

Saving
Montgomery
Sole

ALSO BY Mariko Tamaki

This One Summer

(You) Set Me on Fire

Emiko Superstar

Skim

Fake I.D.

Trues Lies: The Book of Bad Advice

Cover Me

Saving
Montgomery
Sole

Mariko Tamaki



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*To DBT,
who has saved me many times*

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

—T. S. Eliot

1

I USED TO HAVE A T-SHIRT THAT HAD THE WORDS:
NEVER STOP EXPLORING on it.

On the front was a starry moonlit sky with puffy text across the belly. On the back was a tiny ship floating into what I imagined to be an endless night.

When I was in fourth grade, I wore the shirt to show-and-tell. I said it was my favorite because it had “a moon” on it.

Some kid at the back of the room shouted out, “*The moon.*”
“Duh,” I said. “There’s more than one.”

I got a time-out. Because it’s not nice to say “duh.” Even though I was right. It *is* “a moon,” which I knew back then and know now. The universe is really big. There’s more than just the one moon that happens to hang over the teeny-tiny town of Aunty, California, where I live. Have lived. For what feels like forever.

Although Mama Kate says everything feels like forever when you're sixteen.

* * *

It was a crispy but sunny fall afternoon in Aunty. Outside, I could see the shadow of a day moon hanging like an idea in the blue sky. The clock at the front of the clubs room, also Mrs. Dawson's classroom, ticked to 3:31, and I called the meeting of the Jefferson High Mystery Club, Jefferson's smallest student organization, to order.

"Okay," I said, dumping my knapsack on Mrs. Dawson's desk. "Let's do this."

"Right!" Thomas settled his bag on a chair. "Meeting to order!" he boomed. "Members Thomas Masters, Naoki Bigtree, and, *Chair* Montgomery Sole presiding."

"Thank you, Thomas," I said, pulling a cardboard box out of my bag and balancing it on my hand like a tray of drinks. "Thanks for making me a chair."

"Anytime," Thomas said.

"What am I?" Naoki chirped from her perch by the window.

Thomas paused and tapped his chin. "The lamp," he said.

"I love Mondays," Naoki sighed. "Mystery Club is the best."

The official purpose of the Mystery Club, as listed on Jefferson High's hideous garbage-bag-green website, is *Fan Club, Literary*. Which I'm sure is because Mr. Grate, the vice principal, in charge of clubs, teams, and overall student

welfare, thinks the Mystery Club is for people who read mystery novels.

The actual purpose of the Mystery Club is to examine unexplained phenomena, curiosities, and other subjects the members consider to be interesting.

Most students at Jefferson High care about things that are the opposite of interesting, such as celebrity weddings, lip gloss, and expensive cars. These things seem interesting, and people obsess about them, but really, if you think of it, stuff like this is not even curious. No one cares about celebrity weddings from twenty years ago. Because they're just . . . weddings. A boring person, in lip gloss or a great car, is still boring.

Compare that with black holes, telekinesis, or spontaneous combustion. Spontaneous combustion. No matter when it happened, and to who, it's *always* interesting.

When Thomas and I started the Mystery Club two years ago, before Naoki came to Jefferson, Madison Marlow started a rumor that we were devil worshippers obsessed with aliens.

First of all, kind of a leap between the devil and aliens from outer space.

Second of all, we are neither.

We are examiners of the unknown, Naoki will often say. Voyagers.

Turning, I grabbed a piece of chalk with my free hand and wrote *Remote Viewing* on the chalkboard.

"Remote viewing," I began, swiveling back to the classroom, "is based on the idea that we—all of us—have the ability to see

beyond time and space. Yes, Naoki? You don't have to raise your hand."

Naoki dropped her hand into her lap. "I was going to ask, um, could it be possible with this technique to see into the past?"

"Yah," I said. "Like, you know, in ideal circumstances, our mind's eye can see anything, anywhere."

Naoki rubbed her hands together. "I knew this would be good."

"But today we're just focusing on looking into a box," I clarified.

"Cool," Naoki said, waving her hands excitedly. "Sorry to interrupt. Please continue."

"Is this from one of your weird conspiracy theory websites?" Thomas asked, striding to the front of the room and grabbing the cardboard box.

"Yes, it is," I said, snatching it back. "Any *other* questions?"

The stars braided into Naoki's long black-and-white hair twinkled in the sun. "Can I go first?"

"Sure," I said. "Did you bring a mystery item?"

Naoki bobbed her head and twirled toward the front of the room, a lumpy grocery bag in hand. Thomas and I sat down on the floor. Shielding our view with her massive white smock, Naoki tucked her object into the box and tapped the lid closed.

"Okay!" She spun around. "How long does it take to remote view?"

“Give us ninety seconds,” I said. I adjusted my overalls, tossed my hair up into a ponytail, and tucked my boots under my knees.

Shifting into a kind of side sit, Thomas flicked a giant dust bunny off the palm of his hand. “And we do this how?” he asked.

“You clear your mind,” I said, resting the backs of my hands on my thighs in lotus pose. “We have to open ourselves to our potential.”

“Thomas ran his hand, flat, in front of his face. “Done!”

“Aaaaand”—Naoki turned and checked the clock—“go.”

Remote viewing had been on my list for several weeks as a possible Mystery Club meeting topic. Generally speaking, at every meeting, each member takes a turn presenting a subject they’re into. Sometimes we bring in objects or books. Thomas usually shows movies on his laptop, because that’s more his thing.

My last presentation was on ESP, during which every two minutes Thomas yelled out, “Oh! I knew that! How did I *do* that?”

Two weeks ago, Thomas talked about what he deems the great mystery of why Capricorns are really good boyfriends and Aries are not.

At the last meeting, Naoki gave a presentation on lucid dreaming.

When Naoki dreams, she can shape herself and the world around her. She can turn herself into a penguin and swim in

the ocean. She can turn herself into a gumdrop or a boot. Whatever she wants. I've tried this, too, but mostly it just makes me wake up. Thomas says most of his dreams are sexy dreams.

This summer, Naoki had a dream she was a crane, and so, in the real, nondreaming world, she bleached her hair white and added black tips, like wings.

The site I found on remote viewing didn't exactly say how to do it. It just said, "Clear your mind."

Thirty seconds into sitting down, I was getting pretty much nowhere.

Wait, my brain whispered. I think I see a circle.

"Time!" Naoki cried.

I opened my eyes and the classroom swam into focus.

Naoki danced over to the box. "So this is like ESP, then?"

"Sort of," I said, pulling myself up from the floor with the grace of what Momma Jo has described as a swan with one leg. "Back in the day, it was used for, uh, psychedelic warfare. Soldiers used it to see into bunkers and stuff."

Thomas stood and dusted off his pants. "For what war specifically?"

"The Sixties . . ." I said, trying to sound authoritative.

"Ah. Hmmm. Not a lot of wars being won around then," said Thomas, clearly amused. Thomas is the official Mystery Club skeptic, despite also being the person who wants to talk about Capricorns and superheroes the most.

Naoki clapped. "Okay, so Thomas is first. What's in the box?"

“A hair dryer,” Thomas announced, throwing his hands up in the air like a marathoner crossing the finish line.

I raised an eyebrow. “Really. A hair dryer. You *saw* a *hair* dryer.”

“Yes,” Thomas said, dropping his arms and winking at Naoki.

“Interesting.” Naoki nodded.

“You do real-ize,” I explained, with exaggerated teacher tone, “that typically with this sort of technique, a person gets a *sense* of the thing.”

“Well, I’m *incredibly* gifted at the whole mind-clearing technique,” Thomas added with equal exaggeration. “So that probably helps . . . *me*. You know.”

Naoki giggled.

“Clearly,” I said, switching into my best wise, old alien impression, “your sense of sensing objects is stronger than most. Yes.”

“It’s a gift,” Thomas sighed. “It is my gift and . . . my burden. Also, your Yoda is terrible.”

Naoki smiled and hugged herself. “Oh you guys! I love this stuff! Like, sensing! Yes! Your faces were so, um . . .” Naoki rubbed her lips together, feeling out the word. “Triangulated with the object in the box. I could totally see your third eyes.”

No one else I know enjoys herself as much as Naoki does doing just about everything. She’s like one of those cartoon teddy bears that bursts out in a rainbow glow when she’s happy, which is often.

“What did *you* see, Monty?” Thomas said, pointing a wiggling finger at me. “Sorry. What did you *sense*?”

I grabbed at the last image that had danced in front of my eyes. “A circle. Like, a charcoal circle.”

“So”—Thomas tapped his chin with his index finger—“not a hair dryer is basically what you’re saying.”

“Ummmm,” I mused. “That wasn’t my *sense*, no.”

“Naoki, would you enlighten us?” Thomas asked.

Naoki popped off the lid and pulled the object out of the box. “It’s a sunflower!”

Silence.

Thomas and Naoki looked at each other, then at me. It was a look similar to the one I got when we did the telekinesis flash cards (which didn’t work). A look not unlike the one I got when I brought in spoons for us to try to bend with our minds (which also didn’t work).

I could practically see the little puffy “uh-oh” clouds floating above their heads.

“You know what?” Naoki tilted her head, tipped the flower horizontally, then upside down. “It does kind of look a little like a hair dryer,” she offered. “Oh!” she added, pointing at the bumpy brown center. “And there is a circle! Do you think that’s what you saw, Monty?”

In his best game show voice, Thomas raised an imaginary scorecard, “Remote viewing: survey says?”

I shrugged. As one of the only fans of anything as cool as remote viewers, sometimes I just wish this stuff would actually work . . . better . . . more.

“I’m giving it a 3.5 out of 5,” Thomas continued. “Mostly because I’m shocked it wasn’t a hair dryer.”

“You’re a 3.5!” I said, doing my best to keep a straight face but failing.

“You know that’s not true,” Thomas cooed. He darted over and threw his arms around me in a massive bear hug. “And you know I love your weird experiments even if they never work.”

“*Sometimes* they work,” I huffed. “It’s complicated.”

“Well, I love them anyway,” Thomas said.

“You love *me*,” I said.

“Mostly, yes,” Thomas said, giving me a small shove. “Even though you are bossy and made me sit on the floor in my new pants.”

“What? I’m not bossy!” I grinned. “I’m the chair!”

“Well,” Naoki said, lowering the flower back into the box, “I thought it was pretty cool. Now my turn.”

* * *

By the time we’d finished remote viewing all there was to view, or not, since no one “saw” any of the articles we brought, it was almost five thirty.

“Sometimes I feel like we enter a time vortex when we do Mystery Club.” Naoki sighed happily as she trotted down the front steps.

“Time flies when you’re seeing through walls,” Thomas added.

“Have we done vortexes yet?” I asked, grabbing my phone out of my pocket to check.

When we got to the curb, Naoki’s dad was there to take her to her pottery class.

Naoki's dad has hair longer than mine, and he wears it in a big bun at the top of his head.

"Let's go!" He waved from the car. "Hi, kids."

"Hi, Mr. Bigtree," Thomas and I greeted in unison, in that upbeat but drone-like voice you have to use when you're talking to someone's parents.

"Bye." Naoki waved as she hopped into the car.

Thomas had a coffee date.

"Toodle-loo," he said, blowing me a kiss as he ran off.

Because I refuse to take part in any activities beyond the one I sort of created for myself, I had nothing to do. So I went home, comforted by the quiet, the warm breeze that is the autumn air in California, and the sound of my boots hitting the concrete as I marched to the bus.

* * *

I love my house.

It has a massive pine tree in the front yard that looks like we have a magical creature in a big, pointy, feathered hat squatting on the front lawn. Mama Kate is afraid that one day it will fall on the house, and my sister, Tesla, used to have these crazy nightmares from the shadows the branches cast on her wall. But I love it. It smells like rain.

After the obligatory parental hellos and a hastily zapped microwaved burrito (Monday being the one night of the week we are allowed to eat wherever we want), I bolted up to the cozy paradise also known as my room. As soon as I was in, I kicked off my boots; slipped into my supersoft, and paper-thin

FRANKIE SAYS RELAX T-shirt and gym shorts; and flopped into the supercomfy armchair I have set up by my desk, which was an old kitchen table so it still smells like onions in some spots.

“Oh, hello, Internet,” I cooed as I flipped open the lid to my ancient but fully functional laptop.

I can lose a whole weekend ignoring the natural beauty of the fabulous state of California to read weird stuff online. Last year I spent a month obsessing over this woman who blogs and live-tweets about what she calls her “process of becoming a human cyborg.” Later I read an article that said she had to give it up because she was hallucinating, possibly due to lead poisoning from all the bolts and screws she was inserting under her skin.

Which, you know, is a little scary.

After polishing off my burrito, I spent an hour just clicking around the web.

I find most of my Mystery Club topics through random searches, which I keep track of in this app I found that was designed for overachieving businessmen.

There’s a happy-face list, originally for listing good habits, where I keep all the mysteries I consider worth looking into:

☺ ESP

☺ That thing that lets people bend spoons

And there’s an unhappy-face list, which is technically for tracking bad habits but I use, because it’s there, for tracking

those things I do not understand and never will, and don't care.

☹ Flip-flops

☹ People's obsession with getting rid of all body hair

That night I was hoping to find a better psychic experiment and a more thorough explanation of how a person would actually see something psychically. I typed in a few questions along the lines of, *How can you see something someone else is seeing if you're not in the same place?*

Alternately, I had this idea that I would find something about crystal balls.

I clicked something. Read something. Got a root beer. Came back. Watched a video of kittens playing guitars. Clicked something, and then I clicked something else, and before I knew it, there was a link to this other thing and a link to a website. And presumably, that is how I ended up at:

Manchester's Academy of Magic,
Mystical Forces, and New Believers

Which is weird because I was really not looking for anything specifically mystical, or magic, and I don't remember clicking a link about anything like that.

But suddenly there I was.

The website looked like it was designed in the nineties. The banner was in Times New Roman. Underlined. Top

center, framed in lavender, was this drawing of a troll-like two-headed woman in a black cape. Like, the worst picture ever drawn.

Most of the text was about different kinds of mysteries. A lot of it was stuff I'd read before about different legends in different countries: fairy folk in England, the Huldufólk in Iceland. There was something about the Loch Ness Monster, which I'm sure has to appear on every website about anything magical or strange. For a second I thought maybe it was a *Dungeons & Dragons* fan site because there were a few *yees* and *yores* in there.

Ye ancient-powers-of-yore-type stuff.

At some point, I clicked an *About* link next to a wizard picture, because, you know, *About* what? About wizards? Maybe something about spells?

Instead, the link took me to a page that was completely blank, except for a *Store* link.

Where there was only one thing listed.

THE EYE OF KNOW

Next to the title was a picture, like some sort of badly lit cell phone picture, of this white rock laid out on a piece of black velvet.

Completely genuine crystal amulet.
Rock excavated from asteroid landing
in the magical mountain ranges of

Peru. When wielded by a skilled visionary, the eye is a portal to vision untold. Journey forward into insight. Explore the power of know. Amulet comes with adjustable leather strap and may be worn as a necklace, bracelet, or anklet. Instruction booklet included. Only \$5.99!

When was the last time anyone you knew *wielded* anything?
I thought, *Maybe it's just a piece of rock from some guy's backyard.*
Possibly in Manchester.

“A portal to vision untold,” I said to no one but the possibly unseen paranormal presences in my room.

What if it was . . . a portal?

Plus it was only \$5.99. *That's, like, a cup of coffee and a doughnut,* I thought.

Looking at the site, I paused to suck out the last dregs of my root beer.

Couldn't be any worse than trying to see inside a box.

Why not? I thought.

Fortunately, I have a credit card for just such occasions. Which I must, with no exception, pay off every month with my meager allowance or it gets taken away, because my moms are afraid kids today don't have the same appreciation for money that they did “back in the old days.” Not that I do that much shopping.

After my purchase, I went downstairs for a snack. My

moms and Tesla, my younger sister, were sitting in the living room, watching TV. I say “my moms” a lot because I think of them as one being from time to time . . . They are two separate people. Momma Jo is tall; Mama Kate is short. Momma Jo is loud; Mama Kate is not.

Momma Jo says stuff like, “You look too un-busy for someone your age. Did you do your homework?”

Mama Kate says stuff like, “Did you want to talk about something?”

I’m told there was a time when I called Momma Jo “the big one” to distinguish her from Mama Kate.

“Fortunately,” Momma Jo often notes, “you grew out of that.”

As I slipped past the living room, the moms were getting ready to watch some show about a woman who is happy with her job but sad about her love life.

Tesla was on the carpet, still in her special workout gear, because even though Tesla is only eleven, she does yoga every day. To keep her core lean. Apparently this requires special clothes. “Breathing clothes,” Tesla calls them.

I can’t watch TV with my moms anymore, because they won’t stop asking me stuff.

Every time we sit down to watch TV, they immediately dive into this ticker tape of weirdly pointless Q-and-A.

“Did you know about this Facebook bullying thing, Montgomery?”

No.

“Oh look, Monty! Is that a Goth?”

Ugh. NO.

“Gluten-free. Montgomery, isn’t that like wheat-free?”

No clue.

“Hey, Montgomery, is that the same actor as the one in the movie that you like?”

Sometimes I wonder what would happen if I said, “I have no idea what you’re talking about, *moms*, because you haven’t included any actual names in that sentence. So let’s say *no*.”

They’d probably just zoom onto the next question. “What was the name of that play you did last year? Was it *Hamlet*, Montgomery?”

No, in fact, it was called I’m trying to watch TV.

It’s easier if I just watch stuff by myself, upstairs in my room, on my parental guardian-monitored Netflix account.

As I padded through the hallway, passing the living room on my way to the kitchen, Momma Jo turned and popped her head up over the couch. “Hey! Monty!” she shouted, pointing at the screen. “Didn’t we watch something like this before? About this woman but in the other show she was a doctor? Is that possible? Monty! Montgomery! Hello? What are you doing?”

“Nothing,” I said, slip-skating across the floor. I was weirdly kind of happy. Like, not laughing-for-no-reason happy, but at least a little happy. Like a kid who’s just discovered that socks on hardwood floors is like skates on ice. I twirled a perfect 360 and skidded into the kitchen.

The Eye of Know, I thought as I perused the cupboards for

the perfect snack. The words felt good swishing around in my brain. *Eye. Know. All.* Possibly my greatest discovery?

“What’s up with you?” Mama Kate chirped, stepping into the kitchen, the popcorn bowl dangling empty by her side. “Are you going to watch TV with us?”

“Nothing,” I said. “And, uh, I’m doing work upstairs, so not tonight.”

“Your clothes are so big and old. You look weird,” Tesla huffed as she wandered in behind Mama Kate. “Where’s the popcorn?”

“They’re supporting my core,” I retorted.

“Do you want new clothes?” Mama Kate asked, raising an eyebrow. “I feel like we’re overdue for a shop.”

“Nah. I’m good.”

I’d been doing just fine on Goodwill finds and mom hand-me-downs. Momma Jo didn’t mind my duds.

Many of them were her castoffs.

Flinging the freezer door open, I grabbed one of the cartons of fancy blueberry gelato and beat it back up to my room.

Then I texted Thomas.

Me: Date done? Call me.

I guess you could say that Thomas is kind of like my big-brother-slash-best-friend because he’s supermature, and I say this not just because he’s a year older than I am (and a grade ahead).

I have often told him that, technically, that should make us even, since boys are so much less mature than girls.

Scientifically proven, by the way.

Thomas says gay boys mature faster than straight boys because they pay more attention to the world around them.

That night Thomas came on the phone humming the theme from some cartoon series he's obsessed with.

I said, "Does shopping online ever make you inexplicably happy?"

Thomas considered. "Um, sometimes. What did you buy?"

"A crystal from a really ugly website."

Thomas snorted. "You and Naoki and your crystals and your dreams."

"How was your date?" I said.

"My date with The Butcher?" I could tell he was painting his nails because I was clearly on speakerphone and he was taking little pauses of concentration. "He's an urban poet. An urban poet and . . . a butcher."

"Surprise, surprise."

Thomas says his dating life doesn't define him. It's all just fodder for his creative sensibility, he says. Sometimes it feels like his dates are characters from a movie.

"What happened to the Yoga Master?" I asked.

"Not so masterful."

"Butchers are probably cooler," I added.

"Oh, let me tell you," Thomas cackled, bumping the phone, "the kids in Aunty are all over the butchers. And the butches! These girls think it's quite the thing."

I flipped over on the bed so I could put my face on the pillow, mashing the phone against my ear. I released my ponytail and was blanketed in hair.

“Did you really think the remote viewing was 3.5?” I asked.

“Is 3.5 bad? Maybe on a game show,” Thomas said. “I would say I’m not clear on why you would need to remote view anything now that we have smart phones.”

“Well,” I said, “it would be cool, though. To have that kind of skill in your back pocket. Just in case.”

Thomas paused. “Just in case what?”

“I don’t know.” I rolled onto my back and stared at the chalk spirals Momma Jo had helped Naoki and me draw on my ceiling a few months ago.

“In case we need to start a psychedelic war?” Thomas asked. “Is that what we’re doing next week?”

“I’m not planning anything. I’m just saying. It would be cool. To be able to see.”

To actually see, I thought, *and to know*. Just because remote viewing was a 3.5 didn’t mean a 5.0 wasn’t out there, somewhere.

I sat up. “I should go,” I said. “I haven’t even done my English homework yet.”

“Good night, Montgomery Sole.”

“Good night, Thomas.”

I turned on some Echo & the Bunnymen because the guy has this great voice and they have this song “The Killing Moon” that I really like. I grabbed my school copy of *The Outsiders* and flopped back onto my bed.

That night, somewhere, someone, hypothetically, in Manchester, or Pocatello, or even next door, was boxing up my Eye of Know, sealing it in brown paper and tape.

Right before I fell asleep, I pulled out my phone and opened my app.

☺ The Eye of Know

2

"MONTGOMERY AND TESLA SOLE! IF YOU ARE NOT IN the car in six minutes, you are on foot!"

Ah, the dulcet tones of the Sole household in the morning, the gentle song of the morning Momma Jo.

It's 8:34 a.m., and my house—as it is at 8:34 *every day*—was late for school, and my moms were freaking out. As I pulled myself into my overalls and grabbed a T-shirt from the floor, I could hear my moms running after Tesla, who can never find her socks—*ever*—or her books, or anything, really.

"There's just a green one here!" Tesla screamed, running down the stairs.

"Then put on a green one and another one!" Momma Jo yelled.

What happens to us between breakfast and 8:34 a.m.? A mystery for the ages.

"No! Mommmmmaaa!"

Honestly, for someone who can never find them, my sister cares a lot about socks. I can't imagine caring that much about something as ridiculous as *clothes*. Not even clothes—*socks*. Why would anyone care about a piece of clothing that's designed to be on the stinkiest part of your body?

I peered out my bedroom door to see if it was safe to make a break for the stairs.

"Tesla, I found a green one. Come here," Mama Kate called, rushing upstairs, dangling a kneesock like a garter snake from her fingers.

"I don't want green socks! I need my pink soccer socks!"

"*Montgomery and Tesla Sole*," Momma Jo hollered as she stomped out of the kitchen and toward the front door. "*Two minutes!*"

Every once in a while, driving to school—or being driven to school, until I am seventeen—I look at the vast blue sky and the rolling green hills, and I think that there must be some kid living in some industrial town like Detroit or Pittsburgh or something, some town with, like, gray skies and coal for air, who *dreams* of living in a place like Aunty. I bet you this kid wakes up every morning and listens to Vampire Weekend or some other Cali-pop tune and thinks, *Gee, if only I could live somewhere where the sun is always shining, where the sparkling blue oceans caresses the coast . . .*

And so on.

To this kid, I would say, "It's not as great as it sounds."

I mean, first of all, not every town in California is San Francisco or LA.

When I first heard “California,” I thought we were moving to Hollywood. Granted, I was nine.

And, honestly, the fact that the sun is always shining here is pretty much an indication that we’re all about to die of global warming. I don’t think it’s anything to get all tra-la-la about, unless your only goal in life is to get an amazing tan and learn how to skateboard.

The only reason to love the sun here is the resulting plentitude of avocado, which is basically my favorite thing in the world to eat. Especially on rye toast. With just a little bit of salt and pepper. And a drop or two of really good olive oil.

According to Momma Jo, who is from Blenheim, Ontario, which is in Canada, which is very cold, there are many places in the world where it is not possible to pick an avocado from your avocado tree in the backyard for breakfast.

Horrific.

That said, I wonder if students in Blenheim, Ontario, have to suffer through a school pep rally every month.

A rally that, by time I got to school, was in full craziness.

I crawled up into the nosebleed section to join Thomas, a book hidden in my Jefferson High WE’RE #1 foam finger for later.

Sipping from a box of the latest health elixir, Thomas gave me a tiny wave. “Good morning, Montgomery. I hope you are prepared to cheer for the home team.”

I stabbed my finger clumsily into the air, almost dropping my book.

The crowd roared.

Thomas yawned and popped an earbud into his left ear.

“Can you imagine the whole school gathering every month to cheer on the Mystery Club?” I asked. “Or anything like it? Like, even the Dramedy Club?”

“Is this the start of a joke?” Thomas asked, slipping his shuffle into his pocket and adjusting his velvet blazer (lined with school colors, or at least Thomas’s version of Jefferson High green).

It’s a pretty tragic name. *Dramedy*. I don’t think there’s really any reason to rally around a name like that.

Every time I hear the name, I can picture some teacher desperate for student participation trumpeting, “Hey, you guys, wanna come have fun with theater?”

Thomas is actually a longtime, upstanding member of the Dramedy Club, in part because he wants to be a director someday. Sometimes when school is making him crazy, he imagines he’s making a movie about a wayward high school population.

Sometimes as he’s walking to class, he puts his fingers up in a frame and pans across his shots.

Also, he has a tendency, when we’re walking down the hall, to lean into me and whisper, “*Action!*”

Naoki is also originally from Canada, from Vancouver, where there are no pep rallies to be had. I remember the first rally she went to, the year before. She was like a kid going to Disneyland.

“A pep rally? And everyone goes,” she’d marveled, “to raise *spirit* for the school? Wow. Do they sing?”

“They shout,” Thomas had said.

“It’s more of a scream,” I’d added, jumping and swinging my arms. “It’s like this: ‘*Abbbbbbhhhh, Jefferson High, aaaaaabbbbbbhhhh!*’”

“Wouldn’t it be great if we *sang*?” Naoki had said. “That would be so amazing!”

That day, as Thomas and I sat and chatted, and Thomas half-listened to dance music, Naoki swayed and twirled around the top row with two foam fingers (one was Thomas’s) pointed at the ceiling. She looked like a cloud with a foam finger wedged on either side.

Probably the first thing I noticed about Naoki was that she always wears white. Not like tennis white, or yuppie white, but what Thomas calls hippie white—long, flowing skirts and shawls. White like lilies and like smoke. She paints her nails white and sometimes she paints white spirals on her cheeks. And even though it’s not weather appropriate, sometimes she wears a baby-blue knitted scarf because she says her neck misses scarves.

It seems a little underplayed to say that something about Naoki is weirdly, like, magical.

I’m pretty sure she basically just *is* magic.

Most of the people at this school think that Naoki’s a space cadet. Partly because she has this way of answering questions that’s kind of long and meandering, and people

are always cutting her off and rolling their eyes. I'm pretty sure she doesn't care, though, or at least I've never seen her get mad.

I long ago added the pep rallies to my list of things I do not care to understand:

- ⊗ Stupid pep rallies—which everyone else seems to love for no reason
- ⊗ Why the lyrics to our cheer are called lyrics even though it's just *Jefferson High!*

Although I do think it would be cool to study something that actually raises spirits.

☺ Chanting?

* * *

After the rally, I had math, which is never fun. Mr. Deever is the sweatiest person on the planet. One day he's just going to melt into a puddle in front of us like that guy in *X-Men*.

Second period. English.

As soon as I sat down, Mrs. Farley announced we were doing group work, which meant I had to spend the whole period with Madison Marlow and the Parte twins, Cat and Miffy. Who *immediately*, upon hearing my name lumped with theirs, rolled their eyes and shook their platinum-blond ponytails in unison. I combed my hair over my face.

Great.

“Oh my God,” I heard Madison whisper. “Is she wearing farmer pants?”

I looked down. My overalls were looking a little worn-more-than-once. Not that that was any of Madison’s business.

“They go with her Def Leppard T-shirt,” Cat snickered.

Def Leppard? I looked down.

It’s Death Cab for Cutie, you idiots, I wanted to scream. Not exactly the same thing. Of course, it’s hard to scream something at someone when you’re in the process of scooting your desk over to join her group.

Since fourth grade, Madison Marlow and the Parte twins have basically been the heads of the Jefferson blond mafia. Madison’s mom runs just about every group (gardening, bridge, ladies’ softball, scrapbooking, felting, knitting, ladies’ chess, and Pilates) in Aunty. So Madison had no choice, clearly, but to be the same way and run everything at Jefferson, a dictator in short shorts and too much mascara.

It tells you something about the student population, I think, that they’ve surrendered power to someone who once said, out loud, that girls who don’t wear bras are prone to depression.

Mrs. Farley asked us to look up examples of irony and foreshadowing in *The Outsiders*.

We didn’t even get to irony.

Four minutes in, Madison took charge.

“We have to look for dark things,” she said, flipping through her book, using her ridiculous fake nails like tiny spatulas.

Dig. Flip. Dig. Flip.

“Right! It’s totally night at the beginning of the book, I think,” Miffy offered.

“Wait,” I cut in, turning to Miffy. “What’s that got to do with foreshadowing?”

My assigned group threw ice-cold girl glares.

“Foreshadowing has nothing to do with night,” I explained—I thought, hopefully.

Silence.

“It *doesn’t*,” I said.

“Um, I didn’t say it did,” Madison hissed, waving her nails so close to my face I could smell the epoxy. “We’re looking at, like, dark things that show that things are going to get . . . bad. And, um, guess what. As Miffy knows, night is dark.”

“God, Montgomery,” Miffy huffed, rocking back in her seat and flicking her ponytail over her shoulder like a weapon.

I squirmed in my desk, my student-issued classroom torture device. Cat coiled the end of her ponytail around her index finger.

“Foreshadowing doesn’t have to be dark,” I said finally. It felt like I was squeezing the words out of my eyeballs.

“Hey,” Madison snapped. “There’s no need to be rude!”

“I’m not being rude. I’m being right!” I could feel my cheeks glowing red. I’m sure I was flushing like crazy. I probably looked like a raspberry.

“Excuse me. Can I just say? A shadow is *dark*.” Cat sniffed, looking at Madison.

“That’s totally true,” Madison nodded.

“Uh, *hello*, I know that,” I said, my face exploding. “What I’m saying is, that doesn’t mean foreshadowing has to be dark!”

Honestly!

Mrs. Farley stopped writing on the blackboard and looked over at our group. Someone else on the other side of the classroom coughed. “*Whi-itch.*”

“Whatever,” Madison sneered. “Let’s just work without her.”

And they scooted their chairs closer together and bent their heads toward each other so I could just hear them whispering. “*It’s like, ‘Oh, I’m so cool, look at my T-shirt, I listen to alternative music.’*” “*Know-it-all.*”

I could feel my stomach pinching together like someone was using it to make pizza.

As a kid, I thought girls being mean was the only way to get a stomachache.

Screw them. I inched my chair over in the other direction and held my book in my lap so I could be as far away from them as the class rules of “group work” allowed.

“Does anyone have any examples?” Mrs. Farley asked, pacing up the aisle. “Anyone? No? Not even one? Nice work, guys. Okay, it’s homework, then.”

The bell rang.

“Class dismissed,” Mrs. Farley sighed.

Just to make sure I really got that feeling-like-a-busted-up-sandbox-toy vibe, after lunch, I ran into Matt Truit.

Matt is one of the most popular boys at Aunty, even though he just transferred here last year. He is the biggest jock there

is, the best football and basketball player of all time, irresistible to all women. Also, he is a jerk.

So Thomas and I were walking down the hall to class, talking about whether or not it would be cool to go to Disneyland for my birthday, which is maybe out of the question because we'd probably have to rent a hotel room since it's really far. Thomas thought we should try to hitch to Vegas or something. Which is probably also out of the question but still fun to talk about hypothetically. And we bumped into Matt. Or Thomas did. And Matt spun around and said, "I thought you gays, I mean, guys, were supposed to be light on your feet."

Thomas and I kind of simultaneously froze midstep.

And Matt smiled. This stupid, big, puffy lip smile. This smile like an old pizza crust. And he said, "*Joke.*"

I felt Thomas's hand on my back, and we started walking again.

"Jerk," I whispered.

"I know, I know." Thomas breezed past the lockers, head held high. "Let's go, Monty, heel, toe, heel, toe, nice strut. This is the scene where we march off into our futures. Cue bell."

And right on cue, the school bell screamed. *BRRRRRRING!*

Thomas ran off to gym. I ran to bio, just in time to find out that I'd failed my test because I drew a plant cell instead of an animal cell.

"Seriously?" I groaned to myself.

Clearly displeased with our overall cell ignorance, Mr. Jenner took a swig from his massive coffee thermos and said, "Okay, let's go through our answers. Eyes front. Mr. Tanner, I'm

talking to you. *Mr. Tanner, this class is not a party for you to meet girls!*”

In history, Mrs. Dawson had the flu, so we watched some ancient DVD of a BBC production of *King Lear*. What that has to do with ancient China, which is what we’re studying, I’m not sure.

Then I was supposed to have study hall, but I kind of wandered the halls for a bit, feeling a little lost, until I ran across Naoki heading into the library for her English class.

I told her what had happened with Thomas and Matt. She frowned. “Poor Thomas,” she said.

“Matt is, like, ‘Oh I’m so funny;’” I spat. “Like that guy even knows what a joke is. That guy is as funny as . . .”

“A rock?” Naoki offered.

“That would be an insult to rocks,” I said, thinking of the cool white surface of the Eye of Know.

“Rocks *are* pretty great.” Naoki paused, tracing something in the palm of her hand. “It’s too bad Matt isn’t the person you thought.”

Which is Naoki’s nice way of saying, or remembering, that I once had kind of a thing with Matt Truit. *Briefly* had a thing with Matt Truit.

“There should be an actual foreshadowing technique that lets you avoid this stuff,” I said.

“Maybe there is.” Naoki patted my shoulder with her scarf. “Healing scarf touch,” she explained.

“Uh, thanks.”

Naoki smiled encouragingly. Which made me think maybe

I was looking like a basket case. Which I am not. I straightened, crossed my arms over my chest in order to look casual and in control.

“Hey,” I said. “Did I tell you I ordered this thing on the Internet yesterday? The Eye of Know. We’re going to wield it and use it to see beyond.”

The word *wield* clearly peaked Naoki’s interest. “We’re going to wield the Eye of Gnome! That’s fabulous!”

“The Eye of *Know*,” I said. “*Know*, like with a *k*. Like *knowledge*.”

“Oh,” Naoki breathed. “Oh, I haven’t heard of that one.”

“But you’ve heard of an Eye of *Gnome*?”

I must have said it really loudly. There was a shuffling inside the library. “Naoki,” a soft librarian voice called, “please take your seat.”

“Crap,” I said, stepping back. “I should go.”

“Do you want to go walk in the sun later?” Naoki asked, stepping one toe through the library door. “We can talk about the Eyes?”

“No, it’s okay,” I called, walking backward down the hallway. “See you later.”

Slumped over in study hall, I realized the only thing that could save me on a day like this was frozen yogurt.

3

BEFORE YOGGY WAS YOGGY, IT WAS THIS ANTIQUE shop owned by a woman who always wore pink tracksuits and told her customers that the place was haunted. Mama Kate went there all the time because she likes old things like candlesticks and lace doilies. While she shopped, I sat at the front and grilled the woman about the ghost.

It used to make me crazy that she couldn't be more specific.

"What's her name?" I would ask.

"I don't know, dear," she'd say, needlessly dusting the very old things in the shop.

"But it's a girl?" I'd push, watching the dust spray up and land back on the glass or wood she was cleaning.

"It's a feminine spirit."

I considered this. "When she talks, can you hear it in your brain or your ear?"

“You buying anything, little girl? Or just riling up an old woman for kicks?”

Clearly this was just laziness on the old lady’s part because I can go online and in two seconds find, like, intensive documentation people have done all over the world of the different paranormal spirits inhabiting their houses and other buildings. I could go online right now and buy a Spirit Tracker if I was so inclined. There’s a guy in Iowa who sells them for, like, a hundred bucks (plus shipping). Last year I found this one site where this guy had a twenty-four-hour webcam of his haunted closet (although I watched for about three hours nonstop once, and I didn’t see anything).

Whoever bought the place and put up Yoggy clearly repurposed some of the art and decor from the antique shop. The place is covered in a mishmash of old posters from the fifties to the nineties. Thomas, when he’s accompanied me to get a treat, says the place feels a little sacrilegious.

“You mean, like, haunted?”

“Ugly, Monty. *Ug-ly*.”

Tiffany, who is both the manager and the only person who works at Yoggy, is sort of my adult best friend. She looks kind of more like a mountain lion than a person. She has big dreads, which I normally don’t like on not-African American people, but on Tiffany it looks kind of scary in a good way. She’s got all these thick black tattoos on her forearms. On one hand is a hammer and on the other is a fountain pen. On her back is a picture of a woman holding a sign that says “No justice, no peace.” Tiffany wears tank tops even though it’s always

freezing at Yoggy. Tiffany used to be a master's student in women's studies in Michigan, but then she said she decided the whole thing was useless and too expensive. Also, her boyfriend ran off to India with a skinny yoga instructor . . . named Tiffany.

What are the odds?

Now Tiffany spends most of her time at Yoggy working on her "independent thesis," which will be based on her "out-of-system" research on "The SorBetties."

The SorBetties are the yoga freaks who come to Yoggy every week but only ever eat the health-conscious options, that is, the yogurt Yoggy has labeled as either fat- or sugar-free. Or carb-free. Tiffany has been tracking the SorBetties' movements since she got this job three years ago. Every time a Sorbetty orders a health-conscious Yoggy flavor, Tiffany takes their picture with her phone and adds them to her data.

We got to be friends because one day I ordered health-conscious, carb-free, blueberry swirly with extra marshmallow and Cocoa Puffs topping, and I caught her taking my picture. My only interest in the carb-free blueberry was that it was their only blueberry option. Blueberry goes great with marshmallow.

I would never diet. Even Tesla, who is always on a health kick, would never diet. You cannot diet in a house run by lesbian moms, especially when one of them was the head of a "consciousness-raising group" in college.

Or, you know, that's what Momma Jo tells me.

Needless to say, Tiffany and I are pretty much bonded on

our shared major dislike for the population of Aunty that worries about carbs. The SorBetties are *the* rudest. They always travel in packs and squeal really loudly like how girlfriends laugh on TV. Also, they never pick up their cartons. And they never finish their yogurt.

Recently, Tiffany kicked her research up a notch by changing around the health-conscious cards on some of the flavors. The Wild Strawberry Sensation, as a result, is now listed as carb-free.

It is not.

It's possible the SorBetties have sensed a snake in the grass.

"This is *totally* carb-free?" they squeak from the dispensers. "You're sure? Totally carb-free? Hellooooo, yogurt lady? I'm talking to you. Yes. Are you *absolutely* and *totally sure* this is carb-free?"

"Totally." Tiffany has a special smile she saves for the SorBetties. It is a teeth-only, dead-eye smile. It looks like some sort of reverse magic spell.

Mystery Club-related side note: once, like two years ago, I started reading these blogs of girls who decided to starve themselves to death. I was actually looking for websites about people who fast for spiritual reasons, so they can hallucinate, but all these anorexia fan sites started coming up instead.

There are so many blogs out there written by girls who want to weigh less than a baby squirrel.

I would put it on my list of things I will never understand, but it's too gross and sad.

Of course, the second-best part of Yoggy is that whenever I come in, Tiffany lets me put as much topping as I want as long as I pay for the actual yogurt.

I'm currently perfecting the perfect balance of mochi and mandarin slices and crispy stars. The trick is to keep the stars on the top so they don't get soggy.

The store was quiet when I arrived, so Tiffany let me sit on the counter, and we looked at sexist magazines together. Which was kind of calming. The counters were all littered with half-eaten cups of strawberry-smelling goop.

"How's the research?" I asked, between perfect cold and crunchy mouthfuls.

"Grueling," Tiffany grumbled.

I scooped on some extra Lucky Charms cereal and maraschino cherries on my Mocha Me Crazy fro even though Mama Kate is convinced anything with red dye is poison.

Flipping the page of her magazine, Tiffany squished her mouth from side to side, like she was rinsing with Listerine or something. Her lip ring looked a little sore.

"How's school?" she asked.

"Stupid," I said, flipping the magazine page.

"Huh." Tiffany flashed a pierced-eyebrow raise.

"Hey," I said, jumping off the counter to grab more topping. "Do you ever get the feeling you're, like, on the verge of not being able to deal with people being jerks?"

Tiffany gave me the look I guess a person like me asking a person like her a question like that deserves. I mean, she works at a place called Yoggy.

She sighed and grabbed another magazine from the pile. “High school is mostly pointless.”

“Right.” I stabbed at a handful of peanut butter cups with my clearly-too-small-for-the-job set of plastic tongs. “I’m pretty convinced my own research online will be more fruitful than anything I’ll learn at Jefferson High.”

Tiffany stopped to unstick a page. The magazines were the ones the SorBetties had left behind, and they were always covered in carb-free. “Yep. Most of what you’re learning at school is a lie you’ll have to unlearn in college.”

“Unlearn!” I shouted exuberantly, scattering peanut butter cups and cherries on the counter as a result. “Whoops. I mean, exactly! I should just not go.”

“Ah, no. You gotta go,” Tiffany said, grabbing a wet cloth from under the counter and handing it to me. “Wipe.”

“What?” I froze, cloth in hand. “Why?”

“Ahem. You gonna clean that up?”

Tiffany had this thing, the ability to switch almost who she is, on a dime. Like, all friendly to superharsh. She’s not mean like high-school-girl mean. More like grumpy. Usually when something is spilled.

I wiped the counter while she opened up a new magazine.

“You know,” she said, when I’d finished grabbing all my spilled toppings with the cloth and dumped them in the trash, “I had a Sorbetty come in today and buy a small carb-free for her four-year-old. Four years old, Montgomery!”

I snorted. “What does that have to do with me not going to school?”

Tiffany gave me this kind of drop-dead look. “Maybe there are some things that are bigger than just your problems?”

Wow. Nice.

I looked down at what was left in my cup. All I could smell was the bleachy, sour smell of the wet rag on my hands. The anti-food smell.

You know, I wanted to say, I’m, like, the only person you talk to all day, I bet, that gets why it sucks here. I mean, it’s not like I treat you like someone who’s serving me yogurt. How about you treat me like something other than a dumb kid?

Instead I said, “Well, thanks for the toppings.”

Just then, the door dinged and a bunch of SorBetties came in, dewy from Ashtanga or whatever it is they do. I slipped out, put a little Eurythmics on. Eurythmics is this band from the eighties. Their song “Here Comes the Rain Again” was Momma Jo’s favorite song, and she used to play it *all the time*. I heard it probably a million times as a kid. Fortunately it’s a great song. They’re probably my fourth-favorite band.

Naoki said it’s interesting that I like Eurythmics because the name actually means “a harmonious body of words.” “Like a pep rally where everyone is singing the same song.”

“And it’s a nice song,” Thomas added.

☺ Harmony—music and magic?

☺ Throat singing?

There’s no way Jefferson High would ever play Eurythmics, anywhere. First of all, Eurythmics is music for poets, not jocks.

Plus it's music for singing alone when you feel alone in the world. And that's not pep rally music.

* * *

It was Sole Family Pizza Night. By the time I got home, Tesla had already voted on a movie, *Home Alone*, which is this relatively ancient movie she found on Netflix about this kid who gets left behind when his parents go away, because his parents are stupid and don't know how to count their kids.

As I carefully stacked what I perceived to be the max number of pizza slices onto my plate (accessing my math skills to see if my triangle studies would prove at all helpful—they didn't), I caught Mama Kate looking at me.

"How's it going?" she said, in this superlight "I'm just asking about the weather" way.

"Starving," I said, pointing at my pizza.

Mama Kate disappeared into the fridge and emerged with a big bottle of soda, which is an only-movie-night treat because sugar in pop form makes Tesla a bit crazy. "How's school?"

"Fine," I said. It is important, when eating pizza, to make sure you have at least two napkins per slice. Especially in my family. Half the clothes any of us owns are stained with something.

Mama Kate nudged a glass in my direction. "Nothing of note?"

There is nothing Mama Kate wants more than for me to "talk about things," whatever that means. Talk about what and why is what I want to know. About how Matt Truit is

a dickhead? Which would give her a new thing that she can worry about? On top of all the other things she worries about, like food dye and grades and everything? I don't think so.

I poured myself a glass of sugary carbonated goodness and smiled a huge “school photo” fake smile. “Everything’s totally cool,” I said.

“Hey!” Momma Jo shouted from the couch. “*Are we watchin’ a movie or what?*”

On movie nights, my moms sit on the couch with Tesla snuggled in the middle, and I perch on the top of the couch, creating kind of a pyramid shape. We have many family photos with this similar formation. It is not necessarily the best setup for a movie-night seating arrangement. Many pieces of pizza have been spilled because the top of the couch, as Momma Jo has often said, is not a table.

I lay a few extra napkins on my knees and on the couch for good measure.

“That’s a good idea,” Momma Jo said, holding out her hand. “Gimme some of those.”

“I might have to go and do homework and not watch the whole movie,” I warned as Tesla pointed the remote at the TV.

“Geez. Glad you could join us!” Momma Jo frowned. “How’s the pizza? To your liking? Should we order you an extra pie next time?”

“Can I just eat please and not get hassled?” I said, in what was probably more of a low grumble.

“Hey!” Momma Jo snapped, flicking my knee. “How about

you're wearing my super cool overalls so you should be nice to me or I'll let Mama take you shopping for real clothes?"

"Jo, stop it!" Mama Kate reached up and patted my leg. "I'm glad you're still into movie night," she whispered.

"*Shhh!*" Tesla pouted. "I'm trying to watch."

Tesla was superintense through the whole movie. At some point she slid off the couch and sat cross-legged on the floor, so she could practically touch the TV. Against the screen, her hair looked like a halo.

At some point, the kid, who has been left alone, goes to a church, because he's lonely, I guess. Tesla made us pause the movie at that scene.

"Why don't we go to church?" she asked.

"Do you want to go?" Momma Jo asked, her mouth full of pizza.

Tesla shrugged and pressed Play.

Mama Kate looked hard at the back of Tesla's head.

Weird.

But then, of course, before I could think about it too much, true to form . . .

"Oh! It's that woman! What's the name of that actress, Monty?"

I have no idea.

"You know this little boy is grown up and married now, I think. Isn't he, Monty?"

For God's sake.

Right about the time the zany burglars in the movie were

slipping around on marbles, which Momma Jo thought was hilarious, I began my escape.

“You don’t want to see the end of this?” Momma Jo asked as I slid backward off the couch, not unlike a lizard.

“I think I got it,” I said, landing on the floor and standing upright. “The kid ends up not alone, right?”

“*Monty!*” Tesla whined.

“Sorry!” I hollered, and bounded up the stairs.

* * *

I was lying in bed when I got an IM from Thomas.

Thomas: You OK? Looked for you after school.

Me: Bad day. Jefferson sucks.

Thomas: Cour-age, my little one.

Thomas: Remember we are orchids in a forest of carnations.

Me: I will try.

I think the thing that really makes Thomas, me, and Naoki such good friends, beyond their amazingness, is the fact that we are most definitely—unlike everyone else in Aunty—not from here.

Technically, I’ve lived here since I was nine. But let’s just say, as a girl with two moms, from Canada, I didn’t exactly get a warm welcome when I stepped through the doors of Aunty Public Elementary School, vintage Michael Jackson lunch box in tow.

And the number of times, since that first day, that I've been asked if I grew up in an igloo is uncountable.

I've also been asked, more than a million times, if I miss my dad. By which they presumably mean the anonymous sperm-donor who I've never met.

Basically, for as long as I've lived in Aunty, I've always been, like, this inexplicable thing, a mystery object that's not like anyone else at this school. I guess it's possible that that's part of why I'm so obsessed with other inexplicable things. With other unsolved mysteries.

There's nothing wrong with being unsolved. Unsolved just means not everyone gets it.

I'm kind of glad no one else but the Mystery Club is into this kind of stuff. It's like my secret treasure. Me and the Mystery Club's thing. It's special.

After I got off IMing with Thomas, I watched this BBC documentary on cryonics, which is where people freeze themselves so they can be brought back to life in the future. Then I spent a few hours rereading *The Outsiders*.

It's a great book.

I looked up foreshadowing, which—surprise, surprise—doesn't have anything to do with darkness. It's a hint of what's to come that a writer leaves for the reader.

Why would foreshadowing have to be bad? I thought. Everything has a shadow. Plus anyone with a brain knows you need a light to have a shadow. Light is good.

I pulled out my phone and opened my app.

☺ Foreshadowing in real life. Maybe fortune telling?

Right under that was:

☺ The Eye of Know

I tossed my phone on the bed and looked up the website, just for kicks.

The site was still there, but the shop now had a banner that read *SOLD OUT*.

I called Thomas immediately. “It’s sold out!” I cried. “I just checked the website, and The Eye of Know is sold out!”

“Yippee,” Thomas yawned.

“Do you think they only had one in stock? Or do you think there are Eyes of Know everywhere?”

“I don’t know,” Thomas said. “I’ll tell you, though, I’m so excited for you to get this stone. I’m thinking, maybe then you won’t call me at . . . *midnight*, because you’ll *know* that I’m asleep!”

Then he hung up.

And I went to bed, still feeling pretty thrilled.

The Eye of Know.

Was coming.

4

- ☺ Séances
- ☺ Tea leaf readings
- ☺ Ouija

PEOPLE WHO WRITE ABOUT OUIJA ON THE WEB HAVE the spookiest websites. One time I accidentally left one open, and halfway through the night I could have sworn I heard whispering coming from my computer, which, needless to say, meant I spent the night sleeping in my moms' room, curled up on the floor.

The general consensus among communicating-with-the-dead experts seems to be that Ouija is a kind of remedial way to talk to spirits. This one site I found said that the best thing about Ouija is its clarity. So there's all this chatter, this guy said, made up of all the souls of the universe, and the Ouija

reaches out into the void and pulls out a single sound, *yes* or *no*.

I don't have that many dead people in my life that I've known, well, except for Momma Jo's parents, who I never met but I've seen pictures of, mostly on vacation in places like Florida and Mexico. In most of the pictures, they are on the beach, fully clothed. Like, shoes and everything.

"That's how old people vacation," Momma Jo had said.

This one time, I found an online Ouija board, where you could put your mouse in the center of the screen and ask a question.

Call to your spirit, the site had read. *If the spirit is there, he/she will answer.*

So I asked if Momma Jo's parents were there.

NO.

Then I asked if my biological sperm donor was there. Because I have had this thought, from time to time, that maybe he's dead and maybe he's alive. And it's weird sometimes not to know . . . if he is or not.

"Is my biological sperm donor there—I mean, dead?" I whispered.

NO.

I feel a little guilty whenever I think about or talk about my bio sperm donor. There was a time when I was little, like eight

or something, when I was always asking my moms about it, about what I'd called "the stuff" (i.e., sperm).

I'd wanted to know what it looked like.

"What *what* looked like?" Momma Jo asked. I think on that occasion we were waiting in line at the grocery store. "What stuff?"

"*The man sperm!*" I yelled, frustrated.

"*Ha!* Well. Geez. You're asking the wrong person," Momma Jo smirked.

It's not like I want to find him. The donor. I don't need to find him. He's just there, I guess, and sometimes I step on him in my brain, kind of. Like a sock left on the floor.

I don't know if the Ouija thing could be taken as proof that he is alive. I guess it would depend on whether the spirits know what a biological sperm donor is.

No one in Aunty has a clue.

There are some people who consult various forms of spirit communication as a way of preparing for the day. There are apps that will show you your tarot reading every day, presumably so you can decide whether to take the bus or just stay home.

It might be nice to know what's coming your way.

To have an app or an Eye you could touch and say, "Trouble?"

And it would say, "Yes! Avoid the letter *L* at all costs. Also the letter *K* and anything white. And watch out for short men with facial hair."

Or just, “Yes! Go back to bed. Do not pass GO. Do not leave your room until you receive further instruction.”

* * *

☺ Morning Music Medleys

☺ Backmasking

If there is one thing the entire student population of Jefferson High, Mystery Club included, can agree on, it is about the Morning Music Medleys. They are just about the worst thing in the world. Imagine if someone took the ugliest parts of every song ever written, in all of time, and mushed them together into one terrible song.

Whoever decided that song should be played in the hallway every day, top volume, from 8:55 a.m. to 8:59 a.m., is not a nice person.

The rumor at school is that this is a punishment, although the official word is it's an effective way to get students to class on time.

I think whoever wrote this so-called medley must look like some sort of cartoon villain. I bet he sleeps on a bed of nails. Naked.

That said, when they started playing the medleys two years ago, the number of kids left in the hallways after bell dropped from tons to, like, four.

This morning, instead of fleeing, I was standing in the hallway so I could record the medley on my phone as part of an

independent experiment I was doing on backmasking. Backmasking is this thing where musicians put weird messages in their music, which can only be heard when you play the tracks backward.

Mostly it's just jokes or nonsensical things, like "Who's eaten all the spaghetti?" According to Wikipedia, the rock band Pink Floyd used, "Congratulations. You've just discovered the secret message!"

Of course, all this was back when people had vinyl records and enough time on their hands to play records backward. Which is probably what I would do if I had a record player.

I had this idea one night that maybe there was some sort of messaging in the Jefferson High medley. Something brainwashing like, "Be true to your stupid football team."

Mostly what I was discovering was how much music can penetrate earplugs. Kind of makes you wonder if they're really plugging anything. \$5.99 down the drain.

As the music swirled around me, like an angry mob, I stepped up to my locker in a funnel of muffled noise and looked up to see . . . a cross.

When I say "cross," of course I mean a Christian cross, not an *X* marks the spot, although it was probably a little of both. It was white plastic, wallet-sized. Jesus pressed to the front like he was part of the cross instead of nailed to it, his body fused to the slats, his face all contorted and hard to read.

I dropped my bag, suddenly stuck by the cold wave every queer-related kid gets when they see something stuck to their locker that they didn't put there.

See also: KICK ME stickers, MONTYZ MOMZ HAVE AIDS signs, MONTY IS A LESBIAN Post-it notes. You name it. I've had it. It hits, in the same soft spot, right under the lung, every time.

All down the hallway, students dumped their books into bags, slapped lockers closed, scrambled to get out of the hallway.

I felt a tear in the corner of my eye and squeezed it back.

"No way. No way. No way. Stop, stop, stop," I whispered. "Stop, stop, stop."

I yanked at the edges of the cross with the tips of my fingers, but it was stuck there. Not even taped. Like, cemented.

Suddenly there was a hard tap on my shoulder. "*Wha wha wha!*"

I jumped and turned to see Mr. Grate, VP, his mouth flapping open and shut like a crazed puppet.

"*Wha wha wha!*"

"What?!" I popped out the earplugs, only to be flooded with noise.

Mr. Grate's face turned red like an overripe tomato. "Class, Miss Sole. Now!"

"Mr. Grate! There's . . ." My face exploding. My fingertips sweaty as they pressed into the hard plastic edge of the newest intruder on my sanity.

"I know, I know. The crosses. We're dealing with it, Miss Sole. There's no need to—"

"I-I don't want it on there!"

"Miss Sole." Mr. Grate leaned so forward I could practically count his hair plugs. I could definitely smell the cologne he

was soaked in. “Our administration will deal with this matter swiftly. In the meantime, you have class. Go. Now.”

Looking down the hallway, I saw it. Rows of crosses. Not on every locker, but almost.

“Not the end of the world,” Mr. Grate grumbled as he turned and plodded down the hallway, barking out orders. “You! Maxwell! Get to class! You too. Class! Denton! Class! Taft!”

Who made you the authority on the end of the world? I seethed.

No big deal?

I pressed my lips closed and slammed my locker so hard it made my fingers ring. I snatched my bag and trudged down the hall, awash in a noise that lingered in my brain all through math and Mr. Deever, who despite continued ridiculous sweating, wore a turtleneck to class.

By the time I got to second-period English, my head was throbbing with a magical evil headache. Mr. Gyle, Dramedy Club head, stood at the front of the class with a big yellow sign-up sheet and an unnatural happy grin on his face. Mrs. Farley motioned me to my seat and clapped her hands.

I slid into my chair.

“Okay, class, well today. Yes. Yes, Mr. Totter, sit *down*, please. Yes, so today we have a special announcement and a special guest. This year, Jefferson High will be presenting a full production of *The Outsiders*! Isn’t that fun? And Mr. Gyle has agreed to come to class to tell us a little more. Isn’t that exciting, class?”

Silence. A sure sign that something is *not* going to be

exciting, is when a teacher starts talking about something like it's exciting.

Besides, audition lists had been up in the hallways for weeks. It wasn't exactly *news*.

"Thank you, uh, Mrs. Farley. So. Yes. It's a very tough play," Mr. Gyle explained. "I know you're reading the book, so you know, um, that, well, it's a play with a lot of good themes. But it's not, uh, just literature. Uh, there are fights, and stabbings, so it's a-uh action-type of play. These greasers, these boys, as I'm sure you're noticing in your studies with Mrs. Farley, they were very tough boys, uh guys, and, uh, you know they were the jocks of their time. The, uh, heroes. As it were."

The herd sat lifeless.

"Will there be actual fights onstage?" this kid Todd, amateur rapper and some sort of sport player, asked.

"Oh, uh, yes! Yes, there will definitely be . . . fights. We will be, uh, choreographing, uh, that is to say, uh, *staging* fights."

"Fiiiiight," someone whispered in the back of the classroom.

"Looks like Tanner's going to get his butt kicked," someone else chuckled.

"Kick your butt first," said Tanner, who I believe is also on a sports team, because he dresses that way, high-fived the kid next to him.

"Kick all your butts," someone else laughed.

"Sign up. We'll see," Tanner barked.

"Okay, enough! Class." Mrs. Farley clapped her hands. "That's enough butts for today."

Looks like it's butt-kicking time, I thought. *How thrilling for us all.*

Just to be clear, *The Outsiders* is a book by S.E. Hinton about this kid named Ponyboy, who has a great name but is also really poor. He's what is called a greaser, which is what the really poor kids from the town he's from are called. And the whole book is about this ongoing battle between the Greasers and the Socs, who are the really rich kids. And the really rich kids beat up and make the greasers' lives miserable because they can and because they're rich and they get to do whatever they want.

There is no way in hell that the Greasers in *The Outsiders*, by any literary interpretation, are “jocks.”

I stared wide-eyed at Mrs. Farley. Like, really? Really, this is happening?

By lunch, the sign-up sheet was a list of almost every jock at Jefferson.

Thomas wanted to eat lunch on the stage in the auditorium, which he has a key to because Mr. Gyle gave him the key two years ago, then forgot to ask for it back. The stage was covered in little taped out X's for where the set would go.

Thomas perched himself on the throne from the *Knights of the Round Table* set, and I sat on an old toadstool from the production of *Alice Through the Looking Glass* many moons ago, balancing my cafeteria fries on my knee. “Did you *know* that Mr. Gyle was going around telling all the jocks they should sign up because it's going to be like Jock Fight Club?”

“*The Outsiders* is about conflict,” Thomas sighed, leaning back into his throne and sipping pomegranate juice. “A huge

part of the book is fights. Besides, it's an almost all-male cast, and no one was signing up."

"And you care because?" I asked, stabbing my fry into a mound of tangy red goop.

"Because I am a patron of the arts, Montgomery, and I'm on set and wardrobe. And art is art. Art *transcends*."

"Half of these guys can't even read," I grumbled.

Pulling a bag of kale chips out of his pocket, Thomas shrugged. "Well, we're cutting most of their lines for time anyway. It's not worth getting upset about."

"I'm not upset," I said, picking at my toadstool.

"So"—Thomas rolled up his sleeves—"new topic because I don't want to argue about this anymore. Ready? Did you hear about the new student?"

"What new student?"

"Kenneth . . ." Thomas paused. Waited for me to finish chewing my fry, possibly for dramatic effect, possibly because he wanted to let me know I was chewing too loudly. "White."

I paused, mostly because Thomas had just paused, and I wanted to make fun of him a little. "Should that mean something to me?"

Thomas leaned in, eyes wide. "Reverend White? Reverend John White? Reverend 'I'm going to save the American Family' White?"

The image of the Reverend White, blurry under a Buzzfeed headline I'd scanned a while ago, popped into my brain. "Oh my God."

“Exactly. God!” Thomas pointed excitedly at the ceiling, “Here!” He pointed at the ground.

I jumped up from my toadstool. “Did you see the crosses this morning?”

“I did,” Thomas said. “My grade didn’t get hit though.”

Thomas peered into his kale chips bag in search of whatever you would expect to find in a kale chip bag. “Wouldn’t it be so much nicer if instead of a cross they gave you a present? Like, ‘Hey, here’s just something for you because I think you’re special.’ Like a Jesus sweater. I would wear a Jesus sweater, if it was tasteful.”

“I’d wear anything that’s not ‘Your parents are gay, you’re going to hell.’ That’s White’s thing, right?” I’d only seen the one article.

“Probably,” Thomas said, “after a while most of them blend into one big blob of bigotry, to be honest.”

“Until they move to your town.” And suddenly I wasn’t hungry anymore.

“Right,” Thomas said. “So. Anyway, a new local celebrity. More YouTube famous than famous famous, but still. Exciting.”

“I guess.” My stomach started to twist.

Thomas flipped his phone out of his bag. “We should look up his videos. Could be good Mystery Club material.”

“No.”

“No?” Thomas tilted his head back into his throne, deep in thought. “You know, I assumed it was this White kid who put

the crosses on the lockers, but that seems a little obvious, doesn't it? Do you think it was the allied forces?"

There's a Students' Christian Alliance here, formerly run by Harley Car, actual name. It was currently seeking new leadership because Mr. and Mrs. Car split up and Harley moved to Las Vegas with his mom.

"Maybe," I said.

"Hard to imagine them organizing in advance without new management. Are the crosses still there?"

"I don't know."

"Hey!" Naoki said, marching down the auditorium aisle like a majorette. "Are you eating fries and talking about stuff?" She grinned.

"Some of us are not eating fries," Thomas said, shaking his kale snack.

"Yeah," I sighed.

Naoki jumped up onto the stage and looked at Thomas. "Some of us are a little on edge today," Thomas added.

"Oh," Naoki said quietly. "I see. Ready for bio, Monty?"

I stood up. "Yes. I have to go do something first."

* * *

As I walked down the hall, my heart hammering in my head like a car alarm, I could see the rows of crosses ahead. Still there. *Glad the administration is all over it*, I thought.

Guess it wasn't a huge priority for the staff to remove a *cross*. Because, you know, what's the big deal?

It's not the end of the world or anything, a voice in my head fumed. *Right? It's just someone tagging someone's locker with a religious figure? Who doesn't love a Jesus on a cross?*

It took two regular pencils, a mechanical pencil, and a ball-point pen, but I eventually pried the thing off my locker. The stream of post-lunch kids slowed to a crawl behind me, slowing down the way you do at a car accident. I could hear Naoki in the background talking but not what she was saying.

Then, right before I wrenched it off, I could swear I heard someone chuckling. But I spun around, and it was just Naoki.

"You okay?" she asked.

"Let's just go."

The cross left a huge navy hole in the paint of my locker. It looked like someone had cracked it with a cannonball.

"You want to go home maybe?" Naoki whispered.

"No, I'm fine. It's fine." The tips of my fingers were all raw. I shoved the cross into my bag and stomped to class.

It wasn't hard to spot Kenneth White, son of the Reverend White, in bio. I mean, all I had to do was look for someone I didn't know. I tried not to stare as Naoki and I made our way to our spots, until I was behind him and better able to glare freely.

He was football-tall and stocky, with a big, wide neck. His hair was so blond it was almost see-through. It looked like doll hair. When he turned to look out the window, I could practically see his veins.

"That's Kenneth White?" I whispered.

Naoki nodded. "Yes, it is. He's in my Spanish class as well."

He looked as if someone had chipped him out of marble.

We spent the class drawing cells. Naoki drew hers with the faintest pencil line, thinner than an eyelash.

“Your cells look like ghosts,” I whispered, pointing.

Naoki looked down at her sheet of paper. “Do ghosts have cells?”

Something about having Kenneth White in the room made my head hurt. Maybe it was how hard I was staring at the back of his head.

The bell rang and students started jumping out of their seats, slinging bags over shoulders. Shouting across the room. Stuff like, “Wait up, *dick!*”

I felt light-headed and heavy all at the same time.

Kenneth stood, like some sort of Neolithic creature, propping his hands on the desk and shoving his chair back. He must have been over six feet tall. He practically had to unfold himself to get out from under the desk. He was wearing leather boots like the kind construction workers wear, neatly tied up tight. Not like some sort of cool hipster thing. Like someone planning on digging a hole or something.

A hole for sinners.

I didn’t want to get out of my chair. I kind of wanted to crawl under my desk.

I mean, seriously, it’s one thing to have a school full of idiots to deal with; it’s something else entirely to have to sit with someone who you know, for a fact, thinks you’re going to hell.

So I just sat for a bit. Feeling like lead and staring at Kenneth’s now empty seat.

“Hey,” Naoki said, touching my shoulder lightly with her finger. “What are you doing after school?”

I swung my head back in a gesture that might have looked a little psychotic. “Ah. Nothing, I guess.”

Slipping her stuff into her bag, Naoki smiled. “Why don’t you come over, and we’ll watch a documentary? Or just have a snack.”

Clearly there is something medicinal for me about the word *snack*.

“Do you have frozen yogurt?” I asked.

“I’ll make some,” Naoki said, rubbing her hands together. “I can totally do that.”

* * *

Naoki’s house smells like Japanese food. Maybe that’s a little racist to say, because her mother is Japanese and her dad is Native Canadian. I’m not saying I think all Japanese people have houses that smell like soy sauce. Plus I think it’s an amazing smell, and I love that it hits you as soon as you walk in the door. Both her parents travel a lot, so her house is usually empty. Her dad is a famous sculptor, and her mom directs documentaries. Naoki says she likes to be alone so it doesn’t really bother her. Which I totally get because sometimes I just want, like, five minutes of uninterrupted me time without a knock on the door asking me how I am and if I want something.

Or, *Have you seen your sister’s socks?*

We walked in the door, and she dumped her bag and kicked off her little black ballet flats onto a little kitten-shaped mat.

“Now,” she said, grabbing my bag and tossing it in the same pile as hers, “what should we put in our frozen yogurt?”

Coconut. Oreos. Avocado. Greek yogurt. Soy milk. Honey. Ice.

All whipped up into a masterpiece I ate out of a little purple-and-yellow rice bowl with a little pink spoon shaped like a rose petal.

“Where do you get this stuff?” I gasped, turning the spoon over in my hand.

Naoki smiled. “My dad makes most of it. Also, his family does ceramics. So they send us things every year.”

We sat in her dad’s garden on these two massive beanbag chairs. I lay back and felt the day kind of wipe away with every bite of cold white and green.

“Would you rather see the future clearly or have a perfect memory of the past?” Naoki asked, reaching out to run her finger along the leaf of some crazy alien-looking plant I’d never seen before.

I paused to suck on my petal spoon to think and to savor the joy of homemade frozen yogurt. “See the future. Definitely. Oh yeah, I told you about the Eye of Know, right?”

“You did, just a tiny bit,” Naoki said, burrowing deeper into her beanbag chair so it swallowed her up like a cocoon. “It sounds like the name of a book of magic.”

We squished our beanbags together, and I tried to find a picture of it on the Internet, but the site wouldn’t load on my phone. So I drew the Eye on a page I ripped out of the back of my bio textbook.

“So it’s like a mirror,” Naoki said, balancing the drawing carefully on the flat of her palm, like it was some sort of archival artifact.

“No,” I said. “I mean, it’s for seeing, but I think it’s for seeing, like, other things. I mean, I read the description as gaining knowledge into things that people . . . like regular people . . . can’t see.”

“Which is a lot of things,” Naoki said, raising her eyebrows.

The first time we met Naoki, Thomas and I had only been doing the Mystery Club for a year or so. We were sitting in the clubs room, arguing about *Doctor Who*, which Thomas thought was an appropriate subject to discuss in the Mystery Club and I did not.

“I mean the *original Doctor Who*, Montgomery, not any of these new impostors,” Thomas charged.

“It doesn’t *matter*, Thomas. And it depresses me to think you’re drawing a distinction.”

“This level of rigidity doesn’t suit you, Montgomery.”

“It’s a *mystery* club, not a crappy TV club, Thomas.”

“Take that back right now or I will *wal*—”

And Naoki just knocked on the door. And we both sat up in our chairs, like, “Uh, hello?”

Naoki stepped into the room, like some curious alien descending from its ship onto the crusty desert sand, her body draped in what looked like a silver parachute, her hair, which was black then, tied up in blue ribbons. And I think she said, “Did you say this is a Mystery Club?”

“Yah,” I said.

“Good.” She walked in and sat down. “I’m here for the mystery.”

Like, at no point did Naoki think she was going to see a club that would involve reading whodunits.

It’s like she knew she was walking into a different kind of mystery. And that was why she walked in.

Naoki believes that nothing is random. Like, technically there’s actually this thing called probability, which is a math thing that tells you what the possibility is of something happening, like rolling a die and getting a two. Naoki’s basic theory is, yeah, sure, there’s math, but on top of it, there’s this un-math. In Naoki’s un-math, everything happens not because of math but because of stronger, often inexplicable forces pulling things this way and that.

Which is kind of interesting because Naoki’s also really good at math.

It was kind of perfect, I thought, that I would find something like the Eye of Know now, when I knew someone like Naoki. Someone who would actually (a) think that something like the Eye of Know was possible and (b) think it was cool.

After we finished our yogurt, we watched a video about cats that can smell cancer, which is also on my list of mysterious things.

☺ Extra-sensory powers of pets

Around us, crickets chirped. The wind chimes Naoki’s dad made out of clay clinked and clanked.

There was a rap on the patio door, and Naoki's tiny mother, who I swear is, like, three feet tall and looks a little bit like that fashion designer in that movie from Pixar, tapped her watch. Dinner.

"I better motor," I sighed, rolling out of my bean bag.

"Okay, well." Naoki stood. At her feet was a figure eight drawn out in little stones. Which I hadn't even noticed she was doing. At the door, she smiled a big smile. "Hey. I just want to say, I'm glad you are my friend, Montgomery. I'll see you tomorrow."

I felt my smile pull at my face, which was clearly kind of an unfamiliar shape for my face to make. "Thanks! Me too!"

How is it Naoki is just so nice? I wondered. It seemed so easy for her. Even when people treated her like some sort of ditz at school. It was like she just didn't care. Like it wasn't important.

I could have taken the bus home, but it was so nice I decided to walk. It's twenty minutes if I walk fast. Plus I wanted to add some stuff to my app before I forgot, and I can't type and ride the bus, because it makes me nauseous.

- ☺ Random vs. non-random things or coincidences
- ☺ The Eye of Know and how it works and whether it lets you see through time

I licked my lips. They still tasted like coconut.

- ☺ Why homemade fro-yo is better than Yoggy's

I cut through the park and ran up the slide and down the slide and just felt kind of amazing. Which was amazing considering what a crap day it was. Which I tried not to think about.

By the time I got back, the house was totally quiet. Like, still.

Soccer practice, I thought.

The only light on in the whole house was the one over the dining room table. It glowed like a beacon.

I turned the corner.

The box, placed in the center of the table, was brown and scuffed, like some kind of ancient package rescued from a war effort, scratched and torn at the edges. It was about as big as a shoe box cut in half. Perfectly square.

I spun it around. Taped to the outside was an envelope, with a printed card that read:

TO: Montgomery Sole

FROM: **Manchester Technology**

Please enjoy the enclosed EYE OF KNOW!

Every great adventure begins with a new discovery.

Please read your EYE OF KNOW instructions carefully.

Thank you for shopping with Manchester. We hope you'll visit our site again soon!

“Oh my gosh!” I grabbed the box and rocketed up the stairs, stumbling through the darkness, slamming on light switches. I burst into my room and closed the door, even though no one was home.

Sitting on my bed, I tore it open.

There, nested in a handful of crinkly brown paper stuffing, was . . . the Eye of Know?

It . . . wasn't white. But black. Solid. Black.

“What the eff?”

Was this going to be more or less disappointing than the book of spells I'd ordered for \$10.99 that had ended up being a blank book *for writing spells in*, instead of a book of actual magical spells?

Hard to say, I thought, foraging through the rest of the packaging.

The only other thing in the box was a little white pamphlet of instructions, which was really more of a folded card, like a greeting card. On the cover, it read:

*In sight
not see*

On the inside, the left side had a drawing of an eyeball, with the eye open. And a picture of a black rectangle.

On the right side was a picture of an eye colored black, and a white rectangle.

On the back, in writing that was kind of fuzzy, was this:

black light
not be

I flipped the card over and back.

In sight
not see
black light
not be

Tossing the card, I picked up the stone and held it to the light. It was the shape of a domino but without the little dots on it.

The cord was just a piece of white string.

“Wow,” I said to my empty room, the den of disappointment. “Not even an adjustable leather strap!”

I flipped the rock over in my palm. It was perfectly black. No cracks or little white flecks. Nothing. Against my skin, it looked like this perfect black hole. Like there was an actual square-shaped hole in my hand. A doorway to some sort of endless darkness.

“Okay, so,” I said, this time to the stone, possibly. “Time for great insight.”

I closed my fingers around the stone and squeezed it a little.

Thinking back to my extensive research, I closed my eyes and tried to arrange my thoughts like I was setting a table.

Clear away everything else. Away, math. Away, TV. Away, thoughts about food.

What did I want to know?

“Kenneth White,” I whispered.

Come on, Eye. Kenneth White—what is he up to? What horrors will he bring to Jefferson High?

Trouble?

Yes or no?

The stone sat silent in my hand.

I heard, felt nothing.

Okay, I thought. This time I’ll just clear my mind. See what shows up.

I sat up on my bed. Crossed my legs. Cleared my mind. *Now.*

...

Nothing.

My first absolute blank mind in forever. Quiet as a pillow.

And nothing.

I opened my eyes and the Eye of Know stared blankly at me.

Suddenly there was the distinct racket of two soccer moms and a soccer kid piling into the front door.

“*Mon-ty!* Is this your mess?”

“*Mamaaaaaa!* Monty ate my fro-yo!”

“There’s another one in the freezer!” I screamed.

“There’s only banana!” Tesla howled.

“Monty come here and clean up these dishes!”

“*Geez!*” I yelled, carefully placing the Eye in my bag.

“Coming!”

Ping!

On the computer there were two messages from Thomas.

Are you there?

I'm watching *Back to the Future* on Netflix. Golden oldies!

You'd hate it. It's not witchy at all. But this guy, whoever he is, is CUTE cute cute.