

as a store manager or something. To make decent money. To be normal. Totally normal. Just that.

RIVER: You say that, but what does that mean? Does that mean you'll get married? What kind of guy would you like? A sensitive type, or a real tough guy? Where would you live if you could choose anywhere to live? What's your normal?

CLOVER: I don't know! I haven't thought about it.

RIVER: That's my point. You've never had a chance to think about it because you're always thinking about me. In my novel, she has to discover her own life—what she really wants or she'll die. Each person in the family has to move on by themselves or they'll die.

CLOVER: Is this story about me or you?

RIVER: Both. *(Beat.)* Have you ever had sex, Clover?

CLOVER: What?! I'm not talking about this with you!

RIVER: Me either. Don't you think that's odd? And neither of us have a best friend. I think we should move out. Both of us to different places. Start somewhere fresh. Maybe I'll want to do more social things if you aren't nagging at me to do them. And maybe you'll get out more if you stop worrying about me for a second. What do you think?

CLOVER: Who am I talking to? Who are you?

RIVER: I won't fall apart if you're not looking out for me. I promise.

CLOVER: I'd feel as if I were letting her down.

RIVER: Why? Mimi always wanted us to be our own people, remember? She "longed" for us to be our own people, even if that means you'll be all irritatingly normal.

CLOVER: But I promised her that I would take care of you.

RIVER: You have been. But I guess if you really want to take care of me now, you have to let me grow up. On my own.

CLOVER: *(Beat.)* So . . . how does the novel end?

RIVER: *(Beat.)* I don't know yet. It's unpredictable I guess.

THE UNFORTUNATE GIFT

Nicolas, 15, and Jennifer, 14, are waiting at a city bus stop. They both attend high school at Marymount High. Nicolas is a sophomore, and Jennifer is a diligent freshman. Jennifer got a late start this morning because she was up until midnight last night studying for her biology class. Nicolas is late because he decided not to take the last bus. He had a strange feeling about it. Nicolas is known at school as an eccentric. For his biology project last year, he deprived himself of sleep for several days and recorded his thoughts and answers to short quizzes. The project was a hit with his teacher, but most of the kids just thought he was weird. Fellow students try to keep their distance from him. Jennifer doesn't know him at all, but she has observed his slightly strange behavior in the hall heading to class. Nicolas looks down the street in search of a bus. Jennifer, who just ran a block to try to catch the last bus, leans against the bench trying to catch her breath.

NICOLAS: *(Looking down the street.)* You sound tired.

JENNIFER: *(Panting.)* I ran the whole block. I thought that was the 71 bus.

NICOLAS: It was the 71 bus.

JENNIFER: Oh. *(Beat.)* That was the 71 bus?

NICOLAS: That one that just left a second ago? Just now?

JENNIFER: Yeah.

NICOLAS: That was the 71.

JENNIFER: It was? *(He nods.)* Shoot! God . . . blessed! I'm so late. I slowed down at the end of the block there because I thought . . .

NICOLAS: You thought it wasn't the 71 because I didn't take it?

JENNIFER: Yeah. Well, no. I mean—I don't know where you're going or anything.

NICOLAS: I've seen you at Marymount. You go there too, right?

JENNIFER: Yeah.

NICOLAS: I'm a sophomore.

JENNIFER: Yeah, I think I've seen you in the hall. I'm a freshman. I can't wait till I'm a sophomore.

NICOLAS: Yeah, sophomore year is a better year. It's a really good year. In fact, this is my favorite year in my whole life so far. Last year was highly depressing.

JENNIFER: Oh.

NICOLAS: No. It's good because I can appreciate how fantastic this year is. It's really fantastic.

JENNIFER: Good. *(Long pause.)*

NICOLAS: I've noticed you before. In the hall outside of Sister Pat's chemistry class. I saw you on the bus too. Normally I do take the 71. And I'm going to take the next one when it comes.

JENNIFER: Good.

NICOLAS: It's the only one that goes by Marymount. Do you wonder why I didn't take the last one?

JENNIFER: *(She shrugs, not at all sure what to make of this.)* I guess.

NICOLAS: It didn't seem right. Something didn't seem right.

JENNIFER: Uhh. Okay.

NICOLAS: You ever meet someone you're immediately uncomfortable with and you have no idea why?

JENNIFER: Yeah. I guess.

NICOLAS: That's kinda how I felt about that bus. It happens from time to time. I hate it. I think it might be a psychological disorder. Luckily it doesn't happen too often.

JENNIFER: Are you trying to creep me out or something?

NICOLAS: No! I'm just telling you why I didn't take that bus. It's just weird—those feelings.

JENNIFER: I mean, not to be rude, but it's not like I majorly care.

NICOLAS: Fine. I wasn't trying to creep you all out. I'm not like that.

JENNIFER: I know. You just think you're psychic right? What was going to happen on that particular bus? Was it going to crash and go flipping over?

NICOLAS: No, no. Nothing like that. But a drunk man was going to be found dead on it.

JENNIFER: Oh, come on!

NICOLAS: I'm serious. I could see the face of an older business woman on the bus—a woman who had not yet got on.

JENNIFER: So?

NICOLAS: So she was to get on the bus two stops down from here. In the picture in my brain, the business woman walks past a man on the bus. As she walks past, heading to a seat near the back door, he, the pale, drunk man, falls from the bus seat to the floor. She screams—says he's dead. The bus driver stops and the man, all pale, is on the floor. He *is* dead.

JENNIFER: You are totally crazy. You're one of those kids who sits in total darkness playing video games all night long, right?

NICOLAS: I don't do that. I only own one video game. Frogger. I hate it. I'd rather read any day.

JENNIFER: Right.

NICOLAS: I'm telling you the truth.

JENNIFER: You're just trying to creep me out.

NICOLAS: In the instant when the bus was heading to stop in front of me, I saw that whole thing in my head. The idea of seeing a dead person has always made me scared. I got a bad feeling, like the feeling you get when someone makes you uncomfortable and you don't know why, and I didn't get on.

JENNIFER: So are you saying that if I contacted the Mass Transit Authority, and I asked them if a drunk man was found dead on a 71 bus, they would most definitely say yes?

NICOLAS: Yes. I'm pretty sure that's true.

JENNIFER: You're so crazy! Okay, psychicdorkalus, so predict when this bus will come then?

NICOLAS: It'll come in a little under 320 seconds. It's a bit delayed.

JENNIFER: Fine. I'll set my watch's timer by your prediction.

NICOLAS: I wouldn't listen to myself if I hadn't predicted things correctly in the past.

JENNIFER: Whatever. You watch too many movies.

NICOLAS: Seriously. I mean, why else would I make myself late for school?

JENNIFER: I don't know. Maybe you didn't feel like going to your first class.

NICOLAS: My first class is Tragic and Existential Drama with Ms. Scudlo. That's my absolute favorite class. She's the only teacher at Marymount that has even a tiny bit of imagination.

JENNIFER: I heard she's a total flake. Told everyone that she spent her summer vacation with an Italian lover who was a famous painter. I heard it was total bull. She had to take care of her sick mother in Cleveland the whole time.

NICOLAS: The lover was when she took a long weekend in July to Italy.

JENNIFER: Yeah, that's not what I heard. She also believes she has a ghost named Hilary that helps her teach Shakespeare and the Tragedy of MacBeth. She also says Hilary, the ghost, eats half her sandwich every lunch.

NICOLAS: What's wrong with that?

JENNIFER: I'm just saying it's totally weird, and she's a freak.

NICOLAS: What's weird? The ghost eating half the sandwich or just the idea of the ghost in general?

JENNIFER: Think about it. We're not in kindergarten. If she thinks "the ghost" helping her teach Shakespeare is some really, really clever way of teaching, it's not. It's annoying. Really annoying. And insulting too.

NICOLAS: I don't think it's annoying or insulting. I happen to

think she really sees Hilary. Every day. I think she feels she needs her.

JENNIFER: For what?

NICOLAS: To remain interesting.

JENNIFER: Interesting? Being crazy is interesting?

NICOLAS: Yes. She's not very confident. All she has is her teaching and her potential genius. Name me one genius who wasn't a bit crazy.

JENNIFER: You think Ms. Scudlo is a genius?

NICOLAS: No. But maybe she's striving to be one. Wanting to be one. I'd like to be one someday.

JENNIFER: A genius?

NICOLAS: Yes. I'm writing a book already. My first.

JENNIFER: About what?

NICOLAS: About my secret need to be a genius. On everyone's secret need to be a genius. It's about a fifteen-year-old kid like me who starts to realize that he can predict the future. As time goes on, it seems like he can not only predict the future, but cause certain things to happen.

JENNIFER: Wow. That could be convenient.

NICOLAS: Yes, for a while, but then it's not. I think in the next chapter, he'll even change the future by making people begin to call him a genius, but he'll be very disappointed.

JENNIFER: Why?

NICOLAS: Because it's somehow not as good when you have to magically force people to call you that. Manipulating the future isn't all that fun. Neither is predicting it, eventually. He'll wish away all his powers by the end of the book. He just wants to be accepted for him.

JENNIFER: It sounds interesting actually.

NICOLAS: Do you read a lot?

JENNIFER: Some. A lot of mysteries lately.

NICOLAS: Really? (*She nods.*) You'll be the first to read my stuff then.

JENNIFER: You know, I heard about that special project you did for Sister Pat's biology class last year.

NICOLAS: So?

JENNIFER: So this girl from your class told me it was totally cool. You didn't sleep and you videotaped yourself the whole time. You were all weird and demented.

NICOLAS: That was the point of the project.

JENNIFER: To be all weird and demented?

NICOLAS: No! To show how personalities actually alter with little to no sleep. I forced myself to take these little word puzzles every few hours. I also had to play "Frogger"—the one video game I own. All my scores went down as I got more tired. I just wanted to understand more about sleep deprivation for reasons.

JENNIFER: What reasons?

NICOLAS: I told Sister Pat that anyway. I just wanted to observe the effects. But I was curious if it would affect my psychic abilities—*increase* them.

JENNIFER: So when did you first think you could predict things?

NICOLAS: Four years ago.

JENNIFER: So what are some big things you predicted, Mr. Nostradamous? You've heard of him, right?

NICOLAS: Of course. Well, I predicted my friend Billy Robins' parents' house being burglarized. You can even ask him. I predicted my mother's friend's pregnancy. You can ask her when you meet her. I predicted that tornado warning we had last summer.

JENNIFER: You can't prove any of them at the moment. Predict something about me. Right now.

NICOLAS: Okay. I predict that I will become one of the most important friends you will make in high school.

JENNIFER: You? But I don't even know you. And what I *do* know of you makes me nervous.

NICOLAS: Yes. And you'll always think that about me, but you'll like me all the same. We'll be friends for years to come. Maybe even romantic someday, but it won't last.

JENNIFER: Why not? I mean, not that I want anything to do with you, but what's that about?

NICOLAS: That's all I know. We'll be friends for many years.

JENNIFER: Okay. Whatever. So what's your name? I remember that girl from your class pointing you out, but I never heard your name? I suppose if we're going to be friends . . .

NICOLAS: Nicolas. I'm Nicolas.

JENNIFER: Good to meet you. I'm Janet.

NICOLAS: Good to meet you, Jennifer.

JENNIFER: How'd you know that my name wasn't Janet?

NICOLAS: (*Shrugs.*) I'm not sure. I just figured you'd try to test me.

JENNIFER: That's creepy. So what else did you predict? Tell me something really big, Nicolas? Something good—totally juicy.

NICOLAS: (*Beat. He shrugs.*) My dad's death.

JENNIFER: (*Beat.*) What?! That's just wrong! Your dad is not dead! This is all bull, isn't it?

NICOLAS: No, it's not. Ask Billy Robins. It happened when I was ten.

JENNIFER: He's your friend. He'll back up your lies.

NICOLAS: I'm not lying! And he wouldn't either. He's not that good a friend. Only so-so. Not like you'll be. Besides, I wouldn't lie about something like that.

JENNIFER: You probably do this kinda thing to tons of girls at school. You two try to creep them out together. It's not going to work on me.

NICOLAS: I wouldn't have brought it up if you didn't ask. I don't even know why I told you. Check with the office. My father died five years ago when I was ten years old. He died in a car accident. He was a sales rep. He had to cover a large territory. He had a problem with insomnia.

JENNIFER: Insomnia?

NICOLAS: He didn't get much sleep, and he drove to New York and Vermont a lot. He was on his way back from New York and he fell asleep at the wheel.

JENNIFER: *(Completely skeptical.)* And you predicted it?
NICOLAS: Not exactly. We were watching TV, and I looked up and out the window for a second. In my mind, I saw my dad falling down a hill. I told my mom what I saw in my head. I was really nervous. I told her it was nothing when I saw the look on her face. So stupid of me. But then we got a call. That was it.

JENNIFER: *(Fiercely.)* You better not be lying! Cause that is totally not funny at all.

NICOLAS: Check the obituary section in the *Boston Herald* or the *Globe*. August, five years ago. I'm not lying. I wish to God I were.

JENNIFER: I'm sorry if you're not lying. I don't know anyone who lost a parent. I don't know what to say.

NICOLAS: There's nothing you can say. *(Beat.)* I just feel sorta down sometimes. I felt like he was the only one who totally understood me. Ya know?

JENNIFER: Yeah. It's so sad. I can't even imagine. I'm sorry.

NICOLAS: It did no good to know ahead of time. It really doesn't help things much to be able to predict. It just makes you uncomfortable. I wish some day that my psychic power would completely disappear like the boy in my book. Like maybe they already have. Maybe I was all wrong about that drunk guy dying on the bus.

JENNIFER: I'm gonna call the MTA, believe me. *(Beeping watch.)* Ah! That alarm is so loud. That's my timer. *(Turns it off.)* Three hundred twenty seconds are up and no bus in the—Oh my God! Is that the bus? That's the bus. Just like you said.

(Nicolas shrugs as Jennifer looks strangely back at him.)

JENNIFER: Creepy.

A GOOD SOLID HOME

After a half a dozen attempts at artificial insemination, Robert, 39, and his wife Monica decided to adopt a child. A private agency put the couple in contact with Angie, an 18-year-old girl who felt unable to care for her expected child. Monica and the pregnant mother quickly bonded via the phone and through letters. After some initial conversations over the phone, the couple arranged to adopt Angie's unborn child. Throughout the remainder of Angie's pregnancy, the adoptive parents asked the birth mother if she was certain about her decision. Angie reassured them, and she signed all necessary papers. It has now been two months since Angie gave birth and handed the baby over to the adoptive couple. Everything had been going smoothly until a week ago when Angie suddenly called them. In this scene, Angie travels from New Jersey to Florida to confront the adoptive parents.

ANGIE: Okay, I know I called ya out of the blue, but I've been thinkin' about this for the whole two months.

ROBERT: Ms. Andrews, I don't mean to be abrupt, but I think we should have a lawyer present.

ANGIE: Why? We're friends. Your wife and I wrote to each other like every week before he was born—about real personal stuff too. I'm not here to do no legal thing. I just want to talk about our, our like arrangement. Besides aren't *you* a lawyer or somethin'?

ROBERT: No, I'm an accountant.

ANGIE: Oh. Well, that's kinda similar, isn't it?

ROBERT: Not really. We'll have to discuss this tomorrow, Ms. Andrews. From our previous discussion, we thought you were coming tomorrow. We already made arrangements with our lawyer.