

**COLOURS IN BLACKNESS**  
**A New Life**

**By Tammy Dunning**

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All characters are fictional and therefore do not resemble any living or dead person.

*Special Thanks*

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**CHAPTER ONE**

“Laura? Laura, answer the question please.” Mrs. Grant is summoning me. I must have dozed off. This migraine headache is worse than any of the others. The light hurts my eyes; feels like they're actually burning up from the inside.

Two days now. I've had this stupid migraine for two damn days! It's not so bad right now. At least I stopped throwing up. I didn't eat breakfast this morning, because I was nauseated and was afraid that I'd puke in class. I'd never live that one down, but now I'm starving.

I'm eighteen years old and I've been getting these ridiculous headaches most of my life or at least as far back as I can remember. But lately, they seem to be getting worse.

"I'm sorry Mrs. Grant, I didn't hear the question." What was I going to say to get me out of this; randomly pick an answer, blurt out something that has no relevance to her question and get laughed at by my fellow classmates? I don't think so.

"I asked you, what the capital of Northwest Territories, and what their main industry is? You would have heard me if you weren't napping during the lesson." My teacher is a little snippy today.

Mrs. Grant is a nice teacher. I like her, but she's tough. If you don't pull your own weight, then she'll fail you. But I'm a good student, holding a 3.8 grade point average, so teachers don't usually bother with me.

"Oh. Um, well, Yellowknife is their capital, and I think they mine gold up there." My brain is going to explode. Please don't ask me anything else. I don't want to have to think anymore.

With a smirk on her face, Mrs. Grant adds, "They also mine for coal." She goes on talking about the Northwest Territories, but no matter how hard I try to pay attention to her, I just can't focus. I'll probably never go there anyway.

Please let the bell ring, so I can get the hell out of here. Wait, no, the bell ringing will be like knives stabbing through my brain. But at the same time, I know it will get me closer to relief. School will finally be done for the week. TGIF... Huge!

I just want to go home and hide in my room. I'm going to close my curtains and my door; no outside noise, just the sound of my own breathing.

I want to just curl up in my bed with the blanket over my head. Oh it sounds like Heaven right now. I just have to endure the fifteen minute bus ride from Belle River back to Tecumseh.

I live in Tecumseh, Ontario. That's near the southernmost tip of Canada; just across the "crick" from Detroit, Michigan. That's what a lot of the old timers say, 'just across the crick'.

Tecumseh used to be a small town, according to my mom who's lived here since she was nine years old. Now it's more like a city, even though everyone still calls it a town.

The biggest news of the week is when someone gets their car broken into. Needless to say, it's still safe to walk down the street alone at night.

There's always someone walking their dog here, even in a snowstorm. They just put a goofy sweater on him, and sometimes even booties. You can almost see the humiliation on the dogs face as he saunters by.

Living here isn't so bad... boring... definitely. At least we have a huge variety when it comes to the weather. Winter snowstorms where the temp drops to about -20F (-28C) or worse, and summer heat waves of up around 110F (43C) degrees or more. It varies. It's the humidity that'll kill you.

I awaken to the sounds of birds outside my window. Some robins decided to nest in my window box that is usually full of flowers. Of course I couldn't plant flowers after they had created a nest in there. What do I do, throw it over the edge and watch their eggs splatter on the cement below? I'm not that cruel.

Besides, I've enjoyed watching them huddle over the eggs when it was raining. It's gross when they first hatch. They look like ugly little veiny things.

I've been watching them and I never realized how fast they grow from simple little eggs to beautiful robins. They're getting their adult feathers already. They've lost most of their down feathers, which are soft as a cotton ball, by the way.

Pretty soon I'll be watching them fly from the nest. Well hopefully they'll fly and not splatter. I think I'd be pretty upset if they fell.

Note to self: Be sure to plant seeds in the box before they come to roost next year so that flowers will grow around the nest. It'll be pretty.

My headache isn't so bad this morning, but my eyes are still sensitive to the early afternoon light. Sleeping in until 11:00 is magnificent. There's nothing like knowing that you have absolutely nothing to do, so you can sleep for as long as you want.

I finally pull myself out of bed and make my way down to the kitchen. Mom's sitting in the front room watching TV and playing games on her laptop. Probably some dumb 'shoot the bubbles' thing. She seems to like those pointless types of games.

Dad's out in the garage building something. I can hear his table saw wailing away as it chews its way through some poor innocent piece of wood. I wonder what he's making.

His work always looks awesome, but I can't figure out why he doesn't just go out and buy the stuff instead of making it himself. That sounds so much easier to me. He says that it gives him a sense of pride for a job well done, and that I should try it some time.

Ah, the kitchen... breakfast. I know we have my favorite cereal because I put it away when we sorted the groceries last night.

The cereal tastes so good, the milk is super cold.

Mom comes strolling into the kitchen with her half empty mug, heading straight to the coffee pot to get a refill. "Good morning, baby girl! How'd you sleep?"

"I think I might have slipped into a coma, not just slept. I had some really bizarre dreams." I mumbled as I shoved more cereal in my mouth.

It's true... I don't remember having any dreams that actually made any sense. Just flashes of colours, with bubbles floating around. I could almost see people and other odd pictures in the bubbles. Nothing made any sense... some really crazy stuff. Nothing like I've ever dreamed before.

"So how's the headache?" Mom sips her coffee and groans because she burnt her lip again. It's a common occurrence.

"Not too bad." A strange feeling waves through my head, almost as though I'm losing control, or getting farther away from my physical self. My arms start tingling. The bowl of cereal slips from my grasp and smashes on the floor in what seems like slow motion. I can't move my legs.

Pain... Sheer utter agony. My head is going to explode!

Blackness... I... Can't... See...

Flashes of bright colours flicker and smear together. It's like a kaleidoscope, only the multitude of shades blur into each other creating colours that I've never seen before.

I feel like I'm floating... quietly, softly while these colours engulf me. When I move my hand back and forth, the colours blend together leaving a trail of swirls and waves.

I can't help but laugh. This is so amusing. I must be dreaming. My weightlessness is something that I've never felt before. It's almost like I'm swimming through the beautiful hues,

only I won't drown if I stop moving. I just float in zero gravity amongst blushes of reds, blues, greens, yellows and other colours, that as of yet, have no names. They are unearthly.

A bubble starts to form so far away and slowly coming closer. There's motion inside the bubble; like a movie playing. I can't quite make it out.

This is so much like the dream I had last night. Am I dreaming? I wasn't asleep when this started, so I must be hallucinating. But why? Maybe it's because of the migraine.

So where am I? What's happening to me? I'm not scared, not panicking. I feel nothing but calmness. No migraine pain.

In the bubble there's an airplane at an airport. Why am I dreaming about a plane, if I am actually even dreaming? If so, this is a really bizarre one. A plane would be the farthest thing from my mind. I've never even been on one.

It's like I've floated right into the bubble. I can see the whole picture now. Everything's so sharp, like it's playing in HD or something better. The 747 is driving down the runway getting ready to take off. The wheels lift from the ground and start to fold up so they can hide away into the underbelly.

A blinding flash... Fire in the engines... The plane is going down. I should be horrified, but I have no real emotion, I'm numb. Pardon the pun, but I feel like my emotions are on autopilot. It is only a dream after all.

In a huge ball of fire, the plane slams into the ground. It rips apart as it skids and drags on the cement. While it's flipping, it's tossing pieces, scattering them all over the runway and surrounding field. I look closer at the flying debris. Some of the pieces aren't fragments of the plane, they're people, and some of them are on fire.

In an instant I'm being pulled backwards. Not pulled, so much as sucked. As my body flies backwards through the colours, a trail is left in my wake, swirling with beautiful pastels. The bubble is getting farther and farther away. Again I float in blackness...

I gasp for a breath of air, sucking it deeply into my lungs. I open my eyes to see my mom leaning over me with a look of panic on her face. Why am I looking up at the ceiling and lying on the kitchen floor? How the hell did I get here?

"OhmyGod! Laura, are you ok?" Even though she's panicking, my mom is trying to keep her voice as calm as possible. It's a mom thing.

"A plane crashed." I have no idea why that's the first thing that fly's out of my mouth. I should be asking 'What happened?' or 'Why am I on the floor?' things like that.

"What?" Mom's look of panic shifts into a look of utter confusion. She's looking at me like I've lost my mind.

"A plane... crashed. I saw it in the bubble. It was bad, really bad. People... scattered all over the runway. Why did I dream that? Was I dreaming? What happened anyway?" Ok so now I'm starting to panic a little.

"I... I don't know." There's a dumbfounded look on mom's face. "You just dropped your bowl then slumped backwards onto the floor. Your eyes were fluttering and it was like you weren't here. It lasted only about 10 seconds then you woke up. You said you saw a plane crash?" Mom sits back on her legs and shakes her head. "That migraine pain must have really put your brain in a tizzy."

A tizzy? I've grown up hearing that word. "Yeah, the pain got so bad; just before everything went black. That's probably why I passed out... pain." I've never passed out before, like ever. It's weird, and I don't want it to happen again. The dreams that go along with it are way too freaky. "I'm ok, just let me up."

"Wait!" Mom puts her hand down on my shoulder and looks at my eyes. I mean, she looks 'at' my eyes as if she's studying them. "Your eyes are so red. Why are your eyes like that? They're... well they look like you would if you hadn't slept in a month. Do they hurt?"

I sit up and touch my eyelids. "What? Um, yeah, they hurt a little. They feel heavy, kind of like when I'm super tired. They're red?!"

"You should go lay back down in your room for a bit, just in case it happens again. I'll bring you some more cereal and a cold pack for your eyes. I'll keep checking in on you from time to time. Do you think you should see a doctor?" I shake my head to say 'no'. Mom turns me in the direction of the hallway and gives me a gentle shove towards my room. "A plane? Really?"

I yell down the hall when I'm almost to my room. "No more cereal, I'm kind of nauseated now." How can I eat after watching all those people die? I didn't feel any emotion when I saw it happen, but I'm fighting back tears now. It was horrible. If I never see that again it'll be too soon.

The mirror confirms that my eyes are indeed red, very red. I resemble a person with a hangover. I flip on my TV and change my milk soaked pajama pants, then flop out on my bed. I can't get the scene to stop playing over and over in my head. Why would I see a plane crash? It's not like I'm fascinated with traumatic events. It just seemed so real. I have to put it out of my mind.

## *CHAPTER TWO*

6:00 pm? Oh my God, I fell asleep! I bounce up from my bed and strip off my pajamas. I hop across my room because my pants are stuck on my one ankle. I quickly pull on my favorite old purple sweatshirt and my favorite pair of jeans that I threw over my computer chair when I took them off yesterday.

I am supposed to be at Andrea's house right now. I grab my purse, sling it over my shoulder, and sprint down the hall, literally.

"Mom, I got to go. I'm supposed to be at Andrea's. We're going out to dinner with the crew. Bye." At this moment I'm thankful that my shoes are already tied loosely, so I can just slide my feet into them, not wasting a single moment.

"Wait!" Mom, almost tripping over herself, runs to the door to stop me before I leave. "How are you feeling? Do you really think you should be driving right now? I mean, what if it happens again?"

"No, I'm fine! If I didn't feel good, I wouldn't drive." Actually, I hadn't realized until now that I actually do feel better than I've felt in days. My headache is completely gone. I stop dead in my tracks and look at my mom. "My migraine is gone, and I feel amazing... I really do. Don't worry. I love you. Bye."

I pull up to Andrea's house and before I can put the car in park, she's opening the door and hopping in. Its times like these that I wish my car had auto door locks. That would be funny to watch her glare at me through the window especially if it was raining.

Andrea is a little upset that I'm slightly late, and she's not shy about letting me know it. "Where have you been? I tried to call you, but you didn't answer. I was starting to think that you

were avoiding me." She looks over at me, probably ready to give me more of an attitude. "Holy Shit! What happened to your eyes?"

I was hoping my reddish eyes weren't as obvious as they were earlier, but I'm not that lucky. They must be pretty bad if she can see them even though there's hardly any light in the car. "Um, it's nothing, really. I had a headache incident. I'm fine."

Andrea seems to accept my answer and doesn't press for more information. She just leers at me with a questioning look. "I thought maybe you were trying out a new make-up look and it didn't go well or something. So what, you don't believe in using make-up to cover that up? It's called concealer. You should try it some time." She pauses for a quick moment then changes the subject. "Ok, so why didn't you answer my calls?"

I'm not a big make-up person. Wearing concealer makes me feel like I'm wearing a mask, and I don't like it, unless it's Halloween or something. I usually only put on a little mascara and eyeliner, if anything. Sometimes I wear tinted lip gloss if my lips are dry.

"Oh yeah, I forgot, my phone is in my purse on vibrate. Sorry. I didn't feel very good today, and I fell back to sleep." I really don't want to get into explaining the whole incident while I'm driving. Besides, how can I explain the plane crash dream without sounding like a freak or something?

Andrea doesn't say anything else about it. She just starts rambling on about everything else. That girl can talk. I'm too busy thinking about the plane wreck. I can't get it out of my head. All I have to do is fill in the odd 'really?' or 'oh yeah?' or just nod my head, and she'll keep right on talking.

She is very pretty. Andrea has auburn hair that seems to capture the light as it flows in a soft wave down to her mid-back. Her eyes are so deep brown that when lined in black, can make a grown man weak in the knees. She's taller than me by about 4", but most people are taller than me; I'm only 5'2" tall. Yup, I'm short!

Andrea has been my best friend for most of our lives. When a kid kicked me, then stole my viewfinder in kindergarten, she gave me her dolly. We've been joined at the hip ever since.

We arrive at the restaurant only about ten minutes late. As soon as Brian notices me walking up to our usual table, he stares with a disgusted look on his face. "What happened to your eyes? You look awful!" His face is crinkled up making him look like he smells something bad. So it is really noticeable.

Ronny and Jill both stare at me too with pretty much the same expression. Neither of them says anything, but they do whisper amongst themselves. Ronny now looks concerned, but Jill's look has changed to her "airhead" look. That is typically how her face looks anyway.

Nobody has ordered their food yet, so we really aren't late. Andrea and I sit down just as the waitress approaches the table. I'm glad I already know what I want. It's the same as always, a burger and fries.

Brian is sitting across the table. He's looking at me with his very sexy little smirk. "I'm sorry that I reacted that way, you don't look that bad. You do look worse than you did earlier today. Man, I thought you were at death's door the way your face was so pale, but now... wow! I wish you didn't have to suffer those damn migraines. At least the blue in your eyes is really pretty surrounded by all that redness." He's trying to suck up to me.

He's trying to make me feel better. Either that or he's desperately trying to make up for being so freaked out in the first place. Brian has never been one for change, and my red eyes are definitely a change to how I usually look.

I think Brian is hot. His black hair is cut into short spikes, and his eyes are the brightest blue that I have ever seen. He's about 6' tall and built strong. He's into mixed martial arts so he's very athletic and tanned. All the boy has to do is to think about the sun and he tans! Pisses me off; I'm a "Casper" all the way.

His GPA is 4.0, which is another reason that I really like him. Stupid guys don't do it for me. But his best feature is his lips. They're not big and puffy, nor are they skinny, but they sure are soft and warm. I should know, we've made out on a few occasions, but it hasn't gone much past the kissing part.

It's not like we're actually dating, so nobody knows what to call us. Everyone thinks we should put a title on our relationship. I like to think we are just really good friends with perks.

We've never had sex, although, if I were considering having sex, he'd probably be the one. I don't know, maybe. I'm not sure why I'm holding off on it. I just believe that when I'm ready, I'll know without any doubt.

"Thanks... I think. I slept until 11:00 today. It's been a really long time since I've been able to sleep in that long. After that passing out thing happened, I fell back to sleep for about six more hours. Migraine's gone, and I feel great!" I try to slide in the passing out part really quick hoping that nobody will pick up on it, so that later on I can still say that indeed I did tell them.

"You passed out? Like on the floor, like seeing little birdies flying around your head, kind of passed out?" Ronny asks me so quickly that each word almost blends into the next. He talks so fast.

Ronny is, well, kind of nerdy. He's about 5'5" and as thin as a rail. He hasn't found his man voice yet, and the other guys tease him about it. He's that guy who cares about everyone, and would never hurt a fly.

He's had a huge crush on Andrea since the fifth grade. She doesn't even notice him as boyfriend material, which is sad. He'd be good for her. Andrea likes the jocks.

I think her and Ronnie would make a good couple. She could talk continuously, and he would never interrupt her. But if he had to, he could get a whole paragraph said before she was finished taking a breath, that way she'd never miss a beat.

"Um, well," how do I explain what happened without sounding crazy? About the plane I mean. "I kind of passed out on the kitchen floor today."

"OhmyGod, Laura! You didn't tell me!" Andrea is concerned, but I can tell she's also upset that I didn't tell her first.

"Um, yeah, well, it's no big deal really. The weirdest part is the dream I had when I was 'unconscious'." Everyone's staring at me with wide eyes and hanging open mouths.

I continue on, trying to tell the story as short and sweet as possible. "It was nothing like a dream. I saw an airplane crash. People were being thrown from the plane as it flipped and flopped and ripped open. And, it burst into flames on the runway. I wasn't scared. The whole thing was... bizarre."

Everyone is still staring at me. Nobody is saying anything, which is totally out of character for Andrea. I'm so uncomfortable. I hate being the center of attention. Are they waiting for me to say something else? Thankfully the waitress brings our food. Still, nobody's talking.

After a few bites, Jill breaks the uncomfortable silence. "Well, thankfully you're ok. The dream was probably some unconscious, subconscious brain, dream thing. Don't worry about it." She's trying to make me feel better. "Now that I'm getting use to your eyes, I think they're pretty." She's always been a little strange.

“Well if it happens again, I really think you should go see your doctor. Maybe you need a CT scan or something. You could have a tumor.” Ronny is genuinely concerned, but I wish everyone would just drop it.

“A CT Scan... seriously? That's more for bones, I think. If it were a tumor, I think they'd have better luck using an MRI machine.” Andrea pulls everyone's attention away from me as she starts into one of her endless speeches. I can finally eat in peace.

My eyes meet Brian's ocean blue eyes, “Are you ok? Like, really ok? That 'dream' must have really freaked you out. I mean, how could it not?”

“No, that's what was strange. At the time, I felt nothing. I wasn't scared while watching the plane crash at all. I was just pushed into the bubble, and it played out. I know it's really weird. Eat before your food gets cold.” Lucky for me the focus of conversation changes to something else.

By the time I get home, the evening news is just ending. My mother is standing in the living room with the remote in her hand and a blank look on her face. She's staring at the muted TV.

“Mom, what's the matter? Are you feeling ok?” I'm half expecting her to fall down. She looks rather weak in the knees. I turn to grab the phone ready to call 911 if she hits the floor and dies or something.

Barely a whisper and without any emotion, my mother says. “A plane crashed. Everyone died.”

OhmyGod! I saw it happen... before it happened. Everyone died. They flew out of the plane; I saw it. I can actually feel the blood draining out of my face. “Coincidence... was it the same as my dream? On take-off, did it roll and burst into flames?”

She turned to look at me, and with a single hesitant nod of her head, my whole world changed. Nothing will ever be the same from this moment on.

If I were able to look ahead and see what my future will be like, how things will be so different from what I have planned for my life, to know of the drama and deceit that will occur... I would never have believe it.

I run to my room and flick on my TV, hoping to catch anything on the news about it. The all-news station will have something about it. I just want to see if there is a video of the crash, so I can compare it to what I saw in my dream. Speaking to no one but myself, I utter, “It's just a coincidence, that's all.”

The reporter is announcing that 122 people died. Then I see it, a blurry image of a plane skidding out, rolling over, ripping apart, and finally, the flaming engine erupting in a huge ball of orange flame. It's playing repetitively like the tape is on a loop. It's exactly what I saw. The only difference is that my view was so much clearer. I could see all the people. In this video I can't.

What's happening to me? Have I somehow become a prophetic person? How? Usually after people have some odd accident where they bump their heads a certain way they become psychic. At least that's what they claim. But I didn't bump my head. Maybe I did when I fell.

Snapping me out of my fog and making me jump, literally, my phone vibrates and the theme song for Andrea's favorite TV show fills the silence. She must be calling because she's seen the news too.

Before I can even say hello, she starts rambling. “OhmyGod! You must be freakin' out! Holy shit! Did you see the news? They keep showing this plane crash that happened somewhere in the States. Is it like you saw in your vision?” Andrea is obviously as freaked out as I am. She's actually speaking faster than normal, which I didn't think was actually possible.

“Um, yeah... it's exactly how I saw it; identical. It's like that exact tape was playing in my dream, only my view of it was perfectly clear.” She must think I'm nuts. I think I've gone nuts.

“Ok, so now you see visions?! OhmyGod... everyone is going to think you are some psychic, prophetic girl who can see shit before it occurs. Do you realize that you could have maybe stopped that from happening? I mean, if you knew, like, what the planes number was or whatever. You saw it clearer right, so like, did you see the numbers on the plane?” Andrea said all that without even taking one breath.

“Um, I didn't really think about it at the time.” She's right; maybe I could have prevented it somehow. I shut my phone off after talking to Andrea. I just don't feel like talking to anyone else right now.

### *CHAPTER THREE*

My whole Saturday is spent answering my phone and the text messages that I'm flooded with. Finally, around 3:00 in the afternoon, I've had enough and shut off my phone. I swear that everyone in my school knows what happened. Great! They're all going to think I'm some kind of freak.

“Laura, can you come here please?” My mom's familiar voice puts an instant calm over me. She's calling from the kitchen.

Dad's leaning against the counter with his arms crossed over his chest. He isn't smiling... he looks sad.

There are two strange people in our kitchen sitting at the table with half-filled cups of coffee in front of them. Including my mom, all three of them are sitting rather stiff and looking at me. Mom's eyes are red and swollen like she's been crying, a lot.

“What's going on?” I think somebody died.

The woman speaks up first. “Hi, my name is Ginger Adams and this is Bradley Rathem. Would you please come and sit with us? We would like to discuss something with you.” Her arm extends to the empty chair that she wishes I'll sit in. What else can I do but oblige her. “Curiosity killed the cat”, as people always say.

Ginger Adams doesn't look like a ginger at all. Her gorgeous hair is long and black as coal, not red like I picture someone who carry's the name Ginger. Her eyes are a deep green and kind. For a middle-age woman she's still quite pretty.

She speaks in a soft, gentle tone. “We are here because we've been informed that you had a vision last night, which came true shortly after. You must be very confused and scared. I assure you that there is no need to fear your gift. You can learn to control it and be able to use it for good things. You can help people, stop tragedies from happening for instance.”

Is she for real? Ok, so like, I just had this 'vision' last night... how could they have possibly found out about this already? Damn, news travels fast in this town. “Ok, um, I'm not really scared, a little confused, yeah, maybe. Actually, after what you just said, I'm even more confused. Are you here to, like, fix me or something?” Yeah, 'fix me', that sounds stupid, I'm not broken!

The man introduced as Bradley Rathem cuts in with his horribly raspy voice. “No dear, we aren't going to fix you,++++ but we can help you learn how to use your gift properly. If you

were to come to Salvation Center, we have doctors and teachers that are more than willing to guide you through the learning process. There are other teenagers there that also share your position with having an ability that they've also acquired. You could live in the dorm with other girls and boys that are much like yourself."

Ginger almost cuts him off. "Wouldn't it be great to be around others just like you?" She pauses for a moment. "I'm sure you must know that what happened to you last night will happen again, soon. If you don't learn how to control your gift, it will consume you. Your migraines will continue to worsen. Most of your friends will alienate you. They won't understand about the visions, so they will fear you and avoid you. We see it all the time."

"My friends would never alienate me." Would they? No! They wouldn't. "So, this is going to happen again? Why? Is there a pill I can take to make it never happen again? If so, bring it on so I can stay home."

Bradley says, "Laura, it will indeed happen many more times throughout your life. It will never stop. Different visions of course, not that same one. If you don't gain control of them, they will consume you. And if there were a pill to stop the visions, I would consider giving it to you." He smiles at me, but it seems like a forced smile, not a real one.

Up until now my mom has been quiet as a mouse. "I think it's best for you to go to Salvation Center. They can help you get through this... thing. I don't want you to leave home, but I want you to learn how to manage this. Please say you'll go." Tears are quietly streaming down her face.

"When do I go? Can I at least bring my stuff?" OhmyGod, I can't believe I'm actually considering this. I don't want this to happen anymore but if I can control it, I can stop it and get back to my life as I know it... right?

"You may bring your things with you. You can have a room to yourself if one's available, but some of our students prefer to share a room. It will be your choice." Ginger seems so nice, like a mother almost.

I have a thousand questions. Pick one... "How long do I have to stay there? Will I be able to still come home and visit my friends, on like, weekends or something?" Ok, so that's more than one question.

Bradley's husky voice reminds me of an old cowboy who smokes harsh cigarettes. "Of course you will. Most of our students have to stay on campus until they've acquired the ability to control their gift. But you are allowed to leave after you have total control. With your gift, you tend to lose your mental awareness. What would happen if a vision came while you were walking across the street or driving a car? For your safety, we prefer you to stay on campus."

Ginger says, "You can come with us now, or later tonight. It'd be best if you didn't waste time. Another vision could appear at any moment. The sooner we help you control them, the better. I'm sure you don't want that pain back. We can help with that too. Without us, the pain will worsen each time a vision is about to appear, and the visions will increase in frequency."

How does she know all this? How does she know about the pain? Maybe she's right. Maybe it will be better for me. I should probably go. It's not like I can't leave and come home if I don't like it there, right?

"Why can't my mom or dad drive me in later? It'll give me time to pack, and you won't have to sit here and wait for me. I mean, what's the hurry?"

Bradley says, "Well Laura, it's been our experience that the stress and anxieties of a long good-bye tend to bring on another episode. If the child packs quickly and leaves soon afterward, an attack is less likely."

Ginger adds, “Laura, if you forget to pack something, your parents can bring it to you another day. If it’s important we’ll send someone back for it.” Her facial expression is so soft and comforting.

I can't believe I'm going to do this, “Ok, yeah, I'll come. Can I bring my cell phone, laptop and all that stuff? I want to stay in contact with my friends.” This is happening so fast; I can't think. Everything that I want to bring, have to bring, is running through my mind at warp speed. I'm bound to forget something.

Raspy voice, “Absolutely. You may bring whatever you'd like. We do have Wi-Fi, and cell phones are permitted during your off time. During learning sessions they are not.”

Mom and I start walking to my room, perhaps the last time for a long while. With a cracking voice filled with sadness, my mom tries to talk. “I'll help you pack if you'd like. I'll get my suitcases.”

She starts to walk through the doorway leading to her bedroom, but stops and turns around. “I love you. You know that right? This will be good for you... and when you're in control of all this, you'll be back home. Everything’s going to be ok. It's for the best.” Tears are still streaming down her cheeks, even though she’s doing her best impression of a smile.

Who is she trying to convince; me or herself? She's right though; I don't want that pain to come back and not know what to do and worse yet, put my mom through seeing me like that again. When they fix me, I can come home and voila, back to my life, like I didn't skip a beat... right?

Note to self: Study, learn, get better fast!

Dad is helping Mr. Rathem put my bags in the back of their van while Ginger is talking to my mom trying to comfort her with her words. My mom has stops crying. I don't think it's because she wants to, I think she just ran out of tears.

Mr. Rathem and Ms. Adams wait patiently in the van until I kiss and hug my mom. She holds onto me for so long. I know I'm going to miss her and she, me. “I'll email you, Mom, a lot, every single day if I can. I promise. Dad, I love you.”

“Every day, if you can. I love you.” Mom's voice is so soft.

I squeeze my dad and quickly, before I can change my mind, step up into the van and shut the door.

I hadn't realized it until I buckle my seat belt and we're driving to Salvation Center that my face is drenched with tears.

## *CHAPTER FOUR*

I've driven by Salvation Center before and seen the building, but right now, standing in front of it; it looks so much bigger than I ever thought it was. I take a deep breath and follow Ginger and Bradley in through the main doors.

“Laura, this is one of our orderlies, Laden Harris. He's been with us for about five years now.” Ginger introduces me to one of the hottest guys I have ever seen in my whole life, including in magazines and on television.

I am totally in awe of him. I'm sure my mouth must be hanging open, but I just can't help it. I feel like I know him when I look into his eyes. Maybe it just because he's so gorgeous.

Why are we staring at each other? Neither one of us is looking away. He's so... I don't know if there's a word to describe his perfection. Look away Laura, you're acting like an idiotic drooling teenager.

Laden speaks without averting his eyes from mine. "Actually, it's been eight years now, and I'm almost graduated from nursing school, so I won't be an orderly for much longer." Laden sticks his hand out for me to shake, but all I can picture myself doing is jumping on him, wrapping my legs around him and making out with him.

But I decide to settle with shaking his hand and nodding my head. If I try to speak right now, I'm pretty sure nothing will come out, or I'll say something really stupid. The smartest thing to do is just shut up.

I can't seem to look away from his blue eyes. I'm still staring. He's looked away several times but his gaze keeps coming back to me. Maybe that's just because I'm acting like a hormone-crazed teenager in lust. My face must be totally red... I can feel the heat. I blush at even the slightest embarrassment. I hate that about myself.

Laden gives me this hot little sexy crooked smile, and raises his eyebrows almost as though he knows what I'm thinking. Yup, my face is getting hotter; lovely.

Through a slight laugh, Laden says, "Come on, I'll take you to your room. You're going to have to stay in a single room right now, because we just don't have a roommate for you yet. Don't fret, we always have new people coming in, or graduated people leaving, so unless you like being alone, we'll double you up as soon as we can."

Laden picks up my super heavy, over-loaded suitcase like it weighs nothing. He talks while he's leading me down the hallway and around the corner toward the elevators.

His dirty blonde hair hangs in soft careless curls, about 4" long. It lifts and bounces when he spins around, flopping casually back into the perfect style for him... messy. I just want to run my fingers through it, and tangle the strands in my grasp. Snap out of it!

I open my mouth to speak, hoping a voice comes out, and that I don't say something dumb. "Um, no, a single room is great. I like being alone." I'm so thankful that I have sound, even if it's a little shaky. "What do you mean by graduated? Is this place like high school or something? I was under the impression that it's a hospital."

Stepping into the elevator, Laden pushes the third floor button. "Something like that. You'll find the classes here are definitely not like regular high school. Most of the time classes usually only run for a few hours a day. You'll do one-on-one with counselors too. Each person has their own type of ability, and we're here to help you discover everything about yours. Here you're looked at as an individual; that's definitely not like high school, huh? It seems, so far, that nobody's had the exact same talents as you have, at least not quite as accurate. I mean, we've had, and still do have Seers, but nothing as advanced as you. I suppose you'll be like a test subject, but most of the kids here are, and don't seem to mind it. You'll like it here, most do. The only real downfall here is that sometimes there are classes on the weekends too."

"You say that I'm advanced. What do you mean by that?" I ask the sumptuous man.

"You're not a freak or anything. You just saw every detail exactly as it happened. Most don't... at least not with their first vision." His voice echoes through the elevator, and ripples through me.

The doors open, and we exit. Laden's leading me to my room. His ass is so tight. Quit looking! I ask, "So how many students live here?"

Laden says, "Well, I think we have about forty kids. Some have gone; moved on to different places. Yeah, I'd say around forty, forty-five. I'm not sure because I only care for the one wing; your wing actually. So I'll get to know you better." He pauses for a moment, stops walking, and stares at my face. "Have we met before? You just seem really familiar to me."

He feels it too? Wow, so it isn't just me. "Um, it does feel like that, but I'm fairly sure that I'd remember you. I mean, meeting you... remember meeting you." Great Laura, you do sound like a drooling teenager... lovely.

With a gentle smile, he leads me down a hallway that doesn't look anything like a hospital corridor. There's carpet on the floor; nice carpet, plush and soft. The walls are painted in soft beige with really nice pictures hung all over the place. Plants sit on end tables, sucking up the rays that float through the windows. It's an environment that's perfect for reading. It's quiet here, like really quiet. It's not overly bright like most hospitals, either.

Note to self: Come here to read or study.

"Once we get you settled, I can take you down to the mess hall for some dinner. I'll introduce you to your neighbor that lives across the hall from you. She's really nice. You probably haven't eaten yet, right?" Laden opens the door to room #312, leans in flips on the light then backs up to allow me to enter first. "Welcome to your new abode. I think you'll have everything you need here. If not, let me know, and I'll do my best to get it for you. You have your own bathroom; huge bonus."

The room is nice, bigger than mine at home. The walls are painted in a soft blue. The bed sits between two nightstands; one has a lock with a key sticking out of it. The white bedspread is thick and fluffy with tiny blue flowers on it. A big flat-screen TV hangs on the wall, with shelving on either side of it. There's a tiny little fridge that sits on one of the shelves.

Against the wall, opposite my new bed, sits a tall dresser. A walk-in closet is right at the entrance, hidden behind two sliding mirror doors that go from the floor to the ceiling.

The bathroom is a nice size, and it has everything I'll need; a sink and vanity with another huge mirror, a toilet obviously, a big stand-up shower with etched glass doors that would hide my privates if anyone were to walk in. I hope that never happens. I shudder at the thought. Ok, I think I might like it here after all.

Laden opens the curtains to a huge window, so I walk over to look out. It overlooks an amazing courtyard filled with flowers and shrubs. People are sitting outside on cement benches with cement tables. The grass is greener than any grass I've ever seen around here, especially this time of the year, fall. Usually it's brown and has not yet recovered from the blazing heat of the summer. All of this is surrounded by one building with huge windows like mine, but they reflect on the outside like mirrors do.

"Ok, I'll just leave your suitcase here on your bed and you can unpack after we get something in your belly." I'd love it if he could put the suitcase on the floor and put me on the bed, with him! Snap out of it! Great, I'm blushing again.

We arrive at what appears to be more like a restaurant than a mess hall. Laden shows me where I go to get my food and tells me the best thing ever; the food is free here! I love food.

Note to self: Don't pig out, stay healthy!

What a spread. It's an Italian theme tonight, and there's so much pasta. I really think that I will like it here. Laden also tells me that they switch it up; every night there's a different theme. My stomach is growling now.

After I fill a plate with food and grab a papaya juice, Laden leads me over to a table of kids about my age. "Hello everyone, I'd like to introduce you to our newest addition, Laura Sadie. Laura, this is Tara Remi, Reilly Jarlen, Todd Dunkin, Jessy Bell and Sherri Harper. Tara, Laura is your new neighbor right across the hall from you. Maybe you could help her get settled in."

"Yeah, no problem. Nice to meet you Laura. Come sit. By looking at your eyes, I can tell that you're a Seer. All new Seers come in with red eyes. You'll learn how to control that." Tara points to the empty chair next to hers, and she puts her hand out for me to shake it. I put my plate down and shake her hand, then Reilly's, Todd's and Jessy's. I put my hand out towards Sherri, and she grabs my hand and shakes it quickly. Her hand feels like its vibrating or something. I jump and let go.

Jessy smiles and giggles, "Got you, did she? Don't worry about it. Sherri's ability is to read people when she touches them. She can see what you're thinking and feeling, and your history. She tries to avoid touching people as much as possible because she hasn't learned how to shut her ability off yet."

Note to self: Don't touch Sherri.

Sherri is really pretty. Long dark brown hair that has an almost out-of-control curl to it, but it suits her. Her eyes look black as oil. Her lips are full, pouty, and she has the smoothest, silkiest skin. She has an average build, perhaps athletic.

"Sorry, I'm sort of new here too, and he's right, I can't shut it off. I didn't mean to read you, but since I did, you don't have to fear us. We're the best group of kids here when it comes to being friendly. Well, most of us, Reilly's not always friendly." Sherri smirks over at Reilly.

The best way to describe Reilly is to say he's pretty much an average looking guy. His hair is dark brown, along with his eyes. He doesn't look to be too tall, maybe 5'7", and kind of chubby.

Reilly leers at Sherri, looks up at me and smiles cocky-like. "It's nice to meet you." And immediately goes right back to eating.

Note to self: Stay out of Reilly's way.

"Reilly's a Controller, which just means that he can put ideas into your head without you even knowing it. Like, he can make you throw your fork at Sherri if he wanted to. But he won't, right Reilly?!" Tara looks over at Reilly, who doesn't even bother to look up from his spaghetti.

Tara continues the in-depth introductions. "Todd can control your body temperature, your moods, that kind of stuff. He's a Controller as well, but his ability is a little different from Reilly's."

Suddenly my body gets really hot. I look at Todd. He's smiling a huge smile and winks at me.

I ask Todd, "Is that you doing that?"

He replies, "It's all me babe." He must be taking back the hot feeling, because I'm getting back to normal.

Todd looks like he stepped out of a magazine. Black hair cut short, stunning blue eyes, about 5'10", thin. Oh, and did I mention really gorgeous?!

Note to self: He's hot, way out of my league.

“Watch out for Todd. Don't trust your emotions when you're around him, he likes to play with them. We're not supposed to use our talents on each other, but he does it all the time. If he uses them on you, just tell me and I'll deal with it.” Tara's giving me fair warning. She rolls her eyes.

Jessy waves his arm in the air and says, “I'm a Holder. Basically I hold time. Actually, I speed up, so time seems to hold still. At least that's what we think. They're still studying me. But that's basically why I'm here.”

Jessy seems normal. He looks like a surfer kid with his blonde hair and green eyes that look like they're always laughing. He's built average, athletic, about 6' tall.

“I'm a Drifter, which simply means that I can totally leave my body and go places. It's kind of fun.” Tara takes a bite of her garlic bread and goes on to explain. “The farthest I've gone was about a kilometer. I don't like to go that far, because my spirit is pulled all that way back into my body so fast that I get a vertigo sensation, and usually puke. But that's not really dinner conversation is it?”

Pulling apart his bun, Todd asks me, “So what is it that you're gifted with exactly?”

Everyone stops eating and looks at me. They sure are a curious bunch. I can feel my face getting red again.

I'm not sure how to explain it. “Um, well, I had a migraine and I saw something, like a movie in my head, and then it came true. I don't know if you know anything about the plane crash that recently occurred, but I saw it before it happened. The fuzzy video shown on the news is exactly how I saw it happen; only my version of it was crystal clear. It's only happened once.” I feel so out of place.

Sherri shudders and says, “Yeah, I saw it when I touched you. Definitely; a graphic scene that I hope to never see again.” She looks up at me and smiles. “But you're good people, I saw that too.”

Everybody goes on chatting about me, my vision and the crash itself. I'm just glad the attention is more or less off me, and I can eat in peace.

## *CHAPTER FIVE*

I actually had a great night's sleep. This bed has a super comfy pillow-top mattress. And I had no migraine what-so-ever. It can't get any better than that. Except that I already miss my mom and dad.

After the fog of sleep dissipates, I try to remember what woke me up in the first place. I think that someone knocked at my door. I flip back my covers, hop out of bed, and walk over to open the door.

Nobody's there. I look both ways down the hall, and still, nobody. Just then Tara, from across the hall, opens her door.

“G'morning.” She says through a yawn. “How'd you sleep?” She stretches her arms up high over her head, then lets them fall limply down to her sides.

“Awesome, actually. These beds must have magical powers, because for the first time in three days, I didn't have any pain in my head when I woke up.” I pause for a second, and then ask her, “Do you know if someone knocked on my door or did I just imagine that?”

“Oh, every morning around 7:00 someone will knock at your door; just two knocks, to wake you up in case you're not up already. You'll get used to it. Sometimes they knock to let you know you have paperwork or mail or something. They put it in your slot beside your door. You have something there. It's probably your schedule, if you didn't get one already.” Tara, still yawning and stretching, waves to me. “I'll come pick you up in an hour, and we can go get some breakfast.”

I nod to her, bring my paperwork into my room, take an orange juice from my little fridge and sit back down on my bed. It's my schedule, a list of the 'House Rules of Conduct', and a map of the school. Well, I have English, Human Behavioral Science, Concentration Class... wait a minute, what the hell is Concentration Class? “What the hell did I get myself into?” I leave the papers on my bed and head to my bathroom for a shower. I'll read the rest of the schedule later.

The breakfast spread is amazing. They even have my favorite cereal in a cute little box. We sit at the same table, with the same people that I met last night. Not much conversation to be had this morning. Everyone sleepily stares down at their food, yawning and rubbing their eyes through most of the meal. Once in a while someone will look up and smile at me if we meet eyes.

Tara reads over my schedule and shows me on the map where all the rooms are that I have to go to. She even explains to me that basically Concentration Class is about how to control your emotions and your anxiety levels. Ok, so now I know, sort of.

She says that no matter what grade you were in at your regular high school, it doesn't change what we have to learn here. Basically, since I was in grade 12 in my high school, I still have to start out as a beginner in most of my studies.

Tara also tells me that there aren't a lot of kids here, so they put beginner kids in with the experienced kids, but they study their subject at different levels.

We empty our trays and everyone splits up to go their own ways. Sherri has the same class as me so she walks me there.

A headache is starting up; quickly worsening. By the time we get to the classroom it's a full blown migraine. I hope it goes away just as fast as it came. I've been told that stress brings them on, and God knows that I've been a little stressed these last few days.

I sit beside Sherri and she hands me a textbook. “Here you go. You're going to need this.”

“Thank you.” The pain in my head is increasing at a faster pace than it ever has before and so much more intense. It seems like the lights are getting brighter in here. The teacher starts talking, and writing something on the blackboard, but I can't even focus on what she's saying, let alone writing.

Sherri whispers to me, but it sounds like screaming. “You don't look good. I'm going to touch you and read you. Is that ok?”

All I can do is nod my head, and even that is outrageously painful. I can feel her hand on my arm, tingly and warm; vibrating. Sherri's hand leaves my arm. I hear her chair scrape on the floor and that causes me more agony.

Hands, vibrating hands, pull on my shirt and help lift me out of my chair. Sherri is guiding me out the backdoor of the classroom. “You're going to be alright. I'm taking you to see Nurse Carol. She'll give you something to stop that migraine. I can't believe anyone can have that much pain. I felt it when I touched you.”

That's when it happens. I feel the same as I imagine getting hit by lightning would feel. Sheer, utter pain! My body stiffens.

Blackness... I'm floating through the blackness; the nothingness. Then colours... spiraling... swirling, magnificent shades coming towards me, blending into the blackness until it takes over and the colours are all I can see. Through the vibrant shades I see it, the bubble. I really don't want to see what's in the bubble, but I can't look away. It's getting closer. Then I see clear as a bell; it looks like a mall. I'm pulled into the bubble.

I stand overlooking a food court. There are a lot of people here. The floor seems to quiver slightly. The ceiling starts to crack and shake. Dust falls, and people start running, scattering in a panic. The ceiling is falling down, landing on some of the people and squashing them. Then it's just a cloud of dust, and I am being sucked backwards through the colours, through the blackness.

I gasp for air. It takes me a moment to realize that I am lying on the hallway floor outside of the classroom on top of Sherri's leg. A group of kids are all around; staring.

As I sit up, I shuffle off of Sherri's leg and turn to apologize, but what I see in her face is utter terror. Tears are pouring down her cheeks, dripping off her chin onto her blue shirt. She must have seen what I saw; only she doesn't have the emotion blocker that I seem to have during a vision. She may never get over this. I feel awful.

Well, the good news is that my migraine is gone... not even a mild headache... nothing.

In the midst of sobs, she yells, "We have to warn someone. We have to stop it. Where is this going to happen... when??" It's so obvious Sherri is just as freaked out as I am, maybe more so.

A nurse comes and checks me out to see if I'm able to walk on my own, and I am. The two of us head down to see Doc Turner.

"It's nice to see you again, Laura. However, your gift seems to be coming to you at a very fast pace, doesn't it." I nod at the big man in the white jacket. A man I've known my whole life. He's my pediatrician, Doc Turner. He has been treating me since the moment I was born.

He's a very gentle man; soft spoken. Even now, at my age of 18, he still wants to be my doctor. Pediatricians rarely ever treat adults, and an 18 year old is considered an adult. He still gives me a sucker after every visit. His hair, once brown, is now almost all grey; well, whatever hair he has left on his head. I think when it fell out of his scalp it re-rooted in his ears and nose.

He's been becoming more and more "portly" through the years. Being just under 6' tall, and 250+ lbs., he's "large and in charge", as they say. His belly leads him around, and I think he might just be ready to give birth to a baby elephant any day now.

"How are the migraines my dear?" His short, sausage-like fingers are pressing at different spots on my head, and then down to the glands in my neck. "Does this hurt?"

"No, that doesn't hurt. Migraines are getting worse. I see things when I have them now. Nobody can tell me why. Will you tell me anything?" I try to speak normally but it's hard when someone is flashing a tiny, really bright pen light in and out of your line of vision. Now I have red spots everywhere I look... Great.

Doc Turner comes at me with one of those huge Popsicle sticks. "Stick out your tongue and say *ah*." I comply and hope that my breath isn't horrible. "Well my dear, we really can't say why these afflictions are developing in some teens. Theory is that it's something environmental, but who could say for sure? That's why we have rounded most of you up, and brought you to one place. Hopefully we will be able to study your genetics, past histories, and behaviors, and see if there is a common link to explain everything." He smiles at me with his pudgy face.

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