

NOTE: This is My NANOWRIMO 2013 first draft. I feel the story is complete, though it has significantly less than 50K words. It also has many typos.

I am officially setting it aside for a while, after which I will look at the story with fresh eyes. Thank you for reading my work.

If you like what you read here, visit my infrequent blog at lexicalcreations.weebly.com.

DetnoGirl

By JEN

CHAPTER 1

“Honey, are you awake?”

Of course I'm awake. Sleep is one of those things only normal people get to do, and we've all established that I'm not normal.

Honey rolled over and grabbed the edge of the blanket. A little too hard. She groaned and let the disintegrated pieces fall from her hand. It was not going to be a good day.

“Honey, come down and eat. School starts today.”

Don't remind me. Why did they have to keep feeding her? Why couldn't they just let her die, and this monstrous gift die with her?

Honey hadn't always felt this way. She was a straight A student. Loved cheerleading and volleyball. At least until a few days ago. *When everything I touched turned to dust. Literally.*

It was the best game of the season. Honey's team was serving up the match point, and Kelly had just set the ball up. Honey had gone in for the kill, her famous spike force in full gear. But when her hand touched the ball, it suddenly - what? Exploded? Shattered? *Disintegrated*. Yeah, that's what happened. Amid shouts and ball ashes, the Ref blew his whistle and Coach Rose called a time out. Honey spent the rest of the game on the bench. She couldn't remember if her team won. No way was she going to ask, either.

The next day, Mr. Brown handed Honey the hall pass before she even sat down. “Mr. Ramsey wants to see you, Young Lady.”

I hate it when he calls me that. It means I'm in trouble.

Mr. Ramsey wasn't in his office when Honey got there, but Shana sent her in to wait. “Just have a seat. He'll be right with you.”

Honey fidgeted in Mr. Ramsey's empty office. Her chair was a bright orange plastic number with metal arms that were "padded" with plastic. *They must have hunted for the most uncomfortable chairs in the history of chairs.* Honey gripped the plastic arms and shifted her butt.

Only the teachers called Mr. Ramsey by his real name. Everyone else just called him Mr. VP. because... Well, I think you can guess why. As Honey waited for him to enter, she began formulating an apology. Except she didn't know what she was in trouble for.

The door squeaked behind Honey. Even with her back to the door, she knew that a tall, slightly balding man had just entered the room. Mr. VP had arrived.

"Honey Wilson, you are a very talented girl." The VP told her as he sat down in his obviously more comfortable desk chair. He paused to deal a piercing gaze at her. Instinctively, Honey's hands tightened on the arms of her chair. *Hey, wasn't there plastic on these?*

In the silence, Mr. VP stood, grabbed a broom and long-handled dustpan from the corner and began coaxing the ashes from under Honey's chair. Honey didn't move. She barely breathed.

"Here at Hill Haven High, we have a secret." Mr. VP said between broom strokes. "Several of our students possess extra special gifts. Superpowers, really. Congratulations, Honey, you have officially proven to be one of those students."

"Wait, what?" Something didn't register. "You think because I have straight A's and I'm in sports, that I have superpowers? Or are you implying that I cheat, because that would be so prejudice."

"No, Honey, I'm not talking about your grades or athletic ability, and I'm not questioning your honesty. What you have is a supernatural gift. And you aren't the only one. Oh, no. We have a whole hidden campus of students like you."

Honey looked at the ashes and paled. "Superpowers, seriously?" A nervous laugh caught in her throat. "What is there something in the water, here?"

Mr. VP gave her a look that seemed to suggest she wasn't far off. Then he pulled out a pile of papers. "I've already called your parents. You'll be transferring to Hidden Hill High starting next week. There you will learn how to control your gift and use it for good."

He handed Honey the papers. A glossy brochure adorned the top of the pile. The rest were forms to fill out. Honey took the papers carefully and stood up to leave.

"Oh and Honey, this was your last day here. Enjoy the rest of the week at home."

"Whoa, what am I expelled?"

“Transferred. It’s really a privilege. I know this is sudden, but it’s best we get you to a place where you’re protected. A place where you can learn about your power.”

OK, where were the cameras? If this was this a joke, Mr. VP was taking it way too far. Honey didn’t know whether to be scared or suspicious.

Back in the office, Honey’s mom was signing her out. “Oh Honey, I just heard.”

Honey couldn’t believe it. She could always tell when her mom was hiding excitement. This had to be a prank. She waited for her friends to jump out. *Haha, Honey actually thought she had superpowers.*

Except that’s not what happened. Instead Mom had driven Honey home. In silence. Honey fumed the whole way. *If there are cameras waiting for me, so help me I’ll...* Honey didn’t know what.

At home, Honey’s mom disappeared into the house without saying a word. *Oh no, she’s not getting away that easily.* Honey jumped out of the car and barreled after.

Once inside, Honey stopped and looked around. No cameras. Nobody in the house except Mom, who was in the kitchen marinating chicken. “Oh isn’t it wonderful?” she said when Honey found her. “Our Honey has a gift. Your father and I are so proud.”

That was it. If this was a prank, and Honey was still sure it was, Mom was in on it too. Fine. Honey was going to play along until they finally stopped this crazy charade.

“By the way, what is your gift? They wouldn’t tell me on the phone.”

Honey grabbed the ladle from the wall and squeezed it into oblivion. Shock registered on her mom’s face. Then Mrs. Wilson attacked the chicken with marinade as if it were the most interesting thing in the world.

“Mind telling me what’s going on here?” Honey exploded.

Mrs. Wilson sighed. Wiping her greasy hands on her apron, she nodded to the dining table. Honey plopped down and her mom pulled up a chair next to her.

“Your father works for the government.”

“Okay...” This was not news. All postal workers did. Indirectly anyway.

“No, I mean he *works* for the government. The post office is just his cover. He’s kind of a genetic genius. Actually we both tested positive to carry some very special genes. Genes that, when unlocked, have supernatural properties.”

Honey tightened her fists and took a deep breath. “So you two have superpowers?”

“No, our genes do. Their powers can only be unlocked during puberty. The genes in your father and I are... dormant.”

Honey stood up. But she didn’t move.

“Well, say something!” Mom finally bursted. “Ask questions, express feelings. This is just about the best day of-“

“I. Am going. To. My. Room.” Honey said.

And stay there forever.

CHAPTER 2

By the time Honey woke up the next day, she had convinced herself that yesterday was just a bad dream. But when she got downstairs, her dad was reading the brochure and her mom filling out transfer papers.

“And you say Honey has one. So what is it? Flying? Super strength?”

Honey didn’t even want to hear the answer. She spun on her heel and ran back up.

In her room Honey thought. *Is this for real? I have to test it.* She scanned the room. It had to be something nobody would think to rig. Honey saw the wire cup of pens and pencils. *Perfect.*

Somewhere nobody would put a hidden camera. Not the closet. *That’s first place I’d put a camera.* But no one would put cameras under the furniture. Or would they?

Honey flattened herself to the floor and lifted the bed skirt. No blinking lights. She reached in and swept everything out. It was insane what had collected under there. Old magazines, Odd socks, and a CD or two. No good. Most of this stuff was already garbage. And too dark and cramped to be a good test site. Honey dumped the pile into the wastebasket and scanned again. Wait. She couldn’t do it under her bed, but...

Armed with her cup of writing implements, Honey crawled under the bedclothes. She felt like a 4-year-old in her “tent,” but at least it would be proof that she was on to the prank the whole time.

Honey poured the cup onto her bed. First, a number 2 pencil. She picked it up gingerly. No disintegration. She held the pencil as if she was going to write. The pencil stayed whole. Then Honey wrapped the pencil in a fist and squeezed. The pencil was ash in seconds.

Next test subject was a blue ballpoint. This time Honey grabbed the tip between her fingers and

squeezed. The pen fell on the bed, half disintegrated. *Interesting.* Ink began oozing out, so Honey grasped the remains and squeezed into dust.

Honey gently brushed the rest of her pile and grasped a mechanical pencil with both hands. The plastic disintegrated all right, *and then the lead.*

Honey looked at her hands. Maybe they'd put something on them. Honey hopped out from under the covers and ran out to the backyard. She ignored her parents calling after her. She was going to get to the bottom of this.

Holding the hose between her legs, Honey wrung her hands under the water. Was it her imagination, or was that filmy black dust coming from her hands? Honey smiled. She was foiling the prank. When Honey was sure her hands were clean, she looked for something to squeeze. The sprinkler head. Stuck in the ground and on a timer, no one would think to pick that up. *Perfect.* Honey bent down and clutched the head. Black ash came away into her palm.

Honey almost wished cameras would come out now. If they had, she would have been relieved. But she knew there were no cameras. Like or it or not, this was real. Honey didn't like it.

CHAPTER 3

Both parents had signed the transfer papers to Hidden Hill High a little too eagerly. Honey was definitely being sent to a new school today. *A school where they send the freaks.*

It might not have been so bad if Honey's gift was something cool. According to the brochure, some kids at HHH could fly, freeze, or transform. And what could Honey do? Disintegrate stuff. *Lucky me.*

Honey threw on a black sweatshirt and black skirt. Usually, black on black was a huge fashion no, but it matched Honey's mood perfectly. She slogged into the bathroom to put on makeup. She brushed her teeth all right, but when she grabbed her brush, Honey made the mistake of looking in the mirror. Suddenly, her hairbrush was dust. Forget it. Honey didn't feel like combing her hair anyway.

After putting on burgundy lipstick and slate eye shadow, Honey looked in the bathroom mirror and sighed. *Look out Hidden Hill, here comes one of the freakiest.*

Honey's new bus stop was just up the street from her old one. She'd seen other school buses crossing paths as she'd rode school last year, but she'd never really thought about where they were going. Honey half smiled. *I guess that's the point.*

Honey squinted at the 66 on the side of her new bus so that she could almost see another 6. 666. Now that's an appropriate bus to be riding on today. But it was all in Honey's imagination. She

didn't have that kind of superpower. *I only wish I did.*

The door opened toward her with a familiar whoosh. Honey looked up at the driver before stepping up. Sam, the driver, was blond-haired, dark-skinned, and broad shouldered. Honey watched her feet as she mounted the steps.

Honey found an empty bench and slide in near the window, ignoring the social buzz around her. She was the new girl again. No one would talk to her for a while, though she knew everyone had noticed her.

Once the students were all on the bus, Sam pulled over and swung out of her seat.

"Listen up!"

Everyone stopped talking.

Sam strolled up and down the bus aisle as she talked. "Now we have some new students, so I'm going to go over the rules."

Everyone glanced at Honey. She was pretty sure there was only one new kid.

"Rule Number 1: You CANNOT use your superpowers. No flying, stretching, summoning, etc. I don't care what you can do. If you show off your powers to everyone you meet, you don't belong here, you belong in an asylum."

I belong in an asylum now.

Sam whipped her glance to Honey. "I don't want any trouble."

Neither do I, but I can't help being in it. Honey wondered if Sam could read her thoughts, but no, she saw in a moment that this was not Sam's superpower. Honey saw that Sam had discovered her power when she was Honey's age. It has been an embarrassment to Sam's family, and – Sam was suddenly looking in the other direction.

"R-rule Number 2: Learn to stop yourself. This is the first thing you have to learn at HHH and I'm teaching it to you now. If you feel your power getting out of control, do this."

Sam straightened up and closed her eyes. She brought her hand together like a prayer. Then she bowed her head. She looked like she was mimicking an Asian monk.

"Find your center. Take a deep breath. When you look up you will have total control of your power. You can stop it... or not."

Sam looked up. "But here, you will stop it, or else I will throw you so far your head will spin."

Honey snickered. *She could do it too.* Sam could throw the whole bus if she wanted to.

"I don't want any trouble." Sam said in a softer tone. She was looking at Honey again. Honey thought she was going to cry.

"Last Rule," Sam said looking at the other students again. "The Drill. Whenever I call 'drill' you must stop yourself just like I showed you."

Sam looked around. "Perhaps you didn't hear me. I said DRILL!"

Immediately, everyone on the bus faced forward and repeated the Asian monk stance. Honey followed suit.

It worked! Honey suddenly felt in total control. Of her emotions, of her powers, of everything! Honey thought she might cry again, but this time from pure joy.

Honey looked up and saw Sam smiling at her. *Was she watching me?* Honey smiled back.

"OK, enough rules." Sam returned to her spot behind the wheel. "I don't want you guys to be late. Next Stop: Hidden Hill High!"

CHAPTER 4

"Here we are!" Sam's voice rang out, as if the whole bus was full of new students who'd never ridden it before.

Honey looked out the window, expecting to see a building or at least a flag. Instead she saw a large mountain covered in chaparral and manzanita. *I've been kidnapped!*

Suddenly, the side of the hill opened like a garage door. This did little to alleviate Honey's fear, as Sam cranked the steering wheel and drove the whole bus in.

"All off!" She called, and opened the door.

When Honey got to the front, Sam pointed toward a large building. "That's where you check in."

As if the big O-F-F-I-C-E over the door didn't give it away. But Honey thanked the driver and started off the bus. Then she turned back.

"Sorry," she said, "for, you know."

Sam shrugged. "You're new." She smiled. "You'll learn to control that. Now, get off my bus. You're holding up traffic!"

Honey spun on her heel and hopped off.

Before heading toward the office, Honey paused to look around. From the look of it, HHH could have been any high school.

Hey, why doesn't it feel like we are in a cave? Honey looked in the direction she thought the bus had come, but she didn't see any gate or sign of the hill.

Honey scanned the crowds of kids who walked as if they knew exactly where they were going, and weren't in that much of a hurry to get there. She was looking for a familiar face, but no luck. *I take that back.* They all looked semi-familiar, but there wasn't anybody she knew.

Honey remembered a boy last year that she of had a crush on. Actually, Honey had spent a lot of time crushing on him. His name was Matt, but her pet name for him was Matty-boy. She never actually called him that, which was probably a good thing, but in her head she imagined dating him, kissing him, marrying him... Actually, that's about as far as she ever got. Ol' Matty-boy didn't know Honey existed. And Honey never got the nerve to talk to him.

One day, Matt-boy – er- Matt just disappeared. Poof. She didn't even know his last name!

Honey looked at all the boys trying to decide if any of them looked like her former crush. Then the first bell rang, reminding Honey of where she was supposed to be.

A wiry girl with large glasses was sitting behind the desk in the office. She looked barely older than Honey, but her grey pantsuit suggested otherwise.

"Can I help you?" the girl (lady?) asked without looking up from the computer. Her fingers flew across the keyboard as if they had been born typing.

"Um, I'm new here."

"Name?"

"Honey Wilson."

The girl switched screens and typed in the name in one motion. "Ah yes, Principal Huffmaster is expecting you." She picked up a pencil and used it as a pointer toward a hallway. "Go straight down there, first door on the left."

"Thanks." Honey said and followed the directions.

The tardy bell went off just as Honey knocked on the door, but since she didn't have her schedule, Honey figured it was okay.

Mr. Huffmaster was a man big enough to filled out his name.

"Hello, Honey." He said in a warm, kind voice. "Welcome to Hidden Hill High."

Like a Papa Bear.

Mr. Huffmaster gave Honey a tour of the campus, then handed her a schedule. "I know this is hard, transferring right in the middle of school. But almost all the students have been through the exact same thing. Just remember that."

Honey nodded, but she didn't quite believe him. *And how many here have my superpower?* Honey felt her eyes get hot again. The bell rang for first period.

"Get along," Mr. Huffmaster said. "The Mighty Grows doesn't like handing out tardy slips."

The Mighty Grows turned out to be the science teacher. She was short and stocky with a shock of white hair. "Ah, Honey Wilson," she said when Honey walked in.

If Mrs. Grows hadn't acknowledged her right off, Honey would have thought she was in the wrong room. There were no chairs or tables. Bright blue circle lights shown from the floor, as if the room was upside down. Honey looked at the ceiling and the class laughed.

Mrs. Grows laughed, too. "Everyone does that on their first day." She beckoned for Honey to come closer. "So, what is your superpower?"

Honey looked Mrs. Grows in the eyes. Mrs. Grows liked to let the students show off their powers. Then Honey wrung her hands and looked at them. She didn't want to show off her power.

"Oh, I see." Mrs. Grows said. "Another shy one. Well then, missy, let me tell you a little bit about this class."

Mrs. Grows walked to one of the blue circles. Five students stood in the middle of it. "This is the Air group. In some shape or form, their powers have to do with lift, thrust, and defying Bernoulli's Principle."

Mrs. Grows walked to another circle. "These are Earth guys. They are all about plants, nature, and life science. And over here..."

Mrs. Grows skipped to another group. "Water people."

At the next circle, "Fire group. We like to keep these separate from the Water. Otherwise it gets pretty steamy."

Everyone had a laugh, then Mrs. Grows introduced the rest of the groups. "So you see, Honey, we need to know what group you're in, so that you can help us learn the science behind your

power."

Honey nodded. "But it's kind of hard to describe. Can I just show you?"

Mrs. Graws gestured to go ahead. Honey opened her backpack. What did she have that she didn't care about? She decided on an eraser. It was one of those huge pink deals with the words "FOR BIG MISTAKES." Mr. VP had given it to her as a going away present. The joke wasn't very funny.

Honey held it up and squeezed it into ash. She was pretty sure she heard a few jaws hit the floor.

"Whoa." Mrs. Graws said. "No wonder you were so shy about it. That's impressive. A class of its own. But you can't be without a lab partner. How about... you go with the Matter Group."

Honey stood in the appropriate circle.

Mrs. Graws returned to the center of the room. "Now, I always say, don't get trapped in your own circle. We separate you only so you can learn with others who have similar powers. But you can learn a lot from other groups, too." Then Mrs. Graws looked hard at Honey. "I think you will find you have an advantage in that department, Honey."

Honey didn't know what she was talking about. How could destroying things be an advantage?

"Lab work!" Mrs. Graws called and gave each group an assignment. The Matter group was supposed to create a massive object. It could be small as a golf ball, but could not be bigger than a watermelon. Easy, right? Except Honey couldn't do it.

She held her hands like most of the students were doing. She concentrated on the space in between. *Come on, come on!*

"Honey Wilson, make something!" Mrs. Graws snapped her fingers next to Honey impatiently.

"I'm trying!" But no matter how she cupped her hands, nothing materialized. In fact, Honey was pretty sure she was disintegrating a ball of air.

"Whoa, Honey, stop!" the girl next to her suddenly exclaimed.

Honey put her hands down. The girl turned to Mrs. Graws. "Honey's doing something all right. She disintegrated my creations."

Mrs. Graws gave one final snap in Honey's face. "F." She said, and walked on.

First day. First F. Ever.

That bell didn't ring soon enough.

CHAPTER 5

The rest of the periods before lunch were relatively normal compared to science class. The only difference in math was the word problems. ("If Hank flies faster than the speed of sound at room temperature –which is approximately 343 m/s – and gets to his destination 8 seconds before sound would, how fast is Hank flying?")

In English Language Arts, the class was supposed to write about how they discovered their superpower. Honey sort of lied and said that disintegrating the volleyball won her team the match point. *Hey, it's creative writing, right?*

All in all, Honey had done a pretty good job of not drawing attention to herself, but the next was Lunch. In the social swimming pool called the cafeteria, Honey could no longer stay invisible.

Well, here goes nothing.

As Honey found the coldest bench in the room, she knew she had already been spotted by Ellen, the most popular senior in school.

"Well, well, well. Who do we have here?"

Honey straightened, suddenly wishing she worn a little less Goth. Ellen's fashion sense was impeccable. The contrast was jarring, considering Honey usually trended herself.

Ellen's superpower was telepathy. Honey knew Ellen trying to probe the fresh meat. Except this time, Ellen was failing. Honey knew how bad this was, because the last time Ellen couldn't read a mind -- *Wait, how did I know that?*

Almost instinctively, Honey assumed the monk stance. As she closed her eyes, Honey heard Ellen laughing. "Oh, does the new girl think she can control her power that way?"

Honey looked. Once again she had total control of herself. Her powers, emotions, everything. *And Ellen doesn't.* Honey didn't need her superpowers to see it. Ellen was scared. And she wasn't the only one.

Ellen's friend shivered. Honey didn't know the name yet; she wasn't using her powers anymore. Not that she needed powers to spot a sidekick of the popular girl. "Come on," the Sidekick said, "she's not worth it."

Ellen's sneered. "You're on my turf, now, honey. Stay out of my way."

Honey watched with amusement as Ellen walked away. Ironically, Ellen had guessed her name without realizing it.

But Honey's private joke was short-lived. Honey groaned. Only the first day, and already Honey

had an enemy. This day had now officially topped the charts in Worse Days Ever. *In other words, I'm doomed.*

After lunch, Honey headed to the library for PSD – Personal Skill Development.

“Can I help you?” the girl said from behind the desk.

Honey did a double-take. This girl was an exact copy of the one in the office. Honey looked at her hands and resisted the temptation to look into the girl’s eyes. “Um, I’m new here.”

“Name?”

Déjà vu. Honey answered, and the girl looked it up on the computer.

“Ah yes. Sandra’s expecting you.” She picked up a pencil and used it as a pointer toward the nonfiction section. “Past the 600’s, door’s on your right.”

“Uh, thanks.” Honey spun on her heel and went in the direction of the pointing pencil.

Sandra was standing by an open door when Honey got to the 600’s.

“Honey Wilson?”

Honey nodded and Sandra smiled. “I’m your PDS tutor. Come on in. Let’s get started.”

Honey walked into the miniature classroom. A whiteboard took up one wall, and a teacher’s desk took up half the floor. A card table with two folding chairs hogged the corner opposite the door.

Sandra closed the door and motioned for Honey to sit down at the card table. Sandra sat in the other chair.

“I like to keep it casual, but I’m going to be honest. This period sometimes feels like a therapy session.”

Honey realized Sandra was joking, and managed to giggle.

Sandra laughed too, and then got serious. “I’m only half joking about that. Outside of this room, you can only use your powers in the way the teachers tell you. And using them at home is generally forbidden - if you can help it - for obvious reasons.”

Honey wondered if anyone had seen her disintegrate the sprinkler. Maybe the backyard wasn’t such a good idea.

“But here, you can use your powers as much as you want, any way you want. In fact, I want you to.”

Sandra stood up and looked on the computer. “It says you have the power to disintegrate things. Is there any other powers you’ve discovered?”

Honey looked at her hands.

Sandra put her hands on top of Honey’s. “Honey look at me. The more you show me about your powers, the more I can help you develop—“ Sandra stopped when Honey’s eyes locked with hers. “--Interesting.”

Honey began to know things about Sandra. Like the fact that Sandra was an intern straight out of college. She was studying to be a superhero physical therapist, and her power was... obvious. A number two pencil was flying across a page on the teacher’s desk, and the keyboard was typing of its own accord.

“OK,” Sandra said. “One thing that’s very important for you to know is that I could feel that. Were you reading my mind?”

“Not exactly.” Honey looked at the ceiling. White cardboard tiles surrounded a long florescent light. Each tile was full of holes.

“I think... it’s more like I’m dissecting your personality and feelings. Like if your life were a book and I was reading it.”

“OK, great. I’m going to have to digest this, because I’ve never felt that before. Let’s talk about your other powers for a while.”

Honey showed Sandra how she disintegrated anything she squeezed. They talked about how that felt and what frame of mind she had to be in to do it.

The bell rang, and Honey stood up. This period was over way too soon.

The last two periods were History and P.E. In both classes, Honey didn’t have to do much of anything, since it was her first day.

In History, she got her textbook, *The Great Feats and Adventures of Superheros: Past and Present*. The class was in the middle of Chapter 17, so Ms. Moser told Honey to simply observe and listen. “You can read the chapter for homework, and I won’t assign anything until next week.”

Looking forward to it, Honey thought with a fake smile and sat down.

In P.E., Coach Clark singled Honey out right away. “Here’s your uniform, but you won’t be participating yet.” He pointed to the locker room, and then turned away to blow his whistle. One boy was freezing the basketballs, and his friend was then melting them with superheat.

Honey dressed down, but soon realized she would be spending the whole period on the bench.

“Today, just watch.” The coach said, holding his whistle three inches from his face. “Next week, GAME ON!”

Then he blew his whistle at the rest of the class. Honey slumped. For once, she wished the teacher had asked her to participate. Warming the bench was just plain boring.

Honey had been pretty good at P.E. in her old school, but Physical Education at HHH was all about exercising your superpower. *The one part of me I don't want to exercise.* Suddenly warming the bench wasn't so bad.

CHAPTER 6

When the last bell rang, Honey found that Sam's bus had returned to the front of the school. Maybe they weren't kidnapped after all. Honey's fears were finally alleviated when Sam stopped at her stop.

Honey almost laughed at herself all the way home.

“So, how was your day?” Mom blew the words over her midday cup of cocoa. *Why couldn't she just drink coffee like everyone else?* But Honey knew the answer. Her mom had studied the effects of coffee and wrote a thesis on it. She'd said that was enough to stay out of Starbucks for life.

Honey dropped her backpack. “Indescribable.” She ran upstairs.

“Well aren't you going to tell me—?”

Nope. Honey closed the door of her room. She flopped onto her bed. It had been a long day. Once Honey's head was in the pillow, she didn't wake up for three hours.

When she woke up the phone was ringing.

“What? Did you drop off the face of the earth?”

“Hi Kelly.”

“I mean seriously! After that bomb exploded in the volleyball, you disappeared. Where'd you go?”

“I... got transferred.”

“I knew it! You're mom's some secret spy and someone tried to assassinate you, right?”

Honey glanced at the brochure. One of the rules was absolutely never tell about the super

powers.

“It’s... complicated.”

“Right, right. You can’t talk about it, right?”

“Yeah.”

“Of course, gotta keep on the down-low, never know who could be tapping our conversation.”

How am I going to keep Kelly out of this? She’s my BFF!

“So you’ve moved, right? To a super secret locale?”

“Nope, still here on Sandwood Drive.”

“Well, isn’t that a bit dangerous? You know with hitmen after you?”

“I never said that.”

“Oh, right. You never ‘said’ that.” Then Kelly began to yell in the phone as if she wanted to be overheard. “And I’ve never seen to you in my life, Oneyha.”

“That’s just weird.” Some names should never be said in Pig Latin. “Look, Kelly. I’ve gotta go. I have a ton of homework from my new school and-“

“Nuff said. Signing out. But you have to tell me about your new school’s like.”

Yeah right.

Dinner was quiet. Too quiet. Mom tried to carry a conversation. Honey let it fall one-sided.

Dad wasn’t even there because he had to work late. Doing what, Honey couldn’t guess. Certainly not delivering mail like she’d been told all her life.

Honey suddenly lost her appetite and went to bed.

The next day Honey felt a little less black. She donned a pair of jeans and a layered T, then went down for breakfast.

“Hi Honey, how was school yesterday?” Either Dad hadn’t been warned or he didn’t care.

“You know, school.” That had been Honey’s answer since she was a Freshman.

“Oh come on, Honey,” Dad said, “Your mom and I have been chomping at the bit to ask you. We just didn’t want to wake you.”

He had been warned.

“Well,” Honey said between bites of cereal, “Keep chomping.” She got up and put her half-eaten bowl in the sink. “I’ve got a bus to catch.”

The bus ride was uneventful, if you can call driving onto a hidden campus inside a hill uneventful.

Honey looked at her schedule. She had homeroom with the Mighty Graws. The one teacher who had already given her an F. *Seriously?*

Honey walked into Mrs. Graws’ classroom and almost walked back out. The room had been transformed into a regular classroom. Honey looked at the ceiling, but snapped her eyes to the floor when she heard some giggles.

“Honey Wilson. I saw that you were on my roll. Have a seat.”

Honey found a desk that looked unclaimed.

“Do you have a homework buddy yet?”

Honey looked at Mrs. Graws. *You’re kidding, right?*

“Oh, I know this is your second day. But that’s what Homeroom is for. Find someone who you can trade assignments. What group are you in Science?”

You should know, you put me there.

“I don’t have a lab partner yet, Mrs. Graws.”

Honey turned. The girl from science A girl was smiling with her hand still half-way in the air.

“Splendid!” Mrs. Graws rolled a paper into a tube. “Deseree and Honey, I knight you Science Partners.”

Honey half expected her to make the sign of the cross and say “In the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost” but that would have been sacrilegious against Catholics.

Honey walked over.

“So, hi, I’m Deseree, but I guess you know that.” She pushed a strand of maroon colored hair behind her ear and studied the top of her desk.

“Why did you want to be my homework buddy?” What Honey really wanted to say was *Why do you want to be my friend?*

Deseree brushed an invisible speck of dust off the desk. “Well, I just got here, too, and anyone who can scare Ellen like that can’t be all bad...”

Honey pulled her planner out of her backpack. “What’s your number?”

Deseree smiled and wrote it down.

Honey went back to her seat and opened her history book to Chapter 17. She read the whole chapter just as the bell rang.

“Class dismissed.” Mrs. Graws said. “Go on, get out of here.”

Honey stayed in her seat, but Deseree came up to her. “We have to leave the room and come back in for next period.” She explained, picking up Honey’s backpack and giving it to her. “Mrs. Graws claims it’s so we get much needed exercise, but I think it’s just so they can change the room without us in it.”

Honey took her backpack and stood up.

“Come on, I show you where the best hangouts are.” Deseree laughed. “If you like soda and music.”

The Music classroom were only around the corner from the Science labs, and there was a soda machine at the end of the hall.

“What do you like? My treat.”

“Dasani.”

“Water?”

“Yeah. I don’t care for soda.”

Deseree shrugged. “I wish I didn’t like soda. I drink way too much of it.” She bought the water for Honey and a 7-Up for her.

Honey opened the Dasani and smiled. It was the only bottled water that sounded like opening a soda.

“Sometimes, people practice between classes.” Deseree pointed at the classrooms. “Hip hop, reggae, classical, all kinds.”

She took another drink then capped the bottle. “We’d better get back. Science waits for no man.”

When they got to the classroom, the familiar circles were back.

“Today, we are studying the Fire Group.” Mrs. Graws announced.

Honey was relieved. All she had to do was pull out her notebook.

CHAPTER 7

Deseree was in almost every class on Honey’s schedule.

“That makes it easy.” Deseree said. She led the way to Math and Language Arts. But they didn’t get a chance to talk much until lunch.

“So, your name’s Deseree?” Honey set her tray on the table. She was really asking, *Can I sit here?*

Deseree nodded. She patted the bench beside her and Honey sat down.

“Named after all the aunts and uncles: Aunt Debbie, Uncle Seth, Aunt ReAnne, and Uncle Eoin. Uncle Eoin says he got gipped, so my younger sisters are named Eoinna and Evaleoin.”

Deseree wrote her sisters’ names on a napkin. Honey laughed.

Deseree took a bite of her sandwich. “What about you? Why are you named Honey?”

Honey patted her head. “My wet hair looked exactly like golden honey.”

“Aren’t parents incorrigible?”

The two girls giggled, but Honey stopped when she saw Ellen across the room. Ellen’s face was turning red with anger. *She’s trying to read me again.*

Reading minds was how Ellen usually spent her lunch periods. Actually, that was how she spent all of her periods. She’d been doing it ever since she could. It was only when she *couldn’t* read the mind of a substitute teacher that she was discovered. It was the stupidest mistake she’d ever made when she opened her big mouth and asked-

“Honey! Are you listening to me?”

Honey looked away from Ellen and turned her attention back to Deseree. “No, I’m sorry. I was thinking about something else. What were you saying?”

Deseree smiled and seemed to forgive her on the spot. But the bell rang.

Lunch was over.

“Here’s where we part ways.” Deseree said, smiling. “See ya in fifth period.”

Honey smiled back and walked to the library.

Sandra was waiting by the open classroom.

“Every time I look into someone's eyes I know things about them.” Honey said as she walked in.

Sandra didn't say anything so Honey kept going. “I mean will that always happen? Can't I stop it?”

“Let's find out.”

Sandra motioned for Honey to look in her eyes. Honey locked gazes and immediately began to know stuff. Sandra's favorite color was purple. But Sandra never wore purple because it looked horrid on her. Red hair could be so annoying sometimes-

“Don't look away! Try to control it.”

Honey wrestled internally with her power.

No matter how she tried, though, Honey couldn't stop the flow of info. Sandra's brothers always called her the red-headed step child when they teased her. And secretly she always wondered why she didn't look anything like her brothers. Sandra's mom said she was born in Glasgow, Montana and someday she was going to save up enough money to track down her certificate-

Honey looked down. “It's no use. I can't stop it.”

“Yet.” Sandra shifted in her seat and smiled. “Let's try something else. Look at me again.”

Honey reluctantly locked gazes. She suddenly knew that Sandra had three older brothers and one- suddenly the thoughts dimmed. Like when you come to the end of a movie and the screen goes blank. Honey giggled. She'd succeeded. But what had she done differently?

“This isn't good news, Honey.” Sandra said looking away. “It means someone more powerful than you can block you.”

So that's what happened. Honey's jubilation was snuffed out.

“Ok, things you should know:” Sandra held up her fingers “1. I had to know what you were doing. B. I had to focus on blocking you; I couldn't use my powers.”

The pencil resumed its dance to emphasize the point. “And 3. I don't know what you found out about me before I did that. What did you find out?”

A lot of stuff. “um that your favorite color is purple...”

“Interesting.” Sandra looked thoughtful. “My boyfriend was just asking that question during my

break. I think he's going to get me a present and I told him I don't wear purple because..." She lifted her braid.

Honey smiled weakly.

"Did you see who my boyfriend is?" It wasn't an accusation.

Honey shook her head.

"Well you wouldn't know him anyway. Let's try this-"

The bell rang.

"Next time."

Honey stood and picked up her backpack. For once she was grateful for the bell. She was exhausted.

Just before Honey left, Sandra stood up. "Honey, don't worry about knowing things about me. I took this job knowing I might be working with a mind reader."

Honey opened her mouth to protest. Sandra didn't let her. "Close enough."

Honey spun on her heel and walked out of the library. She took her seat in the next class, still deep in thought from the class before. *Will I ever be able to control my powers?*

CHAPTER 8

In History, Deseree offered to help her catch up on Chapter 17. Honey didn't have the heart to tell her friend she had already finished it.

"Sure." She said and the two girls made arrangements to meet after school. It turned out that they lived within walking distance of each other, even though they took different buses to school.

So after school, Honey found herself sitting on her bed with her new friend.

Deseree held the textbook in her arms, but she didn't open it right away. "I have to ask: what did you do that scared Ellen so bad?"

"I kind of read her."

"You can read minds?"

"Kinda."

"Oh, read mine!" Deseree squealed as if she had suddenly discovered the winning lottery ticket.

Honey looked at her friend for a few moments, then looked away. "I can't."

"No, it's OK, I won't tell."

"No, I mean I can't. I just tried."

"Has that ever happened before?"

Honey shook her head.

"Odd." Deseree opened the textbook. "So, where are you in chapter 17?"

"Um, I'm done."

Deseree fingered the page. "I'd kind of figured that."

The two girls looked at each other and laughed. Honey shoved her textbook into the backpack and Deseree did the same with hers.

"Come on, let's go window shopping." Honey said, already headed to the door.

"Now, you're speaking my language."

CHAPTER 9

By the end of the week, Honey was finally feeling like she had a handle on life again. She was still struggling to catch up in her classes, but at least she had Deseree to help. And Kelly had also kept in touch to keep her from feeling totally cutoff from the world.

On Monday, Honey had gotten her own fashion sense back, and black-on-black seemed as silly as ever. Things were really looking up, until she got to P.E.

"So which group did the Mighty Graws put you in?" Coach Clark asked. He was finally going to let Honey participate.

"The Matter group."

"Great we need another ball creator! Go over there."

Honey trotted to the group of peers. Most of them were in her group in Science. Deseree gave her a horrified look. "Honey, tell him!"

Honey spun on her heel and ran back. "Um Coach Clark? I can't create balls."

"Excuse me?"

“I c-can’t create balls.”

“Explain to me, then, why Mrs. Graws put you in the Matter Group. Hmm?”

Honey looked as if the answer would be sitting on her shoes. Finally she said, “There wasn’t a group for me.”

“Well Miss—“ Coach Clark consulted his roll for the name, “Wilson, you may think you’re all high and mighty, but Mrs. Graws has been at this school for several years--”

Honey nodded. “35 exactly.”

The coach’s face suddenly got red. He grabbed his whistle and blew. Hard. Then he spit it out to yell, “IF Mrs. Graws sees fit to put you in the Matter Group, that’s GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME.”

Honey didn’t have to explain to Deseree. Everyone in the class had heard.

“Tell you what, pretend to make the balls and you can catch mine as if you made it.” Deseree whispered.

Honey shook her head. “Thanks anyway.”

Anything Deseree made would probably just disintegrate in Honey’s hands.

CHAPTER 10

As the weeks went on, Honey continued to struggle. Even the classes like math and history where Honey didn’t have to use her power, or be shunned for not being able to use her power the right way, had new concepts that were foreign to Honey. Who on earth was Super Silas the Great? Why did Honey have to know about her, when the rest of the world seemed oblivious?

Math was getting especially hard. Things that everyone else seemed to know, like the impact of gravity on superstrength, or the time it takes to become transparent, were just nonsense to Honey. *Just give me a simple math problem. I can do math!*

English had never been her strong point, but at Hill Haven she’d gotten A’s by giving the teacher exactly what she wanted. Except she never knew what this teacher wanted.

“Dig deeper, Honey. I want to know what it feels like to have your power.”

It stinks. But when she wrote that, Mrs. Sherman asked, “How does it stink? What makes it so bad? Does it actually smell bad?”

Next time at PSD, Honey actually sniffed the ash to see. Yep, smells like dust. Or ash. Or disintegrated object. What was she supposed to write?

By the end of the quarter, History was the only subject that Honey was getting a decent grade in. She found it interesting that there was a whole component to history that nobody ever heard about. But when the class got to WWI, Ms. Jarvis gave an assignment that Honey couldn't complete.

It was only a three page paper, which would have been a breeze at her old school. She was supposed to write about the real cause of ww1 it was complicated enough when shed learned it at hill haven but at hidden hill there was a supernatural component that she hadn't even known about

And do you know how hard it is to do reaserch on superpowers in the 1914's? Google was less than helpful to say the least.

Honey did the best she could. But it was a bad paper and she knew it.

On the day it was due, Ms Jarvis was walking toward her collecting the papers. Honey reached into her backpack, pulled out her paper. ..

And sprinkled dust into Ms. Jarvis' hand.

"Where's your paper?"

"I- I just disintegrated it."

"Unacceptable. You are not to use your powers in class."

"I couldn't help it."

"No makeups." Ms. Jarvis moved on. "I hope you have a paper for me Mr. Asana."

"Yes ma'am."

Honey buried her face. The grade in the one class she had a chance in had just been shot to ruins.

She spent her entire fourth period disintegrating stuff. She even wanted to disintegrate the annoying pencil that kept writing notes for Sandra.

"Whoa, Honey, slow down. I'm going to run out of stuff!"

"No you won't. Just ask 'The Matter Group' to make some more."

"Sit down." Sandra patted the table. "You obviously need to talk--"

The bell rang. Honey had not disintegrated enough.

CHAPTER 11

As report card time approached, Honey's grades continued to plummet, black came creeping back into Honey's fashion. Even with Deseree's help, she couldn't seem to get her grades above water. *I mean, who flunks P.E.?* Her other grades weren't much better.

It was kind of funny, because Honey would never have dressed like a funeral at Hill Haven. But she never would have chosen her superpower either. And, hey, black was a good color for disintegration. Honey was just dressing the part.

Nobody said anything, and Honey didn't think about it much, until one day when she was visiting the ladies' room at lunch.

"So what did you want to tell me?" Ellen's voice echoed in the bathroom. She and someone else were coming in.

Honey locked the stall door again. She didn't care to bump into Ellen.

"It's about Honey."

"What about her?"

"I know her power."

"It's disintegration. Old news."

"You know? But you can't read her mind."

"No, but I can read the minds of all of her friends." Ellen spoke in a patronizing tone.

Honey scrunched up her nose. *Why does she let her treat her like that?*

"So you know how great that is then."

"Excuse me?" Sounded like Ellen's patience was wearing thin.

"Well, disintegration is a *villain's* power. It's evil!"

"Hmm." Ellen paused. Probably to do her make up. "That's why I keep you around, Pam. You have such interesting ideas."

The two girls finally left the bathroom.

Honey ran to the mirror and tried to rub the tear trains from her eyes. No good. It just made her eyes puffier.

She grabbed her makeup and tried to cover the redness. The bell had already rung, but she couldn't go out looking like this.

Honey expected Sandra to be inside the classroom, but instead she was standing at the open classroom door.

“You’re late.” Sandra was annoyed. Then she saw Honey’s face. “What happened?”

So much for makeup.

Sandra motioned Honey inside.

“Am I evil?” Honey demanded.

“Well you don’t exactly look like Miss Goody TwoShoes.”

Wrong Answer.

“So that’s it. I’m the Villain. Destined to be the arch nemesis of Deseree.”

“Whoa, back the truck up. How did you take such a flying leap to that conclusion?”

Honey didn’t answer.

“Did you and Deseree have a fight?”

Honey shook her head. “But it’s true, right? Deseree can create. And what can I do?”

She grabbed the back of Sandra’s chair. And squeezed. Now it was a stool.

Sandra looked back. The pencil began to go faster. “Did you notice how far your power went just now?”

“Are you listening to me?” Honey threw the dust at Sandra. It smelled like soot.

“Yes, but I’m observing too. My job is to help you discover the ins and outs of your power.”

“Why, so I can take over the world?”

“Is that what you want to do?”

Honey stopped.

But Sandra was still talking. “Do you want to be evil?”

“It would be easier.”

“I didn’t ask that.” Sandra stood up and looked Honey in the eyes.

Honey began knowing stuff about Sandra, She looked down quickly.

“Uh huh.” Sandra said. “I think I know the answer, but you’ve got to find it yourself.”

The bell rang.

Sandra handed Honey her backpack. “I don’t care what happens at lunch. Don’t be late again.”

Honey avoided Deseree for the rest of the day. Which was hard to do since they were in every class together.

It didn’t help that the quote of the day was, “Keep your friends close and your enemies closer.”

Most non-superhumans attribute the quote to Sun-Tzu, but Honey had learned in history class that it was actually Sun-Tzu’s friend Hei-Shi who coined the phrase. Hei-Shi was an ancient Chinese superhero who saved Sun-Tzu’s life in the late 400’s.

Honey peeked at Deseree. Was that why Deseree was so eager to be her friend?

Honey ducked her head. Deseree was looking at her. When the bell rang, Honey ran.

“Honey, wait up!”

Honey walked faster to the locker room. She dressed down and got to the bleachers before Deseree could catch her.

Honey sat in the corner. Deseree sat next to her. Honey got up.

"Honey, sit down so we can start." Coach Clark was taking roll.

Honey looked hard at the coach. She slumped back into her chair. And turned away from Deseree. Honey could almost hear the hurt she was causing. She felt gloomy and guilty and *evil*. *Proves my point*.

Clark finished roll and blew his whistle. “Today, Power Sprints.”

Oh great. Each student was supposed to exercise their power at a run. Which was fine if you could actually see the power being exercised.

“Mind readers first.” The coach wrote down a number. Mind readers were supposed to read Clark’s mind and give the number after the sprint.

Honey stood up. She might be able to do that.

The coach folded his arms. “Honey, what are you doing?”

“I want to run with-“

Coach Clark silenced her with his whistle. “I’ve had just about enough of your insubordination

Honey Wilson. You are not a mind reader. You are a creator. End. Of. Story.”

The coach punctuated his point with another whistle blow.

Honey sunk into onto the bench again. And sunk her head into her arms. Was that a huff from Deseree?

No, it was a creak. Deseree had stood up. “Coach, Honey reads minds better than she creates.”

It was true, but the coach wasn't listening. He'd already started the mind readers on the sprint.

“It's not fair.” Deseree said as she sat down. “You should be out there.”

Honey buried her head again. How could Deseree be so good? *Proves my point again.*

Even the invisibility group had it better than Honey. All they had to do was flicker in and out a few times. What would she do when it was her turn?

After the water and ice groups, the creator group was up. Honey found herself next to Alex Frederick.

“Please don't use your power.” Alex begged Honey. “It ruins my stuff.”

“She can't help it.” Deseree said.

Why does she keep defending me?

The coach blew his whistle and balls of all sizes began flying passed Honey's head. Honey tried and tried to create something - anything - but it was hopeless.

“Wilson! Fredrick! Step it up. I'm not seeing anything.”

“I knew it,” Alex said.

Honey stopped using her power. No sense in both of them getting F's.

“Now that's what I'm talking about Alex.” Coach clapped his hands. “Honey, why can't you just make balls like the rest of the group?”

Why indeed.

A ball almost hit Honey in the head.

What if I-

Honey scooped up a ball and turned it to ash. Honey smiled. She could exercise her power that

way.

“Honey, quit picking up others’ creations. You’re not fooling anyone.”

I’m not trying to fool anyone. Honey tightened her fists in frustration. *Looks like I’m doomed to fail this class.* She slammed her fists into the wall. Bad idea. When she took her fists away, there were two big holes in the wall.

Clark blew his whistle. “That stunt just earned you a trip to the principal’s office, Honey Wilson.”

Honey stomped over to the coach and grabbed the referral from his hand. It was ash before she got to the gym door.

“Can I help you?”

“I was sent to the office by Coach Clark.”

“Referral slip?”

“I kind of disintegrated it.”

Martha withdrew her hand and picked up the phone receiver. “Mr. Huffmaster, Honey’s here to see you.”

She paused. “I don’t know she doesn’t have a referral slip.”

Martha put the receiver down and picked up a pencil.

“Down that hallway-“

“I know how to get there.” Honey replied. She started down the hallway. Then she spun on her heel. “Which Martha are you?”

“What do you mean? Don’t I look like the original?”

Honey rolled her eyes. “I know you’re not.”

Martha laughed. “We all say that. But truthfully I’m copy number three.”

Honey smiled. Then She spun on her heel and her smile disappeared. This was not going to be a fun trip.

When she got to Mr. Huffmaster’s office, he was putting the phone receiver down. Honey had a sneaky suspicion that he had not been talking to Martha. “Come on in, Honey.”

Honey sat down carefully.

"I've been reading your transcripts from Hill Haven." Mr. Huffmaster pointed to his computer. "It's not like you to be insubordinate."

He leaned back in his oversized office chair. He sure filled that chair. "What's going on, Honey?"

Honey shrugged and slumped farther into her own chair.

Mr. Huffmaster sighed. "Many students have a hard time adjusting to this."

The big Papa Bear seemed to growl. "But Honey, you are by far the worst case I've seen."

Mr. Huffmaster consulted his computer. "Your grades have gone downhill since you transferred. And now you're defacing property."

Honey was right. Coach Clark had called.

"That was an accident." Honey said. She kept her fists off the arms of the chair. In the mood she was in, everything was disintegrating on contact.

Mr. Huffmaster sighed again. "I believe you. I just don't know how to help you." He reached for the phone, but then stopped. "I don't think calling your parents would help things, Honey, though I probably should." He threaded his fingers into the shape of a church and tapped the 'steeple' on his nose.

Honey looked at Mr. Huffmaster. His mother used to tell him that rhyme all the time "*Here's the church and here's the steeple, open the doors and see all the people, close the doors and here them pray, then one-two-three they all run-*"

"Here's what I'm going to do." Mr. Huffmaster said suddenly.

Honey jumped and broke her gaze with the principal.

"I'm going to give you until the end of school tomorrow to fix the damage in the gym." Mr. Huffmaster stood up and opened the door. "Fix it by then and I'll forget you were even in here."

"But how can I-"

"You might have to get a little creative."

Honey groaned. She wasn't in very good graces with the creative crowd. Especially since she kept destroying their stuff. And Deseree was out of the question.

Maybe Alex or Gerry would do it. *Fat Chance.*

The bell rang as soon as Honey was outside the office. She broke into a sprint. Her stuff was still in the locker room and there was no way she was going home in her gym clothes.

“Well, well. You’re later than usual. Did you decide you like this school after all?”

“Hardly.” Honey climbed on to the bus. “But the principal has nice décor.”

“Ohhh,” Sam closed the door as Honey sat down.

From Sam’s final “Have a nice day!” to her mom’s “How was school?” Honey ignored them all.

As soon as she got to her room, she flopped onto her bed and closed her eyes. *Why can't I just die?*

Her phone was ringing. *Let it ring.*

About thirty minutes later it rang again. Then it beeped.

Sup w/U? Y U no ansr?

Honey read the text but didn't answer.

I no wut U nEd...

There was a knock at the door of her room. Honey heard something hit the ground outside the door. Then footsteps as someone walked away.

Honey cracked open the door. And saw the Snickers. With a note. *Feeling low? Grab a Snickers. I was going to make you snicker doodles, but I'm not much of a baker.*

Honey laughed and picked up the candy bar. It turned to dust instantly. Deseree had actually created it with her powers.

Honey snatched up her phone and texted,

got ur gft, bt not 4 long, Pcked it up, now its gon.

“I was worried about that.” Deseree was standing in the open door holding her phone in one hand and two Snickers bars in the other.

Honey might have slammed the door, except Deseree added, “I didn't know you were a poet! Is this a gift you have all the time, or only when you are mad?”

Honey looked at her phone. And laughed.

Deseree laughed too. “So, tell me what I did so I can make it up to you.”

“Why do you want to be friend so much?”

Deseree shrugged. “You're wearing my favorite color.”

Honey raised an eyebrow. Deseree was wearing a dark blue and white layered shirt over skinny jeans. Deseree was looking down at the ensemble, too.

“Look, this is the closest I can get. Mom bought me one hideous black dress. I'm only allowed to wear at funerals. I only want to wear it at funerals. It looks like I'm the one that belongs in the coffin.”

Deseree looked up at Honey's black on black. “But look at you! You rock the Goth like I never could.”

Honey looked at her depressing outfit. *Keep your friends close and your enemies closer.* Whichever one she was, Deseree was certainly worth keeping around. “My favorite color's blue.”

“You're kidding.”

Honey shook her head.

“You're not just saying that because...” Deseree pointed to her shirt.

Honey beamed at Deseree.

Honey's room was done up in various shades of blue. A navy bedspread floated on a cloud of ivory. The walls were the color of sky with sea green trim. The windows were trimmed ice blue lace.

Deseree breathed. “I love it. You are so lucky.”

“What about your room?”

Deseree scrunched up her nose. “I share my room with my sister. It's all ponies and rainbows. Except my bed. I wish I could have found a bedspread this color.” Deseree was fingering the blanket. “Mine's a very dark red. As dark as mom would let me. Not as dark as this, though.”

Honey hoped she wouldn't see the singed corner.

“What's your favorite movie?” Deseree asked. “Mine's *Twilight*”

Honey didn't care for vampires. “I like *Rigoletto*.”

“Never heard of it. What's it about?”

“It's about a man who moves to a town and everyone thinks he's a monster because he's so ugly,

but secretly he's helping people, paying off debts getting jobs for people. Things like that.”

“Sounds like a good movie.”

Honey opened her Snickers and took a bite. “It is.”

“Favorite artist”

“Cicely Mary Barker”

“Who's she, a singer?”

“No, an artist.” *She did say artist, didn't she?*

“Well, what did she do?”

“Fairies mostly”

“Huh?”

Honey stood up and got out her *Fairiopolis* book. “Here's some of her work.”

“Wow, I see why you like her. These are really good.”

“What's your favorite artist?”

“Brad Pitt”

“He's not an artist”

“Sure he is. He's directed some stuff.”

“OK, favorite song”

“‘Brave’ by Sara Bareilles”

“No way, that's mine too!”

“You’re kidding, right?”

Honey shook her head and crossed her heart.

The two girls exchanged more favorites and the Snickers were long gone by the time Deseree stood up to leave. She stopped at the door and looked over her shoulder. “Friends?”

Honey nodded. “Friends.” *For now.*

CHAPTER 12

The next day, Honey rethought her wardrobe. She really didn't like black. Maybe if she didn't wear so much of it, her mood (and thus her grades) would improve.

In homeroom, Deseree was telling Elsa about P.E. the day before. "You should have seen it," she was saying, "Huge holes right where her fists had been. Now that's power."

"About that." Honey said as she sat down. "Deseree, I need a big favor."

"Done."

"Awesome. I have to have those holes fixed by –"

"No, I mean I already fixed 'em. Did it when Clark was on the phone." Deseree turned back to Elsa. "You should have seen his face. I thought it was going to explode."

"Did he know you did it?" Elsa asked.

Deseree shook her head. "I don't think so. He kept looking at the wall like an alien had landed on it!"

A crowd of people laughed at that. Guess Elsa wasn't the only one listening.

"Thanks." Honey said, glad she didn't have to worry about it anymore.

In Science, they were studying the Invisibility Group. Honey tried to observe, but every time she looked into someone's eyes, she began to know about them. Honey always knew where a student was, invisible or not, by whether she knew things about them. But when she wrote down this observation, Mrs. Graws gave her a C.

"It's not what you *see*, Honey. It's about what you *don't see*."

Honey couldn't understand the difference.

The rest of the periods until lunch were unremarkable. (Who cares how cold Manny's ice power was anyway? Wasn't it enough that he stopped the criminal?)

Actually, lunch was pretty uneventful, too. Deseree retold the story about P.E. to anyone who would listen. And, as often happens with stories, it got bigger and more dramatic with each telling.

Ellen sat in her corner and fumed. Honey ate with her hair hiding her embarrassment.

Finally, the bell rang, and Honey went to her favorite period of the day.

“I have a question,” Honey said as she sat down in PSD.

“Go ahead.”

She told Sandra how she couldn’t read Deseree.

“And you couldn’t see anything in her?”

Honey shook her head. Sandra’s dancing pencil sped up on the paper. Then Sandra stood up, and the pencil fell midstroke. “Just a minute.”

Honey waited until Sandra returned with the wiry glasses girl. “Read her.” Sandra said.

Honey tried. “Is my power broken? Did I wear it out?”

“No.” Sandra said, her pencil resuming its dance on the paper. “This is Martha V. As in five. The real Martha spends most of her time in the Teacher’s Lounge gorging on chef’s salads.”

Honey snickered, and Sandra said, “You laugh, but Martha has proven that you can gorge on anything.”

Martha laughed guiltily, too, so Sandra said. “Don’t get me wrong. It’s a great gig. Martha doesn’t have to do much, and the school gets four Marthas for the price of one. Everybody wins! Thank you Martha, that’s all we needed.” Sandra shooed her out of the classroom.

“So, what does this mean?” Honey asked.

“It means you can’t read a copy. And that some powers will block yours.”

Honey decided to spend the rest of the period disintegrating objects. This power was more concrete, more understandable. Reading people was a puzzle and a half.

In P.E., Coach Clark came up to her. “Well Miss Wilson, Luckily, or unluckily, your power is so weak that it doesn’t last more than 5 minutes.” He put a big fat F by her name.

Oh, why did Deseree have to fix those holes so quickly?

Deseree mouthed *Sorry*. Honey forgave her on the spot.

The coach turned to the rest of the class. “Today we’re playing SuperBall.”

Most of the class broke out in smiles and high fives. Honey darkened. She hated SuperBall. She hated P.E. She was coming to hate this entire school.

The game was a superhuman version of baseball. The Ballers create power balls, which the Pitchers throw. The Pitchers were usually those with super strength, but there were a few who

could pitch by shooting a high-powered jet stream of air or water.

Honey had tried every position. She wasn't fast enough to play outfield or batter, even when she managed to hit the ball, which was rare. Before she got to first, a flyer would catch her ball or elastic arms would tag her out. But the biggest disaster was when she tried to be a Baller.

Coach Clark began to separate teams according to ability.

Unfortunately, there wasn't a spot in the game for Honey's power.

After school, Honey got a call from Deseree.

"Honey, you have to help me."

Honey smiled at the phone. Deseree was so dramatic.

"I can hear your smile."

"No you can't."

"OK, I can't. But you *were* smiling."

Honey didn't deny it.

"But seriously, I'm a mess. I didn't write down which chapter we are reading in History."

Honey laughed. *Is that all?* "Let me get my backpack."

At the top of the stairs, Honey got the shock of a lifetime. Her mom was digging in her backpack!

"What are you doing?"

Mom looked at Honey guiltily and began shoving stuff back in.

"Leave my stuff alone!" Honey ran down the stairs and picked it all up.

"Well what did you except?" Her mom said. "You never talk to me anymore, I never know what you're thinking."

I'll tell you what I'm thinking. "Don't ever. Touch. My Stuff. Again."

And she ran upstairs.

"I can't believe it!" Deseree said when Honey told her what happened. "No privacy."

Honey resisted the urge to squeeze the phone into oblivion. *How Dare Mom dig through my*

stuff! Honey vowed never to leave her backpack at the bottom of the stairs.

CHAPTER 13

In Science the next day, Deseree said she wanted to come over after school. At first Honey said yes, but then she remembered Kelly.

“Oh wait, I can’t.”

“Why not?”

“I have a thing.”

“A thing? Like a boyfriend thing?”

“No. Just a thing.”

Deseree shrugged. “OK, guess I’ll catch you next time.”

Honey nodded. And felt evil all over again. Why didn’t she want Deseree and Kelly to meet? She tried not to think about it. *Focus on class*. But something was bugging her. She just didn’t know what.

At lunch, Ellen helped her forget.

“I’m onto you.” Ellen said as she passed Honey’s table at lunch.

“Pardon?”

“You may have stopped wearing black.” Ellen sneered at Honey’s pastel ensemble. “But I know the truth. You’re evil.”

Honey smiled. “Well maybe I am.” Honey scanned Ellen’s own fashionable clothes. “But at least I don’t flaunt it.”

Ellen sneered again and went to her own table.

Sandra was right. PSD was a relief compared to the other classes. Even lunch.

But in PSD, Honey could be herself. She could spend the whole period talking about her powers, or she could learn to control them better. Often she preferred to learn control.

“You mentioned that once you could feel a pencil and the lead separately?” Sandra would start off. “Tell me about it.”

Honey described how the mechanical pencil had felt as she disintegrated it. When she was done,

Sandra stood up. “Wait here a minute.” She said and went out of the room.

That might not have been so bad, except the pencil didn’t stop moving. It was so eerie the way the lead continued to scratch on the paper. Weird became creepy when the keyboard began typing, and the mouse moving, of its own accord.

Sandra came back in with a handful of mechanical pencils. “Want to help enforce the rules?”

Mechanical pencils were against the rules. So whenever a teacher saw one, that was the last time you saw it. Honey had wondered where all those contraband pencils went. *Now I know.*

Sandra dumped the pencils onto the card table. “Let’s see if you can control your disintegration.”

But Honey had a question first. “How do you move those objects from another room?”

“I just do. Now let’s talk about you.”

“But how can you see where to move the mouse on the computer, when you’re not even there?”

Sandra sighed. She shut the door and sat down. “Honey, tutors are not supposed to talk about our powers. So I’m not going to go into detail about this, but I can see we aren’t going to get anywhere until I answer your question.”

She looked at the mouse. “The mouse knows where to point and click. I’m just telling giving it tasks.”

Honey had more questions, but she didn’t want to get Sandra in trouble, so she picked up a pencil.

“OK,” Sandra said, her pencil dancing more furiously. “First tell me what you feel as you disintegrate it.”

Honey described in detail what her hand felt.

“Yes, that’s good, but what are you feeling in here?” Sandra pointed to Honey’s heart and head.

Honey didn’t know. She picked up another pencil. This time she described her emotions.

“Excellent, excellent.” Sandra handed Honey another pencil. “Now see if you can slow the disintegration down. How long can you stretch the process out?”

Honey took the pencil and concentrated. After several tries, she’d stretched the process out to a full minute.

“Great. One more thing. Can you stop yourself from disintegrating the whole thing? Can you

hand me just the lead, *unscathed?*”

Honey picked up another pencil. This one was green and see-through. Could she disintegrate the plastic only? Honey tried. And failed. Again and again.

When the bell rang, she still was not successful at this final challenge.

“We’ll try again. Tomorrow.” Sandra offered.

Honey sighed and picked up her backpack. In her head, she knew that all the periods were the same length, but PSD still felt like the shortest class of the day.

The day stretched out like usual from there. She did OK in History, horrible in P.E. Got on the bus. Got off the bus. Got home. Glared at her mom. Went upstairs and flopped on her bed.

The phone was ringing.

“How have to been girl? I haven’t talked to you in ages!”

“Hi Kelly.” It’d been like two days.

“How’s the Secret Life of Honey?”

“Normal.”

“Yeah, and my dad has goat cheese for breakfast.”

“He did?”

Kelly gaffawed.

“Hey weren’t you coming over today?” Honey asked. “I could use a game of Monopoly right now.”

“Yeah, that’s why I called. I can’t come. Dad’s babysitting the neighbor’s kids and he won’t let me leave him alone with them.”

“Why can’t parents remember that we have lives too?”

“I know, right? Hold on…” Kelly’s voice yelled “I’m on the phone” to some unseen entity.

“Sorry about that.”

“That’s OK, I can let you go if-“

“No, no, don’t hang up. I’ve locked myself in the bathroom because I can only stand those hoodlums for so long.”

Honey smiled.

“So tell me something about your new school.”

“Oh, you know, it’s... school.”

“Ok, ok, I know.” Kelly gaffawed again. “All right then, I’ll tell you about my life. Zac spit milk out his nose, and it splashed on Bryn. She thought Zac was starting a food fight and told Mr. Micheals. *He* told Mr. V.P. and Zac gets a trip to the office. All because Bryn said something funny.”

“What’d she say?”

“I don’t even remember! But Zac like Bryn so anything she says is funny.”

Oh, to be normal again and not have to worry about mind readers at lunch.

“He wants to ask her out.” Kelly continued. “But I think he’s just blown that chance.”

Honey laughed. “Right out his nose.”

Kelly laughed, too.

At least Kelly was normal. *For Now.*

CHAPTER 14

“Mr. Huffmaster wants to see you.” Mrs. Graws handed Honey a yellow slip.

What now? Honey picked up her backpack and went to the office.

Once Honey was sitting in Mr. Huffmaster’s office, the principal got right to the point. “It has come to my attention that you still have contact with your old school.”

Huh? When was the last time Honey had seen anything of her old school? When had she even talked to anyone except-

“You mean Kelly?”

Mr. Huffmaster nodded.

“So I’m supposed to drop my friend because-“

“Because you have to protect the school”

Honey looked at Mr. Huffmaster. He’d had to do the exact same thing years ago- Honey looked

down. She didn't want to know.

“It's a stupid rule.”

“It's a necessary rule.”

Honey didn't wipe her tears. She was mad. “Why?”

Mr. Huffmaster sighed. “I think you could answer that if you wanted to.”

Honey didn't want to. “How am I supposed to just get rid of my best friend?”

“That's a fair question. You are more connected than we...ever were. For starters,”

Mr Huffmaster was looking at her backpack. “You can change your cell number.”

How did he know my phone's in there? Honey always kept it off while at school. She never even touched it until she got through the door of her house.

For a moment Honey was tempted to look in Mr. Huffmaster's eyes but she looked at her hands instead.

After school, Honey asked her mom to change her phone number.

Two days later, there was a knock at the door.

“Kelly!”

“Kelly's eyes were red.

“What are you doing here?”

“I. Should ask. You. The same. Question.”

So changing her number without warning wasn't such a good idea.

Kelly shook her head. “I just don't what to think. When your number changed I thought you had moved. Then I saw your mom come home. Then I saw you come home.”

“You've been watching my house?”

“No - I mean - can't you tell me anything?”

Suddenly honey had a thought. She wanted to try something. But not here.

“Come inside.” Honey pulled Kelly into the house.

Kelly humphed like it was about time she invited her BFF in.

“Oh hi, Kelly” Honey’s mom didn't seem to think there was a problem having Kelly in the house.
Didn't she read the brochure?

Honey took Kelly to her room. Kelly seemed more perplexed than Honey.

“Your mom looks so... normal”

“Well what did you expect?”

It was a rhetorical question but Kelly answered it. “I don't know. Something.”

Honey shook her head. Then she remembered why she invited Kelly up.

“Look in my eyes and tell me if you feel anything.”

“Like a staring contest? Didn't we decide to quit those years ago?”

Honey shrugged. But Kelly didn't seem to be protesting. Secretly she still liked staring contests and sometimes she would have one with herself in the mirror. She wished that Honey hadn't decided they should stop. Honey was her only real friend but she was that way. She'd lock onto one person and just be friends with her until-

“Whoa that is really weird. How did you do that?”

“Honey looked down. Should she tell Kelly? She thought of Mr. Huffmaster. *Better not.*

“It's just a trick.” She finally said.

“Some trick. What is it static electricity or something?”

“Something.”

“Can you do it again?”

“Yeah, but let's do something else. How about Monopoly?”

“Sure!”

Just like old times.

“Kelly?” Honey ventured when they were a few turn in

“Hmm?” Kelly was moving the top hat to Marvin Gardens.

“This is the last time you can visit.”

“What? Why?”

“I can't tell you, but you've got to stop watching the house.”

“Too dangerous?”

Not like you think. “Probably.”

“Ok, but if ever there's a time you can tell me your secret...”

Honey smiled. “You won't have to ask. You'll know.”

Honey realized her mind experiment hadn't answered her question after all.

Kelly and Honey played a short game of Monopoly. Well, short for Monopoly, and then Kelly left. Honey closed the door and felt like crying. But tears wouldn't come.

“Um, mom?”

“Yes?” Mom was folding laundry in the utility room.

“I haven't told you everything.”

“You haven't told me anything.”

“I mean about my powers”

Honey's mom raised one eyebrow. Honey looked at her mom.

Her mom had lots of friends growing up she always went around with an entourage -

“Do you feel that?”

“Yeah what is it?”

She had lots of boyfriends, too, over the years. Her first kiss was not Honey's dad but some punk with a pickup truck. They were sitting in the bed on lovers hill when -

Honey jerked her head away. *TMI, Mom, that's just TMI.*

“So what were you doing?” Mom asked as she grabbed a pile to take to the linen closet in the front room.

Honey followed. “I, uh, kind of read your mind.”

“You read my mind?” Mom almost dropped the towels before getting them into the closet.

“Kind of. Not really. It’s... complicated.”

Mom plopped onto the couch. She looked like she seen a ghost.

“W-what did to read?”

“That you’ve had lots of friends over the years.”

Mom was visibly relieved. Honey felt more guilty than ever.

“Can you read everyone?”

“Not everyone.”

Mom nodded slowly as if she was trying to wrap her head around the revelation.

“Did you read Kelly?”

Honey nodded and bit her lip.

“Did you tell her?”

“No, we’re not supposed to.”

“Well,” her mom huffed. “I think if you’re going to read someone, you should at least them first.”

CHAPTER 15

The Mighty Graws met her science class with a pile of papers in her hand. That meant a big assignment.

"Science projects" Mrs. Graws said as she handed out the assignment, "must include your superpower." She finished passing out papers and folded her arms as she continued pacing the room. "I want you to explore the science behind your ability. Figure out the why, how, or what of your ability."

She was scowling at few of the jocks in the class. Several of the groups had at least one, and each was surrounded by their personal fan club. "What I Do Not want is a simple demonstration of your powers." Mrs. Graws said, wagging her finger at the students. "This is not a show, it's a science fair." Mrs. Graws stopped pacing. "Your concepts are due by Monday."

Honey looked at the handout. *You can work alone or with a classmate. No more than four on a single project. Must include your power. Has to provide evidence of science behind it.* Mrs. Graws's handout was mostly a repeat of her lecture.

Honey groaned. How many things would she have to disintegrate to learn the science of her powers?

"Oh we should totally do a science project together."

Honey looked at Deseree. "I can't do a science project." She looked at her hands. "You do know my power, right? I disintegrate things."

"That's what makes it so perfect. I create and you disintegrate. Oh that could be our project - how our powers counteract each other."

Honey smiled. Trust Deseree to make her feel human.

They worked on the idea the rest of the period and set up a study schedule just before the bell rang.

"Only we have to do it at your house."

Honey nodded. Deseree had three younger sisters who bounced from jealousy to admiration for their older sister's powers. But mostly they just bounced.

Honey had come to a realization. Even math and language arts were bearable with Deseree around. Deseree seemed to have all those formulas and numbers memorized.

"I just can't do the math."

And Honey could.

The two girls made a good team. *For now.*

Honey told herself to stop worrying about the future. Either they'd still be good friends or they wouldn't. Right now they were friends. That should be enough.

At lunch, Ellen practically floated in their direction.

"Honey Wilson!" Ellen's voice was sickly sweet as she stood over Honey's usual spot.

Honey looked up at the senior. *What did she want?*

"There's room for you at my table."

Honey saw in a moment that it was a trick. She'd learned how to do this when she first transferred here. The Popular girl had found out that Ellen could read minds and thought that would be useful-

Ellen broke gazes hurriedly and tried to smile. "Come on. You can sit by me."

"Why do you want to be my friend?"

"Because we have the same powers. Mind Readers have to stick together."

Ellen locked gazes again with Honey. When Ellen had read the Popular girl's mind, she only read kind, friendly thoughts. She's probably trying to send me those thoughts now. And Ellen had been fooled. She'd gone and sat with the seniors and felt like something special. It was several weeks later that she finally found out. And that's when she learned the secret of being popular-

Honey looked away. Ellen was wrong. They didn't have the same powers. Or the same ideas. "Not interested." she said.

Ellen's face turned red. She stomped off to her own table.

Deseree's jaw was bouncing on the table. "Are you crazy? That was a chance of a lifetime! She's a senior."

"Trust me, being friends with you is a way better deal." Even if someday- But Honey wasn't going to think about that.

"We could still be friends..."

Honey raised an eyebrow.

"Yeah, you're right. She'd push me out first thing."

The bell rang so Honey emptied her tray and went to PSD.

Honey passed Sandra and sat down. She didn't say a word.

"So, what do you want to explore today?" This was Sandra's fallback question whenever Honey was quiet.

Honey shrugged.

"How about your mind power?"

"OK." Honey straightened up "I'm going to read you now."

"I know that. Why did you say that?"

"My mom said I should warn people."

"Did you read her?"

Honey nodded. She wanted to crawl into the floor.

“Honey, looked at me.”

Honey closed her eyes. “I’m tired of looking at people and knowing about people. Knowing their deepest darkest secrets.” Tears were streaming from her closed eyes.

“Honey, listen to me. Your mother is wrong. You shouldn’t warn your opponent when you’re about to make a move, even when that opponent is me.”

Honey opened her eyes in disbelief.

“Let me put it this way.” Sandra said. “You used to play volleyball, right?”

Don’t remind me. But Honey wanted to know where Sandra was going with this.

“Well, if your friend was on the opposing team, like in a practice, you still wouldn’t tell her, ‘look out! I’m aiming left.’ Would you?”

“No.”

“No, of course not.” Sandra leaned back in her chair. “And that’s why you shouldn’t warn people before using your abilities.”

Honey thought for a minute. “But what good are my abilities?”

“You said it yourself. You know people’s deepest darkest secrets You know their vulnerabilities, their weakness. This puts you in a position of power.”

“But I don’t want-“

“But you’ll have to.”

Honey sort of wanted to ask more questions, and sort of didn’t. Instead, she spent the rest of the period getting her emotions under control. There was no way she was going to go to History with red eyes.

In History, Honey realized something. The class didn’t go in chronological order. “Do you know why?” She asked Deseree.

Deseree shrugged. “Maybe they’re going in a different order. Alphabetical? By Superpower? Who knows. Makes it hard though. Which chapter were we reading this week?”

Honey looked it up in her planner. How come Deseree never remembered?

“Why can you do math? Who knows.”

The bell rang and Honey and Deseree walked to P.E.

P.E. was another epic fail. They were doing powergolf. Honey's swing was okay, but Clark never gave her the chance to show it. "You're in the Ball Creator Group, Honey. I want to see some golfballs!"

Honey just looked at her hands in despair. P.E. was becoming the longest period of the day.

After school, Deseree came over to work on the project. The two girls had just gone up to Honey's room when the doorbell rang.

"Honey, would you get that? I'm up to my ears in meatloaf."

Honey ran back downstairs to answer the door.

Kelly stood on the porch with red eyes and clinched fists. "So, is that girl the big secret? You have a new BFF so you're ditching your old one?"

Kelly was really upset. This was like déjà vu for her. Her last BFF was Missy Mathews and she lost her, too. Except she was six and it was because her family moved away suddenly. They never really explained why. But she still kicked herself for not keeping in touch. Somehow –

"This is no time for tricks!" Kelly yelled. "Who is that girl and what is she doing here?"

Whoa, I have to stop doing that. Honey looked away and cringed. Especially since she had a fair idea of why Kelly's family moved here.

"Look, Deseree is not the reason–"

"Is that her name? Great! Now I've got a name to put to the one who stole my only BFF in the world."

"I'm not your only BFF–"

"Oh, you think I'm cheating on you, too?"

"Kelly, it's not cheating to have two BFFs."

"Then why ditch me?"

Kelly spun around and strutted off before Honey could answer.

"What was that all about?" Deseree was standing at the top of the stairs.

She had to kind of yell. Honey's mom had her favorite oldies station blaring in the kitchen.

Honey climbed the stairs before answering, "Kelly's my BFF from Hill Haven High."

“From our old school?” Deseree half gasped, half squealed. “You’re not supposed to do that.”

I know. Honey charged the rest of the way upstairs.

When the girls were back in her room, Honey tried to work on the project. But Deseree kept changing the subject.

"We should totally have a secret best friend's handshake."

Honey scrunched up her nose. "Aren't we a little old for that?"

"Nah, handshakes last forever, just like friendships."

"OK, but it can't be anything obvious."

"Of course not. How about we shoot our powers at the same time?"

What happened to not being obvious? "Isn't that against the rules?"

"Will you ever lighten up?"

Honey smiled and shook her head.

"OK, how about this? Our powers cancel out, right? So we'll just point at the same time. If we do it right nothing will happen."

Honey wasn't convinced.

"Oh come on, it's research! For our project, OK? The Mighty Grows can't fault us experimenting in the name of science."

Honey shrugged. That was a good project. She lifted her finger.

Deseree squealed and pointed back. It took a little practice, but soon the two of them were able to aim a small amount of power at each other without any noticeable effect. Honey had to admit it was fun.

Honey spent the next day waiting for PSD. She had a question.

“Does everyone at Hill Haven High get superpowers?”

Sandra sighed. “Any chance of leaving it at, ‘I’m not supposed to talk about that’?”

Honey shook her head.

Sandra nodded. “What do you know about it?”

“I know that I have superpowers because of a gene my parents have.”

“Not all students have two parents with the gene like you do Honey. It was almost guaranteed you’d have some kind of superpowers.”

“So some at Hill Haven don’t have superpowers?”

“Some don’t have superpowers here.”

“Who?”

Sandra studied the woodwork of the table. Honey knew she wouldn’t answer.

“So what *can* you tell me?”

“Nothing. But what I will tell you is that if a superpower isn’t triggered by the end of high school, then it usually doesn’t show up at all.”

Sandra paused. “Are you wondering about Kelly?”

Honey looked at Sandra. *How did she know?*

Sandra shrugged looking at the classroom door. “Teachers talk.”

“I need to disintegrate something.” Honey looked around.

Sandra smiled and lifted the wastebasket. “Will paper work? I raided the shred pile.”

The paper worked just fine.

CHAPTER 16

Deseree spent the next few weeks at Honey’s. Their project was really coming together, so sometimes they just hung out.

“I’m bored,” Deseree said as she twisted her dark hair into a lazy braid.

“How about monopoly?” Kelly loved that game.

Deseree shook her head. “That takes so long. About the only board game I can stand is Sorry.”

“We have that.” Honey pulled it out of the game closet.

After a few turns, Honey realized something. She could read just about everyone, but she couldn’t read Deseree, Her BFF! Well one of the anyway. Was Kelly still her BFF, even though she couldn’t talk to her? Honey was suddenly annoyed with herself.

“Do you play Truth or Dare?”

“Well sure. I mean not with anyone, but with friends...”

Deseree was quiet for a few turns. “So what do you want to know?”

“When did you discover your powers?” Honey asked.

Deseree turned over a *Sorry!* card. “Ok BFF secret: don't tell, but I secretly like Sorry only because I can do this... ” She slammed Honey's pawn back in Start. “And I am not sorry. ”

Honey laughed.

Deseree laughed, too. Then she answered Honey's question. “Last Christmas. Well, almost.”

Honey turned over a *Two* and moved her pawn out of Start again. Finally, Deseree told the story.

“I was wishing we still lived in Colorado where it snows about that time.” Deseree looked at her hand. “I was wanting to start a snowball fight. But there was no snow in sight. Then suddenly, I had one in my hand.”

Deseree's hand bounced an invisible snowball. “I threw it and wished for another one. And there it was!”

Deseree dropped the charade to take her turn, but she kept talking. “I thought I had three wishes, and I didn't want to waste it.” She laughed at her own naïveté. “I was going to wish for Dad to come for Christmas.”

The silence laid heavily on the game.

“Where's your Dad?”

“Missouri, now, I think. Hard to keep tabs on him.”

“Are they...”

Deseree nodded. “Divorced. Split just before we moved here.”

Deseree waited a few turns before continuing. “I didn't know what was going on. One night everything was fine. Then there was this big argument and we up and move without Dad.”

Honey tried not to notice the tears coming from Deseree's eyes.

“I didn't know what the argument was about at the time. Now I can guess.”

Deseree created a Hidden Hill High brochure to illustrate the point. “You know what gets me the

most?"

Deseree threw the brochure into the waste basket. "They didn't even ask me."

Honey nodded empathizing.

"I mean – I'm the one who has to deal with... this." Deseree created a small neon sign that flashed the words, *WHY ME?* "You'd think they'd have the decency to ask if I wanted it."

Honey looked at the board. It might have been her turn. She couldn't remember.

Deseree didn't seem interested in the game anymore. "Well, I don't want it. This isn't worth losing a dad. I would have told 'em to. If they let me."

"How old were you? When they-"

"Twelve. That's old enough, isn't?"

Honey shrugged.

Deseree wiped her eyes and laughed. "Talk about TMI. Why'd you ask anyway.?"

Honey cleaned up the unfinished game. "You're my BFF."

Deseree squealed. "Really?" Then her face darkened. "Don't you already have a BFF?"

"Can't I have two BFF's?"

Deseree shrugged. "I don't mind sharing."

Honey didn't have to read Deseree to guess what she was thinking. *But Kelly does.*

"Sorry about the game." Deseree said when Honey put the box away. "I'm just not much of a board game person."

"No worries."

Deseree grabbed a pillow from Honey's bed and hugged it. "So, tell me about discovering your superpower."

Honey told her about the Volleyball game.

"What did Kelly think happened?"

"She thinks someone put a bomb in there."

Deseree nodded. "That's logical." Then she giggled. "Sounds like something from a cartoon."

“Maybe. But what else could she think?”

“Not fair is it? That we can’t tell anyone about our powers”

“Did you have any friends at Hill Haven?”

Deseree shook her head. “No, but I’ve wanted to tell plenty of times.”

“Like who?”

“Oh, just people.”

“No friends at all?”

“I was only there a couple weeks. And my parents had just – “

Honey understood.

CHAPTER 17

Honey had gotten used to the bus rides to the HHH. Between Sam’s random drills and the familiar, yet still disturbing hillside opening, Honey was beginning to feel like she belonged there. Her usual seat was five rows back on the right. Somewhere in the middle where nobody else particularly wanted to sit. She almost felt invisible there. In fact, on the days when she could spend the whole trip without anyone saying a word to her, she felt a morbid sense of accomplishment.

“DRILL!” Sam suddenly yelled.

Everyone on the bus assumed the monk stance. Except Jon.

Sam’s bus screeched to a halt. “So,” She said into the rearview mirror, “Some of us think they are above the rules?”

Jon smirked defiantly.

“Fine. We are not going anywhere until Mr. Kouri decides to comply.”

Sam stood and looked down the aisle. “If we’re late, Mr. Kouri will serve detention for the entire bus.”

Jon smirk turned into a sneer and he assumed the stance.

Honey couldn’t understand why anybody would refuse to do the Drill. She always felt refreshed and in control. *Wait a minute-* PSD suddenly felt like forever away.

When the lunch bell finally rang, (*About time!*) Honey ____

Honey burst past Sandra into the classroom. "I have something I want to try."

"Ok," Sandra closed the door and sat in her usual seat at the table in the corner.

Honey stopped in the middle of the room. She put her hands together and found her center. She closed her eyes. *The Asian Monk Stance.*

When she opened her eyes, she had total control. She could use her powers – or not. She looked into Sandra's eyes and chose *not*.

"So what are you trying?"

"To control my powers."

"Is it working?"

Honey locked gazes and knew... nothing. She didn't have to always know everyone's secrets all the time. She could choose!

Honey was so jubilant, she almost lost control. Finally, she looked away and noticed something. *Not* using your powers was just as exhausting as using your powers. But Honey didn't care.

"Good news?"

"I think so. Did you try to stop me just now?"

"No. But I didn't feel you reading me –"

"Because I didn't. I chose not to. I figured out how!"

Sandra smiled. "That *is* good news. Let's see what else you can do."

Honey nodded. She was tired, but she wanted to know just how much control, and how long, she could keep over her power.

CHAPTER 18

"Honey June Wilson!"

Honey came down the stairs. She knew this day would come. Sooner rather than later. When Honey got the bottom, her suspicions were confirmed. Honey's mom was holding a green envelope. Her report card.

"A 'D' in Science! 'F' in P.E.?! What's is going on? What happened to your A's?"

"What happened? I transferred, Mom, these are not normal classes! Oh, you wouldn't understand." Honey ran upstairs. She needed to disintegrate something. Maybe a pillow. Or her homework.

When got to her room, Honey settled for destroying five highlighters. She'd convince her mom to replace them later.

After wiping ash off her hands, Honey gained control with the monk stance. She was now completely in control, but how could she explain the report card? She needed to talk to Deseree.

As if on cue, Honey's phone went off.

Ur mom C ur cRd yet?

Yep she's mad.

ned 2 cum ovr?

Honey smiled. The answer was yes, but she didn't even stop to text it.

"And where do you think you are going?"

"Out."

"This is exactly why your report card looks like this, young lady. If you don't put your nose to the grind stone soon, Young Lady-"

Honey didn't even listen to the rest of the lecture. She'd tell her mom everything. But later. Now she needed to give her mom some space.

CHAPTER 19

Honey never did talk to her mom that day. Or the next. Or the next. Instead she started wearing black again. Her mood warranted it.

"Oh, class, Miss Goth is back."

Honey ignored Ellen's ridicule. She really wasn't worth it. If only Deseree were here. This day would have gone so much smoother. But Deseere was home with a cold, and Honey seemed incapable of catching anything. *I'd probably disintegrate the germs before they got there.* The thought didn't help Honey's mood.

After lunch, Honey took her cloud of doom to the library. As usual, Sandra was waiting by the open classroom.

“What would you like to work on today?”

“Nothing.”

“Oh, come on you want me to get fired? You’ve got to disintegrate something while we’re here.”

Honey stepped into the room. “Look Sandra. I just don’t feel it, OK?”

“Okay, let’s just talk. Have you learned anything new lately?” Sandra’s pencil stood up and began working its way across the page.

“Only that I used to be a straight ‘A’ student, but now I’ve got a ‘B’ in History, ‘D’ in Science and ‘F’ in P.E.” Honey threw her hands up. “P.E.! Only supposed to be the easiest class in the world. And I’m failing it.”

“And do these feelings help or hurt your power.”

Honey’s fists clenched. “You. Are. NOT. My. Shrink!” She grabbed the whirling pencil and broke it in two. Breaking it was redundant.

“There.” She said, wiping the remains of the pencil into Sandra’s lap. “I disintegrated something. Class dismissed.”

“Honey wait—“ she heard Sandra say, but Honey wasn’t stopping. She clipped down the aisles and through the double doors. Once outside the library, Honey broke into a run.

She was done with this school, done with everything. She ran in the direction of that she knew the buses came from each morning. She’d find that gate in the hill and she’d go home. Forget this crazy school. She didn’t need it.

She didn’t know how long she ran. Her anger kept spurring her on. She fed it with a minuet of horrid memories. Ellen and SuperBall. Science and P.E. Sandra pretending to care, but really just studying her. Martha I through V, giving her déjà vu every day. Sam and Coach Clark and Mighty Graws telling her when and how to use her powers. Ha! What did they know about her powers? They’d put her in the Matter Group! This whole school was nuts. And Honey was done.

Where is that blasted gate? There still was not so much as a hill in sight and Honey knew it couldn’t be that far.

The bell rang, and Honey found herself on the sidewalk in front of the office. Her first impression of this place was right. She was trapped.

But I don’t have to come back tomorrow.

After school, Deseree called. She wanted to know everything that had happened. Honey told her.

“You have to come back tomorrow.” Deseree said when Honey was done. “If you don’t go back, I’ll be alone. I can’t take it anymore.”

Honey smiled. Deseree could empathize.

“Please,” she was continuing, “I need you. Just go back for me.”

“OK, but if you are absent again - I don’t care why – you tell me so I can be absent, too.”

The phone seemed to vibrate with Deseree’s giggle. “Only if you promise to tell me when you’ll be gone.”

“Deal. Now get better.”

The call ended, and Honey flopped back into her pillow. *I can’t believe I’m going back.* But Deseree was right. Neither of them could make it alone.

CHAPTER 20

The Science Fair finally arrived. Honey and Deseree had planned everything down to the outfits they were going to wear. Honey wore a navy sweater. Deseree’s was powder blue. They had talked about doing black and white, but Deseree wouldn’t do it.

“White makes me look fat.” She’d said simply. And that was the end of that.

On the day of Science Fair, both girls were a bucket of nerves. They were already set up, way to fast.

“If I don’t walk around, I’m going to explode.” Deseree said.

Honey felt the same way.

Most of the projects were impressive. Honey began to regret walking around. Finally, they came to Gerry Martin’s table and Honey gained a little confidence. At least one project would be worse than theirs.

“A volcano? Are you serious ? Isn't that a 6th grade project?” Deseree poked the papier-mâché cone.

Gerry's volcano looked like it *had* been his 6th grade project.

"That was before I had powers." Gerry pushed Deseree’s hand away. “This is a super powered volcano."

"Uh huh." Deseree smiled "Well good luck!"

You're going to need it.

The PA system squeaked into action, and an unidentifiable voice declared, "Students please return to your own projects. The Science Fair will be starting in 10 minutes."

The girls barely made it back before Mrs. Graws appeared with a small entourage of teachers.

In one hand, the Mighty Graws held a clipboard. In the other, a stopwatch. "Honey, Deseree, you may begin now."

"Hi I'm Honey."

"And I'm Deseree."

"And our project is all about opposites."

The girls proceed to demonstrate how perfectly matched superpowers will counteract each other.

Their presentation was admittedly a little cheezy. "But don't worry," Deseree had said, "the Mighty Graws loves that kind of stuff."

Indeed she did. "Well done, Honey, Deseere. This project is 'A' quality. Full points, girls. Good job."

Honey's smile widened. Her grade had just jumped from a 'D' to a 'B.'

The two girls were in the middle of a victory hug when BOOM! A green cloud mushroomed from across the room. Gerry Martin's superhuman volcano had gone very wrong.

"Everybody out! Get out!" Mrs. Graws covered her mouth and began shooin students with her hands. Almost everyone was coughing from the toxic fumes as they made their way to the exits.

CHAPTER 21

On Monday, the auditorium had a big sign on the door: "Closed for Airing." Honey guessed the sign had been borrowed from a radio station.

Homeroom was full of excited whispers, until Mrs. Graws finally threatened to give the entire class detention. "And I will personally stay to lead it."

An invisible mute button had suddenly been pressed.

Once the bell rang, the whispers of homeroom turned into a buzz in the hallways. Only to be silenced again by a look from the Mighty Graws.

The Ice Group stood in the center of the room while the other students pulled out their science notebooks.

"Now pay attention to different ways each of this group utilizes the power of ice." The Mighty Graws orbited the Ice Group pointing to the other students. "And I want to see some thoughtful observations from you." She turned back to the Icies. "Go ahead Bart."

Bart stepped forward and smirked. Honey swear she heard a couple of blonds swoon.

The Mighty Graws folded her arms. "We're waiting, Mr. Barnes."

Bart nodded. He held out his right hand and focused on it. A stream of ice began to shoot out of Bart's palm –

"Aaaah!" The stream of ice had suddenly stopped coming out of Bart's hand and began crawling up his arm.

"Stop yourself!" Mrs. Graws said.

"I-I can't!" The ice had crept past the elbow and was approaching the shoulder.

Deseree unconsciously grabbed Honey's arm. But Honey was thinking fast. "DRILL!"

Immediately, everyone in the room assumed the monk stance, and regained control of their powers. Bart gripped his frozen arm and managed to stop the ice from spreading. Except Deseree hadn't let go of Honey's arm. Her face registered total panic.

CHAPTER 22

Mrs. Graws examined the frozen limb. "Nurse White will have to look at that." She wagged her finger to the rest of the class. "Nobody move 'til I get back, you hear?" and escorted Bart out the door.

Of course everybody ignored the mandate. As soon as the door closed, students began mingling and talking.

"Did you see that?"

"Unbelievable!-"

"Bart's never lost control like that."

"He's too dreamy to lose control."

Honey rolled her eyes when she heard that. Then she felt Deseree's grip on her arm. Honey knew

shock when she saw it. "Let's sit down."

Deseree nodded and sank to the floor. Honey pulled an unopened water out of her backpack. Honey broke the seal and paused a moment. She loved this brand, because it was the only water that sounded like soda when she opened it. Funny how little normal things help after a traumatic experience. Honey coaxed her friend to take a few sips.

"His arm just... froze! He couldn't control it!"

Honey pushed the water toward her friend. "He'll be all right. Nurse'll fix him up." All the things you say to a person in shock.

"You don't understand." Deseree's eyes were misting. "That's my worst fear. My biggest nightmare. That my power goes wrong, and I can't control it."

"Test it." Honey said.

"What?"

"Put your mind at rest. Test your power. Make a golfball."

Deseree set down the water and cupped her hands. A perfect golfball appeared.

"See? It's fine. Nothing to worry about."

"What about Bart?"

"He'll be fine too. You'll see."

Except he wasn't fine. The nurse didn't know what was wrong.

Two periods later, Ms. Jarvis couldn't stop the whispering, even with the threat of detention.

"Would somebody care to share the joke with me?" Ms. Jarvis had her hands on her bony hips, and her eyes were scanning the room. "Hmm?"

"Not a joke," Amanda said, while raising her hand. "Powers keep backfiring! We don't know how or why."

Ms. Jarvis turned white as a sheet. She looked at Honey.

Ms. Jarvis had seen a friend of hers turn villain. It was her boyfriend and-

No. Honey looked at her desk. She didn't want to know.

"Well, since this seems to be on everybody's mind, then I'll make that the writing assignment." She turned to the whiteboard and wrote, *Ten Minute Quickwrite – What powers have you seen*

backfire and what do you think is causing it?

There were groans all over the classroom, and none louder than Honey's. She had a sneaky suspicion that the backfiring powers had something to do with her.

While everyone worked on their assignment, Ms. Jarvis stepped out.

It was like someone hit the up volume. Everyone seemed to forget the quickwrite. They started talking about it instead.

"That was pretty freaky in Science today," Deseree said.

Honey shook her head and bent it over her paper. She could not afford to miss this assignment. Her grades could not afford it.

Fifteen minute later, Ms. Jarvis had not returned. Her quickwrite finished, Honey turned to her friend. "Yes, it was freaky."

Deseree "I'm just glad mine – you know."

Honey nodded. Her power also seemed to work fine. But she wasn't going to keep testing it. Not if she could help it.

The door opened and the class fell silent. It had been almost thirty minutes. But it wasn't Ms. Jarvis.

"Ms. Jarvis will not be coming back today." Mrs. Graws announced. "I'll be taking the rest of class."

She looked around. "I see that Ms. Jarvis left you with an assignment. I'll collect those now."

When the Mighty Graws got to her desk, Honey picked up the paper and gave it to her. She looked into Mrs. Graws without thinking. Honey began to know things about Mrs. Graws's past, but reading between the lines, she understood why Ms. Jarvis had not returned. Her powers had backfired.

Mercifully, the bell rang before Mrs. Graws could give another assignment. Honey didn't really want to know what that would have been.

Honey ate her lunch in gloomy silence. Maybe she really was evil. She looked up and saw that Ellen was honing in on the new girl. As Ellen rounded the new girl's table, Honey looked on with empathy. Ellen was incorrigible.

Well, well what have we got here? Fresh meat!

Everyone looked around in amazement. They'd all heard it. Who thought that?

Whoever it was began to think louder and louder until it was like a loud speaker shouted into everyone's mind.

And who are you? Why can't I read your mind? ARE YOU ANOTHER HONEY?

Then Ellen screamed and grabbed her head. *WHAT IS HAPPENING? OW! WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO ME? GO AWAY! GET OUT OF MY HEAD! YOU'RE HURTING ME!*

Ellen ran out of the room screaming.

Honey and Deseree smiled and pointed at each other. Whatever this was, it did have an upside.

The bell rang. For once in her life, Honey dreaded PSD.

“So, ready to disintegrate something?” Sandra asked as she sat in her usual spot.

“Uh, I really don’t feel like using my powers today.”

Sandra was nodding. “Ok, ok. We can just talk.”

Honey told her about Bart, and Ms. Jarvis, and Ellen. Sandra’s pencil never stopped.

“No wonder you don’t want to use your powers. Does anyone know what’s causing it?”

Honey shrugged.

“Don’t blame yourself until you have some evidence, Honey.”

“I wasn’t.”

“Oh, yes you were.” Sandra’s pencil paused. She was about to say something important. “I may not be able to read your mind, but I can read people’s body language. And you were screaming self-blame Honey June Wilson.”

Honey tried to smile.

“Now,” Sandra’s pencil picked up. “Quit blaming yourself and start paying attention. What can you learn about this thing.”

Honey started thinking. And figuring out things. PSD wasn’t so bad after all.

In History, Honey tried to pay attention to video, but her ears were full of whispered stories from her classmates. She was beginning to see a pattern.

In PE, Deseree was up first to create the ball. She shrunk back into Honey, who happened to be

next in line. Apparently her ears had filled with stories of backfiring powers, too.

“What if –“

Honey didn’t blame her.

Clark blew his whistle. "Is there no one who will make a ball?"

"I'll do it coach " a lanky brown-noser named Jeremy raised his hand.

Coach waved a go ahead. Honey took the opportunity to shake some sense into her friend. She grabbed Deseree by the shoulders "Now listen to me. Your powers are not going to backfire. That was a fluke. One-time deal."

"You call that a fluke?"

Honey looked over her shoulder. Jeremy's hands were on fire.

"Clark!"

The coach ran over to the burning student. He sucked in a windful of air and blew on the victim. And started choking.

Deseree’s face was white as a sheet, but she looked calm compared to the rest of the students. Honey let go of Deseree’s shoulders and yelled, “Drill! DRILL!”

Everyone stopped themselves, except Coach Clark. He was still choking. *Oh great. The teachers always think they are above the rules.*

“Coach, listen to me. You will choke to death unless you gain control of your power. NOW!” Honey demonstrated with the Asian monk stance, and the coach followed suit.

Shayla, Jeremy’s girlfriend, wrapped her arms around him and walked him to the nurse’s station.

The silence was intoxicating.

“It's spreading.” Deseree pointed to Donna, aka Dash, who normally was faster than everyone even when she wasn't using her powers. Dash looked like someone had pushed the slow-mo button on her. Her hands were even now just coming out of the monk stance.

"The powers are backfiring." Deseree said. She looked down at her hands. Honey saw the air shimmer and she put her hands over Deseree’s.

“I have to know!” Deseree tried to brush Honey’s hands away.

“No. We have to stop. Look around.” Honey motioned to the students on the field.

Girls from the water group were up to their necks in water. A boy called Stretch looked like he had the shrinks. And the flyers were digging up the grass as if trying to tunnel.

Deseree nodded. "We have to stop. All of us." She grabbed Honey's hand.

"Wait, what are we doing?"

"The P.A. System. We need a Power Lockdown."

Honey and Deseree went in the office. Martha III was not in her usual spot. Instead, Nurse Mark was at the computer.

"We have to see Mr. Huffmaster."

"You and everyone else. He won't see anyone." Mark turned back to the monitor. "I don't know how Martha did all this."

"Where is she?" Deseree asked.

"She didn't show." Mark began hunt and pecking on the keyboard, but he looked up when the door opened. "Oh, here comes another one..."

A boy was yelling and sobbing. "Medic!" His eyebrows were scorched and he stumbled around the room. "I can't see!"

"OK, just calm down. Listen to my voice. Stay there. I'm coming your way." Mark gently touched the boy on the arm and led him to the nurse's station.

Honey and Deseree looked at each other. They headed out the hall. The principal's office was locked. Honey pounded on the door.

"Go away."

"Please Mr. Huffmaster. We want to help."

His voice was suddenly next to the door, "do you know how to fix it?"

Honey shook her head and looked at Deseree. *See I told you.*

"No..." Deseree said, "but we think we know how it's spreading. Please let us in."

The knob turned. Evidently, Mr. Huffmaster was standing behind the door. The girls walked in and turned around. And screamed.

A living skeleton was standing there. He raised a bone finger to his skull and shushed the girls. The skeleton was Mr. Huffmaster. "I know, pretty bad."

“What is your power?”

"X-ray vision. Or it was. Every time I tried it, there was a shooting pain and a little more of me disappeared."

Honey nodded. "It's not just you. Powers are backfiring all over the school. "

"It's like a superpower virus. Whenever someone uses his power, it contaminates everyone in the room."

Except us. Honey suddenly remembered the golf ball. And the best friend point. For some reason, their powers had not backfired.

Mr. Huffmaster slammed the loudspeaker button. "Attention phinexes this is principal huff master. This is a power lockdown. You are to stop using your powers immediately. This is real. Using your powers may have dire consequences. Do not use them until further notice!"

But that only stopped the problem from spreading. Mr. Huffmaster was still a skeleton.

When Honey finally got home from school that day, her mom met her at the door.

“I got a call from the school today. Is everything OK?”

“I’m fine, Mom.”

“Well, at least you had sense enough not to use your powers. Are any of your friends hurt?”

No Mom, all of my little friends are just fine, thank you for asking. BTW, her name is Deseree.

Honey dropped her backpack and started up the stairs. Then she spun on her heel. Glaring at her mom, Honey grabbed her backpack to take it with her.

Her mom shrugged. “At least you pick up after yourself.”

By the time Honey got to her room, her cell was ringing. It was Deseree. “My powers are working!”

“Deseree—“

“I know, I know. I wasn’t supposed to uses them. They could have backfired or worse.”

Honey didn’t know what was worse. She didn’t ask.

“But I had to know! And they work fine. No problems.” Deseree paused. “Are you there?”

“Yes.”

“Then say something.”

“I knew it.”

“What?”

“I figured it out in Mr. Huffmaster’s office.”

“And you didn’t tell me?”

“Think about it, Deseree. We are the only ones who can keep control of our powers.”

Deseree got it. “And that’s not something we want advertised at school.”

The two girls spent the next hour talking about boys and hair and other pointless things that had nothing to do with superpowers.

CHAPTER 23

When the bus pulled up to Honey’s stop the next day, Honey thought a sub was driving it. The door creaked open, as if it were lethargic. Honey looked at the driver ready to introduce herself. The driver’s arms draped over the steering wheel, and her back slumped. It was Sam all right, but Sam was far from all right.

When all the students were on the bus, Sam heaved the door closed as if it had taken all her strength to do so. *It probably did.*

Less than half of the students had actually made it to school. Many of them had their arms or legs in casts. But the casts didn’t do much more than keep the limbs alive.

The loud speaker squeaked. “Good Morning Phinexes, this is your principal Mr. Huffmaster. As a reminder, we are still on Power lockdown until further notice. NO ONE is allowed to use their superpowers AT ANY TIME. Consider your PSD classes a free study period.”

It was the saddest, strangest “normal” school day ever. In Science, Mrs. Graws spent an hour giving a lecture on Newton’s Laws in a monotonous voice that betrayed her own boredom in the subject.

Math and Language Arts went as usual, since students weren’t supposed to use powers in these periods anyway, but some of Honey’s classmates found it hard to work around their casts to do assignments.

At lunch, Honey passed Ellen on the way to her seat. As Ellen brushed passed, Honey could still hear a whispering of thoughts, as if Ellen couldn’t completely turn them off. She had an icepack

tied to her head with a tie-dyed ribbon. *Unbelievable*. Even in pain she had to look trendy.

Honey sat down and watched Ellen strut to the new girl. “I thought Honey was bad, but you are ten times worse.” She growled at the girl. “I don’t know what you have done to this school, but you will be sorry.”

“Who?” The girl replied.

Ellen snorted in disgust and sat down.

“Do you think...?” Deseree looked at Honey.

Honey knew what she was going to suggest. “Oh no, bad idea.” She whirled her finger in the air to remind Deseree of the Lockdown.

“Come on, what if she’s the cause? And only you could figure that out and stop her?”

Suddenly Honey had a new reason to stay in her seat. She took a big bite of her Stroganoff and Mystery Meat Casserole. It was still disgusting, but better than doing what Deseree wanted.

“And what if someone dies? Will you be stuffing your face then?”

Honey sighed and put down her fork. *You win*.

“Hi, I’m Honey.” Honey held out her hand.

“Who?” the girl asked and looked up.

“Honey. I’m a Sophomore.” *I must be getting rusty*. This time was a lot harder than usual. She had to stall. “What’s your name?”

“C-Clara,” the girl said. “I’m new here. Has there ever been a Power Lockdown before?”

Honey shrugged. “Not since I’ve been here.” *Which is a total of three months*. Then Honey looked at her hands. She’d found out what she needed to know.

“I’m a Junior.” Clara said.

“Well, I guess that explains why I only see you at lunch.” Honey said with a smile. “It was nice meeting you.”

“Nice meeting you, too.” Clara turned back to her food, and Honey spun on her heel to return to her seat.

Deseree looked at expectantly at Honey, but Honey shook her head. “She hadn’t tried to use her powers in years, not since –“ Honey stopped herself. Nobody needed to know about Clara’s dog.

“—in a while. But her power was discovered on a fieldtrip to a wildlife preserve. The ducks were begging her to pass on some habitat requests.”

Deseree looked confused.

“She talks to animals. Her PSD tutor couldn’t even get her to use her powers yesterday.” *But she used them last night to help a baby owl.* Honey decided not to mention that.

“Well, if it’s not the new girl, then who is it?”

Honey didn’t answer. But she had a prime suspect. *Me.*

CHAPTER 24

Honey knew something was wrong as soon as she hit the 600’s. The door was closed. Honey walked in and saw Sandra in the corner. Sandra was standing stick straight leaning against the wall. *Like a pencil.*

“What’s going on?”

Sandra straightened up and began to twirl like a ballerina across the floor. No, not dancing. *Writing.* Honey watched the ground. “Start over.”

“W-H-A-T I-S G-O-I-N-G O-N?”

Honey didn’t know if Sandra had to write that, but she knew Sandra wanted to know. “Powers are backfiring. Every time someone uses a superpower, it contaminates everyone in the room. Looks like it happened to you.”

“P-O-W-E-R-S B-A-C-K-F-I-R-I-N-G Y-O-U.”

So Sandra did have some control over which spoken words she wrote, but this way of communicating definitely had its limits.

“Er- no.” Honey said, answering Sandra’s question. “I seem to be immune.”

Or the cause. Honey changed the subject. “What can I do? Do you need anything?”

Sandra didn’t move.

“Are you hungry? Have you had lunch?”

“H-U-N-G-R-Y L-U-N-C-H”

“Stay there. Maybe... Is your lunch in the teacher’s lounge? I’ll go find your lunch.”

Honey only half paid attention as Sandra picked out the letters from what she was saying, and

wrote: “S-M-A-R-T G-I-R-L”

Normally it was taboo to go into the teacher’s lounge, but since nothing was normal, even for a superhero school, Honey charged right in.

The lounge was abuzz with teachers. Evidently many of them took their lunch during this period. A few looked at Honey with annoyed expressions. *As if they were caught doing something human. News flash Folks, we know what you do in here.*

Honey scanned the room for the fridge and located Sandra’s lunch.

When Honey got back, she encountered a new problem. Sandra couldn’t move her mouth. *But she has to eat.* Honey grabbed Sandra’s chicken wrap and tore off a piece. She pressed the food to Sandra’s lips. She might have disintegrated the food, just a bit, in hopes that it would make it past the small crack in Sandra’s smile.

Honey must have overestimated Sandra’s abilities. Not only was Sandra able to take the bite of food, but she actually managed to chew it and swallow.

By the time the bell rang, Sandra had eaten all her lunch. “Is that enough?” Honey didn’t want to leave her tutor like this. “Will you be all right?”

“T-H-A-N-H Y-O-U B-E A-L-L R-I-G-H-T”

Amazing. Even without all the right letters, Sandra still got her point across.

History was down to half the size it had been. Like language arts, there was a substitute. Otherwise, the class went as normal.

For P.E. Coach Clark had borrowed a volleyball from Coach Rose. *Finally, a game I can play.* For once, Honey was glad for the Lockdown.

Another plus, Coach Clark couldn’t talk. Or whistle. That was even better. A few times the coach pulled the whistle to his lips out of habit, but all he could do was wheeze a little in it.

All in all, it was the best P.E. class Honey had been to since the transfer.

After school, Honey phoned Deseree to tell her about PSD.

“At least your tutor was there.” Deseree said. “Mine didn’t even show.”

Deseree’s tutor was a platinum blond named Tim with hundreds of freckles on his nose. Like Sandra, Tim was an intern fresh out of college. *Hey, where did superheroes go to college anyway?* Honey decided to ask Sandra. If Sandra ever stopped being a pencil.

Honey wondered if Tim called in sick... or if he *couldn't* show.

Deseree didn't know Tim's power. "Every time I ask him. He changes the subject. He tells me we should be focusing on my power, but I think he doesn't want people to know what it is."

Deseree sighed audibly. "I wish I had your mind reading power, or whatever. It'd make things so much easier."

Yeah right. Suddenly, Honey wanted to change the subject.

CHAPTER 25

If it were possible, Sam looked even worse the next day.

"Stop using your powers, Sam." Honey told her. "You're making it worse."

Sam nodded, looking more and more like Honey's great grandma. Honey sat down and wondered if the bus would get there in time.

When Honey got to the school, it looked almost like a ghost town. Or a hospital. Honey wasn't sure which.

A substitute walked into homeroom. Honey looked up in surprise. *The Mighty Grows too?* But wasn't she there yesterday? Honey didn't know what to think.

With the lockdown in place, Science had become pretty boring. They spent the whole period reading the textbook.

Math was the only period that remained unchanged. Except for the fact that a third of the class wasn't even there.

At lunch Clara walked up to Honey. "I wanted to thank you."

"For what?"

"For clearing me. I thought once I was out of school the lockdown-"

She knows I used my powers. "I didn't do anything." Honey waved her hands in a shushing motion.

"Um, okay. Well then thanks for doing nothing." Clara smiled and walked away.

Honey looked at Deseree and shrugged. But Deseree was looking past Honey and over her shoulder. Ellen was standing there with a weird look on her face. It was 50% scowl and 50% smile. *And 100% trouble.*

In P.E. they played Volleyball again. Honey was in heaven, but Deseree didn't seem so happy. "I never liked volleyball." She admitted.

That didn't stop her from trying though. When the ball came flying in her direction, she threw her body after it. And fell flat on the floor.

"Are you all right?" Honey asked.

Deseree nodded. "I think so." Deseree thrust her hand against the wall to help herself up. She pulled it away just as quickly. Then felt the wall again. "Honey! It's the school. Something's wrong."

Deseree grabbed Honey's hand and pulled it against the wall. "Can't you feel the pain?"

"No, I don't know what you're talking about." Honey admitted, moving her hand around on the wall. "I don't feel it."

Deseree grabbed her hand. "Here."

Honey tried. "I don't feel anything."

"It's right here – that's strange I felt it a minute ago." Deseree felt around. "Here's some." Honey put her hand there. "Feel it? It's like the school is sick and—" But she didn't finish. She felt around some more. "Honey put your hand here."

Honey did. "Deseree, I don't feel a thing--" Deseree was shushing her with her right hand and feeling the wall with her left.

"That's because it's gone. Your power is getting rid of it. Honey you're the *cure*."

"What?"

Deseree was shushing her again. "Put your hands here. Now make a power ball."

"You know I can't make balls."

"Trust me. This'll work."

Honey shrugged. "Here goes nothing."

"That's exactly what we want."

Honey wasn't listening. She was making a power ball.

When Honey was done, Deseree slapped the wall in several places. She must have been happy with what she felt – or didn't feel – because she grabbed Honey's hand. "Come on."

"Where are we going?"

"We're going to save the school!"

You do realize how cheesy that's sounds...

First stop was the teacher's lounge. *Martha?* A shadow of the girl with wiry glasses slumped in the corner of the room in front of a bowl of rancid lettuce. "Ablababa,." She mumbled struggling with a fork.

"Do something!" Desiree shoved Honey in Martha's direction.

"What am I supposed to do?"

"I don't know, touch her, hug her, throw a power ball at her. Something!"

Honey looked into Martha's eyes. It was like watching a movie through a dirty screen. *Martha where are you?*

Martha's back began to straighten. She dropped the fork, but she was visibly gaining control.

"Wh-what's happening?" Martha finally said.

"You're power backfired. I'm fixing it." Honey could now see a little more about the girl. She really wasn't much older than Honey and Desiree, but she needed a job to help her get to college. Money was tight at home so –

Honey blinked. Martha was done. Honey wanted to make sure that Martha was really okay, but Desiree stood up and pulled Honey to her feet.

"Enjoy your salad!" Desiree said as she pushed open the door with her shoulder.

"That was weird." Martha looked down. "This is disgusting."

There might have been more, but the teacher's lounge door had closed.

Desiree pointed toward the office. "Next stop, Mr. Huffmaster's."

Sounds like Sam. Honey thought about how weak and old Sam had looked that morning. So many people had been hurt by this. She remembered Jeremy, Bart, and Coach Clark. She thought about Martha with her wilting lettuce. And –

Honey pulled Desiree to a stop. "No. Our next stop is the library."

Honey spun on her heel and ran.

CHAPTER 26

Sandra was still stick straight in the corner when Honey and Deseree arrived. “Sandra we’re going to help you.”

Sandra began dancing across the floor. “H-E-“ but Honey grabbed her by the shoulders.

“No. Don’t talk. Just hold still.” She looked into Sandra’s eyes.

Honey was used to the mind fog by now. What she wasn’t used to was the wooden feeling. Sandra’s mind felt heavy and tired. *Like a piece of wood.*

Sandra. Honey silently called. *Help me find you.* She knew Sandra couldn’t really hear her thoughts, but it helped Honey to focus on healing the tutor.

Finally, the fog began to clear and Honey saw how Sandra had come to school yesterday just like every other day. How she hadn’t heard about the lockdown until after she picked up her pencil with her mind. She was sure that there was a memo in the email, she hadn’t checked it yet. And found herself stick straight before the first announcement over the loudspeaker.

“What’s going on?” Sandra asked, with her mouth this time.

“We don’t know everything.” Deseree offered. “But we do know that Honey is the cure.”

“Thanks Honey.” Sandra said. “But if I don’t eat something right now, I’ll starve. I’m so hungry even Martha’s salads sound good!”

Honey laughed. *You wouldn’t say that if you saw what we did!*

“Anybody else we need to save right now?” Deseree asked.

Honey shrugged. “Let’s go find out.”

Honey spun on her heel and started out the door. But this time Deseree pulled to a stop. “Wait!” She put her hand on the wall. “We’re not done here.” She started to put Honey’s hand to feel, too.

Honey shook her head. “Still can’t feel anything.”

“Oh, just make a powerball already.”

Honey snickered and did as she was told.

CHAPTER 27

Once the library and its occupants were free from contaminate, the two girls ran toward the office. But they weren’t going to Mr. Huffmaster yet. Next stop was the nurse’s station.

Actually, it took a while for Honey and Deseree to get to the office. Honey kept stopping to help injured students and staff in the hallway. Almost everyone had a hurt limb or damaged face. Honey wanted to help them all.

“This is going to take forever, Honey,” Deseree pointed out. “You can’t heal everybody one at a time. We need to talk to Mr. Huffmaster and figure out how to do it all at once.”

Honey nodded. Next stop was Mr. Huffmaster after all.

The living skeleton was still hiding in his office. Deseree began telling Mr. Huffmaster what was going on, and how Honey was the solution, but she talked so fast no one understood her.

“Is your power backfiring?” Mr. Huffmaster asked. “I thought you were immune.”

“We are but –“

“Please sit down sir.” Honey interrupted.

Mr. Huffmaster’s skull turned toward Honey and he sat down.

Honey tried not to flinch. She looked into the eye sockets. This was the hardest one yet.

“What is all this?” Mr. Huffmaster asked.

Honey spoke slowly. “We still don’t know what’s causing this. But we think we have a cure.”

“Well, where is it? I want a drink!”

Honey continued to look into Mr. Huffmaster’s face. Yes, it was a face now, and the rest of was gradually coming back as well.

“It’s not a drink.” Honey said, still talking slowly, still looking into Mr. Huffmaster’s eyes. “Or a shot, or a pill. It’s not that kind of cure.”

But Deseree apparently couldn’t stand it anymore. “It’s Honey!”

“What?” Mr. Huffmaster broke Honey’s gaze and Honey shook her head. The principal was only half visible.

Deseree picked up a metal trophy from the desk. She held it up to Mr. Huffmaster’s face.

“What is this? Some kind of trick?”

Honey looked at Mr. Huffmaster again, but talked faster now. “No trick, Sir. I don’t know why, but I have the ability to get rid of... whatever this is.”

“That sounds highly suspicious, Young Lady.”

You’re telling me. “If you’ll let me, I can finish...”

Mr. Huffmaster nodded and Honey looked into his eyes again. She saw how he was a father of three children, and grandfather to eight. Honey saw that Mr. Huffmaster had been discovered when he was twelve and had been studying to be a doctor when he got married. But his wife got pregnant right away so—

“That’s quite enough, Young Lady.”

Honey nodded and looked at her hands. She always felt a little guilty knowing so much about other people.

Mr. Huffmaster lifted Honey’s chin with his pleasantly fleshy hand. “Thank you.”

The Papa Bear was back.

“Great! Now, how about we get to work?” Deseree was leaning on the wall. “You may not know it, but I’m feeling pain here.”

Mr. Huffmaster had a confused look on his face, but Honey knew what she meant. She lifted her hands and made a power ball.

CHAPTER 28

It dawned on Honey that she would have to make a power ball for every room in the school.

“We have to do this methodically.” Deseree grabbed the map of the school off Mr. Huffmaster’s wall, and a black marker from his desk.

Mr. Huffmaster made a gruff sound, but didn’t stop her.

“So far we’ve done. Here, here, and here.” She marked the rooms on the map. So our next stop will be—

“An assembly.” Mr. Huffmaster said in a tone not to be argued. He pushed the P.A. button and told everyone to be in the auditorium in thirty minutes.

“That will give us time to set up first.”

“And to clear the room before everyone gets contaminated again.” Deseree added. She rolled up the map and shoved it into her backpack.

Suddenly, Honey looked at the clock. One thing was certain: she wouldn’t get to every room before the last bell. Was Mr. Huffmaster going to make her stay after? *Hi mom, I have to stay*

after and clean up the school. Almost felt like detention. Honey wondered if she deserved it.

Honey had made five large power balls before Deseree was satisfied.

“This is awful!” Deseree kept saying, putting her hand on various walls around the room. “I’ve never seen it so thick. It’s almost like-“ but she didn’t finish.

She didn’t have to. Honey knew what she was thinking. *Almost like it started here.* That’s when Honey realized. The science fair was here.

It was our science project. Honey was sure that somehow her powers had backfired and contaminated everyone. *Everything. I deserve to be in detention the rest of my life.* She promised herself that she would never use her powers again. After she cleaned up this mess.

Ten minutes before the assembly, Deseree pulled Honey behind the curtain on the stage. “I know you.” She said. “You are going to want to heal them one by one.”

“But how am I going to look into everyone’s eyes at once?”

“Hmm. Didn’t think that far.”

Honey looked at Deseree. “Um problem.”

Mr. Huffmaster’s head poked through the curtain. “Well, you’d better figure it out, and fast. They’re starting to arrive.”

A lightbulb went on in Honey’s head. She grabbed Deseree by the shoulders. “You know how I can’t read you?”

“Yeah, my powers oppose yours.” Deseree rolled her eyes as if to say *We’ve been over this.*

“Stay with me.” Honey said. “I think I know how to get to everyone.”

Honey picked up Deseree’s hands. “You have to create a power amplifier.”

Deseree brightened. “Then let go of me so I can get cracking!”

Honey smiled as Deseree began to create.

CHAPTER 29

Honey was glad the teacher’s lounge was so close to the auditorium. They needed Martha. And all her copies.

“But what about the lockdown?” Martha protested when Honey explained what they needed.

“I can personally promise that your power will not backfire.” *If it does, I’ll fix it again.*

“But Mr. Huffmaster-“

“Mr. Huffmaster sent me!” Honey pulled on Martha’s hand. They didn’t have time to argue. Martha allowed herself to be led, but not before taking one last bite of salad. It was a fresh batch.

The auditorium was full, but not as packed as usual. Honey knew most of them were either home sick or trapped, or worse. An image of Coach Clark flashed through Honey’s brain. She pushed it away and prayed that no one was hurt that badly.

Mr. Huffmaster was speaking to assembly, explaining how his own power had backfired, but that they had found a cure. The audience was getting pretty impatient.

Honey led Martha into the wings so that Mr. Huffmaster could see they had arrived. Relief registered on the principal’s face, and he began to explain how the cure was administered. “All you need to do is put on these specially prepared glasses. The Marthas will be handing them out shortly.”

Deseree suddenly appeared with an armful of bright red glasses. They looked like the 3D ones you wear to the theatre, but from the proud look on Deseree’s face, Honey guessed these were a whole lot more powerful.

Martha understood at once what Mr. Huffmaster wanted, and soon five Marthas were passing out glasses to everyone in the room.

“They’re wireless!” Deseree whispered.

Only you can squeal with delight in a whisper. Honey smiled. “So where do I fit in?”

Deseree led her to what looked like an optometrist’s chair. “Just look in here and do your thing.”

Honey did. Most of the assembly had put on their glasses, and after the mind fog cleared, she began to know stories. Ice stories, Fire stories. Flying stories. It was like trying to read every book in library. No worse. It was like watching every movie on Youtube. *At the same time.* Too many stories. Too many lives. Honey’s brain couldn’t handle it anymore.

She blacked out.

CHAPTER 30

“Oh, Honey, don’t die! I’m so sorry.” Deseree’s voice kept repeating the same thing over and over.

“I’m not dead, Deseree. You’re so dramatic.” Honey opened her eyes and sat up. “How long was

I out?”

“Ten minutes.” It was Nurse Mark. “But you cured everyone at the assembly.”

“Isn’t that wonderful!” Mr. Huffmaster said. “I’ll send out a call to the parents and we’ll have another assembly tomorrow-“

Mark shook his head. “Too risky.”

That’s my decision, Nurse. But the bell rang before Honey could say anything. “Am I clear to go?”

The school nurse nodded. “Take it easy, though.”

Honey nodded, but didn’t promise anything. There was still one more person Honey had to help today.

“How ya doin’ Sam?” Honey asked as she lingered at the door of the bus.

Sam looked at Honey as if you say *You have got to be joking*. Honey locked gazes with the driver and began to probe. Sam felt so weak. She hadn’t felt this weak since before she had the power of strength. She remembered trying to lift her baby brother. He was so big. And she hadn’t been that much bigger.

“I-I don’t want any trouble, Honey.”

Honey broke gaze. Sam was sitting fully erect again.

“Sorry, for,” Honey looked at her hands. “You know.”

Sam laughed. “Get on the bus. You’re holding up traffic.”

Honey grabbed the railing and climbed the stairs.

“And Honey?” Sam looked back while Honey found a seat. “Thanks.”

Honey smiled and leaned back. And slept all the way to her stop.

CHAPTER 31

The next day, Honey didn’t even follow her scheduled classes. She went from room to room creating power balls. After each room, Deseree marked it off on her stolen map. When the lunch bell rang, they reported their progress to Mr. Huffmaster.

“We have about ten rooms left.” Deseree said, consulting the map. “Plus the bathrooms.” She looked pointedly at Mr. Huffmaster.

The principal put up his hands in surrender. “OK, I’ll help you out with those. I’ll also want you to check the buses, offices, and back rooms.”

Deseree nodded. Honey sighed.

“But first, some lunch.” Mr. Huffmaster picked up the phone. “What do you want? Pizza? It’s on me today.”

Honey looked at her hands. She knew Mr. Huffmaster meant well, but both she and Deseree hated pizza. Honey didn’t want to be rude, so she didn’t say anything.

Deseree however, had no such qualms. “Neither of us really care for pizza, but...” She pointed to an open menu on Mr. Huffmaster’s desk. “We love Chinese.”

“Chinese it is then.”

Deseree squealed and ran over to help the Papa Bear with the choices.

Within ten minutes, the three of them were enjoying mounds of steamed rice, cashew chicken, and sweet ‘n’ sour pork. The lunch break lasted halfway into fourth period.

CHAPTER 32

“Now,” Mr. Huffmaster said when the last of the steamed rice was resting their tummies, “First we’ll get the bathrooms and other restricted areas. Then I’ll call another assembly to have Honey do another mass healing.”

Deseree shook her head. “Mr. Huffmaster I don’t think Honey-“

Mr. Huffmaster put a finger up to shush Deseree. He looked at Honey. “Do you think you can do it?”

Honey looked back at the principal. “Yes,” she said, “but not like we did it before.”

Someday I look back on this and laugh. Honey followed Deseree and the principal from bathroom to locker room.

“Housekeeping!” Mr. Huffmaster yelled in to each room and then he went in himself. When he was sure the room was vacant, he motioned for Deseree, who charged in and almost charged back out. “Do I seriously have to touch the walls of this room?” and she created latex gloves over hands before gingerly putting them against the sheetrock.

“Unfortunately,” Deseree told Honey, “You’ve got to come in here.”

Every one of the bathrooms and locker rooms were contaminated.

Since the locker rooms were right by the gym, they did that next. The gym was a larger room, so it took three powerballs to clean it up.

While Deseree began feeling the walls, Honey looked around herself. “Uh, Deseree, can you come here a minute?”

Two large holes had suddenly appeared in the wall.

Deseree laughed. “At least that was the only fix you destroyed.”

Honey looked at Deseree, dumbfounded. Deseree had fixed damage before.

“Who have you...”

“Oh, everybody.” Deseree smoothed the holes out of sight. “Well not everybody. Invisibility doesn't do much damage.”

Wow. Honey was never that selfless. Maybe their powers weren't so mix matched after all.

When the gym was whole again and contaminate free, Mr. Huffmaster led them into back offices. All of them needed Honey to make a power ball, but luckily none of the buses were contaminated. The hallways outside the school were also fine. Deseree even put her hand on the field, but contaminate wasn't there either. Much to the Honey's relief.

“That's doubly good.” Mr. Huffmaster declared. “There's a less likelihood that any of the students took the disease home.”

Honey didn't know how Mr. Huffmaster had come to that conclusion, but she didn't argue either. Honey didn't relish the idea of visiting everybody's home to clean it of contaminate.

By the time Mr. Huffmaster called the second assembly, the entire school building was free from contaminate. Deseree even checked the assembly hall, but it had not been reinfected.

Mr. Huffmaster was once again standing on stage telling the rest of the Phinexes how simple the cure was, and the Marthas were handing out glasses to anyone who needed them.

Backstage, Nurse Mark was leaning a folding chair back against the wall so that only two legs touched the floor. His face was a mask of disapproval. But a rather large first aid kit lay at his feet.

This time Deseree's power amplifier had two optometrist chairs. The girls sat side-by-side holding hands. This was going way past a friendship point. They were going to be keeping each other alive.

The assembly had their glasses on and the stories began pouring in. “Hold on!” Deseree was

saying. "We can do this."

No we can't. Honey decided their plan had failed. The stories were just too many. But Deseree was squeezing her hand tighter and Honey was still awake.

As suddenly as they had come, the stories began to fade. Eventually, they were gone. Had she blacked out again?

"I think," Deseree was saying, "I think it worked!"

Nurse Mark's chair clanged to all fours. He picked up his flashlight and examined the two girls. "No concussion. Looks like you're all right."

The two girls stood up and went to the wings where they could see onto the stage.

"Don't start thinking you can use your powers, though," Mr. Huffmaster was explaining, "We're still not sure what caused the powers to backfire."

Suddenly Ellen spoke up. "I know! It was Honey Wilson. And I have proof."

Honey crouched and cranked her neck. She saw something flash in Ellen's hands. Probably her cell phone.

A murmur spread through the audience. Mr. Huffmaster waved his hands in a calming motion. "I don't know what you have on that device, Ms. Blach, but I don't think--"

"I saw her!" Ellen insisted. "And she's immune from it. Has anyone seen *her* power backfire? And where is she now? Does anyone know?"

The murmur escalated.

"I know exactly where Honey and Deseree are. They've been with me most of the day. Ms. Blach, *sit down!*"

"See? They're trying to take over the school. Maybe even the world."

Honey stood up. She was going to put an end to this. She was going to admit everything. She started toward the curtain, but she didn't get far. Deseree was holding her arm.

No. Deseree mouthed the words. *Nonononono, don't do it.*

Mr. Huffmaster was still trying to calm the audience. "Ms. Blach, if you don't sit down this instant I'm going to --"

But Ellen was talking to the audience now. "It's all Honey's fault. If she hadn't come, none of

this would happen.”

“WRONG!” A new voice yelled from the back of the room.

Honey peeked from behind the curtains. Mrs. Graws was coming up the auditorium. A plump boy slogged behind. The boy looked like it could be Gerry Martin’s cousin. Mrs. Graws strutted up the stage steps and to the microphone.

“Mr. Huffmaster.” Mrs. Graws nodded.

“Mrs. Graws.” The principal gave the science teacher the floor.

“While some people have been doing everything in their power to stop this horrible state of affairs,” the Mighty Graws looked pointedly at Honey and Deseree, who were still huddling in the wings, “and others have been jumping to conclusions at every turn,” she glared at Ellen, who sank into her seat, “a few of us have been trying to determine the cause of this catastrophe. This is what we found...”

Martha IV pushed a cart onto the stage. It was Gerry’s volcano. Green smoke still seeped out of the paper-mache top.

“This is the culprit.” Mrs. Graws said when the cart was beside her. She looked into the wings.

“Come here, Honey.”

Honey shuffled onto stage and Deseree followed. The Mighty Graws didn’t have to say anything. Honey knew what she wanted. *One more powerball.*

When Honey was done, the volcano was no longer smoking. And Honey was exhausted.

Mrs. Graws nodded approval and turn back to the assembly. “Honey wasn’t the cause, she was the solution. If Honey wasn’t here, your powers would still be backfiring. *It’s Honey’s fault that they’re not.*”

“Which reminds me.” Mrs. Graws turned to Honey. “You have one more person to cure.” She pointed to the boy who looked like – no, who *was* Gerry Martin.

Gerry was hardly recognizable. His hands, feet and torso were so puffy that it stretched his clothes. His face was covered in huge bumps. The largest, worse case of acne anybody had seen. His superpower had backfired, big time.

Honey looked into Gerry’s eyes. She couldn’t read him. No fog, no dark screen. Nothing. “I can’t do it.”

Gerry’s face fell. It was red. It made the bumps look like a horrible rash. Honey couldn’t handle

it. She looked away.

Mrs. Graws's face was red, too. Her lips formed a tight line. "Excuse me?"

"I mean, I want to. I'm trying. But... I can't." Honey's eyes began to mist.

Deseree put her hand on Honey's arm. "Maybe you're just tired. Try again."

Honey wiped her eyes and looked into Gerry's again. And saw the familiar fog. Clouds and clouds of it. It took a few minutes to dissipate. But there was a problem. Gerry didn't know what to be healed.

As far as he was concerned, Gerry deserved his fate. No one had wanted to be his partner at the Science Fair, and now he knew why. He was stupid. Why did he have such a lame superpower anyway? That's why he tried to create other people's superpowers for his volcano. Anybody can create lava and steam and ash. But Gerry wanted to be different. He wanted to stand out for being ingeniously creative. No one wanted to be his partner. Fine. He'd create their powers for his project. He'd show them! Boy did he show them. But he didn't want to hurt anyone. Not really. He just wanted an A on his Science Fair project-

Honey looked down. "I think you're OK, now, Gerry."

Gerry lifted his hands to his face. The oversized acne was gone.

"Thank you, Honey." Gerry said. "Though I don't deserve it."

"A mistake." Mrs. Graws declared. "One we can ALL learn from." Mrs. Graws looked pointedly at Ellen.

"But my proof!" Obviously Ellen wasn't willing to let it go.

"Did we really have to cure her?" Honey said under her breath.

But Deseree heard. She giggled.

Mr. Huffmaster shushed them both. Honey didn't know if he had heard her comment. She hoped he didn't.

"Well, you can't believe everything you see, hear or *read*, Ellen Blach." The Mighty Graws told Ellen. "Nobody has the full story."

Except maybe you.

Honey realized that Mrs. Graws had sent her that message via telepathy. Mrs. Graws's power was exactly opposite of Ellen's.

CHAPTER 33

The lockdown was over. Every class was back to normal. Or as normal as Hidden Hill High ever is.

In science, they observed the earth group. From plant growers to rock movers. Superpower Science really was an interesting class.

Math and Language Arts were boring as always, except Honey's name managed to make it into one of the math problems. "A classroom that is 5 feet by 5 feet by 8 feet, with a wall-length closet 3 feet deep becomes contaminated with the backfire curse. Honey's power ball cure will get rid of 20 cubic feet of the curse. How many power balls will Honey need to clear the room of contaminate with the closet door closed. How many more will she need if the door is open?"

Honey was flattered, but it felt kind of weird too. I mean, who really wants to be in a math problem?

At lunch, she was met by a standing ovation. It felt weird. When Honey sat down, her face was hot.

Deseree laughed. "You are bright red, DetnoGirl."

Honey was pretty sure her face just got redder.

Ellen set her tray next to Honey's "They may think you are a hero, Honey," she said as she sat down, "But I know the truth. You're still evil."

"You know Ellen, if you quit using your power all the time, you might learn a thing or two." Honey blurted.

But the comment went over Ellen's head.

"What, so we're sitting with Sophomores now?" Pam was so clueless.

"No, I've lost my appetite." Ellen got up with her tray and walked away. Maybe Honey's comment had hit its mark after all.

Honey watched her go and she caught sight of Clara. Clara was smiling.

In PSD, Honey asked Sandra her burning question: "Where do superheroes go to college?"

Sandra brightened. "I'm so glad you asked. Actually, we are connected to quite a few elite hidden campuses." And they spent the rest of the period looking at brochures and talking about

scholarships.

When the bell rang, Honey remembered her other burning question. “What is Tim’s superpower?”

“Tim Hilt?” Sandra looked like she was being painted into a corner. “You know we’re not supposed to talk about-“

“Just tell me.”

Sandra smiled. “Invisibility.”

Really. No wonder he didn’t show up for Deseree’s PSD class.

After they studied Superman in History (Oh, yes, there really was a Kryptonite. – Just not the way most people know him), Honey and Deseree went to P.E.

Coach Clark had got his voice back. “Today we are going to play SuperBall.”

Honey groaned. Things were definitely back to normal.

“Relax, Honey, I have a job for you.”

Honey was relieved. Until the coach told her what the job was.

Honey spent the whole period walking up and down the field. She was supposed to disintegrate any leftover balls.