

Invisible Justice

Chapter One

It blasted him like a sucker punch. Sam wasn't sure where it came from, but the burning sensation radiated from his temples all the way down to his ankles. His body was seized by a flash of fire and immobilized with the pain. The wind rushed out of him. He dropped to his knees. He wasn't sure if he could see, but he knew he wasn't ready to open his eyes and find out.

Kneeling on the kitchen floor, he gasped, desperate for air. The agony was unbearable, and unending.

Son of a... What is this pain?! Oh my God! My head... Is it a stroke? Can't breathe... Heart attack? Why won't it stop? What's wrong with me?

Then it left, as quick as it came. The flash of torture disappeared. Sam sat on the cool tile and raked shaking fingers through his short, sandy blond hair.

What just happened to me?

The burning, still fresh in his memory, made him wish someone was home. His mother would be home at 5:15 or he could call his dad at work. But Sam didn't want to worry either of them. Especially since now everything seemed normal again.

Well, almost normal. He shook his head and realized that there was something new going on inside his brain. Not pain. But a sense of something extra.

Still lightheaded, he got to his feet and reached for a glass from the cupboard. He turned on the tap and the stench assaulted his nose. He looked down – the water looked clear, but he could actually smell the iron and fluoride as it ran out of the faucet.

Maybe it's just my imagination. I can't be smelling fluoride in water. What does fluoride even smell like? And is that calcium carbonate? What – how do I even know what that is?

For a boy of sixteen, and one that didn't pay much attention in his general chemistry class, he couldn't figure out why these thoughts filled his head – let alone how he could smell and identify each of the particular elements themselves.

Distracted by the sound of wheels on the driveway, he peeked out the curtains to see what he heard. *Just the neighbor kid, riding his bike after school.* He headed back towards the kitchen, and then froze.

How in the world can I hear bicycle tires on the sidewalk?

Standing still, he closed his eyes to test his ears. What else could he hear? The quiet hum of the refrigerator, Mr. Parker's lawnmower from across the street, the television in Sam's upstairs bedroom that always stayed on, which resulted in constant nagging from his mother. But there was more.

He could hear the toilet flush from the basement bathroom in the house next door. He knew that sound didn't come from his house, as he was home alone at the moment, but how exactly could he sense the specific location of that sound?

A squirrel scurried up one of the trees in the back yard. Without even looking, he knew from the sound that it was the papery bark of the birch tree in his mother's flower bed. And further back, he could hear the gum balls falling from the sweet gum tree – the tree his father always griped about – from Old Lady Cullen's house, whose property butted up against theirs.

How can I hear all of this? And will someone please shut that dog up?!

Suddenly he realized that the dog was Buttons – the poodle from two blocks over that never left the house except for his morning exercise. He only knew the bark because he heard it every morning on his way to school when he passed Buttons and his very nice looking owner as they took their morning jog. Buttons always lunged and barked at him, but Sam never minded, probably because he was too busy checking out Jeannie in her spandex.

Okay, something really weird is going on. What do I do? What do I DO? Get a grip, Sam. You're not losing your mind. Well, maybe you are. NO, you're not. Crap. Mom's on her way home.

He ran upstairs to throw his backpack in the corner of his bedroom, made a quick attempt to straighten up his bed, and threw all of his dirty clothes in the closet. Then he glanced in the bathroom mirror to check for any visible marks from whatever had happened. There were none. Big sigh of relief.

Just. Act. Normal. Wait, how did I know Mom was coming home early?

As if on cue, Sam's mother walked in the door, which only added to the paranoia building in his head. In his mind's frenzy, he couldn't figure out if he had simply heard her car outside or had just *sensed* that she was on her way home. He didn't believe in psychic abilities or sixth senses. If it couldn't be seen or proven, it didn't exist, simple enough.

She walked in looking just as fresh as when she had left that morning. She had an uncanny ability to keep order in everything – herself, her home, her family, her work. Nothing got by Marcy Dixon.

"Hey kiddo, how was school today?" she said, watching Sam run awkwardly down the stairs. "What's wrong? Do you feel okay? You look a little pale."

"Uh, no... I'm fine. School was fine. Good. Why are you home so early?" He winced as he knew he sounded strange.

"Your sister has that cheer meeting... Are you sure you're okay?" She didn't sound convinced, and her eyebrows pinched together as she looked at him closer.

"Yeah, mom. I'm fine. What's for dinner?" Not that he was even remotely hungry.

"Well, that sounds more like you. Actually, I'm just here to get her forms and run – Lexi is waiting on me at school. Can you just grab something?"

"Sure."

"You're sure you're okay?" She looked hard at him once again. "I can stay home..."

"No, Mom, go. I'm fine, really." *Get out of here so I can think.*

"Okay, if you're sure. But call me if you need anything."

"Sure."

He knew his mother hated his one-word responses, but he really wasn't in the mood for conversation at the moment. He just needed a few quiet minutes to think. *Quiet. Right. As if I can't hear football practice from halfway across town.*

As soon as she was gone, Sam sprinted upstairs and got out his laptop and hit the power button. While he waited, he decided a hot shower was in his best interest. Turning on the water, he was once again assaulted by the smell of the water, and decided that dinner was definitely out of the question for tonight. As he stepped into the spray, he realized that something felt different. Not only was the water temperature too hot, but the pressure was much harder than he'd ever felt it.

That's strange. I always set the temperature the same way. Great. Does that mean my sense of touch is affected now, too?

He readjusted the temperature to a cooler setting and closed his eyes. The water hit his shoulders and echoed off the walls. He could hear the soapy water as it circled through the drain and down the pipes through the house and under the ground. But the new pressure felt good, and relaxed him, despite the noise.

Clear your head. Clear your head. Good. Now let's see if we can do a little research and figure out what's going on here.

Sam was never the best student in school, but his grades were okay. He didn't hate school, but rather found it tedious – he was just doing his time, waiting for the finish line. But he was a whiz on the computer, and could find just about anything he wanted to know by researching on the web. If there was something medically wrong with him, he'd get to the bottom of it.

Dried off, dressed and rejuvenated, he sat down at his desk. Once the internet was up, he typed in "heightened senses." He found thousands of hits from World of Warcraft to comic book heroes. With "super smell" he found any product one could hope for – from home air fresheners to antihistamines. His "hearing" results ranged from hearing aids to radio woofers. There was absolutely no connecting medical information on any of the search terms he plugged in.

After almost an hour of fruitless research, his head swam in pure frustration. He sat down at the edge of his bed, laid back and closed his eyes. Through the floor his feet could feel the traffic outside, the car engines purr and the tires bump along the potholes. His nose could sense the just-before-rain drizzle as it mixed with the oil and dirt on the roads and sidewalks. His ears – now buzzing with new sounds – honed in on an argument between two small children a few houses down as they fought over who got to ride the scooter next.

Then, all of a sudden, it just stopped. After a couple of hours of the constant noise and sensory static, it almost seemed as if everything had totally been shut off. His eyes flew open and he sat up in one jerky move. He brought his fingers to his ears and snapped.

Ears, check. Eyes, check. Nose...

Looking for something to test his nose on, he grabbed the nearest basketball shoe on his floor.

Check. Well, it seems like everything is back to normal. Is that good? What the...?

In a moment of panic combined with exhaustion, Sam had the urge to get out of the house. Thinking some fresh air and greasy fast food would clear his mind, he grabbed his keys and headed towards his truck. Once he started the ignition, his mind settled a bit, knowing that the radio was exactly the right volume – where he always kept it – loud, but not “drive your neighbors crazy” loud. The hand-me-down Ford that he inherited from his dad when he turned sixteen was well used, but still looked nice and had a lot of miles left in it. Plus, as his dad always said, trucks are meant for small groups – meaning the fewer people he could pack in, the less trouble he was likely to get into.

Heading out of his subdivision, he turned towards the burger joint on Broadway Avenue. It wasn't his favorite food, but since his best friend Ty worked there, he knew he might get a freebie in his bag. Pulling into the drive through, Ty's voice was the one that greeted him through the intercom. He waited for Ty to finish his usual greeting before placing his order.

“Yeah, I'd like an order of crab legs, three tacos, a funnel cake and a keg of Guinness. And make it speedy.”

“Hey Sam! Very funny... What do you really want?”

“Uh, I guess the double cheeseburger combo – make it with onion rings and a root beer.”

“You got it, come on around.”

Sam and Ty had been friends since the third grade, when they had to endure Mrs. Fisher together. Ty had been new to town, and had the good fortune of sitting next to Sam on his first day. They had been inseparable ever since. It didn't hurt that Ty's family lived two blocks down in the same subdivision. That made after school time easy, even from the days when they were riding their bikes down the street rather than motorized vehicles.

Over the years, they shared everything - forts, secrets, homework, sports activities, and stories about girls – including the various phases from “ick” to “how do I get to first base?” As they grew older, their bond had only grown stronger. There really wasn't anything one couldn't – and didn't – tell the other. Sam had one sister, Ty had two – so the two of them were as close to brothers as best friends could be. They were good kids – so their mothers always bragged – they watched out for one another and kept each other out of trouble.

He drove around the corner and up to the window and his friend greeted him with his normal crooked smile.

“Hey bro. What's up?” Ty handed the drink through the window.

“Not much. Just getting some grub. What time are you off tonight?”

“Eight.” He handed Sam a bag much bigger than it should be if it only held a cheeseburger and onion rings.

“Cool. Call me later?”

“Will do. Anything wrong?” They knew each other like the back of their hands.

“Nah. Just call me. Or text. Whatever.”

Sam took a deep breath towards the drive through window, testing his nose. It smelled like it always did, a fast food burger joint loaded with greasy food. He was mildly relieved to not have his nose assaulted by the smell of each individual ingredient used in the place, glad that he couldn't hear every bit of

chatter in the dining area, and even more comforted that he did not have the names of the chemical components of cooking grease floating around in his brain.

Maybe I just had a mental moment. That has to be it. Like an out of body experience. There is NOTHING wrong with me. I'm fine.

He turned his gaze back to Ty, gave him a reassuring smile and his money. "I'm headed back to the house. Got some homework to do, and will probably catch some of the Cubs game. Thanks for the brew – it'll go great with the game!"

Ty smiled at the inside joke. When they were nine, they pledged to have their first beer together, in college, after they turned twenty-one. They officially spit and shook hands, so the promise was bonded more solidly than if they had drawn up legal papers. They still laughed about it often.

"See ya, man."

"Bye. Thanks for the food." He steered his truck out of the drive through and headed back towards his house, his body still tense with worry, his mind filled with anxiety.

Chapter Two

He had to admit his evening had settled into a fairly uneventful one. After planting himself in the recliner to watch the game, then visiting with his parents and sister as they each came home, Sam was finally starting to shake off the afternoon and feel normal again. Exhausted, but relaxed, he decided a good night's sleep was just what he needed.

He said goodnight to the parents and headed up, brushed his teeth, washed his face, then stripped down to his flannel pants and slid under the covers.

Ty had never called or texted that evening which was a little odd. But Ty had been spending quite a bit of time lately with his on-again, off-again girlfriend, Mena. She was a nice girl, but if Sam had to be honest, he didn't like the fact that she took so much of Ty's time away from him. She tended to be pretty bossy and possessive with Ty's time, and Sam knew he could do better.

It was probably just as well, though. Sam had decided he wasn't going to talk about the "headache" incident anyway – not with Ty, not with anyone. He kept telling himself that it really was nothing more than a headache, hoping that if he kept repeating that to himself, it would become a reality. He'd never had any health problems and he'd determined he wasn't going to start now.

He let his mind wander to other things. His homework, which he had blown off that evening – understandable, all things considered – would need to be completed in the morning before he went to his first class. He didn't have any tests tomorrow, so the only thing he needed to get done was his trig homework. His first period was study hall, and since he was pretty good at math, he could get it done easily.

He didn't remember falling asleep, but the electrical current that seemed to run through his body had him sitting up in bed in a flurry of flying sheets and pillows. His temples were throbbing and the burning sensation was back and radiating throughout his body. He couldn't think straight enough to remember if he had screamed in pain or not, but at the moment, he really didn't care if he woke anyone in the house, or the entire neighborhood for that matter. He just needed the burning to stop.

Sam glanced at his clock. The red numbers were so bright they seared like fire into the back of his brain. When he looked around the room, he wondered who had turned the light on after he had fallen asleep. Nothing was really out of order – he couldn't make sense of it.

Covered in sweat, he panted, trying to concentrate on slowing down his breathing and heart rate. It seemed like the more he filled his lungs, the less the fire in his body burned. He focused on his breathing, all the while trying to figure out if anyone in the house was stirring. He could hear his father's quiet snore from downstairs, along with the ticking of the grandfather clock in the living room. He heard his sister, two rooms over, switching positions in her bed. Farther out, he heard the rustling of fallen leaves as they scratched across the driveways and sidewalks each time a breeze came along.

And, just as suddenly as before, the pain was gone. He looked back at his alarm clock.

Two minutes. Tops. Not long, but too long for that kind of torture.

Still out of breath, but relieved that the fire had left him, Sam swiveled in his bed and set his feet on the floor. He walked to the bathroom, opened the door and went to switch on the light and realized he could see the bathroom fine – just like it was daylight. Confused, he looked up to see if someone had left that light on as well. The bulbs were unlit. He looked back at his bedroom, bright with detail, and noted those lights were also dark. Checking the switches, just to make sure he wasn't losing his mind, he found them switched off.

How can I see this well in the dark?

He checked the window, and everything outside was light as well. His alarm clock read 2:37 a.m., so he knew it had to be middle-of-the-night dark. Cautiously, he walked back towards the bathroom and reached for the light switch. When he turned it on, he could see the light bulbs pop on, but the addition didn't make much difference as to how he saw in the room. He switched it off again. No change.

Huh. So this time I can see in the dark. This might be a little cool, in a super human kind of way, if I wasn't still so freaked about the pain that comes before it.

Sam realized he was much more collected about the episode this time, even considering that it was the middle of the night. Though he wasn't sure exactly what was happening to him, it didn't scare him as much this time as it had earlier in the afternoon. For some reason, he was just sure that nothing was medically and drastically wrong with his body. He knew there was something off about what was going on in his head and senses, but he also knew he wasn't going to get horribly sick or die from it. How he knew this, he wasn't certain, but he was grateful for the extra "sense" that calmed his mind.

He sat back down on the edge of his bed to test his senses. Closing his eyes, he focused first on smell. Breathing in deeply, he could smell the film of toothpaste he forgot to rinse down the sink in the bathroom. Further away, he could smell the vast array of perfume bottles his sister kept on her dresser (which reminded him to tell her he hated her newest one.) Reaching out further, he could smell the bag of dust and particles that sat in the vacuum cleaner, left out in the downstairs hallway for the cleaning lady who would be there promptly at nine a.m.

Switching to his ears, he heard Brandy – their twelve-year-old cocker spaniel – as she dreamed and twitched her legs. He wondered what she was chasing in her sleep. He heard the click and turn of a key next door as Mr. Harris came home from his evening shift as security supervisor at the local museum. And further out, he heard the flap of the giant flag at the gas station four blocks away on Main Street.

Now, for the newest ability, Sam decided to explore a little. Opening the door and walking down the stairs, he felt like he was looking at his home in the middle of a sunny afternoon. There were no sunbeams streaming through the windows and no shadows to be seen, but his eyes were viewing the environment like it was the middle of the day.

As Sam walked through the house, he heard and smelled things he never knew existed before. Padding across the kitchen tile, he opened the refrigerator to grab a bottle of water. Normally the fridge light would blind him in the dark of night, but he realized again that there was really no difference in the light of the dark kitchen and that of the open refrigerator. He opened the bottle and drank deeply.

Oh, that feels good on the dry throat. Wait... This tastes normal, but it's bottled water. I wonder if I drank from the tap...

He took a glass from the cupboard and turned on the tap water. As it ran, he remembered the horror of smelling it earlier in the afternoon – same smell, individual elements. This time he tried his taste buds.

BLECK. People really drink this stuff? I'm not sure I'll ever BATHE in it again. Taste buds, check.

Satisfied that he was able to wrap his head around these heightened abilities and keep his cool all at the same time, Sam realized he was too amped up to go back to sleep. He didn't dare turn on the television, which would wake his parents. So he sat on the couch and reached for the sports magazine on the coffee table.

How cool is this that I can read in the dark?

He flipped through the pages, read a few articles, but found he couldn't concentrate on the stories in the magazine – his head was too filled with questions about what was going on with his brain. He didn't want to see a doctor – how could he explain any of this to a physician without being sent directly to a shrink? He would just have to do more research online and see if he could find an expert or specialist who might have some direction or answers for him.

And then it happened. Again. Everything shut off. Sam found himself sitting in the pitch black of the living room, and his sense of calm had flown completely out the door.

He sat there for a full five minutes, hoping it would come back, scared that it wouldn't. And when it didn't, he fumbled his way back to his bedroom, crawled back into his bed, and laid with his eyes wide open until his alarm went off at 6:45 a.m.

Chapter Three

Sam spent Thursday going through the motions at school, just waiting for the pain to hit. Nothing.

At home he was quiet and withdrawn, which is pretty typical of a teenager, so his parents weren't overly concerned. But Sam was. He was convinced that something – whatever this thing was – should happen again, and hopefully bring with it some new answers. But nothing came.

Friday came and went about the same. By Saturday morning, Sam was so frustrated, confused and moody, he just needed to get out of the house to get his mind on something else. Anything else.

His father had asked him to go out to the local home store and pick up some landscaping stones. His was the only truck in the family, since his father had upgraded to an SUV, so Sam found himself doing a lot of the running and hauling for the family whenever the need arose. A small price, he guessed. Except for the fact that his twin sister ended up getting a brand new Beetle when she got her fifth high school report card in a row with straight A's. *Show off...*

But he was not in the mood for a quick run to the corner store to do his business. The great thing about the metro area where they lived in the outskirts of St. Louis was there were several different sections of town, and plenty of space in between. He needed time in his truck, quiet time for his brain, and a place where he wouldn't run into anyone he knew. So on to the west side he was headed.

While he drove, Sam thought about the fact that he seemed to be waiting, anticipating when the next weird anomaly would happen to his brain. He had spent more time researching, but still hadn't found anything close to explaining what was taking over his body.

I'm going out of my mind worrying about this thing. I've got to stop obsessing about it... Just put it out of your head.

Resigned, and feeling a newfound strength and sense of peace, he was grateful for the long drive. He pulled into the parking spot nearest the lawn and garden end of the store and turned off the engine. He walked toward the gate and pulled a flat bed cart from inside the door. His dad had given him plenty of cash to cover the supplies, plus a detailed note with a description of the stones he wanted for the side yard.

As he walked through the store, he stopped by the display of rose bushes, which reminded him of his mother. He had been withdrawn more than usual this week, and she had gone above and beyond to try and figure out what was wrong. She had even made him his favorite meal last night – lasagna with shitake mushrooms and extra cheese – before digging into him for details. She really did care, and did her best to take care of their entire family. He always told her she was the glue that held the four of them together. On a whim, he picked out a beautiful rose bush with vibrant orange blossoms to surprise her.

Now, on to the task at hand. At the far side of the garden center, the entire end was lined with the heavier items – like bags of soil and mulch, bricks, stepping stones, edging tiles, and ceramic statues that Sam could never figure out why people would bother putting in their yards. He went straight to the stones

his father wanted (he had no idea why he needed a note, as he had just helped his dad put the same stones in the back yard earlier that summer) and loaded up the quantity his father had requested.

He knew it was a fairly heavy load he had just put on the flat bed, but he was surprised when suddenly he felt a little light-headed. He started toward the checkout, thinking that perhaps he just needed to get out of here and to a drive through for an extra large Coke. Then, out of nowhere, the burning hit. Aware that he was in public, and not wanting to make a scene, his squinted eyes looked around for nearby shoppers and a place to sit down. Luckily, there was a concrete bench three paces away. He stumbled over to it and collapsed onto the bench. With his head in his hands, he tried to breathe as deeply as his haggard body would allow.

In and out. Deeper this time. In and out. It'll pass, Sam. It'll pass...

He suddenly realized that he could hear the thousands of water drops from the fountain section of the store a hundred yards away. It was deafening. The smell of the mulch bags across the aisle was more than his stomach wanted to handle.

If anyone knew the number of termites that were in each one of those bags, they'd switch to river rock in a heartbeat! I can even hear them crawling. And chewing. That's disgusting...

And then he felt it – the pair of eyes on the side of his skull. Hoping it would go away, Sam didn't dare look up.

Maybe it's just another shopper looking at the potting soil behind me.

Then he felt the eyes boring into him stronger, as if they were getting closer in proximity. Yes, in fact they were getting closer, as he could hear the soft patter of her flip-flops approaching him.

Go away, please. I'm fine, this will pass. Just go away. I can't take any questions right now. PLEASE.

"I know what's happening to you," said the voice.

Sam looked up through the sunlight and realized that he couldn't completely make out her face between the glare of the sun and the haze in his brain. "What?"

"I know what's happening to you," she repeated.

"How could you..." he started, then thinking better of himself, he kept up his ritual of deep breathing. He felt her sit down next to him. Not close enough to touch, he knew she was keeping a cautious distance. Well, more like he sensed she was keeping a cautious distance.

They sat there in silence for what seemed like an eternity. He couldn't completely concentrate on his breathing, which in his recollection was supposed to speed up the process. His mind was muddled with the scent of her – a mixture of apricot facial scrub and some kind of floral shower gel. Sam was never good at girly scents, and with his brain all jumbled, now wasn't even the moment to try.

Focus, Sam. One breath... Two... Three...

All of a sudden the weight seemed to lighten and even more suddenly, the pain stopped completely. As if she knew it was gone, she reached out and touched his shoulder.

“Is the brain burn gone?” She couldn’t have worded that question more accurately or efficiently.

How in the world could she possibly know what was going on in my head?

“Who are you? And how could...” he cut off his sentence, hoping not to give too much away. He rubbed the back of his neck, which he realized was wet with a cold sweat.

“How did I know your brain was frying like someone had poured battery acid into it?”

Okay, perhaps she could get just a little more accurate. Bullseye. Who is this chick?

She continued, “I’m not exactly sure... It was kind of weird. I felt the quick blast hit my forehead – it almost pulled my eyes toward you – I couldn’t help it. That’s when I noticed the reaction in your eyes as it hit you. I haven’t had any in so long, and this one didn’t linger. I figured it was some sort of phantom signal... That maybe we’re connected, perhaps we can sense each other’s flashes when we’re close to one another. I knew there had to be more!”

“What? Signal? More?” She’s speaking in code!

“More people like me! Anyway, back to you. Once the quick flash in my head directed me to you, I could see the way it took over your body so suddenly – I’m surprised that you had the strength to even stagger to this bench. And I could tell by the way you looked around, hoping that no one else would see that something strange, something you can’t even explain if your life depended on it, would notice.”

“And yet, here you are. All full of notice. How lucky am I?” he managed back, through gritted teeth.

“Well, I can’t speak for you, but I’m feeling pretty lucky myself. I’ve been waiting to find you.” She laughed. “I just never imagined it would be next to the garden gnomes.”

Chapter Four

“What do you mean you’ve been waiting to find me? How did you know about me?”

“Well, I didn’t really,” she replied. “I was hoping, actually. I spent the last year and a half struggling with this all on my own, hoping to find someone who might be going through the same confusion that my life has turned into. I’m Leesha, by the way.”

“Sam.” His head was still reeling, but it was getting gradually better.

“Nice to meet you. I mean, it’s really nice to find you. I thought I would be stuck with this secret forever, and now, out of the blue, here you are! Hey. Can you move stuff?”

“What?” *Could she ramble any more?*

“Can you move stuff? You know, with your brain.”

This chick is making no sense at all. Who can move things with their brain? Wait... It’s not as if my brain hasn’t been doing some pretty incredible stuff.

His expression changed instantly from confusion to astonishment. “No. Can you?”

“Yep. It was pretty freaky at first, and then when the flashes of pain finally stopped, I decided it was a pretty cool parlor trick! Wanna see?”

“Uh, YEAH.” *Duh. Of course I want to see this.*

She looked around to make sure no one was watching or within ear shot. All of a sudden the conversation had the feeling of some secret covert operation.

“Do you see that sign right there – for the bird baths on sale?”

“Yeah.”

And then it happened. It moved four inches to the left.

“YOU did that?” Sam was scared and amazed all in the blink of an eye.

“Yep.”

“With your brain.”

“Yep.”

“No way. Do it again.” Sam wanted to make sure his eyes weren’t playing tricks on him. Or worse yet, that she wasn’t playing tricks on him.

“Okay, but let’s be careful. I don’t think the general public is ready for this kind of thing. Hey, that’s a nice rose bush you’ve got there,” she nodded to his cart.

Sam glanced down and his plant was levitated about two inches in the air and turning a complete one-eighty. She set it down as gracefully as it floated, all without lifting a finger.

“Does anyone know you can do this?” he asked Leesha.

“No. I’ve been afraid to talk to anyone about it. I mean, who’s going to understand? Plus, I don’t really want to be the next NASA science experiment. Who knows what scientists would do with something like this.”

This was all more than Sam could comprehend. There were so many questions he had for her, to try and get a grip on what was going on inside him. As his mind raced, he snapped back to reality and remembered his dad would be expecting his return with the landscaping stones.

“Look, there’s so much I want to ask you, to discuss with you about this,” Sam started, “but right now my dad is waiting at home for me, and I’ve already been gone longer than I should have. Can we get together later?”

“You bet we can. I just found you – I’m not letting you get away so easily. We’ve GOT to figure out some answers to all of this stuff. I hope you’re my key to finding them.”

“What are you doing later on tonight?”

“Nothing, now. My schedule is cleared for this.”

Sam thought quickly. “Do you know the coffee shop on the corner of 3rd and Madison? Frannie’s?”

“Yeah, sure I do. It’s a dive.”

“It is,” Sam replied, “but it’s always empty.”

“Right. I follow you...”

“Meet me there at eight tonight?”

“You got it, partner. See you then,” she smiled widely. Sam couldn’t help but notice the gleam of hope in her blue eyes.

“See you then.” His hope for answers was probably just as strong as hers.

Sam bolted out of the nursery, loaded up the truck and headed for home as quickly as he could. His mind was racing, and he couldn’t quite get a grip on what had just happened. Not only did he have another episode – and he had been waiting for this to happen – but he found a connection to someone that has had similar experiences. So many questions were churning through his mind, which only added to the chaos in his brain from his extra senses that lingered from the last blast of fire.

Did she really just move things with her mind? How cool is that?! I wonder if she can teach me how to do that... Okay, okay. Focus. You’ve got to figure out exactly what you need to know about her and from her. For crying out loud, you didn’t even get her whole name – or her phone number! Oh, I hope she shows tonight...

As Sam sped home, his mind was methodically checking off all the questions he wanted to ask her. He didn’t get a clear look at her – his head was reeling and burning the whole time they talked – but he figured she was in high school or college. She was there alone, so he guessed she was old enough to drive, but he suspected that she was a couple years older than he was. He needed to know everything about her – who she was, where she came from, places that she had been – there had to be some sort of connection between the two of them. If they could find that connection, maybe they could figure out what was happening to them.

Sam parked in the driveway around four o’clock that afternoon and spent the following three hours helping his father unload the stones and place them according to his instruction. The work wasn’t hard, but in Sam’s mind, it seemed like the time drug on forever. Finally at seven, they finished and Sam bolted for the shower. He hurried to get dressed and as he was racing down the stairs, he was stopped by his mother.

“Hi, honey. Do you want dinner?” Sam knew she was worried about him, even though he had done his best to act normal.

“No, but thanks Mom,” he flashed his brightest smile at her, all the while knowing she could probably see right through his attempt. “I was actually going out to meet a friend.”

“Oh? Who are you going out with? Is it a date?”

She is so totally on to me. “No, it’s not a date. Just a new friend I met – her name is Leesha. We’re meeting at Frannie’s, so I’ll grab some dinner there.” *Keep it simple. The less info the better, but stick to as much of the truth as you can, just in case.*

“Well, okay then... Be careful. What time do you think you’ll be home? Do you have your cell with you?” As mothers went, she was totally thorough. She never ran out of questions.

Sam’s curfew was at midnight, but he always tried to be home before then, thinking that he got extra credit for being reliable. “I’ve got my cell. I shouldn’t be out too late – maybe eleven or so. I’ll call if it’s later than that.” *That should earn me a few points.*

“All right.” He turned to leave. “Oh, and Sam?”

“Yes, Mom?”

“The yard looks great. Thanks for helping your dad with that.”

“No problem, Mom. Anytime.”

“And Sam... I love my new rose bush. You picked out my favorite color. Thank you.”

“You’re welcome, Mom. You deserve it,” and he meant it.

Sam knew that his family was pretty normal, kind of straight-as-an-arrow kind of perfect. His was the kind of family that everyone wanted when they saw “story book” families depicted in movies and television. His sister was a pain sometimes, and his parents were overly protective, but all in all, Sam knew he was pretty lucky.

He turned and headed for his truck. He couldn’t wait to get to Frannie’s.

Chapter Five

She was waiting for him when he got there, in the back corner booth. He recognized her immediately, even from his muddled recollection of the few moments they spent together earlier, her jet black hair and quick smile made her an easy target to identify. He glanced at his watch. He was early, by about four minutes.

Well, she's prompt. Points for her.

"Hey," Sam started, sitting down. "Thanks for meeting with me. My mind's been absolutely racing since I saw you this afternoon."

"Mine has too! I had given up hope that I might be able to find any rational connection or answer as to what happened to me. I was so... Well, relieved is the right word, to find you."

"You said happened – past tense," Sam questioned. "Do you mean you're not having episodes any more?"

"No. You call them episodes? That's funny. No, the flashes are gone. All that's left is the extra brain power that it left with me." She tapped her head and gave him a crooked grin that reached half of her face.

"Okay, start from the beginning. Tell me what happened. I want to know everything – how old you were when it started, what it felt like, what you did about it, who you told – give me all your details," he pleaded.

"The first time it happened I was sitting in detention. It was probably close to a year and a half ago, so the end of my freshman year."

"Wait. So you're in high school? Where do you go to school?"

"Central."

"Have you always lived here?"

"Born and raised," she continued. "Except for the nine months when I was seven that my mother wanted to try living on the Gulf Coast. She followed some deadbeat boyfriend of hers down there. He was a fry cook at one of the casinos. We lived there for just a short time, then we moved back when they broke up. My grandparents are here, so it's always been home base for us."

"So you were in detention..." he prodded, trying to get her back on track.

"Right, detention. I had gotten in trouble in Spanish class for talking too much..."

I can't even imagine...

"... so I was just sitting there after school, trying to not do my homework, when out of the blue a migraine hit me like a ton of bricks."

"Uh-huh..."

"I mean, I know now that it wasn't a migraine, but that's what I figured at the time. I'd never had a headache like that. It started in my temples and burned like fire. I couldn't see for a few minutes. I laid my head down on the desk with my eyes squeezed shut, because I knew if I opened them up, the light from the room would burn holes in my brain."

"Did it hurt anywhere else?" Sam was curious, as it felt like his burning reached every corner of his body.

"No – just my head. It was on fire."

"How long did it last?"

“Oh, I don’t know,” Leesha’s eyebrows pinched in thought. “I suppose three or four minutes. Hard to remember now... But I remember it felt like an eternity.”

“And then it stopped?”

“Yeah! That was the really weird part. Just when I thought my head was going to explode, the pain stopped, almost as if it had never started.”

“Did you tell anyone what happened?” Sam wondered.

“I mentioned it to my mom, but we both just figured it was like a migraine flash. It didn’t happen again for like a couple more months, and she never asked about it again... She’s not really attentive in a maternal sort of way, if you know what I mean. And the next time it happened, I accidentally discovered the telekinesis thing, and was so freaked out, I didn’t tell anyone. It’s been a secret ever since. Until today, that is.”

“What do you mean you accidentally discovered the – what did you call it?”

“Telekinesis,” she continued. “It’s basically the technical word for the ability to move things with the power of your mind.”

She threw her head back and let out a deep, throaty laugh. “I suppose it wasn’t very funny at the time, but when I look back at it now, I can’t help but laugh. Anyway, it’s like two months later, early June, and I’m sitting in my lifeguard chair at my summer job.”

“Lifeguard?” Sam raised his eyebrows in disbelief.

“Champion of the swim team, thank you very much.”

“You don’t seem like the jock sort.”

“I don’t fit well into any mold. You’ll figure that out quickly.”

“I suppose,” he said. “Continue...”

She smiled. “Thank you. Anyway, I was in my chair and the migraine hit my head out of nowhere. I seriously thought I would fall out of that eight foot high chair right then and there. Luckily I had my sunglasses on, so when I clamped my eyes shut, no one noticed. When the burning hit my head, everything else was kind of blurry – all of the sounds kind of got quiet and fuzzy – almost like an out of body experience. I peeked through my eyes to figure out if I could get myself down from the chair, and I caught sight of this fat kid – a real pain in the butt every day of my summer career – who had gotten a cramp in the deep end of the pool and was about to go under. I was torn between trying to save my head, and do my job. In a fit of rage, I kind of just willed him out of the pool.”

“What do you mean you willed him out of the pool?”

“Well, I knew that my head would not allow my body to move. I literally couldn’t get down from the perch I was on and physically get him out of the water myself. So I wished him up and onto the concrete. That fat kid FLEW out of the water and just flopped onto his side, like a walrus. What was his name? Nate! Nate. Nate, the walrus. Honestly, it would have been a chore for me to haul him up with my own two hands. It ended up much better this way.”

“Did anyone see this?!” Sam looked horrified.

She chuckled, her blue eyes sparkling with the recollection. “You know, you’d think someone would have. And looking back, I’m probably lucky that no

one did. The other lifeguard on duty was on the other end of the pool, at the zero entry side. And the pool was always so loud and full of kids that no one else really paid attention to what anyone else was doing. Anyway, Nate flew up out of the water and hit the slab, instantly crying and holding his calf. He was hysterical, everyone swarmed him at once, but no one could get any information out of him beyond the fact that his leg had cramped up. In all the chaos, I don't think anyone even realized that he had concrete burn marks on his left shoulder and butt cheek!" She threw her head back and laughed again.

"Did you know instantly that you had done that with your mind?" Sam was riveted.

"Not really. By the time my head cleared, I thought maybe my mind was playing tricks on me through all the haze. Once I got home, and really thought through the afternoon's events, I tried to recreate the telekinesis, but it didn't work. So I figured I had just imagined it. Or another person had gotten him out of the pool – someone I hadn't seen or focused on in the midst of my headache."

"So you lost it?" Sam was coming up with more questions as each one he asked was given an answer. "How did you get it back?"

"It seemed like the burning flashes came in spurts, like a couple at a time really close together, then it took a few days off. Then I'd get like three more, then a week without anything. Each time I'd get a flash, the telekinesis would kick in and last an hour or so. After about a month, I started getting flashes every day, then twice a day, then the last couple of days it was a constant burn. Then it stopped. Well, the burning stopped, but the telekinesis stayed. It's been with me ever since."

"And you've not had any pain since?"

"Nope. None at all. It's over."

"You mean to tell me that this pain is going to increase in frequency and intensity?"

"Well, I can't be sure for you, but for me it got more frequent, but the pain lessened each time. Almost as if the burning cooled a little with each episode."

"And your burning was just in your head?"

"Yes. Isn't yours?"

"No," Sam grimaced. "Actually, it seems to radiate throughout my entire body. I burn everywhere."

"Oh... That sucks." Her face was sober.

"Tell me about it."

"How many times has it happened to you?" Leesha turned the conversation over to him, as she had as many questions for him as he did for her.

"It just started Wednesday. Wednesday after school I was home alone and it hit me – much like you had said, but the burning felt like it crippled my entire body. I had another one that night – woke me up in the middle of the night. Then nothing until this afternoon. So three times, total."

"And can you move things with your mind?"

Sam looked down at his napkin. "No."

"Well, what can you do?"

"Nothing like that."

“Sam, it didn’t happen for me right away. But it does sound like we’re having similar experiences. I have to think your body is changing the way mine did. Isn’t there anything different that happens to you after each flash?”

He thought a minute. “Well, I can’t move anything with my mind, but it seems like each time it happens my hearing and my sense of smell get stronger. The first time it happened, I could hear things like a half mile away from me, and I turned on the faucet and was blown away by the smell of the gunk in tap water. Oh! And the second time – in the middle of the night – I could see everything clearly without the any of the lights on.”

“Super senses?! That’s cool! Does it affect your touch?” Leesha was alert with curiosity.

“Yeah. The first time it happened I got in the shower and it felt really hot, and almost like the water pressure was cranked up to super sonic power.”

“What about your taste?”

“I’m not totally sure... Every time it’s happened, I’ve been too freaked out to want to eat. By the time I’m hungry again, the power has passed. I did notice our tap water is disgusting,” and he proceeded to fill her in on his experience with the water.

“My power got stronger as the flashes grew in intensity. I had to work on it a bit – really concentrate on objects and distances, but you’ll find that you’ll get stronger and better at it. I wonder if this will manifest into any other powers for you as you get closer to the end of the flashes...”

Sam’s eyebrows went up. “Do you really think the flashes will end? I mean, do you honestly think our experiences are connected somehow?”

“I believe they have to be. I believe that you and I were brought together by some force to figure this out. You are my gift to understanding this. Because if I can’t finally understand what this is all about, eventually it will drive me crazy.”

“Then I guess we’ll just have to work on finding some answers.”

Leesha smiled in approval. “Agreed.”

They sat and talked for a total of three and a half hours, updating each other on their experiences and research that had been done. Since they both agreed that Sam was in the beginning phases of his transformation (for lack of a better word), they decided each time he had an episode, he would keep a diary of when it happened, how it felt physically, how long it lasted, and ultimately what strange anomalies or abilities resulted from the occurrence and how long they lasted after the episode. Sam preferred to call them “magic powers,” but Leesha’s scientific rationale shot that down right away.

Leesha promised to do a little more research on heightened senses to see if she could uncover any information that had passed by Sam in his initial search. She also had some files on telekinesis that she would bring for Sam to review when they met next.

They swapped phone numbers, email addresses and physical addresses, and set the next meeting date – next Saturday afternoon at the downtown library. They could communicate in between as needed, but the next meeting was designed to be a working session. They knew they would have to be discreet in a

quiet library, given the sensitive material, but if they were going to research, a library was the best place to start.

Chapter Six

Sam's Sunday went by uneventfully, just another quiet day with the family. Church, then Sunday school, then Dad put steaks on the grill for lunch afterwards. The weather was starting to get cooler, and since they always stored the grill in the shed for the winter, they all wanted to get one last home grilled steak before winter broke.

Sam was secretly relieved not to go out to brunch after church, which was often the family tradition, but he was trying to avoid any kind of public activity until he got a handle on what was going on with the episodes. He wished there was a way to know when they were going to hit, with enough time to find some privacy, but up to this point there had been no precursor signal to the burn.

After lunch, Sam sat down to watch the Packers game with his dad, a lifelong cheese head. When the game was over and victorious, Sam excused himself to his bedroom, with the explanation of homework. He did have homework, which he intended to get done, but he first wanted to do some research on telekinesis as well.

Let's see... According to Wikipedia, telekinesis – or psychokinesis - refers to the direct influence of mind on a physical system that cannot be entirely accounted for by the mediation of any known physical energy. Examples could include distorting or moving an object or influencing the output of a random number generator. Blah, blah, blah... Here we go: There is no convincing scientific evidence that telekinesis exists. A meta-analysis of 380 studies found a "very small" effect which could be explained by publication bias.

What is publication bias? Reading on...

Experiments have historically been criticized for lack of proper controls and repeatability. However, some experiments have created illusions of telekinesis where none exists, and these illusions depend to an extent on the subject's prior belief in the ability.

Sam spent some time reading through the history of telekinesis, how it was named, and the scientists who worked together to define it. Terms such as "remote influencing," "distant mental influence," and "directed conscious intention" kept appearing throughout the material, but Sam just found all of the scientific jargon confusing and burdensome. He was grateful that Leesha would be better at this research thing than he seemed to be.

As he got to the information on modern technology and scientific studies, Sam began to understand why Leesha was hesitant to request any medical or scientific help in uncovering this mystery. Not only is the general public super skeptical (not that he can blame them, he would be too if he hadn't seen it himself!), but the ways in which some of the scientists tested this kind of stuff were downright barbaric.

You'd be crazy if you think I'm going to let anyone drill a contraption like that into my skull! No way. No how. NOT going to happen.

There were other web pages he found along his search, but most of them were hokey and didn't appear to have any scientific data to back up the information that was presented. Some were downright laughable, some pages showed people with spirals in their eyes and others merely listed sci-fi movies

where the plot line revolved around the paranormal. The bottom line was that no one really knew if the ability was possible, there were a million different theories, but no one had been able to document a particular person or case in which telekinesis had been recorded and measured.

Sam felt that reading through the information, after all was said and done, was a good exercise, as now he felt he knew a little bit more about Leesha and her abilities. He couldn't imagine having to discover this and mentally process it alone, and he realized that he was grateful that Leesha found him when she did. He recognized that while he spent about half of a week scared out of his mind wondering what was happening to him, she spent the better part of a year and a half feeling the same exact way.

How frustrating that must have been for her. Well, if nothing else, we have each other now. I'll do everything I can to make this up to her as we try to figure this out together.

And with that pledge, he begrudgingly switched over to his trig assignment, then on to drafting his book report for literature class. After a couple more hours at it, he shut down his computer, loaded his school pack for the next day, and got ready for bed.

Great. Just EXACTLY what I needed today. Why, of all days, does my truck decide not to start? I don't have time to fiddle with it now. I guess I'll have to fix it after school today.

Sam kept turning the ignition, hoping each time that the truck would suddenly miraculously come to life, but so far, no luck. Angry, he stepped out of the cab, slammed the door, and stomped back up to the house. His sister was already gone – she always left early to socialize before the start of classes – or he'd have hitched with her.

"Mom?" He yelled as soon as he hit the door.

"What is it, Sam?" It was the first thing she had heard out of him in what seemed like days, so naturally she sounded a little worried. "What's wrong?"

"My truck won't start."

"Oh no, honey! That's awful. What do you think it is?"

"I'm not sure at this point, but I don't really have time to figure it out. I need to get to school. What time are you headed to work?"

"Not for another 45 minutes or so. I've got a meeting close to here, so was going straight there, then in to the office. But I think your dad is leaving here shortly." She turned and yelled across the house: "Dan! Sam needs a ride to school. Can you take him?"

"Yep," he said in a much quieter tone, as he was just appearing around the corner of the entry way. "I'm headed out now. You ready, pal?"

"Yeah, Dad. Thanks."

"No biggie. And I'll come home early this afternoon to give you a hand under the hood. We'll get it fixed this afternoon." Sam was grateful that his dad was so handy around the house – especially with mechanical things. He guessed that was where he picked up much of his fix-it skills, tinkering around with his dad.

His mother turned back to Sam, “Lexi is supposed to come straight home from school to finish her biology project. Make sure you catch her at school, she can give you a ride home.”

“Mom, I can manage a ride home...” The last thing he wanted to do was ride with his sister, for crying out loud.

“Okay, but if you need to, she can take you,” his mother insisted.

“Okay Mom, thanks.”

Mondays were always Sam’s favorite school day because instead of having to go to P.E. in fourth period, he was excused to participate in student government. Normally it wasn’t a big deal – the group got together to talk about upcoming events like Homecoming activities and the rules and regulations of the ad hoc student clubs. Sam would not have even run for election, except that he knew the activity would look good on his college applications. Plus, Ty ran with him, so it gave them an extra chance to hang out during school time.

Today, however, Sam was having a hard time concentrating on the agenda the group was discussing. His mind seemed to be on eleven different things, and this Monday couldn’t go quite fast enough. He needed to get home to fix his truck, then he had a health quiz to study for, and most importantly he needed to do more research on senses.

“Hey Sam,” Ty whispered across his desk. “What’s going on tonight?”

“Uh, nothing man.” Sam was caught by surprise. Ty had kind of neglected him for the past few weeks, spending the bulk of his time with his girlfriend. He wondered if Ty was suddenly single again. “My truck wouldn’t start this morning, so I’ve got to get it fixed when I get home. Hey – can I catch a ride home with you after school tonight?”

“No, sorry. I’ve got to take Mena to shop for her dress for the dance.”

Well, that answers that. What a loser – he’s shopping for dresses?

“That’s okay, I can catch a ride with Lexi.”

“Do you want to try and get together tonight to watch the game? We could hook up for pizza? Mena wants to go out, and I can’t stand to be around some of the girls she’s invited...” Ty grimaced.

Oh, so now he’s using me as his backup entertainment. Great. Well, I am a good wing man, but I don’t have the stomach for Mena’s gaggle either. Not tonight.

“Ty, I can’t. I’m sorry, but I don’t know how long it’ll take to fix the truck, and then I’ve got that health quiz to study for.” Truth be told, Sam didn’t think he’d need long to study, but he was hoping to connect with Leesha online tonight to see if she had gotten anywhere in her research attempts.

“No problem,” Ty said, though he sounded disappointed. “Maybe next time. I may bail anyway. She’s kind of getting on my nerves right now anyway.”

Big surprise. Huge. He’ll go anyway. She’ll make him.

When school was finally over, Sam walked out to Lexi’s car. He had seen her over lunch, so she knew to wait for him before heading home. She was already inside, adjusting her radio and checking her lip gloss in the rear view mirror.

“It’s about time, bro,” she looked at him impatiently.

“Well hello, Lexi. It’s lovely to see you too. Thank you so very much for the gracious transportation.”

“Shut the sass or I’ll leave you here.”

He knew he was at her mercy. Normally the two of them got along, but like most brothers and sisters, they knew how to push each other’s buttons. He settled back in his seat as she put the car in reverse.

That’s when it hit. Like every other time, this one came out of nowhere. He hadn’t been expecting it, and there was no warning whatsoever.

“Ahhhhhh!” Sam screamed and instantly gripped his temples and put his head between his knees, eyes clamped tightly shut.

“What is wrong with you?” Lexi’s expression went from annoyance to wide-eyed horror in an instant.

“Nothing. Nothing. Just get us out of here.” Sam tried to concentrate on his breathing, but the vibration of the car motor was shaking his seat so badly he couldn’t clear his mind to concentrate on anything else.

“Sam! What IS it?” Lexi was pleading now. She had never seen her brother in this much pain.

“Lexi. Stop screaming and please drive us out of the parking lot. Now!”

Lexi slammed on the accelerator, throwing gravel everywhere in her path, and headed for home. Sam thought his head would explode, or worse yet, he would throw up from the pain. In a moment of clarity, he glanced at his watch to note the time. He knew he would need to document this later.

In between breaths, Sam did a check list of his senses. His ears could hear each mechanical clicking, grinding and turning of the motor of Lexi’s VW. The other traffic on the road was just as noisy, with the turning of rubber wheels on the pavement and the vast array of radio stations that each car in the six block area had their tuners fixed on. He found that he could choose to tune that out and concentrate on the environment – the rustling of the leaves in the trees overhead and the chirping of birds in flight. Then, blocking that, he was able to focus on each house they passed and what was going on inside the walls – they had just passed a television tuned to Oprah’s afternoon show, and the next house was having a debate over the dinner menu...

Selective hearing... It seems like I can focus on what it is I want to hear. That’s progress. Now let’s see if it works for my nose.

He sat back in his seat, eyes still shut, and breathed in deeply. At first notice, Sam caught the scents within the car – the gas that pumped through the ignition system, the oil, lubricants, and windshield washer fluids, and the dirt and dust that was caught in the car’s interior carpets and upholstery.

Not a great combination of smells. Lexi really needs to clean out this car!

Sam then tried to shut these scents off and reach out further. This was a little bit harder, but after a few seconds he noticed the scent of burning leaves approximately two blocks to the right of where they were driving. He also picked up the smell of freshly cut lawn from several different yards around them.

Ew, gross! Is that dog poop? Okay, let’s block that one... I’m glad I’m learning how to do this. It feels like the burn is starting to fade.

With that relief, Sam decided to try and open his eyes and test his sight. Looking out the window, nothing really seemed out of the ordinary. It was daylight, so he couldn't test the see-in-the-dark theory, but he did notice that everything he looked at seemed a bit crisper, like he had put on corrective glasses for the first time. He could see the ribbing of lines on the protective coating on the telephone wires above the streets, the rust particles that stained the side of an office building as they turned the corner, and the pollen particles floating in the air each time the breeze seemed to spring up. It didn't appear as if anything was closer to his eyes, but Sam noted the detail as if he were seeing it through a different lens – like a pair of binoculars or a microscope.

As they topped the hill, Sam looked down and realized that he could see the detail much further down the horizon than he ever had remembered. Shifting his gaze, he looked down at the floorboard, to see if he could see the particles trapped in the car's carpet. He squinted and focused on his eyes, and everything in his sight shifted. First he could see the carpet fibers and the dirt and grime that had been tracked in over time. Then, as if he was concentrating too hard on seeing into the carpet, his eyes focused through the floorboard and he was suddenly watching the pavement below the car as it sped down the road.

"Oh. My. God," was all Sam could get out.

"What?! What is it? You haven't said a word since we left the school... Are you okay?" Lexi was almost hysterical with worry. He looked over and saw that her eyes were filled with tears and terror as she pulled into their driveway.

"Lexi, I'm fine. Calm down," he tried to comfort her. "It was just a headache that hit very quickly. It's gone now. Really, I'm fine."

Then suddenly he heard her, only she wasn't talking. She didn't believe him. Her mind was racing, though he couldn't make out any words. But he could sense her feelings, and he knew she was worried about him and contemplating whether or not to tell their parents about what just happened.

"Listen, Lex..." he pleaded. "Look at me. Look in my eyes. I'm fine. Believe me – there's nothing wrong. Nothing at all. You don't have to freak out, and please don't tell Mom and Dad."

She knows something is up. How can I convince her that everything is normal? Especially when I don't even know what's normal anymore?

"What do you mean don't tell Mom and Dad? What is going on Sam?"

"Just trust me. I can't explain it, but I promise you, there is nothing wrong. PLEASE don't tell anyone about what just happened." Sam resigned himself to the fact that she knew something was off, so he had to improvise, because he knew he wouldn't be able to convince her otherwise. "There is something weird happening, but I promise it's not life threatening. I haven't figured it all out yet, but I am getting help from someone, and I promise to fill you in on all the details when I know them myself." It was really all the truth he wanted to give her at this moment. He prayed it would be enough to satisfy her, for now.

Suddenly he could feel her calm down. She looked at him skeptically, but he knew she trusted and believed him.

"You promise? You'll tell me everything?"

“I promise.” He hoped he could keep his promise. If she kept this secret for him, without knowing any of the details, he owed her at least that.

“Okay. I won’t tell. But promise me something else?”

“Sure, what?”

“You’ll come get me if you need me?”

“Sure, Lex. I promise,” and with that, he noticed that the burn was completely gone. He glanced down at his watch and noticed the time again.

I’ve got to go and write all of this down. Leesha’s gonna freak...