

Prologue

Are you sure you are the real you?

Wait. That makes no sense unless I start from the beginning.

Let's try again.

When there's a storm, grown-ups say you should remain calm, stay inside and keep away from windows (as if that can protect you from the screams in the sky).

Creepy. I know.

"Let's go to C.J.'s," I told Jake, my twin brother.

"No!"

"Why?"

"I'm allergic to cashews."

"Huh?"

"I'm saying you're nuts, Esau!"

"Ha, *freaking* ha," I said. "Look outside!" A thunderstorm was wreaking havoc in our small town. "Eleven-year-olds shouldn't be alone when the world is ending."

"Not alone. We have each other," Jake said.

"That's like being alone with myself," I scoffed. "Who wants that?"

"I'll give you a hand." He started unplugging appliances in the family room.

"Watch out!" I pushed him out of harm's way as the stormy wind blasted a window open and knocked over one of his trophies, almost hitting him in the head. How could he be so careless? Mom would die if he got hurt!

After I locked the window, a hair-raising burst of green light startled me. And then we heard what sounded like an angry giant shrieking in the clouds. We covered our ears until it stopped. I didn't know how long it lasted, but it felt longer than a Social Studies class. And that's saying something.

Jake's face turned white. "What's happening?"

For a second, I wondered if I looked that scared too. I mean, we are twins, after all: we both have jet-black hair, bright green eyes, and skinny legs. People would mix us up twenty-four seven if he didn't need glasses or if I didn't wear a different baseball cap for every occasion.

I hate to admit it, but we are identical copies of each other, except that I am me, and he's like the next Mozart or whatever. He even played a solo cello piece at the last school concert.

"Grab the phone!" I shouted. "Maybe Mom will call." I'd never wished I owned an iPhone so badly before.

Then the power went out, and a tree branch shattered the dining-room window into a gazillion pieces. We both screamed. By that point, all I cared about was getting us to safety.

"We need to take shelter!"

After we made it to the basement, I tried closing the door behind us, but the gale coming through the broken window was too strong.

"I'll help!"

"No," I said. "I've got this."

In my mind, what happened next played out in slow motion. Jake reached for the doorknob as a gust of wind burst the door open, striking us both. I held on tight to the banister, but my brother wasn't so lucky; he rolled down like a boulder and knocked over a big stack of cartons at the bottom of the stairs.

"Jake! You okay?"

He wasn't. We weren't. Jake leaned forward for a hug, but I gently made him keep his broken arm close to his chest. After that, we stayed paralyzed near the furnace, listening to the mean voices raging in the wind.

And I wish I could say those chilling whispers were the weirdest thing that's ever happened to me.

But they were only the beginning.