Helping your children choose books they will love

I ♥ reading

Lovereading4kids.co.uk is a book website created for parents and children to make choosing books easy and fun

Opening extract from

Another Day

Written by

David Levithan

Published by

Egmont Books Ltd

All Text is Copyright © of the Author and/or Illustrator

Please print off and read at your leisure.

Lovereading4kids.co.uk

ANOTHER DAY

DAVID LEVITHAN





First Published in Great Britain in 2015
by Electric Monkey, an imprint of Egmont UK Limited
The Yellow Building, 1 Nicholas Road, London W11 4AN

First published in the USA in 2015
by Alfred A Knopf,
an imprint of Random House Children's Books,
a division of Random House LLC,
a Penguin Random House Company, New York

Text copyright © 2015 David Levithan

The moral rights of the author have been asserted

ISBN 978 1 4052 7343 5

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

www.egmont.co.uk

A CIP catalogue record for this title is available from the British Library

Typeset by Avon DataSet Ltd, Bidford on Avon, Warwickshire
Printed and bound in Great Britain by CPI Group

58071/1

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher and copyright owner.

Please note: Any website addresses listed in this book are correct at the time of going to print. However, Egmont is not responsible for content hosted by third parties or advertising. Please be aware that online content can be subject to change and websites can contain content that is unsuitable for children. We advise that all children are supervised when using the internet.



For my nephew, Matthew
(May you find happiness every day)

1

I watch his car as it pulls into the parking lot. I watch him get out of it. I am in the corner of his eye, moving toward its center – but he isn't looking for me. He's heading into school without noticing I'm right here. I could call out for him, but he doesn't like that. He says it's something needy girls do, always calling out to their boyfriends.

It hurts that I can be so full of him while he's so empty of me.

I wonder if last night is the reason he isn't looking for me. I wonder if our fight is still happening. Like most of our fights, it's about something stupid, with other non-stupid things right underneath. All I did was ask him if he wanted to go to Steve's party on Saturday. That was it. And he asked me why, on Sunday night, I was already asking him about Saturday. He said I'm always doing this, trying to pin him down, as if he won't want to be with me if I don't ask him about it months ahead of time. I told him it wasn't my fault he's always afraid of plans, afraid of figuring out what's next.

Mistake. Calling him afraid was a big mistake. That's probably the only word he heard.

"You have no idea what you're talking about," he said.

"I was talking about a party at Steve's house on Saturday," I told him, my voice way too upset for either of us. "That's all."

But that's not all. Justin loves me and hates me as much as I love him and hate him. I know that. We each have our triggers, and we should never reach in to pull them. But sometimes we can't help ourselves. We know each other too well, but never well enough.

I am in love with someone who's afraid of the future. And, like a fool, I keep bringing it up.

I follow him. Of course I do. Only a needy girl would be mad at her boyfriend because he didn't notice her in a parking lot.

As I'm walking to his locker, I wonder which Justin I'll find there. It probably won't be Sweet Justin, because it's rare for Sweet Justin to show up at school. And hopefully it won't be Angry Justin, because I haven't done anything *that* wrong, I don't think. I'm hoping for Chill Justin, because I like Chill Justin. When he's around, we can all calm down.

I stand there as he takes his books out of his locker. I look at the back of his neck because I am in love with the back of his neck. There is something so physical

about it, something that makes me want to lean over and kiss it.

Finally he looks at me. I can't read his expression, not right away. It's like he's trying to figure me out at the same time I'm trying to figure him out. I think maybe this is a good sign, because maybe it means he's worried about me. Or it's a bad sign, because he doesn't understand why I'm here.

"Hey," he says.

"Hey," I say back.

There's something really intense about the way he's looking at me. I'm sure he's finding something wrong. There's always something wrong for him to find.

But he doesn't say anything. Which is weird. Then, even weirder, he asks me, "Are you okay?"

I must look really pathetic if he's asking me that.

"Sure," I tell him. Because I don't know what the answer is supposed to be. *I am not okay* – that's actually the answer. But it's not the right answer to say to him. I know that much.

If this is some kind of trap, I don't appreciate it. If this is payback for what I said last night, I want it over with.

"Are you mad at me?" I ask, not sure I want to know the answer.

And he goes, "No. I'm not mad at you at all."

Liar.

When we have problems, I'm usually the one who sees them. I do the worrying for both of us. I just can't tell him about it too often, because then it's almost like I'm bragging that I understand what's going on while he doesn't.

Uncertainty. Do I ask about last night? Or do I pretend it never happened – that it never happens?

"Do you still want to get lunch today?" I ask. It's only after I ask that I realize I'm trying to make plans again.

Maybe I am a needy girl after all.

"Absolutely," Justin says. "Lunch would be great."

Bullshit. He's playing with me. He has to be.

"No big deal," he adds.

I look at him, and it seems genuine. Maybe I'm wrong to assume the worst. And maybe I've managed to make him feel stupid by being so surprised.

I take his hand and hold it. If he's willing to step back from last night, I am, too. This is what we do. When the stupid fights are over, we're good.

"I'm glad you're not mad at me," I tell him. "I just want everything to be okay."

He knows I love him. I know he loves me. That is never the question. The question is always how we'll deal with it.

Time. The bell rings. I have to remind myself that

school is not a thing that exists solely to give us a place to be together.

"I'll see you later," he says.

I hold on to that. It's the only thing that will get me through the empty space that follows.

I was watching one of my shows, and one of the housewives was like, "He's a fuckup, but he's *my* fuckup," and I thought, *Oh, shit, I really shouldn't be relating to this, but I am, and so what?* That has to be what love is – seeing what a mess he is and loving him anyway, because you know you're a mess, too, maybe even worse.

We weren't an hour into our first date before Justin was setting off the alarms.

"I'm warning you – I'm trouble," he said over dinner at TGI Friday's. "Total trouble."

"And do you warn all the other girls?" I replied, flirting.

But what I got back wasn't flirtation. It was real.

"No," he said. "I don't."

This was his way of letting me know that I was someone he cared about. Even at the very beginning.

He hadn't meant to tell me. But there it was.

And even though he's forgotten a lot of other details about that first date, he's never forgotten what he said.

I warned you! he'll yell at me on nights when it's really bad, really hard. *You can't say I didn't warn you!*

Sometimes this only makes me hold him tighter.

Sometimes I've already let go, feeling awful that there's nothing I can do.

The only time our paths intersect in the morning is between first and second periods, so I look for him then. We only have a minute to share, sometimes less, but I'm always thankful. It's like I'm taking attendance. *Love? Here!* Even if we're tired (which is pretty much always) and even if we don't have much to say, I know he won't just pass me by.

Today I smile, because, all things considered, the morning went pretty well. And he smiles back at me.

Good signs. I am always looking for good signs.

I head to Justin's class as soon as fourth period is over, but he hasn't waited for me. So I go to the cafeteria, to where we usually sit. He's not there, either. I ask Rebecca if she's seen him. She says she hasn't, and doesn't seem too surprised that I'm looking. I decide to ignore that. I check my locker and he's not there. I'm starting to think he's forgotten, or was playing with me all along. I decide to check his locker, even though it's about as far from the cafeteria as you can get. He never stops there before

lunch. But I guess today he has, because there he is.

I'm happy to see him, but also exhausted. It's just so much work. He looks worse than I feel, staring into his locker like there's a window in there. In some people, this would mean daydreams. But Justin doesn't daydream. When he's gone, he's really gone.

Now he's back. Right when I get to him.

"Hey," he says.

"Hey," I say back.

I'm hungry, but not that hungry. The most important thing is for us to be in the same place. I can do that anywhere.

He's putting all of his books in his locker now, as if he's done with the day. I hope nothing's wrong. I hope he's not giving up. If I'm going to be stuck here, I want him stuck here, too.

He stands up and puts his hand on my arm. Gentle. Way too gentle. It's something I'd do to him, not something he'd do to me. I like it, but I also don't like it.

"Let's go somewhere," he says. "Where do you want to go?"

Again, I think there has to be a right answer to this question, and that if I get it wrong, I will ruin everything. He wants something from me, but I'm not sure what.

"I don't know," I tell him.

He takes his hand off my arm and I think, okay,

wrong answer. But then he takes my hand.

"Come on," he says.

There's an electricity in his eyes. Power. Light.

He closes the locker and pulls me forward. I don't understand. We're walking hand in hand through the almost-empty halls. We never do this. He gets this grin on his face and we go faster. It's like we're little kids at recess. Running, actually running down the halls. People look at us like we're insane. It's so ridiculous. He swings us by my locker and tells me to leave my books here, too. I don't understand, but I go along with it – he's in a great mood, and I don't want to do anything that will break it.

Once my locker's closed, we keep going. Right out the door. Simple as that. Escape. We're always talking about how we want to leave, and this time we're doing it. I figure he'll take me out for pizza or something. Maybe be late to fifth period. We get to his car and I don't even want to ask him what we're doing. I just want to let him do it.

He turns and asks, "Where do you want to go? Tell me, truly, where you'd love to go."

Strange. He's asking me as if *I'm* the one who knows the right answer.

I really hope this isn't a trick. I really hope I won't regret this.

I say the first thing that comes to my mind.

"I want to go to the ocean. I want you to take me to the ocean."

I figure he'll laugh and say what he really meant was that we should go to his house while his parents are gone and spend the afternoon having sex and watching TV. Or that he's trying to prove a point about not making plans, to prove that I like being spontaneous better. Or he'll tell me to go have fun at the ocean while he gets lunch. All of these are possibilities, and they all play at the same time in my head.

The only thing I'm not expecting is for him to assume it's a good idea.

"Okay," he says, pulling out of the parking lot. I still think he's joking, but then he's asking me the best way to get there. I tell him which highways we should take – there's a beach my family used to go to a lot in summer, and if we're going to the ocean, we might as well go there.

As he steers, I can tell he's enjoying himself. It should put me at ease, but it's making me nervous. It would be just like Justin to take me somewhere really special in order to dump me. Make a big production of it. Maybe leave me stranded there. I don't actually think this is going to happen – but it's possible. As a way of proving to me that he's able to make plans. As a way of showing he's not as afraid of the future as I said he was.

You're being crazy, Rhiannon, I tell myself. It's something he says to me all the time. A lot of the time, he's right.

Just enjoy it, I think. Because we're not in school. We're together.

He turns on the radio and tells me to take over. What? *My car, my radio* – how many times have I heard him say that? But it seems like his offer is real, so I slip from station to station, trying to find something he'll be into. When I pause too long on a song I like, he says, "Why not that one?" And I'm thinking, *Because you hate it*. But I don't say that out loud. I let the song play. I wait for him to make a joke about it, say the singer sounds like she's having her period.

Instead, he starts to sing along.

Disbelief. Justin *never* sings along. He will yell at the radio. He will talk back to whatever the talk radio people are saying. Every now and then he might beat along on his steering wheel. But he does *not* sing.

I wonder if he's on drugs. But I've seen him on drugs before, and it's never been like this.

"What's gotten into you?" I ask.

"Music," he says.

"Ha."

"No, really."

He's not joking. He's not laughing at me somewhere

inside. I am looking at him and I can see that. I don't know what's going on, but it's not that.

I decide to see how far I can push it. Because that's what a needy girl does.

"In that case . . ." I say. I flip stations until I find the least Justin song possible.

And there it is. Kelly Clarkson. Singing how what doesn't kill you makes you stronger.

I turn it up. In my head, I dare him to sing along.

Surprise.

We are belting it out. I have no idea how he knows the words. But I don't question it. I am singing with everything I've got, never knowing I could love this song as much as I do right now, because it is making everything okay – it is making *us* okay. I refuse to think about anything other than that. I want us to stay inside the song. Because this is something we've never done before and it feels great.

When it's done, I roll down my window – I want to feel the wind in my hair. Without a word, Justin rolls down all the other windows, and it's like we're in a wind tunnel, like this is a ride in an amusement park when really it's just a car driving down the highway. He looks so happy. It makes me realize how rare it is for me to see him happy, the kind of happy where there isn't anything else on his mind besides the happiness. He's usually so

afraid to show it, as if it might be stolen away at any moment.

He takes my hand and starts to ask me questions. Personal questions.

He starts with, "How are your parents doing?"

"Um . . . I don't know," I say. He's never really cared about my parents before. I know he wants them to like him, but because he's not sure they will, he pretends it doesn't matter. "I mean, you know. Mom is trying to hold it all together without actually doing anything. My dad has his moments, but he's not exactly the most fun person to be around. The older he gets, the less he seems to give a damn about anything."

"And what's it like with Liza at college?"

When he asks this question, it's as if he's proud that he's remembered my sister's name. That sounds more like Justin.

"I don't know," I tell him. "You know we were more like sisters living under a truce than best friends. I don't know if I miss her that much, although it was easier having her around, because then there were two of us, you know? She never calls home. Even when my mom calls her, she doesn't call back. I don't blame her for that – I'm sure she has better things to do. And really, I always knew that once she left, she'd be gone. So I'm not shocked or anything."