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NIC BLAKE AND THE REMARKABLES

THE MANIFESTOR PROPHECY

ANGIE THOMAS



WALKER
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In honour of Virginia Hamilton
and all of the ancestors who knew we could fly



1

HELLHOUNDS, HAINTS AND HAPPY BIRTHDAYS

When my best friend JP turned twelve, his parents bought him a phone. It was a super big deal, 'cause one, JP loses everything, and two, his parents think phones are "quick access to the Devil". (I didn't know the Devil had a phone.)

For her twelfth birthday, Alabama McCain down the street got a sweatshirt once worn by a member of her favourite K-pop group. Weird, but not as weird as being named Alabama even though you're from Mississippi.

Sean Cole got a four-wheeler for his twelfth. Now he likes to ride around the neighbourhood, knocking over rubbish bins. His mom says he's being a boy. I say he's being a butt.

For my twelfth birthday, I've got them all beat. My dad's gonna teach me how to use the Gift so I can finally be a real Manifestor. First I've gotta catch a hellhound.

I tiptoe through the woods so the leaves don't crackle under my feet. In yesterday's lesson, Dad said hellhounds can hear sounds from hundreds of miles away. I think I can smell a hellhound from hundreds of miles away. Wherever this

thing is, it's filling the forest with a strong odour of boiled eggs and Fritos.

"Remember what I told you, Nic Nac," Dad says. His voice is around me, like he's speaking on an intercom. "Look for the signs. Hellhounds always leave a trail."

A trail of what, funk?

I wipe my forehead on my arm. You'd think eight in the morning was too early to sweat, but it's normal for late May in Mississippi. The sun glares through the trees, and the air is thick and sticky; it feels like walking through toffee.

I grip the handle of my net. The mesh is made from Giants' hair, one of the strongest materials on earth. Although I zoned out for most of Dad's hour-long lecture, I do remember that Giants' hair is one of the few things that hellhounds can't chew through. I also remember that hellhounds breathe fire. So I search for signs. Burnt leaves, scorched earth…

Smoke. Up ahead, a pillar rises into the air. Where there's smoke, there's a hellhound.

I tiptoe in that direction, and *bam*, there it is in the clearing – a hellhound with brown fur that stands on end. It has horns, which means *it* is actually a *she*. She's the size of a tiger, and she gnaws on a bone as big as she is. Hey, better that bone than me.

Now to catch this thing. If only I knew how to use the Gift, this would be a breeze. But nooo. "You're too young to learn," Dad said. "It's nothing to play with," he said. "Wait until you're twelve," he said.

"Those rules stink," I said.

Lucky for me, I'm twelve today and that means goodbye rules, but at the moment all I've got is my net. I raise it above my head as I inch closer to the hellhound. Good doggy. Don't worry about this live, three-course meal walking towards—

Aaaand she sees me. I freeze.

"She can smell fear, Nic Nac," Dad says. "Don't be afraid."

Says the guy who isn't three feet from a hellhound.

Nope, I'm not going out like this. One of us is gonna attack first, and it's gonna be me.

I take a step.

She growls and takes one too.

I take another step.

She charges.

I nearly pee my pants.

She tackles me to the ground.

Hundreds of pounds of hellhound pin me down. The stench burns my eyes. I'll never tell Sean he stinks again. If there is an "again". I'm probably seconds from pearly gates and angels.

But suddenly the hellhound shrinks. She smells like cheese – not great but not bad – and instead of biting my head off, she licks my face. The woods dissolve, revealing my garden, and that fire-breathing, gigantic hellhound is a tail-wagging little hellhound pup.

Dad's standing over on the patio, laughing. "Happy birthday, Nic Nac."

He waves his hand, erasing the rest of the illusion he drew, along with the concealment mojo that kept our neighbours from seeing that our garden had become a forest. My dad's

a pretty good Manifestor. He managed to make this furball look ten times her size. In reality she's no bigger than a shoebox.

I wipe her warm slobber from my cheeks. "Is she mine?"

"I'm not saying names, but somebody has been bugging me for a hellhound or a dragon. Since a dragon ain't happening, a hellhound it is."

I grin. "See? I knew you'd get the hang of things."

"You may wanna hold off on that celebration, Nic Nac. Please believe there are rules if you wanna keep this pup."

"Name them."

Dad raises his eyebrows. "Who are you and what have you done with my kid? Because the Nichole Blake I know hates rules."

"Apple." I point at myself. "Tree." I point at him.

He laughs. "Touché, Miss Blake. Tou—"

"What are you guys doing?"

Dad and I jump.

"JP," Dad says with a deep breath. "Good morning to you too."

My best friend peers over the fence that separates our gardens. JP's only the second friend I've ever had in my life. The first was this girl Rebecca who was in my homeschool group in Atlanta. We bonded over Oreos. I thought I'd never have a friend like her again until JP strolled along. When I first met him, he wore a smart shirt and bow tie like he was ready for church on a Sunday instead of fourth grade on a Tuesday. Nobody forced him to dress that way either. JP just likes bow ties. He held his hand out and said, "I'm Joshua Paul Williams. You can call me Joshua Paul."

We call him JP. Sometimes Pastor JP because of the bow ties. Plus, JP's dad is a preacher, and JP has a freckled face, round belly and short brown hair just like him.

JP's the only Black kid on our street besides me, but that's not why we're friends. JP's the one kid who doesn't think I'm the weird homeschooled girl. Also, I'm not one hundred per cent sure JP could survive without me. I'm not saying that because he's an Unremarkable either (aka doesn't have the Gift or any supernatural ability – mostly everyone around here is Unremarkable). I'm saying that because he's a hot mess.

He adjusts the holder straps on his glasses. "Sorry I scared y'all. My momma says I'm sneakier than a snake in slippers."

"Uh, snakes don't have feet," I say.

"Yet I somehow get what she's saying," Dad adds. "How long you been standing there, li'l man?"

JP shrugs. "Not long."

Thing is, the majority of Unremarkables don't know about the Gift or know that Remarkable creatures really exist. On top of that, they can't see that stuff. But illusions are so powerful that they're the one Remarkable thing Unremarkables can see. Luckily the concealment mojo should've kept JP from seeing the illusion Dad drew, and my hellhound puppy should look like a normal puppy to him. But there's a teeny, tiny chance that he saw something. Unremarkables have those moments. They usually explain it away by saying their mind's playing tricks on them.

"Mr Blake, my momma asked if Nic is going with us to the book signing tonight and if I can go to the museum with y'all

tomorrow?" JP says. "She would've asked herself, but she gets shy around you 'cause she thinks you're cute. Don't tell my daddy I said that."

Ewwwww! "JP! You don't say that out loud!"

"It's the truth!"

Dad shakes his head. We've lived in ten neighbourhoods so far – I keep count – and Dad's had a fan club in every single one. He's tall and lean with a dimpled smile, dark brown skin, black locs and tattoos covering his arms. Know what it's like having the cute father in the neighbourhood? Disgusting. I wanna vomit on the regular.

"Nic can still go," Dad says. "And you can still come with us tomorrow. Tell your momma I said thank you for taking her tonight."

"Yes, sir. I can't believe we're gonna meet TJ Retro."

"And he's gonna sign our books," I add. JP and I are the unofficial-but-should-be-official leaders of the TJ Retro fan club (along with official editors of his unofficial wiki). We've read his Stevie James books a hundred times. They're about this foster kid, Stevie, who finds out he's a magician and attends a magical prep school with his best friends, Kevin and Chloe. One day he will have to battle the evilest magician in the world, Einan.

The magicians and their magic remind me of Manifestors and the Gift a little bit, but in real life, the Gift is more powerful than magic. You see, the Gift is an innate power that lives in us Manifestors. Magic, on the other hand, is a corrupt form of the Gift. It's hard to control and super destructive. Also,

magic in real life can only be performed with a wand, and the magic in wands runs out after a while. We Manifestors don't need wands.

So although the Stevie books aren't accurate, they're cool. The third book in the series came out last week, and Mr Retro's making a book-tour stop in Jackson tonight. JP and I have held off on reading the new book, and we're avoiding all spoilers until we get our copies signed. That's discipline right there.

"Good ol' TJ Retro and his inaccurate books," Dad mumbles.

"How could books about magic be accurate, Mr Blake?" JP asks. "Magic isn't real."

"Yeah, Dad, how could they be accurate?" I say.

He side-eyes me, and I grin. Dad hates books about magic. He calls them "fabricated tales written for profit". Technically all fiction books are fabricated tales written for profit, but I let the dude have his moments.

He clears his throat. "They're just not my thing, JP."

"In other words, he's got no taste," I say.

Dad puts me in a light headlock. "What you say?"

"Get off!" I shout, and laugh. He plants a big wet kiss on the top of my head.

"I got taste," he says, letting me go. "The best taste. Remember that."

"You wish," I say as my hellhound jumps up my legs. "Check it out, JP. I finally got a dog."

Since JP is an Unremarkable, he can't see the smoke she lets out as she squeaks or the small horns on her head. But JP

barely glances at her. "Uhhh, I better go. Vacation Bible School only waits for Jesus. Happy birthday, Nic!"

He disappears from the fence, and I frown. "What's that about?"

"With JP, who knows?" Dad says. "C'mon. We gotta get started with your school day."

The other kids in Jackson got outta school for the summer earlier this week, but Dad homeschools me year-round. Today that's A-OK by me. It's Gift lesson time, baby. Time to finally become a real Manifestor.

You see, although we Manifestors are born with the Gift inside us, we still have to learn how to use it, and there are lots of ways to use it too. The easiest is with mojos and jujus, which control the elements. We can do stuff like form fire in our hands or make water shoot from the ground. If we do it with good intentions, it's a mojo. Bad intentions, it's a juju. We can also use our minds to summon objects or create illusions and tons of other things. It can take years to learn to master the Gift, plus Manifestors are still discovering new ways to use it. I don't have to know a ton of stuff, but geez, I'd like to know how to do *something*.

My puppy scuttles behind us into the house. We've lived in Jackson for two years now. It was New Orleans before this, Memphis before that, Atlanta, Charleston, DC, New York. Basically, we've lived a lot of places. Dad let me choose our new city this time, and I picked Jackson. I can't explain it, but it felt like the place we needed to be.

I gotta say, I made a good decision. This is one of my

favourite houses so far. It's got an upstairs and a basement, and it's in an artsy neighbourhood called Fondren. Once a month, there's a neighbourhood-wide festival, and on Sundays Dad and I walk to the restaurant a few streets over for milkshakes and cheeseburgers.

It feels like we've found a home here, but any day now Dad could say, "Hey, you up for a change of scenery?" That really means, "Hey, an Unremarkable caught me using the Gift, so let's get out of here." That happens a lot.

In the kitchen, a deep growl rattles the door to the basement. I sit at the counter. "Is that the demon you caught at the governor's mansion?"

Dad waves his hand, and a light glows under the basement door. The demon squeals. "Yep. Second one in two weeks. I swear, demons can't stay away from that place."

Dad's a handyman here in Jackson. Unremarkables don't know that eighty-five per cent of their household problems are the result of haints, demons, ghouls and other Remarkable creatures. Twelve per cent of what's not caused by creatures can easily be fixed with the Gift. The remaining three per cent require a screwdriver and a prayer.

"A'ight, Nic Nac," Dad says. "Quick quiz – when did we Manifestors first receive the Gift?"

Aw, man, here he goes with this. I'm ready for Gift lessons, not a quiz. But I gotta do what I gotta do. "Our ancestors were first blessed with the Gift while they were enslaved," I say. "It was given to them so they could escape to freedom."

"You sure about that?" Dad says.

Oh shoot. The fact that he asked makes me not sure. "Uhhh … I think I am?"

"Sorry, baby girl. You got this one wrong today. Remember what I always tell you – nothing about any Black people started with slavery. For us Manifestors, the Gift was first given to our ancestors, the Wallinzi, in Africa. We're focusing on them for today's lesson."

"What? But … but I thought you were about to teach me how to use the Gift. Today's the day I'm supposed to learn, remember?"

Dad frowns. "It is?"

"Yes! On my eleventh birthday, you said I could learn when I turned twelve. Before that, you said on my tenth birthday that I could learn when I turned eleven."

"I don't remember—"

"Aaaand on my ninth birthday, you said I could learn when I turned ten."

"That was a while ago. You sure?"

I press my lips together. "Dad, this isn't fair. You told me you learned to use it when you were ten."

"I did. I also grew up thinking it was a quick fix for everything, but it's nothing to—"

"Play with," I say.

"There can be real—"

"Consequences," I say.

"You could hurt yourself or—"

"Somebody else," I finish. I've heard this a million times. "I just wanna know how to use it for simple stuff, like to draw

an illusion to make my room look clean or ways to use it on a gamer troll."

"Orrrrr you could actually clean your room. Please do. I caught a whiff of some serious funk in there the other day. I'm definitely not teaching you how to use the Gift on a gamer troll. You'd mess around and make some poor kid's teeth fall out."

I widen my eyes. "You can do that with the Gift?"

Dad purses his lips. "Like I said, the Gift's not a quick fix for when you're in a bind, baby girl. Besides, it ain't got nothing on this." He taps the side of my head. "Your brain's the only gift you need. *You're* the only gift you need. Everything you need is inside of you."

"Well, since the Gift is inside me, don't I need to know how to use it?"

He smirks. "You're persistent, I'll give you that. I think we should wait another year, Nic Nac."

I wanna tell him to give me a chance. That I'd be careful, I promise I would. That I wanna know that I can do it, that I'm a real Manifestor.

But Dad won't listen. He never does. I sigh. "Yes, sir."

He kisses my forehead. "Let's get this Wallinzi lesson out of the way so we can head to Ms Lena's."

✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

After about two hours of homeschooling, we hop in Dad's pickup truck – me, Dad and my hellhound pup. I think I'll name her Cocoa. She's the colour of a cup of hot chocolate. The demon Dad caught at the governor's mansion sleeps in a cage in the bed of the truck, and on the back seat there's

a crate holding blue-glass bottles with the smoky forms of haints swirling around in them. Dad caught them in various houses this week. When he hits a pothole on our street, the bottles clink against one another.

"You gotta be kidding me," he says. "Another one?"

Jackson has potholes galore. Sometimes people turn them into pools and flower beds. It's cool and sad at the same time.

I glance back at the one Dad rode over. "Was that there yesterday?"

"Nah, I don't think so. Them things pop up real fast, though. Bet it's got something to do with that volcano under the city."

Most people don't know that Jackson is built on top of an inactive volcano that's only a few thousand feet below the city. The opening is said to be right below the Mississippi Coliseum. I'm just glad it's inactive. Trust me, I wouldn't have told Dad we should move here if it was active, although the Jackson culinary specialities of caramel cake and chicken on a stick are worth the risk of volcanic eruption.

We hit potholes the whole way to Farish Street. In one of our history lessons, Dad said that it used to be the spot for Black folks in Mississippi. It was one of the few places where they weren't discriminated against. I found some old pictures online that showed people crowding the pavement to go into the shops and restaurants.

Today, most of the buildings on Farish Street are abandoned. That's how Ms Lena's seems to Unremarkables. They don't know that the boarded-up door is only an illusion hiding a steel door with ancient markings on it.

Dad holds the cage with the demon in it as he opens the door. The sounds of blues music and chatter drift outside, along with the aroma of fried foods. The place is packed today, but Fridays usually are. That's when Ms Lena serves her famous fried catfish and Cajun fries.

The lights in the juke joint stay dim to keep people from seeing how rundown it is, but the Remarkables light the place up a bit thanks to the Glow: different-coloured auras that tell you the kinda Remarkable they are. Only other Remarkables see it, but Dad says Unremarkables sense it. They usually say that person has "it" or something special about them.

We Manifestors have a golden Glow that's a little brighter than other Remarkables' Glows. It's probably not a coincidence that we're some of the most powerful Remarkables there are. Don't get me wrong, Rougarous, Vampires, Giants, Fairies, Merfolk and other Remarkables are powerful, but they don't have the Gift like us.

A couple of Manifestors at the bar are being served by a small purple-glowing Aziza with brown skin, glittery wings and pointed ears. That's Ms Sadie. Don't call her a Fairy or she'll tell you that Fairies are from Europe and Azizas are of African descent and Azizas are stronger than Fairies. They're able to pick up things a thousand times bigger than them.

A Manifestor at a booth shows a red-glowing Vampire a suitcase with small leather bags in it. The Manifestor is Mrs Barbara, and she's a salesperson for Miss Peachy's Marvellous Mojo and Juju Bags. The slogan shimmers on the suitcase in glittery letters: "If you're wise, you'll open this surprise!"

Remarkables love them, 'cause they're filled with the Gift, but you don't know what a bag can do till you open it up. It could be a mojo bag that rains money and gold, or it could be a juju bag that turns off the gravity in the room or makes it rain actual rain. It's like a Remarkable version of scratch tickets. People will spend all their money trying to find the mojo bags with money or gold in them, and most of those are worth no more than ten dollars. It's rare to find one that's worth millions. Dad says nobody's getting rich but Miss Peachy.

Over at a table, a dark-skinned Rougarou with a grey Glow talks to a Shapeshifter (orange Glow) and a Vampire as he shows them pictures on his phone.

The Rougarou, Mr Zeke, spots us. "Hey, it's the birthday girl!"

I grin as it's echoed around the juke joint. This is a lot different from how it used to be. Before Dad and I moved to Jackson, we didn't hang around other Remarkables much, and if we were around any, Dad told me not to talk to them. He's kinda over the top when it comes to stranger danger. Once we got to Jackson, he met Ms Lena and started coming to the juke joint to sell her the creatures he caught on jobs. He was super hesitant to talk to folks, but over time, the regulars became like our family.

I get swarmed with birthday hugs. Ms Sadie promises me a root beer float with a drizzle of caramel. Mrs Barbara gives me a Miss Peachy's bag and claims she has a good feeling that it may be a gold-raining mojo. I stick it in my pocket. Would be just my luck that it's a juju bag that rains frogs instead.

We go over to Mr Zeke, and he wraps me in his woolly arms. I can only imagine what he looks like during a full moon. "Happy birthday, Nic! How's twelve treating ya?"

"The same as eleven so far."

"Wait till you hit the hundreds," says the Vampire, Mr Earl. "Not a thang feel different. I went a year thinking I was a hundred and ten, and I'm a hundred and eleven."

"You a hundred fourteen, Earl," says Mr Zeke.

"Well, dang. See what I mean?"

"I see somebody got a hellhound," Ms Casey, the Shapeshifter, says with a look at Dad.

I grin. "Yep! He had to cave eventually."

"Yeah, yeah, yeah. You won't be grinning when you're cleaning up all that hellhound poop," Dad says. "How was the trip, Zeke?"

"Amazing don't describe it, man. I was showing Earl and Casey the pictures. I got as close as I could."

Mr Zeke takes a trip every year to a Remarkable city or historic site. This year he went to Africa to see the Garden of Eden. Well, the outside. Nobody can go in. According to Dad, the Wallinzi, the tribe we descend from, live in the city that surrounds the garden. Mr Zeke shows us a picture of himself outside the garden's gates. The ivory wall is hundreds of feet tall, and two angels in golden armour stand guard.

"How was the city?" Dad asks. "As beautiful as they say it is?"

"More so," Mr Zeke says. "Those Wallinzi, though … interesting folks."

"Funny, I just started giving Nic homeschool lessons on them," Dad says.

"You oughta teach her that they ain't real welcoming to outsiders," Mr Zeke adds. "Especially not to us 'less gifted' Remarkables. You know how some of y'all Manifestors are."

Mr Earl and Ms Casey grunt in agreement. Some Manifestors like to make sure other Remarkables know that we're the most powerful Remarkables. Dad says it's silly; that as Black folks we've seen people like us get treated as inferior and we shouldn't do that to others.

"I'm sorry you had to deal with that, man," he tells Mr Zeke.

"It is what it is, Maxwell. I'll deal with them over LORE any day."

There go the grumbles around the juke joint. In Ms Lena's, you should never mention LORE, the League of Remarkable Efforts, aka the Remarkable government. It's mostly run by Manifestors, and they monitor Remarkables to make sure we don't mess with Unremarkables. In any major way, at least. I mean when Mr Earl broke into the Jackson blood bank, he had to deal with the Unremarkable police. But if he were to go on a rampage and bite a bunch of Unremarkables, LORE would step in. LORE also oversees the secret Remarkable cities in North America, including Uhuru, where Dad and I were born.

I haven't been to any of the Remarkable cities since I was a baby. Dad and I are exiles: Remarkables who don't live in Remarkable cities. So is everyone in Ms Lena's. Half of them left LORE cities on their own; some say there are too many

rules to follow in the cities. The other half got kicked outta the cities. Dad says he chose for us to live in the Unremarkable world, but sometimes I wonder if he really had a choice. I mean, with the way we move around so much and how Dad never went around other Remarkables before we came here, it's as if he had something to hide. Then again, I can't imagine he'd do anything to get kicked outta anywhere.

"Speaking of LORE, anything I need to know?" Dad asks.

Mr Zeke glances at me – so quick I almost don't see it – then says, "You know how it is this time of year."

Uhh, what does that mean?

Dad nods. "Thanks, man."

Mr Zeke holds his fist out. "Hey, we exiles stick together."

Dad bumps it. "Always. C'mon, Nic Nac."

I follow him towards the back. "What happens this time of year?"

"Grown folks' business," he says. That's also what he calls politics and what happened to Mr Earl after he broke into the Jackson blood bank.

Dad raises his hand to knock on Ms Lena's door, but the door swings open before he can. Shelves cover every wall of the office, holding cages filled with creatures and vials of tonics in every colour. An older Black woman sits at the desk in the centre. Gold rings adorn her fingers, and her skin is bathed in a bronze Glow.

Ms Lena is a Visionary, a person who has visions of the future. That's different from a Prophet. Prophets hear divine messages about certain people's futures, seek them out and

relay the messages. Prophecies aren't super detailed and can get misinterpreted by the recipients. Visionaries see flashes of things that will happen. It's apparently like seeing pieces of a puzzle but not the picture the puzzle creates.

"Ah, my best supplier," Ms Lena says. Her New Orleans accent makes me think of walking around Uptown with Dad. "I see you brought that hellhound back. I told you, ain't no refunds."

I should've known Dad bought Cocoa from Ms Lena. She's the go-to for everything from hellhounds to lightning birds to tonics.

"Oh nah, we're not bringing her back," Dad says. "Just brought her along for the ride."

"Uh-huh. She only breathing smoke? I gave her a tonic to stop that fire mess, but I ain't responsible if she burn your house down."

Um, what?

"Just smoke," Dad says. "No fire."

"Uh-huh," Ms Lena says. I think that's her favourite non-word. "Well, stop wasting my time. Show me whatcha got."

Dad sets the cage on her desk as the demon claws at the metal bars. It's maybe a foot tall and has red bumpy skin and beady green eyes. Ms Lena uncaps a vial and splashes a clear liquid on it. The demon howls as its skin sizzles like water thrown on a hot pan.

"Holy water," Ms Lena says. "He gets too unruly, I'll hit him with some oil."

She pronounces oil like earl. That's how some folks from New Orleans say it. Ms Lena was born and raised down there,

but then this hurricane called Katrina hit. She spent three days on a roof until some Swampfolk – the bayou cousins of Merfolk – rescued her.

"How many haints you got for me, Maxwell?" she asks.

"Ten, including a real angry one from Madison."

"Oooh, chile! You done made Ms Lena's day. We 'bout to make some good money!"

"Who buys haints from you anyway?" I ask.

Ms Lena sets her hand on her hip. "Who wants to know?"

"She didn't mean any harm, Ms Lena," Dad says.

Ms Lena puts her hand up. "Nothing wrong with a curious child, chile. If you must know, Miss Nosey, there's some rich Remarkables out here who like to collect haints. Don't ask me what they do with 'em. It ain't my business long as they pay up."

Weird. If I was rich, I'd buy something useful, like a pet dragon trained to attack my enemies. Practical stuff.

"Your daddy said that hellhound's your birthday gift," Ms Lena says. "How old are you?"

"Twelve."

"Ohhh." She flashes her gold-capped teeth in a smile. "I remember that age real well. You oughta let me try and fetch you a vision. I don't usually do it for free, but for your birthday I don't mind."

"Nah, that's OK, Ms Lena," Dad says. "I don't want you going out your way."

"Oh hush, Maxwell. It's not a problem."

"No, really," Dad says. "Don't."

Ms Lena reaches for my hands. "Why not? It'll take a min—"

Our fingertips barely touch.

A strong gust of wind whips past me. Dad, Cocoa and Ms Lena disappear, and I'm in a darkened tunnel.

I frantically glance around. "What the—"

Another flash. I'm in a gigantic cave, but everything around me is blurry. There's something big and dark up ahead; I can't make out what it is. Then someone shouts, "Nic, run! It's behind you!"

I'm about to turn around to look, but another gust of wind whooshes past me, and I'm back in Ms Lena's office.

She lets go of my hands and shouts, "How you do that?"

I hold my throbbing head and blink stars out my eyes. It's moments before everything comes back into focus, and once it does, I see Ms Lena staring at me, horrified.

I'm just as horrified, looking at her. Her Glow flickers as if someone is flipping a light switch on and off.

"What you do?" she shrieks. "You better tell me, li'l girl!"

Dad doesn't let me respond. He grabs me and Cocoa and hurries us outta there.