

I lean against the hall wall and slide down it, disgusted by my own thoughts. I pull out my phone and text Jenna, my best friend from forever and the one person I'm still close to back in Maryland.

I am a horrible human being. I want everyone else to fail just so things don't have to change.

Right there with you, Jenna texts back. Looking up black magic spells to make Sam tank his SATs. Come over and let's be horrible together.

Sam is Jenna's boyfriend. They're both track superstars, and while Sam could get a track scholarship to University of Oregon just like the one Jenna's after, he's a genius and has his heart set on MIT. A bad SAT would bump him out, leaving him free to join Jenna in a West Coast runners' paradise.

I smile when I read her text. I love Jenna. If someone as well adjusted and together as her can be just as insane as me, maybe I'm not so insane after all.

Or maybe I am and I just have good company.

Be there in 5.

I know it's a very weird thing for me to say to someone in Maryland when I'm in Florida, unless I mean five hours or five days. Which I don't. See, my dad left me this gift after he died. A couple of gifts, actually. The first one was a diary that made wishes come true. I know, it sounds crazy, but it happened and it was real and it worked . . . until all of a sudden it didn't work anymore. I thought that was the end of it, but then I found *another* gift—a dry-erase map of nowhere that existed in the world. When I write on the map, it takes me to that place. Like, I could write “Australia,” and *bam*, I'd be hugging a koala. An *angry* koala, with my luck, and I'd end up getting my face scratched off. But if I use it carefully and really think about what I'm writing, it usually gets me exactly where I want to go.

Dad had left me both the map and the diary as part of my mission—to bring peace and harmony to my little corner of the world. I kind of made a mess of that last year, but I cleaned it all up by New Year's. And even though I'm all kinds of messed up in my own head about J.J. not being my friend anymore, and Mom and Erick changing, and everyone leaving for college in less than a year, that's all my own stuff. For my friends and family, things have been pretty peaceful and harmonious, so I haven't used the map except to see Jenna on a regular basis, because yeah, a magic portal to your best friend in the universe? Kinda the most amazing thing ever.

I go into my room and rummage through my school backpack until I find the pouch where I keep the map and dry-erase pen. I shut my bedroom door, plop down on my bed, and scrawl “Jenna” across the weird green landmassy blob in the middle of blue ocean.

And nothing happens. I’m still on my bed.

I peer closely at the map. Did I write her name wrong? It wouldn’t be the first time I made a mistake like that, only I’m not sure how even with my dyslexia I could have messed up the letters in “Jenna” to make the word “home” or “my bed.”

Nope, the name is fine. I wrote it the same way I always do.

Did I not press hard enough? Was I maybe not thinking about Jenna hard enough when I wrote her name?

My phone rings.

“Hey.”

“Where are you?” Jenna asks.

“It didn’t work,” I say. “Let me try it again.”

I lick a finger and start rubbing off Jenna’s name so I can write it again, but then I hear her voice go all dark and foreboding in my ear.

“Is the *zemi* still there?”

I freeze, and not just because I realize I’m an idiot and Jenna is much smarter than me. I slip my fingers underneath the postcard-sized board. I raise it slowly and nervously, like I’m expecting a cockroach to scuttle out from underneath. Finally, I flip it over.



The back is plain blue plastic. No design. No *zemi*.
No spirit of my father.
“No,” I say breathlessly. “It’s not there.”

