

# ZEVI TAKES THE SPOTLIGHT



CAROL MATAS

# ZEVI IS FAMOUS—FOR THE WRONG REASON!

Thirteen-year-old Zevi is thrown into the spotlight when the media discovers his secret abilities—and it's ruining his life! He wants fame as an actor, not as a psychic. So when Robert Lemon, a famous actor, comes to town to film a movie, Zevi hopes this is his chance to turn things around. Until he begins to sense that the star's life is in danger. When "accidents" start befalling Robert Lemon on the movie set, it's up to Zevi to use his gift to save the famous actor.

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# Zevi Takes the Spotlight

Author: Carol Matas

April 16, 2024

In this high-interest accessible novel for middle-grade readers, thirteen-year-old Zevi uses his psychic abilities to save a famous actor's life on a movie set.

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## KEY SELLING POINTS

- Thirteen-year-old Zevi uses his psychic powers to save the life of a famous actor during the filming of a movie.
- This story examines the effects of fame and the importance of choices, while exploring themes of responsibility, empathy and doing the right thing.
- Carol Matas is an internationally acclaimed and award-winning author of dozens of books for young people. She's written in a variety of genres, including historical fiction, sci-fi, supernatural and thriller. She is also a graduate of the Actor's Lab in London, England, and pursued an acting career for a few years.
- The accuracy of the movie set and filming scenes was expert reviewed by filmmaker John Kozak, a professor of film at the University of Winnipeg.
- Enhanced features (dyslexia-friendly font, cream paper, larger trim size) to increase reading accessibility for dyslexic and other striving readers.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**CAROL MATAS** is an internationally acclaimed author of over 47 books for children and young adults. Her bestselling work, which includes three award-winning series, has been translated into over a dozen languages. She has received over one hundred awards and honors, including the Sydney Taylor Book Award, the Geoffrey Bilson Award for Historical Fiction for Young People and two nominations for a Governor General's Literary Award. Carol lives in Winnipeg.

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*Orca currents*

Orca Currents are short, high-interest novels with contemporary themes written specifically for middle-school students reading below grade level. Reading levels from grade 2.0 to 4.5.

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**CAROL MATAS**

*orca currents*

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*To my grandchildren, with all my love*



# Chapter One

I'm famous.

This is how it happened.

A five-year-old girl went missing in North Vancouver, and that night I had a dream—I dreamed exactly where she was. Clear as day. I told my parents, and they went with me to the police. Mom explained to the detective that I have this gift.

The detective was nice. I mean, she didn't laugh out loud. Instead she checked. I had seen the little girl shivering inside a shed, and I could also see the street the shed was on. It was beside a big old factory that had a huge *G* marked on the front. The detective found her exactly where I said. Turned out the kid had wandered into the shed and got locked in. It was just a few blocks from where she lived in North Van.

Mom called it a gift when she explained it to the detective. That's not what I would call it. I can sometimes see the future. I can sometimes dream what will happen, or hear people's thoughts, or even talk to dead people. Some gift! Unlike other gifts, this one is not returnable.

When I was little I thought everyone saw the world the same way. It was only when I got older that I started to realize I was different. My best friend, Nir, used to tease me. He'd say I knew what he was thinking when we played soccer and that's why I was always a step ahead. I told him I *could* hear what he

was thinking. Yup, that freaked him out. He pretty much made me tell my parents, who were worried I was sick. But the psychiatrist they took me to said I wasn't. I was just "sensitive."

Anyway, back to my instant fame. Some reporter managed to track me down as the person who had helped the police. I still don't know how the reporter did it, but suddenly there were cameras at our door. Then there were more and more reporters, until finally the story went viral.

I'm just finishing seventh grade, and I really don't need this going into my last year of middle school. I was planning to star in the school play next year. I was planning to audition for films in Vancouver. But who wants an actor who's had his face all over the internet and all over TV news—for being psychic? This is really bad!

Okay, so I haven't had a normal childhood. I've managed, though, often by ignoring my psychic abilities whenever possible. My older sister, Jessie,

Jes for short, is always trying to figure out some scientific explanation for my powers. She's a math wiz and has more science medals than she can fit in her room. And she badly wants to know what my powers mean.

Is it because of quantum physics? Some scientists say there is no past, no future—only now. Jes wonders if I could be tapping into some sort of collective unconscious. Like a group mind. But that wouldn't explain my talking to and hearing dead people, would it? That has Jes stumped for sure.

Still, outside of my family, Nir and Jes's best friend, Meira, who is Nir's older sister, no one else knew anything about this.

Until now.

## Chapter Two

“What’s it like being famous?”

I stare at—what’s her name? Lily? Or maybe it’s Luna? She must be the fiftieth person today to ask me that. She’s one of the popular kids, and she has never, ever noticed me before.

The hallway is finally empty, except for the two of us. I’ve been mobbed out here, answering questions every class change.

“Zevi, who’s going to win the Stanley Cup?”

“Zevi, should I go out with Jon or Jordan or whoever?”

“What about the latest Jays trade?”

Then there are the others. “Zevi, you’re a total freak. Zevi...”

And to make it even more annoying, half of them can’t pronounce my name right. “Zeevee” is one I hear a lot. “Zev,” I correct them, “and then add the long *ee*.” They don’t really listen, though. They aren’t interested in me, just in the answers I can give them. Which I mostly can’t—or won’t!

Nir barrels down the hallway and saves me, as usual. He’s so tall for thirteen, he looks like a high schooler. I’m almost as tall as Nir, so the two of us stand out in the hallways. Coach Briggs is always glaring at me because I chose Drama Club over basketball, unlike Nir. Coach takes that as a personal insult.



“Zevi! Come on! We’re late for class.” Nir grabs me by the arm and puts some distance between us and whoever that girl is.

I can hear her disbelief as we start down the hall. “Um, *hello!*” I guess no one just walks away from her when she is talking, like, ever!

“So have you heard?” Nir asks me.

“What?”

“Guess who’s coming here to film a movie.”

“Who?” I ask.

“Guess!”

“Who?”

“Robert Lemon!” Nir says.

“*Really?*”

“Really. The movie’s called *Darkness Falls*, and they’re only filming some of it here, the rest in LA. But Robert Lemon will be here for, like, two weeks. It’s his first lead in a drama, not an action movie. It’s set in the future, and he plays a guy who discovers

that his older brother murdered their father. Then the older brother takes over the family empire, leaving the younger brother with lots of problems. Sounds like a great part!" Nir says eagerly. "And wait—there's more!"

"What?" I ask.

"They're auditioning for extras. I'm going to send in my picture. You should too. I mean, maybe we could even be in a scene with him."

"You and the rest of the city," I say. "Anyway, you hate acting. Why would you do it?"

"Because it's Robert Lemon, obviously," Nir says. "And you know he's Jewish," he adds.

"Yeah," I answer, rolling my eyes. Every Jewish kid, including me and Nir, knows that Robert Lemon is Jewish.

We finally get to class. Ms. Foster gives us both a look for being late.

We sit down, and I open my math book. I think about what Nir just told me. I've been an extra in two movies and one TV episode. It's mainly standing

around and then more standing around. I find it interesting, though, because I get to watch the actors and try to learn from them. And learning from Robert Lemon would be amazing.

But suddenly I see a black cloud all around me. I've seen that before. Over the years I've learned that whenever I see it, bad things almost always happen.

"Zevi, is anything wrong?" Ms. Foster asks me.

I look up. "No, why?"

Nir whispers, "You kinda groaned out loud."

I check the room. Everyone is staring at me.

"I just saw a vision of my math mark," I say.

Ms. Foster smiles. The kids laugh.

And Nir whispers, "Zevi? What's up?"

I shake my head. I'll tell him later.

*I'm in a movie. It must take place in the present or the future because the set is sleek—white walls, white furniture, white media console, like an Ikea*

*showroom. In front of me is a person dressed all in black—black cap tilted over their eyes, black trench coat, black-and-white high-tops. They're holding a black weapon that looks like a phaser from Star Trek.*

*At the far end of the room is Robert Lemon. His hands are up in front of his face, and he's saying, "No, no," in a whisper. But the figure dressed in black shows no mercy and says, "It has to be."*

*The person shoots. As the laser hits Robert Lemon, it scatters into countless bits of light. In slow motion Robert Lemon grabs his chest and dramatically sinks to the floor. His last words are "Zevi, I should have listened to you..."*

*"Cut!"*

Nir is sticking a pen in my back. I sit up. I fell asleep in class. I hope I'm not drooling. I glance around. It looks like no one but Nir noticed.

I turn to him. “Something’s up with this movie,” I whisper.

“Uh-oh,” he says. When I say “up,” Nir knows right away what I mean.

“Should we stay away?” he asks.

I don’t know. I feel like beating my head on my desk, which I guess won’t help. It’s not as if I get text messages telling me what will happen. I get feelings or images or pictures. Sometimes I have dreams like this one. Mostly I don’t even know how to understand them.

Will Robert Lemon be shot by a weird person in a black coat? From past visions I’ve learned that things often don’t play out exactly the way I “see” them. It can be so frustrating. That dream about the missing child wasn’t the norm for me. Usually it’s more like this—just feelings and vague hints.

“Don’t worry,” Nir says. “We’ll figure it out.”

I hope he’s right.

Our next class is English with Mr. Crossly.

“Zevi,” he says, as soon as we are all seated, “do you feel any different now that you’re famous? Let’s use this as a teachable moment!”

My heart sinks. I don’t want to be a teachable moment! Why do so many teachers use that phrase? The last thing I want right now is to be the center of attention!

“I don’t want to go into it,” I mutter.

“Oh,” Mr. Crossly says, and he seems surprised. “But fame is a huge part of our culture. Some want to be famous, some don’t have a choice. But we are all surrounded by it.”

*I want to be a famous actor*, I almost say out loud. *What’s wrong with that?* I am thinking about what I can say, when Nir saves me again.

“Speaking of fame,” he says, “has everyone heard that Robert Lemon is coming to town?”

The whole class bursts into chatter. Mr. Crossly gives up. I thank Nir with a thumbs-up.

And hope this day doesn’t get any worse.

## Chapter Three

I hear the doorbell, but I don't want to get off the couch. What a day! Nonstop stupid from start to finish. I've now become the official school psychic. If things don't get better tomorrow, I might have to take the rest of the week off.

The bell rings again. I drag myself off the couch. Jes isn't home yet, and neither is Mom or Dad. I open the door and find myself staring at a tall woman

with jet-black hair and dark eyes. She is dressed in tight black leather pants and a black leather jacket. Her shiny black boots have heels so high, I have no clue why she doesn't just topple over. Her sunglasses are perched on top of her head.

"May I speak to the owner of this house?" she asks.

"Uh, can I take a message? Because they aren't back from work yet," I say. I could lie, but she doesn't look like a serial killer.

She pauses for a moment as she sizes me up. "You're the son?"

I nod.

"Okay. Here's the deal. I've been asked to approach your folks about using your house to film part of a movie—with Robert Lemon?"

She waits for the expected reply.

"Robert Lemon wants to use our house to film his movie?" My voice comes out very squeaky.

"Well, the director, Nora Michaels, wants to use your house. We need something a little unusual."



“Yes, yes, yes,” I hear myself saying.

Our house *is* unusual for sure. It is made of glass and steel, which reflects the light. So it always looks different depending on the time of day. Sometimes you can see trees reflected, sometimes clouds. People often stop to stare at it like it’s a work of art in a museum. Mom and Dad bought it about twenty years ago. That was when they moved here from Toronto because Dad got a job as a professor teaching acting at the university. Mom started as a doctor in training. Mom and Dad say we are lucky because we could never afford it now.

“We’ll need to hear the yes from your parents,” the woman says.

“You will,” I say, sounding surer than I feel. “Can you call around seven?” I give her my cell number, and she hands me a card. It says *Betty Wong, Publicist*.

I shut the door and call Nir.

“Can’t talk,” he says. “I’m already in line to be an extra.”

I tell him.

“No!” he says.

“Yup.”

“No!” he repeats.

“Uh, yes.”

Then I hear him saying to someone else, “But you have to. I was here early. That’s not fair…”

“You won’t believe this,” Nir says to me. “The line is so long I can’t even sign up.”

“Get over here,” I say. “Maybe we can ask to be extras for letting them use our house.”

“Genius,” he says.

I can’t sit still after that. I pace up and down. When Jes gets home and I tell her, she is all in. I think she has a bit of a crush on Robert Lemon, but who doesn’t? Mom finally arrives. She is not happy when I tell her the news. In fact, she says “No!” right away.

She is still taking off her coat as we start to argue.

“Zevi, I have no idea what this means for us. We might need to go to a hotel. Will they pay for that? And even if they do, what a fuss.”

That’s when Nir bursts in. He rarely knocks—we come and go from each other’s houses all the time.

“Dr. Becker!” he almost shouts, even though Mom is standing a foot away from him. “This is the coolest thing ever. Ever!! I mean, Robert Lemon? In this house?”

Jes has joined us, a glob of peanut butter in her mouth. That makes it difficult to hear what she is saying. But she is definitely agreeing with Nir.

I can see Mom is going to give in.

“All right,” she says finally. “We’ll see what this woman says and just how crazy it might be for us.”

Nir, Jes and I high-five.

Success.

## Chapter Four

“Zevi!” Mom says. “Wake up! This was all your idea. Four a.m. Why I ever agreed...” She stomps off in a horrible mood.

I drag myself out of bed so I can get to the bathroom before Jes. It’s not that she ever takes that long. I just like to beat her there.

The doorbell rings when I get downstairs. I answer. It is Betty Wong, the woman from yesterday.

Right behind her is the film crew. I see that our street is now lined with huge trucks and trailers. Masses of people push past me and into the house to start setting up.

Nir walks in after them. Betty agreed to having me, Jes, Nir and Meira as extras, but Meira said she was too shy, even if it meant not meeting Robert Lemon. Jes isn't that keen on being an extra either, but she can't pass up the chance. This should keep me in her good books for at least a week. Maybe two!

Then all the other extras arrive. About fifteen of us are herded into the living room, where a woman called Coral is doing hair and makeup. She looks at her list and calls, "N...n...ii."

Nir grins. He knows that means him. "Nir," he says. "Rhymes with *here*." He goes first.

Coral tells him that he is perfect. Sometimes I think he should be the movie star, not me. I mean, he has a smile that makes kids swoon, plus perfect

skin without a single zit! Coral gathers his black hair and puts it in about five small man buns.

Jes's short, curly blond hair is also "just perfect," according to Coral.

My turn. Coral sits me down. She stares at my very short blond hair and frowns. Finally she takes a pile of goo and mashes it around until my hair is standing straight up in spikes. I look like I've been struck by lightning!

The costumes are set up in the kitchen. Nir and I get off lucky—we are both given loose gold overalls and shiny silver tops. Once dressed we are told to wait in the family room. Some of the other costumes are extreme. Jes is wearing a skirt that has so many layers and is so wide, she can barely move around. I give her a thumbs-up and she gives me a glare. I bet she's wondering if this was worth it.

After waiting at least an hour, Nir and I decide to go upstairs to use the bathroom. We haven't seen

the cast, but they must be in that long line of trailers outside.

While Nir is in the bathroom, I hear my tablet dinging in my bedroom. I go in to check. It's bad. My social media is clogged with nasty comments. People are accusing me of being a fake. Of using a little girl's terrible experience so I could get famous.

Nir takes the tablet away from me and disables the comments. I ask him to take down all my accounts as well. He's almost done when the bedroom door suddenly flies open. Two people, a man and a woman, burst in. They are having an intense conversation. Arguing.

She is so angry, her face has turned bright red. "You just don't get it!" she exclaims.

"I think I understand exactly what you are saying," he replies. And the man who is speaking is...

"Robert Lemon!" Nir blurts out.

The man jumps a mile. “I know who I am! Who are you?” he says, staring at us.

“Nir.”

“Well, what are you doing here, Nir?” Robert Lemon demands.

The woman is glaring at us. I know that face. Mimi! She is a well-known comedy star who only uses her first name—but she’s not looking too amused right now!

Nir can’t seem to answer, so I do. “Uh, I live here.”

“He does,” Nir agrees. “This is his room. We’re extras in the movie, but this is Zevi’s house.”

“Well, then it is up to me to apologize to you, Zevi and Nir.” Robert Lemon makes a small bow. “We shall leave you in peace.”

I can’t help but notice how he sounds almost old-fashioned when he talks to us. But, of course, he does have a degree in English literature and Shakespeare studies, so that makes sense. And after he trained at the Yale school of drama, he



worked as a stage actor before becoming a famous action star.

Mimi gives us a very dirty look. As she and Robert Lemon leave, a black cloud seems to appear out of nowhere and swallow him up.

Before I can stop myself, I call out, "Careful!"

He turns. "What?" he asks.

"Sometimes Zevi leaves his skateboarding stuff on the stairs," says Nir, trying to cover for me. "Just don't trip."

"Thank you." Robert Lemon smiles. The charm oozes out of him. Green eyes, shiny black hair, tall—he is even better-looking in person than onscreen. "I will do my best."

He shuts the door gently behind him.

"That was quite a fight they were having," says Nir.

And the bad feeling is back.

"Trouble already?" he asks me, seeing the look on my face.

I shrug. “Anyway, we better get down there.”

Just in time. The extras are being led out the front door onto the lawn. After a few minutes the crowd parts like the Red Sea when they spot Robert Lemon. I know from my other times as an extra that we aren’t allowed to talk to the actors. Nir and I were lucky to meet him in person, even though it wasn’t the best introduction in the world.

A guy called Lars introduces himself to the extras as the AD. I know that means assistant director. He is slim, average height, with brown hair and a flower tattoo on his right arm. He has a definite accent, but it’s not Danish like Dad’s—which is almost unnoticeable. Maybe Swedish? He places us one by one around a long white stone table. It is covered with cakes and different things that are maybe supposed to be futuristic sweets. I can see that most of it isn’t real or edible. And that seems to be the entire set—this one table.

Of course, just because the set is simple doesn't mean anything else is. Our entire front yard is crammed full of people, many of them talking into their walkie-talkies. The lighting crew is finalizing the line of huge standing lights that curve around one side of the set. I catch sight of the boom operator. A microphone is attached to the boom, which is a long pole the operator is balancing on his shoulders. He signals he is ready.

Lars partners up the extras, putting me and Nir together. That's a relief. Lars tells us to mime talking to each other when the scene begins. He says we need to look happy. He also says no big hand gestures.

Then Lars puts Robert Lemon right beside us! I can't believe it. We'll be in all the shots! This is awesome! What if this is my breakthrough? What if Robert Lemon notices me and offers me a part in his next movie? Or the director thinks I am perfect for the lead in her next movie?

Just as I am thinking that, the director, Nora Michaels, walks over to talk to Robert Lemon. She is a small woman with long, curly black hair and huge black glasses. She stands, hands on hips, looking up at Robert Lemon as she gives him advice on how to play the scene with his costar, Mimi.

When Ms. Michaels is done, she sits down in her director's chair.

"Quiet!" Lars shouts. The prop people stop fussing and move to the side. Then he shouts, "Picture's up!"

The set goes dead quiet. No one moves.

"Roll sound!" Lars calls.

"Speed," the sound mixer says.

"Roll camera!" Lars calls.

"Rolling," the camera person responds.

A young woman holds a black-and-white slate in front of the camera. It's got the stick part, or clapper, hinged up. She says, "Scene eleven alpha, take one. Mark!" She snaps the clapper shut on the slate.

"Camera set," the camera person says.

“Action!” Ms. Michaels calls out.

Robert Lemon takes a small sip out of a long thin glass. That’s when Mimi hurries toward him. She weaves her way through the extras, who are standing around the table as directed. Nir and I are pretending to talk.

“Morgan,” Mimi says to Robert Lemon, “I’m so glad you came.”

“Of course. It’s your birthday.” He beams at her. “We promised to meet today and finally tell everyone,” he says.

“I know,” she answers. “But there is something I need to tell you. And you won’t like it.” She pauses and looks away. Then she says, “Morgan, it is over. I have found someone else.”

Robert Lemon gasps and turns away, shielding his eyes with his arm. I can’t help thinking he is overacting a bit. I mean, a *lot!*

Suddenly one of the lights above us seems to be closer than it was a second ago.

In fact it is getting closer and closer. That makes no sense—until I hear someone shout something like “Watch out!” from where the directors are sitting.

My brain realizes it is a big light coming straight for Robert Lemon, who can’t see it because he still has his eyes covered. And Mimi is looking down at the ground. “Nir!” I shout. “Push!”

I push Robert Lemon. Nir pushes Mimi a second later, just as the light crashes down. It grazes Robert Lemon’s shoulder and my leg. Then it breaks into a million shards as it smashes into the ground.

Panic follows.

## Chapter Five

Screaming—lots of that. People running toward us. Chaos everywhere.

Robert Lemon is surrounded in seconds by pretty much everyone on set. Stagehands, directors, you name it—they are there.

“Are you okay?” Nir asks me.

“I think so. Are you?”

“Not a scratch,” says Nir.

I can hear a siren already.

Robert Lemon says, “I’m fine. I’m totally fine. How are the kids?”

Lars says, “You have to get checked out at the hospital. You know that.”

Robert Lemon is led away.

A paramedic appears and looks me and Nir over. They agree we are fine.

Jes also comes over to check on us. She gives me a hug. “You were amazing,” she says.

Lars tells the extras to go into our family room. It’s crammed with people shouting into their phones and texting. Coral comes in and tells everyone to get changed and to hang their costumes on the racks in the kitchen. Nir and I slip upstairs to change in my bedroom. We hurry back to the kitchen with our costumes.

That’s where Betty finds us. She says, “Zevi, we’ll have to film this all over again tomorrow. I hope your parents will be all right with that. After this we



have one more scene here, and then we are done.” She calls Mom and is lucky to get right through. When Mom is in the ER, she doesn’t have time for phone calls. She must have picked up worried that something had gone wrong. I can hear part of the conversation.

“Dr. Becker, we want to assure you first of all that Zevi and his friend are just fine.” Pause. “Well, there was a freak accident. One of the lights tipped over.” Pause. “No, no, actually no one was hurt at all. But that was mainly due to your son and his friend. They pushed the stars out of the way.” Pause.

So was this accident the cause of my bad feelings? Is this what my dream was warning me about? Except the bad feelings are still there.

Betty continues. “Well, here’s the thing. Robert Lemon refused to go to the hospital. He says he is fine, but he has gone back to his hotel. The director insisted. We had to wrap filming for today. It will take too much time to find another location. So...can we

use your house for just one more day?" Long pause as she listens.

Nir and I both hold our breath.

"If there were any other way..." Pause. "Thank you. Thanks so much! I'll tell the director. And we'll put you up at any hotel you would like tonight, since the house is such a mess right now."

Nir and I high-five.

"The Leeds? Absolutely. It's where we're all staying. That's perfect. How many rooms would you like? Certainly. Two rooms. I'll arrange everything."

I grin at Nir.

Betty ends the call with Mom, then turns to me. "Your mom said you and Jes should each pack a bag. She'll come home to pack a bag for herself and your dad and then drive you downtown. You can meet your dad there."

She puts a hand on my shoulder. "I don't know if anyone has thanked you, Zevi, but that was amazing.

Have you checked the news? Someone caught the whole episode on their phone, and apparently you're famous now. The boy who saved Robert Lemon!"

My heart sinks. "No way!" I blurt out. I look at Nir.

"More famous," Nir says.

"More?" Betty asks.

"Zevi was already in the news," Nir explains, "because he found this little kid who went missing—"

"Wait a minute," Betty interrupts. "You are *that* boy?"

I nod.

She stares at me for a minute and then says, "Come with me."

Nir and I follow her to the front door. She opens it, takes my arm and pulls me outside. Crowding around the door are at least a dozen media people and camera crews.

"Here he is, Zevi Frederiks, the boy who saved Robert Lemon's life," announces Betty. "The very

same boy who only days ago saved a five-year-old child from sure death by using his psychic powers. Zevi can tell you all about it.”

## Chapter Six

My heart is pounding. What do I do? Betty should have asked me first. This is not fair, and besides that, it's scary!

I look at the logo on a camera and see it's the biggest media company for online celebrity and entertainment news. I notice another one, also super big. What do I do? I'm frozen. I'm panicking.

Do I tell them about my visions? I mean, the visions had nothing to do with pushing Robert Lemon out of the way. I look desperately at Nir.

He whispers, “Keep it short.”

I pull Nir over to stand closer to me. Then I take a breath and start.

“This wasn’t anything psychic,” I say. “My friend Nir and I are extras in the movie Mr. Lemon is shooting here in Vancouver. I just happened to see the light coming for us—for all of us. Him, me, Nir and Mimi. Anyone would have done the same thing. If someone hadn’t yelled ‘Watch out!’ I probably wouldn’t have acted fast enough. So you should find out who it was that warned us.”

“But Zevi, did you have any strange feelings before all this happened?” a young reporter asks.

I don’t want to lie, but I also don’t want the world to know about feelings or dreams I can’t prove. So I just shrug.

“Zevi? Is there something you aren’t telling us?”

I don't know what to say.

"Nir? Nir, tell us your story. Are you and Zevi good friends?" someone else asks.

"Best friends," Nir answers.

"Tell us what it's like to have a best friend with psychic powers."

"Normal to me, I guess."

Betty puts up her hands. "That's all for now. Thanks, everyone. And all of us at *Darkness Falls* would like to thank Zevi and Nir."

She leads us back into the house and closes the door firmly behind us. "Thanks so much for doing that," she says.

Like she gave us a choice!

"Zevi, I've spoken to the director, and there is good news and bad news," Betty says.

I wait.

"The bad news is that you and Nir won't be able to be extras anymore. Your faces are too well known—or certainly will be. Which means in that

scene everyone will be looking for the two kids who saved Robert, when they should be looking at Robert and Mimi.”

I feel really upset. Earlier today I was imagining that this movie could be the beginning of a film career! Instead my psychic powers and my acting career are at war! And acting just lost.

Nir doesn't look happy either.

“But,” says Betty, “you have an open invitation to the set the entire time Robert is filming in Vancouver. You can come and watch anything, anytime.”

“Really?” I ask. I mean, that *does* sound cool.

“Really,” she says.

“So tomorrow Nir and I can still be here? And my sister? Can she still be in the movie?”

“Not in the movie, no, but she can watch as well.”

Mom comes home then, and Betty thanks her again. Nir says goodbye, and we promise to text each other later. Mom and I head upstairs. We need to pack our bags.



I look out Mom's window, which is at the front of the house. All the extras are gone. A skeleton crew is putting away the lights and equipment and packing up the props from the table.

Mom insists on checking me for glass shards, even though I tell her a paramedic has already done it. When she is sure I am okay, she can't keep her anger in.

"You may be the psychic," she says, "but I never had a good feeling about this."

"You don't know the half of it." I tell her about the media ambush.

She sighs. "Any publicity is good publicity, don't they say? I suppose Betty couldn't let this go by."

"Here's the thing, Mom," I say. "I *did* feel something about Robert Lemon. I saw something. A dark cloud. And I had a dream where he gets shot with a laser, and the light sort of shatters."

Mom sits down on the bed. "Honey, why didn't you tell me?"

“Because I wasn’t sure it meant anything.”

Just then Jes bursts into the room, with Nir right behind her.

“I thought you went home,” I say to Nir.

Jes seems almost out of breath. “Look what I found on the lawn,” she says, holding up a long piece of rope.

“So?” I say. “The crew could have left rope anywhere.”

“This was sticking out of a bush right behind where the light was,” Jes says. “Look closely.”

The rope is knotted like a lasso used to catch a horse.

And suddenly I see it all like a movie in my head. Someone is pulling the rope, which is tied around the bottom of the tall light stand.

“Someone pulled the rope to tip the light over?” I ask. “Crashed it on purpose?”

“It was no accident,” Jes says. “Could someone be trying to hurt Robert Lemon?”

“Long story,” I answer. “Amazing you noticed such a small thing,” I add. “Good job!”

“As a scientist I always need to be alert to my surroundings,” she answers, looking a bit smug.

Nir says, “Well, if we want to figure out who did it, we have a prime suspect. Mimi! She was so mad at Robert Lemon. Right, Zevi?”

“She was,” I agree. “But she was in the scene, so if it’s her, she must be working with someone. I wonder if we can find out why they were fighting.”

“Maybe you will ‘hear’ something,” Mom says.

I hope so.

## Chapter Seven

Mom picks up the rope. “This isn’t what I would call hard evidence, but I think we should drop it off at the police station. We can leave it for Detective Deene. She was very understanding when we talked to her about the missing child.”

We drop Nir off at home and head to the police station. It’s not far from the hotel, right downtown. But when we get there, we don’t get the reaction we

had hoped for. An older man at the front desk tells us that Detective Deene is away and no one has time to meet with us. Mom explains how I helped the detective find the missing child. The guy snorts through his nose and says, “Deene was the only one here who believed all that. Sorry, but unless you have an urgent police matter, I can’t waste anyone’s time.”

Mom glares at the man for a moment. Then she nods her head and says, “Come on, kids.” That’s all. Mom knows when there is no point in fighting with someone.

As we drive away, she says, “Pay no attention to that man, Zevi. He’s one of those people who like to feel important by making other people feel small. But we aren’t small. We are chazak!”

That makes me grin. When Jes and I were little and got scared, Mom used to pose like a wrestler and say, “Chazak!” That’s the Hebrew word for *strong*. And we got in the habit of saying it about anything,

from a skinned knee to a schoolyard fight. Funnily enough, when I clench my fists and cactus my arms, I still feel tough.

Together Jes and I shout, “Chazak!”

In a few minutes we are at the Leeds. It’s one of the oldest hotels in Vancouver. We ride the elevator to the seventh floor, where we have two adjoining rooms. Small but nice.

Dad is reading in an armchair when we arrive. He puts the book down and says, “Well, well, what’s all this I hear on the news? Are you trying to get *more* attention, Zevi?” He gets up and gives me a hug.

I know he’s teasing—just so I’ll laugh at the whole thing. Trouble is, it doesn’t feel all that funny right now.

“Some things are out of your control, Zevi,” he says. “You couldn’t let a person get hurt because you don’t want more publicity.”

“I guess,” I say.

“Why don’t you tell me what happened, over dinner?”

When we get to the dining lounge on the main floor, I notice that Robert Lemon and about eight other people are already there. They are on one side of the large space, seated by the window.

Maybe Robert Lemon feels my eyes on him or something, because suddenly he is looking right at me. He points at me. Everyone at his table raises their glasses and shouts, “Bravo!” Other people in the lounge can’t help but notice. I can feel my face getting hot.

A server takes us to our table. A hubbub starts. I notice that Robert Lemon is walking over to us! All eyes in the lounge are on him. Even the servers pause for a moment as if the king were walking past them. I stay standing.

He reaches our table and puts out his hand to shake mine. I take it, trying to remember what Dad

taught me about a firm handshake. *You never want your hand to feel like a dead fish*, he told me.

It works maybe a little too well. Robert Lemon smiles and says, “That’s some handshake! I came over to thank you,” he continues. “Is this your family... Zevi?”

“Yes, this is my mom, Naomi, and my dad, Kai. And Jes is my sister. She was an extra today too.”

Robert Lemon shakes hands with everyone and then says, “I also want to thank you for letting us use your house.”

“Oh, no problem,” says Mom.

Not quite what she was saying a few hours ago!

“Well, thank you again for today, Zevi,” says Robert Lemon. “Betty tells me she invited you to our shoots—that’s the least we can do. Enjoy your dinner.” He starts moving away.

Before I can think about it, I am following him. I say very quietly, “Actually, Mr. Lemon, could I talk to you?”



He turns to face me. “Well, I’m in the middle of eating with my friends right now, Zevi.”

He couldn’t talk down to me more if he tried. I can almost hear him thinking, or maybe I actually *am* hearing him thinking, *Just my luck. He wants something from me now.*

“Betty will be happy to give you and your friends signed headshots,” he says, backing away.

“No, no, it’s not that,” I say.

“Well, then we’ll see you tomorrow.” He turns his back.

“Mr. Lemon, wait.”

He faces me again. He’s thinking, *Great. Great. He wants a part in the movie because he thinks he saved my life.*

“I...I don’t want anything,” I say. “It’s just... Well, you probably heard, maybe from Betty, that I was the one who found the missing girl here in Vancouver. I have these psychic...” I pause. “Abilities.”

I rush ahead before he can stop me. “I have a bad feeling right now about this movie. And about, well, danger maybe.”

Now his eyebrows go way up. I see a small smile form. He is trying not to laugh.

“I know it sounds stupid, but you need to be careful. I’m not sure today was an accident,” I say.

He places a hand on my shoulder. “Zevi,” he says softly, “I’m not sure if you really believe what you are saying. But yes, Betty told me about your ‘powers,’ and she is thrilled about the publicity it is going to give the movie. And if she’s thrilled, I’m thrilled. So...thanks again!”

He pats my shoulder, then turns and strides off.

I am left standing there. I slink back to our table and sit down. I stare at my plate. I can’t even look over at Robert Lemon.

Now I’m not even sure I want to watch the shoot tomorrow. But I also feel like I have to go. Maybe I

can stop another bad thing from happening. But what if I can't?

"Didn't go so well?" Mom asks. "I'm guessing you tried to warn him?"

I nod.

"Never mind, Zevi. The food here is delicious," Mom says. "Put it all aside and have a nice dinner."

I am almost too tired to be hungry. I try not to take the Robert Lemon talk too hard. He doesn't know me. Why should he believe me? I only hope that I'm wrong.

## Chapter Eight

They are already filming when Dad drops me off at our house the next morning around eight. Jes decided it wasn't worth missing class just to watch. Plus she and Meira are competing in a science fair and have lots of work to do on their project.

I stand at the edge of the lawn, watching the actors redo the scene from yesterday. When I hear

Ms. Michaels call, “Cut,” I make my way toward the house.

“Zevi! How lovely to see you!” Betty says. She walks me over a few yards from Ms. Michaels and Lars, right in front of the living room window. “Let’s just put you right here. You can see everything but not be in the way.” The scene is set in front of the dining room window.

Nir arrives after the next take, and Betty brings him over to join me.

Ms. Michaels calls for another take. “Go again.”

“Stand by!” The sound person goes over to Robert Lemon and fiddles with the boom microphone. He shakes his head and motions for the boom operator to bring in another mic.

Then Lars calls a break and tells everyone to take a half hour because the mic needs replacing. “Hot set!” he declares. I know that means no one is allowed to touch anything.

I suddenly feel like we have to stop something from happening. The trouble is I have no idea what it is or how to stop it.

And that's when it happens.

The very large boom operator and the boom he is balancing on his shoulders somehow fall over and land right on top of Robert Lemon!

The boom guy is shouting, people are screaming—it's like yesterday all over again!

Lars grabs the boom first and moves it, then helps roll the guy off Robert Lemon, who hasn't moved because Lars is practically holding him down. Lars is saying, "You can't move until they've checked you for spinal injuries. Stay put. No, you can't get up."

Robert Lemon is yelling that he is just fine and for Lars to get off him!

So that's a relief. He will be okay.

In all the commotion, I stand very still and "listen," trying to pick up anyone's thoughts. Things like, *Too bad he's still alive or Maybe I went too far this time*

or something. But all I get are very, very worried thoughts, with lots of swearing. Nir is also standing really still beside me, observing. I know what he is doing—seeing if he can spot something or someone out of place.

We watch Ms. Michaels catch Lars's arm and pull him to his feet. "Robert insists he is fine. Arrange for a doctor to go to the hotel and check him over just in case. Also I need to talk to Betty. We can't be mobbed by the press again today, or we will get nothing done. I'll have Betty tell the reporters there'll be a news conference at the hotel later in the day."

We are so close that we can hear everything. Ms. Michaels says something about insurance and then asks, "What are you going to do with the extras? We don't have the budget for another day."

"What if we do the scene today with a stand-in?" Lars suggests. "You can get all the shots with the extras along with Mimi's reaction shots. And if the

family will let us use the house for one more day, tomorrow you can do the final shots with Robert and Mimi.”

He pauses. “No, wait! We could use Davis Dunn! He’s in his trailer prepping for the poisoning scene with him, Mimi and Robert.”

“Maybe he can do better than Robert,” I hear Ms. Michaels say quietly.

“Anyone could,” says Lars.

They look at each other.

“Too late now,” she says. Then she adds, “Those dailies from yesterday...”

“I know.” Lars nods. “Brutal.”

So they hate the footage from yesterday? I mean, I thought Robert Lemon was overacting, but now I know they think so too.

“What would I do without you, Lars?” Ms. Michaels asks, as she squeezes his hand. “Thank goodness you didn’t stay at Yale when they asked you to.”



Lars winks. “Being in the thick of things is way better than teaching,” he says. “Even when it gets crazy! Don’t worry, we’ve got this!”

## Chapter Nine

I motion to Nir, and we head up to my room.

“How dare they say that about him?” Nir says once the door is closed. “Robert Lemon is the best actor ever!”

“I kind of agree with them,” I say, although I hate to admit it. “Maybe he’s not right for this.”

“Oh, come on,” says Nir. “He does everything on *Mars Rebound*.”

“But is he deep?” I ask.

“Of course he’s deep!” Nir exclaims. “Remember when he falls in love with the Separdo alien, and they can never be together? Remember how well he played that?”

“I’m just saying that the director is for sure not happy with him.” I pause. “Maybe she’s trying to get rid of him!”

“Or,” Nir says, “maybe he’s doing it to himself to get out of the movie! Maybe he thinks it’s going to ruin his career!”

“I wonder if we can talk to that boom operator,” I say. “It’s pretty strange for him to lose his balance and fall right onto the star. What are the chances of that happening?”

“Do you think your mom will let them film here another day?” Nir asks.

“If they put us up in the hotel again, maybe she’ll go for it,” I say.

Nir and I go downstairs.

Soon after that Lars tells everyone we'll be back to filming after an early lunch, which is being brought in.

I text Mom and tell her what happened. And I beg her to let them finish up here—just one more day. She texts back and agrees! She is probably too busy today to even discuss it.

I hurry over to Lars and tell him. He is relieved. He tells everyone that Robert is fine and will be back at work tomorrow.

After a while lunch is announced, and the cast and crew start to line up at the food truck. Nir and I decide this would be a good time to find the boom operator. We see him sitting at one of the picnic tables set up near the street, where most of the crew is eating. We casually walk over and are lucky enough to catch him talking very loudly about what happened.

“I swear it was like someone pulled my feet out from under me!” he is saying. “I have never, ever had that happen!”

Someone pipes up. "You need to do yoga or something. Improve your balance, or you might be out of a job soon."

"Not funny!" he exclaims. "I'm telling you, someone tripped me!"

Nir and I move away.

"What do you think?" I ask.

"Tripping him without anyone noticing would be quite a feat," Nir says.

"Unless they used a rope or a wire we couldn't see," I say. "Like with the light."

"Let's spend the afternoon hanging around," Nir says. "Maybe you'll sense something. Or even hear something."

"Okay," I say. "I guess that's the best we can do."

After lunch everyone is called to their places. A new actor is standing where Robert Lemon should have been. He has a script in his hand.

Filming starts. Nir and I watch. This actor, Davis Dunn, is much better than Robert Lemon. In *this*

role, at least. I can't say how or why, but that's the thing about acting. You just know when someone is fantastic—and he's only reading from a script! And just so they can get reaction shots from Mimi and the extras.

I think what's so effective about Davis Dunn is how low-key, almost quiet, he is. It's the opposite of Robert Lemon's approach. I almost cry watching his reaction when Mimi tells him she is breaking up with him and getting together with his brother.

When Lars yells, "That's a wrap for today, people!" all the extras applaud the new guy.

And I still feel like there is a disaster moving toward us like a thunderstorm.

## Chapter Ten

Betty drives Nir and me back to the hotel. Nir is going to spend the night.

When we walk through the front doors, we are mobbed by reporters. They crowd around us, yelling questions, like, “Zevi, did you see this one coming?” and “Zevi, what are you feeling or seeing?” Stuff like that.

Betty takes charge, giving each reporter a turn. I answer as best I can, trying not to give too much away.

But after the fifth question, I feel overwhelmed. I say, "I kinda feel like something's not right." The words seem to slip out all on their own. As soon as they leave my mouth, I realize I've messed up. The reporters look like hunters who have just cornered their prey.

"What do you mean?" one shouts. "Is Robert Lemon in real danger?"

Another yells, "What's not right, Zevi?"

I text Mom and Dad. **Where are you?**

**In hotel room**, Dad texts back.

**Get down here to lobby**, I text. **HELP.**

Just then Betty stops it all. "That's enough for today," she says, smiling. "Zevi is here for some quiet family time, and I'm sure you will all respect that. And as promised, I have our director here to



take questions.” She motions Ms. Michaels over, and the reporters start to swarm around her.

Nir and I break free. We meet Mom and Dad and Jes as they come off the elevator. Dad leads us all into the lounge. He finds a quiet table in a corner.

While we wait for our food, Betty comes over to us, smiling. She thanks Mom and Dad for letting them use our house for one more day. She promises it will be the last day—for sure this time.

“And how is Mr. Lemon?” Mom asks.

“Resting in his room,” Betty says. “With room service and his agent.”

As Betty walks away, Dad looks after her and says, “Betty seems to be working the media to create as much publicity as she can for this movie.”

“Technically that *is* her job,” Mom says.

“Are you saying she could be the one behind the accidents? All for publicity?” I ask.

“Well, movies like this are made with very small budgets. So this would be free publicity and buzz,” Dad says.

“Maybe Betty researched you before coming here,” Jes says.

“What do you mean?” I ask.

“I mean, maybe that’s why she chose our house!”

“Wait,” says Dad. “Are you saying it was Betty, the publicist, who chose our house and contacted us?”

Mom nods. “Yes, she’s who I’ve been dealing with.”

“Betty told me it was the director who chose our house,” I say.

“Okay,” says Dad. “That’s for sure wrong. It is *always* the location manager who chooses the site, makes contact and organizes the contracts. Always.”

As an acting teacher, Dad knows quite a lot about the industry. He’s the one who inspired my love of acting. He’s a fantastic teacher. Sometimes he lets me sit in and watch his classes. And of course, we

always go to the student productions, some of which Dad directs.

He teaches film studies as well, so he knows what he is talking about now. “Jes could be right,” Dad says. “Maybe Betty did choose our house because of Zevi and arranged it with the location manager.”

I suddenly hear music. It’s an old Abba song that Dad has on his playlist. He sings it all the time. I say, “They’re playing your song, Dad.”

“I don’t hear anything, Zevi,” he says.

I look around the table. Everyone shakes their heads.

“It’s a message!” says Jes. “A clue! Which song?”

“Take a Chance on Me,” I say.

“A classic love song,” says Dad with a grin. We are always teasing him about a Dane’s favorite band being Swedish.

“It must mean something,” Mom says. “Maybe we have to think about that as a motive. Someone is doing this out of love, not hate.”

“All I can say is that if I were Davis Dunn, I might be tempted to sideline Robert Lemon. Just so I could get a chance to read for that role,” I say, thinking out loud. “It was almost like he was auditioning. Asking for a *chance!* So maybe love of acting? Love of doing that part?”

“And he was on the set, according to Lars,” I add. “If he were seen wandering around, no one would give it a second thought. He was waiting to do his scene, after all.”

“Oh, and Zevi and I saw a fight between Robert Lemon and Mimi,” Nir says. “We have no idea what it was about, though. Maybe they were together but then broke up? That would fit with the song.”

“Maybe. But that means we can think of a few people who would have a motive to stage a small accident,” Dad says. “Let’s hope that’s the end of it, right?”

After dinner we take the elevator to our floor. As we get off, we see a woman stomp out of a room and

then stride down the hall in our direction. Robert Lemon follows her out of the room and yells, “And don’t come back! You couldn’t manage a high school musical, never mind my career! We are done!”

The woman walks up to me. She is the opposite of all the movie stars. No makeup, long brown hair parted in the middle. She reminds me of Mom. No nonsense. She says in a low voice with a New York accent, “Listen, kid, I know who you are. I don’t know what your angle is, but everyone has one. Don’t use my client to get famous. He’s a good guy.”

“I wouldn’t!” I say.

“And he’s still my client, so don’t go blabbing to the reporters either,” she says.

“I wouldn’t,” I say again.

“Make sure you don’t,” she says.

But as she walks away from us, I hear what she’s thinking, as clear as if she were saying it out loud. *He better not have meant what he said! I’ll kill him if he dumps me!*

Then she whacks the elevator button with her fist.

Whoa. I would not want to get on the wrong side of her! And it looks like Robert Lemon just did.

## Chapter Eleven

It's eight in the morning. Mom, Nir and I drop Jes off at Meira's house so they can walk to school together, and then we head home.

When we reach our house, Robert Lemon and Mimi are already filming—the same scene we've seen over and over. The scene Davis Dunn killed yesterday. Mom parks on the street, and we all watch from the car so we don't destroy the action by getting out.

Finally Ms. Michaels calls, “Cut!”

Lars shouts, “Rehearsal! Poisoning scene.”

Davis Dunn comes out of his trailer. He and Mimi and Robert take their places so fast, Nir and I barely have time to say goodbye to Mom and hop out of the car. We hurry to a safe spot to watch, near the front of the house. I notice that Mom is on her phone and hasn’t driven away.

“Action!” Ms. Michaels calls. The cameras aren’t rolling, though, because they are just rehearsing.

Mimi hands Robert Lemon a silver cup. She and Davis Dunn exchange a glance. Robert Lemon puts the cup to his lips.

At that moment I know Robert Lemon can’t drink whatever is in that cup. The cup looks as black to me as that dark cloud I’ve been fearing.

“STOP!” I scream at the top of my lungs. I know everyone will think I’ve lost it. And maybe I have.

Robert Lemon is so surprised that he jumps, and some of the liquid in the cup spills onto the ground.



But I think he already drank a bit.

I race over to him—my body and mouth seem to be doing stuff without me right now!

Robert Lemon stares at me and shakes his head as if to say, *This kid is nuts...*

But then his face turns white.

He gasps and clutches at his throat.

He falls to the ground.

Nir is right beside me. “Call 9-1-1,” I tell him. I look around. Mom is running toward us from the car. Thank goodness she hadn’t driven off yet.

She bends over Robert Lemon and does a quick assessment. “Jes’s Epi,” she says to me.

I race for the house. The Epi is just inside the door in a special drawer, in case Jes gets a wasp sting. I grab it and run back. Hand it to Mom.

I hear Betty before I see her. She is yelling, but in her head. I hear, *No, no, no, this is not part of the plan!* She is hovering right beside me. I stare at her.

Then Lars tries to shove me out of the way. I don't let him. "Give them space," I say.

Robert Lemon is thrashing, gasping for air. His lips are turning blue. He starts to go limp.

Mom takes the Epi out of its case and pulls the safety off. "Hold him!" she says to Nir and me. We grab his left leg and hold it down. She raises her arm and stabs Robert Lemon in the thigh. For a moment nothing happens. Suddenly he takes a big gulp of air. Mom feels for the pulse at his neck and nods. She takes his hand and says, "You are going to be fine, Mr. Lemon. You had an allergic reaction to something."

Already some color is coming back to Robert Lemon's face. He's starting to breathe easily again.

"Okay, Zevi," he says, as he sits up. "Now I believe you. Come to my hotel room in a couple of hours." He looks at Mom. "Is that okay?"

"Yes, we'll drop by later," she says.

Robert Lemon takes Mom's hand. "Thank you."

She squeezes his hand and says, "Just take it easy for a couple hours, and you'll be fine." Then she adds, "I'm an emergency room doctor, so they would have brought you to me anyway. You're all right to go back to the hotel and rest."

I can hear the sirens. Soon the paramedics arrive, and Mom tells them what happened.

While Robert Lemon is driven off in a limo, Nir holds up his phone for me and Mom. "Look at this," he says. "It's a bio of Robert Lemon. And right here it says he has a rare allergy to mangoes. Even the smallest amount could kill him," Nir continues. "If it was in there and he drank that whole cup, well..."

"Or if we didn't have the EpiPen..." I say.

And then Nir grins. He holds up the cup. "Lucky I grabbed this."

"I'll go get a baggie and we can keep it in case the police ever show any interest," Mom says.

The sound of the sirens is now replaced with the sound of cars and trucks speeding to the house. The media.

“I need to get you out of here, Zevi,” Mom says, nodding toward the reporters about to mob us.

“Mom, I have to talk to Betty,” I say. Before she can stop me, I run over to Betty.

“I really need to talk to you,” I say to her.

“Yes,” she agrees. “We need a plan about what to say to the reporters.”

“Right!” I say, even though that’s not at all what I want to talk to her about. “Can we do that somewhere quiet?” I ask. “Like upstairs in my room?”

“I guess,” she says.

I wave Mom and Nir over. The four of us hurry inside and close the door just as a mob of reporters get out of their vans.

“This way,” I say to Betty.

We troop upstairs. I close the door to my bedroom once we are all inside.

“This is so terrible!” Betty says, and I can tell she means it.

“You might not believe I’m psychic in any way,” I begin, “even though you *are* using it to get publicity for the movie.”

“Zevi,” Betty says, “that’s not true! Of course I believe you are!”

“When Robert Lemon looked like he was dying on the ground, you were thinking, *This is not part of the plan*. Sometimes I can hear exactly what people are thinking,” I explain. “When people are upset, it comes through clearer.”

“You heard that, Zevi?” Mom asks.

“Yup,” I answer.

Mom turns to Betty. “Just tell us the truth,” she says. “We only want to stop Mr. Lemon from getting hurt. Or worse, killed.”

*Killed?* I can hear Betty thinking.

“Yes, killed,” I say.

I can feel how upset Betty is. She sits down on

my bed, then stands up again. Finally she takes a deep breath and says, “I had nothing to do with what was in that cup. But...okay, it was me who caused the other accidents.”

## Chapter Twelve

“I did it to help Nora,” says Betty.

“For the publicity?” I ask.

“Yes,” she says. “I love Nora like a sister. And for some reason, she put all her own money into this movie. Anyone can see that Robert is miscast. But if we can get loads of pre-publicity and buzz, then no matter what the critics write, people will come

to see him. If I did nothing, the movie could bomb. She could lose everything.”

She pauses. “I asked Mimi to talk to him about switching roles. This movie is very important for her too. Could be a huge breakthrough for her! But not if the whole movie flops.”

Nir looks over at me, eyebrows raised. I nod back. This has to be what Robert Lemon and Mimi were fighting about.

“But wait,” I say to Betty. “Those lights were really heavy. What if I hadn’t pushed him out of the way?”

“No, no, I made sure it was only the one light,” she answers. “Plus I checked that you and Nir were in the right spot to see it fall. And I yelled out to warn you. I would have pushed you all out of the way if you hadn’t heard me. I was standing close by, just in case. But it worked perfectly, Zevi. You got the credit and we got the extra publicity.”

“So what you’re saying,” Mom says to Betty, “is that taking the chance that two kids, or your stars,



might get hurt was a fair trade for the great publicity you got?"

"I had it under control," Betty objects.

Mom says, "I don't think you did. But if you didn't give Robert Lemon that drink, who did? You know it probably had mango in it?"

"What?" Betty exclaims. "Everyone knows that Robert is allergic to mango! That must have been deliberate!"

"It must have," Mom says. "Look, you know everyone here. Who would want to hurt Robert Lemon?"

"No one!" says Betty.

"Well, that's not true, is it?" says Mom. "Try to think."

After a moment Betty answers. "There's his manager, Lucille Pacer. Robert just told her she's fired. Lucille is furious. Then there's Davis, who'd get a big break if he got that role. And Mimi. She and Davis go way back. They were in film school together and have always stuck together. Maybe she wants this for him...and for herself."

As Betty says the names, I picture each person, but none of them stands out for me. I get no sense that any of them could be involved. But that doesn't mean they aren't. My feelings are not exactly reliable.

Betty continues. "Then there's Nor—" She stops.

"Nora," I say. "Because Robert Lemon's acting is so bad."

"Not *bad*," Betty says. "Just not as great as we had hoped. But not bad."

It's quite a list, considering she started out saying no one would want to hurt him!

"I really have to deal with the media," Betty says.

"I'm not sure I can let this pass without telling the police," says Mom.

"Please, please," Betty says. "I promise I won't do anything like this again. And if you don't say anything, I can keep my eyes and ears open to see if anyone is out to hurt Robert."

Mom takes a moment before she nods. "For now," she agrees. "But we will have to see."

Betty is relieved, of course. “We’d better get downstairs,” she says.

As we reach the first floor, I notice that the crew is packing up, and the house is quickly emptying out.

Ms. Michaels is in the living room. She is putting her clipboard and some papers into the large leather satchel she always carries. When she spots us, she puts down her bag and hurries over.

“Mrs. Frederiks,” she says, taking Mom’s hands in hers.

“Dr. Becker,” Mom corrects her. Mom kept her maiden name. “But please call me Naomi.”

“Naomi, we’re rewriting the last scene so that it takes place downtown. We will finally be out of your hair.” She pauses. “Is there anything at all I can do? To make up for all the trouble this has caused you? I’m so sorry!”

“This wasn’t your fault,” Mom assures her.

Unless she’s the wannabe murderer, I think.

“In fact, I’m very sorry you’re all going through this,

Ms. Michaels. It must be so scary,” Mom continues.

“Please—call me Nora,” she replies. “All of you,” she adds, looking at me and Nir. Then her eyes well up. “Today was terrifying. I thought the other incidents were just accidents. But looking back, they become even scarier. Because, you know, the person—or the maniac, I should say—could have killed Robert. Or even these kids!”

Her hands are still gripping Mom’s, and they are shaking. I am not getting a guilty vibe from her at all. She seems horrified by the whole thing.

“Thank goodness for Lars,” Nora says. “He’s been so steady through all this. He told me he and Robert go way back to Yale days and that he’s always been there for Robert. So important.”

“Speaking of important,” Betty interrupts, “are you ready for the reporters, Zevi?”

“As I’ll ever be,” I sigh.

Betty walks us to the front door. When she opens it, there is an instant roar from all the reporters.

Nir puts his hand on my shoulder. "Listen," he says. "You have to pretend you're in one of your acting classes now. I don't mean lie to the reporters. But you can't tell them what we know, especially about Betty."

"Okay," I say. I take a deep breath. I walk out the front door to join Betty.

Right away I have three mics in my face. Each reporter is asking me a different question. I can't hear what anyone is saying.

Betty steps in. "Leslie, you first."

Leslie pushes the mic even closer and says, "Zevi, tell us what you saw. You screamed at Robert Lemon to spit out his drink. Why did you do that?"

How do I answer? I guess I'll have to tell the truth without giving away everything we know.

"I did see something," I admit. "A dark sort of cloud around the drink. I sensed danger and I yelled before I thought about it."

Another reporter says, "Rumor has it there was mango in that drink, and Robert Lemon is allergic to

mango. Lots of strange accidents on this set, that's for sure. Unless, Zevi, you think someone is out to get Robert Lemon?"

"I don't know what to think," I say.

"Zevi!" shouts someone else. "Are you being paid in any way by the production company?"

"No!" I answer.

"Because this is certainly good publicity for them, wouldn't you say?"

My heart sinks. My head is spinning. This reporter is onto Betty's scheme. I need to say something, but what?

"From the minute I heard Mr. Lemon was coming to town, I started having these dreams and visions. Of something bad happening to him," I blurt out, trying to take their minds off the publicity angle.

"What kind of dreams?" someone asks.

"One dream was like a scene in a movie. And Mr. Lemon was—let's just say it didn't end well."

“Zevi, are you helping that dream come true?” asks another reporter. “Maybe you and your friends? That would make a great story, right? Or maybe it was just a prank?”

Oh no. I’ve just made everything way worse.

My stomach feels like it’s in a meat grinder. I almost feel like throwing up.

That’s when Mom steps in. “Zevi was trying to help. That’s all. And we are done here. I do not give permission for anyone to ask him anything from now on. Is that clear?”

Calmly she walks me and Nir over to the car, and we all get in. And then we drive away—with reporters running after the car!

## Chapter Thirteen

I fall asleep on the way to the hotel.

*Robert Lemon is standing alone in the park near my house. It is so quiet. No one is there but him, standing on the green grass, surrounded by trees in full leaf. There are no sounds either—no birds singing, no dogs barking.*



*Suddenly, from the open gate that leads to the playground, a tiger walks onto the field. A very large tiger, black stripes on orange fur, white belly. It is stalking Robert Lemon, but he doesn't see it. He has his back to it.*

*I start shouting. "Watch out! Tiger! There's a tiger coming."*

*He can't hear me. The tiger gets closer and closer and closer...*

*"Zevi! We're here."*

*I wake up with a start.*

*"Zevi!"*

*Mom and Nir are standing outside the car, waiting for me. Nir is staying with us for the rest of the day since filming ended early.*

*I stagger out of the car and we head inside. At least we got here before the reporters did. I pull*

Nir aside inside the hotel doors, and we let Mom walk ahead.

“I just had a super-vivid dream,” I say to him. “A tiger dream. A tiger coming for Robert Lemon.”

“What does a tiger mean to you? My dad always asks me that when I dream about animals,” says Nir.

“Powerful. But stealthy. Almost sneaky,” I say right away. “But I mean, why am I trying to figure out weird dreams? With that little girl, I saw exactly where she was. Why am I only getting clues now? Why not just send me a dream about who it is that’s trying to hurt or kill Robert Lemon?”

“I know it’s frustrating,” Nir says. “But you’ll probably never know why some things come through so clearly and some things don’t.”

Nir and I have had this discussion before. Maybe it has to do with free will. Who knows? I mean, if I can see the future, does that mean the future is already set in stone? Is it fate? And if it is, are we

just puppets with no free will? Or can our choices change the future?

I guess if I hadn't gone to the police and told them about my dream, the little girl might have died. So I did get to make a choice. Dad loves talking about all this. He's very big on free will and the importance of the choices we make. It makes my head hurt.

As we walk past the lounge, I see that the cast and crew are already here. Nora and Lars are standing in a corner, talking. Lars puts a hand on Nora's arm. He speaks earnestly, gazing into her eyes, holding her arm tightly. She shrugs him off and walks away. I wonder if he's trying to convince her to go with the understudy.

We take the elevator up to Robert Lemon's floor. When we knock on his door, Lucille Pacer opens it. She grabs me and gives me a huge hug. Quite a different reaction from the last time we met! She ushers us into the suite. I think my face must be

bright red, because Robert Lemon lets out a small laugh when he sees me.

“Zevi!” he exclaims warmly. “I really have to thank you!” He pauses. “Can I give you a hug?”

Robert Lemon wants to hug me?

He is sitting on the couch. I go over to him, and he awkwardly puts his arms around me in a gentle hug.

“You all must call me Robert from now on. I insist,” he says.

“Well, Robert,” says Mom, “I insist on looking you over. Do you mind?”

Robert—I can’t believe I’m calling him that—agrees. And after a quick check, Mom says he is well enough to go back to work tomorrow.

Then Lucille makes us sit down. She asks if we’ve eaten. Nir, who is always hungry, pipes up that he is starving. She calls down to room service and puts in an order. She and Robert must have made up and she has calmed down. She must like him a lot, not just as a client but as a friend.

Lucille passes us some cold water from the full-size fridge in the room. For some reason the song I heard in the dining room yesterday, “Take a Chance on Me,” comes into my head again, this time really, really loud.

Suddenly my mind rewinds to the scene I just saw between Lars and Nora. The way he touched her arm. Looked into her eyes.

My heart lurches. Everyone seems to love Nora so much they would do anything for her. Including Lars? Betty stopped just short. But what if Lars thought Robert was about to destroy Nora’s movie? What if he thought getting rid of Robert and putting in the new guy would solve all the problems?

As assistant director, Lars has a lot at stake too—and not just love. If the movie is a hit, then his career takes off. He could be famous. Nora would see what a great team they are. They could make more movies together. They could get married. They would have a perfect life!

My heart is pounding so hard I can barely hear myself think.

“Zevi, are you all right, honey?” Mom puts her arm around me.

“I think I know who it is,” I say.

## Chapter Fourteen

“If I’m right,” I say, talking so fast my words almost trip over each other, “he won’t stop until he finishes what he started. But there is no proof. We need proof. We need to catch him in the act or make him confess.” I look at Robert. “You’re an actor,” I say.

“So I’ve heard,” he says.

“Then we could set up a scene. Nora could film it. And we would have proof.”

“Zevi!” Nir exclaims. “Stop! Tell us who you think it is!”

“Oh, sorry!” I say. “I think it’s Lars.”

“Lars?” Mom repeats. “The AD?”

“He’s in love with Nora,” I explain.

Nir glares at me and motions for me to stop talking. But I’m so excited about my idea, I can’t stop.

“But why would Lars want to kill me?” Robert asks. “Even if he is in love with Nora.”

“Because he wants the movie to be a big hit,” I say without thinking. “So he needs—”

I stop.

“He needs what?” asks Robert.

*I’m an idiot.*

Nir punches me in the shoulder. Mom rolls her eyes.

“What?” Robert repeats.

No one answers.



"You'd better just spit it out," Robert says.

"You won't like it," Mom says. "And maybe it's best you don't hear it."

He looks at her. "I can take it. And believe me, I'd rather be offended and alive than dead. It's something to do with the movie. What exactly?"

I take a deep breath. "We overheard Nora and Lars talking," I say. "They don't think you're doing a very good job. In that role, I mean. They think Davis Dunn could do better."

Robert lowers his head, and a tear trickles down his cheek. I think I am going to cry too. This is a disaster!

Then Robert looks up at us and grins. "I've known for a couple of days," he says.

"You have?" I say.

"Sure. I'd have to be a total idiot not to know. Plus it's what Mimi and I were arguing about when we met in your room, Zevi. And I could tell from the notes Nora kept giving me, over and over and over.

She wouldn't have done that if I was doing what she wanted. I'm miscast. I can feel I'm struggling—not hitting my notes, so to speak. I'd be better off playing Davis's part, and vice versa. I even suggested it to Lucille, didn't I?" he says, looking at her.

"Yes," she admits, "you did. And I told you I wanted you to keep star billing so you'd be able to compete for best actor at the Oscars."

"At which point I told you that you were fired," Robert says.

Lucille smiles. "If I had a dollar for every time an actor told me I was fired, I'd be a rich woman."

"Ha!" says Robert. "You *are* a rich woman."

"Well, there you go," she says.

"As a fan," Nir says, "I would rather see you be great in a smaller role than flop in a big one. And you could be so good in the other role that you get nominated for all kinds of awards. Like best supporting actor! That's a big deal, right?"

“Yes, it is, which I pointed out to Lucille,” Robert says.

“Yes,” Lucille agrees, “you did.”

“So will you tell Nora you’ll switch parts?” I ask.

“Sure,” Robert says. “And maybe Lars will stop trying to kill me once I do.”

Mom says, “No, he was willing to take your life. We can’t hope for maybe. The police haven’t been here to check anything out—they still think this is all a series of accidents. Zevi, what’s your idea?”

“We get Robert and Lars in a room together,” I say. “Nora secretly films them talking. There will be a few of us around to keep Robert safe in case Lars tries to spike Robert’s drink again. If he does, we have proof. Or if he admits it, we have proof.”

I think for a minute. “But I still feel like I’m missing something. What if it *isn’t* Lars? I keep seeing this darkness. And love is bright, like light. So where is the black cloud coming from?”

“If you’re willing to kill for love, that’s dark,” says Nir.

“Well, we have a plan. Let’s see how it plays out,” Robert says. “I’ll be the bait.”

Then he turns to Mom. “Let me pay for you to stay here one more night. I’d feel better having all of you around. I mean, Lars could change his MO and just bash me over the head!”

“He doesn’t want to end up in jail,” I say. “He wants Nora and he wants a hit.”

“Isn’t that what I just said?” Robert grins.

I ignore the terrible joke. “What if I go downstairs and see if I can find Nora? Maybe bring her up here? Then we can explain it all to her,” I say.

“Yes, try to find her,” Robert says. “I think this is more than I can fit into a text.”

The elevator ride takes forever. When I finally reach Nora in the lounge, I see she’s sitting and staring into space. I tell her that Mr. Lemon would

like to see her in his room. Her whole face lights up.  
And that makes a light bulb go off in my head. Nora  
is in love with him! Wow!

## Chapter Fifteen

I watch Nora hug Robert. Their hug lasts longer than it should, and they pull away embarrassed.

“So Zevi has filled you in?” he asks.

“As much as he could as we came up the elevator,” says Nora.

Lucky it’s so slow, I think. I did manage to tell her quite a lot.

“I can’t believe it, though,” she says. “Lars could never betray us like that! You two go so far back—to Yale even!”

“Who goes back to Yale?” Robert asks.

“You and Lars,” Nora answers.

“No we don’t,” Robert says. “As far as I know, Lars was never at Yale.”

“But he told me he went there and that he knew you from there—when we first met, and I interviewed him for this job!”

“Weird. He and I just discussed Yale,” Robert says. “There’s a reunion next month. I told him I was going and that I was going to ask you to come along.”

“Me?” Nora is surprised.

Robert is blushing. “I thought it might be fun.”

Meanwhile, Nir is on his phone, and he shows me what he’s pulled up. Lars’s bio. It says he was at Yale, just a year behind Robert. Nir shows it to Robert.

Robert shakes his head. "I'd have known if he was there."

"Now it makes sense!" I exclaim. "Everything I said was true, but there was something worse on the line for Lars. Nora was about to find out that Lars faked his résumé. And if that got out, how much other work would he get? Another reason to get rid of Robert!"

"This is, this is...crazy!" says Nora. She pauses. "Oh my. What if nothing on that résumé is true?"

"Let me send it to someone in my office," says Lucille. "We have a security wiz on my team who checks all our clients."

"Ugh," says Nora. "Now he's even ruined my favorite flower."

"What do you mean?" asks Robert.

"His tattoo of a tiger lily. My favorite flower."

"The tiger!" Nir says to me.

"That clue could have been a bit clearer," I groan.



Robert and Nora aren't listening to us. He sits down beside her. "We'll find out the truth," he says to her, his voice soothing. "Also, I'd like to switch parts with Davis, if he agrees. I think the role of the other brother will suit me much better."

"Are you sure?" Nora asks.

"I'm sure," he says. And he looks happy about it.

Nora takes charge. She calls one of the techs and tells him she's going to make a surprise short film for the cast and crew tonight. He promises to slip her camera up to Robert's suite without anyone seeing it.

Then she calls Betty and asks her to arrange a party tonight in Robert's suite for the cast and crew. She also tells Betty to go back to LA because she doesn't think she and Betty should work together anymore. After the call is over, Nora tells us that Betty cried but agreed. I guess Betty knows Nora is right. She also knows how lucky she is that we're the only ones who found out what she did.

Mom, Nir and I head downstairs to the lounge. Eventually Dad, Jes and Meira join us for dinner. We tell them everything that has happened and fill them in on the plan. Jes and Meira are more excited about the party in Robert Lemon's hotel room than the plan.

I force myself to eat, but I'm nervous. What if it doesn't work? What if Lars hurts Robert? Maybe we should have tried harder with the police...

After dinner we all go back to Robert's suite, which has been set up for the party. Nora has hidden the camera in Robert's bedroom, where he will try to get Lars alone. It's propped up on the dresser with a towel over most of it. And just to be on the safe side, Robert will also be recording on his phone.

Lars and Nora are already in the suite, but I don't see Robert. Lars is smiling and talking fast to Nora. Maybe he is happy about the switch in parts.

They greet us, and Nora says, "Robert's just resting in his bedroom before the party." She turns

to Lars. "Can you go check on him? See if he's ready to join us?"

Lars knocks on the bedroom door, then goes in, shutting the door behind him.

"Don't you have to be there?" I ask Nora.

"The camera is already running," she says. "We just have to wait."

"What if Lars hurts him?" I ask.

"Well, Lars won't admit to anything if anyone else is there, so let's just hope Robert gives a really good performance," Nora says. But I can see she is nervous.

Meanwhile the cast and crew flood into the suite. Everyone is talking at once, and the place gets full and noisy.

It is about ten minutes later, which feel like hours, when Robert and Lars come out of the bedroom. Lars walks straight out the door without saying a word to anyone. Robert acts as if nothing strange has happened. The suspense is killing me.

Finally, as part of the plan, Robert staggers a little. Nora runs over to him and asks if he is okay. He says he is.

Mom says, “Time for Mr. Lemon to rest. I’m so sorry to break up the party.” No one seems mad at Mom—they all want what is best for Robert, and they are worried about him.

Once the room has emptied out, Robert gives us a thumbs-up. Nora gets the camera from the bedroom. She sends the video file to her computer. We gather around as she hits *play*.

“*You are wanted, oh great one, by your guests,*” says Lars to Robert.

Robert slowly gets off the bed. “*Ugh, that drink I had on set really knocked me out,*” he says to Lars. “*I still don’t feel quite right.*”

“*Is it true that someone slipped mango into your drink?*” Lars asks.

“*Yes, too true,*” says Robert. He looks at Lars. “*You did.*”

I gasp. I didn't expect the direct approach!

In the video, Lars laughs.

*"I'm serious,"* says Robert. *"I know it was you."*

Lars sits down on a chair near the bed. *"How could you know that?"* he asks.

*"I saw you do it,"* says Robert.

*"Impossible,"* Lars replies.

*"Why?"* asks Robert. *"Because you did it where no one could see you? But what if I was going to the bathroom and just happened to see you fix that drink? And didn't think anything of it until afterward? After all, you didn't hand it to me. That was clever."*

*"No one would believe such a crazy idea,"* says Lars. *"No one."*

*"Maybe the police wouldn't,"* says Robert. *"But I think Nora would."*

*"Don't you dare say a word to Nora!"* shouts Lars. He leaps out of his chair.

*"Why? Will you murder me?"*

*“She won’t believe you!” says Lars. “She and I go way back. She’ll think you’ve lost your mind.”*

*“You and Nora go way back? You mean the way you and I go way back? All the way to Yale?”*

Lars grips the back of the chair. His knuckles go white.

*“You knew Nora would find out the truth if she and I went to the reunion. Plus you wanted me out of the way for the sake of the movie, so it would be a success. Oh, and then there are your feelings for Nora! So many reasons to get rid of me!”*

Lars looks like he is about to hit Robert over the head with a hammer. Luckily there isn’t one in there.

*“No one will believe any of this!” he says again. “And there’s no proof!”*

*“Maybe there is no proof,” says Robert. “But maybe someone else saw you too. Someone else who can back me up.”*

At this point I am amazed at what a great actor Robert Lemon is. This story he is making up sounds so real, even I believe him. And wow—making up a witness to keep himself safe is genius.

“Who?” asks Lars.

*“I’m not going to blab that, am I? You’d try to hurt them too!”* says Robert. *“No, I’ll tell you what’s going to happen. I don’t expect you to admit to anything. But I expect you to tell Nora you have another offer and that you are leaving tonight for LA. And if you ever come near me again, I will make sure the police get involved. And you will never know who the witness is—but that person will always be there to back me up.”*

All the color has drained from Lars’s cheeks, like in a vampire movie. He starts to say something, but Robert interrupts. *“I think you should go now, Lars. While you still can.”*

Lars stares at Robert for a minute.

I hold my breath.

But finally Lars walks out, and Robert follows.

Nora turns off the video.

“It’s not concrete proof,” Robert says to us. “But I don’t think he will be back.”



## Chapter Sixteen

It is Friday night, and Robert and Nora are sitting at the dining room table with me, my family, Nir and Meira. Mom invited Robert and Nora for Shabbat dinner. It's a tradition to invite people from out of town who have nowhere else to go.

Mom lights the Shabbat candles, and we sing the blessing. Slowly, though, we stop singing so we can listen to one voice—Robert's. He could be

on Broadway! What a voice. I almost clap at the end. Jes and Meira actually do.

Then, as Mom starts to say the blessing over the challah, Nora chimes in loud and clear. By the time we are at the blessing for wine, we are all chanting together.

“So, Jewish then?” my dad asks Nora.

“Yes,” she answers.

“Where did your family live while you were growing up?” he asks.

“Toronto,” she says.

Dad’s eyes light up, and I can tell he is about to start the Jewish geography game. He wants to ask her if she knows all the Jewish people he and Mom know in Toronto.

But Mom gets in first with her question. “How did the filming go today?”

“Brilliant!” Nora answers. “Robert was made for this part.”

“And Davis was made for the other one.” Robert smiles.

“And I want to tell you what Lucille’s security person discovered,” says Nora.

“It’s pretty shocking,” Robert adds.

“Almost everything Lars told us about himself is a lie,” she says.

“How can that be?” Mom asks.

“His father was a movie director in Sweden,” Nora explains. “He grew up on sets, and that’s why he really did know his stuff. But he never had any formal training at all. He was never at Yale, and he was never offered a teaching job there. He was never at the Swedish school on his résumé. He couldn’t be bothered with school—which was fine, because he already knew so much. But why lie?”

“Sometimes people don’t feel they are good enough, so they lie,” says Robert with a shrug. “But one lie means there will be another and another,

until it gets out of hand. At any rate, Lucille is planning to leak this news to the press. I suspect Lars will soon be on his way back to Sweden.”

I have a question I’ve been dying to ask Robert since he confronted Lars. “Robert,” I say, “what if Lars hadn’t put the mango in the drink somewhere in the house where he could be seen? He would have known you were bluffing.”

Robert grins. “I’m pretty sure he would have blurted out something like, ‘That’s not how it happened!’ Or given away that I was on the wrong track. So either way he would’ve told us what we needed to know.”

I grin. “That’s so smart.”

Robert digs into his food as if he hasn’t eaten in days. Then casually he says, “Zevi. Would you be interested in a part as an alien in an episode of *Mars Rebound*? You know we moved filming to Vancouver this year.”

I get so excited I push my chair back and stand up.

He's sitting right across from me, but I still shout, "Are you serious? Yes!"

"Then I'll arrange it," says Robert. "I hear from your mom that you're interested in acting as a career."

I sit down then. And remember how hopeless that dream is.

"I *was*."

"What do you mean?" asks Robert.

"The minute I get onstage or onscreen, everyone will recognize me as the psychic. No one will want to hire me."

"I have a plan for that," Robert says.

I am listening, but I can't imagine there is any way out of this.

"Your first big part will be as an alien, so no one will recognize you. If it goes well, who knows, it could even become a recurring character. Here's the trick. You choose a stage name. And no one will see that it is you."

I'm about to ask what I should do when I want to play a human being, not an alien.

"Wait," Robert says. "You want to know what happens when you audition for a human role. I suspect your fame as a psychic will pass quickly. People will forget and move on. There will always be some new shiny thing that everyone obsesses over."

"Thank you! Thank you!" I say, feeling quite overwhelmed by his kindness.

The rest of the family chimes in to thank Robert, and he holds up a hand and says, "I know most people don't think being an actor is important. But I can't agree. I mean, I'm not an actor for the fame. I hate the fame part. It's all fake. People don't know me or who I am. Acting, or any kind of art, like writing or painting, is all about letting people in. So they can see the world a little differently, through someone else's eyes. So they can feel what that person feels. Empathy is how we make the world better."

“In Judaism,” Dad says, “there is an idea called *tikkun olam*, which refers to fixing a broken world.” He smiles at Robert. “You want to help do that.”

“Nora does too,” says Robert.

She smiles at him. “I try,” she says. “Art can bring people together and make us realize we are all the same—brothers and sisters. No one should be made to feel left out or like they don’t belong.”

I can hear the reporters who have gathered outside the house.

“Fame isn’t what I thought it would be,” I say. “I think my mom and dad should be famous for what they do. But I’m discovering that people get famous for no good reason at all. And that it’s not all that much fun. Although I guess for some people, like Lars, it’s all they want.”

“We can use it for good or for ill, because a lot of power comes with fame,” says Robert. “We need to be aware of that. And we don’t have to let fame rule us.”

"I'm dreading going back to school," I say. "I'm not sure how this whole thing won't take over my life and rule it!"

"Perhaps meet it head-on?" suggests Nora. "I find that if you answer people's questions, they soon get tired of you and move on to something else. Have a 'news conference' or something at school where kids can ask you questions. And then tell them that's it. No more."

"That could work," Nir says.

"Maybe it could," I say, finally feeling some hope.

"Never forget it's a gift that has now saved two people, Zevi," says Mom. "That's pretty amazing."

She raises her glass of wine, and we kids raise our grape juice.

"L'chaim," she says. "To life!"

"L'chaim!" everyone says together.







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Carol Matas is an internationally acclaimed author of over forty-seven books for children and young adults. Her bestselling work, which includes three award-winning series, has been translated into over a dozen languages. She has received over one hundred awards and honors, including the Sydney Taylor Book Award, the Geoffrey Bilson Award for Historical Fiction for Young People and two nominations for a Governor General's Literary Award. Carol lives in Winnipeg.