

Stacy Hope Alleyne  
7778 Burnside Road  
Landover  
MD  
20785  
202.615.8965  
stacealleyne@gmail.com

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(Your agent's name)  
(Your agent's address)

Dream Girl  
A REM Academy Novel  
Book One

by Stacy Hope Alleyne

*It was dark at the lake. So dark, in fact that you couldn't really tell where the sky stopped and the lake began. Slowly, the cloud covering the moon moved and the moonlight formed twinkling diamonds on the water. Dennis Cross stood at the lake's edge and peered out in the distance. A cool breeze picked up the small hairs on his arms making them stand on end.*

*Suddenly, a sharp female cry pierced the silence.*

*"Help me!"*

*A figure emerged from the lake, a mass of flailing arms and then fell back into the water.*

*Dennis had learned to swim when he was five and now at 14 he could swim like a fish. He did not hesitate. He dove into the water slicing it with his arms like a knife. He reached the spot where he saw the girl go under in no time.*

*She was nowhere near the surface. Dennis dove down deep into the*

water. Everything was pitch black...for a moment. Then there was a purple glow. The circle of purple light got bigger and bigger. He could see the girl now. Her long black hair was swirling around her face and her arms were out to her sides and a purple jeweled bracelet was around her left wrist. This was the source of the purple glow. The girl suddenly made one more attempt at survival and waved her arms widely, opening her eyes for a moment to reveal their bright green irises. And then they closed. Her arms became still and the purple glow faded into nothingness. Dennis swam forward toward the receding light and tried to grab the girl but the next thing he knew..

He was being whacked on the head by a notebook. He was holding onto Phillip Peters for dear life. Peters was the math nerd who sat in front of him in class and the Faculty was attempting to remove him. Dennis released Peters whose desk dropped to the uncarpeted floor with a thud. Dennis was mortified. He knew that the entire incident would be all over REM within minutes. There was a sophisticated social network in place at REM Academy that probably had been around as long as the Academy itself. His plan as the new guy was to lay low and bide his time until he graduated and move as far away from Bethesda as he could. The word Bethesda meant "House of Mercy" but it had never given him any.

"Mr. Cross, remove yourself from this class immediately!"

At least he wasn't being sent to the headmaster. As he gathered his books and squeezed himself between the cramped desks he could feel all eyes on him. He knew that this moment would etch his reputation in stone for the rest of his time at REM. He slowly raised his head and focused his gaze on his classmates and finally rested it solidly on the "Faculty." A slow but steady grin appeared on his face. "Thanks for the early release man." As he turned and walked out the classroom all he could think of was the lake girl with the green eyes.

The REM Academy boarding hall housed only 500 students, all of whom came from affluent homes. The boarding house was a small but stately brick edifice at the top of a very tall hill. The Academy itself was founded in 1825 for boys with especially strong wills but rather weak characters, but over the years REM developed into a co-ed institution for shallow teens whose parents possessed rather deep pockets.

Although the boarding house was small, the academy itself

resembled a small collegiate city. There were seven schools within the academy that each resembled some facet of Greek architecture or thought. [Don't forget to add building descriptions here that mimic greek thought/architecture] (There was, however no ivy draping the walls of these buildings, but there were a few iv drug users.)

The academy's school of Psychology, or "Psycho" as REM students called it, was the fifth building among the seven. The hallways were long and drafty but the classrooms small and muggy. Audra "Pulitzer" Jacobson sat in one of these small, muggy classrooms with 15 other REM students listening to one of the faculty's boring lectures. Usually, REM students referred to all their teachers collectively as the "faculty," only reserving specific individual names for those select few teachers they respected.

Mr. Phibb was one of the respected few.

"Of a truth, the mind holds many secrets," Phibb pontificated. Audra didn't care much for Mr. Phibb. She felt that in spite of his famous line 'Of a truth,' Mr. Phibb told more lies than anyone she had ever encountered. But, perhaps they weren't lies. Audra was a journalism core student. Which meant that she was more interested in the truth than most others at REM, faculty and staff combined. Which was why she was very interested in the boy on the third row to the left in front of her. He was added to the class in the middle of the semester which was totally unheard of at REM. The Academy took their rules and academics very seriously. Students could not join the student body once the first session had begun. There were several core tracks of study to chose from, but students had to start from day one or wait until the following year. This kid joined REM three days ago as if this was normal REM practice. Sure, a few of the kids wondered what was his deal, but none were as obsessed about it as Audra. She had just read a text about an incident he was involved in last mod and was anxious to talk to him.

The announcer came on over the intercom dismissing the class and while the students filed out, Audra waited for the new boy at the back of the room.

Dennis noticed Pulitzer waiting for him at the back of the room. That was Audra Jacobson's nickname which she assumed was a sign of respect. She didn't know that she was known as "Pull-zit-zer" around the Academy because of her frequent breakouts. But, besides the rogue zit or two, or three or four, she was striking in an Angelina Jolie sort of way, if you liked that sort of thing.

"Hey, Dennis isn't it? You got a minute?"

It was the longest minute of his life. Audra was full of questions. She claimed that his arrival was unprecedented and that it required a write up in the school newspaper right away. The R.E.M. Academy Journal (Riveting

Editorial Moments) was Audra's baby.

"Ah, actually, I like to stay low key." Dennis put on his jacket. Maybe he could lose Audra by taking a trip outside. It was cold outside and he noticed that she didn't have her backpack. He started walking to the front door.

She followed him straight outside, jacketless.

"Can you at least tell me how you persuaded the Faculty to let you in mid-semester?" Cross stopped walking and turned around to face her. Audra almost walked right into him.

"Look, I don't mean to be rude, but..."

He started to say that his arrival at REM was none of her business, but just then he saw someone he recognized. Walking across the courtyard with a group of other students was a girl with long straight black hair. The wind caught it and it swirled around her face the same way it did in his dream. It was the girl with the jade eyes, the girl in the dream he had in Math class. She must have felt his eyes on her because she turned her Jade green eyes away from her friends for a moment and focused them on him.

"Hey, are you alright? You look like you've seen a ghost. They're just the Universal Core students. But, if you're anything like the rest of the boys here, you're probably ogling Mina, the girl with the green eyes...all the guys do that"

Audra said the last part a little injuredly.

He had forgotten that Audra was waiting for him to finish what he was saying. She brought him out of his reverie. Maybe he and Audra could help each other. He turned his gaze back to Audra who casually brushed a strand of hair behind her ear. Dennis figured Audra had the info on all the students on campus, including Mina.

"Actually Audra, I've decided to give you the inside scoop on how I got into REM."

Audra flashed him an uncharacteristic smile that illuminated all her features. In that instant, she was so beautiful that Dennis almost forgot his plan. He shook his head to clear the fog that formed in his brain whenever he saw a pretty girl these days.

"Yeah, but I need you to help me with something in return."

"What?"

"I need to know whatever you know about the green eyed girl. Mina."

Thankfully for Audra, Dennis couldn't see the green eyed monster that was sitting perched on Audra's shoulder at that moment shaking its fists at him, then at Mina.

"Sure," Audra said flippantly. "Whatever. I've got Journo 304 now, so we'll have to meet later."

"Is there a hangout spot near the Academy, by a lake?"

Audra's face turned slightly pink.

"You mean the make out spot near Lake [Bethesda Lake]?"

"Well, maybe not."

"How about we meet at the octagon during lunch."

"The octa-what?"

"Octagon, you know math, eight sided. Whatever. Its the eight sided table to the back of the library. You do know where the library is, don't you?"

"I'll figure it out."

Cross wasn't sure he liked Audra poking into his history. He hadn't quite dealt with his parent's murder himself. He wasn't ready for the entire REM population to start asking him questions about it. He had a stupid dream about it before it happened and he couldn't even stop it from happening. And now there was this green eyed girl. What if he couldn't do anything to save her. Maybe he was wrong and the dream was just a dream. But, look where that thought had gotten him before. After leaving Audra he walked in the direction that Mina had walked toward. He ended up at the library. Which was good, considering he had to meet Audra there later. He leaned on the heavy oak doors with his entire weight to open it. The library at REM was massive. Bookshelves reached upward toward the ceiling like trees, the books were the leaves. There were two aisles that cut straight through the library with two windows at the back allowing two small rays of light to pierce through the dimly lit space. Dennis walked slowly to the back of the room. He paused when he heard the hushed voices of students in between the bookshelf in front of him.

"I told you, I didn't see anything, really." It sounded like a girl's voice.

"Of course you didn't, there was nothing to see, right?" This was a voice of a boy, probably a senior.

Two of the books hiding Cross from view were suddenly shoved to the side and he quickly backed up to stand behind the remaining books, but he caught the view of the familiar long straight black hair.

"Right, so why do you keep following me. I'm going to report you to the faculty if you do it again."

"That wouldn't be a good idea,"

There was sharp intake of breath. Cross leaned to heavily against one of the books and it fell to the other side.

"Hey, what was that? Did you tell anyone you were meeting me here."

"No, now let go of my arm."

Dennis moved quickly to the end of the bookshelf and ran down the side aisle and slid into a corner crevice. He beat himself up inwardly.

*How could I not get a look at that creep.*

Maybe he was blackmailing her or something. Why would anyone want to kill a girl as pretty as Mina. But he didn't have time to ponder any more. He could hear footsteps rapidly approaching his location. It was time for him to get back to class.

Audra was up to her eyebrows in papers. She had done a google search on Dennis Cross and pulled up tons of information. Earlier she was so excited. It happened to her whenever she sensed she was on to something, about to break a story. Now, she was just sad. She read Cross' story over and over trying to put herself in his shoes. She couldn't imagine losing her Mother. She was the only family she had left. Her Dad died of cancer when she was two, but she didn't remember him at all. Her Mom had sacrificed when she was younger and still sacrificed today so she could attend REM. That gave her more determination to be the best journalism student she could be. That meant that she was responsible for telling the truth for the public good. So, she packed up her sympathy and continued reading. The Cross murders remained unsolved and although there was some talk that Dennis knew something about the killers, there was nothing substantiated. The news report she was reading now also said that Dennis had to be treated for depression afterward. Given the circumstances, Dennis' admittance into REM made more sense. Audra just needed corroboration from the primary source, Dennis before she wrote her story. She was about to pack up her papers and power down the computer when another headline struck her attention.

### **Teenager Foretells Parents' Demise**

Sounded like a headline from a rag mag. Audra never gave those papers the time of day. But, her curiosity got the best of her. She clicked on the flickering hyperlink.

*May 13, 2009 - Chevy Chase, MD*

*Mr. and Mrs. Douglas and Margaret Cross were found slaughtered in their Chevy Chase home early this morning. The couple, prominent Maryland scientists leave behind one child, a son, who claims to have dreamed about the murder just hours before it happened. The son, 14, was sent to a mental health facility shortly thereafter. There are currently no suspects in the case..*

The lunch announcement came over the PA making Audra jump. It was time to meet with Cross.

Cross hid behind the shrubbery on the side of the library. A few minutes later he head the mammoth oak door open and pushed the branches of the shrub apart so he could see. At first all he saw were legs. The khaki covered legs of a male REM student and the bare pink legs of a REM female.

"I know someone heard what I said."

"How do you know, it could have just been a student studying for a test or something."

"Sure, since when do people study standing behind bookshelves and why did they run?"

"They probably didn't want to get clobbered. You know all the other kids here are scared of you, don't you? Besides, you didn't say anything about you cheating on your mid-terms in there did you?"

"Shhh! Someone might hear you!"

"Look around bud, there's no one here, you're being paranoid, you're just tense. Here, let me make you feel better."

Dennis realized that this was the guy that was threatening Mina, and that the girl with him must be the guy's girlfriend. They sat down on a bench in front of the library for a moment for a quick make out session.

*Gross*

And then they were off.

Dennis stayed where he was for a few more minutes and was about to get up when he heard footsteps. He looked through the shrubs again and this time realized that Audra was coming for their meeting. He popped up out of the shrubbery.

"Jeez! What are you trying to do? Kill me?"

Audra was not happy. She hated being surprised.

*It's not me she has to worry about.*

"Hey, did you see the two kids that just left the library?"

"If by kids you mean the jock that failed so many years that he might as well be an adult and his stupid girlfriend, then yes, I just saw them. Why?"

"What is the guy's name?"

"Lets just go inside to the octagon and I'll tell you there."

With everyone at lunch, the octagon was free. It was a large table with eight sides and looked like it could easily have held Arthur and all of his knights. Audra plopped a stack of paper the size of Everest on it before sitting down in one of the large oak chairs. The back of the chairs were as

tall as an adult male so for all intents and purposes they were hidden from view. Not that they had to worry about crowds at lunch. Everyone at REM would be in the cafeteria. Lunch was at the same time for all students. There were, however, the few stray librarians who liked to pop up at just the wrong moments.

"So, I did a little research."

"I see. Why do you need to talk to me. Looks like you've got everything covered."

"A good journalist always needs to check her sources."

Dennis just looked at her with a blank look on his face.

"Sorry. You mind if I tape record?"

Audra popped out a mini digital recorder. Dennis shook his head in the negative with the same vacant look on his face.

Dennis spent the rest of the hour listening to Audra spell out the details of the last six months of his life. It sounded strange to hear the details as if he were detached to them and he was listening to the sorry circumstances of a stranger. Basically everything she told him checked out. Everything was good, until Audra pushed one final article in front of him.

"What do you think about this one?"

### **Teenager Foretells Parents' Demise**

"Dennis, did you know your parents were about to be murdered?"

The rest of the question was in her look.

*And why didn't you do anything to stop it.*

"It was just a dream, a stupid dream. How was I supposed to know it was really going to happen?!"

"Shhh, we're in the library."

"I don't want to talk about this anymore."

"Ok, ok, I have enough for the story anyway. The Faculty felt sorry for you losing your parents and they just let you in because your parents left you a lot of money."

"Basically."

"Fine."

"Fine."

They sat in silence until the announcement came that lunch was over.

"Hey, are you going home for the weekend?" Dennis asked tentatively.

"Yeah, nothing's going on on campus so I'll go keep my Mom company."

"What about you are you going home..."

Audra stopped at mid sentence.

"Yea, I'll go home to see Botts."

"Who is Botts?"



"My guardian."

"Oh, can I have your number so I can call you this weekend if I have more questions?"

"Okay, here it is, can I get your's too if I think of something I need to ask about Mina?"

They exchanged numbers and left for their next class.

REM students often went home on weekends. But this weekend Cross dreaded leaving the campus. What if something happened to Mina when he was away. He didn't really have to go, but he had promised Botts he would be home and he missed him. He was the only part of his past life that was left. He would find out whether Mina was going to stay on campus or go home too and that would be the deciding factor. Audra had left right after 7th mod trucking all her notes from the interview. Talking to Audra about his parents was unsettling, but a relief at the same time. He had talked to head doctors about it but with Audra it was different. This time, when he went home, he would have Botts take him the library early Saturday morning so he could do more research about his parent's murder. At the time it happened, everything was in a haze.

The drive home was havoc. Friday afternoons in northern, MD were always hectic. Botts used to be his Father's personal assistant and all around errand boy was now Dennis' legal guardian. He weaved in and out of traffic like a snake. Botts was from NY City. Dennis had gone there once when he was four and ridden in a cab.

"Oooh Mom, they should have one of these at Kings Dominion."

"One of what honey?"

"These taxi cab rides."

"It's not a ride honey, it's just a cab."

Now, sitting in the back seat of Bott's Lincoln, Dennis still thought that NY taxicabs should be an amusement park ride.

"Hey Botts, take it easy won't you."

"Don't worry Dennis, you won't be spending your entire weekend on the BW Parkway."

They reached the house at seven p.m. Botts had suggested that they move after the murders, but Dennis was adamant. He hoped that staying at the house would jog his memory somehow and that it would help him to find his parent's killers. But, now that he was back, he realized that it wasn't a very good idea. He had spent much of the six months after his parents' death at the hospital being treated for shock.

"Botts, you go ahead, I'll be there in a minute."

"No can do kid. I'll wait with you until you're ready to go in. Take as long as you like."

It took Dennis about fifteen minutes before he opened the car door and slowly got out. But he hated the thought that Botts would think him weak, so he grabbed his backpack and closed the car door behind him before making his way up the driveway.

He was about a foot away from the entrance when he realized that this wasn't going to work.

"Botts,"

"Yes?"

"This isn't going to work."

"So, I thought."

Botts pulled out reservations for a nearby hotel and escorted Dennis back down the driveway.

"I've got a change of clothes in the car. Perhaps we can come back in the morning and try it again chap."

"Perhaps."

Once they checked into the hotel and settled into their suite, Dennis texted Audra. He knew she would still be up because tonight *The Devil Wears Prada* was on and that was one of her favorite movies. Since he told her practically everything about him, except for the obvious, he felt close to her somehow. She was the first friend he had made in a while and he wasn't going to jepordize it.

*So whts the take on chrldr grl & jock boy?*

*The usual, stereotype, & don't mean sony or panasonic. Her thoghts r so random there's prob an echo in her head.*

*And jock boy?*

*Worse, at least chrldr grl has thoughts*

*Do u think theyd try to hurt Mina?*

*Cn w not tlk bout Mina right now?*

*She's the reason I txted u*

After Dennis didn't get a response after his last text, he learned a powerful lesson about girls. Don't ever text them to talk about other girls and if you do, definitely don't tell them what you're doing.

*Audra, Mina wasn't the only reason. You're my friend.*

*No worries, I went 2 the bthrm. I think thy'll just try 2 scare Mina. Jock won't want to depordize his football schrshp.*

Dennis smiled at the rapid response.

*Bathroom my eye*

Girls were so weird. Dennis and Audra texted well into the night. Dennis was afraid to go to sleep, but he realized that Audra needed some sleep when her texts started to make no sense.

*G night Audra*

*Sweet dreams cross.*

Somehow Dennis thought his dreams tonight would be anything but.

He tossed and turned for an hour before falling asleep. He woke up inside his old room. But he could smell dinner cooking downstairs. Then he heard a voice. A voice he definitely should not be hearing, but a voice he desperately wanted to hear.

*"Honey, dinner's ready!"*

The night Dennis Cross' parents' died happened twice. First in his dreams and then for real.

His Dad dad came home, like always, with a harrowing story from his job.

*"Honey, you won't believe what the boss made me do today."*

*"What's that dear?"* Mrs. Cross finished pouring her husband a cup of freshly brewed coffee before folding her arms in a semi-sincere effort to pay attention to what her husband was saying.

What next ensued over the dinner table was a conversation that Dennis, 14 and a half, barely heard, answering his Mother only when she asked if he wanted more potatoes and mumbling in the negative when she asked him about more peas. Although, almost without fail, second helpings of peas or any other vegetable for that matter was always denied. Dennis ate his dinner hopefully hidden behind a long flap of blond hair that he refused to cut and a cloud of uninteresting and somewhat unintelligible adult conversation and mentally prepared himself for the moment when his covert hair operation failed and his parents' attention would suddenly and often without warning shift itself back to him. That moment happened just when Dennis was stuffing his mouth with his favorite, Mac and Cheese and his mind was beginning to wander to thoughts of Christine. He was just envisioning Christine, with her jet black curls and luminous black eyes, leaning slowly over to him. She closed her eyes, leaned in toward him and was just about to place her luscious lips on his when..

*"So, Dennis!"*

Dennis almost choked as a single elbow macaroni slipped down his throat and lodged there for a second. Being an only child sucked. If he had siblings, right about now his parents could be asking his older sister why she had stayed out so late last night, or interrogating his older brother about why he was bringing home D's on his report card. But, sadly this wasn't the case. Instead Dennis coughed up the lone macaroni and cleared his throat.

*"Yes, Sir?"*

"Your Mother and I have done most of the talking tonight,"  
What else was new?

"What is going on in your world?"

Dennis sighed, whenever his Dad tried to sound hip, it just came out wrong.

"Well, I got an A on the Chem test today.."

"And what else? Any new friends, are you making any friends at this school?"

Dennis tried to conjure up in his mind a suitable response to this question. There was no way he was telling his parents about Christine.

"Yeah, sure. I've got a few friends."

"That's good honey," his Mother almost cooed.

Dennis shook his head and returned to his Mac and Cheese hoping that his part of the conversation was over. The meal ended and Dennis went up to his room while his parents stayed in the living room watching the news.

The Mac and Cheese kept him up well past 11 until he fell into a fitful sleep.

But he woke a few hours later. His room was uncomfortably warm with a tangible thickness to the air. Dennis rolled himself out of his bed and plodded to the door, wearing a damp tee shirt and plaid pajama bottoms. From downstairs, he could hear the static from the tv station that was no longer on the air. That was weird, his parents were sticklers about turning things off. He couldn't count the number of times he was late for school when his Mother would drive back to the house to check to make sure everything was turned off.

"You can't be too careful Honey, remember the Porter's house last year?"

How could I forget

"Yes Mom, I remember." Dennis normally would try to stop his Mother from relaying the gruesome details of the Porter fire, but somehow his Mother never tired of telling him the story over and over of how the entire Porter family even down to their pet gold fish were burned to a crisp because they forgot to turn off a space heater one unusually cold winter. But, tonight the tv was still on and as Dennis neared the end of the stairs, he could see the flickering blue lights on the wall facing the tv. That's when he saw the blood. There was so much on the walls that at first Dennis thought that someone had started repainting. Mom was always complaining about the dullness of the yellow ochre walls. But when he saw his parents lying lifeless in the middle of the living room floor he realized the awful

*truth.*

Dennis began to shake, just slightly at first and then his whole body started shaking. Apparently he had closed his eyes because when he opened them again he was almost blinded by the bright sunlight that was streaming through his hotel window. Botts was standing in the doorway.

"Are you alright young man?"

*Thanks Audra, that was sweet..not.*

The shaking subsided and after convincing Botts that he wasn't going crazy they made a trip to the police station to check on his parents' case. Any thoughts Dennis may have had about entering law enforcement were thrown out after this visit.

"No new leads are available at this time." The officer in charge of his parent's case stated.

"But, it's been six months, what do you mean no new leads. What about the old ones?"

"I'm sorry son, have every confidence that we are making all possible effort into locating the perp in this case."

"I'm sorry sir, but I have no confidence in you at all. Come on Botts, we're leaving."

In the car Dennis was silent. He thought that hiring a private investigator would be the best option.

"Botts, how hard would it be to hire a PI to investigate Mom and Dad's case?"

"Actually, I've already done that."

"What!"

"I thought you would be happy."

"I am, I just thought you would have told me. So, what did they find out?"

"Nothing yet, I'm expecting a full report on Wednesday.

Wednesday Dennis would be back at REM, but Botts read his mind.

"Don't worry, I'll have the report delivered to you at REM."

"Thank you Botts."

"Audra, are you awake?"

"I am now. Dennis, it's three am why are you up?"

"I've been thinking. When we get back to campus, do you think you can you get a hold of Mina's schedule."

"I'm hanging up now."

"No wait, Audra, calm down. I've been having dreams. About Mina."

"So, you do like her, thank you so much for waking me out of deep sleep to tell me this."

"Not those kinds of dreams you douf. I mean dreams like the one I had of my parents."

"What are you saying, you don't even know Mina, or do you?"

"I never met her before today, but I've been dreaming about her for the past month. They started before I even came to REM."

"Why are you telling me this? Are you saying that you think something might happen to Mina, that she might be killed?"

*Just who was this guy. I should probably hang up know and avoid him when we get to school.*

But, Audra knew that she wasn't about to do that.

"Dennis, are you still there?"

"Yes, yes I do think she's in danger. Look, I didn't take the dream I had of my parent's seriously and look what happened. The dreams are warnings. I don't know why I get them. I wish I could get rid of them but it is what it is."

"I'll see what I can do."

"You'll see what you can do about what?"

"The schedule, I'll see if I can get you Mina's schedule."

"Thanks Audra, I'll see you tomorrow."

Audra sat on the bench in the foyer of REM's main office fiddling with the bottom of her kakhi uniform skirt. The door to the inner sanctum opened and another student came out.

"Did you get it?"

"Yeah, but you can't keep asking me for student schedules Auds, I'm going to get in trouble."

"You haven't so far, and this time it's really important. Thanks."

Audra stuffed Mina Roberts schedule deep into her satchel. She was about to meet up with Dennis. She tried to keep the butterflies that fluttered around in her stomach quiet when she thought of his name. What was it about him that made her so ditzy?

*He's just a boy, just a regular boy*

But she knew that Dennis Cross was anything but regular. She also knew that most of the upper core girls at REM had already taken notice of him. He was taller than the other boys in his core set, had intense brown eyes and the nicest haircut she had ever seen on a boy. But it was more than that. He was special, unique. With all her facts, Audra almost believed that Cross was a step ahead of things, that his dreams warned him about future events.

The butterflies were going crazy. She decided to think of something else. But that was unsuccessful as Dennis grabbed her arm as soon as she walked out of the building.

"Did you get it?"

He was so close that it came out as a whisper in her ear.

Audra took a deep breath. Dennis smelled like laundry detergent and soap.

"Audra?"

"Oh, yea I got it."

She handed the schedule to Dennis who looked at it carefully.

"What are you going to do with it? Follow her around like a dweb? That'll never work."

"No, I'm going to add her classes."

"What!"

Audra didn't like the idea of Dennis around Mina twenty-four seven. She was, for all intents and purposes, the prettiest girl at REM and she didn't want Dennis to fall into the same trap that apparently all the other guys at REM had fallen into. Mina didn't even seem to notice or care that she had an army of REM guys drooling after her. But all the girls at REM noticed and cared. Normally, Audra wouldn't care, but she cared about Dennis. She saw him first, he was her friend and she didn't want Mina messing with that, whether her life was in danger or not.

Dennis just looked at her.

"I mean, why are you going to add her classes. Isn't that going to look suspicious and if someone is trying to kill her they are going to notice you."

"No they won't. It's not like I've ever talked to her. I'm the new kid. No one will notice."

"So what's your plan after you add all her classes? Flunk out? You know that Mina's in the highest academic core at REM."

"Are you trying to say I'm stupid?"

"No, it's just that she takes the most difficult courses on campus."

*She's pretty and she's smart, and there's no way you'll be able to resist her and you don't know it yet, but you're mine.*

Dennis casually put his arm around her and pulled her to his side.

"Don't worry Audra, I'll be fine and if I have any problems passing my classes, I have you to help me study."

Audra laughed nervously but did nothing to remove Dennis' arm which he left there as they walked to Mr. Phibbs' class. Out of the corner of his eye he spotted Mina walking across the path towards Einstein hall, the physics building.

His arm slipped from Audra's shoulders.

"I'll see you at the library during lunch."

Even though she was warm in Dennis' arms, Audra felt the chill of the cool November air as soon as he removed it.

"Whatever."

Dennis shrugged as she walked off and turned his attention to Mina. She had just disappeared inside the physics building when he noticed that the jock wasn't too far behind.

*Now what is he doing in the physics building.*

He moved toward the building pulling his jacket closer. It was colder now that Audra had gone. He hoped she wasn't mad at him. She didn't seem to like the idea of him following Mina around. He made a mental note to ask Botts about his experience with women.

Jock boy waited till a crowd of students had entered the building before going in himself. Dennis counted to ten and then followed Jock boy's steps and entered the physics building.

He didn't even see jock boy's fist coming. But, he felt it slam into his jaw like a sledge hammer.

"Why are you following me?"

Dennis lay on the floor clutching his jaw. He staggered out of the way of Jock boy's path.

"I'm not following you, you moron. I think you broke my jaw."

"I'm warning you, I'll pulverize you if I see you here again."

"Look, I don't know what sort of act you've got going on around here, but I'm not scared of you."

Dennis pulled himself up on his feet, he stood at least a head taller than the Jock.

"I know what the rest of the kids here don't and that is you're a coward."

"Why you little..."

"You waited until I walked in the door and blindsided me. You didn't have the guts to wait until we met face to face. You are a bully, pathetic."

"Whatever, just don't let me see you here again." Jock boy slunk off like the coward he truly was and Dennis fixed his uniform and went off in search of Mina. He didn't think that jock boy would have the nerve to really do something bad to Mina. Dennis started to calm down a little. He hadn't had the lake dream in two nights. Maybe Mina was out of harms way.

The male REM Academy students slept on the first floor of the boarding house on top of the hill. That way, if anything happened they would be the first to bear the brunt. There were three boys to every room with a cooridor connecting each room.



Dennis shared a room with a second year economics core student and a first year universal core student. He got along well enough with the economics student, Will. As long as you used up your third of the room and no more everything was cool with him. You watched TV for a third of the time you spent in the room, you cleaned up a third of the room and bathroom and you were A-okay in Will's eyes. He even hung his clothes up by thirds. A third of his closet was hung with pants, a third with shirts and the rest was used to store a third of his general belongings.

Hal was the first year student. He was a combination of ADHD and middle school student. He would jump on Will and Dennis' beds in their absence and totally mess with Will's third system in the most diabolical ways. Once Will got back the room and found his pants mixed in with his shirts. Messed him up for a long time.

When Dennis got back from basically shadowing Mina all day he found both boys in the room. Will was ironing his pants and Hal was laying face down on his bed dangling his feet off the end of the bed.

Dennis tried a couple of times to call Audra but with no success. He figured she was probably still mad at him about Mina. But, that was crazy. He told her about the dream he had to try to protect her. He changed out of his uniform and got into a flannel and climbed into his bed. Maybe tonight would be normal.

*It was dark at the lake.*

*Suddenly, a sharp but familiar female cry pierced the silence.*

*"Help me!"*

*Dennis did not hesitate. He dove into the water slicing it with his arms like a knife. He reached the spot where he saw the girl go under in no time.*

*She was nowhere near the surface. Dennis dove down deep into the water. Everything was pitch black...for a moment. Then there was a purple glow. The circle of purple light got bigger and bigger. He could see the girl now. Her long black hair was swirling around her face and her arms were out to her sides and a purple jeweled bracelet was around her left wrist. This was the source of the purple glow. The girl suddenly made one more attempt at survival and waved her arms widely, opening her eyes for a moment to reveal their bright green irises. She reached out one arm as if to beckon him. And then her eyes closed. Her arms became still and the purple glow faded into nothingness. Dennis swam forward toward the receding light and tried to grab the girl but the next thing he knew..*

"EVERYBODY GET UP NOW!" The boarding house alarm was blaring and the

voice of the headmaster was bombing directives on the intercom.

That's when Dennis noticed that his room was almost fully submerged with water. He saw a pair of Will's pants float by along with several of Hal's action figures. He heard splashing nearby and saw Will treading water nearby make an attempt to grab his pants as they floated by. Hal was a few feet further away under the water looking around and making faces. He bobbed up above the surface for a few minutes.

"Hey guys, isn't this great! Talk about an indoor swimming pool!"

And then he disappeared back under the water. Dennis looked out the window that was halfway above the water and saw the night sky. It was dark outside, so dark that he could barely see where the sky ended and the water in his room began. It slowly dawned on him that this latest aquatic disaster could somehow be his fault.

The girls were not happy. Because of the damage to the first floor, the boys had to move upstairs to their wing. This meant that they had to double up, six girls to every room. Dennis found Audra sitting in the hallway with her laptop typing furiously away.

"Hey, Audra I've been trying to call you."

"And I've been avoiding you."

"Are you mad about Mina?"

"No, but don't you see?" She waved at all the boys roaming listlessly around the girls' hallway. "Since you've been here, things have been, weird."

Audra had continued to type during their conversation but took a pause to look up at Dennis.

"What happened to your face? Did a dresser hit it during the flood?"

"Not exactly."

For some reason that Dennis couldn't put his finger on at the moment, he didn't want to tell Audra what had transpired between him and Jock boy.

"What, were you injured during your tour of duty as Mina's personal body guard?"

"I thought you weren't upset about Mina."

"Whatever. Anyway, what do you think caused the flood?"

"I don't know," Dennis answered without hesitation.

"Faulty pipes maybe? Someone left the bathtub running? I'm sure the Faculty will fill us in as soon as they know. I know several students already texted their parents."

"That will not be good for REM's image in the media."

Audra saw that Dennis had zoned out and was looking around.

"Don't worry, I just saw Mina and she's fine."

"So, now you're looking out for her too?"

Audra ignored that and continued.

"Why don't you just talk to her and see what you can find out?"

"I don't want to scare her or freak her out."

"Well, it looks like Jock boy has already done that, you would just be her knight in shining armor."

"Whatever, I'm going to find where I sleep."

Dennis wondered how long it would be before Audra tied the flood to his dreams. How could this be happening. No one would be safe if things in his dreams started manifesting themselves at random. He had to find out what was wrong with him. He couldn't even ask his parents if the same thing happened to them, if it ran in the family. He would call Botts and ask him to set up an appointment with Dr. Kettle. He had been going to Dr. Kettle for years. Actually, his name was Kettleman but Dennis was so young when he first started seeing him that he could only get out kettle. He had to stop these dreams from happening. But he realized that Mina was still in danger. He had had the dream again and this time it was stronger than ever.

"The mind is nature's greatest creation." Mr. Phibb was dressed in a REM faculty robe at the front of the classroom. Dennis was sitting in the desk across from Mina and at that moment he begged to disagree. Girls were definitely nature's greatest creation and he was looking at one of them right now. He could feel Audra's eyes boring a hole in the back of his neck. So, he sent her a text.

"Hey, when we get out, stop Mina and ask her to sit with us at lunch."

"Why can't you do it? You're the one making eyes at her for the past hour."

"Are you going to do it or not?"

"Fine."

Dennis stayed at his desk when the class was over and watched Audra stop Mina and talk with her. The girls walked out the room together and Dennis picked up his backpack, but before he could leave Mr. Phibb stopped him.

"Dennis, Dennis Cross?"

"Yes sir."

"I've been watching you."

Dennis' first thought that that might not be the best thing for an adult to say to a child. And his second thought was that somehow Mr. Phibb knew that he was the reason for the flood at the boarding house. But that was impossible. Then again, his dreams were happening so anything was possible.

"I've noticed that you're not the same student that you were when you first started last week. Is there anything you'd like to talk about."

Dennis wanted to spill the entire story. To have an adult that understood who could help him get through this situation would be great. But just as he opened his mouth he saw Audra poke her head back into the classroom. She mouthed.

"What are you waiting for?"

And then she pointed. Mina must be waiting to have lunch and Audra couldn't think of anything else to say.

"Thanks Mr. Phibb, but I'm okay. It's just school work and the flood."

"Here's the number to my office if you change your mind."

Mr. Phibbs looked at him strangely for a long moment.

"You can come to me about anything, you look like you haven't been sleeping well."

"I'm okay, well I've got to go to lunch now Mr. Phibbs."

Mr. Phibbs nodded and Dennis hurried after Audra and Mina.

Audra was waiting outside the door.

"What was that all about? I didn't know that you and Mr. Phibbs were that close?"

"We're not. He's just concerned."

"Well, he's never been that concerned about me. Did you know him before you came to REM or something?"

"No." But that got Dennis thinking.

*Why is Mr. Phibbs so concerned about me, a new student. I haven't even been here two weeks yet and Audra's been here forever and he never stopped to find out how she was doing.*

"Well, don't worry about it now, Mina's waiting for us outside the building. I had to make up some phony reason why I wanted her to have lunch with us, so come on."

Dennis filed the thought away for later so he could ask Botts if he or his parents knew a Mr. Phibb. And clutching his backpack, he raced after Audra.

"So, what do you guys want?"

Mina fidgeted with the tassel on her purse and absently played with the French fries on her tray. Dennis sat just staring at Mina.

"Yes, Dennis, what do we want?"

Audra brought his attention back the matter at hand.

"Mina, hi. My name is Dennis, Dennis Cross."

"I know who you are,"

Dennis thought he saw a faint blush creep over her face.

"Everyone does."

*Really, everyone knew him?*

Audra saw the glazed look on his face.

"And I'm Audra, but you probably already know that too."

Dennis jumped back in.

"I'm new here but at my old school I was a student counselor."

Audra raised her eyebrows but Dennis went on undaunted, making up the story as he went along.

"And as a student counselor, I have been trained to recognize when students are being bullied or harassed by other students."

Mina looked anxious.

"As student counselor, I have been trained to be confidential, so that nothing a bullied or harassed student says leaves my lips unless the student is in danger."

"What about Audra?" Mina looked suspiciously at Audra.

Dennis looked at Audra apologetically.

"Fine, I'll leave you two alone." Audra slapped her books into her backpack and picked up her lunch tray before stomping off to the other side of the lunch room. Dennis turned back to Mina. He decided that the direct route would be best.

"So, what is your relationship with Jock boy?"

"Who is Jock Boy?"

"I mean Dillan Royster."

Mina let out a huge sigh. Whether it was from relief or dismay, Dennis couldn't tell. Dennis put his hand on hers and looked right into her jade green eyes.

"It's ok Mina, you can trust me. I want to help you."

Mina opened her mouth and was about to say something when all of a sudden her lunch tray flipped up and into the air, it's contents hung in the air like a baby's mobile before landing around them, milk and chips flying everywhere.

"Somebody say my name?" Jock boy stood before them with a group of his semi-literate friends around him.

*I guess these are his reinforcements.*

All got quiet in the lunchroom and Dennis could see that Audra had made her way back to his side of the lunchroom. She stood off to the side watching with a worried look on her face.

"So, jock boy, you couldn't face me on your own yesterday so you brought your friends? Too bad they won't be able to help you.?"

Jock boy just laughed, his confidence inflated because he was surrounded by his buddies.

Dennis looked around at each of the boys with Jock Boy, silently sizing them up. He could handle the two skinny ones in front of Jock Boy and Jock boy himself and the two heavysset ones behind him he could outrun if he had to. And it looked like he was on his own. For some reason the Faculty was mysteriously missing from the lunchroom, just like cops when someone cut you off on the beltway, they were nowhere to be found.

Audra looked at the scene unfolding in front of her in shock. It looked like Dennis but he was moving like Bruce Lee. He had Karate chopped the first boy who dropped like a log. Then the other boy jumped on Dennis's back and he shook him off with ease as Jock Boy looked on in horror. Dennis turned around slowly to face them and the two heavy set boys who were apparently only there for show turned and ran. Leaving a stunned Jock Boy standing alone. Everyone was silent for a moment and then someone started clapping and soon the entire lunchroom was filled with applause. Dennis backed up and away from the fight scene and blended into the audience amid pats on the back and 'Way to go's'. The Faculty arrived then and saw Jock Boy standing between his fallen bretheren. The Faculty grabbed him by his collar and pulled him toward the door. He made a show like he would be back to handle Dennis, but everyone knew the truth. Dennis exited the lunchroom through the back door and Audra stood waiting for him rubbing her arms against the cold afternoon air.

"What was that?"

"What was what?"

"Who are you Dennis Cross? Why are you at REM?" Audra looked both impressed and a little scared of him in that moment. Dennis made a quick decision to trust Audra with more of his story.

"It was in my parent's will. Attend REM until my 18th birthday. That was one of the criteria."

"But, why REM? What's so special about REM?"

That's just what Dennis intended to find out. But first, he needed to find Mina. He was so anxious to get out of the lunchroom and away from the Faculty that he forgot to look for her. But he didn't have to look long.

"Here comes Mina, looks like you have a fan."

Dennis ignored the sarcasm he heard in her voice.

"Hey Mina, are you all right?"

She was smiling ear to ear.

"Yes, I'm fine. Wow, I've never seen anything like it except on TV."

"Am I or am I not standing right here?"

"Sorry, hi Audra."

"Mina."

Dennis intervened.

"Mina, do you know of anyone else besides Jock Boy who would want to do you harm and why was he bothering you anyway?" With Jock boy out of the picture, Mina was much more talkative and animated.

"He was just mad because I caught him cheating on his core midterm. You can get expelled for that, plus he would lose his football scholarship. But I'm not scared of him anymore, he's such a wuss."

*Jock Boy wouldn't have the guts to kill someone, he saw that himself today. So, who was trying to kill Mina. Maybe he had nothing to worry about and this dream was just that, a dream.*

"So, is anyone else upset at you, another student, the Faculty a parent?"

*Except Audra.*

"No, you're a great counselor Dennis. No one else is mad at me, especially not the Faculty."

The way Mina said the first part made Audra want to puke and the way she said the last part made her wonder why Mina thought the Faculty wouldn't be mad at her. She would have to ask Dennis what he thought after they dropped Mina. The way she was thinking, Dennis might have to question her motives toward Mina.

"Off the subject Mina, who is your fav faculty member?"

"Oh, Mr. Carlson, he's so fine. I mean he's a great teacher and makes physics so fun."

"Oh, I've never taken him. Maybe I should." Audra watched Mina's face carefully. She seemed disturbed for some reason.

"If you're not naturally interested in Physics, I wouldn't advise it. You'll still be bored no matter how great of a teacher he is."

"Aren't you taking Mr. Carlson now Dennis?"

"Yes."

"Would you recommend that Dennis drop Mina?"

"Oh no, he'll be fine."

Audra knew she was on to something. She needed to speak with Dennis, alone. But looking over her shoulder at the crowd at the lunchroom door, she doubted that there would be any more moments alone with Dennis any time soon.

"Come on Dennis, think!"

"I am thinking!"

"Well, think harder. Is there anything that stands out in your dream, anything unusual or striking?"

Dennis had replayed the entire dream in his mind hundreds of times

before. There was the purple light, Mina's green eyes opening and closing and a purple bracelet that glowed purple. He relayed it to Audra for the tenth time.

"Wait a minute, wait. Dennis, have you ever seen Mina wearing a purple bracelet?"

"No, but then we only see her at school or in class. Do you wear your most prized jewelry to class?"

"Of course not. But there is that party tonight that everyone who is everyone will be attending. So you know your Mina will be there. And what better place to show off some bling."

"She's not 'my Mina,'" and besides I wasn't invited. And what does the bracelet mean anyway. It's not like my dream spells it out."

"Well, maybe she doesn't have a date yet and you can ask her and then maybe she'll be your Mina after tonight."

Dennis threw the pillow that was on the couch in the boarding room hall at Audra's head and failed miserably.

Dennis ducked as Audra threw three pillow back at him in quick succession.

"Anyway..." Duck

"She probably..." Duck and throw.

"Already has a date!" Duck, throw and hit.

"Oh that's what all guys think that pretty girls are doing is rejecting date after date. But she's probably in her room waiting for the phone to ring while the other plain girls already have a date. Like your's truly." Audra said the last bit with a smirk on her face.

*Audra, going on a date with another guy. He was wondering why she was making light of him dating Mina. He didn't like when she was so flippant about him. He kind of enjoyed it when she was jealous. And besides he hadn't even meet this guy. At least she could have introduced him. And why would he ask Mina anywhere?*

"So, are you going to call her or what?"

"Who, Mina?"

Audra flung herself down besides him and placed her elbows in his lap and looked up at him.

"Who else silly?"

Then she turned over and lay her head back on his lap and looked up at him through her glasses. Dennis doubted that anyone else suspected that Audra "Pulitzer" Jacobson had a playful side to her.

"Maybe I'll get colored contacts and get rid of these before I go to the party."

"So, who are you going to this party with? I take it you've been invited."



Dennis looked down at Audra laying comfortably in his lap. His voice softened a little as he spoke.

*Well since you didn't ask me dimwit.*

"I'm going with Calahan. Donald Calahan."

"Audra, If I'd known there was a big party.."

"You'd what?"

Dennis paused for a moment.

"I'd have gotten ready for it a lot sooner. What are you wearing anyway? And who is this Calahan, do I know him?"

Audra popped off Dennis' lap like a shot.

"And that's precisely what I am going to do, get ready. And no, I don't think you know Calahan."

And then she was gone. Dennis looked down at his lap where a few minutes ago Audra lay and he was scared. He never felt the way he did around Audra with any other girl and that scared him. And he couldn't afford to be scared right now.

Mina answered on the third ring and accepted Dennis' invitation on his first offer. Now that she was free from the shadow of Jock Boy's scrutiny, Mina's true personality shone thru. You could hear it in her voice and see it in her eyes. This was not a girl who was in fear of her life. Mina told him she would be ready in an hour which meant in girl time, two to three hours. He told her that he was wearing dark purple shirt in the hopes that she would wear her purple bracelet to coordinate. That is, if she even had a purple bracelet. Things were different in dreams. Maybe the bracelet had a symbolic meaning and really didn't exist. Dennis didn't know quite what he would do if that were the case.

*It was dark at the lake. So dark, in fact that you couldn't really tell where the sky stopped and the lake began. Slowly, the cloud covering the moon moved and the moonlight formed twinkling diamonds on the water. Dennis Cross stood at the lake's edge and peered out in the distance.*