

Titles in the *Behold the Eye* trilogy:

Behold the Eye: Braumaru

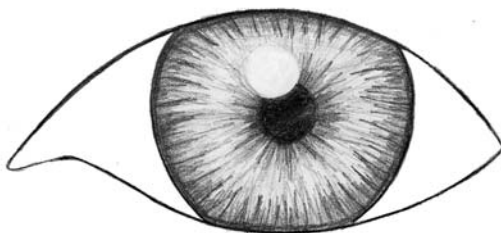
Behold the Eye: Cerulea

Behold the Eye: Viridia

Behold the Eye:

Viridia

Book 3



By Veronica R. Tabares
Illustrated by Bridgitt Tabares

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Publishers note:

This book is a work of fiction and a figment of the author's imagination. Similarities to actual characters, places, names, or events are purely coincidental.

*To my often crazy,
sometimes sweet,
but always wonderful
husband and children.*

*Onny, you are a fantastic husband
and I really appreciate all the support
you have given me.*

*Bridgitt, Tara, Elle, and Jade—
you four are the best daughters
a mother could ever have!*

Viridia
Land of the Green-Eyes

Dear Librarian,

I want to apologize for the two letters I sent you before, and I want to change my mind.

I went back and reread all three Behold the Eye books, and I understand why you have put them in the fiction section.

I still want you to know that they really aren't fiction, but I am now okay with keeping it between the two of us.

I've decided that this is a better way because I don't think anyone will believe the story anyway. And if they believed that I believed, they would think I had been hit on the head. And I don't think I want to go through life with everyone thinking I am crazy. It might interfere with my career, whatever my career will be.

So thank you for your patience, and I'll be in the library later this week to get a few more books.

*Sincerely,
Vickie Sutton*

Dear Diary,

My dad is still not back. He's been gone forever, and mom won't tell me anything about where he has gone, or when he's coming back. I finally had to take matters into my own hands and snoop in the den.

Daddy usually guards the den—"his" room—like a vault and even cleans it himself. But this time, I got a really good look at everything in there.

You want to hear something funny? There was absolutely, positively, nothing interesting in that room. I don't know why he was always so secretive about the den. The only things I could find that I have never seen before were photos of a book. Like someone opened a book, took a picture, turned the page, took another picture, and kept doing it.

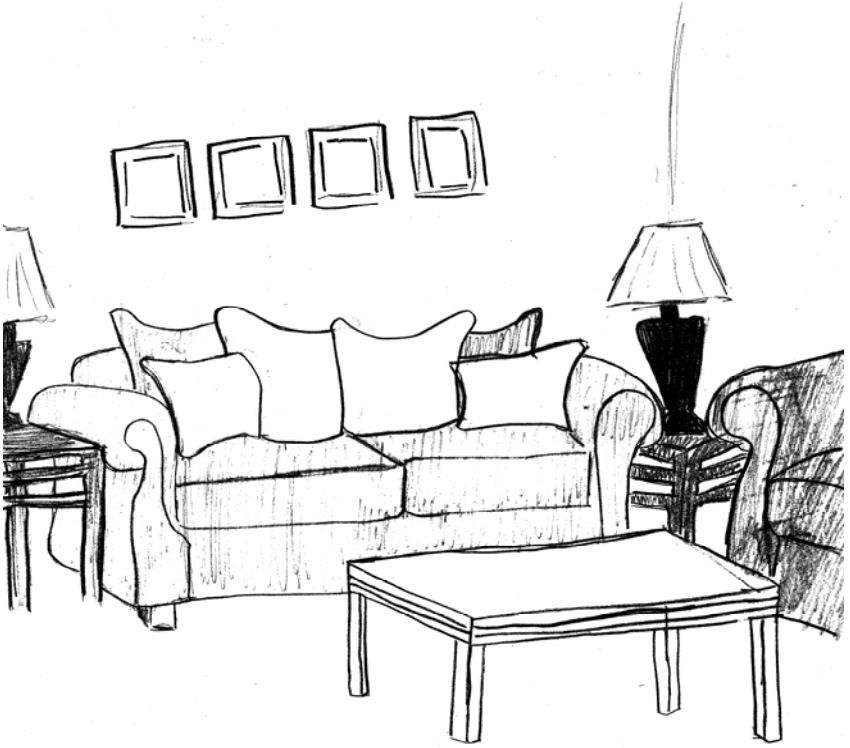
It wasn't even pictures of art or drawings, just words. There must have been hundreds of them! (Pictures I mean, not words.)

Why would he take pictures of a stupid old book? If he wanted to read the book so much, why didn't he just copy it, like a normal person?

I'm determined to find out, so I've taken the pictures and hidden them in my room. I'm going to study them. You never know, those pictures might be the clue that will help me figure out where daddy has gone.

I seem to remember that daddy has spent a lot of time looking at pictures. And more than just looking, he was studying them. Maybe these are the very ones he was studying. Maybe these pictures will help me figure out where he has gone.

-Rhonda



Chapter 1

“TAKE THAT!” TRICIA yelled as she slammed the door behind her.

“A door slammed in her face is exactly what she deserves,” Tricia muttered as she stomped across the room. “Some best friend she is, treating me like I’m not as good as her new friends. Who does she think she is, ignoring me like that?”

As Tricia reached the other side of the room, she turned toward the door, crossed her arms, and tapped her foot. She had quite a few things to say when Vickie came through that door to apologize for her rude behavior.

As she stood there tapping her foot, she looked around the room. Hey, she thought in surprise, this room isn’t half bad. As a matter of fact, it looks a little like one of the rooms I saw in a designer magazine. It has that comfy-cozy feel about it, and the furniture has that not-too-old

and not-too-new look, the type of look that people with good taste would have. At least I have a decent room to stand in as I wait, and wait, and wait, she thought.

“Hurry up, Vickie,” Tricia said to the door testily. “I don’t have all day to stand here waiting for you to beg my forgiveness.”

Tricia tapped her foot more quickly, as if the tempo of her foot dictated the speed at which Vickie would rush through the door. Tricia stared at the doorknob, waiting for it to turn. She paused her tapping, listening for the sound of footsteps on the porch. There was no friendly footstep, no soft creak, not even the merest breath of motion—nothing.

Tricia’s patience was wearing thin. She was angry with her best friend for ignoring her, and all she wanted to do was have the fight she deserved, make up, and resume her friendship. But where was Vickie? Why was she not rushing through the door? Why was she not crying, throwing her arms around Tricia, and telling her that they will be best friends forever, and there could never be a better friendship than theirs?

Moving to a window, Tricia twitched the curtains aside a quarter inch and carefully brought her eye near. The last thing she wanted was for Vickie to see her peeking out—like she cared whether Vickie was coming. Even worse than getting caught peeking, though, was not knowing what Vickie and her new friends were doing.

Within seconds, Tricia threw the curtains wide open, placed both hands on the glass and frantically searched the vista in front of her. Shocked, Tricia realized that no one was outside! Vickie was not rushing to apologize because she had gone! She had deserted her best friend, ignored a lifelong friendship, and forgotten the hard-and-fast rule that best friends always come first, and

are always included in every get-together.

Tricia's heart suddenly felt so heavy that she thought it would drop down to her feet.

But Tricia was not the type of girl to wrestle with depressing feelings for long. Anger warred with disappointment as Tricia thought about Vickie's cruel abandonment, and what it really meant.

Stunned as the true implications sunk in, Tricia realized that Vickie was no longer her best friend. Since she had chosen a group of strangers over Tricia, she had callously flushed an entire lifetime of shared experiences down the drain. What a waste!

All because Vickie didn't think that Tricia was as cool and interesting as those teenagers. Tricia was being dumped like last year's outfits. Vickie evidently thought she had outgrown Tricia and needed bigger and better friends, ones that probably could drive and take her places. Like to movies, and the mall, and...well, who knew where else.

It was downright insulting!

As so often happened with Tricia, anger won the battle and Tricia made her decision. She would go back home and chose a new best friend, probably either Cathy or Karen. She would prove to Vickie that she had made a mistake by dumping their friendship so abruptly. Vickie would see Tricia laughing and sharing secrets with her new best friend, and then Vickie would be the one to feel left out. Oh yes, then Vickie would be oh, so very sorry!

Vickie would learn that it just doesn't pay to be fickle.

She would understand that you just don't turn your back on your best friend.

She would feel the same kind of pain that Tricia was

feeling right now.

Tricia let the curtain fall back into place, and moved decisively to the door. There was no better time than the present to choose her new best friend.

There was of course one very tough decision to make. Who would be a better best friend? Cathy, who was level-headed, but had too many brothers and sisters and sometimes lacked imagination, or Karen, who had too much imagination and lacked level-headedness.

It wasn't fair! Why was Vickie doing this to her!

Tricia grabbed the doorknob angrily and turned it. She pulled on the handle, but nothing happened. The door seemed to be stuck closed. She grabbed with both hands, anchored her feet firmly on the floor, and pulled with all her might. The door refused to budge even a fraction of an inch. It was as if some practical joker had sealed the door with quick drying glue after Tricia had entered the room.

Moving back to the window, Tricia looked for the catch that would allow her to open the window so she could climb out onto the porch. The window had no catch.

Panic set in as Tricia realized she was trapped in the house, and she did not even know who the owner was. The house could belong to a total weirdo for all she knew!

She ran back to the door and started pounding. "Somebody help me! Let me out! Vickie, Vickie, are you out there? Help! I want out, now!"

As her hands began to hurt and her vocal cords to feel the strain of constant yelling, Tricia stopped yelling and dropped her arms to her sides in defeat. She realized that she was all alone; there was no one around to hear her pleas for help. She allowed herself a moment of collapse as she relaxed into a slouch.

But a moment of defeat was all that Tricia would ever allow herself, and she almost immediately pulled her

shoulders back and straightened her posture. Her mama didn't raise a fool, and her father didn't raise a quitter.

So what if she could not get out of this door or this window. There were probably zillions of other windows and doors leading out of this house. All she had to do was explore until she found one that was not locked.

13-Year-Old Girl Lapses Into In Coma, Reason Unknown

SEATTLE-- Tricia Jones, 13, remains in stable condition after falling into a coma for unknown reasons on Saturday. Tricia's parents expressed more than usual concern because their daughter is best friends with Vickie Sutton, who had also fallen into a coma and subsequently made national headlines several months ago when she mysteriously disappeared from her hospital bed. She has not yet been found. Tricia's mother summed up the concerns of many in the community by saying "I don't know what is going on around here, but this is almost looking like the beginning of an epidemic. It's just not normal for a perfectly healthy girl to go to sleep at night in her own bed and never wake up in the morning. This is the second child in just a couple of months! We need answers, and we need them fast!" The family says that they have been assured that Tricia will not disappear from her bed as her friend did. Hospital authorities have declined to comment.

Chapter 2

CATHY THREW DOWN the newspaper she had just been reading, grabbed her little brother, and gave him a tremendous hug.

“Hey, what are you doing,” he yelled as he pushed her away. “You’re messing it up!”

“Don’t worry, I’ll fix your stinky little cars. I think I only nudged a few out of line anyway.” Cathy said as she gave him one more hug before releasing him.

“You messed up the whole thing! See, I had 10 cars in this row, and now there are only 8. And those cars over there aren’t lined up right either anymore.”

“Okay, okay, I’ll put them back. What are you playing, anyway, when you line all your cars up like this?”

“Parking lot, of course, can’t you see?”

“Well, I see you lining up hundreds of little cars, and I see that then you mess it all up by riding over it with your tricycle.”

“Yeah, that’s the fun part!”

“And then, if you want to do it again, you have to spend forever lining up the cars again. Why?”

“It’s fun!”

“What’s fun?”

“Being a giant monster running over all those little cars.”

“Then why don’t you just save yourself the trouble and, instead of lining the cars up in rows, throw the cars down and ride over them. You can pretend they are driving down a bunch of crisscrossed roads. It would be way easier.” Cathy stopped lining up the miniature cars and looked seriously at her little brother.

“That wouldn’t be any fun! If they aren’t lined up, how can I see how far they get flung when I slam on my brakes?” he answered, the look on his face somehow combining superiority and disgust.

Cathy adjusted the last car and shook her head in defeat. She would never understand her little brother.

“There, weirdo, I fixed it,” Cathy said as she tousled her little brother’s hair. Weird or not, he was her brother, and she loved him. And besides, it was probably not his fault he liked to build just so he could destroy. He was a boy, and all boys were a little weird.

Normally, Cathy would be as likely to shove her little brother out of the way as hug him, but that was before she had gotten so scared. Before her world turned into the nightmarish place where two of her best friends had mysteriously fallen into comas—where one of those friends had disappeared into thin air right under the noses of the entire hospital staff.

“Tricia is too bossy for that to happen to her,” Cathy said aloud as she thought about Tricia in a coma in the hospital, just like Vickie had been. And just like Vickie, no

one knew what was wrong with her.

"What did you say?" her brother asked, not even pausing to look up from his cars.

"I was talking about Tricia falling into a coma. I was just reading what the newspaper had to say about it. She was perfectly healthy, not even so much as the sniffles. She went to bed like normal, but in the morning, she just never woke up."

"So what do you care? You don't even like Tricia," her brother asked bluntly.

Cathy looked horrified. "What do you mean I don't like Tricia? She is one of my best friends!"

"Well," he replied, "you always gripe that Tricia always gets her way, and that she is too bossy and mean. So I say you don't like her."

"Yeah, well, bossy or not, she is my friend."

Her brother paused in his play to look at her. "Why do you want a bossy, mean friend? I like people who are nice to me much better than mean people. Those are the people I want to be friends with."

"She is just my friend, okay," Cathy said firmly.

And that was all Cathy was going to say to her seven-year-old brother about best friends. He just wasn't old enough to understand the intricacies of more mature friendships.

"Hey, tell mom I went to Karen's house," Cathy said. "I'll be back in a couple of hours."

"Okay," came her brother's muffled reply. He had already once again become engrossed in lining up his cars, and had his head down at ground level checking that the cars were in line from every angle.

It was a good thing that Karen lived so close. Since it was only a couple of blocks away, Cathy's mom usually

let her go as often as she liked, as long as she had finished her chores.

It was just a long enough walk that Cathy had the opportunity to think things through.

Tricia's disappearance was exactly like what had happened to Vickie, right before Vickie disappeared from her hospital bed. So that probably meant that there was a good chance that Tricia was going to disappear the same way.

Cathy shivered. Were she and Karen going to be next?

Because if something could get Tricia, who was the bossiest and most strong-willed person Cathy knew, no one had a chance. Tricia always got everything she wanted—from her parents, from her teachers, and especially from her friends. She used her powers of persuasion on the adults, but her friends, well, they got strong-armed.

And anyone who could make her friends feel like absolute rabbits must be too strong willed to easily fall prey to...to...well, whatever Vickie and Tricia had fallen prey to.

Cathy was afraid, and she wanted to tell her parents how all the scary stuff had started with the book the four friends were trying to write, about their discovery of dream traveling, and about Vickie moving things with her mind. It was exciting, and scary, and way more intense than anything Cathy had ever had to deal with before.

And it *had* to be connected to what had happened to Vickie and Tricia.

But Cathy had a suspicion that her parents would not believe her, and she would probably get punished for lying. And she really didn't feel like cleaning out the attic today. Her parents' theory was that while she cleaned the

attic, she would be cleaning her mind, and therefore would be less likely to lie in the future.

She didn't know if her mind ended up any cleaner, but it actually did make her think twice before telling a lie.

So Cathy decided not to tell her parents. But something had to be done. After all, she was just a normal, everyday girl. And normal everyday girls never wanted to spend the rest of their lives afraid to go to sleep at night.

She absolutely, positively, needed to go see Karen. They were the only two of their group left. It was up to them to figure out what happened to their friends.

A shiver of fear coursed through her body. Could they help their friends?

Could they save themselves?



Karen was outside in her yard, pulling weeds out of the flower garden. A smile blossomed on her face when she saw Cathy. Karen hated getting her hands dirty, and Cathy usually would help her complete her chores so that she could get done faster.

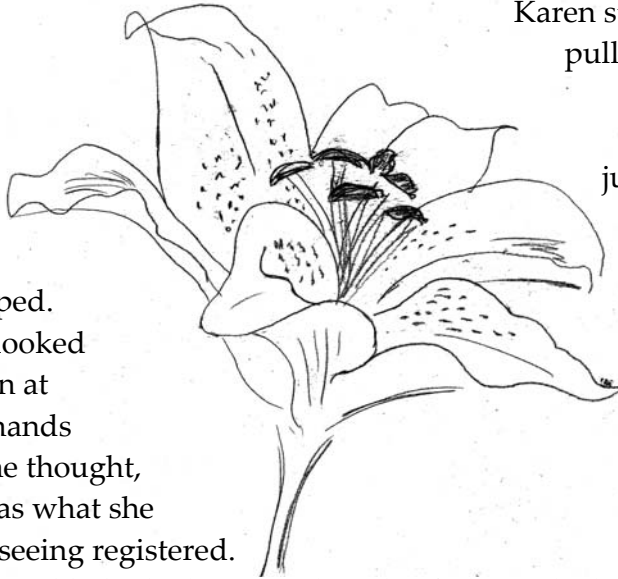
Cathy didn't disappoint Karen, and dropped down on her knees and began to pull weeds. As she pulled, she talked.

"Karen, we need to find out what is going on. It's not normal for girls our age to go into comas and disappear."

"Girls? Has Tricia disappeared too?"

“No, but what if she does? That would mean that one of us would be next.”

Karen stopped
pulling the
plant
she had
just



grasped.
She looked
down at
her hands
as she thought,
and as what she
was seeing registered.

She quickly looked over at the pile of plants she had thrown to the side of the flower bed.

She groaned as she realized she had pulled up all of her mom’s prized lilies! Boy, was her mom going to be mad.

She looked over at Cathy’s pile of weeds, and was relieved to see that it really was just a pile of weeds. Well, that should equal out the mess she made at least a little.

Taking a deep breath and shrugging her shoulders, Karen made a decision. And it wasn’t about weeding the flower garden.

“Cathy, we don’t have a choice. We are going to have to try to contact Tricia and Vickie through our dreams.”

“Are you nuts? What if that is what caused this mess in the first place? What if what happened to them happens to us?”

“What do you mean? You think all this dream stuff

has something to do with the comas?"

"Yes I do! And I don't want to go into a coma. I'm starting to be scared to sleep at night."

"That's bad, because I think we have to use dreams to find them."

"But won't that be dangerous, aren't you scared we'll disappear too?"

"It doesn't matter, we are either going to go the rest of our lives afraid to sleep, or we are going to have to overcome this thing. I like to sleep, so I say we beat it."

"But if we go into a coma, and disappear...."

"Then at least we would be where our friends are, and wouldn't that be fun? No more school, and all the time in the world to do whatever we wanted!"

"You're nuts! You almost make it sound like Vickie and Tricia went on a vacation or something."

"Well, doesn't it make it seem a little less scary? And besides, we don't really know what it is like for them."

"I guess you're right. So how are we going to go about it? Have you thought about it any yet?"

Karen hadn't thought about it, but wasn't about to admit it to her friend. Instead, she said the first thing that popped into her head.

"We go talk to that professor we saw on TV. The one that said she had discovered an ancient civilization that could travel through their dreams. I think she might know something that will help us—and Tricia and Vickie."

"Right, like a professor is going to talk to a couple of kids like us. That is the nuttiest idea you have had yet. She would kick us out quicker than I kick my brother out of my room."

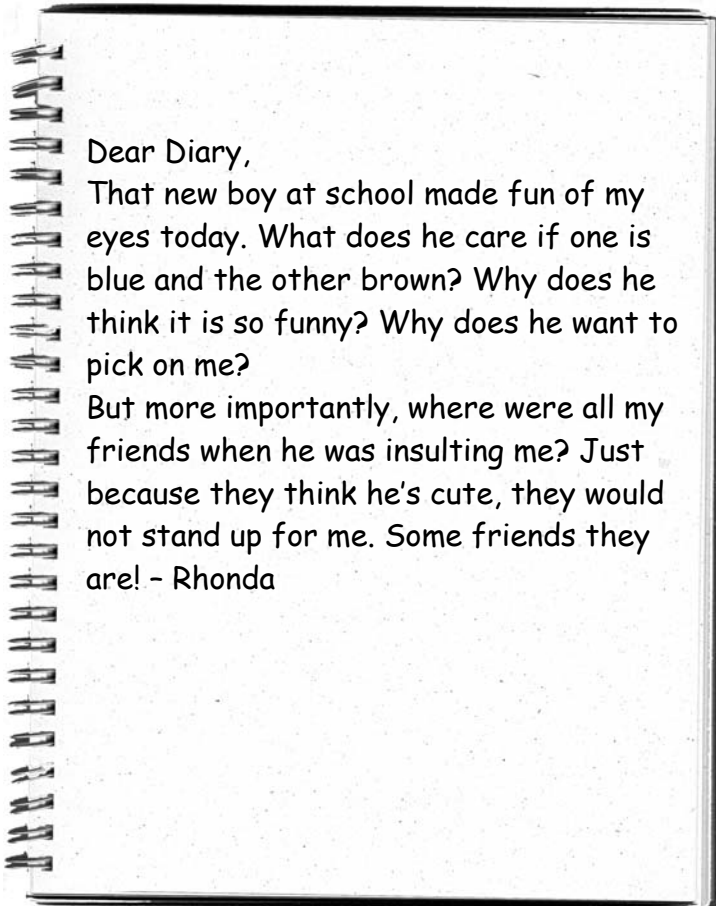
"Okay, do you have a better idea?"

“No. I guess we’ll have to do what you said, and dream to find Tricia and Vickie. I’ll do it, but I don’t like it.”

“Don’t worry, Cathy. We’ll plan it all out a head of time. It’ll be great. It’ll be an adventure!”

Cathy just looked at her friend and shook her head. Karen might have a great imagination, but she was horrible at making plans and following through.

This was either going to be a great idea that saved their friends, or the beginning of one big nightmare.



Dear Diary,

That new boy at school made fun of my eyes today. What does he care if one is blue and the other brown? Why does he think it is so funny? Why does he want to pick on me?

But more importantly, where were all my friends when he was insulting me? Just because they think he's cute, they would not stand up for me. Some friends they are! - Rhonda

Chapter 3

“SO WHY ARE we going to this place?” Vickie asked suddenly, breaking the silence that had overwhelmed the room for the last day.

Shanti put down the clothing she was folding in preparation for travel and sighed. Maybe it would not be as much fun to have a little sister as she had thought. Girls Vickie’s age seemed to ask too many hard questions.

“We go to the land of the Eyes of Green, Viridia, to seek knowledge about dream travel.”

“But why, why would those people know more about it than the people here in Cerulea, the people known for having knowledge and being smart? This is the land made up almost entirely of universities. I’ve never seen so many people devoted to learning in one place in my life! Why do they not know?”

“I have no good answer for you, except that if the Ceruleans do not have the knowledge we seek, and the

Braumaruans do not have the knowledge, we must move on. We must continue to search until we find the answers.”

“Okay, so we move on to the next place. What about my friend Tricia? Do you think she is okay?”

“No, I do not. I think she is trapped in the land of dreams, just as we were once trapped.”

“Can we help her? Can we go into the land of dreams and rescue her like Micah rescued us?”

“It is too dangerous to enter the land of dreams again without the proper knowledge. We go in search of just that knowledge with which we can help your friend. Viridia is the land of the Eyes of Green, and the gift is to be connected with all things living. I do not know if that might help us. But to get you home, we must continue our search.”

“But you seem a little afraid, and not happy to be going. Should we have gone to these people in the first place, instead of all these blue-eyed people?”

“No, we did what is logical. If dream travel happens to people with one blue and one brown eye, should not the knowledge of dream travel be known in the land of blue or brown eyes? Yet we have already searched for knowledge in those two places, and failed to find that which we seek.”

“But why the Land of Green? Why Viridia?”

“There is no where else. It is our last hope.”

“What about people with gray eyes? I’ve seen some of them around. Could they know about dream traveling?”

“Gray-eyes do not have a land of their own. Their gift is the gift of weather, and they are sought out by everyone. Every town wants to have among its citizens at least one person who can warn of thunderstorms, snow, tornadoes, and let everyone know which will be the sunny

days good for travel and fun.”

“Right, we have those people in our world too. They are on television, but I don’t know the color of their eyes, and most of ours tell us the wrong weather almost as often as the right.”

“Our people are never wrong, although some can tell further in advance what type of weather to expect.”

“Okay, so gray-eyed people would not know anything about dream travel, and we need to go talk to the green-eyes. Why do you seem so nervous? Are the green-eyes weirdoes or something?”

“I am unsure what that word means. Open your mind to me please...oh, I see now. How odd. Do you have a lot of people in your world with hair that shade of pink?”

“Not many, but a few. Some of the weirdoes have purple or blue hair. Or maybe green.”

“Is it like in my world, except you can tell by the color of the hair instead of the eyes? It is easy to see who these weirdoes are?”

“Not really. Some people with strange colored hair might be normal. And some weirdoes look perfectly normal, like you and me, until you talk to them. Then you know they are weirdoes by the way they act.”

“Your world is such a confusing place. No, the green-eyes are not weirdoes like you imagine, but they are different.”

“Wow, if they are more different than having pink or green hair, this I’ve got to see. So tell me, how are they different?”

Shanti continued to gather and fold clothes for the trip as she thought. It was only fair that Vickie understand the dangers of Viridia. A shiver ran down her spine as she recalled some of the stories she had heard from travelers to that land.

But she would not tell Vickie any of those horrible accounts of Viridia; instead she would take a gentler approach.

“Think of Dafyyd. Remember the way animals act around him.”

“Oh, yes! Animals love him! Animals for miles around seem to find their way to him, and only to play!”

“Yes. Now imagine an entire city of similar people. Would not you be a little nervous around those people?”

“No, why should I?”

“Vickie, think! Just because none of those animals would hurt a green-eye does not mean they would not hurt us!”

“Oh, but I love animals, all kinds of animals! What kind of animals will be in Viridia? Will there be lots of dogs and cats? I absolutely love dogs.”

Shanti put down the clothes she had been folding, ceased all motion for a couple of seconds, and then turned and looked into Vickie’s eyes. With a groan, she closed her own eyes and mumbled something under her breath.

“What is it Shanti,” Vickie questioned her friend. “What’s wrong?”

“I had simply forgotten,” Shanti answered.

“Forgotten? Forgotten what?”

“That your eyes are a mix of colors, including green.”

Dear Diary,

I was looking at that stuff I found in my dad's den. Those pictures are definitely odd. Well, not the pictures, but the book in the pictures is odd.

The main part of each book page is taken up with a sort of grocery list. You know, 4 bushels of hay, 100 eggs, that kind of stuff. (100 eggs would make a huge omelet!) In the margins is where the interesting stuff is. It is all about being left behind, and never forgetting about being a king. And then it says something about Roland. No wonder my dad took pictures of the book. It has his name in it. I bet it is a clue to where he has gone.-
Rhonda

Chapter 4

LAUREN PAUSED WITH her hand on the doorknob of the professor's office to take a deep breath. Ever since her daughter had disappeared, she had found herself in places that made her uncomfortable, doing things that made her cringe.

Searching for a missing child does that to a person.

Not that visiting a university professor should be all that intimidating. But visiting one because you think that some ancient book found in an archaeological dig could help you find your missing daughter—well, the professor will probably call security and have her hauled straight to the hospital for a psychological evaluation.

How could a university professor even begin to understand the help Lauren needed. After all, academics deal with science and facts. Lauren was searching for her daughter using gut instincts and dreams.

The police had stuck to science and facts, and they

had gotten nowhere. They were no closer to finding Vickie than they had been on the day she disappeared.

So gut instincts would need to prevail.

Time to get on with it, and it really didn't matter that everyone around seemed to think that Lauren was losing her mind. They didn't have a missing daughter.

There was a chance that this woman had some knowledge that could save Vickie. Even a glimmer of hope was worth taking the chance of suffering humiliation.

Gathering her courage, Lauren said under her breath, "This is for my daughter. I will have courage so that I can get Vickie back."

She briskly knocked on the door.

The woman who opened the door was the same mild-mannered woman Lauren had seen on the television. Same brown hair, same stylish but understated clothing, and the same intelligent, kind eyes.

How odd, thought Lauren as she got a good look at Professor Jamison's eyes. One of her eyes was brown and the other blue. I never noticed that on television. I guess they always showed her at an angle, so that both eyes were never visible at the same time.

I wonder if she is self-conscious about her eyes? She must have suffered through years of teasing about her eyes while she was growing up.

Professor Jamison shifted uncomfortably under the scrutiny of the woman in her doorway.

"May I help you?"

"I'm sorry Professor Jamison, I am afraid my mind was wandering. I am here for your help."

"For my help?"

"Yes, I am sure that you have read and heard all about my daughter. She disappeared right out of a hospital bed after she fell ill with some mystery illness."

“Oh, I am so sorry that your daughter is missing. I have read about the case. But how could I help? I’m a college professor. I don’t know anything about finding missing children.”

“Maybe not, but you do know about something that I think will help me find my daughter.”

“Me? I’m sorry, but I think you are mistaken. I have no experience in the field of finding missing persons, or at least live ones. I’m an archaeologist. I study ancient cultures. I dig up artifacts from the past and study—”

“Exactly,” interrupted Lauren. “You have an artifact that I think will help me find my daughter.”

“What are you talking about? Do you not understand that the cultures I study died a thousand years ago? How will an artifact from a long-dead culture help you find your daughter today?”

“I would have thought an archaeologist would understand that the cultures of the past have a lot to tell people of the present.”

“Of course I understand that! I teach it. But I don’t understand how any artifact I might study will in any way help you find your daughter.”

“I want to see the book,” Lauren said bluntly.

“What book? I still don’t understand. I...”

“What don’t you understand?” interrupted Lauren. “I want to see the book you dug up that mentions traveling by dreams. I think it has something to do with my daughter’s disappearance. I want to find my daughter, and I am willing to follow any clue that might lead me to her.”

Professor Jamison stared at the woman standing in her door, and then, without a further word, motioned for her to enter the room.

Dear Diary,

Things are getting weirder and weirder. I found a stash of Dad's papers in the garage. These papers talked about a door, an eye, and about using dreams to travel. What kind of stuff was my dad into?

-Rhonda