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quentin Jacobsen has spent his entire life loving the magnificently adventurous Margot Roth Spiegelman from afar. So when she opens the window and rises back into her life - dressed as a ninja and calling him to a brilliant revenge campaign - he follows. After their nightlife ends and new day breaks, Kew comes to school to discover that Margot, always a mystery, has now become a mystery. But soon he learns that there is evidence - and they are for him. The harder the path is turned off, the closer he gets, the less he sees the girl he thought he knew. Page 1 PROLOG

How I Think Everyone Gets a Miracle. Like, I'll probably never be struck by lightning, or win the Nobel Prize, or become a dictator of a small nation on the Pacific Islands, or contract terminal ear cancer, or spontaneously burn. But if you think all things are unlikely together, at least one of them is likely to happen to each of us. I could see it raining frogs. I could have set foot on Mars. I could have been eaten by a whale. But my miracle was different. My miracle was this: Of all the houses in all the units in All Florida, I ended up living next door to Margot Roth Spiegelman. Our unit, Jefferson Park, was once a naval base. But then the Navy didn't need it anymore, so it returned the land to the citizens of Orlando, Florida, who decided to build a massive unit because that's what Florida is doing with the land. My parents and Margot's parents ended up moving next door to each other right after the first houses were built. Margot and I were two years old. Before Jefferson Park was Pleasantville, and before it was a naval base, it belonged to the real Jefferson, this guy dr. Jefferson Jefferson. Dr. Jefferson Jefferson has a school named after him in Orlando as well as a large charitable foundation, but fascinating and incredible, but the truth thing about Dr. Jefferson Jefferson is that he was not a doctor of any kind. He was just an orange juice salesman named Jefferson Jefferson. When he became rich and powerful, he went to court, made Jefferson his middle name, and then changed his name to Dr. Capital D. Lowercase r. Period. So Margot and I were nine years old. Our parents were friends, so we sometimes played together, driving past cul-de-sacs to Jefferson Park, the center of our unit's wheel. I was always very nervous when I heard that Margot was about to appear, because of how she was the most fantastically magnificent being that God had ever created. In the morning in question, she was wearing white shorts and a pink T-shirt with a green dragon, breathing fire of orange glitter. It's hard to explain how awesome I found this t-shirt at the time. Margot, as always, on Standing standing up her hands locked as she leaned over the steering wheel, her purple sneakers a workaround. It was a hot day in March. The sky was clear, but the air tasted sour as it might storm later. At the time, I thought I was an inventor, and after we locked our bikes and started a short walk through the park on the playground, I told Margot about an idea I had for an invention called Ringolator. The ringolier was a giant cannon that fired large colored stones into a very low orbit, giving Earth the same rings as Saturn. (I still think it would be a great idea, but it turns out that building a gun that can shoot boulders into low orbit is pretty tricky.) I had been to this park so many times before it was displayed in my head, so we were only a few steps inside when I started to feel that the world was out of order, although I couldn't immediately figure out what was different. quentin, Margot said softly. Point. And then I realized it was different. There was a live oak tree a few feet away from us. Thick and gnarled and ancient species. This is not new. The playground is to our right. Not new, either. But now the guy in the gray suit fell on the trunk of the oak tree. It's not moving. It was new. He was surrounded by blood; a half-dry fountain poured it out of his mouth. The mouth is open in a way that the mouths usually should not be. Flies alone on his pale forehead. He's dead, Margot said, as if I couldn't say. I took two little steps back. I remember thinking that if I made some sudden movements, he might wake up and attack me. Maybe he was a zombie. I knew the zombies weren't real, but he definitely looked like a potential zombie. When I took these two steps back, Margot took two equally small and quiet steps forward. His eyes are open, she said. Wegottagohome, I said. I thought you closed your eyes when you died,' she said. Margovgotaghomeandtell. She took it one step further. She was close enough to reach out and touch his leg. What do you think happened to him? She asked. Maybe it was drugs or something. I didn't want to leave Margot alone with a dead guy who might be a zombie attack, but I also didn't want to stand around and chat about the circumstances of his death. I plucked up the courage and stepped forward to take her hand. Margovegotta-gonitones! OK, yes, she said. We ran to our bikes, my stomach churning with something that felt just like excitement but wasn't. We got on our bikes and I let her go in front of me because I was crying and didn't want her to see. I saw blood on the soles of her purple sneakers. His blood. Dead guy blood. And then we went home to our separate homes. My parents called 911, and I heard the sirens in distance and asked to see the fire engines, but my mom said no. Then I took a nap. Both my parents are therapists, which means I'm really damn well-adapted. So when I woke up, I had a long conversation with my mom about the cycle of life, and how death is part of life, but not part of life, I had to be particularly concerned at the age of nine and I felt better. Honestly, I never worried about it much. That says something because I can do some disturbing. Here's the thing: I found a dead guy. A small, charming nine-year-old me and my still little and more adorable playdate found a guy with blood pouring from her mouth and that blood was on her little, adorable sneakers as we cycled home. It's all very dramatic and all that, but what? I didn't know this guy. People I don't know are dying all the damn time. If I had a nervous breakdown every time something terrible happened in the world, I'd be as crazy as a shitty rat. That night I went into my room at nine o'clock to go to bed, because nine hours was my sleep. My mother put me down, said she loved me, and I said, See you tomorrow, and she said, See you tomorrow, and then she turned off the lights and closed the door almost all the way. When I turned on my side, I saw Margot Roth Spiegelman standing outside my window, her face almost pressed against the screen. I got up and opened the window, but the screen remained between us, pixelating it. I did the investigation, she said, quite seriously. Even a close screen broke her face apart, but I could tell she was holding a small notepad and pencil with traces of teeth around the eraser. She glanced at her notes. Mrs Feldman of over at Jefferson Court said his name was Robert Joyner. She told me that he lived on Jefferson Road in one of these apartments on top of the grocery store, so I went there and there were a bunch of cops, and one of them asked if I worked for the school newspaper, and I said there was no paper in our school, and he said that while I wasn't a journalist, he'd answer my questions. He said Robert Joyner was thirty-six. Lawyer. They wouldn't let me into the apartment, but a lady named Juanita Alvarez lives next door to him, and I walked into her apartment asking if I could borrow a cup of sugar, and then she said Robert Joyner killed himself with a gun. And then I asked why, and then she told me he was getting divorced and sad about it. She stopped then and I just looked at her, her face gray and moonless and split into a thousand little pieces of weave window screen. Her wide, round eyes fluttered back and forth from her laptop to me. A lot of people get divorced and don't kill themselves, I said. I know, she said, the excitement in her voice. That's what I said to Juanita. And then she said... Margot turned the page on the notebook. She said Mr Joyner was alarmed. And then I asked what it meant, and then she told me that we should just pray for him, and that I needed to take sugar to my mom, and I said forget the sugar and left. I didn't say anything again. I just wanted her to keep saying that little voice tense with excitement almost knowing things, making me feel like something important was happening to me. I think I maybe know why,' she said at last. Why? Maybe all the lines inside it broke,' she said. While I was trying to come up with something to say in response to this, I reached forward and pressed the lock on the screen between us, knocking it out of the window. I put the screen on the floor, but it didn't give me a chance to talk. Before I could sit down, she just looked up to me and whispered, Shut the window. That's what I did. I thought she was going to leave, but she just stood there looking at me. I waved at her and smiled, but her eyes seemed to be fixed on something behind me, something monstrous that had already drained blood from her face, and I felt too scared to turn around to see. But there was nothing behind me, of course, except maybe a dead guy. I stopped waving. My head was level with her as we looked at each other from opposite sides of the glass. I don't remember how it ended if I went to bed or she did. In my memory, it doesn't end there. We just stay there, looking at each other forever. Margot has always loved secrets. And in all that came afterwards, I could never stop thinking that maybe she loved secrets so much that she became one. PART ONE Strings 1. The longest day of my life started late. I woke up late, took too much time in the shower, and ended up having to enjoy breakfast in the passenger seat of my mom's minivan at 7:17 that Wednesday morning. I usually go to school with my best friend, Ben Starling, but Ben went to school in time, which makes him useless to me. The time for us was thirty minutes before the start of school actually, because half an hour before the first call was the highlight of our social calendars: standing behind the side door that led to the group room and just talking. Most of my friends were in a group and most of my free time during school was spent twenty feet from the group room. But I wasn't in the group because I suffer from the kind of tone deafness that is commonly associated with actual deafness. I was going to be twenty minutes late, which technically meant I was still ten minutes early for the school itself. When she was driving, my mother would ask me about classes and finals and prom. I don't believe in prom, I reminded her how she rounded the corner. I skillfully angled my raisin bran to accommodate g-forces. Yes I did. Did. Before. Well, there's no harm in just going with a friend. I'm sure you could ask Cassie Heaney. And I could ask Cassie Heaney, who was actually quite nice and nice and cute, despite the fantastically unfortunate surname. It's not just that I don't like prom. I also don't like people who love prom, I explained, though it wasn't true. Ben was absolutely gaga over the idea of going. Mum turned into school and I kept basically an empty bowl with both hands as we drove at speed kick. I looked at the senior parking lot. Margot Roth Spiegelman's silver Honda was parked in its usual location. My mother pulled the minivan into a cul-de-sac outside the group room and kissed me on the cheek. I saw Ben and my other friends standing in a semicircle. I approached them, and the semicircle easily expanded to turn me on. They were talking about my ex-girlfriend Susie Chang, who played the cello and seemed to be creating a real commotion when she met a baseball player named Teddy Mack. Whether that was his name, I don't know. But anyway, Susie decided to go to prom with Teddy Mac. Bro, Ben said, standing across from me. He nodded his head and turned around. I followed him out of the circle and through the door. A small, olive-skinned creature that hit puberty but never hit it very hard, Ben has been my best friend since fifth grade when we both finally owned up to the point that neither of us would probably attract anyone else as a best friend. Also, he tried and I liked that most of the time. How do I do it? I asked. We were safe inside, all the other conversations make our promiscuous. Radar is going prom, he said sullenly. Radar was our best friend. We called it Radar because it looked like a little bespectacled guy named Radar on this old TV show MRSAH, except for one. TV Radar was not black, and 2. At some point after nicknaming, our radar grew about six inches and started wearing pins, so I guess it was 3. In fact, he didn't look like a guy at the MSASS, but four. With three and a half weeks left from high school, we're not very good at going to renickname it. Is this angela girl? I asked. Radar never told us anything about his love life, but that didn't dissuade us from frequent speculation. Ben nodded and then said: You know my big plan is to ask freshbunny at prom because they are the only girls who don't know the story of Bloody Ben? I nodded. Well, Ben said, this morning, a cute little ninth grader came up to me and asked, bloody Ben, and I started explaining that it was a kidney infection, and she was giggling and running away. So it's out. In the tenth grade, Ben was hospitalized for a kidney infection, but Becca Margot's best friend, began to rumor that the real reason he had blood in his urine was due to chronic masturbation. Despite his medical implausibility, this story has haunted Ben ever since. It sucks, I said. Ben began to lay out plans to find a date, but I was only half listening, because through the thickening mass of humanity crowding the corridor, I could see Margot Roth Spiegelman. She was next to her locker, standing next to her boyfriend, Jace. She wore a white skirt to her knees and a blue print top. I saw her collarbone. She laughed at something hysterical - her shoulders leaning forward, her big eyes wringing in the corners, her mouth wide open. But it didn't seem to be anything Jace said, because she was staring away from him, across the hallway to the shore of the lockers. I followed her eyes and saw Becca Arrington draped all over some baseball player as she was decorating and he had a Christmas tree. I smiled at Margot, even though I knew she couldn't see me. Paper Towns by John Green / Young Adults / Mystery - Detective have a rating of 5 out of 5 / Based on 50 votes

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