

CHAPTER 2

Eleanor

Eleanor considered her options:

1. She could walk home from school. Pros: Exercise, color in her cheeks, time to herself. Cons: She didn't know her new address yet, or even the general direction to start walking.
2. She could call her mom and ask for a ride. Pros: Lots. Cons: Her mom didn't have a phone. Or a car.
3. She could call her dad. Ha.
4. She could call her grandma. Just to say hi.

She was sitting on the concrete steps at the front of the school, staring out at the row of yellow buses. Her bus was right there. No. 666.

Even if Eleanor could avoid the bus today, even if her fairy godmother showed up with a pumpkin carriage, she'd still have to find a way to get back to school tomorrow morning.

And it's not like the devil-kids on the bus were going to wake up on the other side of their beds tomorrow. Seriously. It wouldn't surprise Eleanor if they unhinged their jaws the next time she saw them. That girl in the back with the blond hair and the acid-washed jacket? You could practically see the horns hidden in her bangs. And her boyfriend was possibly a member of the Nephilim.

That girl – all of them – hated Eleanor before they'd even laid eyes on her. Like they'd been hired to kill her in a past life.

Eleanor couldn't tell if the Asian kid who finally let her sit down was one of them, or whether he was just really stupid. (But not *stupid*-stupid . . . He was in two of Eleanor's honors classes.)

Her mom had insisted that the new school put Eleanor in honors classes. She'd freaked when she saw how bad Eleanor's grades were from last year in the ninth grade. "This can't be a surprise to you, Mrs Douglas," the counselor said. *Ha*, Eleanor thought, *you'd be surprised what could be a surprise at this point.*

Whatever. Eleanor could stare at the clouds just as easily in honors classes. There were just as many windows.

If she ever even came back to this school.

If she ever even got home.

Eleanor couldn't tell her mom about the bus situation anyway because her mom had already said that Eleanor didn't have to ride the bus. Last night, when she was helping Eleanor unpack . . .

'Richie said he'll take you,' her mom said. 'It's on his way to work.'

'Is he going to make me ride in the back of his truck?'

'He's trying to make peace, Eleanor. You promised that you'd try, too.'

'It's easier for me to make peace from a distance.'

'I told him you were ready to be part of this family.'

'I'm *already* part of this family. I'm like a charter member.'

'Eleanor,' her mom said. 'Please.'

'I'll just ride the bus,' Eleanor had said. 'It's not a big deal. I'll meet people.'

Ha, Eleanor thought now. Giant, dramatic ha.

Her bus was going to leave soon. A few of the other buses were already pulling away. Somebody ran down the steps next to Eleanor and accidentally kicked her bag. She pulled it out of the way and started to say sorry – but it was that stupid Asian

kid, and he frowned when he saw that it was her. She frowned right back at him, and he ran ahead.

Oh, fine, Eleanor thought. *The children of hell shan't go hungry on my watch.*