



“Starving.” He lowered his daypack off his shoulders, dropped it onto the floor, and preceded me down the hall toward the kitchen. “Don’t worry, I’ll play along with whatever Bella and Thea worked out. You can go ahead and be shocked that I’m here.”

“You’re so sure I wasn’t part of it?”

“I know you,” he said.

*You know me?*

I made my son some food. A couple of chicken quesadillas and a big bowl of tortilla chips. I pounded an avocado, a tomato, and a serrano chile into a passable guacamole, and I popped the cap off an icy bottle of blackberry Izze. It felt damn good to watch him wolf it all down.

We learned over the course of his visit that Adam had been homeschooled since the sixth grade. Bella had recognized his unusual intellectual gifts much earlier than that and had tried to keep him stimulated at various gifted and talented programs near their home until she tracked one down at Johns Hopkins that allowed him to take the SAT when he was twelve. He got a 1460 combined that year and she immediately gave up on the public schools and started homeschooling him. He aced a repeat administration of the test—a perfect 1600—one year later.

I knew Adam wasn’t a typical teenager, which meant nothing more than that he wasn’t anything like I had been as a teenager. I was no expert on adolescence, but I could make the claim with confidence that my son and I inhabited different teenage galaxies. I couldn’t be sure what was chicken and what was egg—whether Adam’s unusual adolescent demeanor was a factor of his intellectual gifts or whether his social idiosyncrasies were the result of the in-