

HOLLY M. CAMPBELL

*Foreshadowed*

BOOK ONE OF  
THE NEAR DEATHS SERIES

# Foreshadowed



*a novel by*

HOLLY M. CAMPBELL



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*For Chris, whose love inspires me every day.*



# CHAPTER

## *One*

MIND READING IS EXHAUSTING. I don't hear voices—I think other people's thoughts. It's as confusing as it sounds. Thoughts don't exactly flow...they whirl or flit—random and fragmented.

Yep—reading minds sucks. With the way I sometimes zone out in the middle of conversations, or forget what I'm saying as I'm saying it, I can understand why everyone thinks I have an ordinary case of ADHD. The fact that I started gaining control over this “gift” at about the same time my parents started popping Adderall in my mouth only proves their diagnosis (or so they think).

“Six,” I mumble, spinning the dial on my gym locker past the zero twice and stopping at the six.

But the timing is a coincidence. I don't even take the pills anymore. I've just taught myself to push the foreign thoughts into the background so that I can focus on what people are saying instead of what they're thinking.

“Twelve.” Once around the zero in the other direction.

It's not easy. Ever tried to read a book, watch a

movie, and talk to someone at the same time? It's kind of like that.

*...get rid of this muffin top...*

*...her boobs can't be real...*

It's getting easier though. In the last six months or so, I've taught myself to block out the thoughts completely. That only works in a one-on-one situation, or at the very most, in a group of three or four. In a crowd—like right now—it's a little more complicated.

*Totally anorexic...just want to shove a hamburger down her throat...she'd probably just puke it back up...*

I miss the twelve and swear under my breath. I have to start over now. That last thought was directed at me, but I don't know who it came from. There are people who admire my just-this-side-of-emaciated figure. Skinny is in, right? But skinny on a glamorous runway model with designer clothes and layers of makeup looks a lot different than on an awkward teen who'd rather sleep an extra ten minutes than spend time primping.

"Bulimia and Anorexia are two different things," I mumble.

"What?" the girl next to me asks.

"Nothing."

*...always talking to herself...*

She finishes dressing down for P.E. and walks away from her locker. I blow out a breath.

"Seventeen," I say, a little too loudly. I don't really care who hears me at this point; I just want to get my locker open. "Six." I think it's going to work this time. "Twelve."

With a satisfied smile, I pull the locker open. The gym uniform is basic—a plain t-shirt and a pair of shorts. I wiggle out of my jeans and pull up the shorts as quickly

as possible because underneath the bubbly chatter of the locker room lurk mean-girl thoughts—a natural consequence when girls are forced to dress in front of each other. There's a lot of insecurity and jealousy floating around.

“Oh hey, Hopeless,” Tina Jensen says behind me (speaking of insecure and jealous).

I sigh at her pun. My real name is Hope. “Very clever,” I say, not bothering to turn around. I slip into my sneakers hoping she'll leave so that I can change my shirt in private. But she doesn't. And I can tell by the number of foreign thoughts streaming through my head that she's not alone—probably flanked by her two cronies, Gabby and Melissa.

Like I said, I don't hear voices, and for a long time I assumed all the extra thoughts running through my brain were my own (I thought I was gay for an entire week in sixth grade). After years of practice, I can almost always tell which thoughts are mine and which ones are foreign, but figuring out whose thoughts are whose is a little harder. I can tell which thoughts are Tina's—they're more dominant than her friends—but Gabby's and Melissa's sort of blend together. They're the followers, both of them ready to laugh at whatever Tina is about to say.

She's waiting for me to take my shirt off so she can make a joke about how I must be in the wrong locker room. I sigh again as I hear the punch line in her head and consider my options. I can wait, see if she gives up, or I can just get it over with.

I pull my shirt over my head and toss it into the locker.

“I think you're in the wrong locker room,” she begins.

I pull my gym shirt over my head and then turn around, forcing a big smile. “Yeah, I look like I should be in the boy’s locker room, huh? Because I’m so flat-chested?”

She frowns, angry I’ve ruined her joke. Gabby and Melissa laugh, but only a little. It’s not as funny coming from me.

“Well,” I say, “see ya.”

I turn and lock up before walking away and into the gym. Tina is one of the most popular girls in the school and definitely the most popular Junior. Why everyone likes her is kind of a mystery to me—and I’m a mind reader! She’s not bad looking but not exactly pretty: short dark hair, dark eyes, and an oversized nose. She has an athletic build that’s more intimidating than attractive. She’s not nice either so it can’t be her personality. She oozes confidence though. And, as much as I hate to admit it, she can be funny.

Tina has never liked me and has always been kind of a bully. That’s how life goes. Harry Potter had Draco Malfoy, and I have Tina Jensen. In elementary school and middle school, she wasn’t too bad. She wasn’t jealous of me. Then Bryce Nelson changed everything.

Bryce Nelson. My gaze lands on him as soon as I walk into the gym. He stands with a small group of friends underneath one of the basketball hoops as they take turns jumping up to grab the net. From a distance, Bryce looks like an ordinary jock. He’s about six feet, and his upper body is chiseled in a masculine “V” shape. He walks with his arms a little bent, like they’re too muscle-bound to properly hang at his sides. He struts too. It’s a little annoying...until you get up close and really look at him.



His face isn't perfect. The stubble on his chin grows in patchy, and he breaks out from time to time. But his eyes are big and blue and outlined by the darkest, thickest eyelashes I've ever seen on a guy, and his smile is warm and friendly. Half the junior class has a crush on him, including Tina...and me.

Bryce wasn't always so hot. In elementary school, he was short and chubby, and his mom cut his hair. Mrs. Nelson is good at a lot of things, but hair styling is not one of them. He would end up with uneven locks and bald spots. In fifth grade, he had a bit of a crush on me. But then middle school happened. The kids got meaner. Bryce wasn't popular right away, but he started to distance himself from me at school. The more I got picked on, the more he pulled away.

Around that time, I started focusing on my mind-reading thing—started *really* working on it, getting it under control. And Bryce started playing sports. He went through a transformation. The chubby little boy turned into a cute kid, and the cute kid turned into a hot teen. He'd already been pulling away from me so it didn't sting too much when he sort of disappeared into the popular crowd. I think it would bother me more if we weren't next-door neighbors. Our families live in the same two-story duplex, with our bedrooms right next to each other, separated by only a thin wall. His mom adores me, and since our families have regular summer barbecues in our shared backyard, he can't totally ignore me. Instead, we've settled into a sort of secret friendship. At home, with no one but our parents to see, we're friends. We play video games. I eat breakfast at his place. And sometimes—like when it's raining or snowing outside—he drives me to school. But once we're at school,

everything changes.

That makes him sound like a jerk, but he's not. Not really. He doesn't completely ignore me. He just tries not to look at me or talk to me if anyone is watching. It's okay. He's confused. Popular Bryce is a fake; I know the real him. And someday, he'll realize who he is too. Someday he'll realize we're soul mates.

He feels my gaze and glances over...fleeting smile, quick nod. Tina and her friends make their way out of the locker room, heading straight for Bryce's group. She joins in on the "who can jump the highest?" game, finding excuses to touch Bryce—elbows him in the ribs, punches him on the arm, grabs his shirt and pulls him down when he tries to jump. He laughs, but he's annoyed. He puts up with Tina because she's popular, but she's too aggressive for him. She knows we are friends, and she worries that deep down, he actually likes me. That's why she's so mean to me. She's jealous. Unfortunately, I know his thoughts, and I know she has no reason to be.

I walk around the gym, eavesdropping on conversations and thoughts, waiting for class to get started.

There's a group of girls in one corner talking about a new boy in school.

"Have you seen him yet?" a redhead named Connie asks.

"No," a short, square-shaped girl named Alison answers.

"He's in American Government with me," another girl whose name I don't remember says. "Sooo hot."

I sort of hover for a minute, curious. It's not the "sooo hot" description that stops me, just the fact that he's new. I like new people. New people haven't formed

an opinion of me yet. They don't have any memories of me from middle school or the beginning of high school—back when I still blurted out answers to questions no one had asked yet or laughed at jokes before the punch line. I'm much better now, but high school is short on second-chances. Besides, it's probably tough moving to a new school in the middle of a semester. Maybe he's as desperate for a friend as I am.

"What's he look like?" Alison asks.

"Dark hair," Connie answers. "Kind of long and messy. Tall, sexy, mysterious." *Perfect lips...wanted to kiss him right then and there...*

*Just my type...* "Did you talk to him?" the girl whose name I don't remember asks.

"No. I was too nervous." *Seemed a little dangerous...don't care...sooo cute... Should be nervous...way out of your league...* "I tried," she says.

"What happened?" Alison asks.

Connie shrugs. "He didn't say anything. Didn't even look at me."

*Harsh...* "Sounds like a jerk," the girl whose name I don't remember says.

Connie shakes her head quickly. "No, I really don't think he is." *...I like the bad boys...*

I roll my eyes and move away. "Bad boys" don't interest me. They're never as complex as they pretend to be.

As I circle the gym, I spy a mesh bag filled with multi-colored balls, and my stomach drops a little. Dodge ball. Perfect. I can't throw and I can't catch.

Mr. Cannon struts into the gym, his beloved silver whistle already perched on his lips. Mr. Cannon looks like an aerobics instructor but yells like a drill sergeant.

His whistle shrieks and then, "ROLL CALL! LINE UP!"

We stand obediently on the half-court line as he calls our names. Once he establishes that everyone is present he divides us alphabetically into two teams. My last name is Murdoch, and I end up on the M-Z team with Bryce. Mr. Cannon always divides us this way, even though it's not even. I don't think he's ever actually counted it out. I'm not going to complain. His system means that I'll never have to play on the same team as Tina Jensen.

Mr. Cannon and a few volunteers line the multi-colored balls down the half-court line while the rest of us spread out on the floor. I choose a spot in the back, hoping not to draw too much attention to myself. The guys don't hold back in dodge ball, not even when they're throwing balls at a skinny girl who bruises very easily. Chivalry is dead.

Bryce glances at me, noticing my trepidation. Even though he considers himself too cool to publicly be my friend, he still worries about me. Like an embarrassing little sister.

"Hey," he whispers. "Don't worry. I've got your back."

I smile at him. He looks around to make sure no one notices our little exchange and then faces the front. He takes P.E. very seriously.

Mr. Cannon's whistle starts the game, and everyone sprints to half-court for a ball. The athletic kids get there first while the poor slowpokes are taken out before they even get to the line. I don't bother running for a ball. Bryce really does make an effort to protect me, darting in front and either catching or deflecting the balls aimed at me. I'm too busy watching him to really pay attention

to the thoughts around me so Tina's plan to aim a vicious side arm at my head doesn't register until it's too late. It hits hard enough that I stumble a little before walking to the side of the court to stand with the rest of the rejects. Bryce watches me go and gets hit while he's distracted.

He leans on the wall next to me but keeps his eyes on the game. "You okay?" he whispers, his lips barely moving.

"Yeah. You?"

"I didn't get hit in the head. You sure you're okay?"

"It's dodge ball, Bryce. The balls aren't hard enough to give me a concussion."

"The way Tina throws?" he jokes, and we both watch her. She's glaring at us so Bryce steps away from me, looking in the other direction.

Tina's team wins, but the torture isn't over. We still have fifteen minutes of class. Mr. Cannon calls us back to the court, making the teams switch sides this time, like that makes any difference. Bryce actually walks with me, promising he'll do a better job protecting me. Tina notices his attention, and above all the other thoughts and emotions, I sense her jealousy.

I glance up, meeting her eyes.

*Stick to your own kind, freak...*

It's going to mean an enormous headache later, but what the hell? I take my place in the back, close my eyes for a moment and...*listen*.

I still don't bother sprinting for a ball with everyone else and instead bide my time. Tina hurls a ball at me as soon as she has one in her hands, but I step to the side before it even slips off her fingers. Unable to hit me, Tina takes out Bryce, which is definitely not the way to win his affection.

*On your own*, he thinks, and casts me a sympathetic look as he walks off the court. I don't have time to acknowledge him. Tina's preparing to throw another ball at me, and so are two of her teammates. I dance away from all three, impressing even Mr. Cannon. Still, I don't bother trying to pick up or throw any balls.

Pretty soon we're two-to-two.

"Come on, Hope," my teammate, Carson, encourages right before launching a ball at Tina's wingman. It bounces off him, and Tina catches it, immediately throwing it back in my direction. I smile at her when it yet again misses me.

*Don't smile at me!... Knock your freaking head off, then we'll see who's smiling...*

She throws another ball at me, but Carson reaches out to catch it. His fingertips touch it, but fail to grasp it. He's out. Just Tina and me.

I keep smiling.

"Go, Hope!" Bryce shouts. His voice is a little hesitant, but the rest of my team echoes him.

Tina is down to three balls on her side of the court. She throws one right after the other. The first she aims toward my head, the second for my gut, and the third she throws at my ankles.

"Hope, Hope, Hope," everyone chants as I dodge each one.

I stand in the center of my side of the court, surrounded by multi-colored balls, and smile at poor ball-less Tina.

"Lose your balls, Tina?" I ask, and Mr. Cannon doesn't even warn me to watch my mouth. He's rooting for me; he was an outcast in high school too. "You can borrow some of mine."

Finally, I pluck three balls off the floor, placing one under my arm and one in each hand. I saunter to half-court. Tina's so arrogant, she doesn't bother backing away. She paces back and forth like a caged tiger.

"Red or blue?" I ask, holding up each one.

She just glares at me. *I took it easy on you before... this time...red...*

I throw both balls at the same time in different directions. They bounce on the floor and roll away from her. "Red or blue?" I ask again.

She's going to take the red one, but she wants to fake me out. She steps toward the blue one and then pivots to sprint for the red, but I've already thrown my third ball. In a movie, this would be the slow motion scene. There'd be a close-up shot of a few people on my team, jumping up and down, or maybe holding their breath while they wait. Then a close-up shot of the ball traveling through the air...before it hits Tina and maybe knocks her to the ground. But this isn't a movie. It's over in two seconds. My ball travels five feet before it starts to dip.

Luckily, it bounces off her hip before hitting the ground.

And my team erupts in cheers.



# CHAPTER

## Two

IT'S A LETDOWN TO STEP back into the locker rooms. I have this vision of everyone breaking into applause as soon as I walk through the door, but instead I just hear "nice job" from a few people while everyone transitions back to reality. Oh well.

We only have fifteen minutes to change and get back to class so it's really annoying when it takes me three tries to open my locker. Not only am I distracted by all the thoughts buzzing through my head, but now I've got a tension headache from working so hard to sort through the thoughts during the game. I knew it would happen...and it was worth it.

*Don't know how she...total surprise...cute jeans...*  
Tina sidles up to me just as I'm pulling my jeans up over my hips. She's in her underwear, confidently posing right next to my locker.

"Good game," she says. *...She needs to work out... looks like a skeleton...*

"Thanks," I say, reaching for my shirt.

"You've got weak arms, but you're pretty fast."



I don't know what to say to that so I just nod and say, "Thanks," again. I stretch my neck to both sides to relieve some tension. It doesn't work.

"It was weird. You've never played like that before. Ever."

"I've been practicing."

"Practicing dodge ball?" she asks. *She's kind of funny...*

Did she really just think something nice about me? "Well, you never know when you're going to need to dodge a ball in life; it's best to be prepared."

Tina laughs, smacks me on the arm a little too hard, and walks away.

Huh. I made her laugh. Is she going to start being nice to me from now on? Is that all it took—public humiliation? If only I'd known that years ago.

Once I'm dressed, I sling my backpack over my shoulders and walk out into the hallway. Thoughts explode in my head, and I groan.

I don't hear *every* thought. That's impossible. The brain is too complex, doing too many things at once. If I could hear every single thought—"right foot, left foot," "breathe in, breathe out," "blink," "sneeze," etc.—I think I'd curl up in a fetal position and never leave my room. I pick up on emotions if they're strong enough, but for the most part, I only "hear" that continual flow of internal dialogue. Sometimes it's an image, and for whatever reason, some words and images stand out more than others.

*Move...move...seriously, out of my way...*

*Stupid moron...*

*...butt itches...driving me crazy...right up in there...*

*...dropped it...just eat it...who cares?*

Once I get away from the crowd I'll feel better. My next class is language arts with Mr. Kimoto, and there are only fifteen of us in there. Bryce has the class with me, but we've never walked this way together so it's a complete surprise when I find him waiting for me right outside the gym door.

"You took out Tina," he says in greeting. "Very impressive."

I grin, and he falls into step with me. "Barely," I say. "Would have been really embarrassing if I missed after all that."

"It was awesome," he says. *She can use some humbling...* "How did you know she was going to choose the red ball?"

I shrug. "Just a hunch. She likes power, and red is—you know—powerful."

"Huh. Nice work."

"Thanks."

"Hey, I got a new video game. You wanna come over this weekend? Break it in with me?"

"Absolutely," I say.

"And, uh...you can bring a friend if you want." *Should I say which friend? ...She only has one besides me, right?...*

I look at him sharply. "You mean Claire Jones?" I ask, and my bitter tone surprises both of us.

I like Claire Jones. She's in my art class and is the most genuinely kind person I've ever met. I've never talked to her outside of school, but Bryce has hinted a few times I should invite her over. She's ridiculously pretty—one of the few natural blondes left in the world. Her liquid blue eyes take up most of her face, leaving

just enough room for a tiny bump of a nose and a heart-shaped mouth. Her figure is even more ridiculous—Victoria's Secret kind of ridiculous—but for some reason she's self-conscious about it.

She moved here last year or the year before. Some of the popular kids tried to talk her into joining the dark side, but they gave up after a while. She has trouble with small talk, and when she's caught off-guard by an invitation to a party or something, she usually just blurts out, "No," without even thinking. She's too much of a planner and way too innocent.

"Does she like video games?" *Could play at my house, or Hope's ...Mom could make those brownies... mmm, I love those brownies...*

"No." Truthfully, I have no idea, but I doubt it.

"What does she like?"

We reach the other building, and Bryce holds the door open for me. He does it without thinking. It's just how he was raised. Maybe chivalry isn't dead after all.

"She likes art. And puppies. And Zac Efron."

"Are you just making stuff up?"

"She's a girly-girl. She's really not your type."

"What do you mean? I love girly-girls."

"Well, she's not popular."

*She will be...* "So?"

Oh, that's nice, Bryce. Your popularity is more important than our ten-year friendship but not more important than a hot blonde you've never even talked to? Really, I hate Bryce as much as I love him.

*Why doesn't she want to invite her? ...Mom is right...does have a crush on me...*

"I'll invite her over," I mumble as we walk up the stairs to the next floor.

“This weekend?” he asks.

“I don’t know. Maybe.”

We fall silent. My head hurts. We enter the classroom and walk to our separate desks. There are only a handful of people in the room. I put my textbook, notebook, and pen on the desk, then lay my head down and close my eyes. The thoughts in the room swell as more and more people enter, and I groan a little.

After a couple minutes, the bell rings, but Mr. Kimoto doesn’t say anything. I peek up at him. He’s talking to some kid in a black shirt and jeans. This must be the new kid those girls were talking about. Really, I don’t see what all the hype was about. He’s good-looking, sure, but nothing compared to Bryce. He needs a haircut. His dark hair hangs in his eyes and kind of sticks up everywhere else. And I don’t think it’s a fashion statement. He looks like he just rolled out of bed this morning. His clothes are stylish but a little too big for him. He won’t look Mr. Kimoto in the eye—or anyone, for that matter—but I don’t think it’s because he’s shy.

I lower my head to the desk again, already bored with the new kid. I hate bad boys.

“This is Lance Hampton,” Mr. Kimoto announces to the class. “There’s a free seat back there, Mr. Hampton.”

The new kid’s thoughts rise above all the others as he walks past me to an empty desk in the back. ...*Can’t do this...too soon...should just walk out the door...*

“Hi,” a girl sitting next to him says. “I’m Chandra.”

He doesn’t say anything at all, though her name sort of echoes in his mind. That’s interesting. He’s not annoyed she’s talking to him, but he really doesn’t want to talk back.

*Don't look at her...don't say anything...don't look...*

"I've graded your essays," Mr. Kimoto announces, and everyone groans. He passes them out silently. I'd hoped for a "C" but expected an "F" so the "D" doesn't bother me too much. I ignore all the red marks and comments in the margins and start doodling. I'm a pretty good cartoonist, and I turn the D into a cross-eyed woman with fat lips.

"For the most part, I was very pleased," Mr. Kimoto says once he's finished. I have no idea if that's true—his thoughts are in Japanese, which makes cheating in his class very difficult—but I get the sense from everyone else's thoughts that no one else is pleased.

*Never going to pass this class...*

*...he can barely speak English, why are they letting him teach it? ...*

*...wax on, wax off...*

*...need a gun...*

I straighten and turn in my seat, already certain where the thought comes from. No one in this class has ever had a thought like that before. I stare at the new kid...what was his name?...Lance Hampton. Why does he want a gun? For protection? Is he dangerous? Does he just like hunting or something?

Even though my head is already pounding, I close my eyes, take a deep breath, and focus on his thoughts, pushing everyone else's back until they're no more intrusive than an electric hum.

*...get sick if I see all the blood...don't want to hang...what if I chicken out?...needs to be quick...quick, before they show up...maybe I could just jump off a building...none of the buildings here are tall enough...what is she doing?*

My eyes fly open to catch him watching me. Before I can reflect on how odd I must have looked with my eyes closed and my head tilted toward him, before it fully registers how sharply defined his cheekbones are, his green eyes meet mine, and everything goes dark.

I'm in his head, *seeing* his thoughts. I can still see with my own eyes—I see his face, the worried, tortured expression in his eyes, but it's all in the background. The scene unfolding in his head takes center stage. It's not like the random flashes I usually get, and there are no words at all. It feels stronger than a daydream and plays like a scene from a movie.

It's pitch-black, but I can hear heavy, labored breathing. Someone is either in pain or very scared. Maybe both. There's a clicking rhythm of high heels on a hard surface. Someone running away.

Fear scurries across my skin as I realize it's me. The person running away—the person in the dark—it's me. I don't know how I know. I just do.

The darkness is overwhelming. There's no hint of light. And the “me” in his head stops moving. Crying now—a helpless, hopeless whimper.

There's a sickening sound—I'm not sure exactly what it is—and the “me” in his head gasps before falling to the ground.

I pull out of Lance's head and blurt out, “What the hell was that?” without thinking. Everyone in class turns to look at me, and a few people laugh. Surprise flashes across Lance's face.

*Did she...did you...did you see that? ...I'm so sorry... He drops his head to cradle it in his hands. Need to die...should be dead anyway...just want to die...*

“Ms. Murdoch!” Mr. Kimoto calls in his clipped,

barely discernible English.

I face the front reluctantly. "Sorry."

"Do you have something you'd like to share with the class?"

"No."

*Someone forgot her medication today...*

*...never disappoints...*

*...so embarrassing...*

*...what a freak...*

I feel a blush creep up my neck and into my cheeks, and I stare down at the essay on my desk, my eyes swimming. My head hurts. I just embarrassed myself in front of the whole class. And I'm pretty sure I just saw myself *die* in someone else's head.

Is he a psycho? Is he planning to kill me? Or is he *different*...like me?

"I'm sorry you don't find me as interesting as our new student, but please try not to have any more outbursts."

"Yes sir," I mumble.

"Mr. Hampton?" Mr. Kimoto asks, and I steal a peek over my shoulder. He's still cradling his head in his hands.

*Murder*, he thinks. ...*Why? ...why me? ...why her? ...so sorry...*

"Are you feeling all right, Mr. Hampton?"

Lance doesn't answer. He glances at me once. *I know what you're doing*, he thinks, and for the first time, it is a voice I hear, like he's whispering in my ear. Then he stands and walks out of the room, completely ignoring Mr. Kimoto.

"Mr. Hampton! Mr. Hampton, come back here!"

Everyone sits in stunned silence. I wonder what

they'd think if I followed him. It's what I should do. I should talk to him. I have so many questions. But I don't move. If I stand right now, there's a good chance I'll end up passed out on the floor. Focusing on Tina's thoughts in P.E. and Lance's thoughts just now has drained me. My stomach churns, and my eyes are still swimming.

*I know what you're doing.* He knows I was in his head. Can he read minds too? I've never met anyone who could. I used to daydream about finding someone like me, someone I could talk to—*really* talk to. Of all the people in the world, why did it have to be this guy? Like I said, I hate bad boys...though I have to admit, this one seems a little more complex than usual.