

*Game Show Host Dad: Is that your final answer? You could ask the audience.*

*Imaginary Contestant Me: Audience? No one watches this show. It's all in my head. The answer is A.*

*Game Show Host Dad: Right again! You've won TWO hundred miles AND this delicious reheated slice of pizza! Next question, for four hundred: What does this family do after dessert?*

The game show host takes a seat next to me—grinning and fidgeting, oblivious to the bright orange pepperoni juice smeared across his cheek. The other contestants chew like robots. In fact there's more going on *underneath* the table.

The legs swinging opposite mine, not close enough to be called kicking but near enough to create a rhythmical wind that scuffs my jeans, belong to Contestant Number Three: my brother, Raff. He is a small-time criminal, a master of deception. On his lap is a BlackBerry. Dad's current favorite gag is to call it a Plum. Last week it was a Strawberry. Can you see where this is going? How many fruits are there in the world? That's how far he'll take it.

The grubby fingers that are not above the table holding reheated pizza are typing speedily but silently. This is one of Raff's many talents that go unnoticed, along with lock picking, pickpocketing, shoplifting, eBaying stolen goods, and credit card fraud. He is thirteen.

The legs to my right are perfectly still; the feet look glued together at the ankles, in shoes I haven't seen before—black with a small heel. Slim legs in beige stockings; the skirt comes just to the knee. This is Contestant Number Two: Grace. My mom.

Strange how, to everyone else, she was Grace before she was Mom, but to me it seems the other way around.

You can't be named Grace and just get away with it; people expect things of you—grace, for a start, and with that a soothing voice, a light touch, a delicate beauty . . . an immaculate Mr. Clean-ed kitchen, smooth hands with manicured nails that never get pizza topping stuck underneath them, quietness, shiny hair, the kind of face that makes you sigh and immediately catch sight of your own, much larger, nose. All that may seem like a huge burden for a one-syllable name, but it's true. And this particular Grace hits all the marks.

The legs to my left can't stop moving. One foot shuffles, the other taps, completely out of time with each other. They stop and the movement travels up the legs, making them jiggle. Stop. Shuffle-tap-jiggle. Stop. Shuffle-tap-jiggle. The legs are hyper. They wear new jeans, trendy ones; the feet are in Nike sneakers, so fresh from the box you could get high off the smell of rubber. If you had to age the legs, you'd say they were in their twenties. Why can't they just be normal like other dads' legs?

He's so twitchy today it's possible he'll spontaneously combust, but I suspect this strangeness is going to lead to something much more damaging. *For me*. It always does when he's like this.