

Devon in Disney

Devon's dyslexia helps him become the perfect superhero

Chapter One

Devon's family was strange.

That's the only explanation that made sense, if anything made sense this morning. Last night, his Grandmother had called and asked if they'd like to take a little vacation with her to Disney World. Well, who would pass that up? The only catch was they had to leave this morning. So, Devon was awake at six packing and pouring enough cat food to last a week, and hoping his fish wouldn't die while he was gone. He stroked his bass guitar and sighed. All he'd wanted to do this Christmas vacation was hook up PlayStation and play his guitar. Music was the one thing Devon did well. Music and the computer.

When Devon played his guitar, it didn't matter that he read slowly and had trouble writing those long essays. His middle school music teacher thought he was a natural musician. When Devon heard or played music, the world seemed to change around him. Everything got brighter and he could see pictures and entire stories woven through the music. And not just flat pictures like in a book. His music stories had depth and dimension. It was magical how he could lose himself in that musical landscape. Then the bell would ring and class would be over, and he'd have to shake himself to bring his mind back to the hard surface of books and chalkboards. He'd walk with the other kids to his next class, dreading every minute of what was to come.

Devon figured that music was like that for everyone. Just like he thought everyone could finish everyone else's sentences. Or that everyone knew what was about to happen just by hearing or seeing a few words or actions. He'd mentioned this knowing to his Mom when he was six. She'd believed him, but then he'd made the mistake of telling some of the kids at school. They'd laughed at him and told him to go back with the other "speds" —

special education students. It was weird being able to know what people were about to say. All someone had to do was speak the first word, and Devon knew what the rest of the sentence was going to be. It worked with songs he'd never heard before and movies he was seeing for the first time. It wasn't really like being able to read someone's unspoken thoughts because unfortunately, he had to be in the conversation before his knowing worked, and then it was too late to avoid what was about to be said! Like when he brought home a report card with a "D" in English. He knew he was in trouble, but he didn't know how much trouble until his Mom said, "Devon..." and then he knew she was going to tell him he was restricted from watching television and playing on the computer Monday through Thursday. Which was exactly what happened. Devon had wondered for years what was the point of being able to complete someone's thoughts. Besides, if everyone else could do the same thing, how could it possibly give him an advantage?

Devon threw shorts and t-shirts into his bag and listened to his Mom tell his sister to pack a jacket and sweatshirt in case it got cold at night. Mom didn't seem to think this was odd at all. Maybe that's because Mom was "creative," as she liked to say. She'd never remarried after his Dad died and had definitely chosen a different lifestyle from her brothers and sisters. She'd been a working Mom when that wasn't fashionable, she'd refused to spank when everyone else thought spanking was the only way to discipline ("I don't like to be hit," she'd explain, "and I can't imagine hurting a child just to make him stop doing something."), and had no patience for any adult who belittled or made fun of a child and then got angry because the child tried to get them to stop ("Childhood is pretty much a hostage situation," was her feeling.). One time they'd spent the day at Universal Studios and had gone to the Nickelodeon show. There'd been a kid in the audience who was bigger than the other kids and kind of overweight. He was having a great time with the announcer. You could see how excited he was at having been chosen for a little extra attention. And then the announcer called him "Pugsley" and that kid's face fell so fast. Devon's Mom was furious, and wouldn't leave the studio until she'd talked to the announcer and the

announcer's boss. It was embarrassing, but at the same time Devon was actually proud of his Mom. Who else seemed to care like his Mom?

Grandma pulled up in the driveway just as Devon was dragging his bag to the front door. His sister was laughing at something Mom had said, only her mouth was full of powdered doughnuts and it was disgusting. Mom was usually pretty strict about manners, but she must have been distracted by Grandma's arrival. Mom did not think eating with your mouth open or belching were charming.

"Everybody ready to go? May I introduce you to mister napkin?" Grandma asked Devon's sister. Mom started putting the bags in the trunk of Grandma's car while Devon grabbed a Pop-Tart and a carton of orange juice. What was up with Mom? She didn't usually let anyone out of the house without some protein in their stomachs. Something was definitely odd about this whole trip.

Just then Grandma turned to Devon and winked. *Winked*, what was that all about? "I hope you and I get there in time," she said to Devon and got into the car. Why wouldn't we get to the airport in time, thought Devon. And what was this winking nonsense. This vacation was already too weird, and we haven't even pulled out of the driveway.

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