

AUTHOR OF NOTES FROM THE MIDNIGHT DRIVER

JORDAN SONNENBLICK



Drums,  
Girls &  
Dangerous  
Pie

and asked, *Miss Palma, can the journal be longer than a page?*

*Sure, Steven. Why? What are you thinking about creating here?*

*("Creating here." She actually said that. Don't English teachers just slay you? My mom is actually an English teacher, but that doesn't mean I don't find my own English teachers a bit odd.)*

*Well, I'm having trouble crafting my prose.*

*(Yeah, "crafting my prose." Two can play this game. . . .)*

*What's your topic? Remember what I always say: "F. F. F!"*

*(Stands for "Form Follows Function," don't ya know.)*

*Ummm . . . I want to write about a big topic. And it's not exactly a thing. It's . . . it's . . .*

*(And then it hit me. The most annoying thing in my world is . . .)*

*My little brother, Jeffrey.*

*Wow, that's an ambitious topic! Go ahead. If you*

*need extra time, feel free to take the project home tonight, as well.*

*Thanks, Miss Palma. A lot.*

*Anyway, here's what I wrote:*

Having a brother is horrible. Having any brother would be horrible, I suppose, but having my particular brother, Jeffrey, is an unrelenting nightmare. It's not because he's eight years younger than I am, although that's part of it. How would you like to be King of the Planet for eight glorious years, and then suddenly get demoted to Vice-King? It's not because he's cuter than I am, although that's part of it, too. I have mouse-brown cowlick-y hair, glasses that are about an inch thick, and braces that look like I tried to swallow a train wreck. He has those perfect little-kid Chiclet-white teeth, 20-20 vision, and little blond ringlets like the ones on the angels you see on the posters in art class. It's not even because he hates me — he doesn't. The truth is that he idolizes me. And that's the problem: The kid follows me around like I'm Elvis or something. And while he's being

much too cute and following me around, he also destroys all of my stuff, including my self-esteem and my sanity.

Take, for example, the "Dangerous Pie" incident. Jeffrey has known from an early age that the worst possible thing he can do to me is to touch my drum stuff. I have some rules about this: He may not PLAY the drums, he may not pretend the cymbals are shields and he is a knight, he may not hide IN the bass drum, and pretty much any Jeffrey-to-drumsticks contact is a massive no-no. But on one fateful afternoon last year, Jeffrey threw the rules out the window.

On the tragic day, I came home, said hi to Mom, glugged down some milk, and headed down to the basement to practice. I was in a particularly good mood, I remember, because Renee Albert had told me in P.M. homeroom that she liked my shirt. As this was such a grand occasion, I decided to take the Special Sticks down from their sacred perch and use them for my practice-pad warm-up. In case you didn't know this, a practice pad is a thick, dense, flat piece of rubber. Usually it's glued onto a piece of wood.

Steven has a totally normal life (well, almost): He plays drums in the All-City Jazz Band (whose members call him the Peasant), has a crush on the hottest girl in school (who doesn't even know he's alive), and is constantly annoyed by his younger brother Jeffrey (who is cuter than cute — which is also pretty annoying). But when Jeffrey gets sick, Steven's world is turned upside down, and he is forced to deal with his brother's illness, his parents' attempts to keep the family in one place, his homework, the band, girls, and Dangerous Pie (yes, you'll have to read the book to find out what that is!).

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