

You don't know me  
at all. You don't know the first thing  
about me. You don't know where I'm  
writing this from. You don't know  
what I look like. You have no power  
over me. What do you think I look  
like? Skinny? Freckles? Wire-rimmed  
glasses over brown eyes? No, I don't  
think so. Better look again. Deeper. It's  
like a kaleidoscope, isn't it? One  
minute I'm short, the next minute  
tall, one minute I'm geeky, one  
minute studly, my shape constantly  
changes, and the only thing that stays  
constant is my brown eyes. Watching  
you. That's right, I'm watching you  
right now . . . a novel by David Klass



who I am not

**Y**ou don't know me.

Just for example, you think I'm upstairs in my room doing my homework. Wrong. I'm not in my room. I'm not doing my homework. And even if I were up in my room I wouldn't be doing my homework, so you'd still be wrong. And it's really not my room. It's your room because it's in your house. I just happen to live there right now. And it's really not my homework, because my math teacher, Mrs. Moonface, assigned it and she's going to check it, so it's her homework.

Her name's not Mrs. Moonface, by the way. It's really Mrs. Garlic Breath. No it's not. It's really Mrs. Gabriel, but I just call her Mrs. Garlic Breath, except for the times when I call her Mrs. Moonface.

Confused? Deal with it.

You don't know me at all. You don't know the first thing about me. You don't know where I'm writing

this from. You don't know what I look like. You have no power over me.

What do you think I look like? Skinny? Freckles? Wire-rimmed glasses over brown eyes? No, I don't think so. Better look again. Deeper. It's like a kaleidoscope, isn't it? One minute I'm short, the next minute tall, one minute I'm geeky, one minute studly, my shape constantly changes, and the only thing that stays constant is my brown eyes. Watching you.

That's right, I'm watching you right now sitting on the couch next to the man who is not my father, pretending to read a book that is not a book, waiting for him to pet you like a dog or stroke you like a cat. Let's be real, the man who is not my father isn't a very nice man. Not just because he is not my father but because he hits me when you're not around, and he says if I tell you about it he'll really take care of me.

Those are his words. "I'll really take care of you, John. Don't rat on me or you'll regret it." Nice guy.

But I am telling you now. Can't you hear me? He's petting the top of your head like he would pet a dog, with his right hand, which just happens to be the hand he hits me with. When he hits me he doesn't



curl his fingers up into a fist because that would leave a mark. He slaps me with the flat of his hand. WHAP. And now I'm watching him stroke your cheek with those same fingers. He holds me tight with his left hand when he hits me so that I can't run away. And now he's holding you tenderly with his left hand. And I'm telling you this as I watch through the window, but your eyes are closed and you couldn't care less, because he's stroking you the way he would stroke a cat and I bet you're purring.

You don't know me at all.

You think I'm a good student. Hah!

You think I have friends. Hah!


You think I'm happy with this life. Hah, hah!

Okay, now you're putting down the book that is not a book. It's a *Reader's Digest* condensation of literature, which is like drinking orange juice made from concentrate. It has no pulp. The key vitamins have been processed out. You're pressing your head against his shoulder. I can see your toes move inside your pink socks on the coffee table. What's with this toe movement? Is it passion or athlete's foot? There is some kind of serious itch there.

And now the man who is not my father puts down



You think you know John? Well, let's see . . .  
What bathroom fixture did his father have  
in mind at his birth? Does algebra have a  
use, besides torture? Who is Glory Halle-  
lujah? Who is Violent Hayes? What do they  
want? Who or what are the Lashasa Palulu?  
Why do fools fall in love? How can anyone  
who is fighting a secret battle for his life  
know anyone? And how can they know him?  
"Klass blazes past his previous literary  
efforts stylistically, introducing elements of  
magical realism to gradually reveal a  
quirky, talented, and likable guy."  
—*SLJ* (starred review) "A captivating first-  
person narrative with an original voice. . . .  
An engrossing story to which readers will  
immediately connect." —*Kirkus Reviews*

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