

Now you see her. Now you don't.

Has ANYONE SEEN  
**JESSICA  
JENKINS?**



Liz Kessler

NEW YORK TIMES BEST-SELLING AUTHOR

# Has Anyone Seen Jessica Jenkins?

LIZ KESSLER



CANDLEWICK PRESS

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places,  
and incidents are either products of the author's  
imagination or, if real, are used fictitiously.

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# Chapter 1

It was during a Friday afternoon double geography class that I first discovered I had superhuman powers.

I bet you think that sounds exciting. Well, if it's never happened to you, then take it from me: it isn't. It's scary. And weird. And, if it involves not knowing the answer when the teacher asks you to explain the effects of coastal erosion on prehistoric rock formations, it can also get you into a lot of trouble.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. So let's start from the beginning. Well, not the *actual* beginning. That'll come later. But let's at least get back to geography class.



It was mid-April and an unseasonably warm day. I'd spent the lunch break swapping gossip, weekend plans, and chocolate cookies with my best friend, Izzy Williams, and was settling down to geography when three things converged to make me tired.

Thing one: the chocolate cookies. Chocolate *always* makes me sleepy.

Thing two: the sun had crept out from behind a bunch of clouds and was beaming like a spotlight through the window and straight onto my desk.

Thing three: Ms. Cooper announced that today's lesson would be about coastal erosion and prehistoric rock formations.

I think you'll agree that the odds were stacked against me.

I could hear Ms. Cooper's voice in the distant background of my mind, saying something about cliffs and rocks and tidal patterns. A minute later, I was halfway into a dream in which I was lying on a sandy beach at the bottom of the cliffs. A savage prod in my ribs jolted me off the beach and back into the classroom.

I glared at Izzy. "What was that for?" I hissed.

She didn't reply. Instead she nodded toward the front of the class. Ms. Cooper was staring at me,

her mouth pursed in a frown, the word “Well?” dripping from her lips. I wiped away a tiny bit of drool that was dripping from mine and glanced helplessly around the room.

A few sympathetic faces were turned toward me. The others were mostly looking away. They knew what it was like.

“I—I’m sorry, Ms. Cooper. I didn’t quite understand. Could you please repeat the question?” I tried.

Ms. Cooper pursed her lips even tighter so that her mouth practically disappeared. “See me after class,” she said, then snapped her head away from me and pointed at Heather Berry in the front row. “Heather, perhaps you can answer?”

Typical.

Let me tell you about Heather Berry. She’s kind of the opposite of me.

Me: small and nondescript. Long brown hair, which never seems to do much except hang there, and greenish-gray eyes that you have to stare hard at to even notice.

Heather: tallest girl in the class, ridiculously skinny, amazingly shiny blond hair, and eyes that are so perfectly blue I have occasionally wondered if she wears those specially colored contact lenses.



Me: usually seen in scruffy jeans and random tops, like combat jackets or baggy sweaters discovered while browsing around thrift shops on a Saturday afternoon.

Heather: always sports the latest designer clothes—so trendy she’s often seen wearing the “in” thing before it’s even in.

Me: shortish attention span and tendency to pass notes with Izzy rather than *always* listen to the teacher—hence my tendency to get scolded a lot. Except in English, which I love. The English teacher, Mr. Martins, is cool. He has the longest handlebar mustache in the world, a completely bald head, and a million earrings in each ear. Plus, he occasionally makes his classes interesting and seems to think I’m not stupid.

Heather: probably every teacher’s favorite student. Always listens, always volunteers to help. Captain of the volleyball team and class president. Always surrounded by about five girls who hang on her every word and copy her every move, as well as at least five boys who want to be her boyfriend. Looks down her nose at anyone who isn’t part of her group of friends/worshippers.

You might have gathered that Heather is not my favorite person in the world.

She glanced around at me, glaring as if I were a piece of dirt that had accidentally gotten stuck on her shoe, then turned back to the teacher.

As Heather calmly explained the finer details of coastal erosion on a local prehistoric site, I breathed out and tried to think up some strategies for staying awake till the end of class.

I tore a piece of paper from my notebook, scribbled *What did I miss?* on it, and passed it to Izzy under the table.

Izzy opened the note and read it. She started to write something on it. Then she scribbled it out, scrunched the paper into a ball, and chewed on the end of her pen.

Uh-oh.

See, Izzy and I go back as far as I can remember. I know her about as well as I know myself. Better, sometimes. And I know that when she chews the end of her pen, it means she's worried about something. The only thing that indicates even more trouble than chewing the end of her pen is if she takes her glasses off and nibbles the end of them. Izzy has about fifty pairs of glasses and changes them whenever she changes her outfit. Today was a school day, so she was wearing her blue ones, to match our uniform.

I tore another piece of paper from my book.  
*What's up?* I wrote.

Izzy read the note. Then she took off her glasses and nibbled on the end of them.

Double uh-oh.

Finally, she put her glasses back on, scribbled something on the piece of paper, and passed the note back.

*Can't explain now. Tell you on the way home.*

And I don't know why, but something about her words made me feel even more nervous than the thought of my appointment with Ms. Cooper.



Izzy was waiting for me in the coatroom.

"What did she say?" she asked as she passed me my coat and we made our way across the school yard.

"Just the standard 'You need to take your work more seriously' lecture," I said, pulling on my coat and slinging my bag over my shoulder.

"Could be worse," Izzy said.

"Yeah." Ms. Cooper had been known to keep students behind for an hour, copying out articles from *National Geographic* and rearranging the objects on her nature table, so I'd gotten off easy.

“So what’s the thing you couldn’t tell me earlier?” I asked. Izzy hadn’t met my eyes since we’d come out of the school building.

She glanced furtively around, as if we were being watched. Nudging her head toward the park, she pulled me across the road. “In here,” she said.

We often went home through Smeaton’s Park. In the summer, there was usually an ice-cream truck outside the gates, and there was a lake in the middle of the park where we’d throw the crusts from our lunch boxes to the ducks that gathered there.

We sat down on a bench at the edge of the lake.

“Iz, what’s going on?” I asked. “You’re worrying me.”

“*I’m worrying you?*” she said with a laugh. And not a *ha-ha-you’re-so-funny* laugh. More of an *I’m-sitting-with-a-crazy-person-and-I-need-to-escape-without-letting-them-know-I’m-scared* laugh.

“Izzy,” I said firmly, “I’m your best friend. If there’s something wrong, you can tell me.”

She turned away and nodded. Eventually, she looked back at me. “Something weird happened, back there, in geography class,” she said finally.

“You mean my falling asleep and getting into trouble? That’s not weird. It happens all the —”

“Not that,” she said. She pointed at my arm. “Your elbow.”

“My *elbow*?” I repeated, lifting my arm to look at it. “What’s wrong with my elbow?”

“Nothing now,” Izzy said. “But back then, it . . . it . . .”

“It what?”

Izzy took another breath. “It disappeared,” she said.

“My elbow disappeared,” I echoed.

Izzy nodded. “And it wasn’t just your elbow. It started there, but it was beginning to spread along your arm.” She paused and leaned toward me. “Something weird was happening.”

Something weird was *definitely* happening. My best friend was going crazy. “*What* was happening?” I asked.

“I think . . .” She leaned closer and glanced over her shoulder to check that we were alone. Then she lowered her voice and spoke again, and this time, her words made me shudder: “I think you were turning invisible.”

## Chapter 2

Which is not what you expect your best friend to say to you, sitting in the park at 4:05 on a Friday afternoon. Or at any other time on any other day, in fact.

I stared at Izzy and tried to find some words that might form themselves into a sentence that could possibly pass as an adequate reply. I finally came up with “*Whaaa?*”

Which didn’t really pass the test of being either a sentence or an adequate reply, but it was all I had.

Izzy at least had the courtesy to blush. “Hey, don’t shoot the messenger, OK? I’m just telling you what I saw.”

“Or didn’t see, more to the point,” I replied.

Izzy laughed. I glared at her. She stopped laughing.

“Look, I’m probably wrong,” she said. “I mean, it was most likely the light or something. You know, the sun shining in my eyes.”

“Yeah, probably.”

Izzy laughed again. This time I didn’t glare at her. “I mean, imagine thinking you were turning invisible!” she said.

I laughed, too, beginning to relax. “I know. Crazy, huh?”

“What an idiot! In fact, now that I think about it, I’m *certain* it was the light. The sun was shining right on you. That’s definitely what it was.”

“Good. I’m glad we figured that out,” I said, delving into my bag and pulling out my lunch box. “Now, are we going to feed the ducks or what?”

We threw our crusts into the lake and watched the ducks come flying over, then quack as they slid into their watery landings and pecked up the bread.

We laughed and pointed and gossiped and chatted the whole time. Like we normally do. When the bread was all gone, we made plans for meeting up the next day and texting each other the minute we got home. Like we normally do.

In fact, if you’d been watching us, you wouldn’t have noticed anything different from usual.

You'd only have known anything was different if you were inside my mind.

See, Izzy had hit on something that I didn't want to say out loud. The thing was, I'd been having some odd feelings lately. Mainly when I was tired. I couldn't really put the feelings into words. If I tried to, I'd probably use words like *fuzzy* or *woozy* or *weird*.

I told you: not exactly much to go on. All I knew was that I hadn't been feeling a hundred percent my normal self lately. And Izzy's words had made me admit that.

Not out loud. I wasn't ready to do that yet. But to myself. And that was bad enough.



I went straight to my bedroom after dinner. I told Mom and Dad I wanted to get all my homework out of the way before the weekend, which was enough to keep them off my back.

What I really wanted to do was try to find a way to prove—or preferably *disprove*—what Izzy had said. She'd said it had started when I was falling asleep, so I figured all I had to do was lie down and start nodding off, and see what happened.

I took off my shoes and drew the curtains.



Then I lay down on the bed and closed my eyes. My mind was spinning with questions. What if Izzy was right? What if something really weird *was* happening to me? What then?

I shook my head and forced myself not to focus on what Izzy had said. It was crazy. It was impossible.

I made myself yawn and tried to convince myself I was tired. After a few more minutes, I realized that, actually, I *was* quite tired. I could feel myself nodding off. This was it. I was going to find out. I just needed to . . .

Which was when it hit me. How on earth was I supposed to see what was happening to my body while I was falling asleep? The moment I opened my eyes to see what was going on, I wouldn't be falling asleep anymore!

There was only one way I could do this.

I went downstairs. Mom and Dad were on the love seat with the TV on.

"Can Izzy come for a sleepover?"

"I thought you wanted to get all your homework done," Mom said.

"I've done most of it."

"That was quick," Dad said as he flicked through the channels with the remote.

“Izzy can help. We can do the rest together. Anyway, it’s Friday. It’s not like it’s a school night.”

Dad looked at Mom and shrugged. “I don’t see why not,” he said.

“As long as it’s OK with her parents,” Mom added.

I was already out the door and halfway through a text to Izzy. “Thank you!” I yelled behind me.



So, I don’t know if you’ve ever tried it, but it turns out that trying to go to sleep, at least three hours before bedtime, while someone is staring at you, is not actually all that easy.

“Close your eyes!” Izzy yelled for the seventeenth time.

“I can’t sleep while you’re looking at me!”

“But that’s the whole point! How am I supposed to see what’s happening if I’m not looking?”

I sighed and sat up. “This isn’t going to work,” I said. “I’m not even tired.”

“Shall we go for a jog?” Izzy offered.

I gave her a look that I hoped communicated an adequate level of horror and disgust.

“I’m just trying to think of ways to make you tired.”

“I’ve got an idea,” I said. I powered up my laptop.

Izzy craned her neck to look over my shoulder while I typed. “What are you doing?”

“I’m looking for a boring video to watch,” I explained.

“Ooh, good idea. Something about politics or the weather or history.” Then she pointed at the screen. “How about that one?” She was pointing at a program called *Money Wars*, described as “an in-depth look at Britain’s economic strategy in the 1930s.”

“That ought to do it,” I agreed, and clicked on the button to start the program.

It worked like a charm. Within five minutes, my eyes began to close.

Almost immediately, I heard my name being called as something grabbed my arm and shook me. I opened my eyes with a start. Sitting up, I stared at Izzy. She was still holding on to my arm, her fingernails digging into my sweater.

I stretched and yawned. Izzy let go of my sleeve.

“So?” I asked. “Anything happen? Why were you shaking my arm?”

“To wake you up,” she said, not looking at me. Before I had the chance to tell her I hadn’t actually

fallen asleep in the space of the twenty seconds I'd had my eyes closed, she added, "But it took me a few tries to find it."

"I'm guessing you eventually tracked it down, hanging from my shoulder as usual?" I replied in as light a tone as I could manage.

Izzy finally looked at me. "Your arm was completely invisible," she said.

I stared at Izzy. "My arm . . ." I said limply.

"Was invisible, yes. Both of them, in fact. And your feet."

"My feet," I repeated, nodding slowly.

"Your head was starting to go, too," Izzy went on. "That was when I yelled your name. It was getting freaky."

"It was *getting* freaky?"

"Well, it was getting beyond freaky," Izzy admitted.

We sat without speaking for . . . how long? Five minutes? An hour? Neither of us knew what to say. Unsurprisingly. Would you?

So instead, we took turns opening our mouths, realizing we still didn't have any words to describe or explain what was happening, then closing them again.

"We need a strategy," I said eventually.

Izzy smiled. I was finally talking her language. *Izzy loves* strategies. For her, they're the next best thing to new notebooks or chess clubs.

See, Izzy and I are kind of soul sisters and kind of complete opposites at the same time. She isn't big on thrift shops, and I don't hyperventilate over shelves full of stationery, but we're happy to put up with both if it means spending a Saturday afternoon in town together. Equally, I do not get what's exciting about moving knights (which don't look anything like knights), kings (which don't look anything like kings), and bishops (etc.) around a checkered board. Izzy likes nothing more. Good thing we have Tom in our lives for that.

Tom Johnson is a boy I grew up with. Our moms were in the same maternity ward, and Tom and I were born on the same day. Tom's grandparents live in Jamaica and his dad was away visiting them, since Tom wasn't due for another three weeks, so his mom was on her own and she and my mom got to know each other. Our moms have remained good friends ever since.

I think they had this idea that Tom and I would get married one day if they took us to playgroup

together often enough. Tom is cute. He has gorgeous brown skin, big brown eyes, and crazy black, ringletty hair. He's smaller than me. Actually, he's the smallest boy in the class. He makes up for his small body with a big brain, though. He's into gadgets and computers and math. And he *loves* chess. Which is cool, because it means I don't have to go to chess club with Izzy. It also means that they're good friends, too, so the three of us hang out together a lot.

Anyway. Izzy had gotten a notebook out of her bag, opened it, and written—and underlined—the date in the top right-hand corner.

Izzy likes to do things properly.

"Let's start with a list," she said. "Or maybe a flowchart." She smiled. "Yes, a flowchart. That'll be fun."

"My limbs are disappearing, one by one, and you think we could describe this as fun?"

"Absolutely! Once we've established why it's happening, you just need to figure out how to harness it so you can control when it happens."

"Oh! Is that *all*? Why didn't you say so earlier?"

"Come on, think about it. You've got a superpower!"

I laughed. “Superpower? I wouldn’t exactly call it—”

“Jess, you can turn invisible! What’s that if it’s not a superpower?”

“Well . . . OK, I guess.”

Izzy grinned. “See! And once you’ve learned how to control it, who knows what you could do? You could go around the world doing good deeds. You could be a superhero!”

“Whoa! Hold on. Let’s take it a step at a time, OK?”

“OK,” Izzy agreed. Then she added something that made me feel better about the whole thing. And reminded me why she was my best friend. “You won’t ever be on your own with this,” she said. “I’ll be with you every step of the way. I’m going to help you figure it out. Whatever happens, it’ll all be OK. OK?”

I nodded. I didn’t trust my voice.

“And once we’ve gotten to the bottom of it, we’re going to have some fun,” she went on. “And maybe do some slightly superhero-type stuff, too.”

I thought about what she was saying. Perhaps she was right. If I could somehow learn to control this thing, make myself invisible whenever I

wanted to, then perhaps we *could* have some fun with it. *And* perhaps I could do a good deed here and there.

Izzy was scribbling in the notebook. I read over her shoulder. “‘Slightly Superhero Strategy?’”

Izzy shrugged. “It’ll work for now.”

I took the notebook from her and scribbled some notes of my own.

Step One: Find out why this is happening.

Step Two: Learn how to control it.

Step Three: Use power to do good.

Step Four: Have some fun.

“See?” Izzy said with a smile. “You’re thinking like a slightly superhero already.”



# Chapter 3

I opened my laptop again and pulled a second chair over to my desk.

Izzy sat down next to me. “What are we doing?” she asked.

“Step One.” I opened a search engine. I stopped for a moment while I thought about how to word it, then I typed “turning invisible” into the search bar.

“Whoa!” Izzy exclaimed as we stared at the screen. There were 57,843,521 results. “Where on earth do we start?”

I shrugged. “With the first one?”

I clicked on the first link. It took us to a page called “How to Become Invisible.” Not strictly

necessary, as I'd already done that part. But maybe it would tell me if there was something I'd done without realizing.

The page talked about advanced camouflage methods, as used in James Bond films. I didn't exactly feel like an international superspy, so we moved on to the next link, "Being Invisible: Tips and Techniques."

"This says it takes a lot of mental effort to do it. That doesn't seem right. I wasn't even trying," I said after reading a few paragraphs.

"Hmm. Maybe the writer uses a different method," Izzy said.

I stared at her. "A different method from what? I don't *have* a method."

"OK, look. He's explaining how to do it."

We read the instructions. Basically, I had to close my eyes, imagine my body becoming transparent, repeat the word "invisible" silently to myself over and over again, and get my "invisibuddy"—aka Izzy—to write down as a percentage how visible I was.

"I think you'd know about it if you had been visualizing yourself becoming transparent and saying the word 'invisible' over and over again," Izzy pointed out. She was right. We moved on.

“Forget about the how-to ones,” I said as we scrolled down. “We don’t need to know *how* to do it. We need to know *why*.”

“Good plan,” Izzy agreed. We scanned the list.

“How about that one?” Izzy pointed to a title halfway down the screen.

“‘Incredible accounts of people who suddenly became completely invisible,’” I read out loud. “Sounds promising.” I clicked on the link.

We read the first paragraph together.

A woman named Melanie in Ventura, California, had a strange experience while sitting on her own living-room sofa. While just staring at the wall, she became, she believes, invisible. Her husband walked around the house looking for her. He even walked right by her, just a few feet away, and did not see her. The episode lasted about ten minutes, then suddenly she was visible again.

I looked at Izzy.

“You’ve gone white,” she said.

*At least I haven’t gone invisible*, I thought.

We read on. There were several accounts of people who discovered that they had become invisible. It never lasted long, and they’d had no

warning. It just happened—generally when they were at a party where they felt they were being ignored. To be honest, I wasn’t convinced by the stories. Neither was I terribly convinced by the scientist who had apparently invented something he called an Electro-Helmet. He put the helmet on, stepped inside a closet, touched some “contact gloves” on the ceiling, and—presto!—when he came out of the closet, he was invisible!

“I saw someone do something like that in a magic show once,” Izzy said.

“Exactly. This is a magician’s trick, not someone who goes invisible without knowing why or how.”

We clicked on page after page. We read about witches’ brews and invisibility paint; we watched videos of people fading away, pickpockets stealing purses without being noticed—in other words, a bunch of phonies, cronies, and criminals.

“This isn’t getting us anywhere,” I said with a sigh.

Izzy picked up the pad. “I agree. Look, why don’t we forget about Step One for now and move on to Step Two?”

“Learn how to control it?”

Izzy nodded.

“How are we supposed to do that?”

“I haven’t figured that out yet.”

We sat in silence for a while. Then I had a thought. “How about I go through all the things I did and felt as I was falling asleep and you make a list? Then perhaps I can try to do all the same things, but without going to sleep.”

Izzy’s eyes widened. “Jessica, you’re a genius. That could work.”

I thought about the process. “OK, so I guess I closed my eyes first of all.”

“Closed eyes,” Izzy repeated, scribbling on the pad.

“Then I felt sleepy.”

“Felt sleepy.”

“I think my heart rate probably slowed down a bit.”

“Heart rate slowed,” Izzy repeated.

I thought about what else I’d felt. “I think that’s all.”

Izzy finished scribbling and looked up. “So we’ve got closed eyes, felt sleepy, and heart rate slowed. Anything else?”

I shook my head. “Can’t think of anything.”

Izzy chewed the end of her pen. “Nothing at all?”

I thought a bit more. “Wait! That’s it!” I said.  
“That’s what?”

“Nothing at all! I was thinking about nothing. Maybe that’s the thing I have to do. Empty my mind. Think about nothing. Perhaps that’s how I go invisible!”

Izzy stopped chewing her pen. “Try it,” she said. “Can’t do any harm.”

I lay on the bed and closed my eyes. *Think about nothing, think about nothing.*

The problem was, the more I tried to think about nothing, the more I realized how full of thoughts my mind actually was. There were thoughts in every nook and cranny of my brain, whizzing around so quickly I couldn’t even catch them and tell what they were, never mind stop them. My brain felt like the fast lane on the highway. Geography lesson. Rock formation. Homework. Worries about turning invisible. Questions about why it might be happening.

“Try to relax.” Izzy’s voice filtered through the fast lane.

*Try to relax?* Sure! I bet everyone who’s just discovered that they can turn invisible feels really relaxed.

The thoughts whizzed by even faster.

Then I had an idea. I pictured each thought as a car on the highway, speeding by. As each car zoomed past, I imagined it going off into the distance and disappearing over the horizon. I did it over and over, until, after a while, there were no more cars. My mind had gone blank.

“It’s happening!” Izzy squealed.

My eyes flicked open. “Really?”

Izzy pointed at my foot. “It started there about ten seconds ago. It’s stopped now.”

“Izzy, we were right,” I breathed. “I just have to empty my mind and I turn invisible.”

Izzy looked at me, a sparkle in her eyes. “Come on,” she said. “Let’s practice. See how much of you we can get to disappear.”

I met her eyes. Did I really want to do this? What if I disappeared altogether? What if I never came back?

My head was full of questions again. But that was the whole point. All I had right now were questions, and we needed some answers.

“OK,” I said, lying down again and closing my eyes. “Let’s do it.”

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