

## CHAPTER ONE

I probably dreamed that night.

It was probably the one where I'm in poetry class, listening to Dr. Yingling's soft voice read *The Wasteland*. Or that other one where I've been mysteriously transported into that cartoon show *Fantastic Four* with Lindsey and we're invisible or crazy strong or extra-stretchy and we're fighting off all manner of evil with our super-duper powers. There must have been the billowy touch of comforter over my face, that feeling of being burrowed so cozy deep it's hard to tell whether anyone's there at all except for the tiniest wisp of yellow hair visible on a pillow. There had to be big snore sounds, me waking myself up from half-remembered dreams.

These things probably happened.

But I won't remember them.

I'll remember this.

A fistful of my hair jerks me back.

There's a slabby male figure leaning over me, pants bunched around his hips.

I screech into the blackness, my fingers hunting for my glasses.  
Pages are crackling on the floor.  
A hand shuts off my scream.  
I thrash, strain my neck to see a face.  
It's gigantic, vacant, blank. Like a blackboard.  
Outlined chin and jaw loom over me. I try to scribble in eyes,  
nose, lips.  
But I can't call up chalk.  
He moves his hand.  
I scream.  
Thick fingers jam up my throat. My tongue swells.  
Leathery sweat fills my nostrils.