

## Chapter 4 excerpt

Five minutes later, we were walking arm in arm to her father's station wagon parked outside Harold Hall. Minna had taken the bus home that morning to collect some spring clothes and borrowed his car for the return trip. Since the car didn't have to be back until the next morning, we went to Dunkin Donuts for coffee. After getting in the car, she sat with her hands on the steering wheel, not saying a word.

"Are we going?"

Minna nodded. "In a minute, I just want to sit a bit...if that's OK."

"Something wrong?"

She shook her head, then started weeping.

"What? What is it?"

"It's stupid."

"What is?"

"Nicky, I'm scared!"

"*Scared?*" I almost laughed. "Scared of what?"

"Of the way I feel. What if we break up? Sometimes I think I do love you too much...I can't help it...it scares me!"

"Why? I love you, too," I assured her, now unable to hold down that laugh. "I've told you a million times."

"See, I shouldn't have said anything. You think it's funny."

"No, I don't."

"Yes, you *do*! You're laughing!"

"No, I'm not...it's just silly. You know I love you."

"I know you do, but look at today...what if I do something to make you mad, and you stop loving me."

The girl had a point. Although I later regretted my moody behavior, I was often powerless to stop it. My impulsive outbursts persisted beyond the boundaries of my will.

"Nicky, you're the kind of guy I could marry."

"*Marry?* I'm too young!" I laughed. "I'm only eighteen!"

My clumsy effort to lighten the mood and spare her feelings fell flat. She answered somberly. "I know we're too young. I'm not saying I want to get married now."

"Well then stop worrying about it. It's stupid to worry about what *might* happen."

"You're right, I'm being silly." Minna leaned forward, looked in the rear view mirror and began dabbing her eyes with a tissue. "I don't know what gets into me sometimes. Just forget what I said...OK?" She settled back into the seat. "You see that star?"

I looked out the windshield of her parent's Buick, not sure what I was supposed to see.

She pointed at the rose-colored light ebbing on the horizon. "There, above that tree. That's Venus."

I extended my focus beyond her finger to a bright spot in the twilight. "How do you know it's Venus?"

"Dennis and I used to look at it through his telescope. They say that if two lovers see Venus rising in the evening sky, they're meant to be together."

"You and Dennis aren't together."

"It'll be different for us," she whispered.