

ALEX / ALEXIA

(Talking to a tutor.)

I can't open it. The math text book. I can't even reach toward it, or look at its shiny purple cover or thick black lettering or, worse, the squiggly white numbers that rise off the page like ghosts — laughing horrible ghosts! *(Tutor starts to leave.)* Wait! You don't have to get the counselor. I'm fine, Mrs. Preston. I just get a little dramatic. My uncle was an actor, so drama runs like a river through my veins. Did you see me in the school play? *(No reply.)* Right. Back to math. OK. Math. It paralyzes me, like a jellyfish or a giant fury tarantula or — there I go again! I should be on the Nature Channel. I get really carried away when I talk about animals. When I talk about anything . . . except math. It's all those numbers. How they turn into equations and quotients. It's like I'm trying to decipher hieroglyphics or a secret code! I . . . Mrs. Preston. I honestly don't . . . I wish I could describe it. It's a frustrating . . . awful feeling. When I open my book, I'm lost. Help me.

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