

## **The Domsday Box**

**Herbie Brennan**

**Nikhil Bhagwat, 13**

**Star Teen Book Reviewer of Be The Star You Are! Charity**

**[www.bethestaryouare.org](http://www.bethestaryouare.org)**

In the story “Insignificant Events In The Life Of A Cactus”, a young girl named Aven who has no arms moves to Arizona, which she finds a very nice place. She becomes worried that others will take notice of her not having arms on the first few days of school. Then, she meets a boy named Connor, who has Tourette’s Syndrome and, like her, is worried about others making fun of him due to his condition. Connor tells Aven about his parents and how they used to argue about him and his condition, and how his dad used to blame him for making them annoyed, eventually leading to his dad leaving him and his mom. At the steakhouse, Aven and Connor find a stack of boxes with the letters A, V, and N. Connor thinks that the letters represent Aven, but Aven thinks that the letters represent Cavanaugh (Joe Cavanaugh, owner of Stagecoach Pass). They begin to question the Cavanaughs and why they are being so secretive. Aven meets another boy named Zion, who is also worried about what others think of him. Then, Aven begins to worry about Connor not eating anything after he doesn’t want to eat anything even though he never ate lunch. However, she helps Connor feel comfortable about eating in front of her and her parents. The next day, Aven, Connor, and Zion investigate Aven’s house’s storage shed and find an old guitar with the initials A, B, and C carved on it. They think that the initials could mean one of the Cavanaughs. Then, Aven finds a social event online for kids with Tourette’s that is located at the hospital. At the social event, they meet a group of kids who also have Tourette’s. Connor becomes worried that he might end up like Dexter, one of the members in the group who has a rarer form of Tourette’s (coprolalia), but Aven is able to assure him that there is a rare chance of that happening and that he will be just fine. Later, Aven continues to research more about tarantulas for investigating her house’s storage shed. She then finds a necklace buried near the petting zoo. She shows it to Connor and Zion, which Zion believes it to be a possession of someone who died. However, Connor begins to become annoyed that Aven is fixing the way he is. Aven begins to understand him and begins treating him as a normal friend.

At the next meeting at the hospital, Connor gets annoyed by Dexter’s personality, which Aven doesn’t find hurtful towards her. Then, Christmas comes, and Aven, her parents, and Connor have dinner at the steakhouse, where, to her surprise, Henry calls her Aven Cavanaugh (as if she is related to the owner of Stagecoach Pass, Joe Cavanaugh). When her parents hear this, they are surprised. Meanwhile, Aven discovers that the tarantulas at the petting zoo in Stagecoach Pass disappeared in 2004. However, she and her friends find another shocking discovery- a photo of Aven with arms wearing the necklace she discovered taken in 1973. However, soon, she will realize that the photo isn’t her, but instead her birth mother. However, later, after going to the movie theater with Zion and Connor, Aven notices that Connor is looking rather stressed out and nothing seems to cheer him up. She asks him what is going on, and Connor tells her about how he was at the store to get Aven some gummy bears when he noticed someone recording a video of him. This makes Aven shocked, and the experience is making Connor feel like he can’t do anything he wishes to at all due to his condition. Aven tries to persuade him that he can do

anything he can if he doesn't let his fears take over, but this only makes Connor feel more upset. He begins to take his anger out on Aven and calls her disabled, but this angers Aven so much that she feels like never talking to Connor again. After avoiding Connor for a few days, Aven finds another photo of the Cavanaughs from the year she was born (2004), the same year the tarantulas from the petting zoo went missing. She shows the photo to Josephine (one of the members of the steakhouse), where Aven realizes that the photo of her from 1973 was her birth mother, who was Josephine's daughter. This makes Aven realize that Josephine is her grandmother. Aven asks if her birth mother is still alive, only to realize that she died a few weeks after Aven was born. Finally, the festival that Aven was planning on attending comes, which gives Aven so much energy and happiness for herself, her friends, and her parents. She and her friends are planning on creating a memorial for her birth mother (to surprise Josephine). On top of that, Aven is planning on teaching her friends on how to play the guitar.

There were many things that I liked about this book. I enjoyed the main character's background of not having arms and how it made the story more interesting to read. I also enjoyed how the book introduced other ideas, from the tarantulas to other mysterious characters (the Cavanaughs and Aven's grandmother). The age group for this book would be ages 10+ due to the confusing ideas in the book. This book is very good and would be recommended to others.

**Recommended Titles:**

Wonder by R.J. Palacio

Smile by Raina Telgemeier

The Fault In Our Stars by John Green