

ENERGY WARS

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Praise

“I loved reading *Energy Wars*. I liked the characters, and I liked the science behind the book. The book really changed how I see unkindness in the world, and sometimes I can imagine fireballs being launched around me. I really look forward to reading the sequel.”

—Dorothy M., Mansfield Middle School

“Wonderful concept and execution, with a message of the cause and effect actions and words can have, that resonate with all teens at any point in time perfectly (myself 100% included), in addition to the wonderful cast of characters, integrating the relatable message and thrilling mysteries seamlessly. Eagerly awaiting the continuation(s) of this lovely book.”

—Violet T., Mansfield Middle School

“Best book I’ve ever read! My new favorite book.”

—Ethan, CR, Mansfield Middle School

"The book was amazing, a thrilling story that readers won't be able to put down, an amazing story to read."

—Addison W., Sutton Elementary School

"*Energy Wars* was a great read. I particularly loved the dynamics between the characters. Their personalities are very relatable and I loved their friendships with each other.

I enjoyed the creative story twists and I especially can't wait to read the sequel. I definitely recommend this book to all young readers."

—Olivia L., Mansfield Middle School

"An amazing tale! It was fun to read, educational, and thought-provoking!"

—Amanda W., West Springfield Lifestyle

"I loved how the characters worked together and how the new Zphone takes away your energy. Another thing I found interesting was the light beings, and how Myles is/was one.

I found it cool how only Myles can see the energy balls. I would like to see them too. Very fun and interesting book!"

—Aliyah H., Sutton Elementary School

This is a work of fiction.
All characters are either invented or used fictitiously.
Energy, however, is quite real.

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SUMMARY: Myles, a typical thirteen-year-old boy, finds things drastically change one day when his friend Sally is being teased by classmates. He finds himself in the middle of a war zone as the teasing turns into fireballs of energy being thrown all around him. But they're invisible to everyone... but him! Follow Myles as he tries to understand and navigate his newfound superpower and how his friends come together to help him save the world!

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For every kid in middle school
who is just trying to figure it out...
not only social economy,
but life itself.

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ENERGY WARS

Chapter 1

The First Day

You may not believe what I'm about to tell you, or my story. I certainly wouldn't. I'm just an average almost 14-year-old. But what I share with you may save your life, even if you never set foot in Whitmore Public Schools. The same thing is happening right now where you are. You just can't see it. You can't stop it either. You are even, unknowingly, part of it. There is a silent war waging all around you. And I'm the only one in the world who can see it. Why? I still don't know, but knowing what I do may help you survive, even if only practically. If I can help you get through being a teenager and realize the power within you, at least my curse

is for a purpose. But you have to promise, promise, promise to keep this between us. There are those in power who don't want me to spread the truth, let alone exist, and will do anything to stop me.

It all started the day Sally Munson sauntered in the glass doors near the principal's office into the front lobby of our school. Sally was wearing purple silk pants that looked like blown-up balloons wrapped around her legs. Even Principal Farnsworth paused and did a double take. I don't even know where she bought pants like that. She didn't buy them at any of our local shops downtown. The Town of Whitmore is pretty simple. Whit-Mart is our largest store off the only highway in and out, that sells most things, but only stocks the basics when it comes to clothing. There are two styles of jeans and five colors of unisex T-shirts. I know most girls here buy clothes online, but these pants looked more like a costume than what a teenage girl would wear. Sally is one brave person.

With every step she took, fluttering by one locker at a time, there was either a kid staring at her or a group of kids giggling. They were all making fun of her pants. The entire

ENERGY WARS

student population was laughing or teasing. Not that this is really anything out of the ordinary for eighth grade or middle school. It's pretty much par for the course. If you're brave enough to show up with a bad haircut or in some crazy outfit, you'd better be ready for the tirade to follow. The only unique thing today was the magnitude of everyone's reaction and what happened next.

All of a sudden, Tommy Milfoil, the loudest, most obnoxious kid in school, hollered down the hall. "Hey Munson, did your mom lose one of her jobs? Do you have to wear old Halloween costumes to school now?"

Sally's mom was a single mother who worked two jobs to take care of Sally and her little sister. They barely had enough to make ends meet, but you would never have guessed it. Sally was always one of the best-dressed girls in school.

It wasn't unusual for Tommy to burst out yelling or target someone to make fun of. But this is where it gets weird. When Tommy Milfoil opened his mouth, I saw a huge fireball of energy well up inside of him from his center, and when the words came out of his mouth, a hot bright flaming ball of

white fire launched right at Sally!

Boom. Direct hit.

“Seriously, Tommy,” Sally snapped and shot right back.

A fireball welled up inside of her and launched back at Tommy!

“Why do you still act like you’re five years old? Haven’t you figured out yet no one cares what you think.”

Another direct hit. She rolled her eyes and kept walking down the hall like she owned it.

I blinked many times and started to question my sanity. Did I really just see a flaming ball of fire well up inside both of them? And then hit each other?

I pinched myself hard until it hurt to make sure I wasn’t dreaming. Nope, I was definitely awake. An older kid saw me do this, raised his eyebrows then snorted with disdain like I was a weirdo. I can see why.

I stood by my locker like a deer in headlights afraid to move.

ENERGY WARS

“Hey, snap out of it,” my buddy Charlie said coming up from behind, nudging his shoulder into mine.

“Holy crap, Charlie. Did you see that?” I asked in disbelief.

“Yeah,” he smirked. “Munson has purple pants on that look like one of those Halloween costumes. You know, the ones that blow up with air pumps inside of them.”

I couldn’t believe it! A fireball welled up inside of him and launched right at Sally!

“Charlie, do I have a fever? Can you feel my head?” I agonized.

I definitely was delusional. Maybe I was bitten by a brown recluse spider. It’s one of the most dangerous spiders in the United States. I read somewhere that if it bites it can cause hallucinations, even death! I started to panic, which isn’t uncommon when I go off on tangents inside my head.

“Bro, what’s wrong with you? Are you serious?” Charlie reached over and felt my head. “Dude you’re fine, hurry up, the bell’s going to ring.”

“Oh no! Charlie! Here comes Tobias. He’s still mad from gym class. DUCK!” I screamed and pushed him against a locker.

“Ouch, what the heck Myles?!” Charlie said startled. “Tobias is across the hall. Is he going to whip something at me?”

“Um, something like that,” I said. I realized Charlie had no idea that I could see an energy ball welling up inside of Tobias and it was big. He was really mad. It was ready to launch at him.

“You’re a real jerk Charlie,” Tobias rushed up to Charlie and got really close to his face, poking his finger. “You didn’t have to throw the kickball so hard at me. Trying to show off. I’m going to get you back at recess.”

Tobias launched, not once, but three times! He hit Charlie once by “jerk,” once by “so hard,” and again by “get you back.” Tobias stormed off.

Charlie yelled after him, “You can try!”

A huge ball welled up inside of Charlie and BOOM, right

ENERGY WARS

back at Tobias. Direct hit! Tobias turned and flipped him off. Boom! Another one.

This couldn't really be happening.

But the rest of the day, that's what I saw. I saw fireballs of energy being thrown around, back and forth by everyone. Negative words or thoughts about someone became fiery energy balls that people threw, and they hit the person it was about. Then, the person who got hit usually threw one right back. This went on and on, all around me. Even innocent bystanders were getting hit. All day long these fireballs were going over my head, by my head, and often hit me in the head! It was very stressful. I kept ducking and swerving like I was playing dodgeball.

At lunch, I had my hood on and head down eating low at my lunch tray. I was jittery and kept looking up quickly and back down. It was a war zone! I couldn't wait to go home. Charlie sat down next to me.

"Dude, what's wrong with you? Charlie questioned. "Did you drink a Red Bull for breakfast? You're freaking out."

"Charlie we are at war and I'm seeing fireballs flying

around!" I blurted out.

"Myles, I told you NOT to play video games all night, especially on a school night. You're exhausted. Your brain is probably just fried. It's looping in virtual reality."

"Charlie, I'm telling you a legit war is going on, battles all around us and I can see it."

I tried to reason with him, but he didn't believe me. Why would he?

He took his last few bites of lunch, not really hearing me. The best analogy I can think of is it would be similar to trying to explain the internet to someone who never had used it, or vice versa. It's hard to imagine or see the world any differently than you've experienced.

Charlie looked at my uneaten lunch. I handed him my brownie. We were friends long enough that I knew what he was thinking.

After he scarfed down the brownie, he looked me dead in the eyes, "No joke bro. You need an intervention. No more *Call of Duty* for a couple of days, or more. Detox for two.

ENERGY WARS

They say 14 days or whatnot makes or breaks a habit.”

The bell rang.

I decided to call this “Energy Wars”...

JODI DEE

Chapter 2

Research

I was exhausted by the time I got home. I needed to shut my brain off and unplug from all human beings. I told my dad and granddad I wasn't feeling well so I could skip dinner and go right to bed. I laid down and didn't even remember falling asleep.

The next morning, I woke up hoping it was a dream until I looked out the window and saw two neighbors arguing. The wars were still waging. I closed my curtains. I needed to figure this out. I had to understand why I was seeing this and find a way to deal with it. Otherwise, I was going to lose my

ENERGY WARS

mind and be directly transported to a mental hospital.

More seriously though, I couldn't play dodgeball all day. Not only was I getting whiplash but I couldn't pay attention. If this continued, every teacher would send me to the principal's office for disrupting class, or even worse recommend I switch to home schooling because of an attention disorder.

I can assure you, it's impossible to sit still when fireballs are flying over and by your head from every direction. It's very difficult to focus on anything when you're sitting in the middle of a war zone and you're the only one who can see it.

Messages started to pop up on my iPad. I forgot it was Saturday.

Charlie: "Myles, sup. Let's go play catch at the field."

Me: "Sorry. Can't. Have a project I need to work on."

Charlie: "Wait what? Crap! Which class? I don't have anything in my notes, did I forget?"

Me: "No"...

I had to think about what I said because Charlie doesn't

JODI DEE

take no for an answer and knows all of our assignments at school. If I wasn't smart, he'd show up at my house in 10 minutes. I didn't want to be around anyone today, even him.

Me: "Have to help Granddad with something."

That was always my out because my granddad also doesn't take no for an answer and Charlie knows it. Charlie is like his second grandson.

Charlie is my best friend. He knows me better than anyone. We couldn't be more different but we've been inseparable since our first day of preschool. I still remember it like yesterday even though I was only four years old. Charlie walked in the front door larger than life, with his afro blown out like he stuck his finger in a socket, a button-down pressed shirt and pants, and a little red bow tie. I had never seen a boy like him and I thought he was the coolest kid ever. They say opposites attract. Apparently, he felt the same way even though I was in hand-me-down ripped sweatpants, a T-shirt two sizes too small, and my orange hair in knots uncombed. He smiled the biggest smile at me with his big white buck teeth, and I melted.

ENERGY WARS

Charlie: "Ugh. How long is it going to take? Can I help?"

Me: "No, family stuff. Probably all day. Sorry bro. I'll ping you as soon as we're done. Promise."

I turned off my IPAD. I needed to focus. I certainly couldn't tell Charlie I was going to the center of town, he'd want to come, or, that I was heading to the library. No one goes to the library anymore except old-timers, people who need to study, or just need quiet. Everyone else does research on their devices or smartphones. But I figured it was the only place a war wouldn't be waging because no one talked to each other. Hopefully, no one would see me there, or any people for that matter! Wishful thinking.

I ran downstairs to the kitchen to grab something to eat before I ventured into the war zone outside. My granddad was sitting in his favorite recliner by the front window reading his newspaper. Yes, news printed on paper still exists.

"Hey Granddad, I'm going to ride my bike to town and go to the computer lab at the library. I have a project I need to get done for school."

He lowered his newspaper slightly and turned slowly

towards where I was standing.

“Myles, are you in trouble?” he asked, quizzically. “Is this a punishment project or something? It’s Saturday. And, the library?”

“Yeah, I need quiet and to figure something out... I mean... do some research on a science topic. It’s a big part of our grade.”

He put his paper in his lap and looked at me above the bridge of his glasses like I was a suspect in an interrogation. His legs were covered in the old yellow and orange crocheted blanket my grandmother made him.

I live with my granddad because my dad works nights at a warehouse. My dad says we live with him to save money and he didn’t want to leave me alone. We moved in when I was one and a half years old. I also think my dad doesn’t want to leave my granddad alone, even though he would never admit it. My granddad needs help with the house and is less and less mobile every year. I think my dad will eventually take over the house and live here forever.

My granddad is a Vietnam veteran and a very proud

ENERGY WARS

American. Our house is a modest two-bedroom Cape-style home with furniture and decorations from 1970, meaning everything is brown and orange, even our rugs. The house is full of American flags and paraphernalia. My granddad sleeps in our living room, which my dad converted into a bedroom about five years ago because my granddad has a bad knee and can't walk upstairs anymore. I think my granddad exaggerated so I could get my own room.

He and my dad don't always see things the same way, and they argue a lot, so I'm a little nervous to see how these fireballs will work here. I don't know where my mom is. She had me when she was very young and my dad said she just disappeared one night after I was born. All her things were gone as if she never existed. He filed a police report but no one ever saw or heard from her again. He was devastated. He never got over it and hasn't dated anyone since, that I know of.

I don't even know what my mom looks like. There were never any pictures of her. She was gone before smartphones. But, when I see a beautiful movie star on TV with orange hair like mine, I imagine she's my mom and living a happy and

luxurious life. And one day she will show up in a limousine and swoop me out of this poor little town.

“Granddad, when you were at war, did the bombs... were you able to see, what did, um.”

“Huh?” My granddad grumbled. He gets cranky and annoyed when someone interrupts his reading. “What are you saying son, don’t spit out words. Complete your sentences.”

He picked up his paper and brought it close to his face.

“I have questions about war, for school, but maybe we can chat at dinner?”

“Yeah, yeah. Sonny, figure out what you want to know. We can talk when your dad is up for work. This upcoming election is the worst in history, such nonsense,” he grumbled.

My granddad walks to the corner gas station every morning at 5:00 a.m. to get a coffee and his newspaper. Small black with one packet of sugar. He says, “Too much caffeine and sugar are bad for the blood, but I need a coffee to kickstart my heart each day.”

Why he doesn’t make his own coffee never made sense

ENERGY WARS

to me. He makes my dad buy a fresh bag of coffee beans each week, finely ground, but has never used our coffee machine. It still has the stickers on it. The coffee beans just end up in a mulch pile outside. And no, we don't use that either. It's a pile of dirt that just keeps getting taller for the garden we will never have.

So, each day my granddad walks two blocks to meet up with a couple of other old-timers who also get coffee and gossip about what they read in the newspaper. He took me once but I wouldn't stay still and interrupted his chin-wag (as he calls it), so he never asked me again. I was five years old. Five-year-olds run around and touch everything. Not sure what he expected.

The only time I remember him ever missing this ritual was when he was in the hospital last winter with pneumonia. He said we couldn't come visit him unless we picked up his coffee and newspaper on the way. My dad griped the entire ride about how unhealthy it is for my granddad to read or watch the news because it causes him stress. But neither my dad nor my granddad listens to each other, so I always get stuck in the middle of the complaining.

Glossary

Source: <https://www.merriam-webster.com>

Chapter 1

Waging: to be in the process of occurring

Sauntered: to walk about in an idle or leisurely manner

Tirade: a long angry speech or scolding

Disdain: to treat as beneath one's notice or dignity

Agonized: a strong sudden display, intense pain of mind or body

Chapter 2

Ventured: to proceed especially in the face of danger

Suspect: a person suspected of a crime

Interrogation: a formal and systematic questioning

Mobile: capable of moving or being moved

Paraphernalia: items or features typically associated with a particular activity, subject, etc.

Ritual: an act or series of acts regularly repeated in a

Jodi Dee

Author Jodi Dee is a multi-award-winning author, a past columnist for *Bay State Parent Magazine*, and an avid blogger. She is a mother of three with more than twenty years of experience in early childhood and education.

Jodi has a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology & History and a Master's in Education from Clark University. She is a passionate advocate and teacher of self-love, emotional maturity, early childhood education, and empowering children to learn through creativity, independence, self-exploration, and discovery.

Jodi's children's books *The Dirt Girl*, *The Little Green Jacket*, and her *Jesse True Series* have won multiple awards in multiple categories, including the Purple Dragonfly Book Awards, Moonbeam Book Awards, National Indie Books Awards, American Fiction Awards, Next Generation Indie Books Awards, and more.

Author Jodi Dee is available for speaking engagements, readings, classroom in person or virtual visits.

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Examples of standards targeted in each lesson plan:

- | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Predicting | Writing Prompts | Creative Opportunities |
| Story Concepts | Vocabulary | Open-Ended Questioning |
| Main Characters | Science Concepts | Quote Analysis |
| Problem / Solution | Summarizing / Text | Self-Reflection |
| Theme | Connections | Creative Writing |
| Art | | |

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