

A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

I grew up in Newton Highlands, Massachusetts, in a neighborhood that looked perfect on the outside. Victorian houses. Big lawns. Educated people. Excellent school systems. Families that ate dinner together and always seemed sane and safe and satisfied. The thing is, you never really know what's happening inside those houses once the doors close. Even families that look perfect can have secrets that they hold inside like poison. Even people who look sane and strong and satisfied can be in pain.

The novel *Trowbridge Road* comes from my own experience with mental illness within a complex and imperfect family. I have suffered from obsessive-compulsive disorder since early childhood. In that, at least symbolically, I can empathize with June Bug's mother, Angela. I know how it feels to be so afraid of the world outside that you can barely move. Perhaps even more importantly, though, because my own mother suffered from depression when I was eleven years old, I was also quite a bit like June Bug Jordan. I know how it feels to be a child who yearns to be nurtured by a parent who is suffering. I know how bewildering and lonely that yearning can feel when you look onto the perfect street in your perfect neighborhood and it seems like you are the only one in this world who is hurting.

It's essential for young people to realize they are not alone. We need books that remind us that there are lots of different kinds of families who sometimes struggle to get what they need. Children have the right to see reflections of their own imperfect families in the literature they read. They need permission to be brave and tell the truth, even when telling feels scary. They need to know that even people who are imperfect can love one another with all their heart. Despite the pain behind the doors of 28 Trowbridge Road, there is tenderness, there is creativity, there is music, there is bravery, there is love, and, of course, at last there is hope.
