

CHAPTER 1

When Billy came downstairs that morning, he was delighted to hear the crackling sizzle of bacon frying. His mom was standing at the stove in her pink housecoat and fuzzy slippers. She yawned and wiggled the bacon strips around in the pan with her spatula.

"Morning Mum," Billy said as he sat down at the table and poured himself a tall glass of frosty orange juice. He always loved to get that first glass, just after his mom had made up the pitcher. There were always little crystals of ice that hadn't quite melted yet and Billy thought this to be just the right thing to make it extra delicious. Of course his younger sister always had to argue that it didn't matter because it was all the same juice and whether the ice crystals were there or not didn't change the taste.

"I'm making the big breakfast your sister asked for. Eggs, bacon, and the whole works," his mom told him before letting out another huge yawn, "I didn't get up early enough to make the pancakes. There wasn't enough time to fry the batter. She'll have to be happy with toast. We'll have to rush through our breakfast as it is."

His mom popped a couple pieces of bread into the toaster and then dished out the bacon beside each mound of scrambled eggs on each of the three plates. Billy scooped a forkful of eggs off his sister's plate onto his... and received an annoyed look from his mother.

Billy tried to justify it by saying, "She had a bit more, Mum. I was just making it so it's even, is all."

"Sure you were," she said with a sly smile, "Isn't Jenny up yet? She made such a fuss last night about wanting to get there early, and needing a big breakfast, and all that. She better not be in bed still."

"Dad get off to work okay?" Billy asked taking a bite of the crisp and crunchy bacon, "He looked so tired last night and his cold seemed to be getting worse."

"He keeps insisting that it's allergies and you know how stubborn he can be about getting extra rest," she told him, "You better run up there and make sure she's up. She's been so excited and nervous about the junior chess competition these past few weeks. She'll kill us if we let her sleep in. I've got to take out the garbage before I forget."

"Okay Mum," he said as he hurried up the stairs.

"Tell her that her food's getting cold. That'll get her up," his mom called after him.

Billy knocked on her bedroom door. "Hey Jenny! Mum says it's time to get up!" he called out.

He was about to head back downstairs again, but something stopped him. He wasn't sure what it was. It was like a cold chill ran down over his body. Something felt wrong.

He knocked again on the door, this time louder. "Jenny? You in there? Breakfast is ready. You better hurry up or you're going to be late."

There was no answer. Usually, she would yell at him to stop bugging her. She would say that she'd be down when she was good and ready and to stop rushing her all the time. She would at least say something; she would never ignore him completely like this. "Jenny?" he called again, but he still had that weird feeling that something wasn't quite right.

He turned the knob and opened the door. She always yelled at him for coming into her room. "Jenny? Are you in here?" he asked into the room from the doorway. He glanced over to the bathroom door at the end of the hall. She wasn't in there.

Billy was worried now. He thought to himself, "Maybe she caught Dad's cold. Maybe that's why she's not answering. She's probably so sick, she's not waking up. I've been sick like that before, where you end up sleeping all day." Another chill ran down his body.

He stepped into her room and turned on the light. His eyes fell on dolls and other stuffed animals, unicorn ornaments, and her many books. However, her bed was empty, and she was not in her room.

The huge grandfather clock was in the corner, its pendulum swinging back and forth. It was so out of place, but she had insisted on keeping it. Sometimes, Billy thought his parents would let her do anything she wanted. It seemed that way so many times. The clock had been their grandfather's, and he had recently passed away. It would have been put on the list of things to sell in the garage sale their mother was planning, but Jenny had pleaded with her that if the only reason they were getting rid of the clock was because they had no room to keep it, that she would have it in her room. She promised that she would take perfect care of it and that the chimes wouldn't keep her awake at all.

After a few nights, Jenny had confided in him that the clock was driving her crazy. She wasn't going to admit this to their parents of course. Jenny had realized that they were trying to teach her a lesson by allowing her to keep the clock, but she loved that clock and she wasn't going to let it go.

Jenny was very smart for her age, and Billy was sure she would win the junior chess competition. But she wouldn't even be able to enter if she arrived at the school even a few minutes late. She had stressed that importance so many times last night. Where could she possibly be?

Billy ran down the stairs and shouted, "Mum! Mum! Jenny's gone!"

"What's that honey?" his mom asked drying the soapy dishwater off her hands.

"Jenny! She's not in her room. She's gone!" he said frantically.

His mom gave him a confused look, her eyebrows squishing together with worry, "Well did you check the bathroom?"

"Of course I..." Billy began to say, and then he heard Jenny's voice behind him.

"Hello, Mum. Hello, Billy," said Jenny, "I was just in my room getting dressed."

"Billy, that was not funny at all. Don't you ever play a trick like that again," his mother scolded, "You had me worried sick there for a minute. I wouldn't have known what to think. Just to imagine... Oh, don't you ever do something like that again. You hear me? It's the look on your face that did it. I really believed you! Do you remember what your father and I spoke to you about on how important trust is within a family?"

"Yes, Mum, but..." he started to say.

"Just finish your breakfast," she told him, "I have to be up to your grandfather's house to sort through more of his things after I drop you two off at the school."

"Why are we having this for breakfast?" Jenny whispered to Billy.

"It's bacon and eggs. Remember? You asked Mum to make it 'cause of the big competition today," he explained. As he looked at his sister, he noticed that there was something odd about her. He couldn't tell exactly what, but her eyes, it was almost as if they lacked a certain life to them. She was probably just tired.

"Oh, I'm not in my right mind today! I forgot to call Aunt Bethany. I need her to pick you up from school! Oh, how could I have forgotten!" their mother said grabbing the phone and quickly punching in the numbers.

After a few moments, she sighed a breath of relief, "Oh, I'm so glad I caught you. I have to sort through some things at my dad's place. Could you watch the kids today? I should really spend all day there or I won't get anything done. You know how it is, so many memories. It's hard to get rid of anything really," she paused, listening anxiously to the reply.

"And you'll be able to pick them up from school?" she asked, waving at the children for them to quickly finish up their food. "Oh, that's great then. Thank-you so much... Okay, I'll phone you later then to check in... Alright... Bye."

She hung up the phone saying, "Okay, everything's taken care of then. She'll be watching you this afternoon and probably do the same for the next few days. I've got to get ready or we'll never be to the school on time. You know which door we're supposed to go in, right Jenny?"

A strange look came over Jenny's face, as if she were trying far too hard to come up with an answer, and then she said, "Yes," but by this time their mother had already left the room.

"Are you feeling okay?" Billy asked, "Where were you really? I went to check on you, and you weren't in your room."

"I am fine," she answered plainly, "I was in my room getting dressed."

Billy didn't know what to say; he didn't want to argue with her.

"This is an interesting piece," Jenny said picking up the chess piece from the table, "Is it a unicorn? I like unicorns."

Billy had an awful feeling inside and said, "Jenny, that's your lucky knight. You had it since you were three. Remember? The white knight?"

"Yes, this is my lucky knight I had since I was three," Jenny stated, "But I am just wondering why is it only a horse? Did the little knight get broken off? Is there some sort of use for this that I should be aware of?"

"Who are you?!" he asked confused and a little afraid. This was not his sister, and the more he stared at her, the more he saw it. This person looked like Jenny, but it was not her.

"I am Jenny. You are my brother. Your name is Billy," she answered with that same blank expression.

After several minutes of silence, Billy's mom rushed into the kitchen. "Okay, quickly, let's go! Come on! Come on!"

CHAPTER 2