

CHAPTER 3

I wake up with the sun shining in the window. Right in my face. I squint to see the clock through the glare. It's 8:30. Time to start another boring day here. I grab my dark jeans and Nike hoodie, that I'd stacked in front of the mirror on my dresser when we were unpacking yesterday. I put my clothes on, brush my hair and check myself out in the mirror.

"Ladies and gentlemen, our brown-haired, brown-eyed hero Doug Wilson is ready to face the ultimate boring day! Ta-da!" I take a bow and head downstairs.

"Hey, Mom. I'm going to ride my bike around the neighborhood and check it out. Maybe find some kids to play with."

"Ok, honey. Just don't wander out too far. You might get lost."

"Alright. I'll be careful, Mom."

I turn to go out to the garage, rolling my eyes about my mom's worrying about me getting lost. *It's a small town. I'd have to try really hard to get lost here.* I grin at the thought.

I hop on my bike and head down the street. The houses and yards all look pretty much the same. Just like I told Mom and Dad. Boring. They're all two stories tall. Boring. They're all painted blue or gray. Boring. They all have nice green front yards. Boring. And they all have massive old trees in the backyards. Boring.

I stop at the end of the street to read a sign. City Park 1/4 mile. The arrow pointed to the left. Sounds like something that might not be boring.

I pedal toward the park, passing more of the same houses. *How can people live in such a boring place?* I can see the park and there are three kids playing catch with a baseball. They look like they're around my age. I ride over to them. They stop throwing the ball and stand in front of me.

"You're new here, aren't you? I've never seen you before. I know most everybody in town. Especially all the kids our age. I'm Emma Stapleton. What's your name?" the red-haired girl asks. Her words come flying out like bullets from a machine gun. She's wearing ripped jeans, a Green Bay Packers T-shirt, and sparkly green sneakers.

"I'm Doug Wilson. We're staying at my Grandma Miriam's all summer while she's gone."

"That's cool. I'm Tommy Decker." the tall, blonde guy says, sticking his hand out for a handshake. He's big enough to play on the junior high football team. He's dressed in Kansas City Chiefs sweatpants, a Portland Trailblazers jersey, a pair of Michael Jordan basketball shoes and Toronto Maple Leafs cap. His blue eyes flash as bright as his smile.

This guy really likes sports. I shake his hand and smile, even though his grip is so strong that it hurts. *I hope nothing's broken.* He lets go and I keep smiling.

"I'm Mason Martin. I'm the smart one here and the oldest too. I'll be thirteen in two days." says the short kid with glasses. He shakes my hand too. He's wearing khaki cargo pants, a Pink Floyd T-shirt, and white Converse sneakers.

"Nice to have somebody new to hang out with. I get tired of these two children. They've only been twelve for a month or two." he laughs, pointing at Emma and Tommy.

"Yeah, you're a ton of laughs, Mason." Emma said, rolling her eyes.

"So, what is there to do around here. It seems so boring. Does anything cool ever happen?"

Tommy, Emma, and Mason look at each other and start laughing.

"Oh, yeah! Lots of things happen around here. And it all starts at where you're staying right now." Mason says.

"What? At Grandma Miriam's?" I reply.

"Yeah! It's the big, blue house on Whispering Way with a gigantic porch that wraps around it. People have been talking about that place forever. Even my grandparents talk about it."

"No kidding? What do you say about it?"

"They talk about all kinds of weird things happening there. Strange looking people. Some with magic powers."

Emma cuts in. "I heard a story about a guy that lived there. He disappeared somewhere while he was in the house. I don't remember where. Maybe the basement or the attic. Anyway, he showed up again, but he was different."

"How was he different?" I ask.

"Well, they say he had grown an extra arm. It was right in the middle of his chest. And he could use it to grab things."

"Wow!"

"Yeah, I know. But that's not all. That extra arm had the power to move things just by pointing at them."

They start telling me stories about folks that had lived in Grandma Miriam's house. Stories about people with special powers. Stories about witchcraft and wizards. Stories about a magic mirror. Spirits, voices, all that spooky stuff. They even have a story about a black cat.

Emma continues the show. "My cousin, Megan, told me her friend saw a woman at the house who could talk to animals. You know, like the guy in the Dr. Doolittle movies. Like, she just looked at a squirrel, and it started chattering away like they were old pals. She said the woman was feeding birds from her hand and having conversations with raccoons."

Tommy chimes in. "That's nothing! My sister said she saw a group of people in old-fashioned clothes having a midnight tea party on the porch. They were all wearing those frilly dresses and top hats like in the 1800s."

Mason spoke up. "Top hats? Well, my cousin's friend's older sister, Maggie, swears she saw something bizarre there just last week. She said she was walking her dog past the house when she saw a guy in a top hat and a cape just standing on the porch. And he was talking to a black cat."

"That sounds like a vampire! Or a magician! Or maybe a vampire magician!" Tommy said enthusiastically. "So, what was he doing?"

"She said he was holding a big book and muttering something. She couldn't quite make out what he was saying, but she said it sounded like a spell or something. And when she got closer, he vanished into thin air. Poof! Gone!" replied Mason.

"And what about all the magic mirror stories? You guys know what I'm talking about." Emma says. She looks at Tommy and Mason. "The ones where somebody messes with a magic mirror, and they get special powers. But it does weird things to them like glowing eyes or the third arm guy."

"Oh, yeah. And the one where the lady uses a magic mirror to see the future but then eyes grow all over her whole head." Tommy adds.

"Have you seen this stuff happening?" I ask.

"I haven't. But I've heard lots of stories." Emma says.

"Me either. But everybody in town knows somebody who says they've seen something." Tommy declares.

Mason interrupts. "We could go on with these stories all day. But you know what? I don't care if these stories are true or not. I think it's kind of cool that our town has a place like your Grandma's house with all these mysteries."

Tommy nods in agreement. "Yeah, and even if we never see any magic people there, we can always imagine what it would be like."

"Well, whether it's ghosts or just some weird folks, that house is definitely a mystery. I bet it's hiding all kinds of secrets." Emma concludes.

“You know, I’ve heard stories like these about some of my family members, but I didn’t believe them. There’s no pictures or anything. Just stories but there IS a mirror in the attic.”

“What?” Emma spouts.

“You have the magic mirror in your attic?” Tommy adds.

“Well, when are we going to check it out?” Mason asks.

“I don’t know if that’s a good idea. My Mom and Dad are home right now.”

“Yeah, but your dad goes to work every morning like most people, right?” Mason responds.

“Yeah. What about my Mom then? She’s home most of the time.”

“And she needs to get groceries and stuff, right?”

“Yeah, but I don’t know when she’ll go. So, I still don’t think it’s a good idea.”

“Oh, I think we can fix that.”

“How?” Tommy asks.

“Yeah. How can you fix things to change what time she goes shopping?” Emma inquires.

“I can guarantee that she’ll go to the store right after breakfast tomorrow.” Mason says. “Right after Doug tells her about the mice he’s hearing in the walls at night.”

“That’s perfect. My Mom is afraid of mice.” I say with a nod.

“Mine too.” Tommy chimes in.

“Yeah. She’ll be racing to the store for mousetraps. That’s for sure.” Emma says.

“Once she’s gone, we can come over and check out the attic.” Mason states with authority.

“I bet this will work. Give me your phone numbers so I can call you when she’s gone.”

I put their numbers in my phone. We hang out at the park for most of the morning, playing catch and talking more about all the weird stories from Grandma Miriam’s house.

We say goodbye at lunch and promise each other that we will be ready for tomorrow’s little adventure. We have a plan now for investigating the attic.

Or is it a plan for uncovering the mysteries of the magic mirror?