
Badger Hills Farm
Book 1
THE SECRET DOOR
THE GOOD AND THE BEAUTIFUL LIBRARY
JENNY PHILLIPS



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CHAPTER 1

TIMOTHY STIRRED AND SAT UP IN BED, rubbing his eyes. A soft "coo-oo" followed by three louder "coos" floated through the air.

What is that sound, and where is it coming from? he thought. It was his first morning waking up in his new home at Badger Hills Farm.

"Coo-oo, coo, coo, coo" came the soft call again, this time followed by the thud of

running feet as Timothy's cousin, Zoey, came dashing down the hallway.

Zoey and her grandmother, Nanna Bell, had come to live with Timothy and his father, John, shortly after Zoey's mom had passed away. Timothy had lost his mother, too, but long ago, when he was a baby. The children had



grown to be more like siblings to each other than cousins.

Zoey burst into the room, excitement written all over her face. Zoey's big ideas and bright personality had surprised Timothy at first, but now he loved her spirited ways.

With her curly hair flying, Zoey dashed to Timothy's large window. "It's a mourning dove!" she cried. "Come see! It has a nest in the pine tree right outside your window. Living at Badger Hills Farm is going to be amazing!"

She stopped suddenly and whirled around to Timothy.

"Oh no!" Zoey's eyes were wide. "I hope you were already getting up when I burst in. I was just so excited about that dove!"

Timothy chuckled. "It's all right, Zoey. I was already awake. But I do need to get dressed and say my prayers."

Zoey gave her cousin a quick hug and skipped out the door. Timothy crossed to the window, thanking God for the nest and all of His other beautiful creations. As he slipped a sweater over his T-shirt, the smell of Nanna Bell's delicious blueberry muffins tickled his nose. He bounded down the stairs toward the kitchen, with Zoey right on his heels.

"Good morning! You two slept in a little today," Nanna Bell said cheerfully as she flipped bacon that was sizzling and popping in her frying pan. "You must have been tired from the big move yesterday."

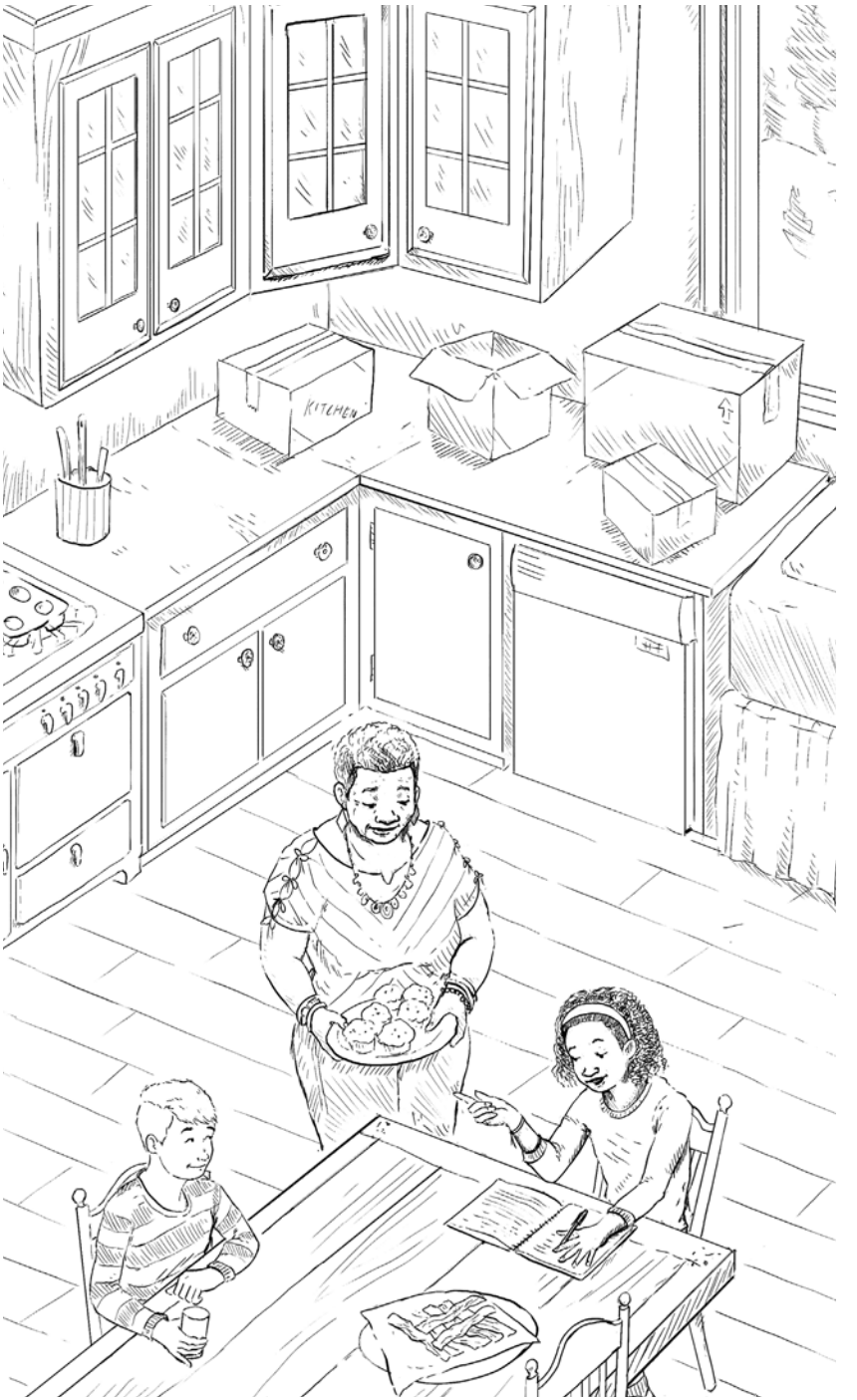
Timothy looked at some empty moving

boxes scattered on the kitchen counter. *What a whirlwind of a week!* he thought, reflecting on his father's marriage to Miss Lily two days before and the big move the day after their wedding.

Having come from a small city apartment, which was only a ten-minute walk from Badger Hills Farm, they hadn't had to move too many things. Most of their belongings had been put away yesterday before John and Lily left for their nine-day honeymoon.

As the cousins enjoyed Nanna Bell's delicious breakfast, Zoey gazed out the window. "Wow, that's a lot of fog rolling in. Look, Timothy."

"That is a lot of fog!" Timothy frowned. "I was hoping we could explore Badger Hills Farm


KITCHEN

today, now that it's actually ours. I want to make a map of the grounds, but all that fog will make it hard. We might have to wait until tomorrow."

"A map is a great idea! We have 180 acres to explore!" Zoey exclaimed excitedly.

"Well, 177 to be exact," said Timothy with a smile. "Remember that Mrs. Bastian owns three acres."

"And can you believe you own the rest, Timothy?"

"Well, technically my dad owns it until I'm twenty-five, but no, I still can't believe it." Timothy picked up a piece of bacon and continued to gaze out the window. "I wonder how long it will take until this fog clears. It's covering almost everything outside."

"I'm sure it won't last all day," Zoey said as

she pulled out a notebook with a bright purple cover. "Hey, I wrote about how we got the farm. Do you want me to read it to you?"

"Sure," Timothy said with a smile. After meeting the famous author Bailey Bastian, who was their only neighbor on the farm, Zoey had decided she wanted to be a writer too.

She cleared her throat, held out her notebook, and began to read.

> Two hundred years ago, a family with the last name of Roach purchased 180 acres of beautiful land, complete with a large pond, waving grass, rolling hills, several groves of thick woods, and a gurgling stream.
>
> As the family began to work the land, they discovered a surprise on the farm—a

den of badgers. Thus, they called their land "Badger Hills Farm."

The family decided never to sell the land. They handed it down from generation to generation.

Over time, a town grew up around Badger Hills Farm. The town turned into a small city and then into a large city.



Badger Hills Farm was surrounded by the city's streets and buildings.

The last generation of the Roach family had only one child, who outlived his relatives and had no children of his own to inherit the farm.

That is how Mr. Roach found himself the only surviving member of the Roach family. He was a very grumpy man with no friends . . . until an eleven-year-old boy named Timothy Todd came along.

"I'm twelve years old now," Timothy said after finishing his last sip of orange juice.

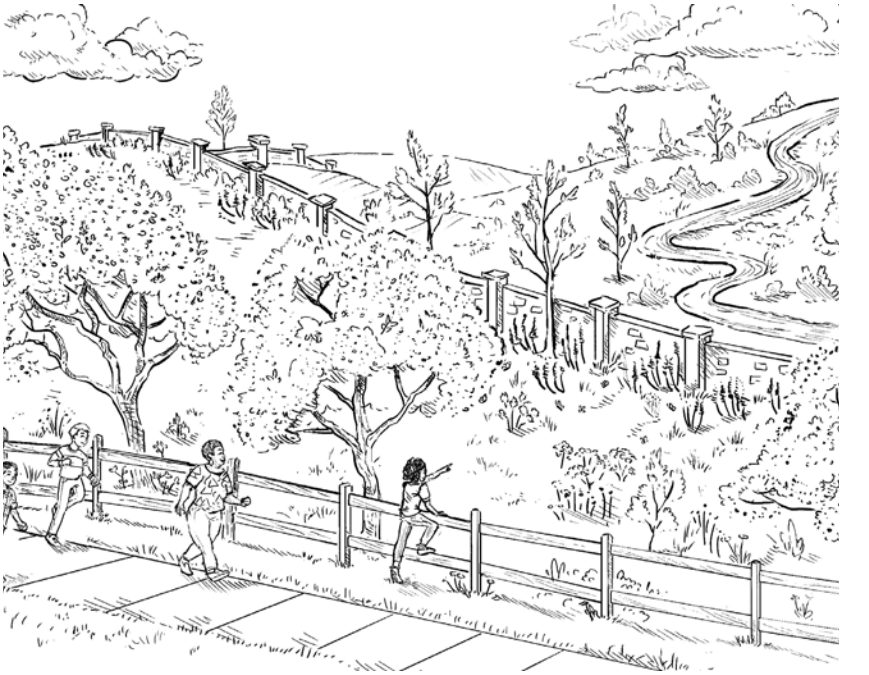
"Yes," replied Zoey, "but you were eleven when we met Mr. Roach last year. Keep listening." She began reading again.

Timothy and his family lived in a small city apartment close to Badger Hills Farm and loved to walk around the land, admiring its natural beauty.

Mr. Roach ran out of money, and the farm fell into disrepair. Eventually, he sold three acres to the famous author Bailey Bastian. This gave Mr. Roach enough money to live, but no one knew who would inherit the rest of Badger Hills Farm.

One day, Timothy's family was walking around the farm when they heard Mr. Roach calling for help, and that's how Timothy's family met Mr. Roach.

Timothy was kind to Mr. Roach and made him some paintings, for Timothy was an artist.



Sadly, Mr. Roach soon passed away. To everyone's great surprise, Mr. Roach left the farm to Timothy, to be in the care of Timothy's father until Timothy turned twenty-five.

I know this story well because I am Timothy Todd's cousin, and I just moved with him to Badger Hills Farm, where I am sure great adventures await.

"What a great story," Nanna Bell declared. "And now we're here, and you're right—who knows what adventures await us at Badger Hills Farm?"

Timothy's gaze drifted again to the window. A blanket of white shrouded all but a few pine boughs that poked their long arms from the dense fog. Nanna Bell's words echoed in Timothy's mind: *Who knows what adventures await us at Badger Hills Farm?*


Badger Hills Farm
Book 2
THE HIDDEN ROOM
JENNY PHILLIPS
THE GOOD AND THE BEAUTIFUL LIBRARY



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CHAPTER 1

LITTLE PUFFS OF PINK CLOUDS FLOATED in the morning sky outside Zoey's window. Although golden sunbeams poured into her room, the late December weather left the house a little chilly. Zoey finished the section she was reading in her Bible, laid it down on the window seat, picked up her journal and a pen, and snuggled into her big, comfy blanket to write.

Mom and Dad got home last night.

Just to be clear, when I write "Mom" and "Dad" now, I am not talking about my parents who passed away. I miss them so much, and they will always be part of me, but calling Uncle John "Dad" and Lily "Mom" is something I want to do.

I can't write very much this morning because, after we finish our chores,



we are telling Mom and Dad about the secret door. It leads to a tunnel and another door—a rusted metal door. Timothy and I couldn't get the metal door open, but we think Dad can. We are going to find out what is behind that door today!

After finishing her journal entry, Zoey turned on Christmas music and cleaned her room.

"O Christmas Tree! O Christmas Tree!" she belted out gleefully with the music. She heard her cousin Timothy—who was walking down the hallway outside her room—join in with a funny opera voice. Zoey laughed.

After Zoey's mom died, and Zoey came to live with Timothy, he had been pretty quiet and sometimes unsure. She had loved

watching him grow more confident and happy. *Now he can even get quite silly!* Zoey thought with a big smile, as she pictured him falling off his chair every now and then when he started laughing too hard.

Zoey and Timothy had a responsibility that they loved: making breakfast twice a week. This morning, they decided to make a healthy breakfast of fresh-squeezed orange juice and vegetable omelets for everyone.

As Timothy squeezed the oranges and Zoey chopped vegetables, Nanna Bell set up a table in front of the fireplace in the family room and then got a blazing fire going.

Finally, breakfast was cooked, and the table was set. Zoey and Timothy were excited to use the triangle meal bell they had found tucked

in the back of the pantry. Nanna Bell had hung the triangle on the back porch, where they took turns banging on it with a short metal rod. Lily and John were just around the corner, but it was so much fun to bang the triangle that the cousins couldn't pass up the opportunity.

Lily and John came bustling into the house, the tips of their noses red.

"Whew!" said John as he took his seat by the glowing fireplace. "This fire feels nice. We've been outside since six o'clock this morning."

"What are you working on?" Zoey asked.

"A chicken coop," John answered with his wide smile.

"Oh, that's right," Timothy commented. "Those huge boxes that were delivered last week hold a build-your-own chicken coop."

"When are we getting chicks? When are we building a barn for Misty Toes and her foal? When will we start building a campground and a greenhouse? What about the stone walls and trails? Will we fix those?"

Everyone laughed. Zoey had hardly taken a breath between sentences.

"Let's pray and then start eating," John said with a chuckle. "While we eat, we can have a family meeting and start planning."



And so they did. After the prayer, everyone dug into the omelets, which were sprinkled with sea salt and oozing with golden cheese.

"It was thirty-seven degrees outside this morning; that's very cold for this time of year," John announced.

"It needs to get down to thirty-two degrees to snow," Zoey stated. "I miss seeing snow. It snowed so much where I lived in Canada."

Lily shook her head. "While it doesn't



usually snow here, it can, and it has in the past. But it is pretty rare, and the snow doesn't stay long before it melts."

"Do you think it will snow for Christmas this year?" Zoey asked. "Oh, I hope it does!"

Nanna Bell chimed in. "I have to admit that I've been hoping for snow this year too—even just a little flurry of snow would be wonderful. I've been looking at the weather forecast, and, well, it does get pretty cold, but it doesn't show a chance of snow before Christmas."

The conversation then turned to their plans for the farm.

"As you all know," John started, "we have a lot of work to do around this farm. Supplies and equipment aren't free. We are so blessed to have the money that Mr. Roach left us from

the sale of his house and three acres to Mrs. Bastian."

"That means you don't have to work anymore!" cried Zoey. "I mean, at least not at Mr. Bevan's greenhouse."

"I loved my job at the greenhouse," John said. "But not having to work there means I will have time to work on fixing up this property."

"And you don't have to work at the library anymore either, Mom," Zoey stated, realizing that it felt good to call Lily "Mom," but it would take a little while for it to feel completely normal. "You loved your job there, though. Are you sad to leave it?"

"Oh, I did love working at the library," Lily replied with that wonderful sparkle in her eyes

that always seemed to be there. "But I will love taking care of my home and family even more. John and I had so much fun this morning starting to put together that chicken coop."

"So when are we getting chicks?" Zoey asked for the second time.

"As soon as the coop is ready," John replied.

"And then what's next?" Timothy questioned.

"Well, that's what we want to talk about," John said. "Lily, do you want to go over the options we discussed on our honeymoon?"

"Sure! We want to build a greenhouse. John doesn't want to compete with Mr. Bevan's greenhouse, since it is so close by. He grows flowers, shrubs, and vegetables. But he doesn't grow—"

"Venus flytraps!" Timothy cried out, and

then realized that he had interrupted. "Oh, sorry! I just think plants that eat insects are so cool."

John laughed. "They are pretty neat, Timothy. But no, we are not going to grow Venus flytraps. We thought we would grow a variety of houseplants."

"What a wonderful idea!" Nanna Bell exclaimed.

"But we might not start that right away," Lily explained. "We also want to build a campground down by the pond, and we don't have the money or time to work on a campground and a greenhouse at the same time."

"Are campgrounds really that expensive to create?" Timothy asked.

"More than you might think," John explained. "We have to create roads, trails, bathrooms, and a bridge for visitors to drive their cars over the stream."

"And picnic tables, fencing, a boat dock, and boats," added Lily.

"Boats!" cried Timothy. "Wahoo!"

"And I just thought of something else," Nanna Bell said, "a website."

"That's right," Lily said. "Most of our savings will be needed to build the campground. So we thought we would start with that, and then once we have money coming in from renting out the campground, we can start on all the other things that we want to do."

"Of course we'll get a barn built right away,"


Badger Hills Farm
Book 3
MESSAGE ON THE STAMPS
U.S. POSTAGE
24 CENTS
THE GOOD AND THE BEAUTIFUL LIBRARY
JENNY PHILLIPS



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CHAPTER 1

TIMOTHY'S EYES POPPED OPEN, AND HE sat up in bed. The stars sprinkled in the dark sky told him that it was the middle of the night. Looking around the silent room, Timothy wondered what had woken him. *Was it a dream?* Timothy thought. *Was it a noise? Yes, I think I might've heard a noise. But what was it?*

He tiptoed to his window and looked out. A string of long gray clouds covered the moon,

but the light from the nearby city bouncing off the clouds dimly lit the yard just enough for Timothy to make out shapes. He saw the huge piles of lumber and the big backhoe that had arrived yesterday to start building the barn.

Faintly, oh so faintly, Timothy was sure that he heard the crunching of gravel outside as if people were walking on the road. A quick glance at the clock by his bed showed it was after one in the morning. He carefully cracked the window and leaned his ear to the opening. There were whispered voices outside—he was sure of it! He backed away from the window a few steps, still trying to get oriented from being jolted awake. His mind spun. *What day is it? Oh yes, it's two days after Christmas. Nanna Rose and Papa George are here, and*

so is Zoey. Mom, Dad, and Nanna Bell had to go out of town suddenly.

Timothy tiptoed down the hall as fast as he could to the door of the guest room, where Nanna Rose and Papa George were sleeping, but then he hesitated. *Will they get mad if I wake them up? They are so nice, but I don't really know them very well. It feels weird to wake them up in the middle of the night.*

I know I heard something, so I have to wake them up. Taking a deep breath, he knocked on the door.

Timothy heard the floorboards creaking, and then the door opened slowly.

"Timothy? Is everything OK?" Papa George whispered with concern.

"I don't know. I heard people walking

around outside and whispering," Timothy replied.

"Let's go check it out," Papa George responded quickly as Nanna Rose joined them.

Papa George peered out the window in Timothy's room. "Hmmm, you were right," he whispered. "I see some people, maybe three or four of them, huddled around that big rock over there."

Timothy was worried. "I wonder who they are and what they're doing. What should we do?"

Placing a reassuring hand on Timothy's shoulder, Papa George spoke calmly. "It's OK, Timothy. I don't think we're in any danger. Don't turn on any lights, but carefully go downstairs and get that basket of pine cones in the family room."

Timothy obeyed promptly. He made his way to the family room even though he didn't understand what good pine cones would be. He returned a short time later with the basket.

Papa George quietly opened the window all the way. Without hesitation, he grabbed a pine cone from the basket and threw it out the window as hard as he could toward the shadowy figures. Then he threw another and another. Papa George turned to Timothy with a big smile on his face. "I haven't had this much fun in a long time! I'm not trying to hit them—just scare them off."

"Let's get out of here!" a voice called from outside, loud enough for Timothy to hear.

That didn't sound like an adult's voice, Timothy thought.

The sound of crunching gravel grew fainter and fainter as the people sped off.

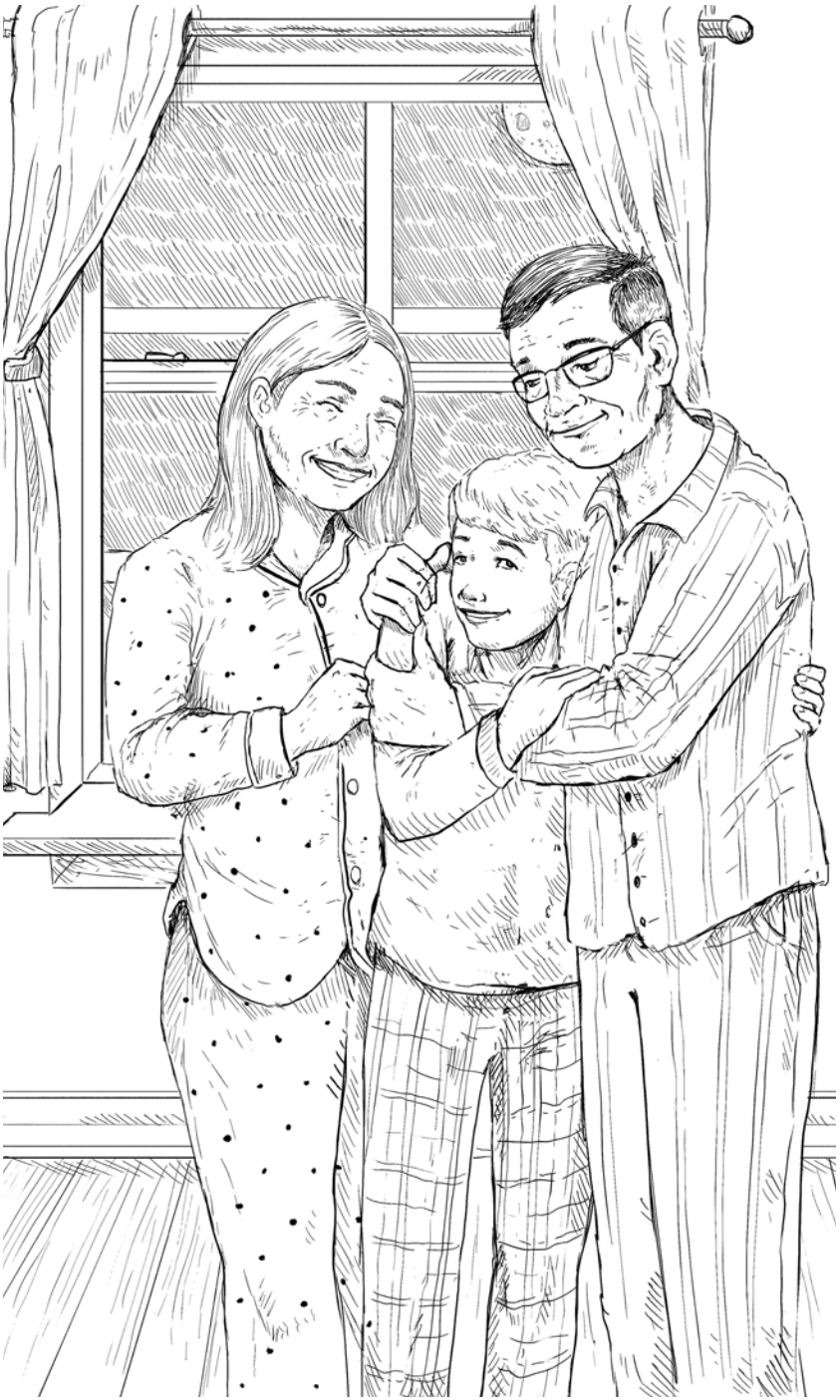
Then all was still and quiet. With a little chuckle, Papa George said, "That was easy!"

Timothy smiled and hugged his grandfather. "Papa George, you are the best!"

"He is the best," agreed Nanna Rose, hugging both Timothy and her husband. Timothy felt an instant bond with these two wonderful people.

"Now, time for bed, Timothy," Nanna Rose said gently. "We're just down the hall if you need us again."

Timothy suddenly felt scared about staying in his room alone, but he couldn't tell them that. *I am twelve years old. What would they think of me if I told them I was scared?*



Nanna Rose studied Timothy's face and then turned to her husband. They smiled at each other and nodded.

"You know, I'm not feeling so tired anymore," Nanna Rose said. "I think I need to knit for a while first. Would you mind if I sat in one of these big, cozy chairs in your room? I know my knitting so well that I can even do it in the dark. It's quite relaxing, actually."

"Sure, no problem," Timothy said. Relieved, he slipped into his warm bed and turned toward the window, which Papa George had closed.

Papa George cleared his throat. "I'm not tired either. I'd like to go sit by the fireplace downstairs and read."

Nanna Rose soon returned with her

knitting and sat in one of the cozy chairs. The faint clicking of her knitting needles was so comforting that Timothy quickly drifted off to sleep.

CHAPTER 2

When Timothy awoke in the morning, he could tell by the bright sunshine pouring into the room that he had slept longer than normal.

Downstairs, he found Zoey putting on her boots and coat and Nanna Rose and Papa George all bundled up.

"Come on!" Zoey called to Timothy. "Papa George told me what happened last night. He went outside this morning to check on things,

and he found something!"

"What did you find, Papa George?" Timothy asked as he took his jacket from the hook by the door and shoved his arms into the sleeves.

Papa George frowned. "I'll show you. It's on that rock where we saw the people last night."

Things sure seem much less scary in the day, Timothy thought as they walked out into the sunshine. A few quail strutted across the gravel path, and a bushy-tailed squirrel scampered up a tree. *It's hard to believe it snowed just a few days ago. It's not even that cold today.*

As they approached the large rock across from their home, Timothy and Zoey gasped. Red and black squiggly lines of spray paint covered the rock.

"It's so ugly!" Zoey said. "I loved this rock."

"Who would do this?" Timothy asked. "And why?"

"Those are good questions," Nanna Rose said. "Has anything like this happened before?"

"Never!" Timothy declared. "We haven't had any problems with trespassing."

"I was thinking of calling the police," Papa George stated, "but I doubt there is anything



they can do. It was probably just some teenagers. I doubt they'll come back."

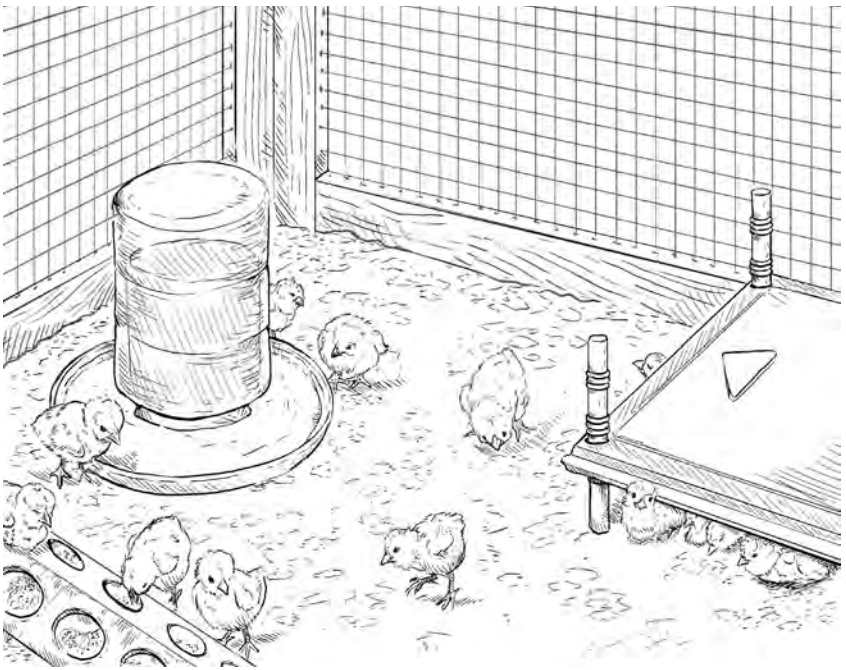
Half an hour later, the family was eating breakfast by the blazing fire. Zoey and Timothy had made oatmeal with diced apples, cinnamon, and cream.

After breakfast, Zoey and Timothy ran out to the garage to see the chicks that had arrived the day after Christmas.



"Oh! They are so adorable," Zoey gushed as she looked into the large cage John had made. The fluffy little chicks chirped and chirped as they walked around the wood shavings and took occasional drinks from their water before darting back under the heating plate.

"They look so happy," Timothy commented. "I want to hold them, but Mom said we have to wait a few more days."




Badger Hills Farm
Book 4
OAK TREE MYSTERY
THE GOOD AND THE BEAUTIFUL LIBRARY
JENNY PHILLIPS



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CHAPTER 1

ZOEY CLOSED HER EYES AND LISTENED TO the sounds around her: birds twittering in the trees, bees buzzing gently in the clumps of flowers nearby, pine boughs rushing in the breeze, and the stream gurgling softly. *Ah, the sounds of early spring*, Zoey thought as she sighed.

Leaving the little grove of trees close to her home, Zoey smiled as she strolled down the narrow asphalt lane. *I miss the crunch of*

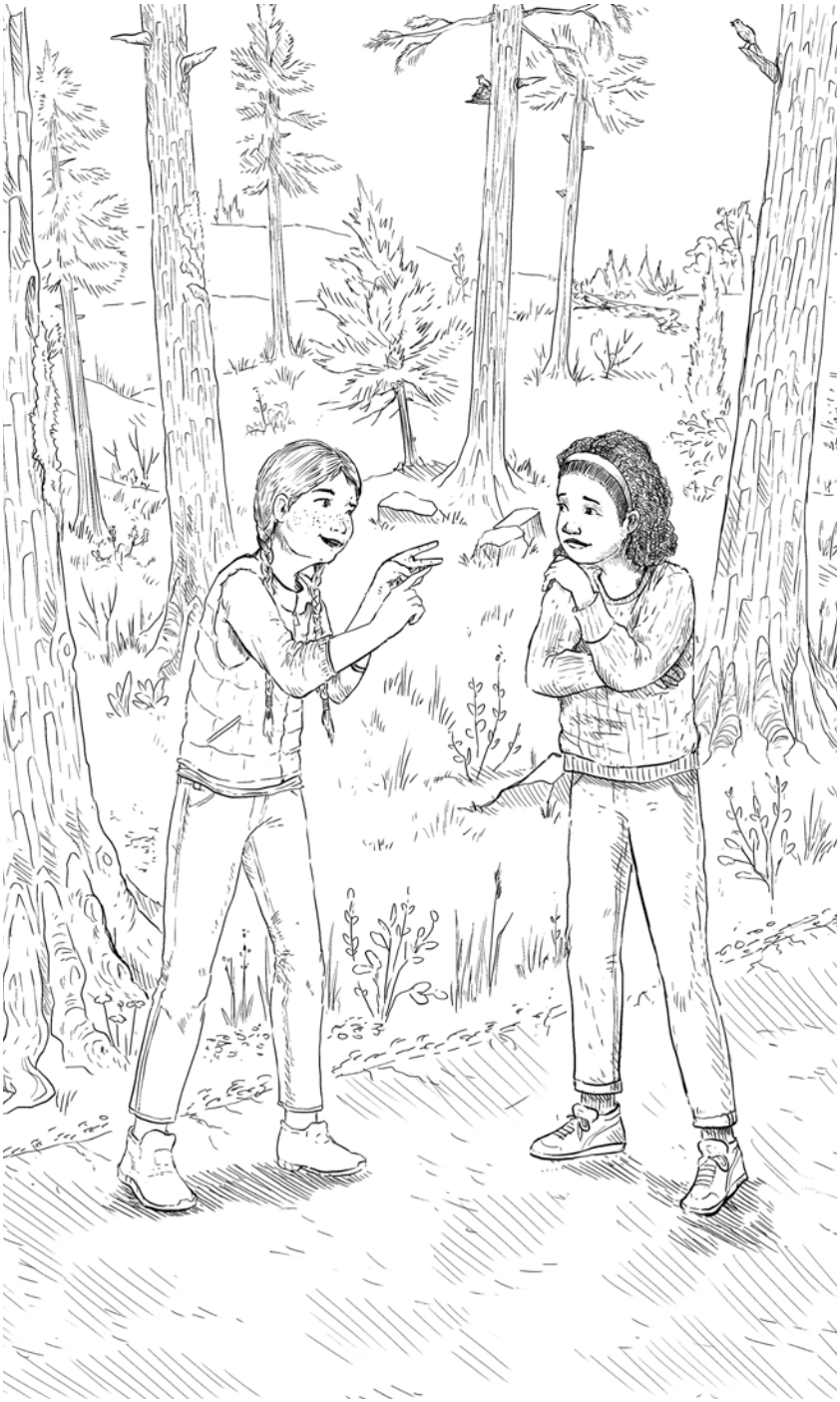
gravel, she thought. *But I love how easy it is for Mrs. Bastian to come over and visit now without having to drive her van here. She can just come right over in her wheelchair.*

"Zoey! Zoey!" Jessica's voice rang out from down the road. "I have a question!"

"What is it?" Zoey asked when Jessica reached her.

"Volleyball!" Jessica burst out. "My club volleyball team needs another player. Twin sisters on our team are suddenly moving, and another girl on our team broke a finger. We can't play unless we have one more person. We are in the championships and only have two games left. We really need you!"

Zoey frowned. "Well, thanks for thinking of me, but I don't play volleyball. In fact, I'm



not the sporty type at all!"

"Oh, you really should do it," Jessica pleaded. "We practice every Tuesday and Thursday at seven and have games Saturday mornings, so you would get two practices in before the first game. I'm sure you would learn quickly. I've told you before how much I love volleyball. It's so fun! You don't have to be amazing; all you have to do is try. And besides, we'd get to see each other even more often!"

Zoey laughed. "I don't think you took a breath between all those sentences. You're quite convincing. But I need to think about it. Can I let you know tomorrow?"

"Sure," Jessica said. "Have your mom text my mom with your answer. I have to run. I've got to babysit tonight."

And with that, Jessica was off, her braids swinging as she jogged back down the lane.

Continuing down the road, Zoey pondered the last few months. The fence around the farm was finished, and it was as beautiful as her family had hoped it would be. It also made Badger Hills Farm feel safe and secure against trespassers. *I hope it will help keep the animals safer too,* Zoey thought. Last month, before the fence was finished, a badger had been hit by a car on the street next to the farm.

In happier news, Sammy had successfully graduated from his dog training school and now obeyed Timothy's commands. The boy and dog were the best of friends. They had also rejoiced when Nanna Bell had returned home after caring for her injured brother.

Zoey's smile changed to a frown when she turned the corner and saw the barn looming before her. Once, she had been so excited for the barn to be finished so that she could bring Misty Toes and her foal from Mrs. Bastian's barn to her own barn. But now, the barn just reminded her that she was too scared to ride Misty Toes since she had fallen off.

Secretly, Zoey had felt angry at her horse—betrayed, even—since the fall. Yes, falling off the horse had hurt her body, and the staples in her head had been painful too, but her feelings were hurt more, and she didn't really understand why. She still did her duty every day: She fed Misty Toes and took care of her. But she didn't talk to and hug her horse like she used to.

A swirl of sadness moved through Zoey's heart as she shuffled into the barn and took care of the horses. She stood close to the stalls for a moment, watching Misty Toes's foal, who was quite big now.

I need to name her, Zoey thought. *It's way past time. I just can't think of a name!*

The foal cocked her head slightly and gazed into Zoey's eyes. In that moment, time seemed to stand still. Zoey felt a deep longing to connect with a horse again. She took a step forward and gently stretched her hand toward the foal.

Without warning, the walls began to rattle, and the earth rolled beneath her feet. Zoey fell hard.

It's an earthquake, she realized as a deep

grumble vibrated through the ground. Zoey quickly got out of the stall. Glass shattered. Zoey dropped to the ground, rolled to the side of the barn, and curled up with her hands over her head. All around were the terrible creaking and rattling of wood, the crashes of things falling to the ground, and the loud whinnies and neighs of the frightened horses. Zoey squeezed her eyes closed and tried to remain calm.

Thirty seconds seemed like an eternity. Finally, the ground became still, and the earthquake was over. Zoey uncurled herself and slowly stood up on shaking legs. Scanning her surroundings, she noticed that a window in the barn had broken and some wooden boards had fallen from the ceiling. Metal pails and



saddles that had been hanging on the wall were now scattered on the floor.

Misty Toes pranced in her stall, eyes rolling. Poor girl! She hadn't understood what was happening in the earthquake and must have been very scared. Zoey rushed to the horse and calmed her down with soft words and strokes. After a few moments, Misty Toes nuzzled Zoey's arm in a show of love. Zoey realized that the horse still trusted her and that she hadn't meant to hurt her before. With a full heart, Zoey threw her arms around her beloved horse. At that moment, she knew she had completely forgiven Misty Toes.




Badger Hills Farm
Book 5
CLUE IN THE CHIMNEY
THE GOOD AND THE BEAUTIFUL LIBRARY
JENNY PHILLIPS



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CHAPTER 1

The late April sunlight slanted through Timothy's bedroom window and shone on flecks of floating dust. The house was quiet; all the guests from Timothy's thirteenth birthday had just left.

Looking around his room, Timothy couldn't decide what to do. A half-read book by Johanna Spyri sat on his nightstand, and presents were piled on his bed: a paint set with a box of blank watercolor cards, a pair

of pajamas, and a pair of binoculars. His interest in birdwatching had grown after he'd seen a few rare varieties of birds on Badger Hills Farm, and he couldn't wait to use the binoculars for more birdwatching. But, at the moment, he wasn't feeling inspired to look for more birds.

Should I finish my book? Or should I use my new paint set? Suddenly, a painting on the wall caught his eye. So many times, he had studied the scene in the painting since he had found it in the hidden room. It showed a narrow path winding up a steep hill carpeted in tall green grass and sprinkled with small yellow wildflowers. Perched on the top of the hill was a white house with green shutters. Rolling green hills rose behind the house, and



one huge tree grew atop the highest hill.

In a recent earthquake, the painting had fallen off the wall, and the frame had been damaged. Timothy and his father, John, had

been creating a new frame for the painting, and it was almost complete.

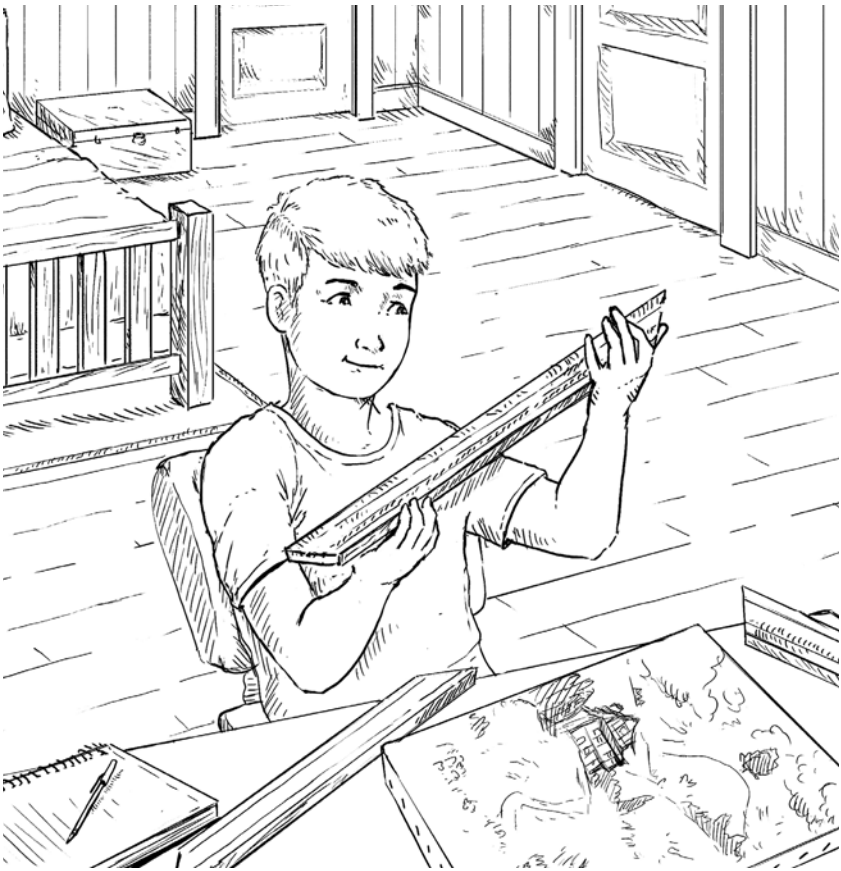
I still wonder what clue or clues this painting holds, but I guess I need to be patient. Maybe I'll take the painting out of this damaged frame so it will be ready to put in the new frame, Timothy thought.

Carefully, Timothy took the painting from the wall and set it on his desk. As he removed the painting, one side of the frame broke loose and clattered onto the floor. When Timothy picked it up, he gasped. There was writing on the back of the frame—writing that looked old and faded.

Timothy's heart began to beat more quickly. *Is this a clue? Has a clue been on the back of the frame this whole time?*

Timothy took apart all the pieces of the frame and turned them over. Each piece had four to five words on it, and when he put all the words together, they created this sentence:

> The clue to unlock the secret of the clock is found on the backs of the photographs.



Timothy's eyes widened. *It is a clue! It's a clue about the clock! I bet the photographs are the ones in Simon's photo album!*

He read the sentence again and then wrote it down in a notebook:

> The clue to unlock the secret of the clock is found on the backs of the photographs.

I've got to tell the others, Timothy thought as he shot up out of his chair. When he opened his door, he heard his father calling for him.

"I'm coming!" Timothy said, flying down the hall and then the stairs. He skidded to a stop in the family room and saw the other members of his family sitting on the couch: John, Lily, Zoey, and Nanna Bell. Sammy, Timothy's dog, was curled up on the rug.

"I have something very exciting to tell you all!" Timothy cried.

"That's great!" Lily responded. She had been Timothy's stepmother for four months, and Timothy loved her with all his heart.

"But wait," John said. "Come have a seat on the couch. We have really big news to tell you first. Then you can tell us your news."

Timothy looked around and wondered why his parents had gathered everyone together. *It must really be important news*, he thought.

Timothy took a seat, and John cleared his throat. "I thought you would all be excited to know that Lily is going to have a baby."

"A baby?" Zoey squealed. "I can't believe it! I'm going to have a little sister!"

"Or a little brother!" Lily laughed.

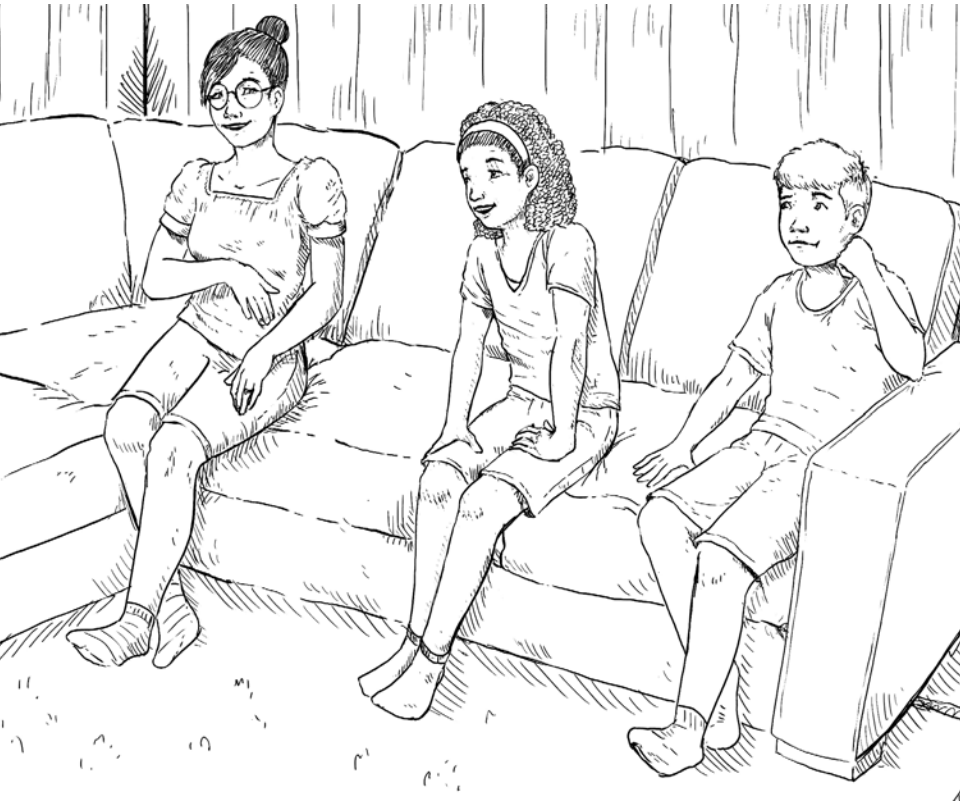
Nanna Bell pressed her hands together, a smile brightening her face. "Oh! How wonderful. How have you been feeling, Lily? When are you due?"

"I'm due in six months—in October. I've hardly felt sick at all," Lily responded.

Timothy felt excited and confused at the



same time. *A brother? I think that would be neat, but he would be thirteen years younger than me. And my dad would have another son. That feels strange. Or maybe it will be a sister. That feels strange too. A baby will change things around here, and I love how they are right now.*



"What do you think, Timothy?" John asked. Timothy looked back at his father and opened his mouth, but no words came out.

Everyone laughed.

"You look pretty surprised," Zoey said.

"I am," Timothy responded, finally finding his words. "But it's neat."

"It is sooooooooo neat!" Zoey sang. She turned to Nanna Bell. "Can we make a baby blanket together?"

"We sure can!" Nanna Bell nodded. "In fact, it's only six o'clock. Maybe we should go into the city and look for fabrics. We could get a late dinner at Buttercup Bakery."

Lily turned to John. "What do you think?"

John smiled. "I love the idea!"

"Let's make it a girls night," Zoey suggested

as she hopped up from the couch. Lily and Nanna Bell enthusiastically agreed, and they all scrambled to get ready to go.

John stood up, too, turning to Timothy. "While the girls are out, I'm going to research what kind of crib I can make. I've really been enjoying woodworking recently, and I'm excited that I'll be able to make this baby's crib! Would you like to join me?"

Timothy shook his head. "Maybe another time."

"OK," John responded. "I'm not too hungry right now, but if you want to eat, there are some burritos in the freezer."

John hurried out, and Timothy was left alone in the family room. Everyone had forgotten that he had exciting news to tell them.

Timothy stood up and made his way to the kitchen, trying not to feel bad that he'd been forgotten.

"I guess I'll go heat up a frozen burrito," he muttered.

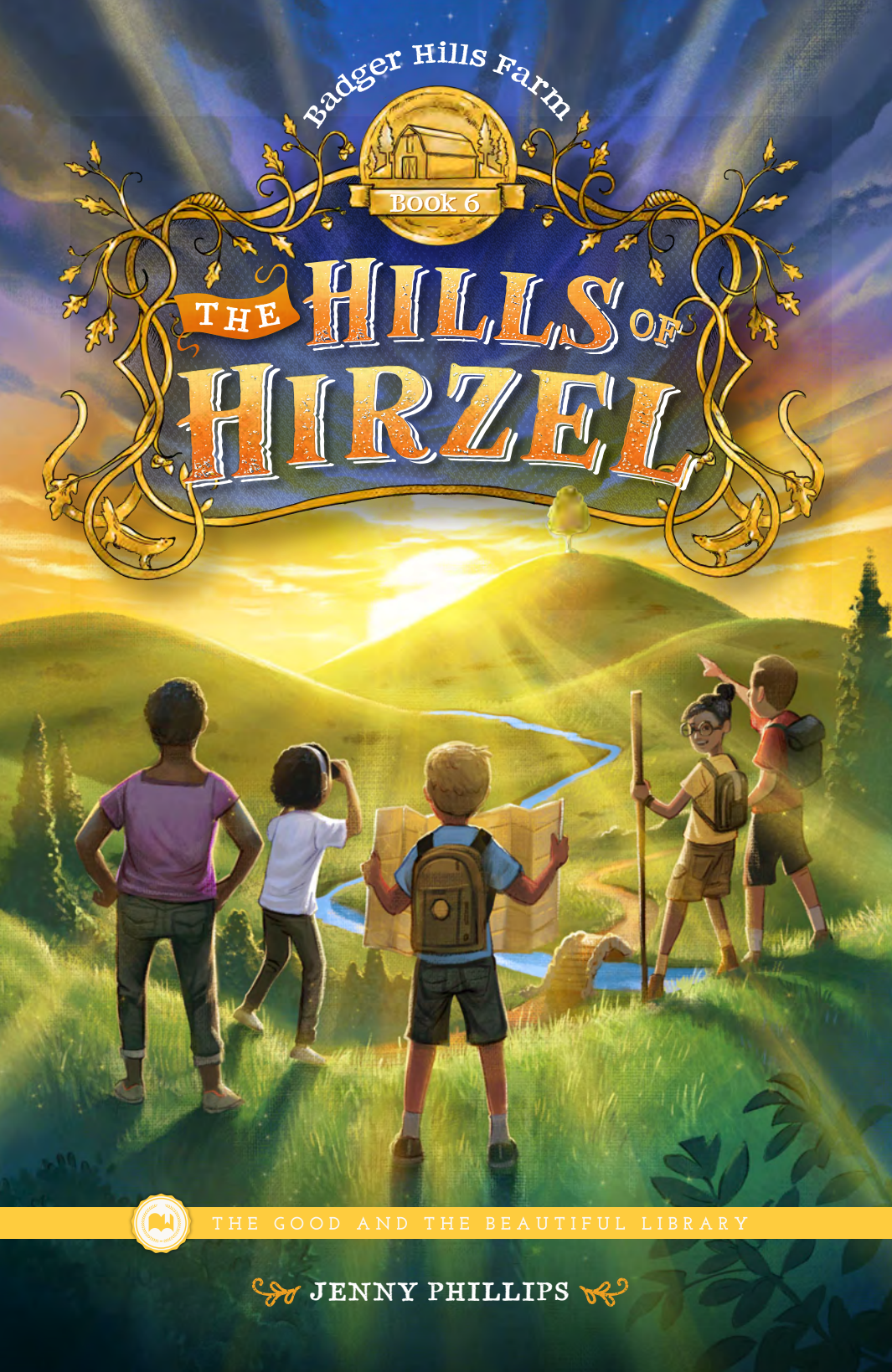

Badger Hills Farm
Book 6
THE HILLS OF HIRZEL
THE GOOD AND THE BEAUTIFUL LIBRARY
JENNY PHILLIPS



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CHAPTER 1

Timothy and Zoey each lay on a separate couch by the fireplace. The dying flames cast dim flickers of light against the walls of the dark room.

As he pulled the blanket up to his chin, Timothy sighed. He was grateful for the warmth of the fire to chase away the chill after he and his family had gotten lost out in the rain.

Listening carefully, Timothy heard no more creaking of floorboards above him. Finally,

the house seemed to be completely still, so he dared to whisper to Zoey. "Did you hear the man who owns this house say he was Simon Roach?"

"Of course," Zoey yawned. "I'm sure we all did, but we were too shocked and exhausted to ask him any questions."

"But he said he was Simon Roach! How come no one said anything?" Timothy whispered, louder than he had intended.

Zoey closed her eyes and snuggled deeper into her blanket. "So much was going on. We were all so exhausted from being lost in the woods that we weren't thinking clearly. We all just wanted to get dry and rest."

"That was nice of them to give us dry clothes," Timothy commented.

"Yes, and it was so kind of them to let us stay the night here. I don't blame Simon for not wanting to drive us to our car; it's so dark and rainy out there, and there are no streetlights." Zoey paused and yawned again. "I'm so tired that I can hardly think, so I'm going to get some sleep. You should too."

"But . . . Simon Roach. At first I thought I misheard him," Timothy whispered as he stared into the last flickers of the fire. "Mr. Roach gave Badger Hills Farm to me because he thought there were no more living Roach family members. I mean, could it be coincidence that the painting in the hidden room showed this house, and then we find someone named Simon Roach living here? I don't think so, but if there are no Roach

relatives left, then who could he be?"

When there was no answer, Timothy looked over and saw that Zoey was fast asleep.

I don't know how she can sleep, he thought. *I don't think I'll sleep a wink.* He closed his eyes and listened to the wind moaning softly outside. It was a little scary to be in this unfamiliar house on a stormy night with a strange man named Simon Roach. Timothy's thoughts raced for a long time until sleep finally overcame him.

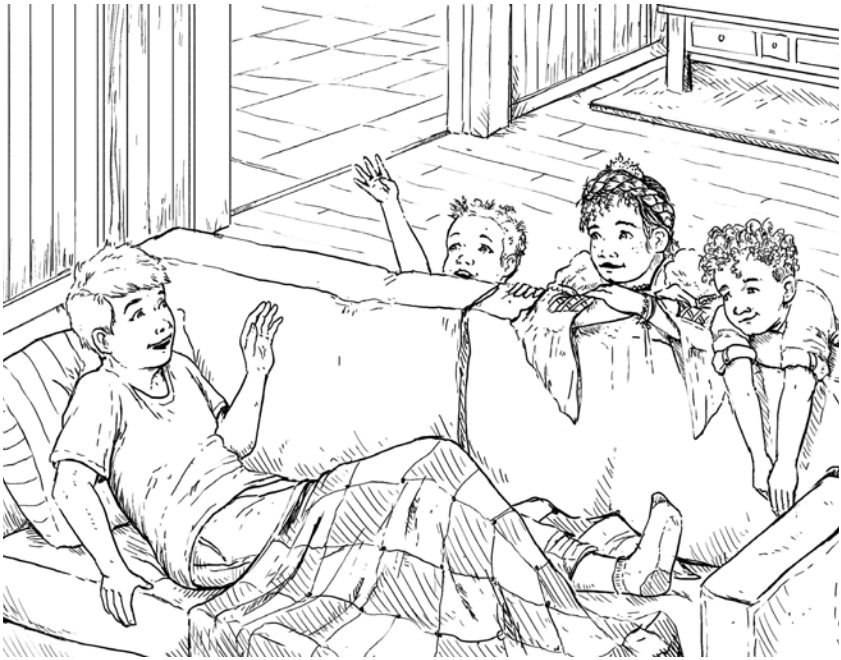
Early the next morning, Timothy stirred as little whispers drifted to his ears. His eyes fluttered open, and he found three pairs of wide eyes peeking over the back of the couch. The eyes belonged to the three little children who lived in the home.

Timothy smiled and sat up. “Hello! How are you?”

“I’m Nora. I’m eight. We don’t speak English,” said the girl whose brown hair was braided into a crown around her head. She was also wearing a princess dress.

“But you just spoke in English,” Timothy said with a laugh.

“Only little bit,” Nora said, pinching her



fingers with a tiny space between them.

"Tobias," said a little boy with bundles of curly brown hair. "I am six."

"Theo!" burst out the youngest, a little boy with blond hair, as he pointed to himself. Then he held up four fingers.

"Oh, you're four." Timothy grinned. "I'm Timothy. I'm thirteen. It's nice to meet you all."

Glancing around, Timothy noticed that Zoey wasn't in the room, and her blankets were folded up neatly on the couch. The scent of freshly baked bread filled the air.

Zoey popped her head around the corner of the kitchen doorway and motioned to Timothy. "Come have breakfast!"

Timothy didn't have to be told twice. He

jumped off the couch, quickly folded his blankets, and rushed to the kitchen. The three Roach children watched Timothy's every move and followed him as he left the room.

Timothy found Zoey and the adults sitting at a very large, old wooden table in the kitchen.

"It's zopf," Lily said, pointing to the bread on the table as Timothy took a seat. "It's the most delicious, buttery bread I've ever had."

Laura Roach smiled. "I can't take credit for it, as I picked it up yesterday at a bakery, but I love it too. We have it every Sunday, as many Swiss people do."

Timothy buttered a thick slice of the bread, and Laura handed him a jar of jam. "This I did make. We grow strawberries in our garden."

"Thank you!" Timothy said.

"You and Simon speak English very well," Nanna Bell commented. "Where did you learn the language?"

"In school, long ago," Simon explained. "We also have friends from England who live close by. We often practice our English with them, and we listen to a lot of audiobooks in English."

"So, is Roach a common last name in Switzerland?" asked Lily.



Timothy was glad Lily had asked the question, and he tried to keep chewing his bread calmly instead of staring at Simon.

"No," Simon said. "My name came from the United States. I was named after my great-great-uncle."

"Your great-great-uncle! From the United States!" Timothy said so loudly that everyone looked at him in surprise. Sheepishly, Timothy



took a drink of his milk and tried not to look so interested.

"Yes, his name was Simon Roach too. He never knew about me, though."

"How did your great-great-uncle not know about you?" asked Lily.

Laura laughed. "Oh, that is quite a story—quite a long one too. It involves a storm, a sinking ship, and so much more. But I'm afraid we don't have time right now. We need to get ready for church. Would you like to come with us?"

"We'd love to," John and Lily both replied.

"Can I drive you over to get your car and luggage?" Simon asked John.

"That would be great," John responded.

Timothy watched as Simon Roach left

the room. His heart sank as a thought came thudding into his mind. *If this man's great-great-uncle was the Simon Roach who owned Badger Hills Farm, then . . . there actually is an heir to Badger Hills Farm from the Roach family. Maybe we will end up losing Badger Hills Farm.*