

Young Oddish Questors

by S.A. Schneider

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# Prologue

## Frankie and Adam

Frankie stuffed the pile of shirts into a garbage bag. He flipped a hunk of his red hair out of his eyes and focused on his brother. Adam sat on the bed and clutched his computer like he thought a strong wind wanted to yank it away.

Though several years younger, Adam's head reached to Frankie's forehead. His shoulders were wider, making him the target of the youth football coach. No matter what the coach promised to entice Adam to the team, Frankie kept telling him no. Adam wouldn't understand the game and wouldn't like the tackling. Frankie had tried to explain what it would be like if Adam started 'whooping' and hand flapping in the middle of the field.

"Come on, Adam. It'll be OK."

Adam didn't move or acknowledge Frankie, so Frankie waved a hand in front of his brother's face.

"Hello, earth the Adam. We need to get going. They'll be here in a minute."

Adam didn't even blink. Frankie sighed. Every time they left a foster home to go back to the group home, it hurt Adam. The kids in the group home weren't nice to Adam. Frankie did everything he could to protect his brother, but Adam still heard their words.

One thing could always be counted on to get Adam's attention. He cleared his throat and tried to speak in the Scooby voice. Adam's voices were better, but Frankie did his best. "Ruh roh, Adam. No Scooby snacks."

Adam blinked. Got him.

"Gotta go."

"No, Fankie. You don't do it right."

"I don't!" Frankie opened his mouth wide and brought his hand to his chest. "Tell me that's not true." He brought his arm to cover his eyes and dramatically threw his head back while blowing out a breath. "Say it isn't so, Adam. Say it isn't so."

Adam chuckled.

"See, I told you I could act." He smiled at his brother. "OK, I've got most of your stuff packed. Get your shoes on and we'll get going."

The smile dropped from Adam's face like a stone in falling off a cliff. "Don't wanna go, Fankie."

Frankie sat on the bed and draped an arm around his brother's shoulder. "Oh, come on. You know what this means?" Frankie waited until Adam looked at him. "It means that our forever adoptive parents are looking for us. Yeah, it's like magic.. The parents we're supposed to be with want us so bad that it messes with anyone else. We just have to get the right ones. So this is a good thing."

"Really, Fankie?"

“Of course. Trust me, I’m your older brother, I know these things. Sometimes when you wish hard enough, it comes true.”

From downstairs came a call of “come on, kids” and Frankie stood and grabbed the garbage bag. He held his hand other hand out and Adam grasped it. Together they walked out of the room. Frankie whistled a favorite show tune. Or was it a tune from a movie? A cartoon. Frankie couldn’t remember but knew it was something about a star.

### **Colin and Maegan**

Maegan hustled around the room. Her long hair flowed behind her as she hustled between the dresser and her suitcase on the bed. The clip meant to hold her hair sat crooked in her hair. At any moment, the brave hairclip might decide hanging on wasn’t worth the effort and it would tumble to the ground.

“Come on, Colin. Get unpacked. Isn’t this a great room? I mean, we get our own beds and they aren’t bunk beds!”

She glanced at her older brother as she made a trip to the closet to deposit the few dolls she had. He sat on his bed and leaned on the suitcase. For several minutes she had tried to get him in a better mood, but he wanted to be grumpy today.

“Do you think it matters, Maegan? I mean, each time we unpack we just have to pack it up again and leave. I might just leave everything in the suitcase.”

He pushed his glasses up his nose and watched her bustle about the room.

“Oh, don’t be such a grumpy nilly.”

“What does that mean?”

She stopped and thought for a minute. “It’s you, a nilly. A silly person.”

“Whatever. I’m going outside to explore these woods they told us about.”

Colin slid from the bed and left the room, rubbing his hand over his crew cut as did walked out the door. Maegan watched him go, then looked at his suitcase. She’d unpack and put his things away. That would make him feel better.

As Maegan unpacked, she tried to figure out how many times they had gone to a different foster home. She wasn’t sure. Colin was older and afraid he was getting too old to get adopted and afraid they would want Maegan, but not him.

Maegan closed her eyes and held her arms out. She tried to imagine herself older and still in this room. Eyes squeezed shut, she wished that the Millers would be their final foster parents and they would adopt both her and Maegan.

Her mind wandered, and she imagined being adopted. In her mind, she pictured Colin older and wearing a hat. She saw herself wearing a bathrobe - no, a silk robe. In her arms she held a cat. The cat purred as Maegan petted it. That was nice, and she smiled and wished for her imaginings to come true.

In her thoughts, someone walked by Colin and Maegan shivered, startled. Who was that? Colin and this boy walked out the door talking. Maegan couldn’t see the other boy’s face, but he had red hair. She thought she imagined this current bedroom, but the room she saw in her mind wasn’t one she recognized.

Maegan’s brow wrinkled. She had never seen other people when she wished to be adopted. It had always been her and Colin. She tried to let the thoughts drift, hoping to see parents.

Like a movie, the scene in her head played out. After Colin and the other boy walked out of the door, the cat jumped from her arms and she turned. Behind her, she saw a desk with a glowing computer screen. Someone with black curly hair sat at the desk. Another girl? In her mind, she stepped closer to see, but a noise behind her startled her. She turned to see a hulking shadow coming down a hallway.

Maegan's eyes flew open. Who, or what, was that? She looked around her bedroom, the real world, and relaxed. It was just a silly imagining, like a daydream. She turned to her brother's suitcase and proceeded to put his stuff away. He'd be surprised and maybe smile again.

Maegan whistled her favorite song, "When you wish upon a star."

## **Sara**

Sara flipped the page and flipped her curly, black hair from her face at the same time. She sat hunched on the bed to ensure her head didn't hit the bottom of the bunk above her. Across from her, another set of bunk beds sat empty. Sara heard the other kids outside playing.

She flipped to the next page, and her eyes widened. The other kids were forgotten as everything seemed to fade except what she stared at on the page.

The catalog she held contained the latest computers and other electronics. While there were plenty of expensive computers, the page Sara stared at didn't have one of those. It wasn't even a game console or big screen tv. The picture on the page showed a small electronic board. It looked like a piece of a computer, but Sara knew it was a complete computer. It was a hackers computer.

Oh, Sara knew about bad hacking and didn't want any of that. She just wanted the ability to make and build whatever she wanted. While a big computer ran spreadsheets or even played the latest game, this little computer could be used for so much more and Sara could control it to do anything.

She imagined herself building a car. Maybe it would have facial recognition and follow her everywhere. Oh, better, she'd make a dog, a golden lab, that would follow her. And she could add voice recognition and command it to do sit or speak. H, she'd have to get a speaker. Then it would do whatever she wanted. Well, if she could program it, it would.

She smiled as she imagined herself the envy of the other kids. Maybe then they'd stop teasing her for being different. They didn't have to be so mean just because she'd rather program a computer than watch some stupid video online.

Sara continue to stare at the little computer. It didn't cost much. She wanted to convince her next foster parents to get her one. Of course she'd have to get a keyboard and mouse, but she might get a used one from the school. If she explained to the computer teacher what she wanted it for, he might just give her one.

Excited, Sara imagined herself making her little computer do anything. She imagined building a drone. She could scour the city and stop bad guys, like a tech superhero. In her mind she saw the drone with four propellers and a camera on the bottom. She imagined picking it up... and froze. The picture she had of picking up the drone changed. Instead, a boy with a hat and a girl with long hair picked up the drone. The boy's mouth moved as he talked to her, but she couldn't hear anything.

Sara dropped the catalog and looked around. For a moment, she thought she was in another room. Then the real world replaced the fading imagin in her mind and once again the bunk beds stood across from her. She shook her head to clear it.

“Stupid,” she muttered as she retrieved her catalog and continued perusing. She whistled softly “When you wish...”

Maybe she’d watch Pinocchio tonight. That is, if the other kids would let her and not want to watch something else.

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Full story released as a serial at [sa-schneider.com](http://sa-schneider.com) under Young Oddish Questors. Check weekly for a new installment.