

Young Oddish Questors

by S.A. Schneider

Copyright 2020 S.A. Schneider

Chapter 2 - Aftermath and haunted stage

Previously on Young Oddish Questors:

Colin and Maegan go into the woods to investigate a witch's grave. They fall asleep and wake up late at night.

Sara can't sleep because she keeps hearing footsteps walking in the hall outside her room.

###

"Maegan, I'm not sure which way to go. Everything looks weird."

They couldn't see too far in the pitch black of the night. Darker than in their bedroom at night.

"Colin, we need to get back. The Miller's will be worried, I don't want them to get mad."

"I know, Maegan." He hugged his sister. "But I don't remember which way we came from. I can't find the path in the dark when everything looks different."

He looked back and forth, eyes scanning the darkness.

Maegan closed her eyes. "I wish I wish I wish...."

"What are you doing?"

"Shush. If ever I wanted a wish to come true, it's now. I want to go home."

"You mean to the Millers."

She ignored him and continued thinking, "I wish to be home." She stepped away from Colin and turned toward her right.

"What are you doing? Maybe if we just yelled."

"No, Colin. It's this way."

"How do you know?"

She considered. How did she know? "I don't know, I just do."

When he looked the way she faced, he pointed at a light in the distance. "Maegan, look. I think it's a Will O' the Wisp."

"What's that?"

"They trick people to get people lost."

"We're already lost."

The Will O' Wisp bounced in the air as they watched.

“Colin, it’s getting closer.”

“It’s OK, as long as we don’t follow it.” Colin licked his lips.

He didn’t sound positive to her, but Maegan trusted her brother. “Should we hide?”

“Yeah, splendid idea.” He headed toward the rock wall and climbed on top as he prepared to jump inside. He held a hand out to her. “I’ll help you.”

“No, I’m not going in there. Especially in the dark. It gives me a spooky feeling. I’ll stay here.”

Before he could answer, they heard a crunch, like someone walked on the dry leaves. The light was closer to them.

Maegan whispered, “Colin, do Will O’ Wisp’s walk?”

From the darkness, a voice emerged. “Maegan, is that you?” The light swung and illuminated her. “Ted, come here, I found them.”

It was Mrs. Miller and moments later there was a crashing and another light joined the first.

“There you guys are. What are you doing out here?”

Mr. Miller sounded mad and Maegan burst out crying. “I’m sorry. We shouldn’t have come here. We didn’t mean to fall asleep.”

Colin jumped from the rocks and joined his sister, hugging her as he did so. “It wasn’t Maegan’s fault. She didn’t want to come, I made her do it. Don’t punish her.”

“Do you know we called the police? We thought you guys were kidnapped or something.”

Colin cowered from the angry tone in Mr. Miller’s voice, but he didn’t say anything. He hugged the crying Maegan tighter as Mrs. Miller approached them.

“OK, Ted. Let’s just get them back home. We can discuss this in the morning.” She hugged Maegan and guided her away from Colin.

Mr. Miller glared at the boy. “Let’s go. We will discuss this in the morning.”

Colin walked with his head hung down and Mr. Miller following, though they talk.

Once home, Mrs. Miller tucked Maegan in and checked on Colin.

“I’m sorry,” he told her.

“Well, sweetie. We can discuss it in the morning. For now, go to sleep.” She tucked the covers around him and left the room.

Maegan lay, eyes closed but not asleep. In her mind, she kept thinking, “Please don’t let them separate us Please don’t let them separate us Please don’t let them separate us.”

She fell asleep with that thought in her mind and Colin’s quiet sobbing from the other bed.

###

“What were you two thinking, going out into the woods at night? Again.” Mr. Miller asked. He hadn’t yelled yet, but Maegan thought he might, any minute.

“Nothing,” Colin grumped.

“Nothing. Then why go? Were you doing something you shouldn’t have? You seem to like going out there to get lost.”

“No. Never mind. You wouldn’t understand.”

Mr. Miller sighed. “Try me, sport.”

Colin didn’t answer.

Mrs. Miller glanced at her husband before looking back at Colin and Maegan. “Sweetie, it’s not that we’re upset you went into the woods, we just didn’t know where you were.”

“Well, we went when it was light,” Maegan said.

“But you didn’t notice we were gone then,” Colin added, crossed his arms and looked out the window by the couch. He had told Maegan that he didn’t care if they got angry. They were going to send them back anyway. Probably.

Mr. Miller sighed. “Listen, champ, just let us know. OK?”

Colin glared at the man standing above him. “We did. We told Mrs. Miller when we were leaving.”

Mr. Miller looked to his wife. Her cheeks blushed.

“He’s right, they did. I forgot. I was busy with supper.”

Mr. Miller blew out his breath. “OK, then it was a misunderstanding. Let’s just forget the entire thing. Next time, guys, just make sure to come back and check in, OK?”

Maegan nodded but Colin jumped off the couch and stomped upstairs. Mrs. Miller followed him with her eyes then turned back to Maegan.

“Are you OK, sweetie?”

Maegan nodded. “I just got scared and tired. I didn’t like it out there.”

Mrs. Miller gathered her into a hug. This was the best part for Maegan. At the group home, she never got hugs.

“Tell you what, why don’t we have a glass of hot cocoa before you head to school. Sound good?” Mrs. Miller smiled at her.

Maegan’s eyes widened. “Can we have marshmallows?”

Now it was Mr. Miller’s turn to smile as he ruffled her hair. “Of course. Why don’t you go get Colin to join us.”

As Maegan ran up the steps, behind her she heard Mr. Miller say “That boy is a handful.” She didn’t hear Mrs. Miller’s response, but hoped they weren’t sending Colin back without her. While she like the Miller’s, she couldn’t stay here without her brother.

Colin jumped when she burst into his room. “Colin, come on, we’re having hot cocoa.”

He glared. “I don’t want any.”

“Come on, please. They aren’t mad.”

“No.”

Maegan bit her lip. “Please, Colin. I don’t...” she trailed off. If she said what she was afraid of, would it come true?

Colin studied her. “Don’t what?”

She couldn’t meet his eyes as she answered, her voice soft. “I don’t want them to send you back. And I like the Miller’s.”

“Send me back? Is that what they said?”

She snapped her gaze to meet his eyes. “No, no, they didn’t. I just don’t want that.”

They were silent for several heartbeats and then Colin sat on his bed. “I don’t want any.”

She wanted to ask him to come down, but knew when he got grumpy like this, nothing would change his mind. She sighed, and with shoulders slumped, went back down.

The cocoa tasted wonderful, warm and chocolatey. The Miller’s were great. But she wished Colin was there, it would make everything better.

###

“There you go, Adam. A haunted stage. Just like the cartoons.”

Frankie flipped his hair from his eyes and gestured to the curtained stage like he was presenting a showcase car. He had his other arm slung around his brother’s shoulder.

“Really, Fankie?” Adam asked as he stared wide eyed at the stage.

Frankie studied his brother. Adam’s hair was a mess, and he had some leftover crumbs from breakfast on his shirt, but Frankie loved him.

“Of course. Didn’t I tell you I was doing a play on a haunted stage? Here it is.”

Frankie had no idea if the stage really was haunted, but he knew Adam would love it. Since Adam didn’t attend regular school, he got more time at home and right now all he wanted to do is watch Scooby Doo cartoons. Over and over. Drove their foster parents nuts, but that was all right with Frankie.

“Yup. If you come to the play, maybe we’ll see a ghost.”

“Fankie, I don’t want to see a ghost.” Adam pulled his shirt so it covered his head. This left his belly and back exposed.

“Pull your shirt down, someone’ll say something.” Frankie helped his brother fix his shirt as he looked around to ensure no one watched them.

Adam continued to look at the stage and repeated, “I don’t wanna see a ghost.”

“OK, OK, no ghost. But who knows what we’ll see. And if we see nothing, you can at least watch me in the play. I get to be a prince.”

Adam looked at his brother. “Really? A prince?”

Frankie laughed. “Not a real prince. But I can pretend to be a prince in the play. It’s acting.” Frankie affected a pose as if he held a sword aloft.

Adam said, “Gee, I knew he wasn’t a real prince.” It wasn’t his own voice, it was higher and sounded like a younger child.

Frankie laughed again and said in a deeper voice than his own, “If it wasn’t fer them durn kids, I would have gotten away with it.” He loved when he and his brother acted out various cartoon scenes with their voices. Maybe someday they would become famous for it.

Adam chuckled, which sounded like a bark. “Snack.”

“Agreed. Let’s go home and get our snacks.”

Frankie led his brother from the school and ignored all the other kids staring as his brother walked behind him and recited every line of the last cartoon they watched and imitated each voice. He didn’t care anymore. Other kids always did that and chances were that they wouldn’t

be at this school any longer than the other ones.

He just hoped they were here long enough for him to finish the play.

###

To be continued in Part 3 - Lock in and sleepy