

Young Oddish Questors

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Chapter 5 - After school

Previously on Young Oddish Questors:

Colin convinces Maegan to leave items for the faeries that live in the woods.

Frankie wants to earn money to get Scooby Doo drawn on Adam's laptop. Adam has a bad dream that night.

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“Come on, Adam. We're doing this for you, remember? You want that picture on your computer, right? So we need to earn the money.”

Frankie leaned on the mailbox next to him. Adam glanced around at the people passing them on the sidewalk. He wanted the picture of his favorite cartoon characters, but other people made him nervous.

Frankie cleared his throat and affected what he thought of as his 'proper tone'. “Maybe, the thief used this mailbox to hide the package.”

Adam cocked his head to the side and studied his brother. Frankie continued, though in a different, higher pitched voice.

“Gee, maybe he did. Like, maybe we should check it out. How about it?”

When Adam realized Frankie looked at him, he took a step back. When he answered, it wasn't in his normal Adam voice, he had become his favorite dog character. “Ruh ro, not me.”

Frankie smiled. He knew what Adam liked.

“Well, sure, you can do it. Just climb into the slot like here.”

Frankie spoke louder and accompanied his words with exaggerated movements. A couple passer by slowed as they watched the boys.

Adam repeated, “Ruh ro, not me.”

Adam sounded louder and Frankie smiled. Adam couldn't resist doing voices and it always put him in a better mood. “Come on, if you check it out, I'll give you a snack.”

Several people stopped to watch the impromptu play happening on the street corner. Frankie removed his hat and placed it on the ground upside down. He took a sign from his back pocket and leaned it against the hat. The simple sign contained two symbols - a dollar sign and a smiley face. No need to elaborate. Best to keep it simple and direct.

He addressed the crowd. “Folks, we have a mystery. It seems the grand jewels of her lady of...” Adlibbing wasn't as easy as he had thought. “Um, main street.” Sure, that works. “We need

to check this mailbox as we believe the thief hid the jewels inside.”

The crowd murmured amongst themselves. Frankie glanced around. It seemed everyone enjoyed their little street corner show.

Frankie looked at Adam and saw it click. Adam’s demeanor altered. No longer was he shy and awkward. He had become the canine detective. When Adam immersed himself in his fantasy world, the real world dropped away.

“Ruh uh, Fankie.” He hadn’t figured out how to say Frankie in the real or make believe world. “Thief ran…” Adam sniffed the air, then dropped to all fours and sniffed the ground. The crowd gasped but then smiled, laughed and clapped. The boys antics were making them happy, and Frankie thought he could do this forever.

“Where are they?” Frankie leaned next to his brother. “Can you pick up the scent?”

Adam sniffed the ground and maneuvered to an older gentleman in black, shiny shoes. Adam sniffed right up the man’s pants - Frankie hoped that wouldn’t get them in trouble - and continued to sniff to the man’s tie. He looked the man in the eye before dropping onto all fours and sniffing in another direction.

“All part of the play, sir. You’re a great sport.” Frankie smiled as he scooped up the hat and held it in front of the man. The man appeared confused, then uttered a “Snork” sound and dug in his pockets until he produced change, which he dropped in the hat.

Meanwhile, Adam sniffed the ground around several people’s feet. Everyone laughed and Frankie followed along with the hat. Most, not all, enjoyed the performance and added coins to the growing pile.

Frankie noticed a police officer eyeing the crowd from across the street. When the man in blue headed toward their side of the street, Frankie knew it was time to leave. No use getting in more trouble.

“Ok, I think the thief went this way. Why don’t we go check?”

He grabbed Adam’s arm, but met resistance. Adam hadn’t seen the cop and enjoyed his part too much to want to leave. Frankie tugged and Adam shrugged him off.

Desperate, Frankie glanced down the sidewalk to see the officer approaching.

“Come on, Adam, time to go.” He tugged his brother’s arm. Through gritted teeth, he said, “Adam, if we don’t go now, the cops are going to get us.”

Panicked, Adam’s head shot up. When he saw the cop close, he jumped to his feet and ran away with his brother.

Frankie called over his shoulder, “Thank you. Look for more performances throughout the week.”

The people laughed and clapped. As they dispersed, they interfered with the cop trying to get through. Satisfied they wouldn’t be followed, Frankie grinned. Not a bad day. The hat definitely felt heavier than an hour ago.

“Adam,” Frankie called as they continued to run, “I think we will be able to get your picture.”

Adam yelled “Whoop whoop”, which Frankie interpreted as a happy sound.

As they ran, Adam grinned and flapped his hands. Flapping confused most of the adoptive

parents. They wanted Adam to stop without understanding that was his way of dealing with his feelings. At the moment, Frankie thought he looked like he wanted to fly, so he flapped his hands along with his brother. Maybe they both could fly.

###

“Maegan, your flowers are gone.”

The necklace and cookies were still there, though the cookies had fallen off, or been pulled off, and had nibbles taken out of them. The necklace hadn’t budged. But the bouquet of flowers was gone.

Maegan beamed. “Oh, good, they liked my flowers. Do you really think it was faeries, Colin?” She twirled in a circle, hands clasped under her chin. “Maybe they’re wearing the flowers for decoration.”

Colin, shoulders slumped and with his hands buried in his pockets, grunted. “Yeah, maybe. The wind probably blew them away.”

Maegan’s brow creased, and she glared at her brother. “What are you being such a grump about? The flowers are gone, that’s good.”

In answer, he sighed and turned away to stare into the woods. “It was the necklace and cookies that they should have been interested in, not the bouquet. They can get flowers anywhere. That’s why I think the wind blew them away and there really aren’t faeries in the woods.”

Maegan sighed. “Whatever, dear brother. Can we just go in now?”

Without answering, Colin stomped along the path toward the house, Maegan followed.

When they went inside, Mrs. Miller called to them. “Hey, kids. Did you have a good time?”

Colin mumbled something and headed straight for the stairs. Maegan, excited about her flowers, rushed up to Mrs. Miller and babbled about everything.

“Oh, yes, it was wonderful. Colin wanted to take some things out for the faeries, you know, the faeries that live in the woods. So he had a necklace and cookies, that’s all. But they didn’t take those. Can you believe it?”

Her expression extended into exaggerated shock and outrage at her brother’s obvious carelessness. Mrs. Miller laughed, which Maegan took as a good sign, so she continued.

“Well, anyway, I thought the faeries might want flowers, you know? Something pretty, because they’re so pretty. So I made a nice flower ring, like a crown or something. And we took it all out to the woods to set on a log for the faeries. And guess what?” The last she shrieked, but waited for a response from Mrs. Miller.

“I don’t know, what?” Mrs. Miller asked. Her grin appeared as wide as Maegan’s and she seemed interested in everything Maegan told her.

“The flowers were gone!” They exchanged wide-eyed looks and Maegan giggled. “Gone. The faeries took them.”

“Faeries, huh? You don’t think it was the wind?”

Maegan solemnly shook her head. “No. It was the faeries.”

“Oh, ok,” Mrs. Miller agreed. “Well, you can go hunt faeries later. Supper’s almost ready, go wash up and tell your brother to wash up.”

Maegan rushed upstairs to find Colin laying on his bed, fists propped under his chin. He stared at the wall.

Maegan approached his bed. “Come on, Colin. Don’t be mad. Maybe the faeries will come back and take those other things.”

Colin’s lips pulled tight, and he looked sideways at his sister. “I’m not mad, Maegan. I’m thinking.”

Maegan hopped on the bed and assumed the same posture as her brother. After a bit of silence, she asked, “What are we thinking about?”

Colin rolled onto his side and faced his sister. “The faeries. Why did they only take the bouquet? I mean, they have tons of flowers in the fields. When I talked to the Crypto-Guru, he said the faeries would like those.”

“Maybe they didn’t need anymore?”

“Hm, but what would they need a flowers for?”

Maegan thought for a moment. “Maybe they thought I did such a good job they wanted them.” She grinned and Colin rolled his eyes.

“Whatever. Did I hear that it was time for supper?”

“Yeah, that’s what I came to tell you.” Maegan hopped off the bed.

Colin followed her to wash his hands. Along the way, he mumbled about the faeries. Maegan knew she would have to cover for her brother’s distractedness during dinner. She didn’t want to Miller’s thinking her brother was weird. She was the only one that could think that.

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Sara burst through the door. She heard the ‘twank’ as it bounced off the little spring thingy that kept it from hitting the wall, but she didn’t slow down.

“Ms. Mcfarland,” she called.

Ms. Mcfarland stepped from the kitchen to peer at her young charge. “Gracious, Sara. Are you ill?”

Sara stopped in front of her foster parent. She struggled to keep talking while breathing heavily. She had run most of the way from the school. She knew her hair had gotten tangled, but she didn’t care.

“I got work. Drawing. Kid asked. See?” She held a handful of change out for Ms. Mcfarland. She probably dropped some on the way, but she didn’t care.

After peering at the change, Ms. Mcfarland straightened. “Young lady, it is not the proper to

run into the house yelling like a... a... banshee. And you left the door open.”

Sara’s shoulder’s slumped. “But isn’t that cool?” She glanced over her shoulder at the still open door. “I’m sorry about the door.”

“Now, why don’t you close the door and go clean up. It looks like you just came from gym class. Then you can explain what this handful of change is from over dinner.”

Sara turned to do as told. As she headed upstairs, Ms. Mcfarland asked from the bottom of the steps, “You didn’t steal that money, did you. I won’t have stealing.”

“No, ma’am. I didn’t.”

Sara washed her face and hands and struggled to comb the tangles from her hair. Some of her excitement returned as her eyes drifted to the coins.

At dinner, Ms. Mcfarland asked, “Tell me what the coins were from, Sara.”

Excited, Sara looked up. “A boy at school paid me to draw him a picture. He saw my artwork...”

Ms. Mcfarland interrupted. “What boy? Are you talking with strange boys? You must watch that.”

“No, no ma’am.” Sara felt her enthusiasm slip away. “He just wanted me to draw a picture for him.”

“Because he looked at some drawing you did?”

“Yes, ma’am. The one that was hung in the hallway.”

“Oh, yes, I seem to remember you telling me about that. He liked it?”

“Yes, he did.” Sara paused, then said quieter, “It was featured in the night at the arts. You didn’t go.”

“Ah, well that is exciting.” Ms. Mcfarland took a drink. “I hope you do a good job.”

Sara didn’t answer. While Ms. Mcfarland never yelled and was nice, she didn’t take much interest in what Sara did. Except when Sara took the computer apart.

After dinner, Sara cleaned the table and put the dishes in the dishwasher. Everything was put away and tidy. Now would be the best time to ask Ms. Mcfarland to use the computer.

“Um, Ms. Mcfarland, may I use your computer?”

Ms. Mcfarland sat in her chair knitting. Sara thought the needles were little metal spikes. Listening to them clink together as Ms. Mcfarland worked on a blanket had become soothing to Sara. She still wished Ms. Mcfarland secretly hunted vampires with them, but wouldn’t tell her that.

“What for, Sara?”

“The picture. The one that boy asked me to draw.” She held a rectangular plastic piece. “He gave me some pictures to work from. You know, so I can get the characters right.”

Ms. Mcfarland eyed the item in Sara’s hand. “What is that, dear?”

“It’s a USB drive. It contains pictures, but I need to use the computer. Please.”

“I won’t get one of those viruses or anything like that, will I?”

Sara hoped that wouldn't happen, but she wasn't sure. "Uh, no, not at all. It's just pictures."

Ms. Mcfarland thought for several heartbeats before answering, "OK, you can use it."

As Sara raced to the computer, Ms. Mcfarland called, "Please make sure and wash your hands first, dear."

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To be continued in Part 6 - Meetings