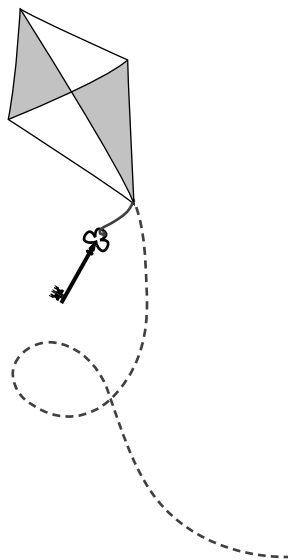


the **TINY**
GENIUSES

SET THE STAGE!

by Megan E. Bryant



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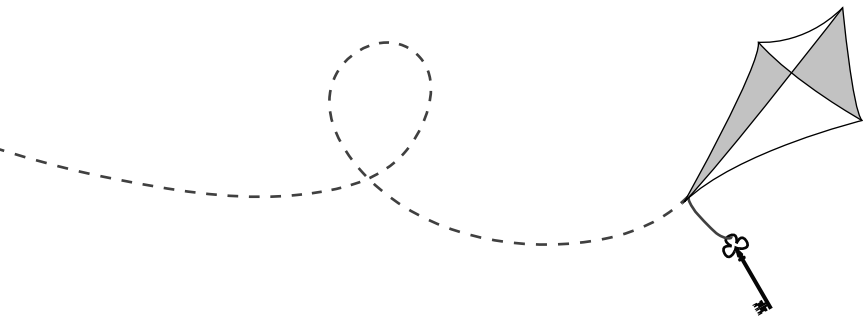
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CHAPTER 1

Thwak.

Thwak.

Thwak.

How many times had Jake Everdale punched his new baseball glove? A hundred? A thousand? He didn't know, and he didn't care. He'd keep hitting and thumping and squashing and squishing it until the brand-new glove was as broken-down—in all the right ways—as his old

one. Jake was pretty sure that the stiff leather had finally started to give, which made him even more determined to keep at it. That's why he was punching it in rhythm to his steps as he walked to school with his best friend, Emerson Lewis. The school day hadn't even started yet, but Jake was already daydreaming about baseball practice that afternoon.

Thwak.

"You think Coach will let me pitch today?" Jake asked.

Thwak.

"Maybe," Emerson replied. "He keeps putting you on third base, though. And third base is pretty important."

Thwak.

A slight frown crossed Emerson's face as he glanced over at Jake's glove. "Why'd you get a new glove anyway?" he continued. "Your old one was perfect."

Jake didn't answer right away. He didn't want

to lie to Emerson, but he couldn't exactly tell the whole truth: A mini-figure of Sir Isaac Newton had come to life to help Jake with his science project, and ripped up Jake's glove for one of his experiments.

It had all started when Jake made a wish at the old storm drain behind Franklin Elementary School. The kids called it the Wishing Well. According to legend, if you threw your most special belonging into the well, your wish would be granted.

Jake had been struggling in school for as long as he could remember, and it had gotten so bad that Mom and Dad were going to take away baseball if he didn't get a good grade on his science project. Jake thought the Wishing Well was his only hope, but he couldn't bear to give up his baseball card collection.

Instead, Jake threw in his Heroes of History action figures. Jake hoped that they were special enough since they'd been a gift from his aunt

Margaret, who was the best neuroscientist in the world. But when the Wishing Well brought Sir Isaac and famous pilot Amelia Earhart to life, it almost caused more problems than it solved!

“I had some money saved up,” Jake finally said. It wasn’t really an answer to Emerson’s question, but by then they had reached school, and Emerson was distracted.

“Better put your glove away before Ms. Turner sees it,” Emerson told Jake as they entered the classroom. Jake wasn’t really listening, though. His attention had been captured by the box on Ms. Turner’s desk. It was glittering gold, with bright red question marks glued to the sides. Jake immediately wondered why it was there—and what was in it.

“Check it out,” Jake said, gesturing to the box.

“That’s new,” Emerson replied. “Do you know what it is?”

Jake shrugged. “I don’t have a clue.”

“Tell us something we don’t know, *Everfail*.”

Jake didn't need to turn around to know who was speaking. Only Aiden Allen, the class know-it-all, called him Everfail instead of Everdale. It was no secret that Jake struggled in school—a lot. But nobody else seemed to enjoy his difficulty as much as Aiden did. Jake didn't understand why Aiden hated him so much. Aiden was a great student. He could get all As in his sleep.

Jake could feel that familiar, uncomfortable redness creeping into his neck. He wished he had something to say—something that would make Aiden shut up for a change. But, like always, Jake was totally tongue-tied when Aiden started mocking him in front of everybody.

“I know *exactly* what's in that box,” Aiden said loudly. “Doesn't anybody remember what's coming up?”

“You want to tell us or not?” Emerson asked.

Aiden paused for a long moment. “It's for Living History Night, of course,” he announced.

The other kids started chattering excitedly.

Living History Night was a big deal for the whole school—but *especially* for the fourth grade. Every year, each student was assigned an important person from history to research. They had to make a costume, find props, and prepare a first-person biographical speech. Then, on a special night, they had to give a presentation to the whole school—including all the teachers, their parents, and the principal!

“I hope I get Marie Curie,” Hannah said excitedly. “She was the coolest scientist ever. She discovered radioactivity!”

“Where would Spider-Man be without her?” Jake joked. “I hope I get a baseball player. I already have a uniform, so my costume would be all set.”

“A baseball player?” Aiden sneered. “Yeah, that sounds about your speed. But baseball doesn’t really have anything to do with history.”

“Are you kidding?” Emerson spoke up. “What about Jackie Robinson? Not only was he one of the greatest ballplayers in history, he ended

segregation in baseball *and* he was a soldier during World War Two!”

Aiden ignored him.

“I know who I want,” he said, speaking over Emerson. “Benjamin Franklin. My brother was Franklin three years ago, so I already have the wig. And I even have a *real* copy of the Constitution on *real* parchment. It looks *really* old and official.”

Good for you, Jake thought. He glanced at the portrait of Benjamin Franklin that hung over Ms. Turner’s desk. Ben Franklin was smiling slightly, like he knew a secret. He looked like a pretty nice guy, actually . . . the exact opposite of Aiden.

“Don’t you think I’d be the *perfect* Franklin?” Aiden continued.

“I guess.” Hannah shrugged. “It’s a lot of work, though. You don’t just have to do your own project—you have to be in charge of the whole show. You’d be, like, the host.”

“You think I don’t know that?” Aiden asked.

“It’s the most important role in the whole show. Ms. Turner has probably already picked the person who gets to be Franklin. I just hope it’s me.”

“But it’s a random drawing,” Jake pointed out.

Aiden gave him a withering look. “Do you *really* think Ms. Turner is going to leave something so important up to chance?” he asked. “A lousy Franklin will make the whole night a giant fail.”

Just then, Ms. Turner entered the room, right as the bell rang.

“Glove!” Emerson reminded Jake.

Jake shoved his baseball glove in his backpack as all the students scurried to their seats. From the middle of the front row, Jake had a better view of the mysterious box than anybody.

“Good morning, class!” Ms. Turner said.

“Good morning,” everyone replied.

A smile crossed Ms. Turner’s face as she picked up the box. “I’m sure you’re all wondering what’s in here,” she began.