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CHAPTER 1

THE CARPET

Sam and Scarlett were twins. They had the same dark hair and green eyes, the same chins, ears, and noses. They sounded alike. They were even the same height and weight. They were best friends too. But sometimes they liked to argue.

Tonight was one of those times.

It was the first night of Passover. Sam and Scarlett were going to help to lead the family Seder. Who would ask the Four Questions? That

part always went to the youngest child at the table. Sam and Scarlett shared the same birthday. This was not going to be easy.

“I want to do it,” said Sam.

“Well, so do I!” said Scarlett.

“Why don’t you read the questions together like you did last year?” suggested their dad.

“No way! I’m not doing that again,” Scarlett said. “Last year was a mess. Sam reads too slowly.”

“Well, you read too fast,” Sam shot back.

“I have an idea. Why don’t we divide up the questions? I’ll take the first two. You take the last two.”

“No! You take the last two. The first two questions are the best. Everybody knows that.”

Sam rubbed his forehead. “Here we go again. Come on, Scarlett! Quit trying to take the best parts for yourself.”

That’s when Grandma Mina got into the act. She stood up from her seat on the other end of

the table. Grandma Mina had grown up in Iran. Her flowing gown and colorful scarf matched the colors and patterns of the Persian carpet that hung on the dining room wall behind her.

The carpet was hundreds of years old. It was the only thing Grandma Mina brought with her when her family had to leave their home. They left everything behind—but not that carpet.

“The carpet is woven with magic,” Grandma Mina always said. “It has been part of our family throughout the ages. If only that carpet could talk. What stories it could tell!”

Right now, Grandma Mina wasn’t looking for stories. She was looking for quiet.

“Sam and Scarlett!” She clapped her hands to get their attention. Sam and Scarlett stopped squabbling.

“Listen to me, both of you. It doesn’t matter which of you asks the Four Questions. The answers are what matter. Tonight, at the Seder, we

don't just tell the story of Passover. We become part of it. You, I—all the Jewish people all over the world. We all take part in the Passover story. We were there. It happened to each of us.”

“Huh?” said Sam. “That doesn't make sense, Grandma. The first Passover happened in Egypt three thousand years ago. Nobody alive was there then.”

“You're wrong,” Grandma Mina said. “We were all there. The whole Jewish people. In every land, in every age. We *all* were in Egypt *together*.”

“You mean Sam and me?” said Scarlett. “We weren't even born then!”

Grandma Mina turned to the carpet on the wall. “Look at the carpet. Can you see how it is made of different threads? Thousands of threads, all dyed different colors. Yet they are still part of the same design. So it is with us. We are all part of this story. Like the threads of the carpet. All of us together . . . in Egypt . . . then . . . and now.”

That's when something odd began to happen. Grandma Mina's voice faded. Hot winds began to blow. Scarlett and Sam stared at the carpet. It began to shimmer. Colors swirled before their eyes.

"What's going on?" cried Scarlett. "I feel dizzy."

"Me too!" said Sam.

The twins held tightly to each other as a powerful force pulled them toward the carpet.

"What's happening?" Scarlett shouted. "Sam, don't let go! Stay with me!"

"I'm trying!" Sam yelled back. Loud whooshing sounds drowned out their voices. The room turned black. The whoosh became a roar. The twins felt as if they were flying backwards through the air. They held on to each other as the carpet bucked and bumped through space.

The air around them felt icy cold. Then it began to grow warm. Warmer and warmer until it



turned . . . HOT!

The carpet came down with a thud. Its colors faded, then vanished. Sam and Scarlett bounced and rolled. Something soft and gritty cushioned their fall.

“Whoa! That was some ride!” said Scarlett, brushing herself off.

“Where are we?” said Sam. “Where’s the carpet?”

“Your guess is as good as mine,” said Scarlett. She picked up a handful of sand. It was almost too hot to hold. “Sand? How did we get to the beach?”

“I don’t think this is a beach,” said Sam. “There isn’t any water.”

“Then what’s with all this sand?” said Scarlett.

The blazing sun beat down on them. All at once, they realized the answer to that question.

“We’re in the desert!” they said together.