

JONATHAN GEORGE



TREASURE QUEST

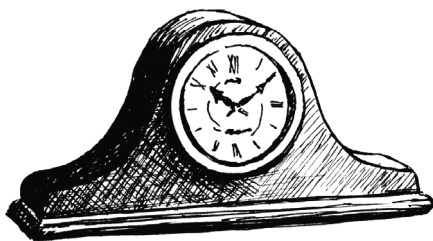
• THE ELLIOTT CHRONICLES •

TREASURE QUEST

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● CHAPTER ONE ●



THE PROMISING LEAD

“Move it up a little, Seth. It’s uneven.” Brianna Elliott stood on her tiptoes atop a chair. She dangled the *Welcome Home* banner between her fingers; her shoulder leaned against the foyer wall for balance.

“I can’t go any higher, Brianna.” Seth grunted. He gripped the other end of the streamer high above his head as he steadied a foot on the edge of a step midway up the stairs.

“Well, go up another step.”

“Then I’d have to twist backwards.”

“Just do it. We don’t have all day, Seth. Mom and Dad will be home soon.”

Seth ascended the stairs while pivoting his arm behind him. His weight suddenly shifted and his foot slid off the step. He grabbed the banister just in time before he tumbled down the stairs. The banner fell from his hand and fluttered to the floor.

“Be careful, Seth!” Brianna exclaimed. “I don’t want Mom and Dad to come home and find you in a body cast.”

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“Thanks for the concern, Bree. I’ll try to keep that in mind,” Seth retorted. His words dripped with sarcasm.

Brianna jumped from the chair and let the other end of the streamer drop from her fingers. “This isn’t working. Don’t we have a ladder?”

“I think so. Somewhere in the garage. Probably behind a million boxes.”

Grandma strolled into the room. The snow white heap of curls on top of her head bobbed with each step. She carried a plate of warm chocolate chip cookies.

“How’s the signage going?” she asked.

“It would be going a lot better if Seth wasn’t so short,” said Brianna.

“Hey, it’s not my fault I can’t reach any higher.”

Grandma held out the plate of cookies. The sweet aroma wafted in the room. “How about taking a quick break for a snack?”

Seth charged toward the platter of sweet confections. “You don’t have to ask me twice.”

Brianna refused the treats. “Maybe in a little while. I’m not very hungry.” She gazed upon the banner which now lay crumpled at her feet. “Mom and Dad have been in Brazil for seventy-three days. But, who’s counting? I just want their homecoming to be special. So far, it’s not going so great.”

“Don’t be so hard on yourself.” Grandma threw an arm around Brianna’s shoulder and gave her a gentle shake. “If I know anything, it’s that your mom and dad are more interested in seeing your sweet little faces than coming home to a lot of fanfare. You just wait and see.”

Brianna forced a smile. “You’re right. It’s just that lately they’ve been spending more time on their archeology digs than at home with us. I just miss them.”

Brianna pulled away from her grandmother's embrace. She picked up the banner and began to roll it up. "I also thought a little family party might make it easier for me to tell them about Seth and me getting saved. I'm not sure how they're going to react."

"What do you mean?" Seth's cheeks bulged with cookies. "Why wouldn't they be happy?"

Brianna shrugged. "I don't know. It's just you know how Dad gets when anyone brings up God or church."

"I wouldn't be too worried," their grandmother said. "God will give you the words."

The telephone rang, piercing the somber atmosphere. Grandmother handed the plate of cookies to Seth. "Take these. I'll be right back," she said. She sprinted toward the phone.

"I've got to admit, Grandma hasn't lost a bit of energy," commented Brianna.

"She claims it's all that clean living," Seth said laughingly.

A moment later, Grandmother called out from the other room. "It's your father!"

Brianna and Seth ran toward the sound of her voice. They found her in the kitchen. Grandmother gestured to Brianna, one hand pressed against the phone's mouthpiece. "He's at the airport and doesn't have a lot of time. He wants to talk to you."

Brianna grasped the phone from her grandmother's hand while Seth grumbled under his breath about never getting to talk with Dad when he calls.

"Hey, Dad. Are you on your way home?" she asked.

"No, Sweetie. That's why I'm calling," Dad replied. "Your mother and I are about to board a flight to Israel."

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Brianna felt her heart sink. “Really?” she whined. “We were decorating the house to surprise you. At least we were trying, but your son needs to grow a foot to reach anything.”

“I’m not short!” Seth protested.

“That’s sweet, baby girl,” Dad continued. “Actually, while we were digging in the jungle, we came across a tribe of Israelite descendants. Crazy story. I’ll tell you about it when I see you kids. Anyway, one of the elders gave us a very promising lead about an important religious artifact. This could rewrite history.”

“That sounds great,” Brianna said. She tried to mask her disappointment with an upbeat tone.

Brianna heard a woman’s voice in the background call out over a speaker system. “We are now boarding rows 17 through 32 on Flight 905 to Tel Aviv.”

“Listen, honey. We’ve got to run now. But the reason I was calling was to see if you and Seth wanted to join us.”

“On an expedition?” Brianna said, beaming. “Are you serious?”

“Dead serious,” Dad replied. “Your mom and I miss you kids like crazy, and she thought it would . . .”

“Yes, yes, yes!” Brianna broke in, excited.

“Great. Let your grandmother know I’ll be emailing her your plane tickets when we land.”

“Again, we are boarding rows 17 through 32 on Flight 905 to Tel Aviv,” said the woman over the intercom.

“Gotta run, honey. We’ll see you in a couple weeks.” Her father ended the call. Brianna hung up the phone.

“What did he say?” Seth asked.

Brianna dropped her head and frowned. She pretended to be upset.

Seth’s face drew up into a scowl. “They’re not coming home are they? I knew it!”