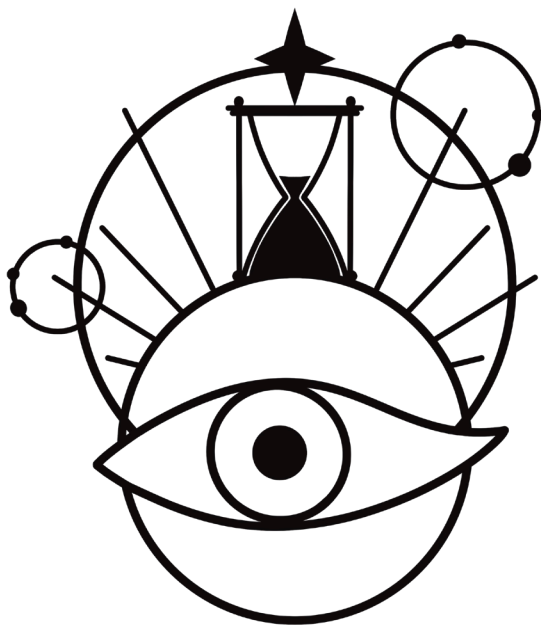


ANNIE DAY



THE  
MAGIC  
EYE

# INTRODUCTION

A quick note from Victoria...

*Hi, I'm Victoria. My twin brother is Henry.  
We live with our Aunt Goldie in a big yellow house.  
It's a magic house.*

*Mostly, life is good but something awful happened.  
Mum and Dad have disappeared. We miss them  
terribly. They went to work one day and they  
never came home.*

*We desperately need to find them.*

*Luckily, we belong to a magic family and tomorrow  
we finally get to use our magic powers.*

*Victoria*



# CHAPTER 1

## The writing on the wall




*Henry's room*

Henry opened his eyes and was startled to see something strange written on the wall of his bedroom. He didn't write it and it definitely wasn't there when he went to bed last night.

'Victoria, this is really, really urgent. Quick, come and look,' Henry yelled.

Victoria ran in. 'Yikes! Henry, how on earth did that get there?'

'I don't know but can you read it? The writing is a bit squiggly.' Victoria made an attempt to read the message.

*'Happy birthday, dear twins. It's time to get to know your extended family. Trace this sign  on the wall and enter the portal.'*

*Greetings and salutations from beyond.*

*Jasper Gardius, esq.*

‘A portal, what’s a portal?’ Henry asked.

‘A sort of doorway I think.’ She studied the wall. The words were arranged in a door-like shape. Jasper’s instructions arched over the top of the glowing outline. The eye shape sat in the middle, where a handle might go. ‘Let’s give it a try.’

‘Wait a minute, I’ve just woken up. I have to eat something, I’m starving.’

‘You’re always hungry but you will have to wait! Let’s not waste any time. By the way Henry, HAPPY BIRTHDAY.’

‘You too, Victoria,’ Henry said quickly.

The twins rushed to their rooms and dressed in a flash. They met in the hall, at the top of the stairs, where Victoria knelt down to give a big hug to Leo, the lion skin rug. She whispered in his ear, as she did every morning, ‘Leo you are the most beautiful lion in the world and we love you. How could anyone turn you into a rug?’ She turned to Henry and said, ‘Let’s get back to Jasper’s message.’ They set off down the hall.

Henry paused to say, ‘I’m a bit scared to go through the portal. I’d never even heard of it until a minute ago. How do we know it’s safe?’

Victoria was a little surprised. ‘Gosh Henry, don’t you want an adventure? It will be perfectly fine, let’s give it a go. Perhaps Jasper really is part of our family and maybe he can help us find Mum and Dad. It would be perfect if we could

all be together again. I know Goldie is the best auntie in the world but it would be so good to have our real mum and dad at home to give us a hug.’

The twins had been living with their aunt Goldie for what seemed like years but, of course, it had been lonely without their mum and dad and the twins didn’t understand why they weren’t around any longer. They hadn’t managed to speak to Goldie about it because every time they tried to mention their parents, Goldie changed the subject and they didn’t want to upset her because she was such a darling.

Goldie was quite old fashioned and sometimes uproariously funny. She found the twins a beautiful little dog they called Scrap. He was a dear creature who tilted his head from side to side and danced around. He had an uncanny sense for how the twins were feeling and tried to make them laugh whenever they were sad.

Tiny moving lights appeared on the wall and Henry said, ‘Wowzers! That’s amazing, but let’s take Scrap with us to be on the safe side. Don’t you think that symbol is just a little bit spooky?’ Henry felt as though the eye was staring down at him from its place high on the wall.

‘Oh, stop being such a wuss. It will be okay.’ Victoria had always considered herself braver than Henry and she really wanted to see if Jasper was part of the family.

Little Scrap was delighted with the lights dancing on the wall and was having a great time jumping up trying to catch one.

Henry traced the shape of the eye on the wall and Victoria touched the dot in the middle. The portal swung open and Henry exclaimed, ‘It really is a door!’

Scrap ran through first and sniffed around with his tail wagging. Following after him, the twins stepped through the portal into a lovely old room. It looked like an interesting museum with lots of old books, artefacts in glass cases, sculptures and exquisite paintings. Music echoed through the room, though they weren't sure where it was coming from.

Henry noticed a strange curved screen on one corner of a desk. It seemed to be made of glass or some transparent material.

They both spotted a photo that looked like Scrap with Henry and Victoria. The dog in the photo even had Scrap's little heart shaped mark on his chest and, although, the twins were dressed in old fashioned clothes they certainly didn't remember the picture being taken.

'Victoria, have we been in this room before? It is a bit familiar and what about this old photograph of us with Scrap? Where did it come from and why are we wearing such funny looking clothes?'



‘I don’t know. It is a bit weird, but I like this place, it’s welcoming and interesting,’ Victoria replied.

A man bustled into the room tucking something that looked like a chocolate wrapper into his waistcoat pocket.

He was dressed in most unusual clothes. His luminous bow-tie and patterned waistcoat were covered in intricate designs that appeared to be changing as he moved. There was something that looked like a pocket watch on a chain but it was glowing. His outfit was completed with spotty, mustard yellow trousers. His hair was scruffy and stood on end in some places. Apart from looking old fashioned, he was quite unlike anyone they had met before.

‘Hello there,’ he said. He wore a big scarab ring on his left hand and waved as he continued his introduction, ‘I’m Jasper Sardius, your great uncle. Call me Jasper. It’s so lovely to see you, dear twins.’ He shook their hands and addressed them by name. ‘Victoria and Henry, welcome to my domain, please be seated. We have so much to talk about now that you have attained the age of ten and can begin using your powers.’

Jasper bent down to greet the third member of their troupe. ‘Hello Scrap.’ Scrap didn’t growl and then hide, as he usually did with strangers, but jumped up for a pat. Henry was surprised that Scrap was so friendly. This was definitely a good sign. In Henry’s opinion, dogs instinctively knew when someone was okay and Henry definitely valued Scrap’s input.

*Definitely* was Henry’s absolutely favourite word and when he said *definitely*, he really meant it.

Scrap jumped up to sit on Jasper’s lap.

Jasper offered them tea and pink cupcakes and one of Henry's preferred sandwich combinations, hazelnut butter and honey on brown bread. Jasper began to tell them about the portal. 'Using the portal, you will be able to travel to other times and places.' The children were amazed and delighted with everything they heard. Henry was listening so intently that he ate three cupcakes and two sandwiches before noticing the plate kept replacing the contents!

'Have we been in this room before?' Henry asked.

Jasper answered, 'Yes, when you were very young. It will be a second base for you from now on. Everyone calls it Jasper's domain. You are welcome here any time.'

'Jasper, we don't want to appear rude and we really love living with our darling Aunt Goldie, but we think about Mum and Dad all the time and miss them terribly. Is there any chance that you know where they have gone? Please, can you help us find them?' Victoria asked Jasper.

'Ah, the hard questions first! It's difficult at the moment to give you a satisfactory answer. We know that your dear mother, Emerald, is safe and well. She is working in a distant part of this galaxy, attempting to settle a dispute with two squabbling kingdoms, approximately a thousand years into the future. They are being difficult and very tiresome, but I trust she will be able to return home soon.'

That was an astonishing statement and Victoria thought Jasper looked worried. There was certainly something he was holding back.

Their mother was, in fact, being held hostage by these squabbling kingdoms until the war was settled, but Jasper didn't want to tell the children this gloomy news.



Jasper continued, ‘Your father, George, is very late returning from an important mission. We have agents on the lookout for him. Hopefully there will be a break in this complicated puzzle soon. I don’t want you to worry about this because your father is our most accomplished time traveller. We are certain of a good outcome. The situation is in hand and we are making progress.’ He smiled and patted Scrap. ‘We are an ancient time travelling family and our goal is to help any person or creature in need.’

Time travelling, outer space, and the possibility of their parents returning soon, even for two very bright ten year old magic children, was extraordinary information to take in. Victoria and Henry sat in stunned silence.

Jasper seemed oblivious to their shock. ‘Our motto is “Facta non Verba” which is Latin for “Deeds not Words”.’

‘That sounds like a sensible motto. It’s definitely good to be able to help others,’ Henry said.

Jasper gave the twins each a folded piece of paper. ‘These are useful and important gadgets that we call “talk papers”. It’s an interface where you can speak to Jet, our hologram, or me, or indeed each other. With a talk paper we can be in contact immediately, at any time. When it is folded, it will look like a piece of paper relevant to the place or era.’ Jasper folded his and it looked just like a chocolate wrapper!

‘If the talk paper becomes misplaced or stolen it will magically return to your pocket, leaving behind an ordinary piece of paper.’

‘Wowzers, this is really cool!’ Henry said as he unfolded the paper.

The talk paper stiffened and lit up with a buzz and an

unusual musical sound, as a hologram of a small person appeared saying, ‘Hello Henry and Victoria, my name is Jet. I am here to help you.’

‘Hello Jet, pleased to meet you,’ the twins said.

Henry loved technology and remarked to Jasper, ‘I can’t see where to plug this in.’

‘Quite unnecessary, dear chap. The ultraviolet rays from the sun are the only power source it needs. You will agree, this is nothing like any method of communication known in the era you’re familiar with.’

The twins had such a lot to chat about and they wanted to find out lots more about the portal.

Jasper told them that the portal could be accessed anywhere, as long as they drew the eye. ‘Think about where you’d like to take your first trip through time. We will have an adventure tomorrow.’

‘We will definitely think about that. There are so many amazing places to go,’ Henry said.

Jasper touched the scarab ring on his finger and whispered something. The scarab began to glow and, to the twins’ delight, a plate of warm scones with strawberry jam and cream appeared on the table.

After a lot more conversation it seemed that hours had passed. Jasper suggested that because it was getting late the twins should return home to Goldie and come again in the morning.

‘Before you go, here are your scarab rings. If you need something, such as lunch, simply touch the scarab, whisper “lunch” and whatever you want will appear. There’s a lot more to the scarab rings but we can learn more about them

as we progress.’

Victoria looked at the ring on her finger. ‘Thank you, this is lovely.’ She turned to Henry and said, ‘Funny thing about our new rings, Goldie and many people we know have the same sort of scarab ring. Somehow, we must all be connected.’

Henry agreed. ‘Yes, definitely, even Professor Garnet at school has a similar scarab ring.’

The twins attended Gertrude Grey’s School for Gifted Children, an ancient building with towers and turrets. They had often thought it an unusual school and it definitely was.

The twins reluctantly went back through the door. When they reached the other side of the wall it sealed, leaving no trace of the portal or the strange writing.

‘Gosh did that really happen?’ asked Henry.

‘Of course it did, we have our scarab rings and talk papers. Let’s say hello to Jet now.’

*Dear Diary...*

*This is definitely the best and most totally amazing birthday ever and I really hope we find Mum and Dad very soon.*

*Victoria*

