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# **THE NEVERMORE SERIES**

**#1: WE BURY THE LIVING**

**#2: DEATH CAB**

**#3: THE THIRTEENTH FLOOR**



## CHAPTER I

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My sister took one look at the elevator and shook her head. “Huh uh. Nope. No way.”

She dropped her end of the box. It landed on the floor with a *thwumpp*. The sudden shift in weight caused me to lose my grip, and the box tumbled out of my hands. It landed on my foot.

“OWW! What are you doing?”

“Not gonna happen.” Karina crossed her arms and shook her head again.

“It’s just an elevator.” I yanked my foot out from under the box.

What the heck was in this box anyway? Mom’s set of cast iron skillets? My toes throbbed. I wiggled my foot back and forth. Nothing appeared broken.



If I made a list of everything I hated in this world, moving would be near the top.

Just below sisters.

“You know I don’t like confined spaces,” Karina said.

I sighed. As far as sisters went, Karina didn’t have much going for her. Trust me. I mean, if you’re just looking at her, maybe you wouldn’t notice so much. She looks normal enough. Long dark hair. Glasses that sorta look smart instead of making her look like a freak. But once she opens her mouth...yikes. What kind of third grader says *confined spaces* anyway? All she really means is she’s scared.

Karina is scared of everything.

Spiders? Check.

Heights? You betcha.

The dark? Oh boy.

The list goes on and on: babies, lightning, deep water, dogs, cats, horses, old people, dusty books, broccoli...

And, oh yeah, *confined spaces*.

“I’m not hauling this thing up the stairs,” I said. “Four stories? Are you kidding me?”

“Well I’m not getting on an elevator. Especially not that



old thing. It'll break down for sure. We'll be trapped."

Karina's right about one thing. The elevator was old. Really, really old. I'd only seen one like that in movies. A thick metal gate separated the elevator door from the main floor. To enter, you had to pry the gate back and step inside. Peering past the gate, I could just make out the dull red carpet of the elevator and a large golden lever along the elevator wall.

"There's a seat." I stepped closer.

"What kind of an elevator has a seat?"

"The best kind," came a voice from behind us.

Both of us jumped. Well, the voice only startled me. Karina just about jumped so high she hit the ceiling.

"Sorry. I didn't mean to scare you. My name's Rudy. Rudy Oscarson."

He held out his hand, which was sheathed in a brilliant white glove. He wore a bright red suit jacket with double rows of golden buttons and a pair of bright red pants to match. Atop his head perched a short black hat that looked vaguely like a soup bowl turned upside down. He was older than Mom, definitely closer to my grandfather's age.

"At your service," Mr. Oscarson said as I took his hand.



He had a strong grip. "I run the elevator here at the Gold Bug. What brings you two here today?"

He let go of my hand and shook Karina's. She gave him a quick squeeze and pulled her hand back, wiping it along her jeans. Did I mention she was afraid of germs too?

"Our parents got divorced," Karina said.

I closed my eyes and sighed. Was it okay to punch your sister? Not hard, just someplace that would shut her up? Like in the throat.

"What?" Karina crossed her arms. "It's true. They're divorced and now we have to move into this stupid apartment and Dad gets to stay in the house. This apartment is stupid and divorce is stupid and elevators are stupid."

Mr. Oscarson nodded. I expected him to tell Karina that maybe she shouldn't be such a blabbermouth, but instead he placed a gloved hand on her shoulder and frowned sadly.

"You're right, young lady," Mr. Oscarson said. "Divorce is no fun, not for you or your parents either, I imagine. And the Gold Bug here has its share of problems, just like any old apartment building. Sometimes the water runs too hot. Sometimes the lights flicker and go out. But you're wrong



about one thing, my dear.”

“What’s that?”

“There’s nothing stupid about this old elevator.” Mr. Oscarson smiled and pulled the steel gate back. “Why, come on in and I’ll show you what you’ve been missing all your life. Heck, I won’t even charge you for the ride!”

Mr. Oscarson laughed at his own joke. I cracked a smile. Not because of the joke, but because the old man obviously loved his elevator. He had what Mom calls that Christmas Morning look, eyes wide and dazzled, mouth hung slightly open in wonder. Like there was no place better in all the world.

Even Karina leaned forward, daring to poke her head past the gate and take a look.

“Let’s go,” I said, pushing Karina inside and dragging the box along with me.

No point in letting her change her mind.

The gate slid shut behind us with a loud clanking.

A narrow seat with a red cushion lined one wall. Mr. Oscarson stood at the back, his hand on the long golden lever. But it was the front wall that drew my attention. The Gold



Bug was a mere four stories high—I knew because our new apartment was on the top floor—but the panel where you pushed the button for your floor held far more choices.

“Fifty floors?” I said. “There’s not fifty floors.”

“Not in the Gold Bug,” Mr. Oscarson said. “But this elevator didn’t come from the Gold Bug. No, sir. It was built for the Hotel Malum in Chicago in 1904. And the Hotel Malum did have fifty floors. Quite the hotel, let me tell you.”

“You’ve been there?”

Mr. Oscarson chuckled. “Been there? Sonny, I worked there for nearly forty years. Ran this very same elevator day and night. And when the Malum went out of business, why, they shipped this elevator right on out the door here to Nevermore and they shipped me out too. Me and this elevator, we’re a set, you see. Where it goes, I go. It’s the only job I ever had in my life. Don’t know that I could do anything else.”

I stared at all those buttons and thought of all the people who had pushed them since 1904. Then I noticed something strange.

“There’s no thirteenth floor,” I said.



“Quite right,” Mr. Oscarson said. “Many old hotels were right superstitious about floor thirteen. Bad luck and all. So they didn’t build them. You went right on from twelve to fourteen. Or some hotels, like the old Malum, did build a thirteenth floor, but it was left empty, and nobody ever used it.”

“We’re on the *fourth* floor,” Karina said impatiently. She was starting to rock back and forth on her heels and clench her hands together, a sure sign her claustrophobia was kicking in. Another minute or two and she’d be gnawing her arm off or something.

“Quite right,” Mr. Oscarson said.

He inserted a key into a small hole beside the golden lever, turning it to the right. Then he pushed number four and yanked the lever forward. A rattling noise filled the elevator as it started to climb. The floor shook, and Karina’s eyes widened.

“No need to worry now,” Mr. Oscarson said. “This old baby is the safest elevator in the state of Washington. You can trust old Rudy on that.”

The elevator bucked and jerked like a rickety amusement



park ride. Karina let out a low wail and started hyperventilating.

Sisters can be such a drag.

There was no door on the elevator, only the metal gate. As we climbed, you could see each floor go by. We slowly ascended past the first floor, then the second, then the third.

“See now. What did I tell you?”

Suddenly the elevator jerked to a halt. The whole cage rattled, knocking us all off balance.

“What’s wrong?” Karina’s grabbed my arm.

We were stuck between the floors. There was nothing but a blank wall beyond the gate.

“Oh my,” Mr. Oscarson said.

That’s when the lights went out. Karina screamed. I felt her dig her nails into my skin.

“This is bad,” Mr. Oscarson said. His voice had gone all wobbly.

“What happened?” I asked, trying to make out Mr. Oscarson in the dark. It was too black to see anything.

“I don’t know,” Mr. Oscarson said. “But I think we might be here for a very long time.”



## CHAPTER 2

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Karina's nails dug deeper into my arm. I jerked away, certain she was going to draw blood.

"Chill out. We're just stuck, that's all."

"We're trapped," Karina said. "Is there even air in this thing? What happens when we use up all the air? How are we going to *breathe*?"

This is my life. I can't go three minutes without Karina worrying about how we're going to die.

"No one is going to die," I said.

Suddenly the lights popped back on. The elevator shuddered and started to move.

A broad smile sat on Mr. Oscarson's face. I saw his hand on the lever, and I realized we'd been played.

"Just a little joke." Mr. Oscarson chuckled. "Sorry about



that. I've gotta do it to all the first timers. My little way of saying welcome to the Gold Bug."

"That's *not* funny," Karina said, her hands on her heaving chest.

I laughed. Of course it was funny. If you weren't a freak who was going to hyperventilate and pass out anytime the lights went out.

The elevator slowed as the fourth floor came into view. Then it jolted to a halt. It had stopped two inches higher than the floor, so that there was a drop-off from the elevator to the fourth floor hallway.

"Easy does it." Mr. Oscarson pulled the lever in the opposite direction. The elevator creaked back down two inches and settled perfectly into place. "Fourth floor, ladies and gents."

Karina grabbed the steel gate and yanked it back and fled. She ran down the hall and never looked back. Our new home, Room 415, was at the end of the building. I watched her practically plow Mom over as she flew through the door and into the apartment.

"Got a thing about tight spaces, does she?" Mr. Oscar-



son asked. "Wouldn't have joked with the two of you if I'd known that."

"She'll get over it. It was a good joke. I'll bet you scare a lot of people with it."

Mr. Oscarson shrugged. "It's not the most exciting job. You gotta make it fun where you can."

Mom was coming down the hall. She raised a hand and waved. I pointed to the box on the floor. There was no way I could carry it down the hall by myself.

I glanced around the elevator while I waited for Mom. Two framed pictures hung on the wall.

"Who are those two?"

Mr. Oscarson's smile deflated. Suddenly he looked very old and very tired.

"That's my Atley." He pointed at the picture of a girl my age. "Light of my life she was. Bright, strong, always laughing and running."

"Does she live here too?"

Mr. Oscarson shook his head. "She disappeared years ago, I'm afraid. When we still lived at the Hotel Malum. I haven't seen my Atley in twenty years."



The girl in the picture leaned against a fence with her arms draped over the sides, a Cubs cap pulled low over her forehead so that her face was shadowed. A broad smile revealed two rows of straight white teeth. I tried to imagine disappearing and never seeing my family again for twenty years. The thought made me shiver.

“What happened to her?”

“Nobody knows. Police say she ran away. Don’t know why she would. She was the happiest girl you ever saw. No reason on earth to run away.”

“I’m sorry,” I said.

I felt bad for Mr. Oscarson. He seemed like a nice guy. Old, but nice. I could tell asking him about his daughter had pretty much ruined his day.

“And this here is Mr. William Wyrm,” he said, pointing to the other picture. “The original operator of this very elevator. A great inventor, by all accounts. They say he built this elevator himself piece by piece.”

I stared at the photo of William Wyrm. It was black and white. It showed Mr. Wyrm standing inside the elevator, his eyes glaring straight at the camera. He wore a long black



suit with a top hat. One hand was on the golden lever and the other held a pocket watch with the initials WW clearly inscribed along the casing.

“Mr. Wyrm disappeared himself,” Mr. Oscarson said. “In 1912. One day he was here. The next, he was gone. No one ever saw him again.”

All this talk of disappearing was creeping me out. Thankfully, Mom had nearly reached the elevator. She didn’t look happy. These days, Mom didn’t look happy very often. I guess when you get a divorce, you don’t have a lot to be happy about. At least not for awhile.

“Thanks for the ride,” I told Mr. Oscarson and shoved the box out of the elevator. “I’m sure I’ll see you around.”

“I’ll be here.” He shut the gate behind me. The elevator rumbled and slowly descended to the floors below.

When I turned around, Mom was standing next to the box.

“What’d you do to your sister?”

“Nothing. Honest. She’s just being Kar.”

“You know she has a thing about confined spaces.”

Maybe that’s where Karina gets all her mumbo jumbo



sayings. Straight from Mom. Mom's a nurse, so mumbo jumbo sayings like *confined spaces* are pretty much her life. She used to work days at the local clinic, but she changed jobs after the divorce. Now she worked the night shift at the Ernest Valdemar Hospital. You could tell she didn't like it much. She looked tired all the time, with deep circles under her eyes.

"She has a thing about everything," I said.

Mom rolled her eyes. "Help me with this."

We carried the box down the hall. Karina stood just inside the door. What do you know? She was still alive and breathing.

"I'm never going in that elevator again," Karina said. "I'll take the stairs."



We unpacked boxes for most of the evening. Mom ordered a pizza from Yesterdays. Pepperoni and sausage, the only way to go. Karina hates sausage, so she picked it off and piled them on the edge of her plate. Is there a such thing as sausage phobia?



Mom had to work, so she showered and dressed in her nursing scrubs and gave each of us a hug and told us not to stay up too late. It was Friday, no school tomorrow. Officially, our lights were supposed to be out by ten on the weekend, but with Mom working nights I sometimes stayed up till eleven.

Tonight, however, I was wiped out. After Mr. Oscarson's joke, Karina really did refuse to ride in the elevator. With every box requiring two people, Karina insisted on taking the stairs. Sisters kill me. I'm not sure why anyone would invent sisters unless they just wanted a way to torture boys. Who knows, maybe there are good sisters out there. The problem is, when you get a sister like Karina, you're not allowed to trade her in.

By ten o'clock, I was beat. So was Karina. She dragged herself off to bed. I stayed in the living room watching *Stranger Things* on Netflix, but after awhile my eyes were drooping. I turned off the TV and headed for bed. Didn't even brush my teeth. Could you be afraid of your teeth rotting out in the night? I'll bet Karina could tell me.

I don't know how long I was asleep before I heard the



noise.

It was a distinct thump. Loud enough to startle me awake. I lay in bed, trying to decide if I'd actually heard something or had only dreamed it. The clock beside my bed read 12:37. Whatever I'd heard, it wasn't Mom. She wouldn't be home for some time still.

I heard it again. This time, there was no question. I wasn't dreaming.

I tossed the covers aside and hopped out of bed. I opened my bedroom door and peered into the hall. A dull glow came from the kitchen at the end of the hall. I paused and listened.

A door creaked slowly on rusty hinges.

I hurried across the dark hall and into Karina's room.

"Did you hear that noise?" I whispered.

Karina didn't say anything. I stepped closer to her bed. Since she was afraid of the dark, she slept with a nightlight beside her pillow.

That's when I saw that her bed was empty.

Karina was gone.



## CHAPTER 3

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Great.

Not again.

Karina is a sleepwalker. She gets up in the middle of the night and wanders off, totally asleep. When we lived on William Street, we would find her outside picking flowers or skipping in the middle of the road. Once Mom found her climbing the iron gate of the old Stevens Mansion where the horror writer, Mark Stevens, used to live.

Karina hadn't sleepwalked in months. Mom was hoping she'd grown out of it.

Guess not.

I glanced at my wristwatch. It informed me it was 12:42. Yikes. I hurried out of Karina's room and down the hall.

"Kar?" I called out softly. "Kar? Where are you?"



Some people tell you not to wake up a sleepwalker. That they can go crazy if you snap them awake while they're prancing about outside their beds. That's crap. I've woken Karina up a dozen times. Nothing bad ever happened to her. Of course, she's basically warped anyway, so it'd be hard to tell.

“Kar? You there?”

She wasn't in the kitchen. Ditto the living room. The apartment was dark and empty. Boxes stood in tall pillars against the walls and along the edges of furniture, making it difficult to see clearly. I swept back down the hall to Mom's room just to be sure Karina wasn't snoozing away in there.

No such luck.

“Kar?”

My voice echoed through the apartment, but I got no answer. Back in the living room, I saw what I'd missed on my first inspection.

The apartment door was ajar.

Karina had left.

I rushed to the door and pulled it open. I gazed down the hall.



There she was.

She'd nearly reached the elevator. A pale yellow light streamed from inside the elevator into the hallway, illuminating a path Karina seemed to follow.

“Kar!”

If she heard me, it didn't slow her down. I left the apartment door ajar and ran down the hall. The last thing I needed was Karina making it downstairs and out into the street. Mom would kill me if she found out I'd let Karina sleepwalk into downtown Nevermore.

Karina stepped onto the elevator. Whatever fear she had of confined spaces apparently didn't bother her while she was asleep. She turned and reached for the gate, pulling it shut.

I kicked into high gear and reached the gate a moment later. Good thing too. Karina had stepped back into the elevator and was now sliding her finger along the floor buttons. I yanked the gate open and jumped inside.

“Kar!”

She ignored me. Or didn't hear me. It's hard to tell when the person you're talking to is actually asleep.



I put my hand on her shoulder and gave her a light shake. Some sleepwalkers are fairly easy to wake up. A loud noise like clapping your hands will do the trick.

Not Karina. Like everything else with her, waking her up was a pain in the rear.

Karina pushed a button. Then she turned and reached for the key that Mr. Oscarson had inserted above the golden lever. She gave the key a twist and grasped the golden lever.

“Don’t touch that,” I told her. “You don’t know what you’re doing. You’re going to break something.”

But Karina moved as if she knew exactly what she was doing. She pushed the lever forward, then back, and then released it. The elevator rattled to life.

Jesus. Guess we were going for a ride after all.

I glanced at the long rows of buttons.

“What the...”

Karina had selected a single floor, but the button she’d pressed hadn’t been there earlier. I knew because Mr. Oscarson had said so.

Floor thirteen.

I blinked rapidly and rubbed my eyes, figuring I was still



half asleep, but no. My eyes weren't fooling me.

*Thirteen.*

And then the elevator began to move.

Except it didn't go down. It did the impossible.

We were on the fourth floor, the very top level of the Gold Bug.

But the elevator started to *rise*.

We were going up.



## CHAPTER 4

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We went up.

And up.

And up.

For a moment, I just stared. My mouth hung open. This wasn't possible.

The elevator ascended, and as it did new floors flashed by. Beyond the gate, the fifth floor came and went. Then the sixth. Then the seventh.

Up and up.

“Kar?” I said, backing away from the gate. “What the heck did you do?”

But Karina was still asleep. She simply stood there, hands at her sides, eyes closed. It was enough to make me want to whack her over the head. She'd conjured up some



kind of voodoo here and didn't even know it.

Eight. Nine. Ten.

Where were we? The Gold Bug had four floors. That was it. How could we be zipping past the tenth floor, and the eleventh, and the twelfth?

Finally, the elevator slowed and rolled to a halt.

Floor thirteen.

Outside the gate was a long dimly lit hallway. Gulping, I crept forward and pressed my nose against the gate. The thirteenth floor was distinctly different from the fourth floor. The carpet here was a deep maroon with crisscrossing black lines. Our floor down below had shaggy yellow carpet. The hallway here seemed wider too, as if three people could walk side by side instead of just two.

Carefully, I pulled the gate back and put one foot on the thirteenth floor. I half expected it to just disappear the moment I touched it.

The floor was solid.

It was real.

This was the thirteenth floor.

The one Mr. Oscarson had said the elevator couldn't



reach.

Then it hit me. Was this the Hotel Malum? Were we somehow on the thirteenth floor of the old Chicago hotel?

I was losing it. You couldn't ride an elevator in Washington and stop on a floor in Illinois. Jeez. I was getting to be crazier than Karina.

Of course, you couldn't ride an elevator to the thirteenth floor of a building that only had four floors either. So what did I know?

I took a few steps down the hall. Tall gray doors lined both sides of the hall. Each door was numbered, but instead of the numbers being listed on the wall like they were for our apartment, these numbers were written on the doors themselves.

922.

841.

634.

The numbers didn't make any sense. In any apartment or hotel, the room numbers correspond to the floor. On the fourth floor, the room numbers were all 401, 402, 403, etc. These numbers, however, were all over the place.



I caught on a moment later.

“They’re all thirteen,” I said softly. “Nine plus two plus two. Eight plus four plus one. They all add up to thirteen.”

Weird.

But *not* the weirdest thing.

The weirdest thing was the hallway itself. It was long. Way, way longer than the hallway on the fourth floor. There were six doors on the fourth floor. Six apartments. But there were more than twice that many here on the thirteenth floor. In fact, the hallway didn’t just end, it bent around a corner far down the way. Bent and *kept going*.

There was no corner on the fourth floor.

I was still staring at that bend in the hall when a man in a suit came around it. He spotted me right off and stopped in his tracks.

My first thought was to get back in the elevator, but my second thought held me in place. Maybe this guy could tell me just what the heck was going on here. Where were we? How did we get here? Nothing about this floor made any sense. Perhaps this guy had some answers.

That thought went right out the window when the man



started screaming.

“STOP! DON’T MOVE! STAY WHERE YOU ARE YOU LITTLE CREEP!”

The man jerked forward and sprinted down the hall. He lurched side to side as he ran, as if he were constantly stumbling and regaining his balance. His long red hair flew out behind him. In one hand he held a flashlight, and in the other a long black cane.

Who was he kidding? There was no way I was staying there. I fled back to the elevator and pulled the gate shut.

“Go go go go go.” I stabbed the fourth floor button.

Karina, still asleep, reached out dreamily and slid the golden lever back and forth.

“STOP! GET OUT OF THAT ELEVATOR RIGHT NOW!”

The elevator shuddered. For a moment, I thought it would stall and we’d be trapped. But then it squealed softly and started to slide downward.

As it did, the closest doorway—number 922—popped open. Just a crack. But far enough to see a narrow face peeking out.



A face I recognized.

Atley Oscarson.



## CHAPTER 5

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I tried to get a second look, but the thirteenth floor disappeared from view. Had I been wrong? Was I imagining things?

One glance at the picture hanging on the elevator wall told me I wasn't. I knew what I'd seen. I'd seen Atley Oscarson. But Mr. Oscarson said his daughter had been missing for years and years. The girl I'd seen in room 922 was my age. If she'd been missing for all that time, why was she still thirteen years old?

Right then, Karina woke up. And started screaming.

“What? Whoa! Hey! What’re you screaming about?”

I whirled around and grabbed her by the shoulders. She stopped screaming, but her eyes were wide and frightened.

“You were sleepwalking again. You left the apartment



and got on the elevator.”

Karina shook her head. “I wouldn’t do that. Not even in my sleep. I hate this elevator.”

“Well, what do you think happened? I dragged you out of bed and hauled you into the elevator in the middle of the night just for fun?”

Karina didn’t say anything. The elevator jolted to a halt. I turned back around and saw we were once again on the fourth floor.

“Wait a minute,” Karina said. “Weren’t we going down? How could we be going down? We’re on the top floor.”

Oh boy.

Just what was I supposed to tell her? She hadn’t seen anything. She’d been totally asleep.

I pulled the gate open and stepped off the elevator. The hall was empty.

“Come on,” I said. “Let’s get back to the apartment.”

Karina followed, gazing around curiously now, as if she couldn’t tell if all of this was some kind of elaborate joke or not.

The door to the stairwell suddenly flung open and Mr.



Oscarson appeared. His face was red from climbing the stairs, and he huffed and puffed mightily. His eyes were two angry black dots.

“You two! I wouldn’t have expected it from you two.”

“Expected what?”

“To steal my elevator! No one’s allowed to ride the elevator alone. But I step away for my break and look what happens. Kids like you shouldn’t even be out of bed this time of night. Where’s your mother?”

“She’s at work,” Karina said. “She works nights.”

“All the more reason for you to be at home in bed.”

Mr. Oscarson looked angry and a little hurt at the thought that we’d taken a joyride in his elevator. But he also looked like a man who was embarrassed to find himself yelling at children. He ran a hand through his hair and sighed.

“Mr. Oscarson, we saw your daughter,” I said. “Atley. Well I saw her. Karina was asleep. That’s why we were on the elevator. She sleepwalks.”

“Atley? What’s that you say? My Atley? Here?”

I nodded, excited now. Of all the people who could explain what had just happened on the elevator, Mr. Oscarson



would be the one. Surely he'd know. He'd worked this elevator for forty years.

“On the thirteenth floor,” I said. “I don’t even know how it happened, but we got on see because Karina was sleep-walking and then she started up the elevator and pushed the button for the thirteenth floor and somehow we went up all the way to thirteen which shouldn’t even be possible but somehow we did and that’s where I saw Atley she was on the thirteenth floor in room 922.”

I paused and sucked in a deep breath. Sometimes when I get going the words just pour out of me and I forget to breath.

Mr. Oscarson had become very quiet and very still. He crossed his hands in front of him, and he was squeezing one hand with the other. His face had flushed an even deeper shade of red. There was no joy there, like I’d expected. Only more anger.

“Thirteenth floor, eh?”

He snagged the edge of the gate and jerked it back. Placing one foot in the trackway, he held the gate open.

“You see a button for the thirteenth floor, sonny?”



“Yeah, it’s right here. I’ll show you.”

I stepped into the elevator and extended a finger to push number thirteen, but my hand stopped midair.

It was gone.

The panel showed numbers twelve and fourteen, but thirteen was missing. Just as it had been missing earlier that day.

“Wait,” I said. “No, it wasn’t like that a second ago. Honestly. It was there. I swear. It was there and Karina pushed it and we rode up to the thirteenth floor. I wouldn’t make this up.”

Mr. Oscarson shook his head. “Up to the thirteenth floor. On a building with only four floors. Who do you think you’re fooling, sonny?”

“Really. I swear.”

All my swearing wasn’t winning any points. Mr. Oscarson just kept shaking his head.

“Get back to bed, kiddo. Both of you. Now.”

I didn’t know what else to say. There was no way Mr. Oscarson was going to believe me now. I left the elevator and started back down the hall. Karina followed beside me.



“We were going down, weren’t we?” she said quietly.

I didn’t say anything.

The apartment door was still ajar. I pushed it open and we slid inside. Suddenly I felt very tired. All I wanted was to crawl back into bed and go to sleep and forget about the thirteenth floor and Atley Oscarson.

I started to close the door.

That’s when a hand shot out of the dark and grabbed me.



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