

THE CHESS PAVILION

Chapter 1

Sometimes, when you want something interesting to happen to you badly enough, your wish can come true. Or, at least Gary hoped so. His parents were away on a trip and had left Gary with the most boring babysitter in the history of the universe. So he really, really wanted something interesting to happen to him right this very minute! But Gary had no idea he'd end up starring in a magical story. And this is how it happened.

On Sunday morning, the doorbell in Gary's apartment rang. He hoped it was one of his buddies. But Gary opened the door and, instead of one of his friends, he saw a girl in a checkered dress.

"Hello, Gary," the girl said. "My name is Cassie. I have come to take you to Chess Country."

Before Gary could reply, or even ask how she knew his name, his mysterious visitor took him by the hand and led him to a six-seated tricycle parked nearby. Cassie got in front, and Gary made himself comfortable in one of the back seats.

And so the journey began. The tricycle traveled at an unbelievable speed. Cities, forests, and rivers came up and fell behind in the blink of an eye. With his heart pounding in his chest, Gary knew something wonderful and amazing was about to happen. Then Cassie slowed down and stopped the trike in front of a beautiful pavilion that looked like a tower.

"This is the Chess Pavilion," Cassie said. "Here we will have our first lesson."

Outside, a boy about Gary's age was playing. He scowled when he saw Gary and Cassie.

"You're going to learn chess?" he asked with a sneer. "You'll never beat me, no matter how much you practice."

