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# CHAPTER 1

Imothy stirred and sat up in bed, rubbing his eyes. A soft "coo-oo" followed by three louder "coos" floated through the air.

What is that sound, and where is it coming from? he thought. It was his first morning waking up in his new home at Badger Hills Farm.

"Coo-oo, coo, coo, coo" came the soft call again, this time followed by the thud of

running feet as Timothy's cousin, Zoey, came dashing down the hallway.

Zoey and her grandmother, Nanna Bell, had come to live with Timothy and his father, John, shortly after Zoey's mom had passed away.

Timothy had lost his mother, too, but long ago, when he was a baby. The children had



grown to be more like siblings to each other than cousins.

Zoey burst into the room, excitement written all over her face. Zoey's big ideas and bright personality had surprised Timothy at first, but now he loved her spirited ways.

With her curly hair flying, Zoey dashed to Timothy's large window. "It's a mourning dove!" she cried. "Come see! It has a nest in the pine tree right outside your window. Living at Badger Hills Farm is going to be amazing!"

She stopped suddenly and whirled around to Timothy.

"Oh no!" Zoey's eyes were wide. "I hope you were already getting up when I burst in. I was just so excited about that dove!"

Timothy chuckled. "It's all right, Zoey. I was already awake. But I do need to get dressed and say my prayers."

Zoey gave her cousin a quick hug and skipped out the door. Timothy crossed to the window, thanking God for the nest and all of His other beautiful creations. As he slipped a sweater over his T-shirt, the smell of Nanna Bell's delicious blueberry muffins tickled his nose. He bounded down the stairs toward the kitchen, with Zoey right on his heels.

"Good morning! You two slept in a little today," Nanna Bell said cheerfully as she flipped bacon that was sizzling and popping in her frying pan. "You must have been tired from the big move yesterday."

Timothy looked at some empty moving

boxes scattered on the kitchen counter. What a whirlwind of a week! he thought, reflecting on his father's marriage to Miss Lily two days before and the big move the day after their wedding.

Having come from a small city apartment, which was only a ten-minute walk from Badger Hills Farm, they hadn't had to move too many things. Most of their belongings had been put away yesterday before John and Lily left for their nine-day honeymoon.

As the cousins enjoyed Nanna Bell's delicious breakfast, Zoey gazed out the window. "Wow, that's a lot of fog rolling in. Look, Timothy."

"That is a lot of fog!" Timothy frowned. "I was hoping we could explore Badger Hills Farm

### THE SECRET DOOR



today, now that it's actually ours. I want to make a map of the grounds, but all that fog will make it hard. We might have to wait until tomorrow."

"A map is a great idea! We have 180 acres to explore!" Zoey exclaimed excitedly.

"Well, 177 to be exact," said Timothy with a smile. "Remember that Mrs. Bastian owns three acres."

"And can you believe you own the rest, Timothy?"

"Well, technically my dad owns it until I'm twenty-five, but no, I still can't believe it." Timothy picked up a piece of bacon and continued to gaze out the window. "I wonder how long it will take until this fog clears. It's covering almost everything outside."

"I'm sure it won't last all day," Zoey said as

she pulled out a notebook with a bright purple cover. "Hey, I wrote about how we got the farm. Do you want me to read it to you?"

"Sure," Timothy said with a smile. After meeting the famous author Bailey Bastian, who was their only neighbor on the farm, Zoey had decided she wanted to be a writer too.

She cleared her throat, held out her notebook, and began to read.

Two hundred years ago, a family with the last name of Roach purchased 180 acres of beautiful land, complete with a large pond, waving grass, rolling hills, several groves of thick woods, and a gurgling stream.

As the family began to work the land, they discovered a surprise on the farm—a

den of badgers. Thus, they called their land "Badger Hills Farm."

The family decided never to sell the land. They handed it down from generation to generation.

Over time, a town grew up around Badger Hills Farm. The town turned into a small city and then into a large city.



Badger Hills Farm was surrounded by the city's streets and buildings.

The last generation of the Roach family had only one child, who outlived his relatives and had no children of his own to inherit the farm.

That is how Mr. Roach found himself the only surviving member of the Roach family. He was a very grumpy man with no friends . . . until an eleven-year-old boy named Timothy Todd came along.

"I'm twelve years old now," Timothy said after finishing his last sip of orange juice.

"Yes," replied Zoey, "but you were eleven when we met Mr. Roach last year. Keep listening." She began reading again. Timothy and his family lived in a small city apartment close to Badger Hills

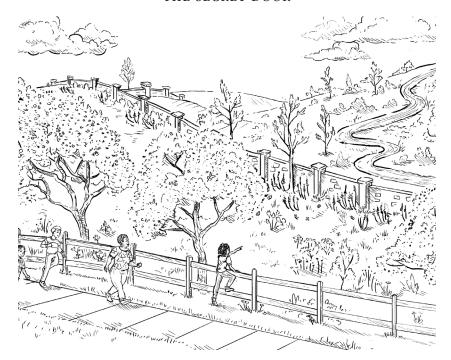
Farm and loved to walk around the land, admiring its natural beauty.

Mr. Roach ran out of money, and the farm fell into disrepair. Eventually, he sold three acres to the famous author Bailey Bastian. This gave Mr. Roach enough money to live, but no one knew who would inherit the rest of Badger Hills Farm.

One day, Timothy's family was walking around the farm when they heard Mr. Roach calling for help, and that's how Timothy's family met Mr. Roach.

Timothy was kind to Mr. Roach and made him some paintings, for Timothy was an artist.

#### THE SECRET DOOR



Sadly, Mr. Roach soon passed away. To everyone's great surprise, Mr. Roach left the farm to Timothy, to be in the care of Timothy's father until Timothy turned twenty-five.

I know this story well because I am Timothy Todd's cousin, and I just moved with him to Badger Hills Farm, where I am sure great adventures await.

"What a great story," Nanna Bell declared.

"And now we're here, and you're right—who knows what adventures await us at Badger Hills Farm?"

Timothy's gaze drifted again to the window. A blanket of white shrouded all but a few pine boughs that poked their long arms from the dense fog. Nanna Bell's words echoed in Timothy's mind: Who knows what adventures await us at Badger Hills Farm?



### >>> The Secret Door ----

Timothy and Zoey's family has just inherited a unique 177-acre farm. Shortly after moving, they learn that a secret door is somewhere in their home, but they can't find it anywhere. As Christmas approaches, joy is in the air, and adventure is around every turn. Timothy and Zoey start exploring the land, face a surprising encounter with a wild creature, and find themselves with lanterns in the forest at night. But through it all, they don't forget about their quest to find the secret door. This first book in the Badger Hills Farm series is packed with feel-good messages about family and faith that encourage pure minds and strong hearts within an exciting, action-packed storyline.



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