



## 1 ★ Pajama Problems

It was just like any other day, I guess. It was raining outside, and my dog, Izzie, was barking. I had eaten breakfast with my mom, dad, and little sister. I was just about to enjoy my favorite TV show when the phone rang.

“Shawnee!” My mom called. “Nia is on the phone for you.”

*Nia?* I thought.

Interested, I got off the couch as little Izzie followed at my heels. I took the phone from my mom. She wiped her hands on her apron and smiled.

“Uh, hello?”

“Shawnee, it’s Nia.” She was a friend from my school, but I really didn’t know her

all that well.

“Hi!” I said with excitement.

“Hi. I was just calling to make sure everything’s all set for the sleepover at Rayna’s tonight.”

My heart did flips and landed in my stomach. I suddenly felt like I was on a roller-coaster ride. I was new at school—just starting fifth grade—and desperately wanted to make some friends.

“Oh, yeah. Yeah! What time do I need to be there? And what do I—”

“Six o’clock!” she interrupted.

“OK, and . . . ”

I stopped talking because all I heard was silence. Nia had already hung up.

I thought that was weird but decided that maybe there was a problem with Nia’s line. All I knew was that I had been invited to a sleepover that night and I couldn’t wait!

I darted upstairs as fast as lightning as I sang, “I’m making new friends. I’m making new friends.” Izzie followed me. I was even more excited about picking out what pajamas I would wear. As I opened the door to my room, Robin, my 5-year-old sister,

was playing with my project markers. The worst part was that she was not using a piece of paper, but my favorite pink pajamas—the same pajamas I was planning to wear to the sleepover!

“Hi, Sissy!” she shouted. “I was coloring a new nightie for you!”

“ROBIN!!” I yelled.

My dog jumped at the sound of my scream and looked up at me. Izzie is a fluffy white dog. The breeder said she’s a Teacup Shih Tzu. When my sister mastered potty training, my parents agreed to let her name



the dog. She chose “Izzie.”

“What?” Robin cried.

Just then, Dad walked in. He had just come in from mowing the yard and taking a shower. He smelled of pine-fresh aftershave. I loved that smell.

“What’s going on in here, girls?” he asked.

“Dad, Robin just colored all over my favorite pajamas! I was going to wear them to the sleepover!”

I marched over to Robin and snatched the ruined pajamas from her hands. Then the tears came. Robin cried—loud and long.

“Whoa now, Shawnee, you need to apologize for yanking that away from your sister,” Dad said. “And . . . what sleepover?”

I was mad now.

“What? That’s not fair! She ruined them! I had a very important sleepover tonight, and now I don’t know what to wear!”

I started crying and Robin started crying even louder. My dad told me he would be right back to talk to me about my behavior. I sat on my bed and flopped onto my back.

I closed my eyes and heard a magical sound like tiny crystals falling to the ground.

Then Nevaeh came.

“Shawneeeee . . .” she said in her singsong voice.

“Oh, Nevaeh. It’s you!” I said as I sat up.

She stood at the foot of my bed holding her sparkly wand. Nevaeh was very beautiful and had very big thoughts to share. She always seemed to come to me whenever I had a need-whether I knew it or not-just like a fairy godmother.



“You look awesome,” I told her as I propped myself up by the elbows to get a better look.

“Thanks,” she said, smiling. She reminded me of the beautiful angels I’d read about in storybooks.

“So do you!” she said as she flicked her wand and made sparkly dust fall over me.

It sounded like tiny crystals falling to the ground.

She folded her arms.

“Shawnee, you know why I’m here, right?”

“No,” I said honestly. I didn’t remember calling her.

“A moment ago you said you didn’t know what to wear, and I’ve come to tell you to clothe yourself with kindness.” She held up her wand again, and the same sparkly dust fell over me.

“To clothe myself in kindness?” I asked, confused.

“I know your sister colored all over your favorite pair of pajamas, but you have to understand that she’s only 5. She loves you and was just trying to show you how much. So, clothe yourself with kindness. Kindness is not rude. As a matter of fact, a kind word spoken is like apples of gold on a beautiful silver plate. It’s like a gold earring and a sweet-tasting honeycomb. It’s sweet to the soul.”

I stood there, amazed at what she had said to me. She was right. I wanted my words to

be sweet like that. Nevaeh always spoke the most beautiful words.

“But how do I keep myself from being unkind, like when Robin took my pajamas?”

“You count to five and think of these things: *Apples of gold, settings of silver, and a honeycomb; a kind word is sweetness to the soul.* You say that, and you’ll be able to be more kind.”

“Wow, I like that!”

I thought I would try it, so I said out loud, “*Apples of gold, settings of silver, and a honeycomb; a kind word is sweetness to the soul.*”

“There you go, Shawnee! You got it.” We sang those words together again and again as we danced around the room.

Then my dad came in.

He heard me singing, “*Apples of gold, settings of silver, and a*

*honeycomb; a kind word is sweetness to the soul.*”



“Shawnee . . . What are you doing?”

He laughed a little under his breath, but he tried to hide it. I looked at where Nevaeh stood, and she smiled at me. She waved her wand and disappeared; she always seemed to do that when someone else entered the picture. I could hear a thousand tiny crystals falling to the floor. I looked at my dad and remembered that he couldn't see her. *Would anyone ever see Nevaeh?* I wondered to myself.

“I like the song you were just singing. It has a lot of truth to it. You know your sister loves you very much . . . ”

He stopped what he was saying and asked, “What *were* you just singing?” He crossed his arms. My dad is very strong. Sometimes he lifts me with his big arms and swings me around at the park. That is one of my favorite things. I'm almost too big for that now, though!

I sang the song for him again.

*“Apples of gold, settings of silver, and a honeycomb; a kind word is sweetness to the soul.”*

“Where did you learn that?”



“Ne . . .” I began. But I stopped myself. He wouldn’t believe me if I told him. He’d think I just had an imaginary friend.

“Just . . . somewhere.”

“Well, good. I like what you’re singing. Maybe next time, you can remember that song, huh? How ‘bout you go talk to your sister?”

I got off the bed and walked across the hall to my sister’s room. She was playing with her dolls.

“Robin,” I said, “I’m sorry for what I said to you. Thank you for making my pajamas look so pretty.” I held them up. There were purple dots and red stars all over.

“I have a sleepover tonight and I think I’ll wear them. What do you think about that?”

“I like it,” she said as she rocked her baby doll and kissed her. “Amanda, you’re a good girl,” she said, walking her baby to her cradle.

I turned around, my slipper sliding on the wood floor, and headed back to my room. Dad stood in the doorway, smiling, and then he gave me a hug.

“Good girl. I’m proud of you,” he said.

“Thanks,” I said, smiling at him, and then I ran into my room excited about what was in store for that evening.