

## Chapter 1

### Emily

“What do you mean I can’t go on the snow trip?” Emily asked her mom for the third time.

“I earned all my money and I’m all registered and I—”

“It doesn’t have to do with any of that,” said Mom as she jerked a suitcase from the shelf in her closet, dusted it off, then tossed it onto her bed.

“And why are you getting that out?” demanded Emily. “Are you going somewhere?”

“We’re *all* going somewhere,” said Mom. “I want you to go to your room and pack.”

“Are we going somewhere for Christmas?” asked Emily, still confused. It was less than a week before Christmas and this was the first she’d heard of a trip.

“Something like that,” said Mom quickly. “Just do as I say and I’ll explain later.”

“But what about Kyle?” asked Emily. “Isn’t he going too?”

“Yes. I’ll have to pack for him. He’s still at work. We’ll pick him up on our way out.”

“What am I supposed to pack?” asked Emily, hoping that they might be going somewhere fun.

“Everything,” said Mom as she pulled open a drawer.

“What do you mean *everything*?”

“I mean everything that you brought when we moved here last spring. And anything you bought since then. Don’t pack any of the things that the Evan’s loaned us. Those will have to be returned ... later.”

“Returned?”

“Oh, Emily,” said Mom in her exasperated voice as she tossed a handful of socks and underclothes into her bag. “I don’t have time for questions right now. We need to get moving—and out of here—fast!”

Emily stared at her mom in horror. “Are we leaving—I mean moving—for good?”

“I’m sorry, Emily. I wish it wasn’t true.”

“But—but—why?” Emily felt a lump like a hard rock growing in her throat.

“It’s your father ...”

“Dad?”

“Yes ...” Mom stood up straight and, pushing a strand of blond hair from her eyes, she looked at Emily with an expression that Emily remembered from back in the old days, back before the moved to Boscoe Bay. “I just found out that he knows where we are.”

“How would he know? How did you find that out?”

“I just happened to call your Aunt Becky this morning. I used a friend’s cell phone at work, so it couldn’t be traced back ... I just wanted to wish her a Merry Christmas.” Mom carried a bunch of clothes from her closet and tossed them onto the already crowded bed.

“Becky told me that your dad hired a private investigator who somehow tracked us down. She said that he was on his way here right now. So, don’t you see, Emily, we have to get out of here—immediately!”

“But why do *we* have to be the ones to run away?” pleaded Emily. “We haven’t done anything wrong!”

“I know.” Mom sighed loudly.

“He’s the one who should be running, Mom. He’s the one who’s done all the bad stuff.”

“I know ... I know ...” Mom sighed loudly. “There’s no time to talk about this now. Just go pack, Emily. Hurry.”

“But, Mom!” Emily pleaded with her. “I have friends here. I have a life and I don’t want to—”

“Neither do I, Emily. But it’s what we *have* to do. I told you and Kyle, right from the start, that our stay in Boscoe Bay might be brief.”

“But what does that mean, Mom?” asked Emily in desperation. “That we’ll have to keep running and running forever?”

“I don’t know ...” Mom closed her eyes and shook her head. “All I know is that we need to get out of here right *now*.” She narrowed her eyes and gave Emily a look that said ‘I am dead serious, and I want no argument.’

“Okay,” said Emily as she went to her room. Tears were filling her eyes as she began to gather her things and pile them on the futon bed that the Evan’s had loaned to her when they first came here. It was funny ... she’d come to think of that bed, as well as so many other things, as her own. Suddenly it seemed as if nothing was really hers. Not her home, or her school ... and worst of all, not her friends.

“Here,” said Mom after a few minutes. “Just stuff your things into these.” She tossed several large black trash bags into Emily’s bedroom. “I’m going to pack for Kyle now.”

Before long, Emily was done, but Mom was still gathering things up. “Can I go tell Morgan that I’m leaving?” Emily asked sadly.

Mom frowned. “I don’t know ...”

“But they’re going to wonder what happened to us,” Emily persisted. “We were supposed to go to their house for Christmas. And I was supposed to meet the girls at the

clubhouse this afternoon. They might think we've been abducted or something. And, knowing Morgan, she might even call the police."

Mom nodded. "Yes. You're right. They've been good friends to us. And we can trust them. Go ahead and tell them that we're leaving this afternoon. I've already explained things to Mr. Greeley. Tell Mrs. Evans that Mr. Greeley can give her the house key so that they can come collect their—their things." Mom's voice broke and tears came streaming down her cheeks now.

"Oh, Mom," said Emily, running over to hug her. "This is so horrible."

"I know," said Mom as she ran her hand over Emily's hair. "I wish there was another way."

"Why isn't there?" asked Emily.

Mom just shook her head. "I don't know..." Then Mom turned back to packing Kyle's things.

"I'm going to Morgan's," said Emily as she grabbed her jacket.

"Don't stay long," warned Mom. "I'm almost ready to go right now and if you don't get back here in time, I'll just drive over there and honk—and you better come a running."

"Okay."

Emily picked up Morgan's Christmas present. It wasn't much, just a leopard print picture frame with a photo of her and Morgan in it. The gift wasn't even wrapped, but Emily didn't want to miss the chance to give it to her. Also, she'd have to ask Morgan to give the gifts (the things she and Morgan had been working on the past few days) to their other friends for her.

“Hey, Em,” said Morgan happily as she opened the door. “I’m so glad you’re here. I’ve got something I want to show you.”

Emily stepped into Morgan’s living room as Morgan dashed off toward her bedroom. Emily looked around the cozy house, trying to memorize every single thing about this place in one quick glance. The happy clutter of Grandma’s homemade afghans and worn furniture mixed with the more eclectic style of Morgan’s mom’s art and nicer things. From the first time Emily had stepped through their front door, she had always felt welcome here.

“Hello, Emily,” called Grandma from her recliner.

“How are you feeling today?” asked Emily as she approached her. Morgan’s grandma had recently undergone some very serious heart surgery and had only been sitting up for a few days now.

“I’m feeling right as rain,” said Grandma.

“I’m glad.” Emily forced a smile as she looked down on her.

Grandma frowned. “But what about you, honey. You don’t look too well to me.”

“Oh, I’m a little sad,” said Emily. What an understatement.

“Sad?” Grandma peered curiously at her. “Whatever for?”

“Yeah?” said Morgan as she reappeared wearing an interesting hat that appeared to have been patch-worked together from scraps of polar fleece—probably the leftovers from her recent sock-sewing project. “What’s up, Em?”

Emily tried to blink back the tears, but it was impossible. “We have to—have to leave.”

Morgan frowned. “You mean you guys are going somewhere for Christmas? I thought you were going to come to our house for—”

“No, I mean—I mean we have to leave—for—for good!” Now Emily was crying full force.

“*Why?*” cried Morgan, running over and putting her arms around Emily.

“Yes, why?” said Grandma more calmly.

Emily worked hard to recover from her outburst, finally taking a tissue from Grandma’s hand. “Thanks.”

“Now, sit down on the sofa there and tell us exactly what’s going on,” Grandma commanded her.

“Well ...” Emily took in a slow breath. “You know a little bit about why we came here. You guys and Mr. Greeley are the only ones who know about ....”

“You mean about your father?” supplied Grandma.

“Yes.” Emily nodded. “I guess he’s found out where we are.”

“*So?*” said Morgan in a defiant tone. It was actually sort of how Emily felt herself when Mom first told her the news.

“So ... my mom says that means we have to go.”

“But why?” demanded Morgan. Her dark eyes were filling with tears too now.

“I don’t really know ...” Emily looked down at her hands in her lap. “I guess it’s because Mom thinks he might hurt us again.”

“But how can he hurt you?” asked Morgan. “I mean what about police protection and things like that?”

“I don’t know ...” Emily just shook her head.

“Morgan does have a point,” said Grandma. “Running away might not solve your problem, Emily. Sometimes it’s better to stay and fight for your rights. You and your family

have good friends here in the mobile home park as well as at church, you have a community that could stand behind you and protect you. If you're out someplace new, where people don't know you ... well, that might be less safe."

Emily looked up at Grandma's kind brown face and nodded. "Yes, yes ... that makes sense."

"It does," said Morgan. "I mean what if you guys were out on the road, staying at a hotel or something and your dad found you there? Which would be worse?"

Emily considered this. "I know what you mean." Then she thought of her mother. "But for some reason Mom doesn't see it that way."

"But *why*?" cried Morgan. "It just seems so wrong that your family should have to be on the run from your dad. *Why? Why? Why?*"

Just then Emily heard Mom's car horn honking out front. "I've got to go," she said quickly. "Mom said to tell you that Mr. Greeley has the key to our house and you guys can go over there whenever you want to get your things." She held out her gift for Morgan. "This was going to be for your Christmas present." Again came the honking sound. "I didn't have time to wrap it."

"But, Emily—"

"I've got to go," said Emily.

"I'm not even done with your present yet," said Morgan. Then she pulled the bright colored hat from her head and shoved it onto Emily's head. "Here, take this for now." Then she hugged her again. "I don't want you go leave."

"I don't want to leave."

"You're my best friend ever," cried Morgan.

“You’re mine too!” sobbed Emily.

This time Mom’s horn honked loud and long.

“You better go, honey,” said Grandma. “But please tell your mom what we said. And if there is anything we can do—I mean anything at all—please, call us. Remember you have your friends, the church, the community here ... there’s a lot of power in those kinds of numbers.”

“I’ll tell Mom.” Emily ran over and quickly hugged Grandma. “Thanks ... for everything.”

“You be sure and call us, Emily,” said Grandma. “And you can call collect if you need to. And don’t forget that wherever you go God is with you. And we are praying for you.”

“Yes,” said Morgan. “And this isn’t over yet. I’m going to pray for God to bring you back here to us, Emily.”

“We’ll all be praying for that,” called Grandma.

Emily thanked them again then went out the door just as Mom began to honk the horn one more time. It was starting to rain as Emily ran out to the car. She wished that what Morgan and Grandma were saying could really be true—she wished it was possible for them to pray her and her family back here to Harbor View. But as she got into the car, she couldn’t forget the last time their family had to run, leaving their home and everything behind. They never did go back then. Why would this time be any different?

## Chapter 2

### Morgan

“We have an emergency,” said Morgan when all the girls were finally seated in the clubhouse.

“Where’s Emily?” asked Chelsea.

“Exactly,” said Morgan. “That’s the emergency.”

“Did she get hurt?” asked Amy.

“No.” Then, since there seemed to be no reason to keep this thing secret any longer, Morgan explained why Emily’s family had to flee so suddenly this afternoon.

“Wow,” said Chelsea. “I had no idea.”

“Poor Emily,” said Carlie.

“That’s crazy,” said Amy. “Why should Emily’s family have to run away from a dad who treated them like that?”

“That’s what I think too,” said Morgan.

“They need a lawyer,” said Chelsea.

“I’m sure they can’t afford one,” said Morgan.

“My dad has a friend who’s a lawyer,” said Chelsea. “In fact, Emily babysat for them to earn money for the snow trip.”

“This means Emily is going to miss the snow trip,” said Amy sadly.

“Not if we can help them,” said Morgan.

“How can we help them?” asked Carlie.

“Do we even know how to reach them?” asked Chelsea.

Morgan considered this. "Not really."

"Then how can we help them?" asked Amy.

"By praying," said Morgan. "We'll start by praying."

So, right then and there, all four girls bowed their heads and they all prayed for Emily and her family. They prayed for God to protect them and to get them safely back to Boscoe Bay and Harbor View.

"Amen," said Morgan when they'd finished.

The girls sat quietly in the bus for about a minute. All they could hear was the sound of the Oregon rain beating down on the roof of the bus.

"So, I guess this means our Christmas party is off," said Amy sadly.

"I know I don't feel much like a party," said Morgan.

"Me neither," added Carlie.

"I'm calling my dad," said Chelsea as she opened up her cell phone.

"Why?" asked Morgan.

"I'm going to ask him to talk to Mr. Lawrence; he's a lawyer, and Dad can ask him if he can figure out a way to help Emily's family."

"Great," said Morgan.

"But even if Mr. Lawrence is willing to help them ... how do we let Emily's mom know about it?" asked Amy.

"Yeah," said Carlie, "it seems pretty impossible."

"I guess we'll just have to keep praying," said Morgan. "Because God is the only one I know who can do what's impossible."

"And we'll do whatever we can to help," said Carlie.

Morgan held up her arm with the Rainbow Rules bracelet. “All for one and one for all?”

The other girls, including Chelsea even though she was talking to her dad now, held up their arms in unison.

“I know, Daddy,” said Chelsea. “But this *is* an emergency.” Then she told him about Emily’s situation, painting a dramatic account of how Emily’s family was, right this minute, fleeing in fear for their own safety. Chelsea listened for a minute or two. “Yes,” she said with excitement. “That’s exactly what I thought too. They need a lawyer. What about Mr. Lawrence?” She waited again. “You will, Daddy?” She smiled happily at her friends now. “Thanks so much! Yes, I’ll leave my phone on. Thank you, Daddy!” Then she closed her phone.

“Is he going to talk to the lawyer?”

“Yep.”

“But, even if he talks to the lawyer,” Amy reminded them, “we don’t know how to reach Emily right now.”

“That’s why we have to keep praying,” said Morgan.

They called their meeting to a close earlier than usual, and all of them promised to keep praying for Emily.

“Can I stay at your house until my mom gets here?” Chelsea asked Morgan as they started trudging down the wet sandy trail back to the mobile home park.

“Sure,” said Morgan.

Although it was still raining, all four girls paused briefly in front of Emily’s now abandoned house. They just stood there sadly looking at it.

“This isn’t over yet,” proclaimed Morgan.

Now Chelsea stuck her hand with the bracelet on it in the air. “Here’s to rescuing Emily,” she said.

“To rescuing Emily,” echoed Morgan and the others joined in. Then they ran off to their houses.

Once Morgan and Chelsea were inside the house, and before they even removed their wet jackets, Chelsea was calling her mom to ask her to pick her up. “We quit early,” she told her, explaining about Emily’s family’s unexpected departure. “Daddy is calling Mr. Lawrence right now,” she said. “We’re all going to do whatever we can to get Emily back here.”

“Excuse me for eavesdropping,” said Grandma as the girls came into the living room. “But who is Mr. Lawrence?”

Morgan told Grandma about Chelsea’s idea and Grandma smiled. “Yes,” she said. “That’s exactly how a community should work. People helping one another.”

“Do you want a Christmas cookie?” asked Morgan. “Emily and I decorated them just the other day.”

“Sure,” said Chelsea, following Morgan into the kitchen.

“Want some too?” Morgan called out to Grandma. “And some tea?”

Soon the three of them were back in the living room having cookies and tea and discussing ways they might be able to find out where Emily’s family were.

“You have to give your license plate numbers when you stay at a hotel,” Chelsea said between bites. “I know because my mom never can remember hers and I usually have to run out and check.”

“But we don’t know Emily’s mom’s license number,” said Morgan. “At least I don’t.”

“Me neither,” said Chelsea. “Do you have any idea which way they were going? North, south, east or west?”

“Not west,” said Morgan. “That would be straight into the Pacific Ocean.”

“And I doubt they’re going east,” said Chelsea, “if they originally ran away from Idaho like you said.”

“My guess is south,” said Grandma as she set her teacup down.

“Why?” asked Morgan.

“A couple of reasons ... one, it’s warmer down there in the winter time and two, there are more people down in California, it’s probably easier to disappear.”

“That’s true,” said Chelsea. “It’s a lot more crowded down there than up here.”

“We need a map,” said Morgan suddenly. “A road map.”

“There’s one in my car,” said Grandma. “In the glove compartment.”

So Morgan dashed out to the carport and returned with a map, which she soon had spread across the coffee table. “So,” she began, “if they’re going south, they might be on this highway right here.” She looked at the clock. “They left almost two hours ago.” She glanced at Grandma. “How fast do you think they’re driving on this highway?”

“Not more than sixty miles an hour,” said Grandma. “That’s a curvy road and the weather isn’t very good for driving.”

Morgan checked the key on the map and did some quick figuring. “Well, Emily’s mom still had to pick up Kyle, so that used up some time. So if they’ve been on the road for, say, an hour and a half, maybe that means they’re about here by now.”

“Hey, that’s pretty good,” said Chelsea. “Do you really think so?”

Morgan shrugged. “If Grandma is right and they’re really going south.”

Just then, they heard a horn honking. Morgan jumped to her feet, dashing to the window, thinking that it was Emily’s mom again. But it was just Mrs. Landers in her Mercedes. “Your mom is here,” Morgan called back to Chelsea.

Chelsea tugged on her still wet parka. “Well, let’s keep in touch,” said Chelsea. “We need to do everything we can to get Emily back here.”

“And let’s keep praying,” Morgan reminded her.

“Absolutely,” said Chelsea. Then Chelsea did something that Morgan couldn’t ever remember her doing before. She reached out and hugged Morgan. “I’m glad we’re friends, Morgan.”

Morgan nodded. “Me too.”

“And somehow we’re going to get Emily back here.”

“See ya,” called Morgan as Chelsea dashed out into the rain.

Morgan closed the door and went back to where Grandma was just finishing up her tea. “Chelsea seems like a nice girl,” said Grandma.

“Yeah,” agreed Morgan. “I’ve had my doubts sometimes, but I think you’re right. She really is a nice girl.”

Grandma chuckled. “I suppose that some people can be just as prejudiced against rich people as others are prejudiced against black people.”

Morgan sighed. “Yeah, I suppose so.”

“Aren’t you glad that God sees past all that?”

“That’s for sure,” said Morgan as she cleaned up the tea things.

“Well, I suppose I should go have a little rest,” said Grandma.

“Need any help?” offered Morgan.

“No, honey, I’m fine. I feel stronger every day.”

Morgan thought about Emily as she rinsed off the plates and cups in the kitchen sink. She wondered if her calculations about their road trip were even close. Was Emily’s car really about a hundred miles south of Boscoe Bay right now? Were they still driving along the Oregon coast highway, wipers slapping against the windshield so that they could see their way through this rain? She wondered how Emily and her brother were feeling just now. Were they all talking? Or was the car silent and somber? She imagined the three of them packed in there between all their personal belongings. Was it cramped? Surely Emily must feel as if her whole life had just been jerked out from under her—all over again. Her family would have to relocate, get started in new schools, get new jobs ... it was overwhelming for Morgan to even try to wrap her head around it. And what about Christmas, which was less than a week away? Where would they be by then? In some shabby motel room? Morgan couldn’t imagine how she would feel if she were in Emily’s shoes. Poor Emily!

Out of habit, Morgan reached up to finger one of her beaded braids—it was something she sometimes did when she was feeling anxious about something. And then she would pray about whatever was bothering her. But, as she touched a soft curl, she remembered that the beaded braids were gone and she instantly wished that she’d never gotten her hair changed. What had she been thinking? Of course, she knew exactly what she’d been thinking. She’d been jealous of the developing friendship between Emily and Chelsea. She had wanted to look less her African American self and more like them. How totally stupid! And now Emily was gone and Morgan actually was starting to like Chelsea

much better. Grandma was right. Morgan had been wrong about Chelsea. Funny how life could change like that—so quickly.

As Morgan stood there, she was looking directly across the road at Mr. Greeley's house and suddenly she remembered something that Emily had said about Mr. Greeley, about him knowing about Emily's family was leaving and having a key to their house so they could pick up their things. Well, some of the things at Emily's belonged to Morgan. Although, in her heart, she had given them to Emily. Still, it provided a good excuse to go snoop around. And maybe she could uncover something that would help them to locate Emily right now. Something that could help to bring Emily and her family back here—back where they belonged!

Copyrighted Material. For Sales Presentations Only.