

HALLOWEEN



EVAN JACOBS

Walden Lane

Where the mountains meet the sea ... Where the city blends into the wilderness ... This is Walden Lane. Hike in the sage-green hills, or surf in the cool Pacific—all in the same day. Is Walden Lane perfect? No. But it is home.

Meet the Characters



Marlon Moore loves gaming. When he's not in school or riding his bike, he's online. But 14-year-old Marlon is also a loyal friend and a great little brother. He would tell you his best friend is Steve McCain. But his dad is his true BFF.

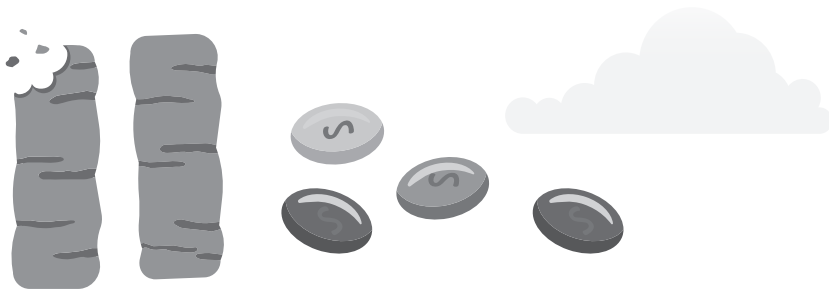


Ashley Moore is an overachiever. She's good at almost everything she tries. Is she a perfectionist? Maybe. But Ashley is 16 and likes to have fun too. And her family doesn't let her accomplishments go to her head.

Trick or Treat



Marlon's fave costume ever: Rainbow Dash from *My Little Pony*. He was obsessed!



Best candy? For Marlon, it's Twix. For Steve, it's Skittles all the way.



Fun Facts



i Libre Soy!

All'alba
Sorgerò

Ashley knows how to sing “Let It Go” in Spanish
and Italian.



To Kayla, Halloween is all about scary: zombies,
severed limbs, oozing blood. Epic!





Chapter 1

Tricked

I'm almost 14," Marlon said. "Why does Ashley have to come? I go out alone all the time."

It was Halloween.

Marlon's parents were sitting in the living room. An old horror movie was on TV. It was in black and white. A candy bowl sat by the front door.

Mr. and Mrs. Moore wore costumes. Marlon's dad was dressed as a clown. He

wore a blue-and-gold bodysuit. His face was painted white. On his nose was a big red circle. Embarrassing!

His mom was dressed in a prison jumpsuit. It was orange. She had worn it to work that day. Marlon's mom was an elementary school teacher. All her students loved her costume.

“Because it's at night,” his mom said. “You know you're not allowed to go out alone.”

“And it's Halloween,” his dad said.

Their eyes were glued to the movie. Both ate candy. Marlon felt like he was talking to two big kids. Who were these people?

Marlon was dressed as Captain America. The costume came with a plastic shield. He looked buff.

“So what?” Marlon said. “I’m going to be with Steve. We won’t get in any trouble.”

Steve McCain was Marlon’s best friend. They always went trick-or-treating together. The boys hung out at the middle school. They were in the eighth grade. Next year they would be in high school.

Steve was going as Iron Man. Marlon had already seen his friend’s costume. The costume had a cool mask.

“Don’t think I’m happy either,” Ashley said. She came down the stairs. “I’ve got a party to go to. What about *my* curfew? It’s at 10. There will be no time for fun. Let’s get this over with.”

It was six o’clock. Ashley only had to be with the boys until eight. Marlon wanted to wait until it was darker. But he didn’t want to waste time.

Ashley was dressed as Elsa from *Frozen*. She wore Elsa's sparkly dress. It came with silver slippers. Her wavy black hair was now in one big braid.

"See?" Marlon said. "Ashley's not going to be any fun. She just wants to get to her party."

"Marlon," his dad said. "You're leaving now. You'll have plenty of time."

"Yeah," Ashley said. "They're making me walk you guys for two hours."

"Two hours?" Marlon whined.

Mrs. Moore looked up from the movie. "The neighborhood's not that big, honey."

The Moores lived in a city called Walden Lane. The small city was like many others. It was made up of homes, apartments, and businesses. Walden Lane was surrounded

by beautiful hills. There were places to hike. Some parts of town were nice. Other parts were rundown.

Marlon's parents were right. The neighborhood wasn't big. Still, he loved Halloween. He didn't want to feel rushed. He had a big goal. It was to get as much candy as possible.

"Do you want one of us to take you?" his dad asked, smiling.

"Yeah, little brother." Ashley was smiling too. "Have Mom or Dad take you."

"No!" Marlon screeched.

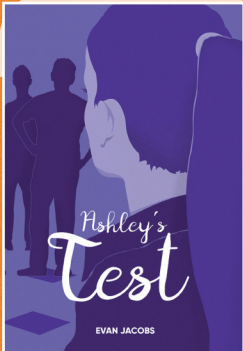
Going with Ashley was bad enough. She didn't want to go trick-or-treating. Ashley felt too old for that now.

Big sister or parents? He chose big sister. It was better than going with his

parents. Marlon hadn't trick-or-treated with them in two years. He didn't want people he knew to see him. He'd be the joke of the school. No eighth graders trick-or-treated with their parents!

“Then get your shield, Captain,” Ashley said. “You're wasting time.”

Marlon looked at his parents. They smiled at him and shrugged. He picked up his shield. Then Marlon followed Ashley out the front door.



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No way do Marlon and Steve need a chaperone. But it's Halloween. And Marlon's big sister will go with them trick-or-treating. Walk through the graveyard, Ashley says, and she will back off. Deal! What could happen?



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SHADY NEIGHBORS

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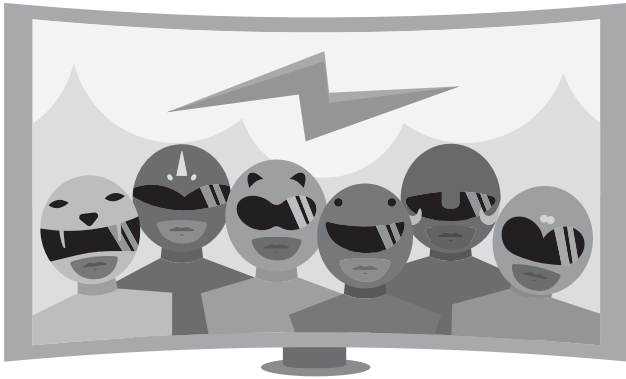
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Fun Facts



Mrs. Moore grew up in a funky purple house.



David Albert still watches *Power Rangers*.





Chapter 1

Welcome

Let's bring those cookies over.” Marlon’s dad smiled. He crossed the living room. As he did, he turned off the TV.

Marlon’s mom walked out of the kitchen. She was holding a plate of freshly baked cookies. They were covered in plastic wrap.

Marlon eyed her from the couch. He was holding his tablet. Normally he would have grabbed some cookies. But not today. His mom had made them for someone else.

New neighbors had moved in across the street. The cookies were for them.

Marlon didn't know much about the new people. But they did drive a big white truck.

“Come on, Marlon,” his mom said.

His dad opened the front door.

Marlon's parents wore jeans and T-shirts. For “older” folks, he thought they dressed pretty cool. Marlon wore shorts and a T-shirt. His shirt said “I logged out for this?” on the front.

Marlon was into video games. Technology was an obsession. He also loved movies.

His mom was an elementary school teacher. Marlon's dad worked for the city. He helped to plan Walden Lane. That's where the Moore family lived.

Walden Lane was a mid-sized city. There were parks and neighborhoods. The city was surrounded by hills and trails. People liked to be outside.

Marlon had a sister. Her name was Ashley. She was a straight-A student. Ashley ran track for the high school. She was also in many school clubs.

“Why do I have to go?” he asked.

Marlon was focused on his tablet. He was reading a story. It was about a family. They robbed banks. The family had robbed over 50 banks. They didn’t get caught for a long time. The best part was where they lived. It was in a city just like Walden Lane.

“Because we’re a family,” his dad said. “And we’re going to welcome these new people as a family.”

“Ashley doesn’t have to go.” Marlon

put down his tablet. He got up from the couch.

“That’s because she’s at track practice,” his mom said.



The house was a fixer upper. It needed new paint. There was termite damage. The old window frames looked rusty. The yard was a tangle of weeds. It was not a pretty sight.

His dad knocked on the door. “They got a bargain here,” his dad said. “It just needs a little love. This side of the street is great. There’s nobody behind you.”

“They’re not home,” Marlon said.

“That’s odd,” his mom said. “Their truck is here.”

“Maybe they have another car,” his dad said.

“I haven’t seen one,” said Mrs. Moore.

Marlon eyed the white pickup. It was old. The paint was fading. There were some boxes in the back. He hadn't seen anyone, just this old truck. The people were never around.

“Maybe these guys are aliens,” Marlon said.

“Shhh!” his mom said.

“Seriously! Maybe they just rented this house. Then they're going to use it to take over Walden Lane.”

“Marlon,” his mom warned.

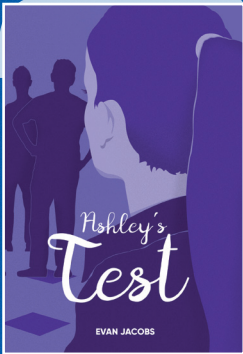
His dad knocked on the door again.

Nobody answered.

“I guess they're not home,” his dad said.

“We'll try again later.” His mom sighed.

“Can I eat the cookies?” Marlon asked.



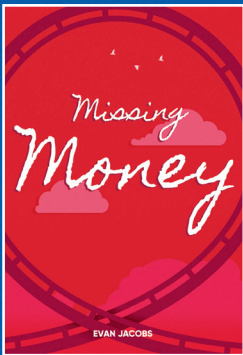
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Marlon thinks the new neighbors are weird. They are never home, except at night. And what is the mysterious glow coming from the backyard?

Marlon enlists his friends as spies. The boys decide to take a closer look.



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