

A-maize-ing Escapade

By Donna Price



Jenna and I pedaled down the long dirt road to our farms. We passed the signs advertising the HUGE CORN MAZE—AS BIG AS 35 FOOTBALL FIELDS! The maze stretched behind the farmhouses.

“I wish we had rocket club instead of Ag Club after school,” I said.

“I know. How are we going to get to Mars if we can’t even get off of the farm?”

“It’s so much work,” I grumbled. “And we never get to sleep in. I’m tired of feeding pigs and chickens before school.”

“And mucking horse stalls. Ugh!” Jenna said. She slowed down at her house.

“We’re supposed to go to my house,” I reminded her.

“Just let me get Rover.” We rode around back to let out Jenna’s golden retriever, Mars Rover.

“Hey, let’s ride through the maze to your house,” Jenna suggested.

“I don’t have my map and compass. Can you get yours?”

“Huh? Who needs those?”

“I’m not allowed in the maze without them,” I said, hoping she wouldn’t think that was stupid. “I would so get in trouble if my parents found out.”

“How would they find out? Besides, when have we ever gotten lost around here?”

“We haven’t—yet. But I sure wouldn’t want to,” I said.

“You wanna be an astronaut, right? Be brave. Come on! It’ll be fun.”

“Well . . . I guess it would be okay, as long as we’re out of the maze by dark.”

“Yes!” She jumped on her bike, calling, “Rover!”

Rover took off toward a maze entrance. We raced through the maze behind him, jockeying to be the first

at corners, slapping the cornstalks on the turns. It was a blast! Then Jenna said, “Hold up. I’m out of breath.” She whistled for Rover, who came back, panting happily.

I looked around, suddenly concerned. I’d lost track somehow. “Umm, Jenna . . . where to now?”

“Next right—I think.” She laughed, sounding carefree.

“Oh, don’t even joke!” I didn’t remember the last few twists and turns.

“I was following Rover,” said Jenna.

“He doesn’t get lost . . . uh, usually.”

We rode on slowly, but the route now seemed unfamiliar. “We didn’t pass the red scarecrow,” I realized. “We must have taken a wrong turn.”

“Okay, maybe we’re a little lost,”

Jenna admitted. I felt a knot in my stomach. I leaned down and peered through the stalks, but they were planted in thick, ragged rows so you couldn’t see far.

“The sun will help!” Jenna suggested. But the sun had sunk below the level of the corn.

“The sky seems a little brighter over there,” I said. “And the sun sets behind the field. So we should go the other way.”

We took a few more turns, Rover padding beside us, but I was losing hope. It got too dark to ride our bikes. “We’re supposed to stay in one place if we’re lost,” I said.

“But no one knows we’re lost!” Jenna objected.

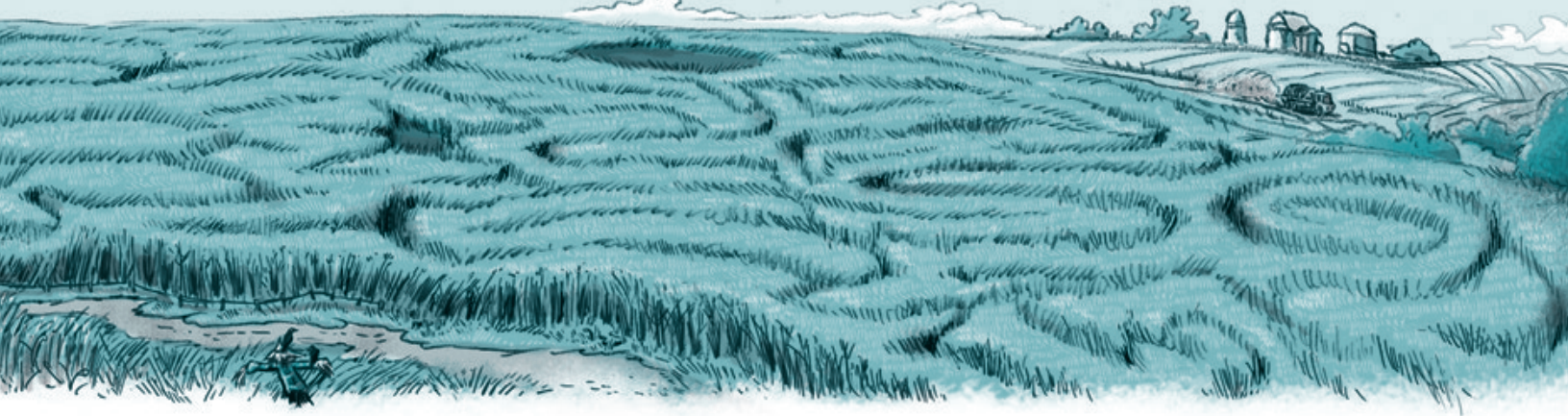
“They’ll figure it out soon.” We sat down in a circular clearing with a giant pumpkin in the middle. I wondered which of the 35 pumpkins it was.

“Look at the bright side,” Jenna said. “Maybe we’ll get cell phones after this.”

“Or maybe we’ll get grounded for a year.”

Suddenly, there was a rustling nearby. I jumped. Rover sniffed the air. “Think that was a snake?” Jenna asked.





“Or a really big rat,” I answered nervously.

“Relax,” Jenna said. “Rover will get it.”

We looked at Rover, and he whined.

“I *really* don’t want to spend the night out here,” I whispered.

We heard another rumbling noise. “That time, it was just my stomach,” I said. “I feel like I haven’t eaten in days.”

Jenna opened her backpack, and the three of us shared the last of her water. She rummaged around and found some crushed crackers and melted gummy candy. As it got colder, we huddled together with Rover on our laps. My jacket couldn’t keep us all warm. I thought about my parents and how warm and cozy Jenna and I would be if we had gone home instead.

“Abby, I’m sorry I got you into this,” Jenna said.

“We both decided to come out here.”

“But I pushed you. Not my best idea.”

“Yeah,” I said. I looked up at the night sky. “Still, the stars are beautiful. Check out the Milky Way.”

“My cousin in Chicago has never seen the Milky Way,” she said.

“Seriously?”

“Too much city light. And in New York, they can barely even see the stars,” Jenna added.

“You know, we have it pretty good,” I admitted.

“I know. The fresh air, working with the family, living near you.” She laughed, “Even if it’s a farm, and not a space station.”

“Yeah, but my parents said they’ll help me go to college to become an astronaut.” I gazed up into space, looking for Mars. “We shouldn’t complain so much,” I decided.

“Yeah, my family’s pretty cool, too,” Jenna said.

“Look!” I pointed. “That bright star. I can see it from

our front porch at night.”

“So if we follow the star . . .”

“It’s like the prayer,” I realized. “O God, guide me!”

“Yes! The brilliant star!”

Jenna jumped up and switched on her bicycle light. Excited now, we used the system of always choosing the path in the star’s direction. When we had to backtrack, we threw broken cornstalks down across the dead-end paths. Slowly, we worked our way toward the star.

The path became more familiar. “Hey,” I said, excited, “I know the way from here!”

We pushed our bikes, running faster than ever to the exit, with Rover trailing behind us.

“I hear a horn!” Jenna said.

After a few more minutes, we heard wonderful voices.

“Mom?” we both called out. “Dad?”

“Jenna? Abby?” We could see

headlights now. We raced toward

the entrance, Rover taking the lead.

The lights from the trucks and the sheriff’s car were blinding. But then our parents were hugging us while Rover barked with crazy happiness.

“Are you okay? What happened?” my mom gasped.

“We were going through the maze from Jenna’s house. We didn’t think we needed a map, but we did. I’m so sorry!”

“Yeah, I’m sorry too,” Jenna added.

“We’re glad you’re safe,” my dad said. His face was stern, yet kind. “But we’re going to have a long talk about this.”

Thankful—for seeing my family, for having friends, for the stars—I found myself just saying, “Okay. And thank you. I really mean it—thank you for everything.”

