

CHAPTER 1

Billy Broccoli hung on to the mane of the horse as it hurtled wildly across the Sahara desert. A tribe of bearded nomads atop snorting, spitting camels galloped so closely behind him that he could feel the lead camel's hot breath on his neck. The leader of the pack, raising a double-edged sword that glistened in the blazing sun, shouted for him to stop, but Billy refused. As Billy held on to his white stallion for dear life, he saw a desert dust storm swirling toward him. He reached up to cover his face, but it was too late. The hot blast of air shot into his ear and traveled from one side of his head to the other. It felt like his brain was on fire, and he let loose a piercing scream.

“I give up!” he shouted. “You can have the treasure map. Just stop the hot air. I can't stand it anymore!”

He jumped from the saddle, flew through the air, and landed with a thud on . . . the carpet of his bedroom floor!

Billy stood up and looked around. He rubbed his eyes, trying to determine where he was. He saw no sand, no camels, no tribe of bearded nomads chasing him. Only Hoover Porterhouse, the ghost who shared Billy's room, floating above him and clutching his sides with laughter.

"What do you think you're doing?" Billy snapped, not sharing his ghostly roommate's amusement.

"I was bored waiting for you to wake up," the Hoove answered, "so I blew in your ear. Hey, it worked. Look, you're up."

"I was in the middle of a dream and now I'll never know how it ends."

"Well, I can tell you this. You were snorting like a camel and it was pretty disgusting. I had to put an end to it, for your own reputation."

"What kind of reputation? There's no one here but me and you."

"The Hoove's Rule Number Sixteen, Billy Boy. You always got to keep yourself sharp because you never know who's looking."