



## SEVEN

Jason flew to his room.

The place was a mess. Pajamas and towels were crumpled in a heap in the corner. The bed was lumpy. His dresser drawers yawned open, and jeans played peekaboo over the top.

He kicked away pieces of gum wrapper with his foot.

Gum wrappers?

What were *they* doing out?

He scrambled to his knees and pushed the comic books aside. The junk drawer was junkier than ever!

Searching, he found his bike money in the back of the drawer. The baseball cards divided his money on the right from Abby's on the . . .

"Wha-at's this?" he wailed.

Abby's money was all ripped up! Bits of garbanzo beans were mixed in with shredded dollar bills.

"What happened?" Jason cried. "Who did this?"

A trail of the scrappy mess led to the bathroom. He found his puppy whining in the corner of the shower.

"Bad, bad Muffie!" He wanted to shake her. No, that was too kind. He wanted to hang Muffle up by her doggie ears.

"How could you do this?" he shouted.

Muffle yipped and backed into the shower stall.

Jason slammed the bathroom door and looked in the mirror. He yelled at his own face. “Can’t you do anything right?”

He slapped himself on the forehead. “It was those big, bad beans!” Jason exclaimed. “I should’ve known . . . I should’ve . . .”

His mother knocked on the door. “Jason, are you all right?”

“I’m doomed. Abby’s money is all gone! Muffle ate it!” he said over and over.

“I can’t understand you,” his mother said.

“Everything’s wrong,” he muttered. “Abby counted on me and now . . .”

He picked Muffle out of the shower. Her breath smelled like beans. “You little sneak,” he hollered in the pooch’s face. “I oughta call the dog pound this minute!”

Poor little Muffle shook in his arms. He carried her to the back door and put her out. Then he slammed the kitchen door and headed for his room.

The junk drawer was sagging open. Half a garbanzo bean and some lettuce were scattered in the front—the reason for Muffle’s mischief.

But deep inside, Jason knew it was his own fault.

He groaned. *Those good-for-nothing beans! If only I’d cleaned my plate.*

Just then the doorbell rang.

“Jason,” called his mother. “Your friend Abby’s here to see you.”

His heart sank. Abby had come for her Mother’s Day money early. He was almost positive!

Jason breathed fast and hard. How much money had she given him? How many dollar bills?

On the floor behind the door he spied the sandwich baggie. The amount was written on a round pink sticker.

Twenty-two dollars!

Jason gasped. What could he do?

Quickly, he counted his own money. It was all there.

He thought about Dunkum’s terrific road bike down the street. Just waiting to be his!



But he had no choice. Jason stuffed his own money into the sandwich bag. He would give it all to Abby Hunter. She'd never know what happened to her half-eaten money. Or worse—that he couldn't be counted on.

He shuffled down the hall. No bike for a kid with a health-food freak for a dog!

"I'm coming, Abby," he called.

Jason tried to swallow the lump in his throat. It was very hard.