

## Chapter 1: A Wobble in Time

No amount of magic could cure the gloomy mood settling over eleven-year-old Billius Weasley one summer afternoon. The Burrow's kitchen was, as usual, in a state of chaos. Dirty breakfast plates floated unsteadily toward the sink, gently colliding before plunging back into the soapy water magically swirled by a common household charm. On the back of a chair, a half-finished jumper continued knitting itself, the needles clicking softly as they added more stitches to what appeared to be a maroon sleeve. Several grumpy garden gnomes huddled outside the window, still upset after being abruptly woken up by an irritable Ronin.

Breakfast plates zoomed towards the sink like badly aimed Quaffles, kicking off another morning at the Burrow, the wonderfully crooked house the Weasley family called home. Inside its cheerful kitchen, the usual magical chaos reigned: dirty dishes levitated towards soapy water stirred by an invisible hand, while a half-knitted jumper draped over a chair clicked its needles together, steadily adding rows to a lopsided maroon sleeve. Just outside the window, a cluster of recently evicted garden gnomes huddled by the muddy Wellington boots. Still cross from being whirled overhead and tossed over the hedge by thirteen-year-old Ronin Weasley earlier that morning, they shook their knobbly fists and grumbled tiny, earthy curses at the kitchen window.

Billius slumped at the long wooden table, poking at a leftover piece of toast. His freckled face, usually bright with excitement, radiated with a sense of discomfort. Upstairs, he could hear the unmistakable thumps and bangs of his older brother, Ronin, attempting to pack his school trunk. Ronin was thirteen and, in just a few short weeks, would be heading off to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry for the first time. Billius wasn't sure which felt worse: the thought of Ronin leaving, or the fizzing mixture of jealousy and impatience bubbling up inside him whenever he thought about Hogwarts.

"Honestly, Ronin, if you blast your socks through the floorboards one more time, you can patch it up yourself!" Mum's voice floated down the stairs. A moment later, a pair of sports socks zoomed past the kitchen doorway, chased by a faint puff of blue smoke.

Billius sighed. Ronin got to learn *real* magic, proper spells, not just the accidental stuff that seemed to happen around Billius whenever he got particularly cross or excited – like the time Aunt Muriel's teacup had shattered when she'd called his hair "aggressively orange." Ronin would ride the Hogwarts Express, get Sorted into a House (Gryffindor, obviously, they were Weasleys!), and probably learn how to turn teacups into tortoises by lunchtime.

Billius, meanwhile, was stuck here. Stuck with chores, stuck with waiting, stuck feeling... ordinary.

[ILLUSTRATION: The chaotic Burrow kitchen scene, with levitating plates, self-knitting needles, maybe a glimpse of gnomes outside the window, and Billius looking glum at the table while socks magically fly past the doorway.]

A clatter from the pantry announced Dad's attempt to retrieve more Floo powder followed by a muffled exclamation that suggested he'd accidentally Apparated only halfway into the cramped space. Mum sprinted past Billius, wand out, muttering about needing stronger household charms.

Left alone for a moment, Billius's gaze drifted to the most peculiar object in the kitchen: the Weasley family clock. It stood tall, dusty, and slightly crooked against a wall. Instead of numbers, it had little descriptions like 'Home,' 'School,' 'Traveling,' 'Lost,' 'Prison,' and even 'Mortal Peril.' Nine golden hands, each engraved with the name of a family member, pointed towards 'Home.' Well, all except one. Ronin's hand kept twitching excitedly between 'Home' and 'Traveling,' as if it couldn't quite wait to get going.

Billius scowled at it. It wasn't *fair*. Why did Ronin get to go *now*? Why did Billius have to wait? He pushed his chair back, the legs scraping loudly on the stone floor. He approached the clock, feeling that familiar, restless itch under his skin. Dad had always warned them never to fiddle with the clock – its magic was old and temperamental, woven together with bits of string, hope, and who-knew-what-else over the years.

But Ronin's hand seemed to mock him, vibrating with anticipation. Maybe... maybe if he just gave it a tiny nudge? Just to see what happened? His fingers hovered over the smooth, golden surface of Ronin's hand. He wasn't trying to break it, not really. He just wanted it to stop being so... *smug*.

[ILLUSTRATION: Close-up of the unique Weasley family clock, focusing on the various locations instead of numbers, with Billius's hand hesitantly reaching out towards Ronin's twitching clock hand.]

With a sudden, impulsive movement, Billius tapped Ronin's hand firmly.

There was no bang, no flash of light. For a second, nothing happened at all. Then, with a concerning *sproing* sound, like a spring uncoiling deep within the clock's works, Ronin's hand went haywire. It wobbled violently, spun around three times, and then detached itself completely from the clock face with a soft *plink*. It hovered in the air for a moment, gleaming, before magically vanishing into thin air.

Billius stared, his mouth open. Ronin's hand was gone. Not pointing to 'Home' or 'Traveling' or anywhere else. Just... gone. The spot where it had been fixed was now an empty hole on the clock face.

Panic flooded Billius. He hadn't meant for *that* to happen. He glanced wildly towards the pantry, where Dad was now presumably unstuck, and towards the stairs, where Mum was likely still lecturing Ronin about using magic for sock-packing.

No one had seen.

He quickly backed away from the clock, bumping the table and nearly spilling the self-stirring cauldron of stew. He had to pretend nothing had happened. It was probably fine. Maybe the hand would just... pop back? Magical things were always going slightly wrong in the Burrow. Perhaps no one would even notice.

[ILLUSTRATION: Billius looking wide-eyed and panicked, backing away from the clock which now has a noticeable empty spot where Ronin's hand should be.]

Upstairs, the thumping stopped. Ronin exclaimed, "Mum! Where's my Cleansweep Seven manual? It's not in my trunk!"

Billius swallowed hard. He had a very bad feeling that things were about to get a lot less ordinary, and not in the fun, Hogwarts-adventure way he'd been hoping for.

## **Chapter 2: Hands of Mischief**

Billius tried his best to look casual, leaning against the kitchen counter as if inspecting a particularly fascinating knot in the wood. Inside, his heart was hammering against his ribs like a trapped Bludger. *Gone. Ronin's hand was actually gone.* He risked a tiny glance back at the Weasley family clock. The empty hole where Ronin's hand should have been seemed to stare back accusingly.

"Right, that's the last of the Exploding Snap cards packed away – honestly, Ronin, must you take *everything*?" Mum hurried down the stairs, wiping her hands on her apron. She paused at the bottom step, surveyed the kitchen – the levitating plates still dunking themselves, the jumper still knitting – and gave a satisfied nod. "Almost tidy. Now, where's your father off to? Giffard! Stew's nearly ready!"

There was no reply from the pantry. Mum frowned, then her eyes drifted towards the clock. "Oh, for heaven's sake," she sighed, walking closer. "Traveling? Now? He only just popped into the pantry for pickled onions!"

Billius froze. He followed Mum's gaze. Sure enough, Dad's clock hand, the one labelled 'Giffard', was now twitching erratically between 'Home' and 'Traveling', as if it couldn't quite make up its mind.

"Traveling?" Mum repeated, sounding bewildered. "Where on earth would he be traveling to *inside the pantry*?" She knocked aggressively on the pantry door. "Giffard? Are you all right in there?"

A muffled voice answered. "Fine, Pomona! Just... having a bit of trouble with the door! Seems to think I'm trying to Apparate through it!"

Mum's brow furrowed. "Don't be silly, dear. It's a pantry door." She turned back to the clock, her eyes narrowing. "That's very odd..." Her gaze swept over the clock face, and then she stopped. "Wait a moment. Where's Ronin's hand?"

Billius felt a jolt, as if someone had cast a Full Body-Bind Curse on him. He tried to swallow, but his throat felt like sandpaper.

"It was there a minute ago," Mum murmured, peering closer. "Pointing to 'Home'... wasn't it?" She tapped the empty spot. "How peculiar. Must have just... fallen off, I suppose. Needs tightening." She sighed again. "Another thing to fix."

Just then, a furious clicking sound erupted from across the room. The maroon jumper Mum had been knitting suddenly sprang to life with alarming speed. The needles flashed like tiny silver swords, knitting faster and faster, the wool blurring into a frantic maroon whirlwind.

"Good gracious!" Mum exclaimed, jumping back as the needles began clattering aggressively against the side of the stew cauldron. "Stop that! *Finite!*"

[ILLUSTRATION: Mum batting away frantically clicking knitting needles that are dangerously close to the magical stew pot in the kitchen, looking exasperated.]

The needles ignored her command, clicking with even greater fury. Stitches unraveled as fast as new ones were formed, the jumper tangling itself into a hopeless mess.

Upstairs, a door banged open. "What's all that racket?" Ronin clumped down the stairs, looking disgruntled. "And has anyone seen my Quidditch gloves? The dragonhide ones?" He stopped short, staring at the chaotic scene: Mum wrestling with her possessed knitting, Dad's hand flickering wildly on the clock, and Billius trying to blend into the background.

"What's happened to the clock?" Ronin asked, walking over and spotting the empty hole immediately. "Where's my hand gone?"

Billius winced. He knew, with dreadful certainty, that this was his fault. His touch, that silly, jealous feat, had done more than just dislodge the hand – it had sent it... somewhere. And now the clock, confused about Ronin's status without his hand, seemed to be making *other* things go haywire. Dad wasn't really traveling, the clock just *thought* he might be because it couldn't properly track Ronin. And the knitting... well, maybe it was trying to knit something for Ronin, but couldn't figure out where he *was*?

"It... it just vanished, dear," Mum said distractedly, giving the knitting a final, forceful whack with a wooden spoon, which made it pause momentarily before resuming its frantic clicks. "And now your father seems to think he's midway through an international Portkey trip in the pantry, and this knitting's gone berserk."

Ronin stared at the clock, then at the pantry door, from which muffled bangs could still be heard, then back at the clock. His initial annoyance seemed to fade, replaced by a flicker of something else – confusion, maybe even a tiny bit of worry. "Vanished? Clock hands don't just vanish."

While Mum was distracted by the knitting again and Ronin was examining the clock face, Billius moved closer. He poked tentatively at the empty hole with his finger, half-hoping the hand might just reappear. Nothing happened. He glanced around, saw Mum's wand lying on the table beside a half-peeled potato, and had a sudden, foolish idea. Making sure no one was looking, he snatched up the wand, pointed it clumsily at the hole, and whispered, "*Accio Ronin's clock hand!*"

Absolutely nothing happened, except the potato beside him gave a slight wobble. Billius hastily put the wand back down, his cheeks burning. Of course it wouldn't be that simple. He wasn't even allowed to use magic outside of Hogwarts yet, let alone perform a Summoning Charm properly.

[ILLUSTRATION: Billius secretly pointing Mum's wand at the clock's empty spot with a hopeful/desperate expression, while Ronin looks puzzled at the clock and Mum deals with the knitting in the background.]

"This is weird," Ronin muttered, touching the flickering hand labelled 'Giffard'. "Dad's definitely in the pantry, I heard him rummaging."

"Giffard! Stop trying to Apparate and just open the door!" Mum called, finally managing to stun the knitting into stillness with a well-aimed spell.

"I'm *trying*, Pomona!" Dad's voice echoed back, sounding distant. "The doorknob feels like it's trying to pull me through the keyhole!"

[ILLUSTRATION: Dad's face peering comically through the magical Floo Network grate in the fireplace, looking bewildered, while his hand on the clock points erratically to 'Traveling'.]

Okay, maybe Dad wasn't *in* the pantry. Maybe the clock's confusion had somehow redirected his attempt to *leave* the pantry via a quick Floo connection back to the kitchen? Billius's head spun. This was getting complicated.

Mum threw her hands up. "Right, that settles it. Something's properly wrong with this clock." She looked from the malfunctioning clock face to the chaos around the kitchen. Ronin was now frowning deeply, nudging the empty spot where his hand should be. Even the levitating plates seemed to be sloshing water over the sides of the sink with more force than usual.

Panic began to bubble in Billius's chest again, stronger this time. This wasn't just a missing piece anymore. It was causing real trouble. And it was all his fault. He looked at Ronin's worried face, at Mum's frazzled expression, heard Dad's confused shouts from the fireplace, and knew, with a sinking feeling, that pretending nothing had happened wasn't going to work for much longer. Ronin's hand wasn't just missing; it was lost.

### **Chapter 3: The Gnome, The Nibbler, and The Golden Hand**

The chaos in the kitchen seemed to somehow get even worse. The levitating plates in the sink weren't just splashing anymore; they were clattering against the porcelain like trapped birds. The knitting needles on the chair clicked with furious speed, the half-finished maroon jumper bunching and twisting as if trying to tie itself in knots. From the fireplace, Dad's voice could still be heard, muffled and increasingly exasperated, "Pomona? Bit stuck here! Seems to think I'm halfway to the Ministry!"

Ronin whirled away from the clock, his face grim. He jabbed a finger towards the empty space where his clock hand should have been, then pointed that same finger directly at Billius.

"Alright," Ronin said, his voice low and dangerously calm, a tone Billius knew usually came just before an explosion. "Spill it. What did you do?"

Billius swallowed hard. The cold panic in his chest felt like it was freezing his insides. There was no escape.

"I... I just..." Billius stammered, twisting the hem of his shirt. "I wanted to see... you know... if maybe..." He couldn't meet Ronin's eyes. Taking a deep breath, he finally mumbled, "I might have... sort of... *borrowed* your clock hand for a bit."

Ronin stared. His ears started to turn red, a sure sign of impending Weasley rage. "You *borrowed* it? *Borrowed* it? Billius, it's not a toy! It's part of the clock! Look what's happening! Dad's lost in the Floo Network, the plates are trying to break free, and Mum's about five seconds from turning us all into garden gnomes herself!"

"I didn't mean for this to happen!" Billius cried, finally looking up, his eyes wide with desperation. "I just wanted to see if it would point to Hogwarts for me, just for a second! And then... then I dropped it. And I couldn't find it."

[ILLUSTRATION: Billius looking wretchedly up at Ronin, confessing, while Ronin glares down, his ears bright red, amidst the escalating kitchen chaos in the background.]

Ronin threw his hands up in the air, pacing a small circle. "Dropped it! Of course, you dropped it! Where? Where did you drop it, you nitwit?"

"I... I don't know!" Billius admitted miserably. "Somewhere near the back door, I think? Maybe? I was looking for my Cleansweep catalogue..."

"Right," Ronin snapped, stopping his pacing. His anger seemed to flicker, replaced by a grudging sort of determination. Mum let out a shriek as the stew pot finally splattered purple goo onto the ceiling. "Right," Ronin repeated firmly. "We have to find it. Now. Before Mum *does* turn us into gnomes. Think, Billius! Where could it have gone?"

They started searching frantically, dropping to their hands and knees. They peered under the kitchen table, scattering crumbs. They rummaged through the pile of muddy boots by the back door, disturbing a family of spiders. Ronin even tried a half-hearted summoning charm, pointing his finger vaguely (he didn't have his wand yet, of course) and muttering, "*Accio* clock hand!" Nothing happened, except one of the levitating plates wobbled dangerously close to the edge of the sink.

"It's got to be small," Ronin muttered, pushing aside a stray Quaffle that had rolled under a cabinet. "And gold. Shiny."

Billius's eyes suddenly widened. He remembered something from earlier that morning, before the clock chaos had begun. When he'd been sent out, grumbling, to help Ronin de-gnome the garden. He remembered seeing one particularly grumpy gnome scuttling away near the cabbages, clutching something... something small and glinting in the weak morning sun.

“The garden!” Billius gasped, scrambling to his feet. “Ronin, the garden! The gnomes!”

Ronin looked up, bewildered. “The gnomes? What about them?”

“I think... I think one of them might have taken it!” Billius exclaimed, already heading for the back door. “I saw one carrying something shiny earlier!”

They burst out into the overgrown garden. The air was damp, smelling of earth and cabbage. Several gnomes were indeed milling about near the vegetable patch, looking thoroughly disgruntled. They were small, leathery creatures, like potatoes with legs, and known for their bad tempers and tendency to bite ankles.

“Which one?” Ronin hissed, scanning the group.

Billius pointed towards the far end of the patch, near the rickety fence bordering the orchard. There, sitting on top of a large cabbage plant, was a particularly troublesome-looking gnome. It was holding something small and golden in its grubby fingers, turning it over and over as if fidgeting with a precious jewel.

It was Ronin’s clock hand.

[ILLUSTRATION: Billius and Ronin peering over a tangle of beanstalks, eyes wide, spotting the grumpy gnome sitting on a cabbage plant, proudly holding the small, shiny golden clock hand.]

“Right,” Ronin whispered, a plan forming in his eyes. “Okay. You distract it. Go round the other side, make a noise. When it looks away, I’ll grab the hand.”

“Distract it? How?” Billius whispered back nervously. He knew gnomes. They weren’t easily distracted, especially when they thought they’d found treasure.

“I don’t know! Trip over something! Yell! Just keep its attention off me!” Ronin urged, already starting to creep forward, low to the ground.

Billius took a deep breath and circled around the vegetable patch, trying to be quiet. He positioned himself behind a clump of overgrown rhubarb. He could see the gnome still admiring the golden hand, occasionally nibbling violently at one end of it. The ‘Nibbler’, Billius thought wildly. That’s what they’d call him.

He took another breath, then deliberately stumbled forward, crashing into the rhubarb leaves with a loud rustle and a yelp. “Whoops!” he shouted, perhaps a little too loudly.

The gnome – the Nibbler – looked up sharply, startled. Its beating eyes fixed on Billius while a threatening facial expression suddenly emerged. Now completely concentrated on



Billius, it dropped the clock hand onto the cabbage leaf. It puffed out its chest, ready to charge.

That was Ronin's chance. He lunged forward, quick as a garden snake. His hand closed around the small, golden object just as the Nibbler realized it had been tricked. With an enraged shriek, the gnome launched itself, not at Billius, but straight at Ronin's retreating ankle.

"Ow! Get off!" Ronin yelled, hopping backwards and shaking his leg vigorously, the gnome clinging on like a furry, potato-shaped action figure.

Billius rushed forward. He grabbed a small rock from off the ground and chucked it at the gnome. It wasn't much, but it startled the creature enough for it to loosen its grip. Ronin gave one final shake, sending the Nibbler tumbling head over heels into the cabbages with a high-pitched *squawk*.

Ronin stumbled back, rubbing his ankle with one hand, clutching his prize in the other. Small, covered in mud, and showing signs of tiny bite marks all over. Unmistakably, it was his missing clock hand.

[ILLUSTRATION: Ronin hopping back from the cabbage patch, shaking a furious gnome off his ankle, while triumphantly holding up the retrieved golden clock hand. Billius looks on with relief.]

They stared at it, panting slightly. Distant sounds of chaos could still be heard coming from the kitchen – plates crashing, knitting needles clacking, Mum's raised voice, Dad's confused remarks – but here in the garden, there was a sudden, fragile moment of shared victory. They had found the hand. Now, they just had to put it back, and everything would return to normal.

#### **Chapter 4: Back Where They Belong**

Clutching the muddy, slightly chewed clock hand, Billius and Ronin scrambled back towards the kitchen door. The sounds from inside hadn't lessened; if anything, the frantic clattering of pots and pans seemed to worsen. Ronin winced as he put weight on his ankle where the gnome had bitten him, muttering something unflattering about garden pests under his breath.

They burst back into the kitchen to a scene of pure chaos. The saucepans scrubbing themselves in the sink were now engaged in a bubbly duel, sloshing soapy water onto the floor. The knitting on the chair had unraveled spectacularly, maroon wool tightly wrapped

around the chair legs like overgrown vines. Their Dad, Giffard, kept appearing halfway into the pantry door before snapping back with a frustrated groan, clearly stuck in some minor Apparition loop. Mum was trying to soothe a teapot that was whistling furiously and puffing steam with a concerning amount of force, closely resembling the steam generated by a bustling train.

“Quickly!” Ronin hissed, shoving Billius towards the century-old wooden clock. The source of all the craziness that consumed the Weasley household that afternoon. Its single remaining hand was still spinning wildly, and the others – Mum, Dad, Ronin, even their cousin Charlie with his dragons – were flickering erratically between ‘Travelling’, ‘Lost’, and, ominously, ‘Mortal Peril’. Billius’s own hand, the one he’d nudged earlier, was jammed firmly under ‘Garden’.

Taking a deep breath, Billius stepped onto the little wooden stool Mum kept for reaching the high shelves. His hands trembled slightly as he held the retrieved clock hand up to the empty spot on the clock face. It was surprisingly heavy for its size. He tried to slot it back onto the small central peg, but it wobbled precariously. Simultaneously, the magical chaos in the room seemed to surge, and the whistling teapot let out a particularly piercing shriek.

“It’s not... it’s not quite fitting,” Billius stammered, frustration pricking at him. After everything they’d gone through!

Ronin leaned in closer, peering at the clock face. “Maybe it needs a bit of magic? That knock you gave it earlier probably loosened the charm work.” Glancing around, the boys caught the attention of their dad – who appeared half-way stuck *inside* a breadbasket – exhaustedly said, “Try... try *Reparo*?”

Billius swallowed hard. He had never successfully cast any spells, and certainly no repair charms. But looking at the frantic energy pulsing from the clock, and the increasing chaos around them, there was no time to hesitate. He drew his wand – an old hand-me-down – and pointed it carefully at the clock, focusing as hard as he could, whispered “*Reparo*.”

For a second, nothing happened. Then, a tiny spark emerged from the tip of his wand to the base of the clock hand. There was a soft *click*, almost too quiet to hear, and the hand settled firmly onto its peg, snug and secure.

[ILLUSTRATION: Billius, standing on a stool, carefully aiming his wand at the clock hand he's holding in place. A tiny spark connects the wand tip to the hand, and the clock face glows faintly.]

Instantly, the magical chaos that consumed the kitchen faded. The wild spinning of the other clock hands came to a full stop. With a series of gentle, chiming *dings*, the hands

slowly started to move again. In one satisfying motion, Mum, Dad, Ronin, even Charlie – all swung around their base smoothly, magically reconfiguring themselves, before ultimately returning to their correct positions. Holding his breath, Billius watched as his own hand unstuck itself from ‘Garden’ and joined the others, landing squarely on ‘Home’.

The angry teapot stopped whistling and settled back onto the stove with a contented sigh. The saucepans ceased their duel and resumed their orderly scrubbing. The spool of maroon wool zipped itself back onto the floating needles and resumed knitting. Dad popped fully out of the bread bin with a sigh of relief, looking around unsure how he’d gotten there. The frantic energy drained out of the room, replaced by the usual, comfortable hum of the Weasley household.

Mum turned, her eyes narrowed slightly as she sat Ronin down on the stool, beginning to nurse his chewed-up ankle.

“Everything seems... calmer,” she said, looking from the boys to the now perfectly ordinary-behaving clock. “What exactly was going on here?”

Billius prepared himself for the imminent scolding he knew he was about to receive. Ronin straightened up, “Oh, you know, Mum,” he smirked while, giving Billius a quick, nod. “Just some enchantments gone wonky from the... uh... teapot.”

Mum didn’t look entirely convinced, but Dad clapped his hands together. “All’s well that ends well! Fancy a cup of tea now things have settled, Pomona?”

A wave of relief flooded the two brothers. They couldn’t believe it.

Walking past them, Dad winked at the boys, and for the first time that afternoon, Billius began to smile.

Later that evening, Ronin found Billius sitting alone at the kitchen table, watching the clock hands twitch occasionally as family members moved around the house. Ronin sat down opposite him and slid something across the table. It was a Chocolate Frog, unopened.

“Here,” Ronin mumbled, not quite meeting Billius’s eye. “Reckon you earned it. That *Reparo* spell wasn’t half bad.” He paused, then added, with a reluctant sort of respect, “Suppose you’re not completely hopeless. Might even survive Hogwarts... eventually.”

[ILLUSTRATION: Ronin sliding an unopened Chocolate Frog across the kitchen table to Billius, who looks surprised and pleased. Ronin has a small, grudging smile.]

A wide grin spread across Billius’s face, warming him more than any hot chocolate could. Proudly reflecting on the crazy roller-coaster of events that happened, he hadn’t needed a Hogwarts letter to make his own adventure. He’d faced down a grumpy gnome, worked with

his brother, and even managed a tricky bit of magic. He looked up at the clock, now back to normal. It wasn't just a clock; it was a reminder of his funny, chaotic, magical family, all safe and sound. And for now, that felt like more than enough magic for him. He picked up the Chocolate Frog, feeling a surge of contentment. Maybe waiting for Hogwarts wouldn't be so bad after all.

[ILLUSTRATION: Final scene focusing on the Weasley clock, showing all hands pointing contentedly to 'Home'. The home is now back to normal. Perhaps a small detail like Billius's hand being slightly brighter than the others.]