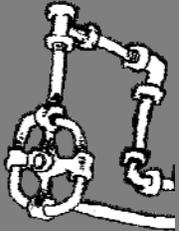
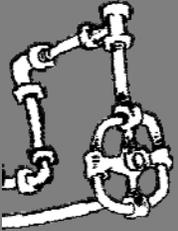


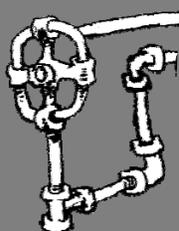
FURRY & FLO



7
PORTAL BOUNCE
THOMAS KINGSLEY TROUPE



FURRY & FLO



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PORTAL BOUNCE

BOOK 7



BY THOMAS KINGSLEY TROUPE
ILLUSTRATED BY JONNY THOMAS

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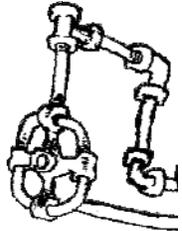
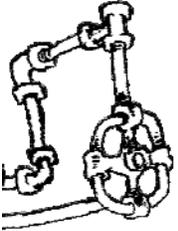
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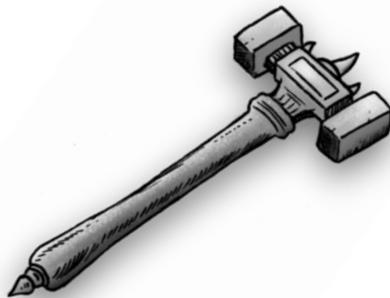
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STRANDED



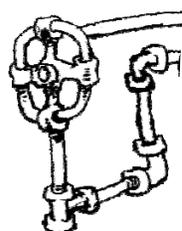
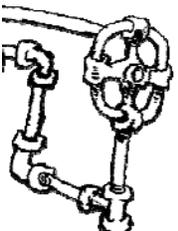
CHAPTER 1



“This is terrible,” Flo Gardner cried. No matter how hard she tried, she couldn’t take her eyes away from the cracked pieces of stone on the ground in front of her. Chunks of the portal stone that brought her and Furry to this world, were smashed beyond repair and scattered in the grass.

The ruined portal was also her only way home.

“WHAT’S WRONG FO?” The deep sound of Garvel the golem’s voice made her whole body tremble slightly.



“Everything,” Flo cried, wiping her eyes on the sleeve of her shirt. “We can’t get back to my world anymore.”

Though she loved the huge rock monster, it was because they’d found him behind their apartment building that she and Furry were there. They were officially stranded on one of the islands in Float Rock Canyon. The plan was to help Garvel find his golem brothers and sisters and then bounce back through the portal to their world. They hadn’t expected to find Garvel’s evil master, Krigg, or the graveyard full of lifeless golems. After they’d driven him away and resurrected all nineteen of the other golems, Furry and Flo discovered that Krigg had smashed their way home as an act of revenge.

Now we’re floating on a chunk of land way up in the sky in a world far, far away from my own, Flo thought. I never even got to say goodbye to my mom.

Flo turned to see Furry sniffing around. She

wondered if he'd caught the scent of more hilltooths with his werewolf senses or caught Krigg's smell. Either way, he didn't seem nearly as upset as Flo did about being stranded in his world.

"What're you doing?" Flo asked. She quickly glanced at the ruined portal again, hoping it might've magically repaired itself when she wasn't looking.

"Be quiet a second," Furry said. "I'm sniffing stuff."

Flo drew in a deep breath and let it out a little at a time. She wanted to scream and hear it echo off of the other floating masses of land, but knew it wouldn't do any good. If anything, it might attract something even more dangerous than the nasty, hairy little hilltooths hiding in the grass.

"Why would he do this, Garvel?" Flo asked, looking up at the towering rock giant.

Garvel's gentle green eyes glowed as if he thought

of a good answer. He finally looked down at Flo.

“MASTER NOT NICE,” Garvel said quietly.

Though Flo already knew the old guy wasn't nice the instant she'd met Krigg, she realized Garvel just answered the only way he knew how...with the truth.

Flo looked over at golem number 6, who was made of dried mud. The golem stood quietly next to her brother, number 11, who was made of some sort of cracked and dingy plastic. Based on their numbers 6 and 11 were older golems. As nasty as Krigg had been, his newer, higher numbered golem creations were better, smarter.

“They don't talk much, do they?” Flo asked Garvel, nodding at the others.

“NO,” Garvel said, eyeing his golem siblings. “MASTER BUILT THEM TO OBEY, NOT SPEAK.”

“Hey Flo, we might be in luck,” Furry shouted from the floating island's edge. “Come over here,



would ya?”

Flo walked down the sloping hill, away from the shattered portal. Just hours ago, she'd chased Garvel's disassembled head while hilltooths nipped at her heels and tried to bite her. She approached her gray furry friend and saw that he was literally standing on the edge of the island. One careless step and he'd fall to the world below.

“Whoa,” Flo said once she stood as close to the edge as she could handle. She saw mountains, streams, and low floating clouds below them. “Be careful, Furry.”

“Oh, I'm fine,” Furry said, then pointed. “But do you see that?”

Flo followed the direction Furry's hair-covered finger pointed. In the distance saw nothing but the side of a mountain, partially obscured by a misty cloud.

“The mountain there?” Flo said. “Yeah, I see it.”

“You don’t see the small cave?” Furry asked, pointing harder. “It’s right there.”

Flo squinted and felt the thundering footsteps of Garvel and his golem siblings behind her. No matter how hard she looked, she couldn’t see the cave. Just a bunch of trees, rocks and not much else.

“I don’t see it,” Flo said. “But I don’t have werewolf eyes, remember?”

“Oh yeah,” Furry said. “Sorry. I forgot.”

“So there’s a cave?” Flo said. “Way down there? What is it, a mile or so away or something?”

“Three miles, I’d say,” Furry said, correcting her. “Maybe like three and a half.”

“Okay, whatever,” Flo said. “What are you thinking? That we’ll live there? Like a couple of cavemen or something?”

Flo thought about the cruddy little apartment

she shared with her mom back at Corman Towers. For the last few years they'd moved from a nicer place to a not so nice place over and over since her dad had died. She'd thought their newest apartment in the city was easily the worst...and it was, but living in a cave would be another major step down.

“No,” Furry said. “We’re not going to live in a cave. We’re going to get out of here.”

“What? How?” Flo asked. She looked again at the shattered mess Krigg made of their way home.

“There’s a portal stone in that cave.” Furry replied. “I can smell it.”

* * *

The excitement that arose in Flo was short-lived. The cave had a portal stone that led back to her world. The big problem? There was no way to get there. She didn’t know how far up in the sky the giant floating island was, but knew it was too high for either of them

to jump down.

“So how are we supposed to get over there?” Flo asked.

“I haven’t figured that out yet,” Furry admitted. He stared at the cave Flo couldn’t see. Wind blew through the fur on his face and head.

She glanced at the other floating chunks of land. None of them were connected to the ground below. They all just seemed to float along in the sky, completely free of anything tying them down.

“If only we had a parachute,” Flo whispered. She wondered if she’d be able to pack one in her lunchbox for next time.

“Or a really big ladder,” Furry added. “There’s never one around when you need one.”

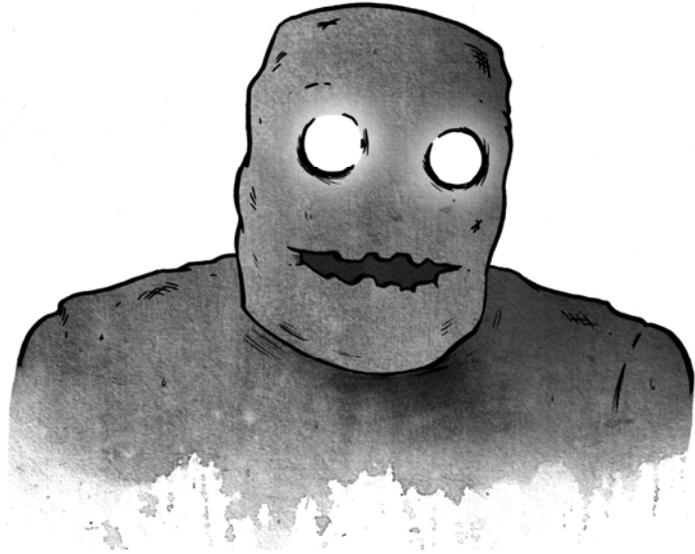
“Seriously! There’s got to be a way to get down,” Flo said with a defeated sigh.

“GOLEMS GET YOU DOWN,” Garvel said quietly.

“How?” Flo asked, pointing at the edge of the floating island.

“There’s nothing to climb down on or—”

“BROTHER, SISTER,” Garvel called, interrupting Flo to address his silent siblings. “GET OTHERS.”



Without hesitation, numbers 6 and 11 obeyed. Their footsteps rumbled the ground as they walked back up the hill toward Krigg’s destroyed encampment.

“ALL OF THEM,” Garvel called after them.

“You should say please,” Flo said. “Even so, I—”

“PLEASE,” Garvel added.

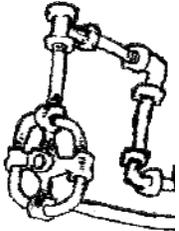
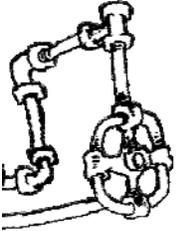
“I don’t know how this will work,” Flo said, looking at the world spread out below the floating island.

“Garvel, I don’t think you understand...”

“GARVEL UNDERSTANDS,” the golem said. “YOU HELP GOLEMS, GOLEMS HELP YOU.”

Flo looked at Furry, but the little werewolf just smiled his wolfy smile and shrugged.

LONG
WAY
DOWN



CHAPTER 2



Within ten minutes, nineteen golems stood with Garvel at the edge of the floating island. Every member of the rock golem's giant family were gathered. For a moment, Flo feared the land mass would tip forward under the combined weight of Krigg's creations.

"We need to get down to the ground," Flo said to the golems. "So that we can go back home, but I don't think..."

"GRAB GROUND, NUMBER 20," Garvel said.

Flo watched as Krigg's newest and likely last golem, walked to the edge of the island, turned and lowered himself down to his iron knees. He dug his long, strong fingers into the ground so that they were practically buried in the dirt and rock. Without saying a thing, he stretched his body out so that his long legs dangled over the edge.

"NOW YOU, 12," Garvel ordered. Flo watched as the one made out of some shiny black rock that might've been volcanic walked over to 20 and crawled over his extended legs. Without pausing and with no fear, she grabbed one leg in each rocky hand and hung herself over the edge.

A chain of golems, Flo thought. One by one they're going to make a ladder out of themselves.

"No!" Flo shouted. "You can't do this! What if one of you falls or...?"

"ONLY WAY, FO," Garvel said calmly. "ONLY WAY YOU AND FURDY GO HOME."

“We have to stop them,” Flo cried to Furry. She clutched her ever-present Dino Katz lunchbox, her grip tightening as another golem climbed down to add another link to the ladder.

“Do you have a better idea?” Furry asked, watching in amazement. “Because I sure don’t. Seriously, this is so cool.”

One by one, the golems climbed over their brothers and sisters, adding themselves as another link to the golem chain. Flo watched Furry get down on his own belly to look over the edge.

“Whoa,” Furry said. “Flo, you gotta see this!”

“I’m good,” Flo said. “That’s too far down for me, thanks. I’ll get dizzy.”

“Okay,” Furry said. “But how do you think we’re going to get down?”

“Wait, what?” Flo hadn’t thought of that. *Will we actually have to climb down?*

Garvel was the last one standing, watching his brothers and sisters link to the others.

“TIME TO GO, FURDY AND FO,” the rock golem said. Before either of them could reply, he crouched down on his hands and knees. “CLIMB ON.”



Furry leapt up ninja-style, landing his big paws on the shaggy grass.

“Let’s go, Flo,” he said and thumbed toward the golem chain. “Time to get off this rock.”

Flo took a few cautious steps forward, watching as Furry climbed up onto Garvel’s massive right shoulder. He reached over and slapped the rocky space above the golem’s left arm.

“C’mon, train’s leaving, Flo,” Furry said. “Don’t you wanna get home?”

“Yeah,” Flo said, looking down at her lunchbox. As she did, she heard something her dad said to her

whenever she was scared:

The first step is always the hardest, Flo. But once you take it, you'll be glad you did.

Flo nodded, looking at the worn cartoon Dyno Katz characters on her lunchbox. She'd done plenty of scary things in the last few months. Clinging to the back of a golem half a mile above the ground was a piece of cake.

Yeah, but if we fall we'll end up flat as a pancake.

Flo shook it off and climbed up onto Garvel. She quickly discovered there wasn't a good place to hold on, especially with her lunchbox in tow, so she opted to wrap her arms around the rock golem's neck.

"HANG ON," Garvel said. "HANG ON TIGHT, FO."

- - -

It was much worse than Flo even imagined. As soon as Garvel climbed down Number 20's iron-clad

golem body, the wind whipped at them as if it wanted to knock them loose. Flo also made the mistake of looking down. The ground seemed even further below than she'd thought. It helped a little to see a long chain of golems holding onto each other, but the wind made even their heavy bodies sway a bit.

“What if one of these guys lets go?” Flo shouted to Furry.

Her werewolf friend was holding his head up like a dog who gets to ride in the car with the window down. His eyes were closed and his fang-filled mouth was partially open to let his tongue hang out. The little guy looked like he was in heaven.

“Then we fall, I guess,” Furry said. He acted like he didn't have a care in the world and it made Flo a little upset if she was being honest. “Let's just hope Number 20 up there doesn't have a weight limit!”

Flo never thought of that. Did Number 20 have the strength to hold the weight of his brothers and

sisters? Plus a girl and a 3rd grade werewolf?

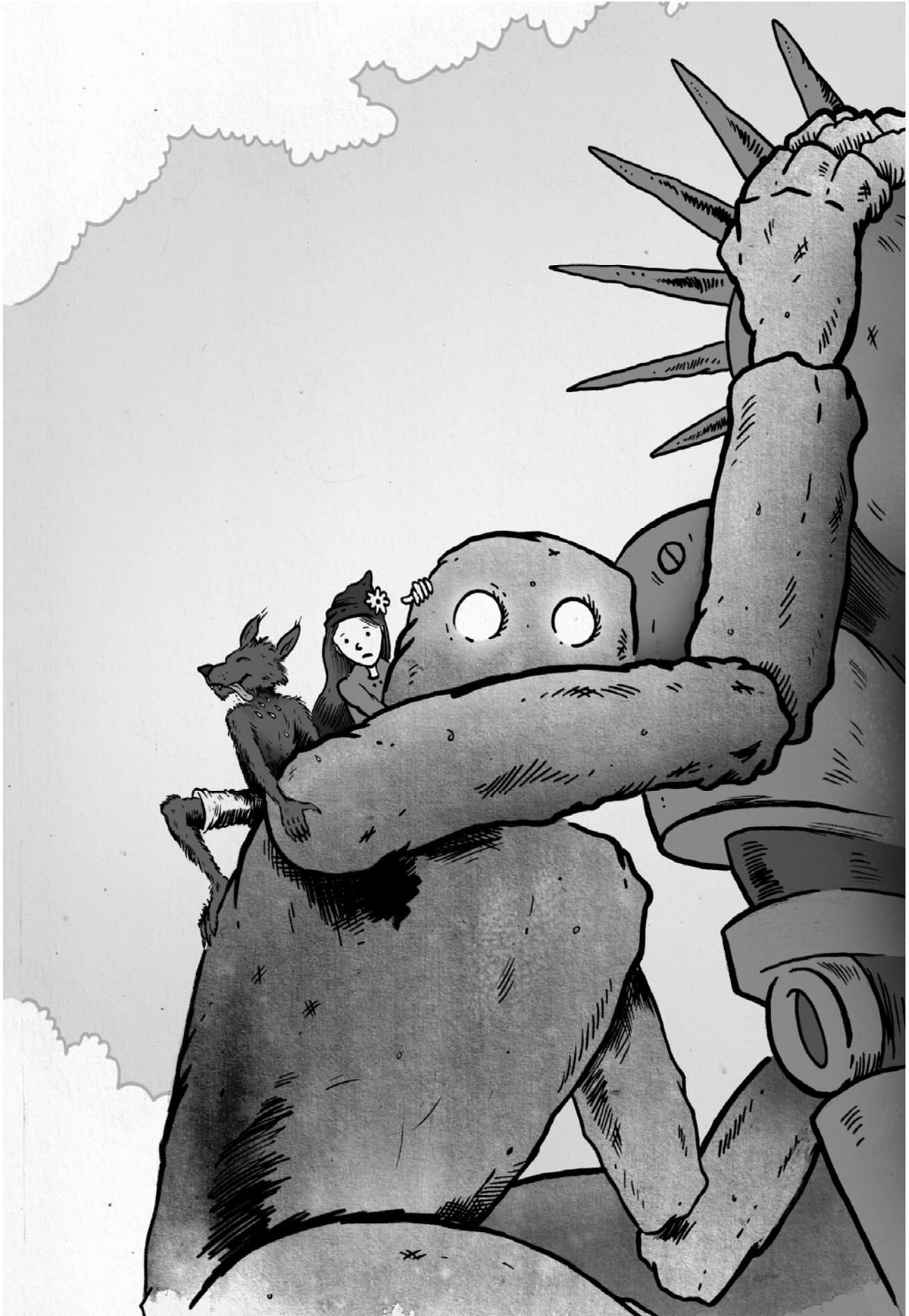
Slowly, Garvel climbed down the length of the golem ladder. Flo could hear the golems grunt and creak as they descended. The wind picked up, making her lunchbox rattle against Garvel's neck.

"HANG ON," Garvel repeated. Flo wondered just then what the golem *thought* she was doing. There was no way she way she would let go.

"We're four golems down," Furry said. "Hey, no problem."

Flo looked up, and saw Number 8, the wood golem just up above them. Wrapped tightly around her ankles were the hardened dirt hands of Number 2. She wondered again how well Number 20's iron fingers were doing, clutching the ground to hold everyone else up.

"UH-OH," one of the golems above groaned.



“Uh-oh?” Flo gasped and looked at Furry quickly.
“What’s she uh-oh-ing about?”

Furry turned his snout up and Flo watched him narrow his eyes. He looked like was focusing his werewolf vision further up the line of golems.

“Number 12 is losing her grip,” Furry said. “Oh, boy. This isn’t good. Hey, Garvel! Any chance you can climb down any quicker?”

“I TRY, FURDY,” Garvel said. Flo felt her own grip tighten. She held onto the beloved rock golem for dear life.

Garvel climbed down the length of two more golems before the whole chain jerked violently. Little broken chunks of rock and wood whipped past them, as loose pieces fell from the golems above.

“We’re in trouble,” Furry said. “Get ready to jump, Flo.”

“Jump? Are you serious?”

Flo looked below them. There were still plenty of golems for them to climb down and through the wispy clouds, she saw sunlight glimmer off of water below.

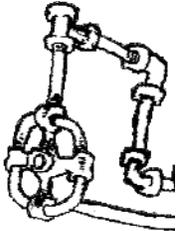
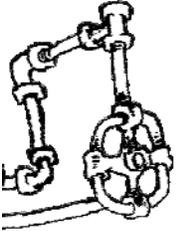
“Is that a lake down there?” Flo shouted. She’d seen in movies how sometimes people in deserts saw mirages of water when they were thirsty. She just hoped that wasn’t what she was seeing now.

“Yep,” Furry said. “But we’re still pretty high up. If we fall wrong, it’ll be like hitting concrete.”

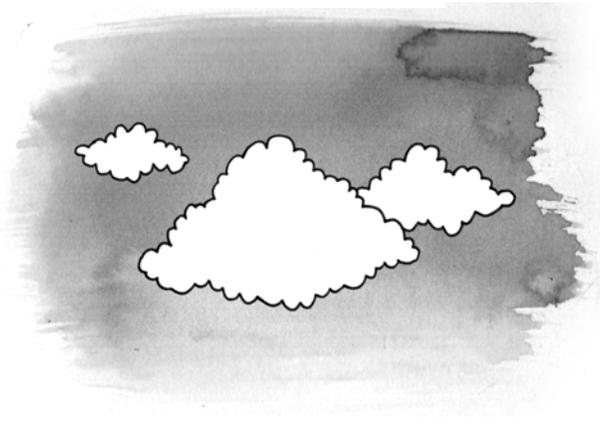
“Fall wrong?” Flo cried. “Is there even a way to fall—”

Before Flo could finish, the golem ladder broke and she was falling.

RAINING
GOLEMS

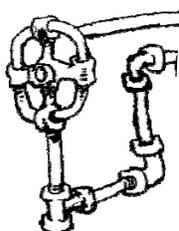
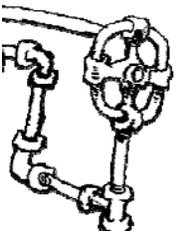


CHAPTER 3



Wind whipped past Flo's face as she and Furry rocketed toward the water below. She heard the golems grunt and groan as they dropped, too. While Flo had always wondered what sky diving from an airplane was like, it wasn't anything she wanted to do anytime soon. She was in fourth grade and she began to wonder if she'd ever make it to fifth.

We're going to splat like a bug on a windshield, Flo thought. She wrapped her arms around her lunchbox



and closed her eyes tight.

“Gotcha,” Furry said and she could feel his hairy paws on her arms. She opened her mouth to say something, but the wind and force of their fall kept her mouth closed. Furry hugged her tight, as if forming a werewolf shield around her. Through his thick, gray fur, she felt his heartbeat against her back.

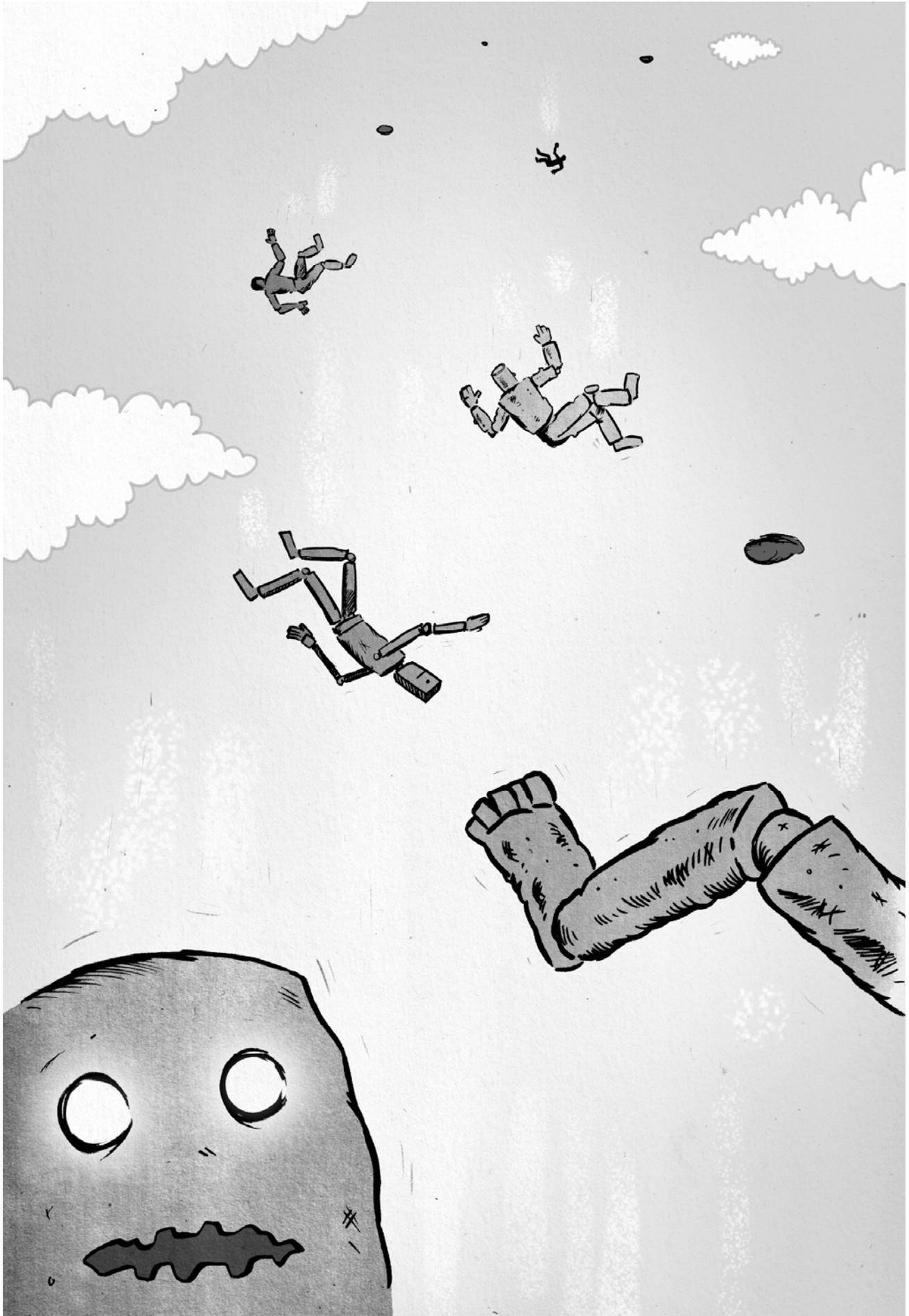
He’s scared too, Flo thought.

“This is going to sting,” Furry said. “But trust me.”

I don’t have much choice, Flo thought. A second later, it felt like someone had hit them with a sledgehammer.

And then, she was soaking wet.

Furry released her from his bear-hug as they plunged further underwater. Her head felt swimmy, like she’d bonked her head extra hard. She was dizzy, but felt Furry’s grip on her wrist, pulling her through



the water.

Above her, she heard loud noises. *THOOM, THOOM, GOOM.*

Those are the golems hitting the water, Flo realized while struggling to hold her breath.

A moment later she was being pulled up, up, up.

Within seconds, they broke the surface of the lake. Flo coughed and spat water from her mouth as she opened her eyes.

“Holy...,” Flo began, marveling at the sight above her. It was raining golems. Giant flailing arms and bodies fell from the floating island, one after another. “...socks!”

“We gotta swim,” Furry said. “Or they’re going to land on us!”

Flo saw Furry’s wet fur, flat and plastered to his face. He looked strange, like a dog getting a bath, which was exactly what he was.

Number 11, the plastic golem, fell a few yards away, causing a gigantic wave to form. It pushed them further out toward land and was enough to snap Flo out of it. She forced her arms to start swimming right away.

She kicked and paddled as best as she could. It was tricky to do with her lunchbox in tow. She splashed along further behind Furry.

“C’mon,” Furry shouted. “You might have to ditch that lunchbox!”

“Never!” Flo cried and caught a mouthful of lake water. She spit it out and decided to keep her mouth shut. She’d told Furry before how important the lunch box was to her.

“Toss it here,” Furry said. “I’ll carry it and you can grab onto me.”

Flo hesitated as two more golems slammed into the lake. She trusted her best friend, but still felt

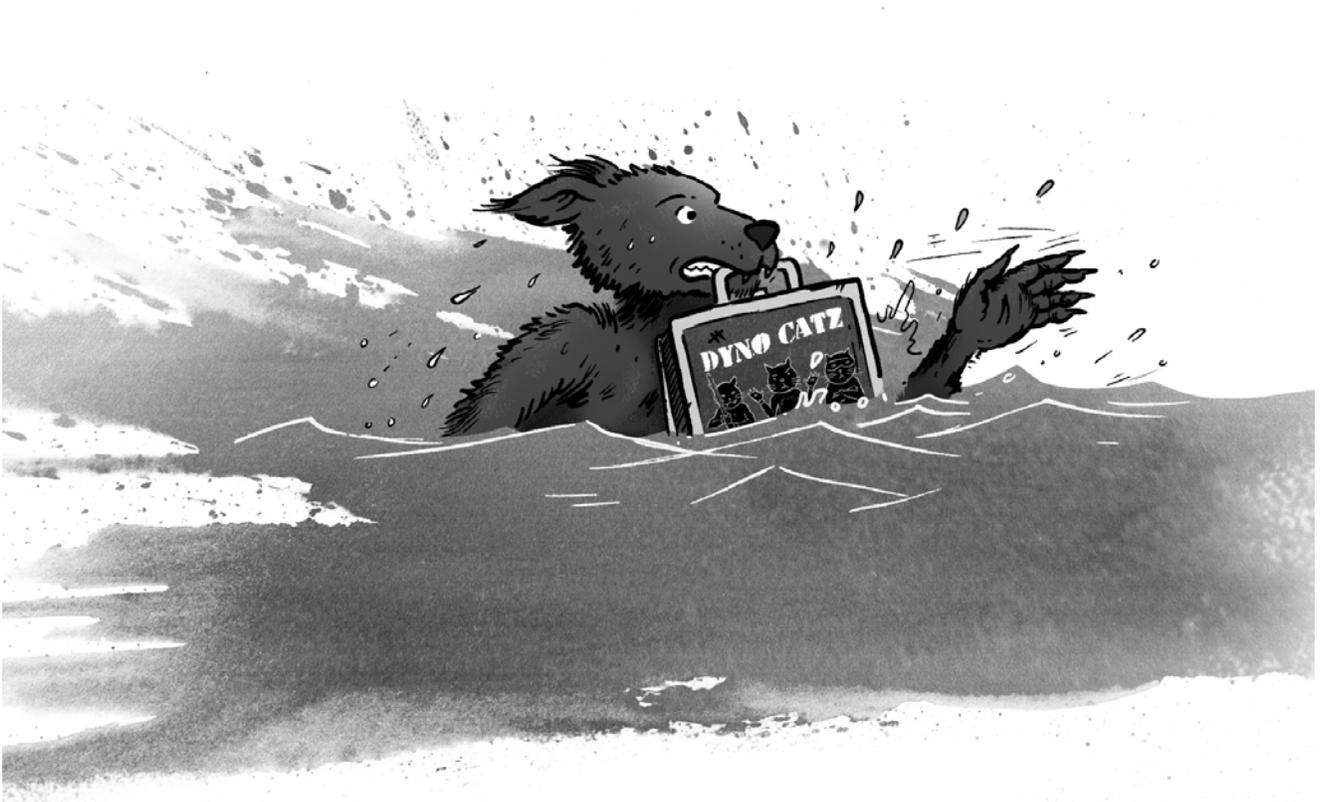
unsure. She started to slip beneath the giant waves, but kicked, bringing her head back up.

“Here,” she said and tossed the metal box.

Furry caught it and stuck his legs out toward Flo.

“Grab my legs,” Furry shouted. “I’ll doggie paddle us out of here!”

As he looked up at the giant approaching waves, Furry put the Dyno Katz lunchbox handle in his teeth.



Flo grabbed Furry's ankles, feeling her hands squish around his soaked fur. She wasn't sure how well he'd be able to swim without kicking, but they quickly zipped across the lake. A moment later Number 20 landed on the spot where Flo was swimming. The giant wave tossed them closer to land, and more importantly, closer to the cave.

As much as she wanted to get to the cave and go through the portal back to her own world, an awful thought filled her heart with dread.

What will happen to all of the golems?

* * *

Almost sure they'd never make it only a few minutes earlier, Furry and Flo hit shallow water. When she felt her knees dragging across the sand, she let go of Furry's feet and stood up. The little werewolf did the same, bounding away from the little beach. He found a good spot and shook his fur, sending water droplets everywhere.

Flo squished her way toward him. As she got close, he tossed her lunchbox to her. She caught it and looked at the battered picture of the cartoon cats fighting force known in small circles as the Dyno Katz. Water dribbled out from one of the lid's corners.

“Soggy sandwiches,” Flo muttered.

Satisfied that her beloved artifact was intact, she turned toward the lake. All of the golems had fallen from the floating island. They were somewhere beneath the lake waters.

“We killed them,” Flo said. “They all died trying to get us down.”

“I don't know about that,” Furry said, walking toward her. His ears twitched and he watched the turbulent lake waters carefully.

As if he'd heard them, Garvel walked out of the water. Enough water to nourish a dried out rainforest poured off of him.

“Are you guys all right?” Flo shouted, walking toward him. Her shoes squished with every step.

“GOLEMS FINE,” Garvel said. “JUST WET, FO.”

Flo looked past him to the lake. She saw another few golem heads crest the surface.

“But your home,” Flo said, pointing to the floating island high above them. “You’ll never get back up there.”

Garvel looked up at the island.

“THAT NEVER OUR HOME,” Garvel said.

“GOLEMS ROAM FREE NOW.”

Flo watched the golems help each other from the lake. One by one, they thundered their way up onto the beach. Though they were wet and a bit frazzled, all of them looked unharmed. Flo watched Number 16, a golem made of granite, take in her new surroundings.

“GO FO,” Garvel said. “YOU GO HOME NOW.”

“But, are you going to be okay, Garvel?” Flo asked.
“I worry about you.”

“BROTHERS AND SISTERS TOGETHER,” Garvel said. “WORLD IS OUR NEW HOME. NO WORRY ABOUT GARVEL.”

“We should go,” Furry whispered. “The sun’s going to set soon.”

“Okay,” Flo said and knew her werewolf friend was right. They’d already been gone long enough and had no idea where in her world the new portal would take them. She reached out and touched Garvel’s hand with her own.

“Thank you,” Flo said. “For everything.”

“THANK YOU, FO,” Garvel said. “AND YOU, FURDY.”

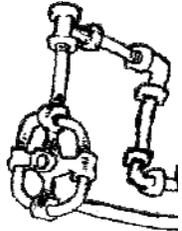
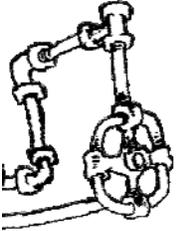
“Thanks, big guy,” Furry said. “Take care of yourself, okay?”

After saying goodbye to the others, Furry and Flo

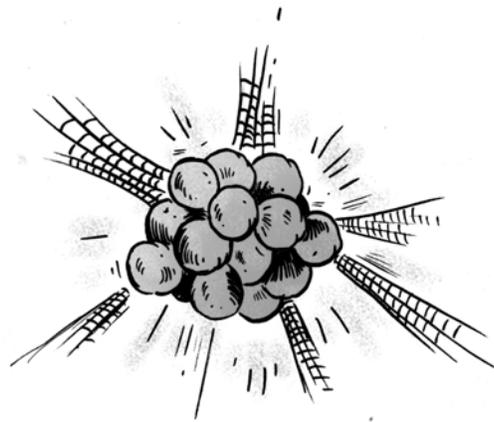
walked away from the beach full of golems and climbed up the foothills on their way toward the cave.

Flo looked back at the giants and smiled. It was a little sad, knowing she'd likely never see them again, but they were together and most importantly...they were free.

CROSSOVER
CAVE



CHAPTER 4



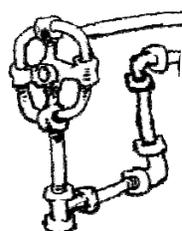
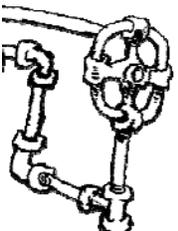
When they were within ten yards of the cave, Furry stopped in his tracks.

“What?” Flo asked, then pointed at the entrance.

“We’re not going in there,” Furry said. “I made a huge mistake.”

Flo turned to her damp friend and looked at him like he’d fallen from the sky, which in truth, was exactly what had happened, just moments earlier.

“What’re you talking about?” Flo asked. “Isn’t there a



portal stone in there?”

“Yeah,” Furry said. “But this one isn’t going to work out. Sorry.”

Flo stared at Furry and then glanced back at the cave.

A wind swept across the mountainside, shaking the strange trees. As it did, something white and wispy drifted from the cave’s mouth like a tattered curtain hanging around an open window.

Spider webs!

“Spiders?” Flo asked. “Is that what—”

“I’m not scared of spiders,” Furry blurted. “But there’s a ton of them in there. I don’t think we can make this work.”

“Seriously?” Flo asked and took a couple of brave steps forward. “We can just go in quick, open the portal and then we’re gone.”

Furry didn’t seem convinced. He pulled the little

piece of portal shard from his shorts pocket and eyed the cave warily. After a moment, he sniffed around.

“Maybe the spiders are gone,” Flo suggested. “They could’ve been here and then moved...to a different cave or something.”

“Oh, they’re in there all right,” Furry whined. “I can smell ‘em.” He started to fidget anxiously, like a dog who needed to be let outside. Flo knew he wanted to be anywhere but the inside of a spider-infested cave. For someone who was unafraid of heights, skeletons, and pretty much everything else they’d faced, his fear of spiders was pretty ridiculous.

“Well, we have to get home,” Flo said. “Is there another portal stone nearby?”

Furry shook his head. “Nearby? I don’t think so.”

“Then we’re going in,” Flo said and began walking up the steep hill toward the cave. “You know, unless you want to stay in your world forever.”

There was a long pause before she heard cautious paw steps behind her.

“Wait for me,” Furry said. “You know I can’t stay here.”

Good, Flo thought. Because I won’t be able to get back without you.

* * *

“Gross,” Flo said, then promptly spit. She tore through the flapping veil of spider webs nearly covering the cave’s entrance. The webbing was sticky and there seemed to be a million little dried bugs caught up in the strands.

“Do you see any?” Furry asked, standing a few feet from the entrance. He looked extremely nervous. Small whines squeaked from his throat.

“Not yet,” Flo said, peering into the cave. Webs were everywhere inside, covering the floor, hanging from the ceiling and stretched across the walls. She

wished they had a flashlight and a machete.

Without them, there wasn't any way inside without getting her hands and hair full of spider webs.

Flo took a few more cautious steps before she spotted something familiar. Lying on the ground near some loose rocks was a white, orb-shaped object. Remembering when their apartment building Corman Towers was infested with spiders, Flo knew exactly what it was.

A spider egg.

Glancing around, Flo spotted more and more of them around the cave.

“Can you tell how far into the cave the portal is?” Flo asked. She did her best not to sound worried. She needed to be brave if she hoped to get her little werewolf friend through the cave and back home to her world.

Furry gave the cave a sniff or two. “Not too far, I

don't think," he replied. "But do you see any spiders?"

"No," Flo said, which was the truth. She just didn't mention the spider eggs. "So, get in here, would you?"

Furry took a few timid steps inside and looked around. He eyed every single web as if expecting some sort of movement. Somewhere deeper inside the cave, a rock scraped, nearly startling the little guy to the cave's ceiling.

"Let's run. We should run," Furry whispered. Flo knew by looking at him that every one of his heightened senses were on full alert.

Flo stepped forward and pulled another curtain of spider webs away. When she looked down, she saw another clutch of spider eggs on the ground. A few feet further, she spotted a dusty circle on the ground.

"Is that--"

"The portal stone," Furry said, finishing for her. "Let's get in there so we can get out of here."

Very carefully, Flo carefully stepped over the seven or eight giant spider eggs and set her foot down inches from them. Furry did the same, keeping his eyes squeezed shut. As he set both feet on the cave floor, Flo began dusting off the stone.

She hear something skitter from somewhere deeper in the cave.

“We should hurry, Furry,” Flo said. She couldn’t see what was lurking in the darkness, but didn’t want to stick around to find out.

Furry took the portal shard and, using the thin stone like a piece of chalk, drew a line across the flat circle. Nearby, she heard a slight squeak and a series of popping noises. Flo’s eyes darted to the spider eggs behind Furry and her eyes widened.

Large spider legs poked and squirmed through the hatching eggs.

“Was that...” Furry began, stopping the shard

halfway across the stone.

“Never mind,” Flo said. “Just draw!”

All around them, eggs hatched. Further back in the cave something even bigger was headed their way, tearing through the spider web veils toward them.

“Open it,” Flo cried. “Hurry, hurry!”

Furry finished the line and blue light slowly leaked through the crack he’d created.



“It’s taking too long,” Flo cried.

“It’s an older stone,” Furry said. “Sometimes they take a second or two! Forget it, Flo, let’s just get out of here!”

Furry turned and was faced with five freshly hatched spiders the size of poodles. They tested out their spindly legs as they scabbled toward him. Flo cried out when she saw a giant and familiar mama spider crawling along the ceiling towards them and her babies.

“Open up,” Flo shouted at the brightening blue light. She set her foot on the crack, expecting it to WHOOSH her to her world. It only hummed, but grew brighter by the second.

“This is it,” Furry shouted as he backed up against Flo. “They’re mad we threw them into this cave that one time!”

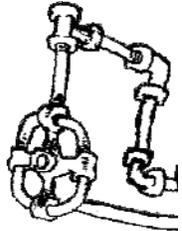
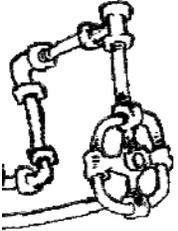
Flo watched the ceiling and gasped as the mama



spider dropped, landing cleanly on all eight legs. It hissed as it scrambled toward them. She backed up, banging her lunchbox against the cave ground. Furry and Flo stood with their backs pressed against each other. There was nowhere to go and then...

WHOOSH.

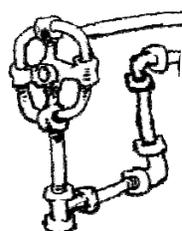
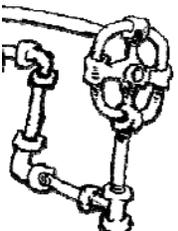
SORRY
SAFARI



CHAPTER 5



Jumping through the portal to travel between Furry's world and hers was something Flo knew she would never get used to. She'd done it a number of times already, but every time it still took her breath away. Flo guessed it was like being fired out of a circus cannon, but with blurry lights whipping by. Just as she adjusted to hurtling through whatever brought her back and forth, she stopped and landed with a light plop in a field of tall grass.



Her lunchbox banged against the ground and popped open. A soggy turkey sandwich flopped out.

“Wow,” Furry said, sitting up next to Flo. “That was too close,” Furry said. “My heart is still pounding.”

Flo noticed that Furry had changed to his human form. Now that he was back in her world, he could do that. Back in his own world, he could only be a werewolf. He leapt up on his bare feet, wearing only his shorts. In his hand, he clutched the portal shard.

“I don’t know where we are,” Flo said, “But it’s really hot here.”

“No kidding,” Furry said. “Sure glad I can ditch the fur for a while.”

Flo grabbed the sandwich, stuck it back into the lunchbox and closed the lid. Her clothes were still damp from their lake adventure. The heat from wherever in her world they ended up made her feel

sticky and gross.

“I feel sticky and gross,” Furry said.

Flo nodded and stood up. She didn't know if the spiders in the cave they'd just escaped from were the same ones they'd rid Corman towers of, but it seemed possible. They'd thrown the eggs and led spider mama back into Furry's world. How would they know where they'd ended up?

The sun was high in the sky and there was tall grass as far as Flo could see.

“We should probably back away from the portal,” Flo said. “They can follow us through there can't they?”

“Yeah, you're right,” Furry said and jumped like someone had set his tail on fire. “Man, I don't ever want to see a spider again as long as I live.”

As if on cue, two spiders slipped through the blue crack on the portal stone.

“Let’s go,” Flo said, grabbing her friend by the hand. “Before you get super scared again.”

“Hey, I told you. I’m not scared of spiders,” Furry insisted. “I just...”

“Don’t like them,” Flo finished for him. “Got it.”

They walked through the grass for what seemed like forever. Flo noticed Furry watch the path in the grass they left behind them.

“Did you figure out where we are yet?” Furry asked.

“I have an idea,” Flo said. “If I’m right, we might be on the other side of the world from the city and Corman Towers.”

Furry sniffed the air with his human nose like a dog, which Flo found pretty funny.

“There are lots of animals around,” Furry said. “Like tons.”

“Perfect,” Flo said. She wondered what might be



hiding out in the tall grass with them.

She scanned the horizon and saw the air shimmering from the heat and a few trees further out in the distance. They looked flat on top with crooked trunks. A familiar, long-necked animal ate from the top branches.

“Yeah,” Flo whispered, keeping her eye on the giraffe. “Just like I thought.”

“What?” Furry said. “What were you thinking?”

“We’re in Africa,” Flo said.

* * *

The sun was high and hot in the sky as Furry and Flo wandered through the grass. In time, they found a large, flat stretch of land. Looking to their left, Flo spotted a group of antelopes drinking from a large puddle.

“Do we have to worry about those guys?” Flo asked.

“I don’t think so,” Furry said. “They seem kind of nervous though.”

Flo shook her head. It amazed her how much Furry could see, hear and sense as a werewolf, even in

his human form.

“You can tell they’re worried about something?”

“Sure,” Furry said. “Even just watching I can tell. See how those other ones are looking around while the others drink? There’s a predator nearby.”

“Okay,” Flo said, sorry she’d asked. “So where’s the quickest way out of here?”

“About twenty miles or so,” Furry began, turning a little. “That way.”

“Oh man,” Flo groaned. “We’ve got to trek twenty miles to the next portal?”

“It’s either that or buy a plane ticket back to the city,” Furry said with a shrug. He patted his shorts pockets. “I didn’t bring my empty wallet. And even so, it’s probably over a thousand miles to an airport.”

Flo sighed. She used her arm to wipe the sweat from her brow. It felt like she was going to melt already and they hadn’t even really gotten very far.

Twenty miles to jump back into Furry's world, find another portal and hope it led back home.

"Well, then let's-"

"Run," Furry cried, and dashed off, grabbing Flo's arm as he did. "We have to move!"

Flo scampered after him, but Furry was pulling her too hard and too fast. There was no way she could keep up. The antelopes were running too and in seconds, she saw why. A large female lion was tearing through the savannah after them.

"Is that lion chasing us?" Flo shouted.

"Maybe?" Furry cried. "I'm not sure I want to ask!"

Flo stumbled and almost fell. Her soggy shoes were getting caught in the thick vegetation and grass.

"Furry!" Flo shouted. "I can't keep up!"

"Right," Furry said and stopped. "Sorry."

Flo looked behind them. She saw the grass part

where the lion was running to catch up with and eat them. Although she knew helping Garvel and his golems had been the right thing to do, Flo wondered if leaving her world for Furry's had been the best idea.

She didn't want to end up a quick lion snack somewhere on the other side of the world from her mom and her home.

"There's no way I can run twenty miles to try and escape this thing," Flo said. "I just don't..."

Furry let go of her arm and turned toward the quickly approaching lion. He plugged his nose, closed his eyes and blew. Instantly, his body changed. Gray fur exploded from his bare chest. A tail shot up from the back of his shorts. His feet and hands stretched and were instantly hairy. His mouth and nose extended from his face, turning his little boy features into a snout and a mouth full of fangs. His ears got real pointy, too.

In seconds Furry was a werewolf again. A small

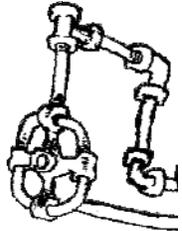
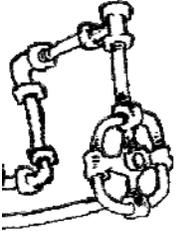
werewolf, but still a lot scarier looking than the boy he was moments ago.

“What’re you going to...”

Just then the lion leapt at them from the tall grass.



LION
AROUND



CHAPTER 6

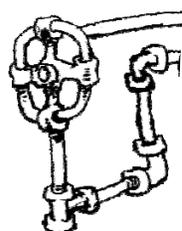
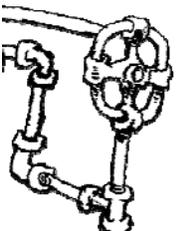


Flo backed up and fell down hard on the grass. The lion roared and looked ready to pounce again. Furry stood his ground and stepped in front of Flo.

“Hey,” Furry shouted. “Knock it off!”

The lion took a step back as if it wasn’t used to being challenged by something so small. It hesitated before letting out another roar that made Flo’s ears vibrate and her heart do jumping-jacks in her chest.

Not to be outdone, Furry unleashed an angry growl.



As if to show he meant business, he got down on all fours and bared his teeth, staring down the large, female lion with his wild eyes.

“I know you have babies to feed,” Furry snarled. “But you’re not eating us, kitty! We just want to go home!”

“Furry, I...” Flo gasped, slowly crawling backwards. She didn’t know which was worse, being eaten herself or having to watch her furry friend become lion food. The little furball in front of her didn’t seem fazed at all.

The lion looked at both of them for a moment and let out a smaller growl. To Flo it sounded more like disappointment than anger.

To Flo’s surprise, the lioness licked her chops and let out a giant cat yawn.

“Cats,” Furry said. “Boy, they’re something else.”

“Are we-”



“I think we’re going to be okay,” Furry said. “Do you maybe have a sandwich in your lunchbox for her? You know, for her trouble?”

Flo quickly unlatched her battle-worn lunchbox and pulled a soggy turkey and cheese sandwich from the metal container. She quickly peeled the baggie from the bread and handed it to Furry.

“Here you go,” Furry said. He offered the sandwich with his hairy paw. “You’ll like this. I’m not a meat-eater myself, but Flo makes a mean cheese sandwich, too.”

And just like that, the lion inhaled the little sandwich and followed it up by licking Furry’s hand. When she felt a little more safe, Flo stood up and closed the lid of her Dyno Katz lunchbox.

Wow, Dad, Flo thought. If only you could see the kind of cat I’m standing in front of right now.

“Go find your other cat friends, would ya? Furry

asked. “We’ve got to get out of here.”

As if she understood him, the lion slinked back into the grass. And though Flo couldn’t say for certain, she was pretty sure she heard the hungry beast purring just a little bit.

Once the coast was clear, Flo was able to catch her breath.

“So, you’re scared of spiders,” Flo gasped. “But giant man-eating cats aren’t a problem for you?”

“Cats are cats,” Furry said with a shrug. “Plus, I wasn’t totally sure I could scare her.”

“Are you serious?” Flo gulped.

“Yeah, well,” Furry replied. “You ready to go?”

They trekked through the savannah and managed to avoid any more trouble for the next few hours. As the sun burned high in the sky, they found the next portal stone near a dried up old tree in the middle of, what seemed to Flo, like nowhere.

“Any idea where this will take us?” Flo asked. She watched Furry get down on his hands and knees to open the crack between their worlds.

“No clue,” Furry said, drawing the shard once again across the dusty, flat stone. The wind made a whistling sound as it passed by the tree and whipped across the plains. “But it won’t be back in that spider cave, I can tell you that.”

Flo watched the bright light grow through the crack.

“How many portals are there between my world and yours, anyway?” Flo asked, almost afraid of the answer.

“I don’t know that either,” Furry said. “There could be ten, there could be ten thousand. And, as you know, they shift at night. So where we’ll end up is pretty much anyone’s guess.”

Flo suddenly felt a moment of panic wash over

her. They could jump from portal to portal for days or weeks and never get back to where they belonged. It was better than being stranded on a floating island with a bunch of giant golems, but not knowing if they'd ever happen to hit the right portal at the right time made her feel woozy.

My mom is probably worried sick, Flo thought. She has no idea where I am. And I have no idea where I'm going.

"It's time," Furry said. "Let's go, Flo."

* * *

WHOOSH.

The one thing Flo noticed right away about where they ended up in Furry's world was the smell. She didn't want to be rude, but it smelled like garbage.

"Oh man," Furry groaned picking himself up from the ground where he'd landed. "That's some stink."

Good, Flo thought. So it's not just me.

Flo looked up to find it a little darker where they were. She knew then that she'd never understand the change in time between her world and Furry's. It was around noon or so when they'd left Africa. Now it looked like it was later afternoon.

"Yeah," Flo said. "The stink makes my nose want to throw up. Do you recognize this place?"

Furry looked around. Flo knew his eyes probably saw one hundred times more than she ever could.

"Yeah," Furry mumbled. "And this isn't good. We're in the trash hills."

"Good name for it," Flo asked. "Should we go back?"

Furry was quiet for a second, which always made Flo nervous. He had a habit of going silent when he wasn't telling her everything. Flo wanted to trust the little guy, but she also knew Furry had a lot of secrets.

"We should be fine," Furry said finally. "The next

portal is really close, we just need to keep moving.”

As Flo stood up, he shoe brushed against something hard. It knocked along the ground and sounded like a bottle falling into a recycling bin.

“Careful,” Furry whispered. “You won’t believe who you just bumped into.”

“What was...” Flo began, but trailed off as she followed Furry’s pointed finger.

“See?”

“Oh,” Flo said with a gasp. Lying a few feet from them, nestled in a pile of old animal bones, moldy bread and other trash she couldn’t identify, was a sealed mason jar.



Vane!

It was the vampire bounty hunter Flo had captured and pitched back into the crack.

“So that’s where he ended up,” Flo said, tightening her grip on her lunchbox’s handle. She wanted to be prepared if he somehow escaped and turned from mist form into his pale, silent and deadly vampire form.

“Let’s leave him there,” Furry said.

“Good plan,” Flo said. “I don’t need to see his creepy face again.”

Furry sniffed the area and for the first time she could remember, Flo was glad she didn’t have his ability to smell everything for miles around. He had a pinched look on his wolfy face, but kept quiet.

“Is everything okay?” Flo asked. She watched Furry crawl around the trash on all fours, as if he caught the scent of something other than piles and piles of rancid trash.

“Something is close,” Furry said. “But it stinks so bad out here I can’t really tell between--”

“Wolf Boy! We meet again as last,” a snarly voice called from somewhere above them. “To find you sniffing around in the trash.”

Flo felt her heart freeze.

The voice. Bad rhymes. Garbage.

“The Goblin 3,” Flo whispered.



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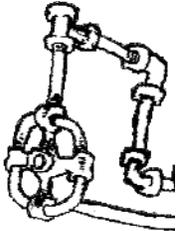
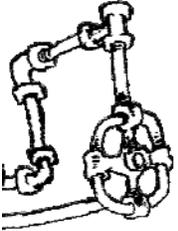
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FAMILIAR
FACES



CHAPTER 7

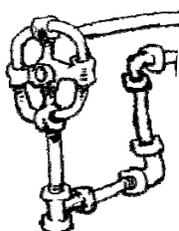
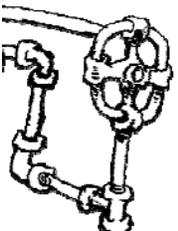


“Seriously,” Furry whispered. “Can’t we *ever* catch a break?”

Flo watched as Snottle, the leader of the Goblin 3, bit into a fly-covered piece of meat and scrambled down the trash pile toward them. In moments, the bigger goblin, Dungton and the shrimpy Wartis appeared atop other piles.

“You knocked us far away from our home,” Snottle said, his mouth full of chewed, rotten meat. “Leaving us stranded and a long way to roam.”

“It’s your own fault,” Flo said. She was prepared to



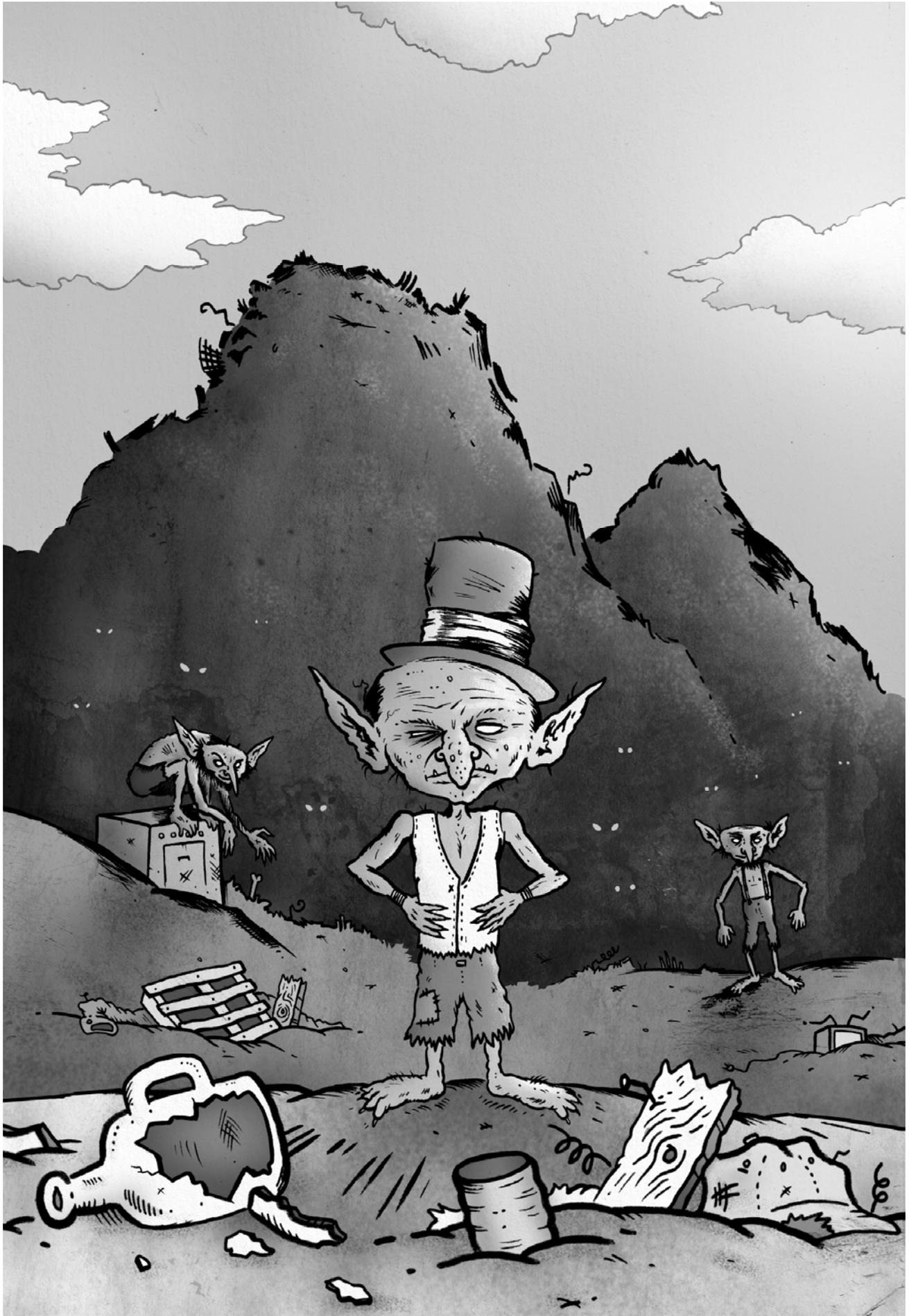
clonk the goblins on the head with her lunch box again. “You shouldn’t have come looking for Furry in the first place.”

“We don’t care about you, girl,” Dungton growled. He stepped on old fruits and soggy papers to get closer to them. His angry yellow eyes twitched beneath the brim of his mangled top hat. “It’s the wolf boy we want.”

“Yeah,” Wartis cried, acting brave around the bigger goblins. “You’re in our world now, girlie!”

Girlie! Flo thought and felt her anger rise. She hated the Goblin 3 for a lot of reasons. They made a mess of the garbage room back at Corman Towers. They came through the portal and nearly dragged Furry back to his own world. But most of all she hated them because they were just plain RUDE.

Flo couldn’t stand when people were rude to her... *especially goblins.*



“You don’t want to mess with us,” Flo warned.
“You remember what happened last time.”

“Yeah,” Dungton said. “You tossed us into Swampmurk. We were lost for a long time, trying to get back here. We almost were eaten by sludgechops. Bloodflies stung us over and over.”

Wartis pulled up his filthy sweater, exposing his green, hairy stomach. Dotted all around his belly button were large, angry-looking welts.

“Surrender yourself, wolf boy. Now,” Snottle ordered. “Or we’ll do something that makes you say... ow.”

“Ooof,” Flo muttered. “All that time in the swamp and your rhymes are still garbage.”

Furry looked around, his canine face crinkled with worry. Flo knew something in his head was bothering him, but she didn’t know what. She wondered if they should step back into the portal again and WHOOSH

back to Africa.

Flo glanced at the round stone in the ground and saw it had sealed itself back up. The portal did that whenever the shard was returned to Furry's world.

"You got your butts kicked last time," Flo said, speaking on Furry's behalf. "And we'll do it again if we have to."

"That's where you're wrong, you miserable little child," Snottle snarled. "The trash hills are where all the goblins run wild."

And, as if by command, the hills were truly alive with movement. Green faces, long noses and twitchy yellow eyes appeared everywhere. They emerged from the trash piles like long buried monsters, hungry for garbage to eat.

"We're in trouble, Flo," Furry said. "Big mistake coming here."

"Not what I need to hear right now," Flo said. She

swung her lunchbox at a twisted green hand that tried to grab at her leg. The hand curled and withdrew with a groan from its owner.

“It’s not just the goblins that-” Furry began, but was cut off as he was tackled by three goblins. Moments later, he stood up and tossed two of them into a pile of trash. He shoved another into a pool of purplish, foul-smelling liquid.

“I just had a bath,” a one-eyed goblin screeched, then spit out a mouthful.

“Get the wolf boy and bring him to me,” Snottle shouted, starting another cringe-worthy rhyme. “And we’ll all divvy up the werewolf king’s fee!”

Werewolf king? Flo thought, knocking another goblin away from her. *He must be talking about Furry’s dad. So does that make Furry...a werewolf prince?*

“We have to get out of here,” Flo cried, clonking

another goblin on the head with her lunchbox. She side-stepped a fiend that dashed at her, making him smash into another who meant to grab her from behind. “There are too many of them!”

Furry grabbed small, shrimpy Wartis by the ankles and swung him like a club. The small goblin knocked three more of his brothers off of their feet before he was tossed into a gloppy snarl of wet sludge.

Even so, more goblins came scrambling down the hills.

“There’s nowhere to run, wolf boy!” Dungen shouted. “Surrender and we’ll return you to Rolvis mostly unharmed.”

Just then Flo heard something off in the distance that made her skin turn goose-bumpy.

It sounded like... a wolf’s howl.

“Is that what I think it is?” Flo asked. She saw all of the goblins halt their advances for a moment. They

were too caught off guard by the same noise that startled Flo.

“Yeah,” Furry said. “I’m pretty sure it’s...”

Flo watched two large, hairy forms leap over the tops of the trash hills. They landed on all fours and tore along the trash-littered ground with zero fear. There was no mistaking who and what they were.

“...my brothers,” Furry finished.



The werewolves were twice as big as Furry and looked eight times meaner. They didn't wear shorts over their large hind legs but swatches of cloth over their midsections. Their big teeth looked somehow sharper than Furry's. They snarled and snapped at the goblins who were startled and didn't seem to know what to do.

"Leave him to us, you filthy wretches," the werewolf with grayish-black fur ordered. "Before we tear all of you apart!"

"We meant to bring him to Rolvis the Mighty," Snottle cried. "There's surely no need to get all bitey."

"Furry," Flo whispered, backing up toward the portal stone. "Should we run? Hide?"

Furry said nothing, though Flo heard him whimper a little. She realized Furry wasn't afraid of the goblins any more than he was afraid of the lioness in Africa. His senses had known his brothers were nearby, just as his brothers probably smelled him, too.

“But the reward is ours!” Dungton shouted.
“We’ve captured the wolf boy.”

“You’ve caught nothing,” the wolf with the almost silver hair growled. “But you’ll about catch my teeth in your throat if you don’t leave at once!”

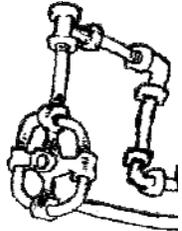
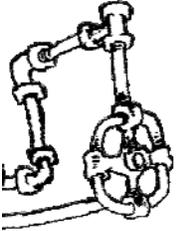
Rude, Flo thought, but saw the anger in the werewolves’ eyes. Furry’s brothers were definitely not to be toyed with.

“Leave!” the other brother roared. “Or you’ll become as worthless as the trash you inhabit!”

The goblins scattered, running from the enraged beasts as if they were covered in goblin-repellant. After a moment, Flo found herself the lone human in the company of werewolves.

“Welcome home, Fiercas,” the darker wolf bellowed. “Father is eager to see you.”

COMPANY
OF
WOLVES

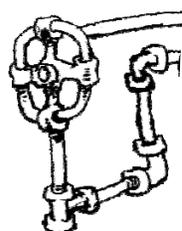
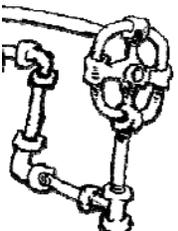


CHAPTER 8



Any hope Flo had of returning home faded as the two larger werewolves moved in on her and Furry. Or should she say Fiercas? It sounded like *that* was his real name, after all.

Furry sounds so much better, Flo decided and studied the bigger werewolves. Both of them stood a good foot and a half taller than Furry and each wore a swatch of cloth around their waist, kind of like a kilt. There were markings and symbols on the fabric Flo had never seen



before.

“I’m not going home, Gnash,” Furry said to the darker wolf. As he did, he moved closer to Flo until she felt his fur against her arm. “Tell Father I’ve found a new home and it’s where I belong.”

“And yet here you are,” Gnash snapped.

“Our kind has no place among them,” the silvery wolf grunted, nodding toward Flo. “Our worlds were to stay closed off from each other, just as it was decreed. You leaving has broken that trust and endangered our world.”

Furry fiddled with something in his pocket as he turned to his other wolf brother.

“Ragon,” Furry said. “I’m not like you and Gnash. I don’t belong here any more. You have to let me go, please! Don’t take me to Father!”

Ragon stared at Furry with large, narrowed eyes. His nose quivered as if he smelled something.



“I cannot disobey, little brother,” Ragon said flatly. “You’ll stand before him. He alone will decide your fate.”

“Come Fiercas,” Gnash ordered. “It is time. After all of these years, you must face up to what you’ve done.”

Flo didn’t know what to do. There was no way she could fight the werewolves; they were one-thousand times stronger than she was. Flo also knew she couldn’t outrun either of them. And even if she could, Furry’s brothers could smell her from miles away.

It was then that Flo felt a small, chalk-shaped piece pressed into her hand.

The portal shard! Flo thought. Why is Furry giving this to me? Has he really given up? Am I just supposed to find a way home on my own?

Flo closed her hands around the piece of stone, pulling the small piece of cord into her hand, too. She

couldn't let risk letting Furry's brothers see what she had. If she lost the shard, there truly was no way back home.

"Okay," Furry said quietly. "I guess I don't have a choice."

"Your choices vanished when you betrayed and stole from Father," Gnash said. "Breaking the Veldir stone to escape was your last."

"What about Flo?" Furry asked. "Don't punish her for what I did."

"Father shall decide her fate as well," Ragon said. "She cannot be left to wander our world."

"You guys aren't going to eat me?" Flo asked, then immediately covered her mouth. She really didn't want to give them any ideas.

"Unlikely," Ragon said. "You don't look like much of a meal. You will come with us to Denn, where you and Fiercas will face Father."

Rude, Flo thought. I could be a meal...

Furry said nothing as he walked with his brothers. The little guy looked beaten and scared. Flo followed along and felt the eyes of every goblin in hiding watch her every move.

* * *

Once they left the stench of the trash hills, Flo saw another part of Furry's world. Everywhere, old, twisted, and dead-looking trees reached to the sky like skeletal hands. Vegetation hung from the branches. Bubbling swamps emitting wisps of white mist dotted the landscape.

The sky was gray and randomly glowed in places as if fireworks exploded behind the cloud cover. Crumbled shacks made of stone were nestled into the hills and overgrown dirt roads snaked across the countryside.

Just as Flo was about to ask what had happened

she spotted a large, scaly beast climb out of a swamp and pummel another small hut with its bare fists. The stone crumbled beneath its fury. Seemingly afraid of its own strength, the swamp creature slipped back into the murky waters.

Flo couldn't imagine Big n' Swampy set loose in her world, but if the portal was left open, it was entirely possible.

Yeah, I wouldn't want to live here either, Flo decided. She'd been to Furry's world a few times and while she wasn't exactly crazy about the dumpy little apartment they lived in at Corman Towers, Furry's world was much worse.

Destruction. Monsters. Werewolf brothers.

No thanks.

"What should I-" Flo whispered, but Furry elbowed her quickly to keep her quiet.

He shook his head and pointed at Gnash. Flo

nodded. It made sense. He couldn't tell her anything. Even if she whispered, his brothers could hear every word they said.

Still, Flo didn't know why Furry gave her the shard or what she was supposed to do with it.

"Hey, wolf brothers," Flo said, addressing the two bigger werewolves in front of her. "Can I ask a question?"

"You just did, human girl," Gnash snapped.

"Cool. Then I'll ask a few more, if that's okay," Flo said. Before they could object, she continued. "What if Furry gave you the portal shard and you let him go? Isn't that what your dad really wants?"

Both of the werewolves stopped.

"You speak in riddles, human girl," Ragon said. "Who is this Furr-"

"Fiercas, I mean," Flo said, remembering. "His name is Ferdinand, but we call him 'Furry' back

home.”

“Furry,” Ragon said slowly as if trying it out. “I do not like this name. The birth name given to him was-”

“I know, I know,” Flo said. “Okay, so what if Fiercas just opened up the way to my world, gave you the shard and you brought it back to your dad?”

Gnash shook his head and folded his fur-covered arms over his hairy chest.

“Fiercas has no place there,” Gnash growled. “Just as you don’t belong here. He will return with us.”

“But the portal will close behind him,” Flo said. “As long as the shard stays here, right? There won’t be-”

“A way back here,” Furry said quietly, finishing her words. “I could never come back.”

Flo turned and looked at her little werewolf friend, standing small and defeated in his shorts. She

realized for the first time why Furry was keeping so many secrets from her.

“You’d want to,” Flo said quietly. “You want to be able to come back here, don’t you?”

Furry shrugged.

“Poor Fiercas,” Ragon snarled. “The little runt just doesn’t fit in anywhere. Follow us. Now.”

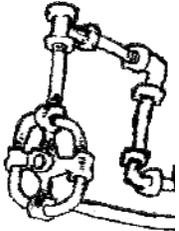
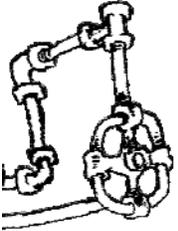
As they turned around, Furry nodded toward a tangled mess of trees to the left of the path they followed. Flo followed his gaze, almost certain she’d never see what he was seeing. She squinted and saw, just through the dead woods, a familiar, circular stone at the base of one of the trees.

A portal, Flo thought, then quickly glanced back at Furry.

Run, he mouthed. And she did.



GOING
UNDERGROUND



CHAPTER 9



Flo had never run so fast in all of her life. She honestly didn't know how badly Furry's brothers wanted to bring her back to their big, bad, daddy werewolf, but she wasn't about to stick around and find out.

Behind her, she heard roaring, then yelping, followed by growling and shouting. Flo cringed, just knowing Furry and his brothers were fighting.

He's going to get hurt so I can get away, Flo thought. Her foot plunged into a soft, marshy spot on the ground,

soaking her shoe and sock. With a grunt, she pulled it free with a *squelch*. Flo ran on, ducking beneath a fallen tree that had come to rest against another one.

She glanced over her shoulder and didn't see any of the werewolves running at her.

Including Furry.

Is he really going to stay here? Flo thought. *And if he does, what will happen to him?*

Furry's dad didn't sound like the nicest guy, so Flo wondered if he was in for some serious punishment. Maybe he'd even end up grounded, but didn't know if werewolf dads did that sort of thing.

Flo also couldn't imagine what she'd do once she escaped through the portal. Where would she end up? After landing in Africa last time, she didn't know what to expect. Flo just knew making it to the portal stone was her first priority.

After getting scratched on the cheek and nearly

bitten by some sort of frog with teeth, Flo reached the stone. She dropped to the marsh ground on her knees, clutching the portal shard. She quickly glanced over her shoulder before drawing a thin line across the dingy, flat surface. Immediately, a glowing blue light emanated through the crack she'd created.

“The way back to my world,” Flo whispered and watched as it grew brighter by the second. She glanced at the little, troublesome portal shard in her hand. If she left it behind, the crack would seal behind her, closing off Furry’s world for good. Or at least until someone drew a line again.

I could pitch it into a swamp and be done with this place forever, Flo thought.

If Flo brought it with her, the crack would stay open, letting any of the creatures she'd seen in Furry’s world slip through and into her world.

“Where is it?” one of the brothers roared. A moment later, branches snapped behind her. They

were coming for her and fast. They wanted the shard.

Within seconds, she saw Ragon's angry face. Flo held onto the shard tight and stepped onto the crack.

WHOOSH.

Once the feeling that the skin on her face might fly off in flaps passed, Flo landed somewhere hard and gritty. A moment later, a horn honked and tires screeched. Flo looked up to see a car with a weird license plate swerve to avoid hitting her. The smallish car smashed with the crunch of metal into a tall, red bus.

Flo picked herself up and noticed the cars were driving on the wrong side of the road. Well, at least not on the same side they drove on back home.

“You, girl!” the man in the smallish car shouted.
“What’re you doing in the road?”

He’s got a British accent, Flo thought. She looked around and realized she wasn’t much closer to home



than she was when they'd ended up in Africa.

“Are you deaf?” the man cried, opening his door. He took a look at his vehicle's damage. He'd pulled the hat he was wearing off to expose a sweaty bald head. Strings of hair were combed over the top.

Before Flo could answer, she heard a crackle. The man's face went from angry red to shocked white.

“All right, where'd he come from, then?”

Flo turned in time to see a teenage boy standing in the middle of the lane. He looked completely confused, staring at the multiplying cars that were stopped in the street. His hair was a lighter brown. He wore nothing besides a strange kilt around his waist.

It's Ragon, Flo realized, slowly getting to her feet. He's in his human form now that he's in my world!

From the looks of it, this was Ragon's first trip through the portal.

“He just appeared there! From thin air!” a woman

shouted from the sidewalk. People in their cars demanded that the two of them get out of the road.

Flo turned and darted through the cars, bee-lining for the sidewalk. She clutched her Dyno Katz lunchbox in one hand and the portal shard in another. She heard another crackle and more shouting. A quick glance over her shoulder confirmed that Gnash had come through the portal, too.

Like his brother, Gnash had turned to his human form. His wild shock of darker hair partially covered his eyes. He too wore a strange kilt.

Good, Flo thought. I'm glad they're wearing SOMETHING.

She ran through a crowd of people on the sidewalk and passed a tall, red phone booth. She considered hiding in there, but knew that they'd be able to smell her with no problem. Getting as far away as possible was the best choice, but Flo couldn't help but wonder...

Where was Furry?

Flo watched as Gnash and Ragon turned their noses to the sky, sniffing what was probably 8,000 brand new scents for their sensitive werewolf noses. A crowd continued to gather around them, taking pictures and stopping traffic for blocks.

“She’s close by,” Gnash snarled, his icy blue eyes staring through the crowded streets. Flo felt her blood freeze in her veins as his eyes locked with hers. Gnash smiled a nasty smile.

“There!”

Flo turned and ran down the sidewalk as fast as she could. She bumped into a big guy wearing a leather jacket and weaved between a couple walking with arms hooked together. She heard Gnash and Ragon’s bare feet slapping the concrete behind them. They were getting closer every second.

I won’t get far, Flo thought, but didn’t dare look

behind her. She knew even if she asked for help, Furry's brothers would easily overpower anyone who got in their way. For the first time ever, werewolf strength was a bad thing!

Flo ran toward a set of stairs that descended below the sidewalk. A sign above the stairs said UNDERGROUND. A stream of people emerged from the staircase, so she headed that way. She squeezed between the confused pedestrians and crouched low, unsure if that would even help her.



They can smell me, Flo said. No matter where I go or how crowded the place is, they're going to find me!

As Flo made her way through a series of hallways and escalators, she found herself in an underground subway station. She'd been to one years ago, but this was different. It was windy and well-lit and the trains looked a bit more strange than the ones back home.

Flo also realized she didn't have any money to get on the train. Even if she did, she wasn't sure where it would take her. A roundish-shaped subway train pulled into the station. The red doors on the side opened and people streamed out as others waited to climb aboard.

As Flo looked around, she bumped into an older woman in a large fur coat. The woman stumbled back and dropped her purse, spilling the contents of her bag out onto the tiled floor.

"Clumsy girl!" the woman blurted, glaring at Flo through narrowed eyelids. She wore a pair of glasses

that looked like the lenses were cut in half. The stems of the glasses were attached to a thin, fancy gold chain that wrapped around the back of the woman's neck.

"I'm so sorry," Flo replied, looking back over her shoulder. She couldn't see Furry's brothers, but knew they weren't far behind. They still had her scent. Quickly, she crouched down to help gather up the woman's things. She knew she was in danger of being captured by two nasty werewolves from another world, but that still wasn't an excuse to be rude.

Flo picked up the woman's pocketbook, a container of some sort of medicine and a fancy glass bottle with a sprayer nozzle at the end of it.

"Whoa, I'm glad this didn't break," Flo said, offering a smile. The older woman nodded and seemed to soften up a bit. As Flo was about to stuff the bottle back into the purse, she realized what it was. "Is this perfume?"

"Flora No. 7," the woman said proudly, as if simply

calling it “perfume” wasn’t good enough. “It’s my favorite scent.”

Immediately the gears in Flo’s head spun and an idea sprang forth.

“It’s lovely,” Flo said, pretending to smell the perfume on the woman. “Do you think I could...”

“Of course, dear,” the woman said and nodded. “Just one spritz will...”

Flo didn’t wait to hear the rest. She pumped the perfume a good seven times, walking through and turning into the cloud of scented vapor. She had to make sure she was completely covered in Flora No. 7.

“Perfect,” Flo said, “Thanks so much!” She dropped the bottle into the purse and handed the bag back to the woman. The old woman’s smile was gone, but it didn’t matter. Before the woman could say another word, Flo had slipped into the crowd of people. She wasn’t sure where she was going, but

kept a watchful eye on the staircase.

Try and smell me now, you dog breath brothers, Flo thought. Her eyes watered over the smell of Flora No. 7 and she slipped out of the crowd and next to a ticket machine.

Flo watched as Gnash and Ragon moved through the crowd as they headed downstairs. Everyone stared at the bare-chested teenagers and gave them room. The brothers' noses were up as if sniffing the air for any scent of Flo and the portal shard.

That's really all they want, Flo thought, being careful to keep her words in her head. They might not be able to smell her anymore, but they could still hear her. *If I give them the shard, maybe they'll leave me alone.*

“Wow,” a voice said to her right. “Do you stink!”

STINKY
ESCAPE

CHAPTER 10



Flo swung her lunchbox. Thankfully, Furry’s reflexes were just as sharp as ever.

“Hey,” he said, ducking out of the way. “Don’t! It’s me, Flo! I was just kidding!”

Flo blinked twice as if she couldn’t believe her own eyes. She glanced back at the stairs. She saw Furry’s brothers still looking through the crowd for them.

“How did you find me?”

“I jumped through the portal just after Ragon did,”

Furry said. “They were so thrown off by their human forms and seeing the cars for the first time, they never noticed me slip through.”

Furry leaned close and pointed to the giant escalator bank leading down to the Underground rail station. His brothers were sniffing everyone and everything around them. Flo guessed their noses were going crazy.

“When I came down the steps, I snuck along the other side,” Furry explained. “I slipped through the crowd and brushed up against every person I passed.”

“You left your scent on a whole bunch of people,” Flo said with a nod. “They won’t know which way to go to find you. Pretty smart.”

“Not as smart as covering myself with really stinky perfume,” Furry said. “Got any left?”

Flo shook her head. She had no idea where the older lady was, but doubted she’d share any more of

her precious Flora No. 7.

“Rats,” Furry said. “Tell me you still have the shard at least.”

“Of course,” Flo replied, showing it to him. “I wasn’t going to get rid of it until I knew you were safe.”

“Thanks,” Furry said. “But we need to find another way out of here and quick. There’s a crack in the street where we popped in. Pretty much anyone could accidentally stumble through there, you know.”

Flo’s eyes widened in horror. She hadn’t thought of that. If a curious stranger or even a car happened to drive across the blue crack they’d created in the street...

“They might end up in your world,” Flo whispered.

“Exactly,” Furry whispered. “We jump through another portal into my world and the one in the street will close.”

“But someone might step through it before then!”

“Let’s not think about that,” Furry said, nervously watching the crowd as he spoke. “I think we’ve got a little time. The accident you caused by coming through jammed the street up. We just have to get to another portal stone before they sort everything out!”

Flo sighed. *What a mess I’ve made*, she thought. *If I would’ve left Garvel in his own world and come right back home...*

But Flo knew she couldn’t have done that. They’d helped Garvel revive his siblings and forced his creator Krigg out of his awful workshop. Even though things were scary and she wasn’t sure if she’d ever get home, Flo was glad she’d helped the golems. Even now.

Help whoever you can, her dad said back when she was younger. *Because you’d want the help too when you need it.*

“Is there another portal close to us?”

“I think so,” Furry said. “We just have to find a

way to get to it.”

Flo couldn't stop peering around the ticket machine. She saw a few people in uniform approach Gnash and Ragon. They looked like police officers, but different. Flo liked their funny looking hats.

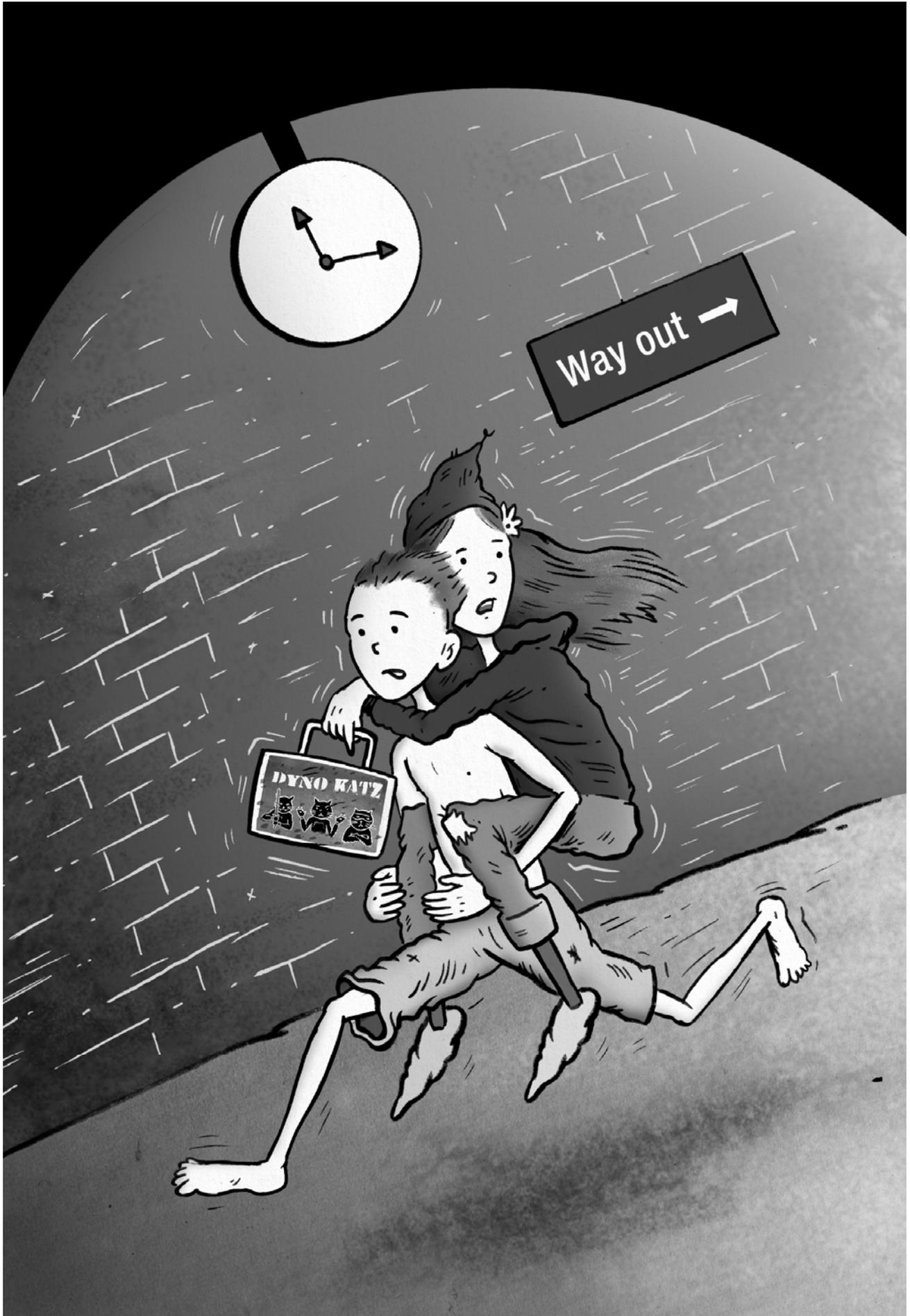
A second later, Gnash shoved one of the officers down, knocking the man clear across the room. Somewhere else, someone blew a whistle.

It's getting ugly, Flo thought. We've unleashed werewolves in London...or wherever we are.

“Okay,” Furry said. “We gotta get these guys out of here before they start hurting people!”

And before Flo could say a word, Furry stood up. She couldn't help but notice how small he looked in his swimming shorts and bare feet. He looked like a little kid lost in the subway, but had his chest puffed out and his fists clenched.

“Hey you big jerks!” Furry shouted. “We're over



here!”

Immediately, Ragon and Gnash turned their human heads toward the bank of ticket machines where their little werewolf brother stood in his human form.

“What’re you doing?” Flo cried in a raised whisper. “They’re going to get us!”

“Not if we’re quick,” Furry said and gave her a quick wink. “Hop on.”

With no time to protest, Flo leapt onto Furry’s back. He dashed through the crowd toward the gates where paying customers inserted their tickets and prepaid cards. She held on for dear life as Furry zigged and zagged through the people, moving toward the front of the line. With little effort, he leapt over the turnstile and landed on the other side.

Flo noticed a few signs posted on the walls in blue and red.

“Mind the gap?” she read aloud, tightening her grip on Furry. She heard people shouting at them in their polite, English voices. “Maybe we should’ve paid.”

“No time,” Furry shouted, running toward a tube-shaped subway car that was starting to fill with people. “Besides, if they knew what we were doing, they’d thank us!”

Flo glanced over her shoulder. Furry’s brothers ran through the crowd, knocking people over. She heard more whistles as the British police officers ran after the teenaged werewolves, disguised as humans.

“Hang on,” Furry shouted. “This might be kind of close!”

Flo looked ahead and wished she hadn’t. The doors to the train were closing and they were still a good ten feet away. She heard Furry grunt and he leapt toward the closing doors like a football player

trying to reach the end zone. They slipped through the narrow opening, only banging the Dyno Katz lunchbox on the way in.

The door closed behind them and the train moved down the track. The entire subway car watched and a few pointed as Furry and Flo stood up.

“Come on, you meatheads,” Furry whispered.
“Come get us.”

“Are you crazy?” Flo asked, watching his brothers leap the gate and head toward them. “We want to get away from those guys.”

“Yes,” Furry said. “But we need to send them back where they belong, too.”

Flo found an empty seat and plopped down. She smelled like an old lady’s perfume, her legs were tired, and her shoes were still muddy from Furry’s world.

There was something on her tongue and she fished it out with her fingers. Werewolf hair!

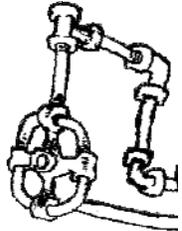
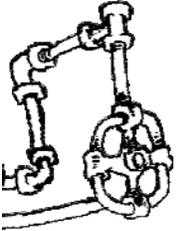
This is just like being back at Corman Towers, she thought. Something bad comes through the crack and we've got to send it back. Only this time it's Furry's brothers!



Something banged against the window behind Flo, making her jump. She turned and saw Gnash, running alongside the subway car, with Ragon close behind. The people in the car were startled and pointed.

“Yeah,” Flo said, watching the werewolves, still in their human form, chase after the train. “We definitely need to get rid of your dumb brothers.”

TUBE
TALK



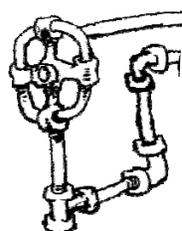
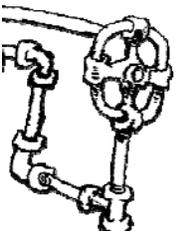
CHAPTER 11



At some point, the train sped up as it slipped deeper through the tunnel. Looking at the walls blur by Flo noticed that Furry's brothers were nowhere to be found.

"I think we lost them," Flo whispered. She did everything she could to avoid the stares of the people riding in the car with them. Flo supposed it was weird to see a girl with a lunchbox running around with a kid wearing nothing but shorts.

"Trust me, we didn't," Furry said. "They can smell us



from miles away. The good news is they probably don't know how to turn themselves into their true forms...yet."

Flo thought about that. Furry told her way back when they'd met how that worked. In order for Furry to change to his wolf form in her world, he had to plug his nose and blow. Sort of like when you need your ears to pop.

"Good," Flo said, watching the windows for any more signs of Gnash and Ragon. She was beyond tired, scared and really began to think they wouldn't ever get home. A long moment of silence passed between them as the train rolled down the tracks.

"You're pretty quiet," Furry whispered. "Are you okay?"

Flo wanted to shout at her friend and tell him that no, she definitely was NOT okay. She wanted to stand up in the middle of the "tube" as everyone seemed to call the train. She wanted to scream at the top of her

lungs in fear and frustration. She wanted to just find a phone, figure out how to call her mom and have someone pick them up. But Flo didn't do any of that. She did something worse.

"Maybe you should just go back," Flo whispered. She saw Furry's reaction and immediately felt like wet garbage.

"What?" Furry replied. "Are you serious?"

"Kind of," Flo admitted. "I don't want you to leave and I'd miss you terribly, but..."

"I get it," Furry said. "I'm a lot of trouble."

"It's not you that's trouble," Flo said and lowered her voice to a whisper again. "But you being here is trouble. Look what's happened since you've come over to our world. Monsters are loose, we're stranded in the middle of England, I think, and your brothers are hunting us down."

Furry kept silent. He sat back into the purple,



cloth-covered seat along the window. He let his breath shoot out of his mouth in a big rush. It was like the wind had been knocked out of him.

“Wow,” Furry said. “Not sure what to say.”

“I’m sorry,” Flo said. “I don’t want to lose you, but we just keep getting into more and more trouble. We’re really lucky neither of us has gotten...you know.”

“Fleas?” Furry asked. “They make collars to keep those things off of dogs and cats. Wolves, too.”

“Very funny,” Flo said, but couldn’t help a smile. “I don’t know what else to do. As long as you and the portal shard are in my world, trouble will keep tumbling through that crack.”

“I don’t want to go back,” Furry said.

“And I really don’t want you to, either,” Flo said. “Which means one thing.”

“Leave the shard in my world,” Furry said, then

took a deep breath.

Gently, Flo pressed the portal shard into Furry's hand.

"If you're sure you can do it," Flo said with a shrug. "Then, yeah."

Furry silently looked at the small piece of stone. It was still tied to a leather cord that he usually wore around his neck.



“You know why I’ve kept it, right?” Furry asked quietly.

“Yeah,” Flo said. “In case you ever want to go home.”

“No,” Furry replied. “It’s in case I ever HAVE to go home. And truthfully, my world has never felt like home to me. Not like our old apartment building.”

“Why would you ever...”

“I’m a werewolf, Flo,” Furry said. “And there are times I can’t control when I change.”

“Full moons,” Flo said. “I know, but you’re careful.”

“But I might slip up,” Furry said. “And what happens if I do? What if I turn into what I really am out in the middle of a crowd? What do you think they’d do?”

He shook his head and looked over at the subway car full of people who’d given them plenty of space at

the back of the subway car.

“I’m lucky you accepted me for what I am,” Furry said. “Curtis, too, I guess. But I don’t think anyone else would. They’d treat me like a monster and who knows what they’d do to me?”

Flo sighed. The shard was his escape plan in case things got rough. He wasn’t completely safe in her world and could be hunted down easily in his own world. She never thought about what it felt like to not belong...anywhere.

“Okay,” Flo said. “I get it. And I’m sorry.”

Furry shrugged. “Don’t be,” he said. “It’s pretty selfish of me to leave the portal open. I’m always endangering everyone in your world. Guess I can’t be here and still want a way back.”

“There’s got to be something we can do,” Flo said as the train began to slow down. “Right? Maybe--”

“We have to go,” Furry said quickly. “They’re going

to catch up to us.”

Advertisements appeared on the walls of the tube as they approached the platform. A red and blue sign outside the window announced what station they’d arrived at.

HYDE PARK CORNER

Flo gripped her lunchbox as the train came to a stop. She noticed the other commuters were still looking at them like they were aliens or something. Flo knew she smelled strange and her clothes were filthy, but it didn’t give them any excuse to stare. Staring was rude.

Furry stood up and put the shard necklace around his neck. He motioned for Flo to hop onto his back for another piggy-back ride. She climbed aboard and wrapped one arm around his neck, using the other to carry her beloved lunchbox.

The doors slid open, revealing the Hyde Park

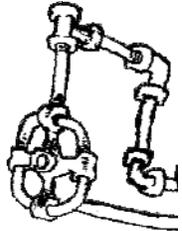
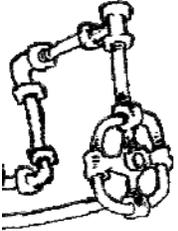
station platform.

“Ready?” Furry asked.

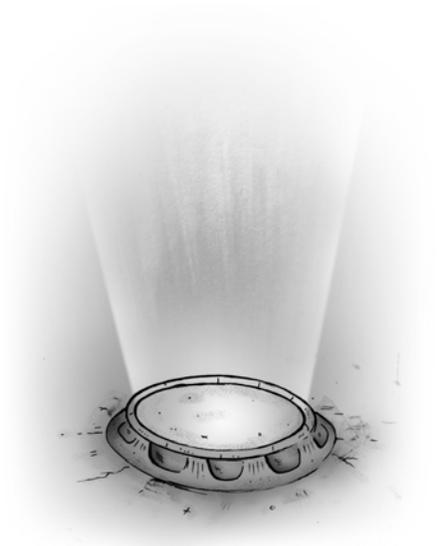
“No,” Flo replied. “But I really want to get home.”

“Then let’s go.”

A
LITTLE
HELP



CHAPTER 12

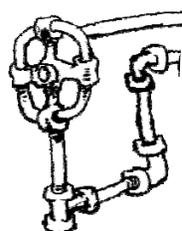
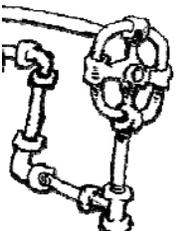


Flo held on tight and they were off in a flash. Furry dashed through the crowd, running barefoot across the tiled floors.

“There’s the way out,” Flo shouted, pointing quickly with her finger before clinging to her friend again.

“What? How do you know?” Furry cried.

“The sign says so,” Flo said. She liked how the stations didn’t use “EXIT” like they did back home, but simply “WAY OUT.”



Furry darted between people, offering quick apologies to anyone he bumped into. He headed toward a long stairway with escalators on each side. The moving stairways were jammed with people going up and down, so he headed for the empty steps instead.

“Fiercas!” a voice shouted from behind.

Furry’s weird real name, Flo thought in horror. That just meant...

“They’re behind us,” Furry shouted. “This is going to be close!”

Flo glanced behind as Furry darted up the steps, four at a time. It was amazing that he could do that with a 4th grade girl stuck on his back. Sure enough, Furry’s bigger brothers were scrambling around the corner, heading toward the steps.

Up and up they went, through one set of stairs, down a hallway and up another bank of escalators.

Flo was sure that at any moment a pair of hands would grab them or they'd be tackled. She closed her eyes, hoping she wouldn't see it coming.

“Here we go,” Furry shouted. “There's sunlight ahead!”

When Flo opened her eyes, she saw they were running up a slanted ramp and up toward a busy street. When they reached ground level, Furry paused.

“What're you doing?” Flo shouted, looking behind her. The cries of alarm down the sloping passageway meant Gnash and Ragon were close.

“There,” Furry cried and she actually felt the little werewolf jumping up and down. “We're close!”

“Close to what?” Flo asked. *Close to getting captured? Close to getting hit by a bus?*

“A portal stone! There's one up there!”

Furry pointed across the street and Flo followed

his finger. Across the street were a set of old-looking arches, almost like a gateway. Large pillars with lined ridges on them made it look like something out of an ancient history text book.

“Really?” Flo cried. “How are we supposed to get up there?”

The stone gateway looked like it was at least 30 feet high at the tallest section and appeared to be the main entryway into a park. Hyde Park?

“Gotta move,” Furry shouted and dashed into the street. Almost immediately, car horns blared and tires squealed. Flo shouted and gripped her friend tighter. She should hear Furry’s brothers’ bare feet on the concrete behind her. They were getting close.

Without pausing, Furry jumped up and landed on the roof of an expensive looking brown car. He leapt to the hood of another car with little effort.

“What’s all this, then?” a man shouted from his

open driver's side window.

“Sorry,” Furry shouted and jumped to the top of a tall, boxy van.

Flo looked behind her and saw the werewolf brothers dodging traffic with a little more difficulty. She knew they probably still weren't used to motorized vehicles driving around. Furry had plenty of practice living in a city for years.

A loud, rumbling sound approached.

A double-decker bus! Flo thought. *No way are we going to dodge that!*

“This is where it's gonna get hairy,” Furry shouted.

He leapt from the van toward the bus. With his quick reflexes, his left foot landed on the side view mirror. He grunted and pushed off with his left leg, launching them up and onto the roof of the red double-decker.

“Whoa,” Flo shouted, suddenly seeing the busy streets from a greater height. “Be careful, would you?”

With a nod, Furry ran down toward the front of the bus, which was driving slowly along the front of the gateway.

“Hey, you’re choking me,” Furry gasped.

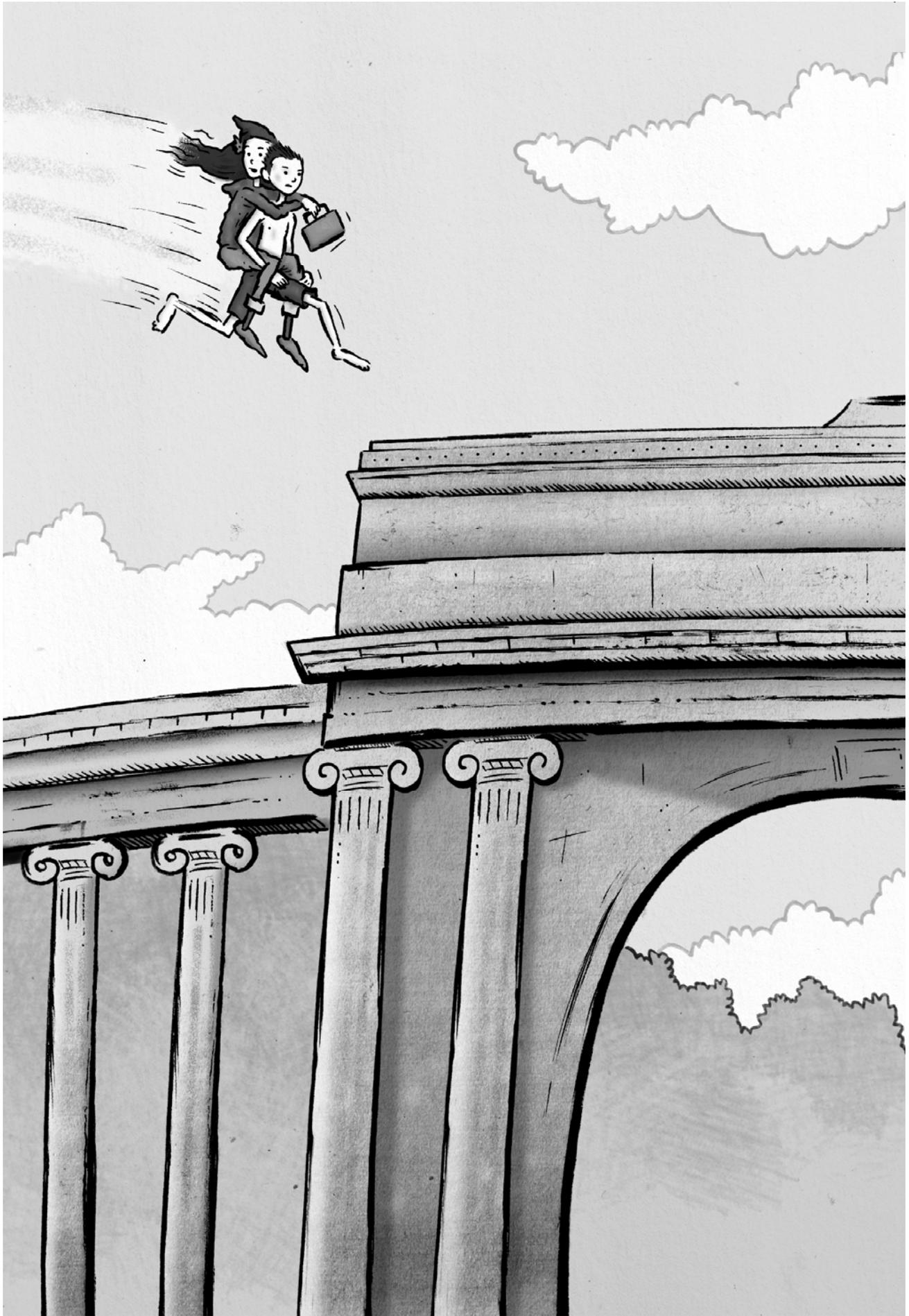
“Sorry,” Flo said, loosening her grip a bit. “I still don’t know how we’re going to get...”

“Trust me,” Furry replied. “And hang on...just not so tight!”

At the end of the bus, Furry darted left and leapt. Flo held her breath for the split second the two of them were in midair. Furry grabbed onto a light pole right outside of the gateway and shimmied up.

In seconds, they were even higher, standing atop a pair of street lamps.

“Last jump,” Furry said and without further warning leapt from the circular light fixture to the roof



of the stone archway. People walking on the sidewalks and riding bicycles nearby clapped and cheered.

Furry stopped for a second and caught his breath, letting Flo get down. She looked over to the entrance to the Underground they'd come from and couldn't believe that in a matter of seconds, they'd gotten where they were.

Unfortunately, Furry's brothers weren't far behind. She saw them weaving through the honking cars and shouting drivers.

"So where's the portal?" Flo cried, turning around. She looked and saw Furry crouched over a small circular stone set into the top of the archway. It was made to look as though it was part of the design all along.

Furry quickly pulled the shard from around his neck and drew a line across the circle. Instantly, a familiar blue glow appeared, forming a crack and way back into Furry's world. Somewhere, back where

they'd entered, the crack closed.

“We have to time this just right,” Furry said. He looked over his shoulder, toward the street side of the archway. “Otherwise, the way through will close behind us and Ragon and Gnash will still be stuck here.”

They didn't have to wait long. In seconds, Flo saw two pairs of hands grab the edge of the stone slab they stood on.

“Fiercas!” Gnash yelled, his eyes red and blearing with rage. “You will yield to us now!”

“Nope,” Furry yelled back. “And you're not the boss of me!”

And just like that he grabbed Flo by the hand and they dropped into the crack.

WHOOSH.

* * *

Anytime Flo passed through the portal, it felt like

she was falling. This time, it felt like she was falling through the passage between their worlds AND it didn't stop once she arrived back in Furry's world.

The portal dumped them off along a steep, rocky slope and they were falling. Flo held her lunchbox in one hand and Furry's hand in another. At some point his hand changed from human to werewolf.

"Don't let go," Furry shouted. He reached out with his free hand and caught the snarled and twisted shape of what Flo could only describe as a root. The root stopped their descent violently, threatening to shake the lunchbox from Flo's hand.

"What, how..." Flo murmured.

"I think there used to be a house or something here," Furry gasped. "The portal used to be part of that wall."

He nodded at the blue crack above them. It was about six feet up, set into a smoothed rock wall. Even

so, Flo thought it was a lousy place for a portal between their worlds.

Flo didn't want to look below her, especially since she *knew* they were way up high. But she did anyway and regretted it. Hundreds of feet below there was a huge body of water. Waves splashed against jagged rocks and chunks of splintered wood. It took her breath away and made her immediately think of the ocean they'd dropped into only hours ago.

She also noticed that the sun was nearly down, which meant one thing.

That portal is going to shift and the crack will lead us somewhere else, Flo thought. But where? Antarctica? The Amazon?

Seconds later, Flo heard a familiar crackle followed by another. She looked up and saw Gnash and Ragon, in full werewolf form, tumble from the portal crack, falling right for them.

“No!” Flo shouted as they got close.

She was sure they’d grab on and pull them down to the rocks on their way past. Furry quickly swung Flo out of the way. The werewolf brothers narrowly missed and tumbled further down the face of the rocky slope. They dug their big claws into the dirt and stopped themselves just short from getting crushed on the rocks and wooden timbers below. Flo guessed they were at least forty yards between where Furry had stopped their fall and where his brothers had ended up.

“There’s no escape,” Gnash shouted, slowly clawing his way up the slope toward them. “Father has decreed that you will return and we shall not fail him!”

“Oh jeez,” Furry groaned. “Just be quiet would you, Gnash?”

Flo climbed to the root and shimmied over to the rock wall. There were enough handholds for her to get

to the crack if she was careful. She watched as it began to seal itself up. It was like the portal stone knew the shard was back where it belonged.

“What are we going to do?” Flo asked watching the sun dip lower into the horizon. “The portal is closing and it’s going to shift any minute.”

“I know,” Furry said. “But even if we go through the crack, they’ll be able to follow us through again!”

Unless you leave the shard here, Flo thought.

She watched in horror as Ragon and Gnash continued to scramble up the side of the mountain. If they didn’t move, the brothers were going to catch them before they could even open the portal.

“Father wants you back home,” Ragon growled, his werewolf teeth dripping wet.

“He just wants his stupid shard back,” Furry shouted back. “Father doesn’t care about me!”

Flo kept climbing. She banged her lunchbox

against the side of the rocks and cringed. Every adventure left her most valuable item a little more beat up.

Furry helped her up until they were face to face with the circular stone in the mountain.

“I feel bad for whoever used to live here,” Furry said, holding the shard out to draw a line across the circle. “This became a really dangerous place to drop into my world.”

“No kidding,” Flo said, watching both the sky and the approaching werewolf brothers. “But we’re really in trouble, Furry. They’re going to get us, aren’t they?”

Furry looked at his best friend as the wind blew through the dark grey hair on his face.

“Not if I can help it,” Furry said and drew a line with the shard. As the crack opened, and the brothers got ever closer, something amazing happened.

From out of the depths of the water below them,

giant shapes emerged. Flo saw huge hands and heads rise from the surface and grab the rocky slope. Their powerful hands sunk into the rock and they pulled themselves up out of the water, like swimmers who'd just finished their laps.

“Holy socks! Flo shouted. “Golems!” She could hardly believe it. But it was true.

There was golem 12 and 17, followed by numbers 3, 6 and 10. And, as if knowing she was waiting for him, Garvel, number 19 himself, broke through the water's surface.

“NEED HELP, FO?” Garvel's large, booming voice called.

“Yes!” Flo shouted. “Get these guys to leave us alone!”

Four more golems erupted from the ocean and began to climb after the werewolves. Furry's brothers seemed distracted by the appearance of gigantic

beasts coming from the sea. They lost their footing and slipped down toward the golems.

Garvel grabbed Gnash with his left hand, trapping the werewolf. Number 6 found Ragon and closed him up in both hands.



“Don’t hurt them, though!” Furry said. “Maybe just keep them here for a day so they can’t follow us!”

“WON’T HURT WOLFIES, FURDY,” Garvel

promised. “PLAY WITH THEM. KEEP THEM OFF ROCK.”

Flo was so happy to see Garvel again, she felt like she might cry.

Because you'd want help too, when you need it, Flo heard her dad say again.

“Ready to go?” Furry said.

“Almost,” Flo said, turning to shout down the side of the mountain. “Thank you, golems! I love you all!”

And then, just before she saw the sun disappear from the sky, Garvel waved back.

“WE LOVE YOU TOO, FO.”

Seeing their chance, Furry and Flo pulled themselves through the portal crack.

WHOOSH.

* * *

Dryer lint. That was the first thing Flo smelled

when she ended up back in her world. She opened her eyes, lifted her head up and saw the back of some old, yet familiar machine.

I'm in a laundry room, she thought and immediately realized...

“We’re home!” Flo shouted. She stood up and discovered they were in the secret space behind the dryers in the basement of Corman apartments. Flo was so happy she was pretty sure her face would split from smiling or that she’d break into song.

“It’s about time,” an older man’s voice called. “Your mom is worried sick about you!”

Flo looked over the bank of machines to see Curtis, the apartment building’s former caretaker folding a pair of white underwear on top of the washing machine.

He wore his giant glasses and his threadbare green bathrobe.

“You’re right,” Flo said and helped Furry to his feet. “C’mon!”

Neither of them said much on their way up. They were exhausted, worn out and ready to be back where they belonged. As they stood in front of their apartment doors each across the hall from the other, they stopped.

“You kept the shard, didn’t you?” Flo said. It wasn’t hanging around Furry’s neck, but she had to ask.

“Yeah,” Furry admitted. He pulled the relic from his shorts pocket. “I guess I did.”

“Well,” Flo said. “Whatever happens, we’ll deal with it, okay? No matter how much trouble it is, I want you to stay here. This is your home. This is where you belong.”

“You mean it?” Furry looked up.

“Yep,” Flo said. And before Furry could say

anything else, she gave the little guy a hug. “We’ll talk tomorrow. That is, if I’m not grounded forever.”

“Yeah,” Furry said. “That sounds good.”

They turned and went to their apartments.

Flo took a deep breath before she turned the knob and opened the door.

“Mom?” she called. “I’m home.”



AUTHOR'S NOTE

Hi everyone! Thomas Kingsley Troupe, here. One of the things people asked me after reading THE SOLEMN GOLEM (Book #6) was:

“So that’s it??? You’re just going to leave Furry and Flo stranded?”

If you just got done reading PORTAL BOUNCE, you’ll know the answer to that is: “Heck no!” It was never my intent to have the series end on a cliffhanger. Ever! I’d hoped to write at least two to four more books but my publisher had other plans. I decided that I needed to finish the story I’d set up, even if the last few books weren’t going to ever be published as hold-in-your-hand printed books. Plus, let’s face it...I’d kind of painted myself into a corner, leaving our heroes stuck on a floating island in the sky! I wish it hadn’t taken so long to get this book out, but I hope it was worth the wait.

And, in case you’re really wondering...yes. There’s going to be one more FINAL Furry & Flo book that I hope to have ready by Summer of 2019.

I think you’re going to like it. It’s called...

FURRY & FLO BOOK 8:

BIG BAD DAD

But wait... did you want to read the first 6 books... er, first?!?!

FURRY & FLO BOOK 1: THE BIG HAIRY SECRET

FURRY & FLO BOOK 2: THE PROBLEMS WITH GOBLINS

FURRY & FLO BOOK 3: THE MISPLACED MUMMY

FURRY & FLO BOOK 4: THE SKELETONS IN CITY PARK

FURRY & FLO BOOK 5: THE VOICELESS VAMPIRE

FURRY & FLO BOOK 6: THE SOLEMN GOLEM

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