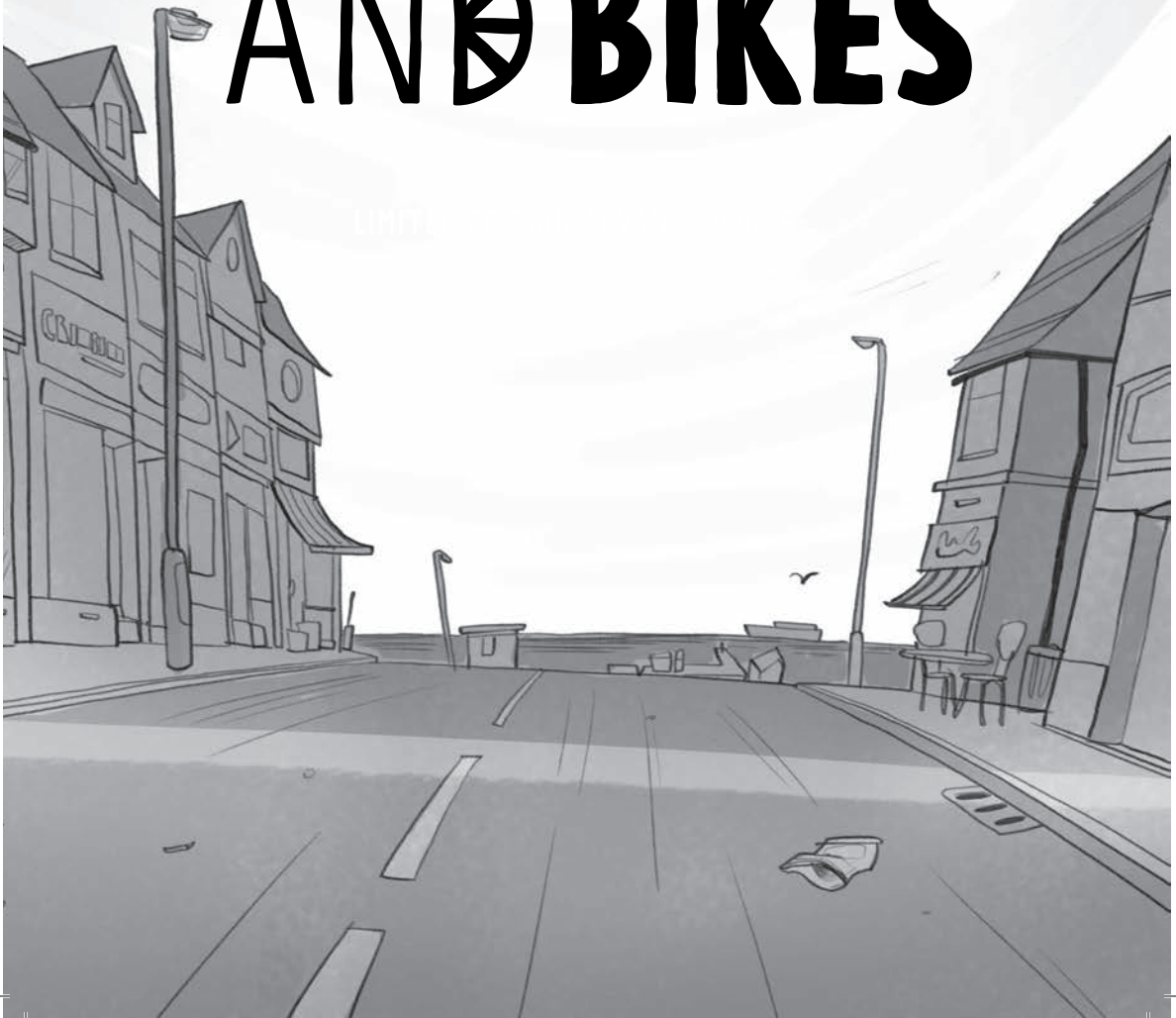


Gabrielle Kent

KNIGHTS AND BIKES



Map of Penfurzy

THE SCRAPYARD

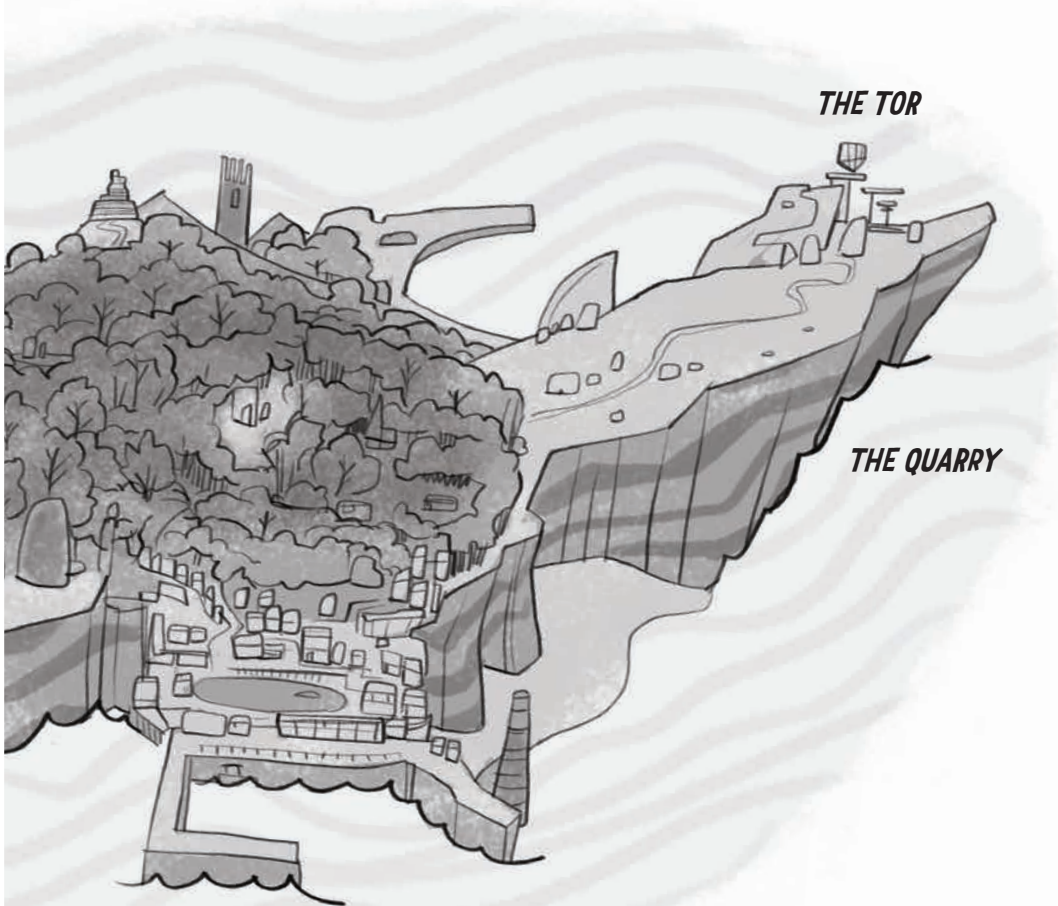


**AVALON'S PEAK
CARAVAN PARK**



THE GOLF COURSE





THE TOR

THE QUARRY

THE HARBOUR TOWN

For Ashoka.

*May your life be a joyous quest
filled with excitement, adventure
and valiant companions.*



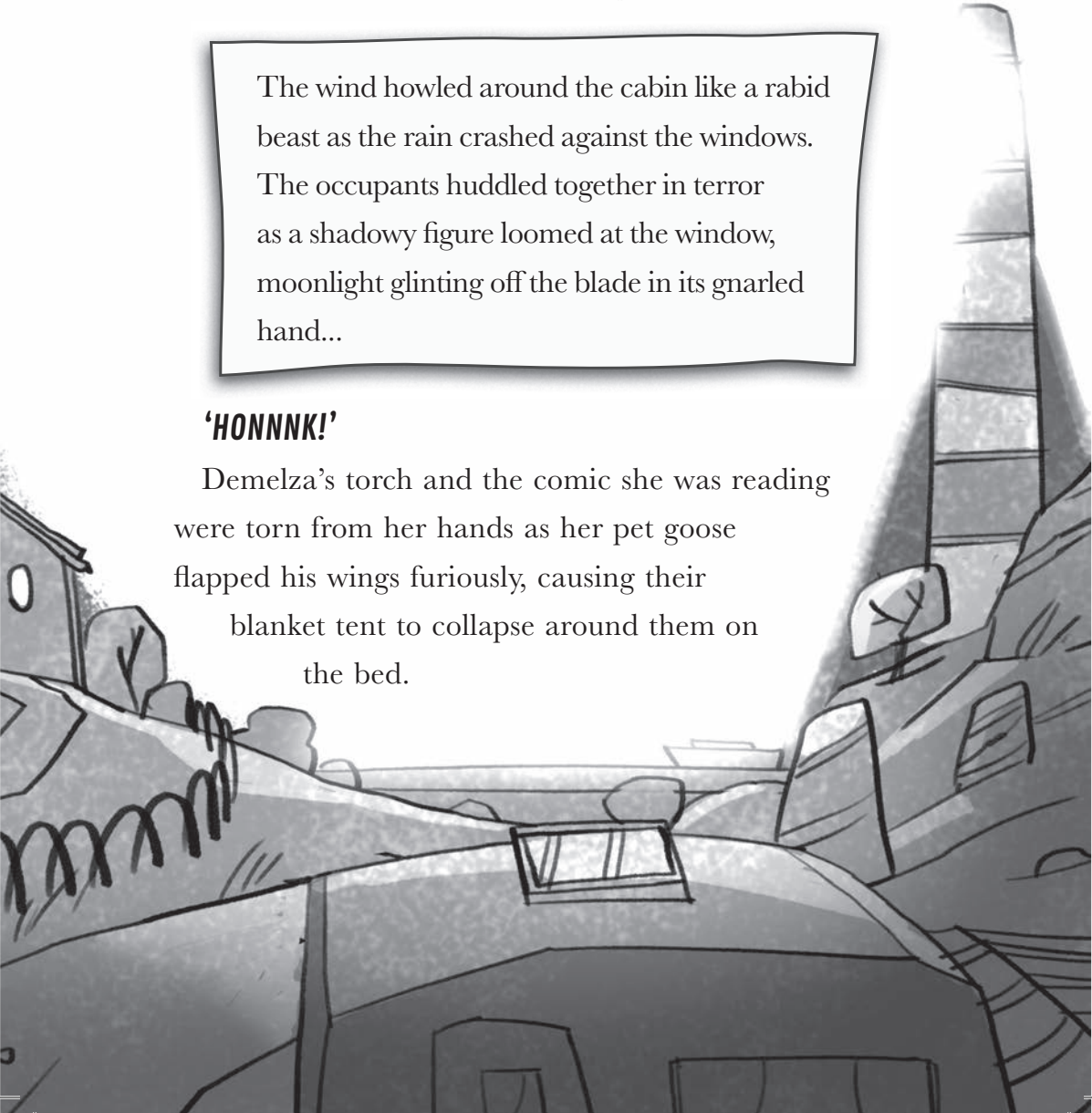
Chapter One

WELCOME TO PENFURZY

The wind howled around the cabin like a rabid beast as the rain crashed against the windows. The occupants huddled together in terror as a shadowy figure loomed at the window, moonlight glinting off the blade in its gnarled hand...

'HONNNK!'

Demelza's torch and the comic she was reading were torn from her hands as her pet goose flapped his wings furiously, causing their blanket tent to collapse around them on the bed.



‘What is it, Captain Honkers?’ whispered Demelza, grabbing the goose and hugging him so close that his feathery cheek was squished up against her pale freckled face. ‘Are we in danger?’

She popped her head up from the crumpled pile of blankets and peered around the little caravan where they lived. Outside, the wind howled around the caravan like a rabid beast as the rain crashed against the windows. Demelza and Captain Honkers huddled together in terror as a shadowy figure loomed at the window . . .

Demelza let out a little squeak and dived back under the blankets as the shadow slithered towards the door. ‘Shh, Honkers!’ she hissed, shining her torch at the goose and clamping his beak shut between her thumb and forefinger before he could honk again. She peeked out from under the blanket. Whatever was out there had reached the door.

The handle rattled.

Demelza breathed a small sigh as she remembered locking the door before going to bed. Her relief was short-lived as a metallic scratching sound came from the lock.

‘It’s trying to break in!’ she squeaked at Captain Honkers. The goose flapped his wings angrily, bursting to honk.

The lock clicked again.

Demelza took a deep breath. ‘If we’re going to be eaten by a carnivorous beast with three mouths and . . . and tentacles for arms, then we’re going to go down fighting. Aren’t we, Honkers?’

She snatched up a blanket, grabbed her foam sword from under her wooden bed and hid behind the door. Holding up two corners of the blanket, Demelza peered over the top and watched as the door finally creaked open.

The monster slipped inside.

‘Yaaaaargh!’ screamed Demelza, throwing the blanket up and over the beast.

‘Honnk!’ squawked Captain Honkers, pecking furiously at the thrashing creature under the blanket.

Demelza began to whack at what she thought was its head. ‘Die, creature of the night!’ she yelled as the foam sword flailed. ‘Begone! Back to the pit from whence you came!’

‘Mkay! Kay! Ry smurunder,’ burred the creature.

Demelza stopped whacking. ‘Did you hear that, Honkers?’ she said, wide-eyed. ‘It’s trying to communicate.’ She pointed her torch at the struggling blanket and prodded it with her sword. ‘What did you say, foul beast?’

The creature wriggled away from her and struggled to its feet before flinging off the blanket and putting its hands up in the air. A large duffel bag containing something big and rectangular fell to the floor.

‘I said, OK, I surrender!’ said the demon, which Demelza had to admit was starting to look much less like hell-spawn, and more like a girl not much older than her.



She had brown skin and punky black hair. Her leather gloves were fingerless and she was wearing slouchy leather ankle boots and not one but TWO earrings in one ear. She was the coolest-looking burglar Demelza had ever seen. She was also the *first* burglar Demelza had ever seen.

The girl bent down to pick up her duffel bag and Demelza pointed her battered sword warily at her.

‘You’re not from here,’ she said, narrowing her eyes. ‘I know everyone on Penfurzy Island, and you’re not anyone I know.’

‘Just passing through,’ said the girl, brushing the tip of the sword away, then rolling up her sleeve to rub at the little red peck marks Captain Honkers had left on her arm. ‘I thought this place was empty. I’m not sticking around – I was just after somewhere to sleep tonight. Sorry I scared you. I’ll be off now, OK?’

‘Scared?’ said Demelza, her frizzy red bunches bouncing as she leapt to block the girl’s path to the door. ‘We weren’t scared, was we, Honkers?’ She grabbed the goose and held him under one arm.

‘Honk!’ said Captain Honkers.

‘Sure. OK, kid, you weren’t scared. Now, if you’ll move, I’ll

go and find somewhere else for the night.’

Demelza stood firm. ‘Who you calling kid? What are you? Ten or eleven? You’s just a kid too. So, shut up, stupid-head!’

‘Say it, don’t spray it,’ said the girl, wiping her face with the back of her hand in an exaggerated motion.

‘So, are you going to get out of my way? Or are you going to try to stab me to death with your toy sword?’

Demelza scratched her chin, accidentally picking the top off a scab she had forgotten was there. ‘I haven’t decided yet,’ she said. ‘If I do let you out, where’ll you go?’

The girl shrugged as she slung her bag over her shoulder. ‘What’s it to you, short stuff?’

The wind whistled around the caravan, blowing open the door and driving the icy rain forcefully against the windows. Demelza could see goose pimples all over the girl’s arms. Her hair and jeans were also dripping wet and she was only wearing a T-shirt under her light denim jacket.

Demelza chewed her lip. Even though this very strange stranger had invaded their fortress, suggested that she was scared, AND called her short, she wouldn’t send even her worst enemy out near the cliffs on a stormy night like this. It was a night just like this when her own mother had—

Demelza shivered and made a decision. She slammed the flapping door shut, locked it and pretended to swallow the key. ‘You’re not going nowhere. Not tonight,’ she said firmly, then picked up her blanket and held it out to the girl. ‘Honkers sez you can stay here with me an’ him. He can sleep in my bed with me, and you can use the top bunk.’

The girl pushed her wet hair out of her eyes and shrugged as though she’d be just as happy going back out in the rain, but Demelza could see a look of relief under the façade.

‘Yeah, I guess I could chill here for a few hours,’ the girl said. ‘Long as you keep that Honkers on your side of the room in case he tries to murder me in the middle of the night.’

‘That’s *Captain* Honkers to you,’ said Demelza, putting the goose down on her bed and wrapping him up in a blanket. ‘He only lets *me* call him Honkers.’

She finished tucking the goose in, kissed him on the top of his head and turned to give the girl a sharp stare.

‘Besides, as far as we know, *you* could be the type that does murdering – sneaking around at night, breaking into people’s bedrooms. The only way to know that you won’t do a murder on us in our sleep is if we’re friends.’ She wiped her hand on her faded pyjama bottoms and held it out. ‘You’ve got to know

someone's name if you're going to be friends. I'm Demelza.
Demelza Penrose. I'm nine and five months. I like comics,
drawing, riding my bike and playing computer games. My
favourite food is banana and

peanut butter sandwiches,
and I have a scar on
my right knee from
when Connan
Lenteglos,
the most
annoying
boy at school,
dared me to do a one
hundred and eighty bunny
hop on my bike. I totally did
it, though!' she said proudly.



‘Right. Now it’s your turn.’

The girl paused for a minute, looking at Demelza’s
outstretched hand. Demelza wiggled her fingers and gave her
biggest and friendliest grin, the one that showed all her teeth.

The girl finally took Demelza’s hand with half a smile. ‘I’m
Nessa,’ she said.

‘Just . . . Nessa?’ said Demelza. ‘One name, that’s it?’

‘Yeah. You know, like Prince.’

Demelza screwed up her forehead. ‘Prince who?’

‘It doesn’t matter,’ grinned Nessa, making Demelza feel she was missing out on a joke.

‘Well then. Pleased to meet you, O mysterious Nessa,’ said Demelza, shaking her hand firmly. ‘The captain and I officially welcome you to Penfurzy, the bestest island in the whole wide world!’

‘Honk!’ said Captain Honkers.

‘You’re right, Honkers. She does look hungry. Nessa, we shall throw a feast in your honour!’

Demelza whizzed around her caravan, opening cupboards and drawers and pulling out packets of crisps, biscuits, cheese, crackers and a punnet of grapes. She threw them all into the centre of her lower bunk and tucked a Thundercats sleeping bag into the side of the top bunk so that it hung down to create a tent.

‘Hop in!’ she said to Nessa, scrambling onto the bed. Nessa slid her bag under the bed and hopped up next to Demelza.

As Captain Honkers laid his head on her knee, Demelza switched on her torch, lighting their faces from beneath in a

manner that she thought was very dramatic. Then she tore open the packet of crackers.

‘Ooh, and don’t forget the Guest-of-Honour hat!’ She pulled a battered cardboard crown out from under her bed and plonked it on Nessa’s head.

‘Honk!’ said Captain Honkers sleepily.

‘He said it suits you,’ said Demelza.

‘Mmph, thanks,’ said Nessa, shovelling crackers into her mouth and biting off a chunk of Yarg cheese without even peeling off the boiled nettle leaves it was wrapped in.

‘Wow, you’re really hungry!’ said Demelza, leaning forwards, her head on her hands. ‘Where are you from? How did you get here? How long are you staying? And, um, *why* are you here?’

‘Nowhere in particular. By stowing away on the last ferry. Not long, I’m just passing through. And, um, none of your beeswax.’

‘Oooh, you’re such an iguana!’

Nessa stared at her blankly.

Demelza scratched her head, ‘Um, I mean an *enigma*.’

‘Yeah, that’s my spy name,’ said Nessa. ‘Ann E. Nigma.’

‘You’re a spy?’ asked Demelza. Her intruder was becoming

more and more interesting. ‘What are you spying on?’

‘I’m on a recon mission. I could tell you about it, but then I really would have to do a murder on you.’ Nessa grinned, before her mouth dropped open as she spotted something under Demelza’s pillow. ‘Whoa, is that . . . ? No, it couldn’t be!’

She reached over and pulled out a large white and grey glove. There were plastic joypad buttons on the back of the hand and wires sticking out of the sides.

‘It is!’ she said in awe. ‘A Game Gauntlet. I’ve never seen a real one. I thought they were banned after they kept setting stuff on fire and electrocuting people.’



‘They were,’ said Demelza as Nessa handed it back. She pulled on the glove and pressed some of the buttons. ‘It doesn’t work any more, but it was a birthday present from my mum so I didn’t return it when they were all recalled. I like to wear it for a little bit every day. You probably think that sounds daft?’ She blinked up at Nessa.

‘I think it’s pretty rad.’ Nessa punched her lightly on the upper arm. ‘Just like the kid wearing it.’

Demelza felt a warm glow inside, even despite being called a kid. No one had ever called her rad before.

‘Honkers thinks you’re rad too,’ she said to Nessa. ‘I know you said you’re not sticking around, but you’re welcome to stay with us as long as you like.’

Nessa’s face lit up, but she chewed her nail for a while before saying anything. ‘You won’t tell anyone where I’m staying?’ she said at last.

‘Cross my heart and hope to die,’ said Demelza, drawing an X across her chest with her finger. ‘Stick a needle in my eye.’

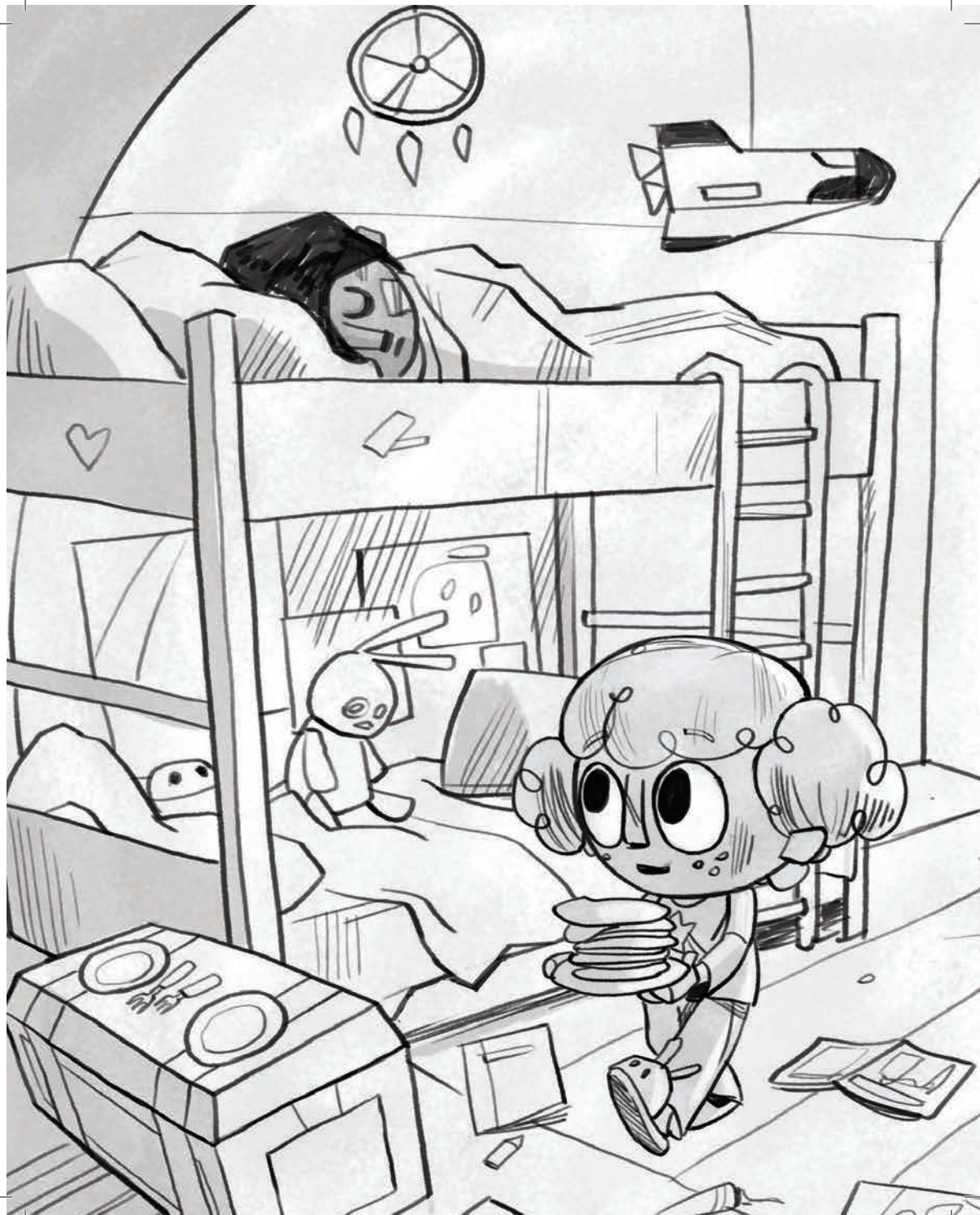
‘I’m afraid I’ll need an even stronger promise than that,’ said Nessa, her face deadly serious. ‘There are people on this island who can’t find out that I’m here.’ She spat in the palm of her hand and held it out.

Demelza stared at the little puddle of spit, wondering what she was supposed to do with it.

‘Spit sisters,’ said Nessa, offering her hand again. ‘You know, like blood brothers but less stupid.’

Demelza smiled as she understood. She spat in her own hand and slapped it into Nessa’s for a very squelchy handshake.

‘Spit sisters!’ she said proudly as cold saliva dribbled down her arm, cementing their bond.



Chapter Two

THE PENFURZY KNIGHTS

‘Wake up, sleepy-head, don’t forget to make the bed!’ sang Demelza, clambering up the bed frame and resting her chin on the edge of the top bunk. She prodded the snoring lump of blankets in the middle of the mattress.

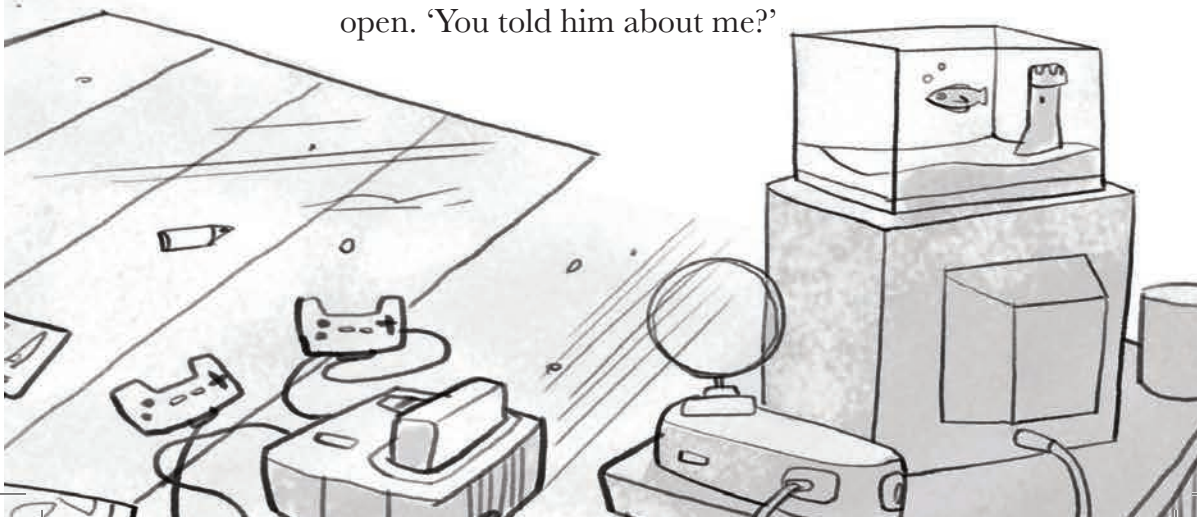
No response.

Demelza prodded again. And again.

Nessa groaned and rolled over, pulling the blankets up further over her head.

‘Pancakes! I have paaaaancakes.’ Demelza waved a plate over Nessa’s head. ‘Delicious, tasty pancakes! Dad made plenty so I brought some back from the house for you.’

The blanket slid down and one of Nessa’s eyes flicked open. ‘You told him about me?’



‘No. I just told him I was extra super hungry so he made lots,’ beamed Demelza. ‘You’re my secret,’ she whispered. ‘Spit sisters, remember?’

‘Good. Let’s keep it that way.’ Nessa’s head disappeared back under the covers. A second later her hand shot out, grabbed two pancakes and whisked them away under the blankets.

Demelza smiled and climbed down the ladder as the sound of muffled chewing came from the top bunk. When the munching stopped and Nessa started to snore again, Demelza sat down at her desk, pulled out her pencils and paper and began to draw. Sticking her tongue out of the side of her mouth to help her concentrate, she carefully documented her meeting with a monster who broke into her caravan and turned into a girl who became her bestest friend in the whole wide world.

‘Hey, you’re pretty good.’

Demelza jumped. She had been so wrapped up in her drawing that she hadn’t even heard Nessa get up.

‘I hope that’s not supposed to be me, though.’

‘Er, no,’ said Demelza, sliding her pens and comic into her desk drawer and locking it shut before Nessa

could reach for the page and follow the story. ‘That’s a completely different monster I had to fight last week.’

She watched as Nessa looked around the caravan in the daylight. Her new friend prodded the origami mobile hanging from the ceiling, and took in the dinosaur and space posters on the walls, the shelves stuffed with toy figures and comics, and the little record player in the corner.

‘This place is great,’ Nessa said as she sat down and began to flick through a box of records.

Demelza blushed, suddenly unable to think of anything to say. It was strange having someone else in her caravan. She didn’t have many friends at school, and none of them had ever come over to visit. She knew they thought she was weird for not liking the things they liked – dolls, ballet, stories about princesses, magazines that had posters of boy bands in the middle. She bet Nessa didn’t like any of those things either.

Sidling up to the shelves behind Nessa, Demelza quickly knocked a fluffy purple teddy with a big pink heart on its chest down onto the floor. ‘*Sorrrrrrrreeeee, Mrs Fizzizwig!*’ she whispered out of the corner of her mouth before kicking the teddy under the bed.

‘Urgh, Pontefract! Total Dad music,’ said Nessa, pulling out a

record featuring a wizard playing a steel guitar on the cover.

‘Heh, yeah,’ said Demelza, rubbing her nose. ‘My dad was their roadie. He used to tour with them, until he met Mum. Pontefract paid her to make a giant lobster for one of their shows. She was an artist.’

Nessa raised an eyebrow. ‘That’s pretty cool.’

‘Heh, yeah,’ Demelza said again, looking down at her feet and hoping that Nessa would stop looking through the records before she found *Jigs and Whirls for Little Girls*. ‘What about *your* parents?’ she asked Nessa, wondering why her new friend was out on Penfurzy on her own. ‘Where are they?’

Nessa shrugged. ‘I’m an orphan. Right now, I’m a nomad. A wanderer. Penfurzy today – tomorrow, who knows? Maybe Peru. How come you live in this caravan on your own, not in the house I passed out there?’

‘I just kept asking Dad until he finally let me,’ said Demelza, putting on her Game Gauntlet and fiddling with the buttons. ‘He doesn’t mind too much, as long as I keep the door locked at night, eat my meals with him in the house, keep the caravan close to the house, and don’t go wandering anywhere without telling him first.’

‘I’m surprised your mum is OK with that,’ said Nessa.

‘She must be pretty laid back.’

‘Yeah. She was.’ Demelza stared very hard at the dirt under her fingernails and swallowed loudly.

‘Oh, dude, I’m sorry,’ said Nessa, getting to her feet. She picked up her bag. ‘Me and my big mouth. Look, I’ll just get out of your hair, OK?’

‘No, don’t go yet!’ said Demelza, suddenly afraid that the most interesting and mysterious person she had ever met was about to walk out of her life as quickly as she had broken into it. ‘At least let me show you around first.’

‘No need, I’m not sticking around. No point in getting to know the place.’

‘Oh. OK then,’ said Demelza, avoiding eye contact as she sat down and beckoned to Captain Honkers who had just waddled up the steps into the caravan. ‘It’s just that Honkers wanted to show you the Crazy Golf course that I helped build. But, you know, it’s fine if you’ve got somewhere else to be.’ Demelza pulled a cracker out of her pocket, crumbled it on the rug and pretended to be engrossed in watching Captain Honkers peck up the pieces.

Nessa scratched the back of her neck. ‘Well, y’know, I guess I’m in no rush . . . ’

‘Great!’ Demelza leapt to her feet before Nessa could say anything further. She tucked her foam sword into her belt and swung her blue anorak around her shoulders, tying it at the neck like a cape. ‘Chop-chop then, let’s go! There’s so much to see! No time to lose! The early bird catches the worm!’ Pushing Nessa ahead of her, Demelza sprang out of the caravan and onto the wet grass. She threw her arms wide. ‘Smell that clean Penfurzy air!’ she cried, breathing in two lungfuls.

Nessa wrinkled her nose. ‘More like dirty Penfurzy butt...’

‘Follow me!’ shouted Demelza, grabbing her by the wrist and racing through the field, anorak cape fluttering behind her as Captain Honkers waddled after them.

The golf course was one of Demelza’s favourite things in the world. She was delighted to see Nessa nod her head in approval as she flipped a switch and a field full of rather rickety-looking painted wooden sculptures came to life, wobbling and creaking and flashing as recorded voices and sound effects rang out from each one.

‘Sweet! This looks totally dangerous,’ said Nessa, admiring a creaky wooden ship rocking on wooden cut-out waves. It was full of grim-looking knights. ‘What’s with all the knights and castles? Is it telling some kind of story?’



‘You don’t know?’ gasped Demelza. ‘It’s only the bestest story your ears have never heard. The story of the Penfurzy knights, their long-lost treasure, and the terrible curse that killed them all dead!’ She pulled a battered leaflet from her pocket and handed it dramatically to Nessa.

‘Two-for-one cream teas, vouchers for half-price fishing trips and ten per cent off at Saffron Records?’ Nessa read out loud, wrinkling her forehead.

‘Turn it over, silly!’ said Demelza. ‘There, that’s the map of our golf course with the tale of the knights that Mum wrote.’ She stabbed her finger onto the map, then pointed to the wooden ship they were standing next to. ‘This is hole number one, showing the brave knights sailing out on the Crusades to rid the world of dragons and stuff.’

‘OK, so killing people who didn’t believe the same as them, and wiping out endangered creatures. Got it,’ said Nessa.

Demelza stared at her, enthusiasm wavering briefly.

‘Sorry, go on.’

‘Well, on their journey the knights found lots of treasure and searched for somewhere to hide it. Look, this is them in North Africa.’ Demelza ran to the third hole. ‘Here they are in a great city in the desert, and’ – she skipped over to the fourth – ‘this is them finally landing on Penfurzy and deciding that this was the perfect hiding place.’

‘I’m not surprised,’ said Nessa, rushing after Demelza. ‘I’d want to hide it too in case the people I stole it from wanted it back.’

‘Oh, I don’t think they stole it,’ said Demelza, wondering where the knights actually had found the treasure – the legend was a bit fuzzy on that point. ‘They probably just found it.’

‘If you say so,’ said Nessa.

‘I do,’ said Demelza, although she was starting to wonder if the Penfurzy knights were as noble as she had always assumed. ‘Anyway, the knights built a **BIG** castle to protect the treasure, but then they started to disappear, or suffered mysterious accidents.’ She cranked a handle and a knight fell from the top of a castle turret, before she wound the handle the other way and the metal arm he was mounted on pulled him back up. ‘The knights who were left decided that the treasure was cursed. They wanted to return it, but one night the whole castle just disappeared without a trace.’

No one knew what happened to it, or to the knights or their piles of treasure. I reckon they all fought each other to little pieces, then they rotted and their eyes fell out and now their skellingtons guard the treasure from anyone who comes looking for it.’

‘Fun story,’ said Nessa without looking up from the map. ‘So, er, did anyone ever search for the castle and the treasure?’



‘Lots of people!
Mainly visitors to the
island. The people who
live here know better. They

don’t want the curse to get them too.’

‘So, you’ve never looked for it?’ asked Nessa. ‘If I lived here it would probably be the only interesting thing I could think of to do.’

‘*Only* interesting thing?’ said Demelza. ‘Penfurzy is *full* of interesting things! There’s the beaches, the fun park, the arcade, the caves, the scrapyard, the quarry, the—’

‘What’s that, over there?’ asked Nessa, wandering over to a tiny rickety shack over by the little fence that ran along the cliff edge.

‘It’s nothing! Don’t go there!’ shouted Demelza, hurrying after her. Her chest felt tight as Nessa opened the little door and crawled inside. ‘Get out! That’s private!’ shouted Demelza, her eyes prickling.

All was quiet inside. Demelza rubbed her nose, sighed and crawled in after Nessa.

There was barely enough room for the two of them inside the shack. Demelza had to shuffle past Nessa so that neither of them ended up sitting on the other’s knee. Nessa was looking around at the photos and sketches pinned to the walls. They were of a smiling woman with long wavy red hair, and freckles just like Demelza’s.

‘What is this place?’ asked Nessa, running her finger over a painting of the sea stacks just off the shore, four pillars of stone rising from the sea just a few metres away from the cliff edge.

‘It’s where I come to remember Mum,’ said Demelza,



keeping her back to Nessa so that her new friend couldn't see her face.

Nessa prodded a mobile made up of papier-mâché sea creatures which bounced around their ears as it swung from the low ceiling.

'Just stop touching everything! You'll mess it all up. This was Mum's stuff. I told you she was an artist. She painted all the golf course displays. Well, I helped.' Demelza rubbed her nose again in the silence that followed.

Nessa touched her shoulder. 'She was a very good artist.'

'She was, wasn't she?' said Demelza, gazing proudly at the sculptures and paintings that filled the little shrine to her mum.

‘What, um . . . ?’ Nessa paused.

‘Happened to her? She’ – Demelza swallowed down the lump that came up into her throat – ‘fell. Right there near the sea stacks in that painting. Dad said she’d been talking about doing something that would make everyone want to visit our golf course. He thinks she was building an extension to the course on the cliff edge when she fell.’

‘Sorry, D,’ said Nessa, putting her hand on her shoulder again. ‘That must have been aw—’

‘Careful!’ cried Demelza.

Nessa’s elbow had knocked a sparkly papier-mâché lobster to the floor. They both grabbed for it, but it slipped through Demelza’s fingers as they struggled to turn in the narrow space.

‘No! You *broke* it!’ Demelza shouted as it hit the floor and fell apart. ‘That was my favourite.’

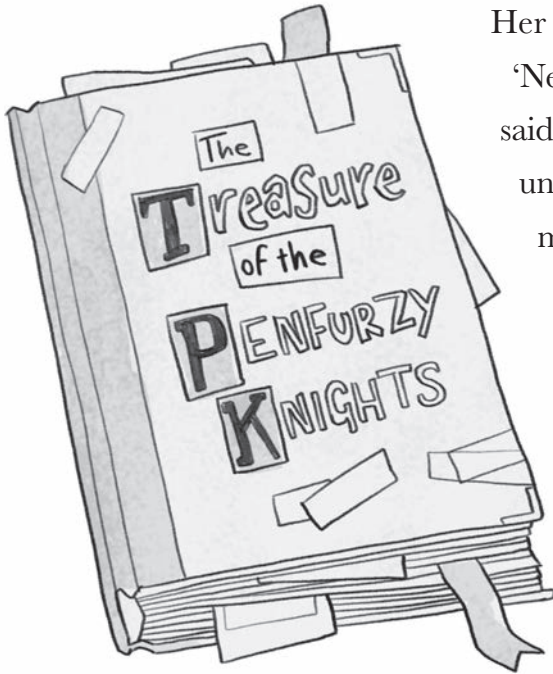
‘Sorry! I didn’t mean to,’ cried Nessa, grabbing the lobster and trying to fit its shell back on. She paused, removed the shell again and looked inside.

‘Why are you breaking it again?’ wailed Demelza. ‘Give it back!’

‘It’s OK,’ said Nessa, pushing the lobster into Demelza’s hands. ‘It’s not broken. I think it’s meant to open. There’s

something inside. Take a look.'

Demelza hugged the lobster close as she reached in and pulled out a notebook. On the cover, in curly handwriting she recognized as her mum's, were the words *The Treasure of the Penfurzy Knights*. She was vaguely aware of Captain Honkers flapping and honking outside as she began to flick through it. It was filled with notes, little maps, and sketches of an amulet, a staff, and even Penfurzy Castle!



Her heart leapt.

'Nessa, look at this,' she said, thrusting the book under her nose. 'Mum must have been looking for the treasure!'

They were interrupted by Captain Honkers sticking his head into the shack.

'HONNNK!'

'Whoa, chill out, little dude,' said

Nessa, shuffling back against the wall as the goose hissed and honked at them.

‘He’s trying to tell us something,’ said Demelza. ‘What’s up, boy?’ She squeezed out of the shack in time to see him stretch out his neck and race off across the golf course, wings raised.

‘What is it, Captain?’ yelled Demelza. She turned to Nessa. ‘Come on. Someone must be in trouble!’

She raced after Captain Honkers. He was heading towards a rumbling noise which was growing louder and louder. She finally caught up with the goose when he stopped to hiss and shake his wings angrily at the bushes between the golf course and the caravan park.

‘Whazzit?’ Nessa panted as she stopped next to them.

‘Something . . . BIG,’ said Demelza.

The rumble became a roar. Demelza and Nessa grabbed at each other as the hedge began to shake. Suddenly, with a great tearing sound, like the splitting of the world’s biggest pair of trousers, the bushes were ripped from the ground by giant metal jaws, sending mud, stones and leaves showering down over girls and goose.

‘MONNNNSTER!’ yelled Demelza.

'HONNNK!' honked Captain Honkers.

'RUUUUUUN!' shouted Nessa.

And they ran.

