

CHAPTER FOUR: Gathering Friends

Fenton sat at his desk facing the window. Crosswords completely filled in with ink, logic games and Rubik's cube-type puzzles littered the desktop. Smiling, he rapidly filled in answers to a complicated puzzle. He finished it, dropped his pen and muttered, "Too easy. I need something that will totally blow my mind."

A tap on his window snapped his head up. Sam stood outside the window with his finger to his lips.

"Sam, what are you doing?" whispered Fenton as he reached over his desk and slid open the window.

"I need your help."

"Is it your dad?"

Sam stole a glance behind him. "Yeah, kind of," he replied.

"What do you need?" Fenton asked.

"I need you and Alex to come with me. And we might be gone for," he looked over his shoulder, "a while?" He turned back to Fenton who looked at him with concern. "Yeah. Probably a few days."

"Are you ok?" Fenton asked. "Do you want me to get my parents?"

"Yes. And no. I can help my dad. There's someone who knows what's wrong with him. I'm going with him and I need you and Alex to come also." He hesitated, "And we can't tell anyone."

Fenton eyes widened. "You know how creepy that sounds? You can't just take off with some strange guy who says he can help your dad."

“It’s a little more complicated than that.” Sam moved to one side and Glip took a step forward. “Hello, Master Fenton. How have you been?”

Fenton pushed his chair back and stood up. He leaned across his desk and looked at Glip, then at Sam, then back to Glip. His eyes narrowed for a moment, then widened as he spoke each word. “That’s. Not. A costume. Is it?” He froze. “Wait a second! How’d you know my name?” He glanced to Sam. “Did you tell him?” Sam shook his head. Fenton’s face broke into a huge smile. “You know my name!” He stood up straight. “I’m in!” he exclaimed. “Be right back.” He turned toward the door, “Hey, Alex! Where are you?”

Fenton ran back into his room with Alexis right behind him.

“Sam, what’s going on?” asked Alexis hurriedly.

“Hey, where’d he go?” Fenton cried out. He stuck his head out the window and looked around, but Glip had vanished.

“Fenton, calm down,” said Sam. “We don’t need your parents busting in here right now.” He turned to Alexis, “Alex, I need your help. My dad is dying and the doctors don’t know what’s wrong. I think I can save him, but I need you and Fenton to come with me. Will you help, me? Please.”

Alexis placed her hands on her hips, “Of course I’ll help you.”

“Please don’t freak out, ok?” he asked. She nodded as Sam looked to his left, “Then let me introduce Glip.” Glip stepped from the bushes and looked up at Fenton and Alexis.

“Hello, Mistress Alexis,” said the little creature.

Alexis started to scream, but Fenton clamped a hand over her mouth. “Quiet!” he hissed in her ear. “You said you wouldn’t freak out. If Mom and Dad hear you scream, they’ll come

running in here and we won't get to go. Sam's dad needs our help and this little guy knows a way to heal him. Now, are you going to go with us, or are you going to scream?"

Alexis mumbled against his hand and shook her head.

"Why were you shaking your head?" Fenton asked. "Are you saying you won't go, or that you won't scream?"

Alexis wiggled her head again and Fenton yelped as he yanked his hand away. "Yuck! You licked my hand! That's disgusting."

"Disgusting for who? I'm the one who did the licking." Alexis looked out at Sam, her body slightly shaking. She pointed at Glip. "Sam, what is that? And where did it come from?"

Sam started to answer, but Glip cut him off. "As Master Sam said, my name is Glip. I am a Grink," he said soothingly. "And I am from the land of Decapolis."

"Fenton saw that Alexis had stopped shaking and he hoped she was getting as excited as he was. But then her hands went back to her hips. "Where's Decapolis?"

"It's in another world," said Glip. All three kids opened their mouths to ask questions, but Glip raised his hand to stop them before they spoke. "Questions will be answered in time. Now, you will need jackets and you will need to hurry," said Glip.

Fenton grabbed a jacket from the floor and pushed past Alexis to climb out the window. He landed on the ground and turned around to face Alexis. "Come on,"

She hesitated. "Guys, are you sure we should be doing this? Our parents are going to be worried when we aren't here in the morning."

Sam looked at her. "Your dad told me to do whatever it took to help my dad."

She tipped her head to one side. "Do you really think he meant for us to follow some little creature to another..." she paused "...some other *world*?"

Sam shrugged, "Maybe."

"We cannot waste any more time," said Glip. "Please, Mistress Alexis. We must get to the portal."

"Portal?!" said Fenton. "This just keeps getting cooler. "Where is it?"

Glip motioned toward Sam without taking his eyes from Alexis. "His father's barn, of course." Fenton could see something change in Alexis. It wasn't excitement like he felt. It looked more like resignation. But at least she climbed out the window.