**The Dreamland Sagas**

*Book Three: The Islands of Dreamland*



# BY DOUGLAS SCHWARTZ

**Edited by Bryony van der Merwe**

**Copyright © 2024 by Douglas Schwartz**

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced by any means, graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, or by any information storage retrieval system, without the written permission of the publisher except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.

*This book is dedicated to David Hobbs (Uncle Dave in the book), who passed away from cancer shortly after this book was completed. His friends and family miss him.*

# About The Islands of Dreamland

*The Islands of Dreamland* is a collection of short stories aimed at two overlapping audiences; children ages 3-7, to be read as bedtime stories, and early readers aged 5-9 who are ready to explore imaginative adventures on their own.

This book contains 20 short stories, each aimed at sparking the audience's imagination and designed to be read in ten to twenty minutes. Woven into the stories are examples of positive behavior and character that will reinforce children's honesty and respect for others. There are no witches, dangerous animals, monsters, or other characters which could cause nightmares in young children.

Hopefully, the Dreamland Sagas can become a part of your child’s bedtime routine and encourage them to fall asleep quickly so they can join their friends in Dreamland.

Other books in this series include *The Dreamland Sagas* (Book 1) and

*The Sagas Continue* (Book 2).

# Table of Contents

Chapter One: Bidding Farewell to the Cousins 2

Chapter Two: Wilderness Village 10

Chapter Three: Puffin Village 20

Chapter Four: Sanderling Island 31



1

C H AP TE R ONE

# Bidding Farewell to the Cousins



itus, Constance, and Evie loaded their gold-filled buckets onto the mule they had bought from a passing prospector. The few dreams they had spent with their cousins, Abigail, Joel, and Bethany, had been quite exciting. They’d had some fantastic adventures and

T

ended up prospecting for gold.

The group spent their last night together near the large tree where they discovered the gold. Finding the tree had been exciting—they had followed a treasure map Joel had found. With the help of Timothy, the bridge troll, they had filled thirteen buckets with little gold nuggets.

In the morning, Titus, Constance, and Evie bid farewell to their cousins, their dream starter dwarf hamster friends, and Timothy. Then, with their dream starter mice friends, Harper, Remy, and Millie, they led the mule north with the gold-filled buckets covered with an old canvas tarp.

“How far are we headed?” asked the mule.

It took a few seconds for Titus to remember that animals can talk in Dreamland. “To Wilderness Village,” he responded. “We’ll spend the night there, buy a 1901 Mercedes auto car, and head to Puffin Village.”

“What about me?” asked the mule.

“What would you like to do when we get to Wilderness Village?” asked Constance.

“Well, riding in the Mercedes is probably not an option, so I’ll head off to Unicorn Castle to visit some of my relatives,” said the mule.

“Are you related to any of the unicorns?” asked Evie.

“Oh no,” the mule said, trying not to laugh. “My uncle and his family run the stables at the castle.”

They all made their way up the dirt road towards the Solo River Bridge.

While walking, Remy introduced the group to the mule.

“Well, if we are getting to know each other, my name is Murray, but as we are friends now, you can call me Ray,” said the mule, smiling.

After walking for what seemed like hours, Titus saw the Solo Bridge up the road.

“Can you see the bobcats?” asked Evie, looking around.

The kids were trying to avoid the bobcats. A few dreams ago, when they first crossed the Solo River bridge, they had given them a fake treasure map instead of paying the twelve-dollar toll.

Titus suggested they disguise themselves in case the bobcats were at the toll booth. Everyone agreed, so they stopped to think of ideas.

“Mustaches!” suggested Evie.

“Great idea,” agreed Constance. “Ray, can I cut off a small length of your tail to make mustaches?”

“No worries,” Ray happily agreed.

Soon, everyone, including Harper, Remy, and Millie, wore fake mustaches. Even Ray had one on, just in case.

As they approached the bridge, they saw the bobcats ahead, stopping travelers to make them pay a toll.

“Ray, do you have any Dreamland money?” asked Titus. “What’s a mule need money for?” Ray laughed.

“Why don’t we give them a gold nugget?” Evie suggested.

“We could, but it would draw attention to us,” Titus explained. But unable to think of another option, he picked out the smallest nugget he could find and put it in his pocket.

When it was their turn to cross the bridge, one of the bobcats stopped the group and demanded twelve dollars.

“Hey, you look kinda familiar,” said a bobcat. “A couple of days ago, a group of Real-worlders gave us a fake treasure map instead of paying the toll.”

The bobcat frowned at the kids.

Titus spoke in his deepest voice. “We are just old prospectors heading home. Here is a nugget of gold to pay the toll.” The fake mustache tickled his nose, and it took all his willpower not to sneeze.

Ray was also about to sneeze, but Millie pulled his tail hard to distract him.

Two more bobcats started heading towards the group. Realizing that things were not going well, Titus tossed the gold nugget toward them.

All three bobcats leaped for the nugget and began fighting each other to get it. While they were distracted, the group rushed across the bridge into Mining Camp village.

Mining Camp was nothing more than a few wooden stores surrounded by numerous clusters of tents where prospectors lived. As it was mid- morning, most prospectors were out searching for gold, and the few shopkeepers were cleaning and stocking their stores.

Titus and the group stopped before the only stable in town—Smithy’s Stable and Black Smith.

“I’ll go in,” suggested Titus.

It was darker than he expected inside, and Titus bumped into something as he walked through.

“Oy! Can I help you?” asked the old mole Titus had almost trodden on. In the dim light, Titus saw the mole squinting up at him through dirty spectacles. He wore an old brown leather apron and a short black top hat.

“Sorry, I didn’t see you there,” he exclaimed. “I’m looking for a small wagon to carry me and my friends to Wilderness Village.”

“Well, you are in luck, young Real-worlder. I have too many wagons, so I can let you have one for a low price,” declared the mole in a rather high-pitched voice. “My name is Smithy.”

Titus introduced himself, then walked around and looked at the wagons. He couldn’t decide, so he asked Ray for help.

When he got outside to get Ray, Titus saw shopkeepers and old prospectors surrounding the group. He brought everyone into the stables and closed the doors.

Ray looked over the wagons and smelt all the wheels before selecting a bright green and red buck wagon with two rows of seats.

“This is the one,” Ray declared.

“Why?” asked Remy, Constance’s Dreamland mouse, who had been watching Ray with interest.

“Its wheels and axles have just been greased. That’s why I sniffed the wheels,” Ray explained.

“Many new wagons had wheel bearings. However, the older wagon that I selected still had wheels attached to wooden axles, which would have to be greased every 40 miles to prevent overheating due to friction and breaking,” Ray explained.

“How much for this wagon?” asked Titus.

Smithy looked at Titus, glanced at the group, looked at Ray with all the bundles on his back, and rubbed his chin for a long time.

Then he removed his hat and said, “If you fill my hat with gold nuggets, the wagon is yours.”

A hat filled with gold nuggets might seem like a lot of money for a wagon. However, Smithy’s head was small and pointed, so his hat was small too.

Before they entered the town, Titus had put a few nuggets in his pocket to avoid drawing too much attention to themselves. He shifted through his pocket to find a nugget small enough to fit in the hat. Smithy quickly put the nugget away and offered Titus seat cushions, a tarp to cover their belongings, and a new leather harness.

While Titus was preparing the wagon for travel, Constance and Remy, loaded with a few gold nuggets, made their way to the general store to get some supplies.

The store was not much more than four wooden walls, with a dirty white canvas roof and a dirt floor. It was filled with barrels of different types of food and prospecting equipment.

A rather rotund couple of hedgehogs dressed in white aprons came out of the store’s back room. The man hedgehog was carrying a broom, and the lady hedgehog had a freshly baked blueberry pie in her gloved hands.

At first, the couple did not notice them.

“No, you didn’t sweep the store this morning,” scolded the lady, “and if you don’t do it now, I won’t make your lunch.”

As the man was about to protest again, he saw Constance and Remy. “Darling, we have customers,” he said.

She quickly placed the pie on display next to the other baked goods, fixed her spikes, and straightened her apron. Then she shuffled around the counter and greeted Constance. She rarely had customers who were not prospectors, much less Real-worlders with Dreamland friends.

“Welcome, my darling. How can I help you?” Mrs. Darling referred to everyone as ‘my darling’. Her real name was Berl, but no one ever called her that, and most Dreamlanders didn’t even know her real name.

After shaking her hand for about a minute, Constance was able to pull away from Mrs. Darling and point to the baked goods. “We are six travelers heading to Wilderness Village. Can I please buy three of your blueberry pies and three vegetable pasties?”

Remy whispered in Constance’s ear, “We should also get a treat for Ray.”

She also asked for a bunch of carrots, which were lying behind the counter.

After wrapping the pies and pasties in butcher paper and placing everything in a burlap bag, Mrs. Darling said it would cost three dollars, which Remy paid in Dreamland money.

As they were leaving, Mrs. Darling came over with a glass bottle of fresh milk and gave it to Constance. Once again, she took hold of her hand and shook it for almost a minute.

“We don’t get many visitors from the real-world,” she said, reluctantly letting her go.

The wagon was waiting in front of the stable. Titus, Harper (Titus’ Dreamland mouse), and Evie were sitting up front. Millie (Evie’s Dreamland mouse) sat in the back. All the gold was packed and covered with the tarp.

Constance and Remy carefully placed the baked goods and carrots in the wagon and climbed up next to Millie. And then they were off!

The bumping of the wagon wheels and the clicking of Ray’s hooves was a different experience from the bus. Evie loved the feeling of the wind in her hair.

After a while, they reached Cooper’s Gasoline and General Store, which was a tiny white wooden building with a large overhang and one small red gas pump.

Evie reminded everyone, “This is where Abigail, Joel, and Bethany joined us on our journey to Gold Country.”

“I wonder what they are doing now,” said Constance. “They are a couple of hours ahead of us in the real-world, so they are probably awake and in school.”

“Really?” asked Evie.

Constance reminded Evie that they lived in Idaho in 1901, and their cousins lived in Florida in 2022.

Titus pulled up under a large oak tree at Cooper’s Gasoline and General Store and got off the wagon to stretch his legs. As they prepared the pies and pasties for lunch, Cooper, the old brown dog who owned the station, barked, “ This tree is for paying customers only!”

Evie and Millie volunteered to buy something in the store while the others set up lunch. Although the gas station was tiny, it had an excellent candy selection. There were piles of different taffy wrapped in wax paper, multi-colored candy canes, large gumballs, and a large selection of rock candy in rainbow colors.

Unable to decide, Evie placed a handful of each in a large paper bag. Cooper weighed the bag and said it would be two bits, which was fifty cents.

After putting the money into the brass cash register Millie handed him, Cooper followed them back to the oak tree.

He frowned. “Hey, I remember you guys. You filled up a big red Mack Bus with gas. If you’re stuck with a wagon and an old mule, I guess you didn’t find any gold and had to sell the bus.”

Ray was about to kick Cooper in the rear end when Constance grabbed his reins and shook her head.

Titus was about to explain about the bus and the gold, when Harper interrupted. “Well, it was something like that. We are returning to Wilderness Village and then to Willets and Puffin Village.”

Cooper said, “I’ve seen many would-be prospectors come and go, and only a few find gold. The rest come back with almost nothing to show for their efforts.”

Constance quickly asked, “How long will it take to get to Wilderness Village?”

Pulling on his whiskers, Cooper said. “Well, it really depends on the weasels.”

“Weasels?” asked Titus. “What do weasels have to do with traveling time?”

“The weasels have set up a base camp at the west side of the Racoon Mountain Range. They rob prospectors making their way to Wilderness Village. But they won't delay you long since you have nothing to steal.”

Just then, an old AutoCar truck pulled into the gas station, and Cooper wished them luck and headed off to help the customer.

Constance and Remy packed up while Evie handed out some candy. Suddenly, she vanished, and the bag fell to the ground.

“It looks like we are waking up in the real-world,” Constance said, and then she, too, disappeared.

Titus had just enough time to tell Harper, Remy, and Millie that they would join them on the road to Wilderness Village before he disappeared as well.

C H AP TE R TWO

# Wilderness Village



itus and Evie were still in bed, trying to prepare for another day of homeschooling and farm chores. Constance was already at her

T

desk, writing in her dream journal.

“Time for breakfast,” called their mother, Kristal Drapkin.

Jack, their father, had already left to work at Mr. McGraw’s Toy Store in Boise, Idaho.

As the kids sat down for breakfast, Kristal asked how they had slept.

“I slept on my right side most of the night, but a couple of times, I switched to my left side,” Titus said, being somewhat of a wise guy.

“Hilarious,” said Constance, who was more mature even though she was younger. As her mother placed buckwheat pancakes on her plate, Constance pulled out her dream journal and told her mom about last night’s adventures.

When the kids first received their Dreamland animals, which allowed them to go on adventures in the kid’s part of Dreamland, Kristal was quite skeptical about their ‘adventures’. But when Jack told her about his time in Dreamland as a child, she accepted that the kids had vivid dreams and humored them as they reenacted their night’s adventures.

After breakfast, the kids did their chores before starting homeschool. Evie and Constance helped clear the table and do the dishes, and Titus fed the animals in the barn. It was fall in Idaho and very cold outside, so Titus wore his heavy coat and gloves. As his last chore, he had to bring in an armful of wood for the stove and fireplace.

The children then made their beds, cleaned their rooms, and brought their schoolwork to the kitchen table. The kitchen was the warmest room in the house due to the large black-iron wood-burning stove. Titus couldn’t wait for their parents to get an electric stove like some of his neighbors had—which would mean no more firewood to bring in!

After math, spelling, and history, the kids had time to read their favorite books. Constance was reading *The Secret Garden*, and Titus was halfway through *Robinson Crusoe*. Evie was starting to read the words under the illustrations in her new picture book.

Afterward, the kids played in the snow, built a snowman, sledded, and had several snowball fights. Finally, when they were cold and tired, they returned to the house as their mother made dinner.

“Can we help?” they asked.

“Constance, can you set the table?” Kristal said. “Titus, can you get more firewood? Evie, please help me make the biscuits.”

Just as everything was ready, Jack came in the door. He hung his coat and hat on the hook and hugged Kristal. “Smells great,” said Jack. “What’s for dinner?”

Constance announced they were having roast chicken, mashed potatoes, sweet peas with carrots, biscuits, and blueberry pie.

After grace, Kristal asked Jack how his day had been. “Well, I am happy to announce that Harper, Remy, and Millie—the stuffed mice you and I made—are now the biggest-selling stuffed animals in the store. If sales keep up, Mr. McGraw promised me a raise and a bonus at Christmas.”

Titus remembered the lovely pie they had eaten in Dreamland. He told his dad about last night's adventure, and Constance fetched her dream journal for more details.

After dinner, chores were done, and the children got ready for bed. Jack reached for *Robin Hood* and read two chapters with the kids

gathered around him. Then he tucked each of them in bed and kissed them goodnight.

Titus quietly got out of bed and went into the girls’ rooms to remind them to wear their Western clothes for tonight’s dream and that they would meet between Cooper’s Gasoline Station and Wilderness Village.

Harper, Remy, and Millie had just reached the summit of Racoon Mountain when Titus popped into the front seat. He almost knocked Remy and Millie out of the wagon.

“Sorry,” he said. “I should have looked before I arrived!”

Remy and Millie moved to the back just as Constance and Evie appeared. Constance landed perfectly on the second-row seat, but little Evie landed on the back of the wagon with her feet up in the air.

Titus asked, “ Harper, did anything exciting happen while we were gone?”

“You didn’t miss a thing,” Harper said.

“We are about an hour from Wilderness Village,” Ray added.

As they were catching up, a red apple was suddenly dangling right in front of Ray’s eyes.

“Yum!” said Ray, and without another thought, he raced after the apple. Ray led the wagon off the road, and suddenly, they were surrounded by a pack of weasels.

The apple stopped moving, and as Ray ate it, a small brown and white weasel jumped on his back and stared at Harper.

“Where are you all going?” asked the weasel.

“To Wilderness Village in this broken-down wagon with this broken- down mule,” Harper said.

Ray got really mad. He did not like being called a broken-down mule. He kicked his rear legs in the air, which knocked the weasel onto Titus’s lap.

The weasel brushed off his fur and stood on the front of the wagon, out of the reach of Ray’s hind legs.

If you have ever seen a cross weasel, you will know it is not a pretty sight.

“I demand payment from you! Your mule is very rude,” the weasel announced. “What is under that tarp?”

“Buckets of gold,” announced Titus.

All the weasels burst out laughing. Constance reached under the tarp, grabbed the bag of candy, and said, “This is under the tarp.

“I knew you didn’t have gold,” the weasel said, grabbing the bag and running off into the woods with the other weasels, all trying to get their share of the candy.

Ray spat out the rest of the apple, turned back to the road, and trotted off quickly.

“That was close,” said Evie.

“Grabbing the bag of candy was brilliant,” Remy said.

“Yes,” agreed Titus. “I thought we were in real trouble for a minute.”

It was noon when they pulled into Wilderness Village. They passed the clock tower, where they had met their cousins less than a week ago.

Titus stopped the wagon in front of the automobile dealership, filled his pockets with large gold nuggets, and went to buy a new automobile.

Within minutes, he drove out in a new 1901 Mercedes with two rows of seats and a large trunk. Harper followed Titus around the back of the building, took the gold buckets from under the tarp, and placed them in the trunk of the Mercedes.

Then, the group went to the stable, where Ray drank water at the wooden trough.

“Can I help you? My name is Theodore, and I own this stable,” said a bear, who looked like one of Evie’s stuffed animals at home and was wearing a black leather apron.

“We would like to sell our wagon,” said Remy. “What about the mule?” asked Theodore.

“No, just the wagon,” Constance said.

“Well, a wagon is not worth much without a horse or mule,” Theodore said. He walked around the wagon and checked the wheels, axles, and harnesses, looking very disappointed. “The best I can offer is five dollars.”

Although he knew the offer was too low, Titus accepted it anyway. They had plenty of money in the Mercedes' trunk.

After Theodore had paid him, Titus gave the money to Millie to pay for the candy she bought for the journey.

The group hugged Ray goodbye and thanked him for all his help. “Good luck with your journey to Unicorn Castle,” said Constance.

Titus pulled up in front of a small wooden building with a sign that read ‘Agatha’s Dinnete and General Store’.

“Let's stop for lunch and supplies before we head to Willets,” he suggested.

The streets were quiet. However, the store was packed with diners and shoppers. A group of prospectors had just finished their meal and were heading out the door. Millie quickly raced to their table and sat down. Once everyone had joined her, a small guinea pig in a white apron came over, cleared the table, and handed out menus.

The guinea pig introduced herself as Helen.

“So what do you have left from the menu?” asked Titus.

“Beef stew and cornbread,” Helen said. “What else do you have?” asked Remy. “Cornbread and beef stew,” smiled Helen.

Titus ordered beef stew and cornbread for everyone while Constance and Remy went into the general store to get supplies. Titus spread a map of Dreamland out on the table and started planning the trip to Willets and Puffin Village.

“We should be able to get to Willets before nightfall,” Titus said, pointing at the map.

Helen returned with six bowls of beef stew and a basket of cornbread. She placed a bowl in front of everyone and spilled a bit of stew onto the map.

“Sorry, dears,” Helen said as she wiped it clean with her apron.

Constance and Remy returned with a bag of supplies and tried the stew. Although it was a bit hot, everyone admitted this was the best they had ever had. Large chunks of beef, carrots, and potatoes, floated in a rich broth. The cornbread was warm from the oven and covered with freshly churned butter.

After lunch, they climbed into the Mercedes. Harper cranked the engine, and all 35 horsepower sprang to life. Titus removed the handbrake and put the car in gear, and off they went.

Wagon trains aplenty were arriving in the village. Now and then, the engine would backfire, spooking horses. As automobiles or ‘horseless carriages,’ as some of the village folks referred to them, were rare in Wilderness Village, the bright red Mercedes drew a crowd along the road.

The road turned southwest as they left town. “What’s that ahead?” asked Constance, squinting.

“It looks like a boulder in the road,” said Titus, slowing down. Then he and Remy jumped out to see what they could do. Soon, they were surrounded by the same pack of weasels as before.

A weasel jumped up on the front of the Mercedes and demanded all their money.

A smaller weasel hanging in a tree above them shouted, “Hey Ronnie, these are the same Real-worlders we stopped earlier. They were in an old broken-down wagon pulled by the broken-down mule.”

Ronnie looked the group over and exclaimed, “Why, you little rascals! You had more than candy under that tarp, didn’t you?”

A tall, thin weasel ran to the back of the automobile and opened the trunk. “Ronnie, come here; you need to see this.”

Ronnie jumped down, ran around, and almost fell over when he saw all of the buckets of gold.

“Well, well,” Ronnie said. “Looks like you were holding out on us. That was not very nice.”

Within seconds, over 20 weasels appeared and, working together, unloaded all the buckets. They moved the boulder off the road and told Titus he was free to go.

Rather than try and fight, Titus asked, “How about leaving us one bucket?”

All the weasels laughed while Ronnie tossed Titus a large nugget and told him to be off before he took the automobile, too.

“Why did you let them have all of the gold?” Constance asked as they drove out of the forest.

“Too many weasels to fight,” Titus said. “We can stop at Sherrif Tanner’s office in Willets and report the theft.”

“Aren’t you upset about losing the gold?” Remy shouted over the noise from the engine.

“Not really,” said Titus. “We can always find treasure in future dreams. Finding it is almost as much fun as spending it!”

Soon, the group was driving along the coast with the Shearwater Ocean to their right and the forest to their left.

It was late in the afternoon when they arrived in Willets, which was an old cowboy town. The Sherrif’s office was a weathered wooden building. Inside was a desk and two jail cells.

As Titus parked, Sheriff Tanner came out, brushing the fur on top of his head and carefully placing his cowboy hat on his head to shade his eyes from the sun.

He was a tall old squirrel who wore a brown vest with a silver star. The group had met him before when they first visited Willets. He had also been their father's childhood Dreamland animal friend.

Sheriff Tanner looked over the Mercedes and noticed Titus and Harper in the front seat. He glanced at the back and saw Constance, Evie, Remy, and Millie.

“Glad to see you all,” said Sheriff Tanner. “What brings you back to Willets?”

“Our new Mercedes,” Titus said, trying to be funny. “I noticed,” the Sheriff stated.

Titus told the Sheriff about prospecting for gold, buying the automobile, and being robbed by the pack of weasels.

“I hope you aren’t too attached to the gold,” Sheriff Tanner said. “That pack has been robbing Real-worlders for some time, and we just can’t catch them.”

Constance asked, "What will we do now?”

“We can go on another treasure hunt and find more gold,” Titus suggested.

As they talked, Grandma K came out of the general store with her arms loaded with goods wrapped in butcher paper.

“Hi, Grandma K!” Evie shouted.

Grandma K looked up at the group and almost tripped over the uneven boards in front of the store. Everyone jumped out to help her.

“My, my, what are you doing back so soon?” she asked in surprise.

“Why don’t we load your supplies in our trunk and give you a ride to your place? We can fill you in on our adventures,” Titus offered.

With help from Sheriff Tanner and Titus, they were able to get Grandma K into the back seat. They waved goodbye to Sheriff Tanner and drove to her house.

“My, my, I have never been in a horseless carriage before,” Grandma K shouted over the noise.

Between the noise, the smoke, and the rough ride, Grandma K thought she wouldn't be sorry if she never rode in another horseless carriage.

Constance and Evie told Grandma K about all their latest adventures in Dreamland. Grandma K told Constance and Evie everything that had happened in Willets while they were gone.

“Gosh,” thought Evie. “How boring! It sounds like we haven’t missed much.”

Everyone helped carry in the supplies. Then Grandma K poured some milk and brought out a plate of her famous chocolate chip cookies.

Sitting around the table, Constance remembered Grandma K’s stories about her dad when he was young, as well as the story of George Washington.

“Where are you heading next?” asked Grandma K. Titus tried to talk, but his mouth was full of cookies.

Harper answered instead, “We are heading home to Puffin Village.”

Stuffed with milk and cookies, the group said goodbye and returned to the car.

“Have a safe trip,” Grandma K waved. “Come back soon. And say hello to your father for me.”

Suddenly, Evie disappeared. Titus realized what was happening and quickly switched places with Harper.

“We’ll meet at the bridge north of Puffin Village,” he managed before disappearing.

Constance wrote in her dream journal, made her bed, and they all went into the kitchen to help their mother with breakfast.

C H AP TE R TH REE

# Puffin Village



onstance read her parents the stories of some of their latest adventures at dinner. She explained Grandma K told them that Mayor Bushytail had traveled to Puffin Village to meet with Mayor Downing to discuss the annual Puffin Village and Willets Picnic at the base of Mount Pleasant. After the *squirrel incident* a while ago, the two

C

villages had decided to hold an annual picnic.

The day flew past, and soon, the kids were ready for bed. They couldn’t wait to return to Dreamland.

Evie climbed into her bed and looked around. Millie, her Dreamland mouse, was missing! She looked under her covers, under the bed. Millie was gone!

In a panic, Evie raced to Constance’s room. “Have you seen Millie?” she asked breathlessly.

“I haven’t,” yawned Constance, almost asleep. “Try the living room.”

Titus and Constance arrived in Dreamland and saw Harper, Remy, and Millie having a picnic at the Avia River bridge.

“Glad you made it back,” said Millie. “Where’s Evie?”

“She’ll be here as soon as she finds you,” said Constance. Real-worlders couldn’t travel to Dreamland without their animals.

Titus thought it was an excellent time to help the mice eat their picnic. Just as he had loaded his plate full of fried chicken, mashed potatoes, corn on the cob, and warm biscuits with melted butter, Evie appeared.

She almost fell into the river, but Millie grabbed her blue and white dress just in time and pulled her back onto the bank.

“How was your day in the real-world?” Remy wanted to know.

“It’s freezing in Idaho. Snow everywhere. So we stayed indoors, did school work, and read,” Constance replied.

“How far are we from Puffin Village?” Titus asked.

“Not far, but we have to cross two rivers. This one has a bridge, but the next one has a flatboat, which we must take to get across,” Harper explained.

As they ate, a troll came out from under the bridge.

“Why are you having a picnic without inviting me?” he yelled.

As the troll came closer, Constance asked if he knew Timothy, their bridge troll friend.

The troll stopped, twirled the hair on the top of his head a couple of times clockwise, then twisted it counterclockwise, which seemed to help him think.

“Why yes, I do know Timothy,” the troll growled in a low troll voice. “He left to prospect for gold awhile back.”

“Please join us,” said Evie, dishing up a plate of food for him.

He smiled and sat down with the group. Although trolls, for the most part, are not pleasant to look at, this troll was relatively small and was not too scary.

With his mouth full of fried chicken bones, the troll said, “My name is Thomas, and I am six years old.”

Evie thought Thomas looked young for a troll. “Where are your parents?” she asked.

Thomas laughed, and a chicken bone fell out of his mouth! He apologized, finished his mouthful, and told Evie that trolls do not live

with their parents. Once a troll is born, the parents find a bridge, leave the newborn troll under it, and move to another bridge.

“Aren’t you lonely?” asked Constance.

“Not at all,” said Thomas, just as he put an ear of corn on the cob in his mouth, cob and all! After he’d eaten it, he told the group that he had fun scaring everyone who crossed his bridge.

“I would have scared your group, but I could smell the food, so I thought if I was nice, you would share with me.”

Titus stood up. “We need to get going. Would you like the leftovers?” Thomas delightedly accepted and wished them a safe journey.

“There are no more bridges between here and Puffin Village, so you won’t run into any more trolls,” he said.

Harper cranked up the Mercedes, and they drove across the bridge. The road to Puffin Village passed through the most beautiful places the children had ever seen.

On the left were emerald-green fields full of colorful flowers and trees. On the right was Shearwater Ocean. The sky was light blue, with white puffy clouds as far as they could see.

Suddenly, the automobile could go no further!

A wooden gate blocked their way. In front of it stood two rather tall otters. The tallest walked around the automobile, counting out loud.

“Let’s see. Three Dreamlanders and three Real-worlders…it will cost nine dollars for the Real-worlder to use our ferry, and no charge for the Dreamlanders,” he said.

Titus only had one gold nugget left.

“Harper, do you have any Dreamland money?” Titus asked. Harper reached into his knapsack and pulled out a nine-dollar bill.

“I have never seen a nine-dollar bill before,” said Titus, looking at it in wonder before he handed it over.

The shorter otter lifted the gate, and the automobile drove onto the ferry. The ferry rocked slightly, and Evie held Millie tightly.

As soon as they were aboard, the shorter otter announced, “ Keep your arms and legs inside the vehicle. There are nasty river eels in the water.”

Using a rope tied to a tree across the river, six otters pulled the ferry to the other side. It felt strange to be sitting in a car and gliding across the water. Titus looked into the river as they traveled. The water was so clear he could see all the way to the bottom.

“Aren’t you worried about the nasty river eels?” Constance asked one of the otters who was pulling them across.

Remy giggled. “There are no eels. He says that to everyone to scare them.”

They soon reached the shore and drove off the ferry. The children thanked the otters, who waved goodbye.

Soon, the group was driving again. It wasn’t long before they could see Puffin Village ahead. It seemed very quiet.

“Where is everyone?” Evie asked, looking around.

“Probably in the village center, listening to Mayor Downing’s daily speech,” said Millie. Evie remembered how much the mayor liked to talk. She also recalled the giant cake Mrs. Wilson had baked.

Titus parked the Mercedes, and the group followed the sound of the crowd. Sure enough, Mayor Downing was on stage with Mayor Bushytail from Willets beside him.

Mayor Downing was a robust mouse with a round belly. He wore a black coat with tails and a gray vest with a silver watch chain, attached to a button, resting in his right-side vest pocket. He also had the longest set of whiskers Evie had ever seen.

Mayor Bushytail was a tall gray squirrel with a larger belly than Major Downing. He wore a black top hat and a black long-tailed jacket with a hole in the back for his large fluffy tail, which moved from side to side whenever he spoke.

“We plan to have an annual race and picnic at the foot of Mt. Pleasant. It starts exactly at 9:00 a.m. on the second Sunday of next month. Puffin and Willets villagers will race to the foot of the mountain. The first villager to arrive will be crowned the King or Queen of the picnic,” explained Mayor Downing.

“The picnic is called the ‘Annual Willets-Puffin Picnic’,” Mayor Bushytail said.

“Mayor Bushytail meant to say it is the ‘Annual Puffin-Willets Picnic’,” said Mayor Downing corrected.

As the two mayors began to argue, Mrs. Wilson climbed onto the stage, took the microphone away, and announced that the picnic name would change yearly, depending on which village won the race.

“Now, it’s time to have some cake,” she said.

The two mayors stopped arguing when they noticed the crowd lining up for cake. Titus, Constance, and Evie happened to be standing nearby, so they were the first to be served. They all went to a tall, shady tree, sat at a long picnic table, and started eating.

“Every time I see you, Titus, you are always eating,” Mayor Downing said as he and Mayor Bushytail sat down to join them, each with an extra large serving of cake.

As Titus tried to speak, a few colored sprinkles from the cake shot out of Titus’ mouth and landed in Mayor Downing's watch pocket. As Titus tried to retrieve it, he accidentally tickled the mayor, making him laugh. The next minute, sprinkles from Mayor Downing’s mouth were decorating Mayor Bushytail’s whiskers. He stood up, lifted Mayor Downing’s hat, placed a large piece of cake under it, and smashed it on his head.

Soon, everyone was spitting sprinkles and throwing cake until the crowd was covered. The two mayors stood up and apologized to Mrs. Wilson. Then the whole village, all laughing, helped to clean up the mess.

Afterward, the group headed to Harper, Remy, and Millie's house for dandelion tea.

A large white pelican with a blue vest and cap was waiting for them as they parked the Mercedes. The pelican dropped his bill, and when he opened it, a small Airedale terrier pup, also wearing a blue vest and cap, hopped out, walked up to Titus, and asked, “Are you Titus Drapkin from the land of Idaho?”

“Yes, I am,” answered Titus.

“I have an important message for you. Can someone vouch for him before I hand it over?” asked the terrier.

“I can belch for him,” Evie volunteered.

“You mean vouch for him,” Constance giggled.

“Yes, we all can vouch for him,” Harper, Remy, and Millie answered simultaneously.

The pup pulled a small white envelope from his vest and handed it to Titus. He noticed the pup staring at him and asked Harper to give the pup a tip.

The pup took the tip and still stood there staring at Titus.

“My name is Airdale, and this is my friend, Pete,” Airdale said, pointing at the pelican. “I was told not to leave without an answer.”

“Please come inside for some tea,” offered Remy. “Then Titus can read the letter in peace.”

Once Airdale and Pete had gone inside, Titus opened the note. “Who is it from?” asked Constance.

“It’s from Riley,” Titus said, then he read the message out loud:

*Dear Titus,*

*Have you heard the Legend of Mother Nature's long-lost jeweled crown? It is rumored that the crown was stolen from Pachamama Island and hidden on one of the other four Dreamland islands.*

*As planned, I bought a mansion in Coonhound with my share of the treasure, and one room was full of old books. After settling in, I dusted the books, and a map fell out. On it was a drawing of the Islands of Dreamland.*

*I think it’s a map showing the location of Mother Nature's long-lost jeweled crown!!*

*The writing on the map says the crown was stolen by the parrot pirates and hidden near a banyan tree. The pirates must have lost this map because the crown was never recovered.*

*There is an excellent drawing of the banyan tree. But a part of the map has been torn off—I think the missing part shows the island where the crown was buried.*

*If you and your friends are up for another adventure, meet me in the Landmark Hotel lobby, where you dropped me off.*

*Also, please burn this note, as I know the mean dogs and the pirate parrots are also looking for the crown.*

*From Riley.*

“Sounds like a great adventure,” Constance said. “Yes, and I’d love to see Riley again,” Evie added.

Titus tore off a piece of paper and wrote a reply: *Sounds like fun. See you soon.*

He handed this to Airedale, who thanked the group, hopped into Pete’s bill and flew off.

When they had gone, Titus read the note to Evie, Harper, Remy, and Millie, and everyone agreed that this could be a great adventure.

“We need to burn this letter,” said Constance.

“We can throw it into the wood stove,” suggested Millie, leading the way.

Once the letter was destroyed, Titus asked Harper where their ship was. “It is still in Puffin Harbor,” Harper explained.

“How long will it take to get it ready to sail?” Titus asked. “Probably the rest of this dream,” Harper responded.

By now, Harper knew roughly how long the kids slept and knew they would soon wake up again.

“What are we waiting for!” Evie exclaimed, leaping up.

Titus, Contance, and Evie made their way to Puffin Harbor while Millie washed up the teacups. Harper and Remy started loading supplies into the Mercedes.

Harper parked in the parking lot at the wharf and paid a short mouse parking attendant five dollars to look after the vehicle.

Soon, everything was shipshape, and all supplies were stored below. “Cast off the ropes and raise the sails,” shouted Harper.

While Evie and Millie climbed the crow's nest, Harper steered the ship out of the harbor. Constance, Titus, and Remy went below to chart their course.

The *USS Puffin* was a three-masted brig, larger than a schooner and almost as fast. With all the sails raised and the wind at their back, they were making great time.

Evie was using toy spy glasses to scan the horizon when she noticed a ship sailing their way off the port (left side) of the *USS Puffin*.

“Ship off the port bow,” Evie shouted to Harper.

“Ship off the port bow,” Harper shouted to the others, still charting their course.

Soon, everyone was on deck looking at the approaching ship.

“It looks like the Sanderling Cloud,” yelled Evie.

Titus spotted Captain Dane at the railing, looking at them through a spyglass.

“That’s the ship we met last time,” Constance said.

“Yes, they do a supply run weekly, so they are probably heading to Puffin Harbor,” Remy answered.

In no time, the two ships were tied together, and Captain Dane had swung over to the *USS Puffin* on a rope, just like pirates do. He was a large, light-brown Great Dane puppy wearing a captain’s hat, a brown leather vest, and a blue scarf.

“Nice to see you all again,” he said, shaking paws with everyone. “Where are you heading?”

“To Port Coonhound and then onto the Islands of Dreamland,” Titus explained.

“Woooo,” Dane whistled. “The Islands of Dreamland, you say. Have you been there before?” he asked, lifting his hat and furrowing his brows.

“Not yet, but we are always ready for a new adventure,” Constance responded.

Dane, Titus, and Remy went down to the Captain’s Quarters.

Captain Dane drew on the map. “Here we are,” he said, pointing at the ocean. “To the west is Sanderling Island. The Islands of Dreamland are way down here.”

Dane began labeling the names of all the islands and the straits between them. “The first island is the small Island of Koloa. Next, you will sail to Dragon Reef, Mermaid Key, Marcos Island, and finally, Pachamama Island, the largest in the chain,” he said. “Sailing around these islands will be challenging, and each island has its own dangers. Heck, even many Dreamlanders avoid them.”

“Have you ever been there?” Titus asked, feeling a bit worried.

“No, but my navigator Bill has been there several times,” Dane answered. “I can loan him to you for a few days.”

“That would be a great help,” Titus said.

“Let’s meet at Port Coonhound tomorrow when I return from Puffin Village,” Dane suggested.

“Why are you going to the islands?” Dane asked.

“To search for Queen Mother’s Nature crown,” Constance said. “Good luck with that,” Dane chuckled. “It's been missing for years.” “We have a friend in Coonhound that…” Constance started to say.

Titus cut her off. “Yes, we have a friend in Coonhound. We are heading there to see him.” He didn’t want to say anything about the secret map.

“What else can you tell us about the islands or the straits between them?”Constance asked.

Dane pulled out his pocket watch, opened the gold case, looked at the time, snapped the watch closed, and told them he needed to go.

As he was swinging back aboard his ship, he shouted that he would meet them at the wharf in Coonhound.

Constance felt herself waking up and soon disappeared. Titus had just enough time to ask Remy to meet them at the port before he, too, vanished.

When he returned home, Constance was writing in her journal, and Evie was still sleeping. Being a bit of a troublemaker, Titus sneaked up to Evie and started tickling her nose with a feather he found on her dresser.

Up in the crow's nest, Evie was speaking with Millie. Her nose started twitching, and she rubbed it hard, then started sneezing. On her third

sneeze, she disappeared and woke up. Titus was standing over her. He hid the feather behind his back and told Evie it was time for breakfast.

C H AP TE R F OU R

# Sanderling Island



onstance told her parents about their dream that evening at dinner. Titus mentioned that they had met with Major Bushytail

C

but left out that he had started the food fight by spitting sprinkles at Major Downing.

Jack chuckled at the memory of his friend Mayor Bushytail, who was Jack’s Dreamland animal when he was a kid. Back then, before he was a mayor, he was called Squirrely.

“Squirrely was such a troublemaker when he was young,” Jack said. “I remember the time we were heading over to Grandma K’s house for milk and chocolate chip cookies. It was almost Halloween, so Squirrely and I dressed in ghost costumes and sneaked to her kitchen window. Just as we were under the window sill, she opened the window and put out a freshly baked peach pie to cool down. She saw us, screamed, and tossed the pie at us before slamming the window shut.”

“What happened next?” Evie asked.

“We quickly hid the costumes, wiped our eyebrows, and licked our mouths clean. The peach pie was very good, by the way. Then we knocked on her door, acting like nothing happened,” he said. “Grandma K opened the door with her broom in her hand, ready to hit any ghosts. She was relieved to see us and told us about the ghosts. We looked out the window and told her nothing was out there. Grandma K gave us glasses of milk and apologized for not having any dessert as she’d thrown a peach pie at the ghosts.”

The kids laughed.

After baths and bedtime stories, they were ready for bed. Titus reminded his sisters they needed to wear suitable clothes for traveling on the *USS Puffin*.

Constance appeared on the deck in cutoff blue jeans over striped red and white leggings and black shoes with large silver buckles. She also wore a red blouse and blue denim vest. She had a puka shell necklace with a large shark tooth in the center around her neck and a red scarf.

Evie appeared next in the crow’s nest with almost the same outfit, but her blouse was blue, and her vest and jeans were red.

Titus arrived on the quarter deck, wearing a white striped shirt, a black captain’s hat with gold trimmings, a blue long-tailed captain’s jacket with white pants, and black boots.

“Hello!” Remy greeted.

Evie climbed down from the crow’s nest and told Constance she had seen a three-legged terrier hanging around the wharf entrance.

“The leader of the mean dogs who wanted our treasure?” Constance asked.

“Yes, I think so,” said Evie.

“I have a plan,” declared Titus. “Everyone go below and stay out of sight while Harper and I meet Riley in town.”

“Why you?” Constance asked.

“Because last time I wore a pirate outfit, and today I’m dressed as a captain. I don’t think he will recognize me,” Titus explained.

Titus and Harper approached the gate at the wharf. Titus turned his head away to keep the terrier from seeing his face. Soon, they were in Main Street.

Coonhound was a beautiful town filled with colorful two-story buildings with large porches wrapped around each house. In the center

of town was a large old church with two bell towers. To their right was the hotel where they were to meet Riley.

As they walked into the hotel, they saw the old English Springer Spaniel still standing behind the front desk, wearing the same black pin-striped suit as before.

A beautiful black grand piano was in the lobby under a crystal chandelier, and there were green velvet couches and a red wool carpet. At first, Riley, who was lounging on a couch, did not recognize Titus in his captain’s outfit.

As soon as Titus smiled, Riley instantly knew who he was. He jumped up and greeted the two of them. “Let’s go to my house where we can speak privately.”

He led them to a waiting horse and carriage, which took them through the northern part of town and up a windy road into the foothills, which overlooked Coonhound. They pulled up to a beautiful white mansion with large marble columns three stories high.

The brown and white beagle driver jumped down and opened the carriage door to let them out. At the door was a Boston terrier butler wearing a black tuxedo, black pants, and white gloves.

He opened the front door and said, “Nice to see you back, Master Riley. Did you enjoy your trip into town?”

“Yes, I did, thank you, Boston. Can you please bring some sweet tea to the library? After that, we do not want to be disturbed.”

“As you wish, Sir,” the butler responded.

Boston served iced cold sweet tea and shortbread biscuits, then left the room and closed the two large walnut doors.

“How was your trip?” asked Riley. “Where are the girls?”

“The trip was fine. We ran into Captain Dane, and he added the Islands of Dreamland to my map from memory,” Titus said.

“The rest of the group are below deck. Evie noticed the leader of the mean dogs loitering on the wharf, so I told them to stay out of sight,” Titus added.

Riley did not know that Boston was the cousin of the three-legged terrier and had been listening at the door. Boston quickly snuck out to tell his cousin that Titus and Harper were with Riley.

Riley unfolded his map. “We know the crown is near a banyan tree on one of the islands.”

Titus studied Riley’s map. “The tree here is ancient and tall,” he said, staring at it. “I think there’s some tiny lettering under it. Do you have a magnifying glass?”

Riley passed him one, and Titus could read the words: *There are banyan trees on each island, and the trees without the crown will have clues.*

“That is helpful,” he said. “At least we know we only need to look for banyan trees, and one will have a crown. Do you have a picture of the crown?”

There was a two-story high bookshelf in the room. Riley went over to the large wooden ladder at the bottom of it, slid it to the end of the row, and climbed up to the second level.

He searched for the book he wanted and then handed it to Titus.

Titus placed the old leather-bound book on the large oak table, and Riley flipped through the pages until he found a hand-colored illustration of the crown, which was gold with alternating large dew- drop pearls and bright red rubies.

“This is beautiful,” said Titus. “No wonder everyone is looking for it.”

There was a short history of the crown on the page, which Harper read aloud: *The crown, or Tree of Life Crown, was made by Fabbersay, the famous jeweler of Dreamland. It was made for Mother Nature, the Queen of Pachamama Island, and it brings gratefulness and happiness to the island*.

Riley explained, “Legend says that a pirate parrot stole the crown while Queen Mother Nature was at the annual harvest festival. Because the crown is missing, some inhabitants are no longer grateful and don’t appreciate the beauty and abundance on the island.”

“That is sad,” Titus said. “We will return the crown to Queen Mother Nature to restore gratefulness and happiness to Pachamama Island.”

Riley heard a noise and looked out the window. He saw the group of mean dogs walking up the driveway.

“It’s the mean dogs!” Riley shouted. “Take the carriage out back and return to the ship.”

“What about you?” asked Titus. “Aren’t you joining us?”

Riley gave the map to Titus. “I’ll lead them in the wrong direction and give you a chance to escape. I’ll lose them and meet you on one of the islands as soon as possible,” he said.

“Be careful,” Titus said, placing Riley’s map in his jacket pocket with his own.

Riley met the mean dogs at the front door while Titus and Harper snuck out the back door. They headed to the carriage house, where Bailey was brushing down a horse.

“Good day, Sir,” the beagle said. “May I be of assistance?”

Harper explained the situation, and Bailey suggested they hide under the brown wool blanket on the back seat.

Riley called for Boston to answer the door, but there was no reply, so Riley opened the door himself. The three-legged terrier and other mean dogs pushed into the large front room and looked around.

“Where’s the Real-worlder and his mouse friend?” the terrier asked. “I am here by myself,´ Riley answered.

The terrier sniffed and moved into the library. “I smell a Real-worlder was here not too long ago,” the terrier barked. “If you are here by yourself, why are there three glasses of sweet tea?”

The carriage raced past the front door and out to the main road. “They must be in that carriage,” one of the mean dogs yelled. “After them,” another dog yelled.

“Stay here, you mangy mutts,” yelled the terrier. “We have Riley as our prisoner again, and he won’t get away this time.” The terrier sat at the table. One dog pulled out a chair and forced Riley to sit while the others all stood behind him.

“Now, young Riley, please tell me everything you know about the whereabouts of Queen Mother Nature’s crown,” the terrier asked in his nicest voice.

The carriage pulled up to the gate of the wharf, where Titus and Harper hopped out.

“Good luck, sirs. I’m going back to see if Master Riley needs any assistance,” the beagle shouted, speeding off.

Titus and Harper cast off and yelled for everyone on deck. When everyone was present, Titus explained what had happened, ordered Remy and Harper to set the sails, and asked Constance to steer the ship from the port to Shearwater Ocean. Millie and Evie climbed up to the crow's nest to keep watch.

Titus went below to the Captain’s Quarters and spread the two maps on the large oak table. He noticed a hound dog sitting on the couch with big, droopy eyes and ears.

“Who are you?” Titus asked, surprised.

“I’m Bill, the navigator from the *USS Sanderling Cloud*. Captain Dane asked me to be your navigator,” Bill answered, moving over to look at the maps. “It looks like you are seeking Queen Mother Nature’s Crown. But the map doesn’t show which island it is on. I suggest we

sail to the Island of Koala. Once we have explored that island, we can head directly to Pachamama Island if we find it or to Dragon Reef, Mermaid Key, or Marcos islands if we don’t.”

As the beagle and carriage returned, the mean dogs hailed him. Everyone piled in, including Riley, and the terrier ordered the beagle to take them to the wharf.

The *USS Puffin* was sailing away as they arrived. Only one other ship was at the port—the *USS Sanderling Cloud*, guarded by a puppy.

“Where is the *USS Puffin* going?” asked the terrier. “I don’t know,” responded the puppy.

“I need to speak to your captain,” the terrier barked.

“He’s not here,” said the puppy. “He and the crew are having fun in town.”

“It doesn’t seem fair that they’ve left you here alone,” the terrier said sadly. “Why don’t we watch the ship while you go to town.”

“That is very kind of you,” said the gullible puppy.

“We’ll wait here until you return,” the terrier said, his paws crossed behind his back.

When the puppy was out of sight, the mean dogs hopped aboard with Riley and cast off the lines.

The terrier suddenly remembered they didn’t know how to sail. “Riley, do you know how to sail?” the terrier asked.

“Yes, but why should I help you?” Riley asked.

“Can you swim back to the wharf?” the terrier asked. Riley looked out and noticed they were already out of the port.

“Good point,” Riley said and took the wheel.

On the *USS Puffin*, Bill had set a course due south. The winds were coming from the north, so they were making good time. Remy and

Harper headed down to the galley to make sandwiches. They soon dished out thinly sliced apples and peanut butter on freshly baked warm bread.

Remy had lunch in the crow’s nest with Millie and Evie. She looked out over the ocean and noticed something. “Isn’t that an island?”

“Land ho, dead ahead,” Evie yelled down. Titus and Bill looked at the map.

“There’s nothing on the map,“ Bill said. “It’s probably Corny Island. Everyone leaves it off the map because that island should be avoided.”

"We’ve been there,” Titus said, grimacing as he remembered all the corny jokes.

As the island grew closer, Millie noticed a ship several miles behind them.

“Ship off our stern,” she yelled down.

Titus went up to the quarter deck and looked through his spyglass.

“It is too far to tell who it is, but it’s following us,” Titus said. “I don’t think they have seen us yet, so let’s hide in one of Corny Island’s bays.”

The *USS Puffin* sailed towards the island and hid the ship in a small, sheltered bay on the south of the island.

“Let's wait and see if the ship goes past,” Titus said.

“Land ahead, " shouted the Saint Bernard from the crow’s nest.

“Head to the north harbor and ask if they’ve seen the *USS Puffin*,” the terrier ordered.

As the mean dogs tied up the *USS Sanderling Cloud*, Mr. Clayton, the hedgehog mayor, came out to meet them.

“Good afternoon, gents,” he asked. “What do you call cheese that is not yours?”

“What?” The terrier asked.

“What do you call cheese that is not yours?” “I don’t know,” said the terrier, annoyed.

“Nacho cheese,” the major said, laughing so hard he almost rolled off the dock.

“Funny,” said the terrier. “Have you seen a ship recently?”

”If you can answer this, I will tell you. What breed of dog can jump higher than a redwood tree?”

After thinking for a while, the terrier said, “A German Shepherd?”

“Wrong,” answered the mayor, laughing. “Any breed can jump higher since trees can’t jump.”

“What is the name of this island?” the terrier asked angrily.

“This is Corny Island, and I am the mayor,” Mayor Clayton responded.

Before the terrier could say another word, Ava introduced herself and asked, “Why did the fish blush?”

“What? I don’t know,” the terrier responded.

“Because it saw the ocean’s bottom,” giggled Ava. The mayor laughed so hard that he fell on the dock, grabbing his stomach.

The terrier had enough. He untied the ship, jumped aboard, and ordered Riley to get the ship moving. “These hedgehogs are crazy!”

The ship passed Corny Island without looking back. Bill recognized the

*USS Sanderling Cloud* and was about to shout at them.

“That may be the *USS Sanderling Cloud*, but the mean dogs are the crew,” Titus said, looking through his spyglass. “Riley is at the wheel, so I assume he’s being held prisoner. Let’s stay here for a while.”

While they were waiting, a small row boat headed their way. Titus saw Kyle, the youngest son of Mayor Clayton, whom he remembered from their previous visit.

Kyle climbed aboard. “Oh, hello, Titus!” he said. “What do you call a sleeping bull?” Before anyone could answer, he said, “A bulldozer!”

Kyle laughed and then asked, “Why did the cookie go to the hospital?” “Kyle, we need to leave,” Titus said.

“Because the cookie felt crummy,” Kyle replied. He laughed so hard that he fell into his rowing boat.

“Are you okay?” Titus asked, but Kyle was laughing too hard to reply.

As Bill pulled up the anchor, Titus heard Kyle shouting, “How come the shrimp wouldn’t share his food? Because he was shellfish.”

Just then, Constance disappeared.

“We’ll meet you on the way to the Island of Koala,” managed Titus as he, too, vanished.

Evie was the last to wake up and return home.