



SENSE



TRONICLES

CAUTION // CAUTION // CAUTION

Weston



Deniz ☺ Marc Zareh!!

Avery

Nathan

Hannah

Adrianna * !! Sara ☺

Pedro

Feliffou

Natalie ♥

Daniel ★

♥ Lazaria ♥



Kate Nick Wolfe Theo Nicole ★

Bianca ☺

Steven ☺

Ivan

Sandi

To my Year 3 Students. Brufftopians prevail with a growth mindset.

All events within the story are a work fiction, especially student personalities. With that being said, we studied a number of texts during the literacy block and learned that no character is perfect. Because everyone has room for improvement, this story would be a wonderful opportunity for the students from 4B to meet their alter egos and see the flaws within them.

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Part 1: Home is Where the Heart Rests

It had been a long time since she had been back. Too long in fact. All of the streets had been widened and paved with stones. The last time she had walked these streets, she was swept up with so much emotion she decided to clean the Sweetwater River. But that was a long time ago.

Lots of things had changed since then.

Since the emotional day of cleaning, she had gone all over the island of Brufftopia spreading her story of making decisions. Sharing her story to anyone who would hear it lead her to the twin cities of Nat-Lou, where the streets were full of mystery and Fel-Lou, where everyone is boiling over with happiness.

Telling her stories led her to the dog-free city of Weiboro. Although she didn't want to leave, she knew it was time to go because all of the children had been helped. She even took her stories to the capital and told her stories for 3 days in the Great Mumball Arena.

By then, her stories were being shared all over Brufftopia. But people wanted to hear them from the famous storyteller herself. Requests were made along with official summons.

She had plans to make it Cattier City but she got stuck in Liaobury. The citizens wouldn't stop talking and interrupting. It took almost 3 years to get one story out. By the



time all six stories were told, Miss Lazaria was nearly out of yellow chenberries and she knew it was time to return to Jungton.

A smile crept across the withered face of the old storyteller. Tracing the outline of a key she wore on a necklace then flattening out her shirt as if to say, "That was all well and good,"

she knew her story telling days were done. Going into retirement and going home was the right decision.

Walking down the busy main street of Jungton wasn't so different than it was when she was a kid. Children still wanted to play and they could be seen running every which way. A group of 10 kids were playing a friendly game of Mumball on the grass. Museum was being played on the platform while people waited for the train to get into the station. Every where she went, she saw signs that said, "Pi Day Contest in Jungton Park today."

Kids still hung together under the palm trees to escape the summer heat. That meant one thing, kids must still go swimming in the river. Before she could say, "Brufftopia prevails!" her feet were carrying her to the river's edge.

Down into the heart of the city she went. The market hadn't been built before she left, but the foundation had been dug. She marveled at the beauty of the chenberry tree columns that held up the roof of the Mint where all the currency of Brufftopia was made.

Foot traffic began to lighten up as she moved through what once was a large Chenberry Tree field. Now there were high rise buildings made out of trees that could be seen for miles. Walking up to one of the buildings, Miss Lazaria's breath was taken



away. Not only were the buildings made of chenberry trees, but growing from the building on the tree was the brightest blue chenberry she had ever seen.

Snapping a chenberry off and popping it into her mouth, she was transported back to her 9 year old world for an instant. The old man with his squirrel hat had come to town and given her the power to make decisions on her own. He had made it seem so simple. Figure out what you want, figure out how to do it, think about what made the most sense, and then go do it. After the joy of cleaning the river and swimming she knew she had to spread the man's message to anyone who was interested in hearing it.

Without meaning to, her feet carried her all the way to the statue in the center of Jungton Park. There was a platform with a podium and a sign smashed to bits. A woman was standing in the middle of the wreckage. Opposite from her was a man with a huge smile on his face. He was tossing food to the birds who flocked around him like the Pied Piper. Behind the daydreaming woman was a young girl with yellow tape on her head.

The girl was muttering to herself and not paying attention "3-decimal point-1-4-1-5-9," she recited bumping into the woman staring at the statue in the middle of the park. "By the Queen's speech! You are Miss Lazaria!" the girl with yellow tape on her head shouted. She began hopping from one foot to the other and screamed to everyone within earshot, "Hey everybody! It's Miss Lazaria!" People began to poke their heads out of windows, pedestrians stopped to stare at the girl who was jumping up and down like she had to use the bathroom really bad.

As people began to surround them, Miss Lazaria knew there was no getting out of the crowd. She'd be here all night signing autographs, taking selfies, kissing babies, and telling stories. It was part of being the most recognizable storyteller on the island of Brufftopia. "I want to go to the river and cool off. Now you've gone and roused up the whole neighborhood." Miss Lazaria said to the girl.

The girl turned her face down while her body and spirit miserably sagged down like an ice cream left in the desert. "Let me guess, you want to hear a story." The woman pulled her necklace off with the key on it, spun it on her finger lazily like a lifeguard twirls a whistle, then gently placed the necklace on the girl. "While I tell this story, you can hold onto my key." Stars had never beamed as bright as the little girl's smile.

As if magicked out of thin air, a chair materialized in Miss Lazaria's hand as she leaped up so she could see over the crowd that had surrounded her. "Gather round one and all." Miss Lazaria's voice boomed. Her voice was as deep and rich as hot chocolate on a cold day, yet soft and sweet as honey. And the way she drew people in with smile made everyone feel as if the story was being told just for them.

The crowd had sat down all around her and settled in for a legendary story told by a legendary storyteller. "Gather your friends, family and loved ones close as I tell the tale of..."

Miss Lazaria stopped as if she had forgotten what the story was supposed to be about. The people who had gathered around looked on the edge of bursting and screaming out demands. Miss Lazaria reached out her hand in welcome and looked at the girl who was wearing something made out of yellow tape. She was easy to spot because she was the only one left standing and asked, "What story would you like to hear little one?"

Whispers went up throughout the crowd as the girl cleared her throat. “Miss Lazaria, what story do you want to tell?” A gasp went up throughout the crowd. The girl looked from left to right and nervously bit her lip while she waited for Miss Lazaria to speak. “I want to hear your favorite story, if that’s okay.” the girl continued.

“What’s your name young lady?” Miss Lazaria asked kindly.

“Nicole.”

“Nicole.” Miss Lazaria said slowly as she were chewing a Starburst at the same time. “Hmm. I’m sure you’ve heard of Daniel. Yes, they say he was the man who first settled the town so they named it after him. He should be remembered for even more than just showing up here and building the first house.”

The young girl cut in, “I learned all about him in school. He didn’t actually settle the town, he...”

“Do you want me to tell the story or not?” Miss Lazaria asked. The young girl sat down with a smile and nodded for Miss Lazaria to continue. Miss Lazaria reached for her necklace with the key on it and came away empty handed. Seeing the necklace on Nicole, Miss Lazaria smiled and began her story.

Legend of the Runes



Desperation

On the southern tip on the island of Brufftopia was the Chenberry Rainforest. Hikers of all sorts were known to climb to the top of the lonely mountain peak called Mount Blossom. After all, the mountain always seemed to blossom out of the rainforest like a sunflower in a field of wildflowers.

Hikers traveled far and wide to climb the chenberry tree at the top of Mount Blossom. From there you can see the entire Chenberry Rainforest.

In a complete circle around Mount Blossom, the Chenberry Rainforest stretched and reached the city limits. With the mountain peak in the middle, it leaves hikers wondering if the mountain is a bullseye.

In the Chenberry Rainforest the massive chenberry trees would grow over 200 feet tall and have red bark like a sequoia tree. Their green leaves are broad like a sunflower and the peach sized, blue colored berries grow in bunches like grapes.

Splitting the Chenberry Rainforest in half is the Sweetwater River. It flows from north to south and cuts around the base of the mountain like moat. On the south eastern edge of the rainforest, the circle is broken. In fact, from the top of Mount Blossom it appears as if a giant had picked up the Chenberry Rainforest and taken a bite, and put it back down making a perfect horseshoe bay for a town to grow into. The horseshoe shaped bay grew into a city that everyone had always called The Bite.

The city was known for its beautiful beaches, calm water its close proximity to the breathtaking Chenberry Rainforest. Chenberry trees had become the “go to” natural resource on Brufftopia. The people on the island had once settled the island to read books and discover an answer to an important question. However, once the question had been answered, governments stopped paying for citizens to live there and Brufftopians began using the resources they had on the island. No resource was as precious as the chenberry tree.

Although chenberry trees grew all over the island, everyone knew where the best chenberry trees could be found. The sweetest berries grew best in the Chenberry Rainforest. The best wood came from the chenberry trees in the rainforest. But most importantly, the trees grew tallest, straightest, and incredibly faster in the Chenberry Rainforest.

Chenberries were the tastiest food on the island and people flocked to the city to trade and sell the delicious fruit. They cut down massive amounts of chenberry trees from the forest to make way for their homes and businesses. The Bite didn't only describe the horseshoe bay anymore. The citizens had taken a bite out of the Chenberry Rainforest as the city grew and grew.

As the rainforest was pushed out of the city, people missed having trees in their backyards. They began to want their own personal chenberry trees again.

It was only a short walk into the rainforest, but the people wanted chenberries to grow in their backyards. The people who lived in The Bite began planting their own chenberry trees so they didn't have to go into the rainforest. Chenberry trees grew throughout the city but they weren't producing the sweet berries they had all grown used

to. Realizing the trees needed more water, the people tried many ways to get more water into the city for their personal chenberry trees.

Citizens of The Bite turned to their mayor, Hannah, for answers. All she could do was shrug her shoulders and shut the door in their face. Hannah commanded the city engineers, "Divert the water from the ocean into the town for the trees!" The engineers did as they were commanded. Soon they returned and informed her the salt water caused many of the chenberry trees to wither and die. The mayor shrugged her shoulders and slammed her door in their faces.

Hannah then commanded, "As the mayor of The Bite, I order you to build a canal from the Sweetwater River which runs from north to south in the rainforest. Send the water through the heart of the city." The city engineers met with Hannah to reveal their building plans. They explained if they built the canal, not only would the canal cause the death of thousands of chenberry trees, it would also cross through the Sledge Monster's hunting grounds. The city engineers blew a kiss in the air with both hands and rubbed their noses with their right hands, to keep the sledge monsters away as they shared their findings with the mayor. All Hannah could do was shrug her shoulders and slam the door in their faces, again.

Not wanting to come up with more ideas that wouldn't work, the mayor decided to have an open assembly to take advice from all the citizens of The Bite. Hannah received one idea that stood out best.

A local magician, Ivan the Incredible, had put forth an idea. In the past he created runes by painting in an old magical language. It allowed him to do marvelous things. Once he made his chenberry trees turn blue and yellow with a few swishes of his paint brush. Ivan had created runes to make hair grow longer and another rune that could make fingernails grow shorter.

Many of the city leaders had seen Ivan do incredible work. They'd seen him paint runes on the hulls of ships so they would never sink in hurricanes. Some city leaders had even seen him paint runes on walls of buildings and then seen those buildings stay standing after earthquakes.

Ivan the Incredible said, "I can paint a rune to bring enough water from the Sweetwater River for all the chenberry trees." Ivan's assistant pulled out a spark that fizzled and made an incredible amount of smoke in the mayor's office. "Can you see water trickling down from the rainforest, into the city to water your chenberry trees? The rune I will create will be the first of its kind and will come with a huge cost."

The mayor was desperate for the chenberry trees to be saved. Without happy residents in the city, they'd never re-elect her. She knew what needed to be done. Hannah had to ignore the ominous warning Ivan gave. "You must start immediately Ivan! You will be my savior. No, I mean, you will be *our* savior."

Ivan rubbed his fingers together and smiled the same way Ursula did when she made the bargain with Ariel. "Here, here." the mayor said looking skeptically at Ivan. "I announce that Ivan the Incredible will create a rune to save the citizens chenberry trees."

Leaving the mayor's office in a final blast of smoke created by the assistant, Ivan cackled and raced down the stairs. "This will be a win-win. The citizens get water and I will be remembered for saving the city." Yelling for his assistant to get his rune painting

supplies, Ivan mounted his horse sized pig. He took off at a trot and began making his way to the edge of the rainforest.

The rune needed to be huge. It was going to be big enough to cover an entire Mumball ring. There were only a few places large enough for the rune to go. One of them being the edge of the rainforest and another being the mayor's office. This one job would make Ivan the Incredible the most famous rune master in all of Brufftopia.

23 Skidoo

Ivan the Incredible's assistant was waiting at the city gate that lead to the Chenberry Rainforest. Ivan yelled out to his assistant. "Steven, what is taking you so long? You should have had all my paint brushes set up an hour ago."

Not wanting to disappoint his boss, Steven began moving twice as fast and four times as careless. "Sorry boss!" Steven apologized tripping over a paint can that was sent flying into the rainforest.

Paint brushes were everywhere and Deniz played hopscotch as she jumped over paintbrushes all the way up to Ivan. "Hey, you're Ivan the Incredible. Oh my goodness. What are you doing?" she asked.

Turning around quickly after giving his assistant one last kick, Ivan turned to face the new voice he didn't see approach him. "Why, yes madam, I am Ivan the Incredible." He did a fancy bow in front of Deniz, straightened up, put his hands on his hips, and raised one eyebrow.

"You're famous. I can't believe you are really here." Deniz said trying to keep her emotions under control.

"Celebrities like myself don't often come around parts like these." Ivan said raising his nose in the air snootily. "What may I do for you?"

Not knowing what to make of the rune master, Deniz looked over at the struggling assistant. Steven was juggling the



paintbrushes when she said, "I'm going into the woods to visit my friend Sanidi."

All of the paintbrushes clattered to the ground. "You need to find your friend and 23 skidoo." Steven burst out.

"23 Skidoo, what does that mean? That must be some kind of celebrity way of saying hi." Deniz said.

"It means scam or get out while the getting's good! Come one, you must have heard someone say 23 skidoo before." Ivan croaked impatiently.

Looking at the assistant Deniz said, "You want me to get out of here while I still can. How come?"

Growing tired of all the questions Ivan rattled off, "If you're not going to leave while you still can you should buy a rune to keep you dry. You'll need it." Ivan sneered as his horse sized pig began squealing and laughing the way pigs do when they roll in mud.

Deniz fumbled with her hair. "What is a rune?"

"What's a rune you ask?" Ivan laughed at Deniz. The pig rolled onto his back and began to snort even harder with laughter. "You don't know anything. You probably think the Sledge Monster of the Chenberry Forest is real." Ivan added.

Blowing a kiss in the air with both hands and rubbing his nose with his right hand, Steven made a sign to keep the sledge monster away. "The Sledge Monster is real." Steven said after performing the superstitious ritual all people of The Bite did when anyone mentioned the sledge monsters.

Ivan shook his head at his assistant. "You are ridiculous. Sledge monsters aren't real you dope. The stories about them are just old wives tales. They are make believe to scare little children before they go to bed." Ivan the Incredible said.

Steven blew another series of kisses and rubbed his nose. Looking at Ivan and Deniz, Steven said, "My grandmother told me that long ago, when The Bite was expanding. People began cutting down too many trees from the Chenberry Rainforest. They wanted to connect The Bite to the capital of Brufftopia. In the middle of the rainy season, someone cut down a tree with yellow chenberries instead of blue chenberries. You know those trees are sacred to all sledge monsters. The largest, muddiest sledge monster woke up. He unleashed all of his fury, vengeance, and hate on the people working on the road. The sledge monster ate all but one workers just as they completed building a bridge across the Sweetwater River."

Ivan sat down next to his pig and stroked its belly. Ivan talked to his pig but clearly he was asking Steven, "Piggy, why would the evil, scary Sledge Monster leave one survivor?"

"You could just ask me Ivan instead of Piggy. He's a pig and he doesn't speak." Steven said angrily. "The sledge monster needed someone to spread the story of what happened. Since then, no one has ever dreamed of building another road or even cutting down another tree in the Chenberry Rainforest. People sell fallen chenberry trees for firewood.

Deniz wasn't as superstitious as Steven was, but she had grown up hearing the same story. She asked, "Do you have a rune to protect me from the Sledge Monster?"

“You don’t even know what a rune is. Lucky for you, I like to tell people what they are buying. A rune, my dear missy, is a combination of symbols put together to make whatever I want. I draw a rune, whatever I draw comes true.” Ivan said with a devilish grin on his face.

By the look on his face, Deniz could see Ivan was up to no good. She began twirling her fingers through her hair. Deniz noticed Ivan was no longer rubbing his pig’s belly. He had moved into a boat. His assistant, Steven, was wearing a bright yellow poncho and a matching sou’wester on his head that went longer in the back than in the front. Knowing that sou’westers were typically worn on the ocean or at sea during bad, bad rainstorms, Deniz knew something was wrong.

“What’s really going on?” Deniz asked glaring at Ivan.

Ivan the Incredible raised his nose in the air snootily, made a “hmp” sound and began feeding his pet pig. “You’d better hurry and find your friend. Ivan is planning on flooding the forest to get water into the city.” Steven advised with worry plastered all over his face. He had started squeezing his hands together in as if that were going to make Deniz run into the woods faster. “You’ll need to be careful though. The Sledge Monster always comes out during the floods of the rainy season. People say the sledge monster hates the Chenberry Rainforest. He wants the PB Blossom Desert back instead of the Chenberry Rainforest. He’ll be really mad because we...”

The rune master cocked his hand back and threw a carrot the size of a paint can at his assistant that narrowly missed. “You aren’t supposed to tell people that we are going to flood the rainforest. People will be upset if the rainforest is ruined and turns into a swamp. They just want to save their own chenberry trees you dolt.”

Not believing what she was hearing, it all began to make sense. How else could the water get from Sweetwater River and to The Bite? When the city engineers talked about making a canal, they said it was going to kill thousands of trees. Obviously, Ivan, the runemaster, wasn’t doing anything special or different. He just didn’t tell the mayor of his plans to flood the rainforest.

Deniz was on her way to her friend Sanidi’s house. It was right in the middle between the Sweetwater River and The Bite. Deniz didn’t have time to warn the mayor and save her friend. Being split in two, Deniz had a tough choice to make. She had to let Sanidi know as soon as possible.

“Steven, you were right. I need to 23 Skidoo and get while the gettin is good.” Deniz sprinted into the rainforest. You could hear Ivan raging and yelling as Steven was complaining about the Sledge Monster. Deniz was destined to get to Sanidi’s house and warn her to leave as soon as she possibly could. There wouldn’t be any baking, hunting for frogs or making book trailers today. They would need to grab whatever they could carry and 23 Skidoo to get while the gettin was good.

Prank

The Chenberry Rainforest was home to homesteaders, people who produced crops and lived off their own land. Sanidi’s family had made a living in the rainforest for

generations by building a house inside a chenberry tree. They weren't just any homesteaders, they were *the* homesteaders who had gathered and sold the most chenberries on Brufftopia. They had hollowed out a large chenberry tree and connected it to different trees so they could avoid the floods during the rainy season. They picked the best chenberries at the top of the trees, and had a great few of The Bite down by the bay.

Deniz stormed into Sanidi's house yelling, "Grab your rain coats and get out!" Sanidi looked up from the book she was reading and stared Deniz in the face. "Come on. Move. I'm serious!" she pleaded.

Sanidi didn't even bother moving another inch. She kept her eyes on her book as she said, "What prank are you trying to pull on me this time? Last week you wanted me to rush outside and I fell into a hole you dug. The week before you made me get into a canoe on the Sweetwater River, but the canoe had a hole in it."

Deniz was completely shell shocked. With her mouth wide open and no sounds coming out, Deniz was almost fresh out of options when the flood siren went off. "That's strange." Sanidi said. "The Sweetwater River only floods during the spring, and this is summer. There has a drought for some time. Something must be wrong with the bell."

Looking directly at Deniz, Sanidi began to wag her finger. "It was you. You'll stop at no lengths to pull one over on me. I won't fall for your prank this time."



“Trust me. I am your friend Sanidi. We have to get out of here.” Deniz begged.

“Let me guess, you need me to go to a certain place and then I’ll be safe?”

“Yes.”

Sanidi was more than irritated. She had an axe to grind. These pranks would end once and for all. “Why would I leave the chenberry tree? When the sirens go off, my family moves higher into the chenberry trees so we can stay safe. Why wouldn’t I do that this time?”

Over the years, Sanidi’s family had created hundreds of leveled platforms high off the rainforest floor. They *always* went to a different platform when the flood siren went off. Inside Deniz knew this flood would be different. With her past pranks haunting her, Deniz was almost ready to admit defeat and leave Sanidi to drown in the flood. Deniz decided the truth would get through to Sanidi.

Deniz asked, “You know Ivan the Terrible, right?” Sanidi nodded. “Well, the runemaster is writing runes to make the Sweetwater River floods the rainforest down into The Bite so the city’s chenberry trees won’t wither and die.” Deniz quickly explained her experience of stumbling across Ivan and his assistant without taking a breath. “So, will you come with me?”

“Hahaha.” Sanidi roared with laughter. She squealed and snorted with laughter like Ivan’s pet pig. “You’ve got to think I’m brainless if I’d ever believe that.” Sanidi took off her glasses so she could wipe the tears from her eyes. She couldn’t help herself. Sanidi began laughing again and rolling on the floor the more she thought about it. In between laughs she said, “The runemaster has a pet pig that he rides! That is hilarious! Let me guess, his name is Piggy.”

“Yes. the pigs name is Piggy.”

“Stop, please stop. This is the funniest thing you’ve ever said.” Sanidi said. “You couldn’t come up with a more creative name than Piggy for a pig. I know you must be trying to fool me. How stupid do you think I am?” Sanidi laughed.

“Fine, if you won’t believe me, I’ll have to stop the runemaster myself in order to save you.” Deniz sorrowfully said. “Sorry that you didn’t believe me because of all the tricks I played on you before. Those were just for fun and this is completely serious. I just don’t know why you can’t see the difference.”

Sanidi sat up from laughing on the ground. Still holding her stomach from the laughter she said, “You always try to play tricks on me, so I think you are going to play another trick on me. Duh, common sense. I bet you are going to try to convince me sledge monsters are real. You know my great-great-great grandfather made up the sledge monsters to keep people from destroying the rainforest. It’s always the rainy season in the rainforest so don’t even try it.”

Without even thinking, Deniz blew a kiss with both hands and rubbed her nose. “This is different!” Deniz stamped her foot and screamed in frustration.

“You said that last week when you...” Sanidi began.

“Ahh! I know what I did last week.” Deniz blurted out stopping the rundown of all her best pranks. Normally Deniz would be happy to hear all about her pranks and how upset Sanidi was when she get suckered into them, but today wasn’t the day for joking

around. "Since the siren has already gone off, that means the flood has already begun. I'll have to find Ivan really quickly. I am not 23 Skidooning very well." Deniz said.

Barreling out the door Deniz began the long trek back to The Bite and the impossible task of stopping Ivan the Incredible. "My best friend won't believe me, so I have no choice but to do the impossible, I will stop the evil runemaster from flooding the rainforest and putting my friend in danger."

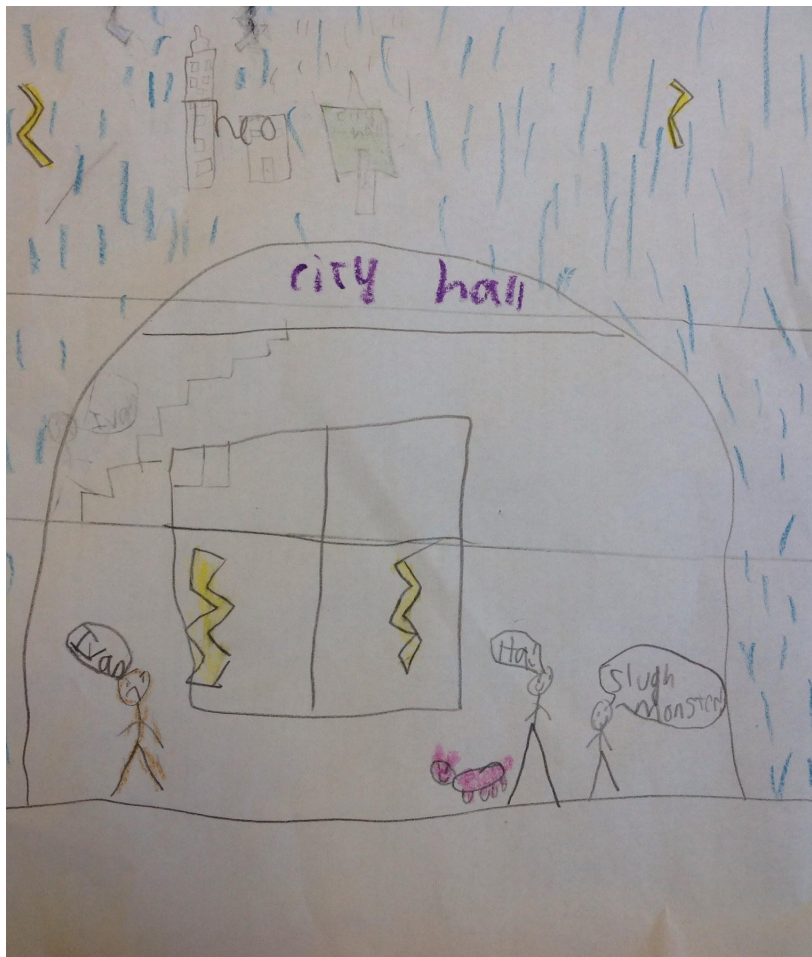
"Hey, did you know when you walk in mud, it sticks to your shoes and goes everywhere your feet go?" Sanidi called out to Deniz as she ran down the dirt path in the rainforest. "You have to learn to stay on the path and not trample through mud if you don't want to clean off your shoes! Don't be like Piggy the Pig." Sanidi chuckled again as she shut the door.

Boomerang

Deniz sprinted when she could, marched when her legs got too tired from running and crawled when all else failed. She made it from the heart of the rainforest and into downtown through a flood and raging storm caused by the runemaster. Deniz was

soaked from head to toe. There wasn't a spot on her that wasn't covered in thick, brown mud.

Without stopping to identify herself, or shake off any water and mud, Deniz barreled into the front door to city hall with her shoulder. She bellowed, "Ivan the Terrible. Show yourself this instant!" From the top most level, Piggy's squeal could be heard. Deniz knew exactly where to go now. Storming up the stairs the top floor and into the mayor's office, Deniz could care less that she had tracked mud throughout the staircase. People



had slipped from the mud and rain which made her appear like a giant size melting chocolate bar.

Storming in the door as lightning crackled outside made Deniz's entrance much more dramatic. "It's the Sledge Monster from the Chenberry Rainforest." Steven cried out loud as he ran behind Ivan and Piggy.

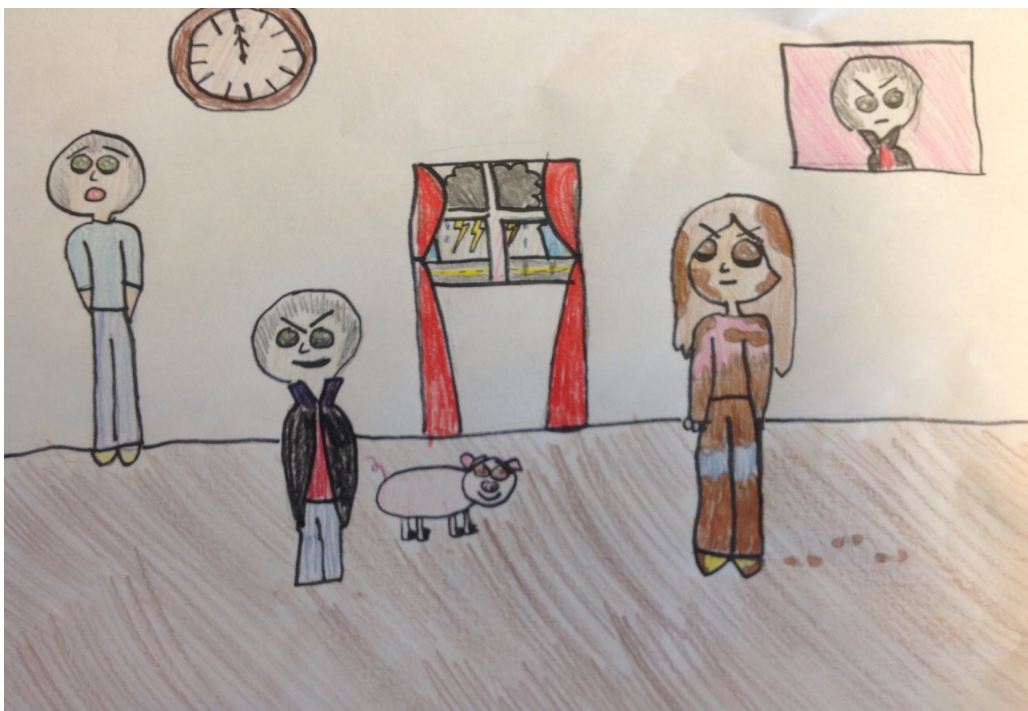
Deniz took a step forward. Her foot squished with mud and water. The city councillors in the room squealed and blew kisses with both hands and rubbed their noses. She took another step forward. Her foot squished again with mud and water. Everyone in the room scrambled for a hiding spot while they blew kisses over their shoulders and rubbed their noses.

A smile crept over Deniz's face. Inside her head she thought, "I'll have to remember to cover myself in mud and prank Sanidi next week. She'll have to believe what she can see with her own two eyes. Yikes, Sanidi and her house. I'd better 23 Skidoo and get on with it."

Balling up her fists, Deniz threw mud towards the edges of the office. She began herding the people in the room into a small contained group. The mayor could see what was happening and pushed the runemaster forward. "You want him oh, Great Sledge Monster." The city councilors in the room wailed in horror as they blew kisses and rubbed noses.

"What monster would actually want to hear that it is a monster, right? You are the wonderful, most great and noble Rainforest Guardian." Hannah nodded her head along with all the city councilors knowing she had been elected mayor because of her quick wit and ability to understand and reason on her feet.

Seeing Ivan the Terrible squirm was so thrilling. Deniz had the power to scare more than the daylight out of him. Not too long ago he didn't believe in the Sledge Monster but clearly he did now. Deniz planned to make him pay for destroying the



Chenberry Rainforest and flooding her best friend's house. She would do that after she had a little fun first. No need to pass up an unintended prank.

Mud oozed off of Deniz as she stood in the doorway. She lifted her finger to point at Ivan and a massive glob of mud pancaked onto the ground. Everyone in the room jumped back as if a rattlesnake he began shaking its tail. Everyone began blowing kisses and rubbing each other's noses to try anything that could make the Sledge Monster go away.

Deniz tried to keep from smiling but she couldn't. Smiling at Ivan made mud drip into her mouth. Spitting it out all over the place in a coughing fit caused Steven to yell, "The Sledge Monster is going into berserk mode. We are all in for it!" Piggy charged the Sledge Monster. Deniz did all she could to dodge the wild pig.

Jumping to get out of the way, Deniz vaulted through air like an acrobat and landed on the back of Piggy the Pig. Deniz sat in the saddle and began to ride the pig like she were in a rodeo. "That's it, knock her off Piggy." Ivan yelled. Ivan's knees had stopped shaking in fear. The city councilors were directly behind the mayor now. Their courage had returned with the charging of Piggy.

As quickly as his fear left the room, the fear came stampeding back like raging water in the rapids. "Piggy, get the Sledge Monster out of here. She is ruining the flood rune I created on the office floor."

Piggy squealed out loud in understanding and took off to the door. The horse sized pig charged towards the door that led downstairs. Deniz needed to stay in the



room to confront Ivan and she flipped and somersaulted off of Piggy. She closed the door behind Piggy and walked directly in the middle of the rune as elegantly as the last Queen of Brufftopia.

Frozen in fear in the center of the room was the runemaster and his assistant. Steven's mind had just been blown. A sledge monster had shown up. It rode a bucking pig. And the sledge monster could sail through the air like Peter Pan.

Deniz's face could finally be seen. The landing caused most of the mud to slide off of her face. "You," Deniz said pointing to Ivan, "You flooded the whole Chenberry Rainforest."

Steven had no idea what to think. Seeing Deniz revealed as the sledge monster was proving to be too overwhelming. He swayed side to side as if walking on the deck of a ship in a hurricane and fainted on top of Ivan. "Get off me you dolt." Ivan screamed.

"Serves you right." the mayor declared. "From this moment on you will be known as Ivan the Terrible. You have lied to the people of The Bite and you are forever banished." Hannah looked at Ivan with a satisfied smile as the other city council members clapped their approval.

Deniz was pleased that Ivan was going to be disgraced and thrown out of the city. Looking out the mayor's 360° grand window that overlooked the bay of The Bite, Mount Blossom, and the Chenberry Rainforest. The storm seemed to be settling into nothing more than a heavy rainstorm. "Would Sanidi be saved from the flood?" she thought. It was too early to tell.

"You fools." Ivan sneered. Looking out into the bay, the storm was completely gone. There wasn't even a cloud in the sky. Following Ivan's gaze, his eyes were looking at the actual city. "Deniz, you are responsible." He pointed a finger at a citizen on the street. "Do you have any idea what you've done?" Deniz's face was frozen in horror.

As far as her eyes could see, every foot of The Bite had a chenberry tree. But these were no ordinary chenberry trees. They had yellow chenberries instead of blue chenberries and they were growing in the shape of people. Deniz's eyes raced all over the city to find one person still alive. Locking onto a small figure, she saw one person running. In mid sprint, the person began turning into a tree as if overtaken by an imaginary wave.

"Look at your feet." Ivan croaked from underneath Steven. Deniz looked down and saw her muddy feet.

"What about them?" Deniz asked.

"They are filthy." Hannah said. "You tracked mud all over my nice marble floor. It is going to take lots of elbow grease to get the mud stains out."

"Exactly. Your muddy footprints blended with the runes I painted. The rune paint had not dried yet. You changed what the rune was supposed to be." Deniz covered her mouth. She was speechless.

Sanidi had warned her. Deniz didn't listen to the warning about staying on the path. At the time, she just didn't care. Her mind was elsewhere. Deniz was so interested in continuing her prank and flaunting her power as the sledge creature that she didn't think about the consequences of throwing mud all over the room or walking through mud puddles. Just like a boomerang, her poor actions had come right back to her.

"Instead of the river water coming into give to water the chenberry trees in The Bite, you've turned all citizens in The Bite into chenberry trees." Ivan said as he had nearly wiggled himself free of Steven.

"What can I do to reverse it?" Deniz panicked. She began wiping mud but it wasn't doing any good.

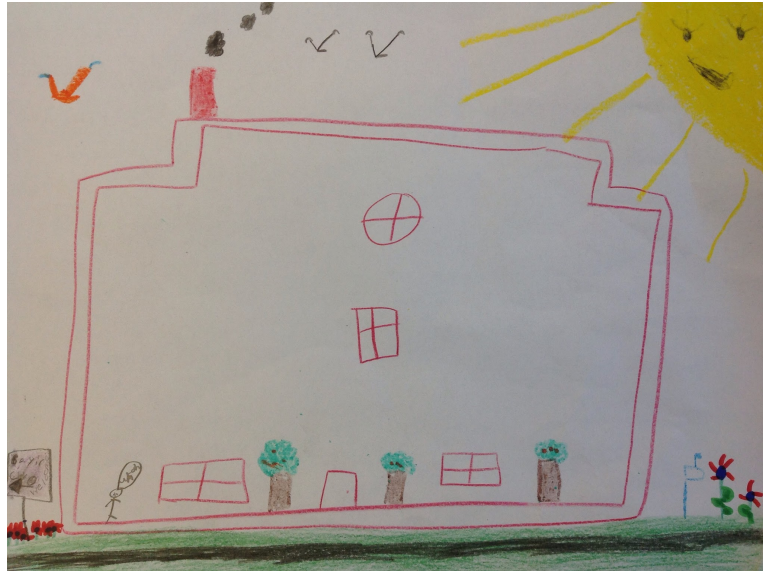
Ivan looked to the mayor. "What can I do to reverse it you ask. Well, I've been banned from the city so I'm not telling you anything Mayor."

"The only way to reverse it is to wait until the mud dries. You will have to scrape

the rune and mud away at the same time." Steven said waking up from his fainting spell.

Everyone in the room looked at Steven in disbelief. He was supposed to be the assistant. It was impossible to think he'd betray his boss.

One by one, the councilors began turning into chenberry trees. Their tall branches were growing through the roof and windows. Deniz looked towards the rainforest and



hung her head. She had failed her friend Sanidi. She had failed the people of The Bite. To make matters worse, there was nothing she could do until all of the mud and rune paint had dried. She would become a useless chenberry tree

Ivan began to laugh and sneer at the people in the mayor's office as they turned into chenberry trees. The mayor put her hand on Deniz shoulder as if to say, "It's okay. It was an honest mistake," as the two turned into chenberry trees.

Sitting in the center of the rune was the only person who and hadn't turned into a chenberry tree yet, it was Ivan. "I guess I'll have to sit here until all the runes and mud dries. Maybe I'll write a rune that erases everyone's memory and I won't be cast out of the city."

Piggy stuck his head into the mayor's door. "Look who finally came back. What perfect timing." Ivan said. Piggy charged at Ivan with excitement. "Wait, no, slow down!" Piggy barged into Ivan and knocked him out of the center of the rune. Faster than you could say *23 Skidoo*, Ivan turned into a chenberry tree.

Piggy sat underneath the shade of Ivan's tree and began to eat the yellow chenberries growing on its branches.

Dockside

“Step lively students.” The teacher said. Students in matching neon green t-shirts followed their teacher from the dock like ducklings following their mother. Carefully walking up the embankment with overgrown chenberry trees, the students made their way to a small clearing.

Students stood in pairs as they waited for their teacher to give them the free time they earned. “First you need to listen to the park rangers speech about safety and then you may explore The Ruins of The Bite with your partner.”

As the students began looking around at the odd surroundings, they couldn’t help having their eyes bulge out of their eye sockets. Chenberry trees of all sizes had grown out of walls of buildings, through the pavement, all over playscapes and even in bathrooms.

Most people were used to seeing chenberry trees grow over 200 feet with red bark, green leaves, and bright blue berries. These chenberry trees were different. There were some chenberry trees that had different colored bark. They all had yellow leaves and bright yellow berries. All of the trees had even taken on a human look to them too. Most were intertwined and twisted together with another tree so it was impossible to tell where one tree started and another ended.

The teacher read a plaque on the wall describing a theory of The Ruins of The Bite. *“Long before The Bite, the area was known as the PB Blossom Desert. In front of the Mayor’s Skyscraper is a fountain where the Bayir Oasis once was. People had often come to The Bite by boat. They filled their canteen full of water at the Bayir Oasis and hiked up Mount Blossom in the heart of the PB Blossom Desert.*

One day, the land was a desert. The next day, there was a forest of trees. People began calling the trees Chenberry Trees. No one could explain why chenberry trees had popped up everywhere and created a forest in the blink of an eye.

Within months the Bayir Oasis was a rainforest. By the end of the year, The Bite was flooded with people looking to strike it rich picking and selling chenberries. Before anyone could say 23 Skidoo, the small oasis town became in The Bite became the second largest city on the island of Brufftopia known as The Bite.

As the teacher ushered her class forward, she couldn’t help but notice how the yellow leaved chenberry trees were different from others all over the island of Brufftopia. In a trance, the teacher walked to a small chenberry tree that was growing, if it was sitting on a wooden bench. She reached out to pluck a bright yellow chenberry. “I wouldn’t do that Ms. Carson if I were you.” Daniel said.

“Yeah, I wouldn’t either.” Mar said. “People who pick chenberries from the yellow leaved trees turn into chenberry trees.”

“That is an old wife’s tale parents tell their kids so they don’t eat too many chenberries.” Ms. Carson said. She pulled her hand back as if the yellow leaved chenberry tree was a dirty diaper. “I was just testing you kids.”

Theo rolled his eyes. “Uh-huh. Ms. Carson, that is unbelievable, suspicious, barely believable at best.”

“I was testing you. I wanted to see if you would help your classmates. You know, to see if they were going to pick a yellow chenberry.” The teacher persisted.

“So why do you and other adults tell those kind of stories?” Daniel asked.

The teacher looked like a deer caught in headlights. “You know what. You kids are driving me crazy.” Adrienne grabbed a yellow branch with a dozen chenberries growing on it and threw a yellow chenberry into her mouth. She chewed on the



chenberry as if she were eating a worm dipped in hot sauce. “Yuck. I can’t believe I just did that. Why don’t you rotten kids listen to the park ranger!” Ms. Carson barked as she stormed back to the docks and onto the ferry boat the class arrived on.

“Way to get rid of her, Daniel.” Mar said. “I thought she would never leave.”

“Hey, you can call me the typist. I know all the right buttons to push.” Daniel joked.

Theo rolled his eyes for the second time in two minutes. “Daniel that was barely funny, corny, barely funny at best.”

“What do you want to do since Ms. Carson took off?” Mar asked.

“Let’s play hide and seek.” Nathan suggested with a smirk. He reached up and pulled a branch down to his face. Nathan chomped into a yellow chenberry growing in a bunch. Nathan’s mouth gushed with yellow chenberry juice. His skin glowed and seemed to be turning younger. He appeared to be full of life. It was as if the yellow chenberry tree was making him young.

“Look, the teacher is gone, no one can tell us what to do, so we should do what we want, right?” Nathan urged again.

Daniel raised his eyebrow as he looked at Nathan. Juice from the berry was rolling down his chin and the yellow chenberry made Nathan’s hair thick and shiny. Taking off his hat Daniel marveled at all the changes Nathan was going through from eating the yellow chenberries. Daniel said, “You look different Nathan. Maybe you shouldn’t eat the yellow chenberries.”

Looking around for support, everyone stayed quiet. For the first time, Bianca decided to say something. “I think Nathan looks like he is getting younger but I can’t really tell. Why don’t we just play a game or something. Nothing bad is going to happen.”

Daniel said, “I am pretty sure you jinxed us Bianca. Now something bad is definitely going to happen. Maybe it would be fun to do something but I’d rather explore.”

“What are you chicken?” Nathan began jumping around and squawking like a chicken.

Bianca piped up, “Come on Daniel. It’s not like anything bad is going to happen, trust me. The more people that play, the more fun we’ll have.”

Taking a quick peek at Nathan who had stopped squawking but kept flapping his arms, Daniel could see his friends wanted him to play.

“Play around against Ms. Carson’s wishes or explore like his teacher wanted him to do.” Daniel thought. His decision was simple. “No thanks guys. You should have fun without me. I’m going to go explore.”

“Some people know how to suck the fun out of everything.” Nathan said as he reached back and threw a yellow chenberry at Daniel. “Ha, ha I got him.” Nathan belted out as the chenberry burst all over Daniel’s hat.

Afraid to say anything Mar couldn’t help but stay silent. She thought in her head, “That wasn’t very nice Nathan. You did enough by calling him a chicken and now you’ve probably ruined his hat.” Looking at her best friend who she wanted to follow, all she could manage to say was, “Daniel loves that hat.”

“Daniel loves that hat.” mocked Nathan.

“Now that is funny.” Theo chuckled. “Hilarious, and really funny.”

While running to catch up, Mar yelled for Daniel to stop running away. “Hey Daniel. Wait up. I’m going to go with you.”

Without even turning around, Mar could almost see smoke coming out of Daniel’s ears. His shoulders perked up around his ears as he snapped, “If you were a real friend you would have stuck up for me. You did nothing. You said nothing. You let him treat me like dirt. I want nothing to do with *you*.”

“That’s not fair Daniel, I didn’t know what to say to Nathan.” Mar said.

Turning to face Mar, Daniel got within centimeters from her face and slowly spoke, “*That wasn’t nice. Daniel is my friend*, is what you could have said.” As he spoke the words, a tear formed in the corner of Mar’s eye. “You aren’t my friend, you never were my friend, don’t ever talk to me again!”

Watching Daniel turn away again, Mar stood as still as a statue. Bianca walked up to Mar and put her arm around her. “Don’t worry. You two will still be friends. He just needs some space.”

Discovery

Walking through the ruins wasn't an easy task. Daniel was sweating buckets, but at least his mind had begun to wander away from what his so called best friend didn't do. The more he climbed, the better he felt.

Mar and Bianca weren't too far behind him. Mar had been to the ruins many times but she had never actually thought about going into the Mayor's Skyscraper. She'd always admired the city from the comfortable security of the ground. Something about being a few feet off the ground made Mar's legs feel like string cheese holding up the Eiffel Tower.

Bianca had convinced Mar to go after Daniel. They were best friends and they shouldn't stay mad at each other for too long. Not wanting Daniel to know she was there, Mar and Bianca silently put their hands in the same holds Daniel did. Deftly quiet like ninjas, the girls put their feet where Daniel did. Only once did Mar almost get noticed. At the top, Daniel had stopped to clean his glasses and he was blind to the world for a few seconds.

"What was that?" Daniel asked rubbing the last of the dirt from her glasses. Peering around a corner, to his amazement, he saw a pig. Not knowing what else to do, he walked up to a pig and began to pet it.

Mar took that opportunity to quickly dash out the crumbling doorway she was standing in. Inside she thought, "Don't look down, the view of The Bite in most people's mind is beautiful. Oh my, there is a kite that flying below me. I must be really high. Oh my goodness, don't look down." Mar's thoughts raced as she panicked about being more than a foot off the ground.

Rubbing the pig's belly, Daniel began to admire the room. It wasn't anything special. There was a cluster of yellow leafed chenberry trees packed tight together while others were scattered about the room. Daniel sat down underneath the lonely chenberry tree in the center of the room. Reaching up, Daniel pulled a few chenberries off the tree and fed them to the pig. The pig nuzzled Daniel as if they were long lost best friends. "I think I'm going to call you Piggy. Get it, you're a pig, but just a wee little pig." Piggy squealed as he rolled onto his feet. He walked to an opening and began pawing at the ground like bull getting ready to charge.

"23 Skidoo," Daniel said slowly and blowing out a whistle. Looking over the pig's haunches, Daniel took a glance out the open window. The view of The Bite was beyond breathtaking, the view was magical.

"Piggy, you're lucky to have a view this nice." Daniel said. Mar was inching her way to the doorway. The pig continued to paw at the ground, oblivious and not listening to a word Daniel was saying or noticing Mar moving outside. "With a view this nice, you wouldn't need backstabbing friends like Mar." Daniel said. Immediately Mar stopped moving. The words hit her like a ten ton brick falling from the sky.

In a trance Daniel walked past Mar and onto the balcony. "Piggy, come hither. Check this out." The pig trotted outside and stopped to rudely gesture for Mar to 23 Skidoo. "It's easy to see from here that something isn't right about the chenberry trees." Pointing to the bay Daniel showed Piggy where the Chenberry Rainforest began and

ended. He also showed Piggy where random new chenberry trees grew even though he couldn't explain why they had grown where they did and why they had different colored berries.

Mar had faced her fear of heights to apologize to Daniel, but here he was, cuddling all sweet with a pig. Daniel wasn't hugging and talking to a sloppy person that was called a pig. He was hugging an actual pig! Mar had had enough. Turning to leave, she realized she wouldn't know how to get down. Bianca was nowhere in sight. Did she keep going up the tower? Was she on the other side of the wall hiding from Daniel? Mar would have to wait until Daniel left so she could follow him down and find Bianca. Not wanting to confront her former best friend, Mar dashed to hide in the tightly packed grove of chenberry trees in the large room.

Piggy wiggled free from Daniel's arms and followed Mar to the grove of trees. "Go away you rotten pig." Mar said. Piggy snorted, breaking Daniel from his trance. Throwing a yellow chenberry at the pig, Mar slipped to the back of the trees to not be followed.

"What's in the trees Piggy?" Daniel asked. He didn't expect the pig to answer but he did see that the pig's mouth was covered in yellow chenberry juice. Once again, Piggy pawed the ground. "Okay, so it's not the trees. Is there something in your hoof? Is that why you keep pawing the ground?"

In the back of the trees, Mar could barely make out Daniel. Across the room, Bianca could easily see Piggy. She saw there was something under his foot. It looked like a giant letter. She needed to get a closer look, but not while Daniel was in the room.

Bending down to look at Piggy's hoof, Daniel saw there was nothing wrong with the hoof but Piggy kept on stamping his foot. "Will you quit it Piggy? You are kicking up so much dust, I can't see." Taking off his glasses for the second time that morning Daniel cleaned them.

Mar knew she only had 20 seconds at the most. Quickly Mar snuck out of the trees and moved the dirt under Piggy's foot. Dashing back to her hiding spot, Mar found that Daniel had no idea what had happened.

Inside Bianca's mind she said, "Mar, finally, you are going to talk to Daniel. Wait, no. Come back. Why didn't you stay to tell Daniel you are sorry. You faced your fear of heights to talk to him."

Piggy squealed at the trees as Mar settled back into her hiding spot. "You are quite the jumpy pig. There is no one else up here besides you and I, Piggy." With his arms wide open, Daniel turned in a circle to show Piggy that there was no one else around. Piggy pouted like any self-respecting pig could pout. He turned around and put his back to Daniel.

"Oh Piggy, I hurt your feelings. But now I know why you were knocking all that dust around. I can see here on the ground there is a rune written here. But it was covered in a massive layer of dirt." At the mention of rune, the leaves of the chenberry trees began to shake as if a gale of strong wind shot through the room.

"Rune." A blast of wind gushed through the room.

Bianca thought, "I wonder if there is a connection between the word rune and the wind rushing through the room?"

“Rune.” Daniel said again. Another gust of wind.

Bianca nodded head as if to say, “I guess there is a connection.”

“Cool.” Daniel said as he peered at the rune, he noticed that it was incomplete.

“Piggy, where is the rest of the rune?” Piggy began to stamp his feet all over the room.

Walking throughout the room, digging through the dirt to expose and uncover more runes Daniel spoke to Piggy. “You know, my distant cousin 45 times removed was known as Ivan the Incredible. So I know a little bit about runes. He was a runemaster.” Piggy jumped for joy. “Oh, so you’ve heard of him too? All the way up here in The Bite nonetheless. But I have Ivan’s old notebook. I taught myself to read runes.”

Bianca looked through the doorway and saw Mar poking her head out of the tightly packed human shaped chenberry trees. Her face said, “Help me, please, oh please, oh please!” With her hands, Bianca moved two fingers as if they were walking downstairs and then put on her best Ms. Carson face. Immediately Mar knew Bianca was going to be going downstairs to look for help or Ms. Carson.

Getting to one section where the dirt was especially thick, long shadows began to fall across the room. Daniel knew he was running out of time before the field trip would end. Unlike The Ruins of the Bite, the field trip wouldn’t last forever. He could easily come back. The runes weren’t going anywhere.

Standing up, Daniel looked down over the freshly exposed floor. He could now see a sprawling intricate rune painted on the floor. It had covered been covered in mud and dirt for an incredibly long time. “Piggy, I don’t know what the rune was for, but I’ve almost cleaned it all off. The rune won’t work because it got ruined when I removed the dirt.”

Piggy was still upset and he gave a snort as if he didn’t really care if Daniel planned to stay or go. “Wow, I thought it was bad when Mar abandoned me. Now you have turned your back on me too. I’d better get used to living in isolation.”

Daniel walked out the room feeling even worse than he did on the climb to the top. Slowly he began his march down the stairs.

Alone

Mar snuck out from her hiding place. Piggy stared at her, daring her to do something. “Okay Mr. Pig. I am sorry that I was mean to you. I shouldn’t have thrown chenberries at you. I am sure they hurt.” Still Piggy didn’t budge or look as if he had forgiven Mar.

“Piggy, I am so sorry. Here are some chenberries.” Holding out her hand, Piggy snootily sniffed her hand. With a smile of triumph, Piggy ate chenberries right from Mar’s palm. Exhaling, Mar knew she had made up with one person. If she could make up with a pig, she could easily do make up with Daniel and become friends again.

Walking around the recently uncovered runes, Mar marveled at the exquisite detail of the painting. She traced the runes with her fingers and began brushing away the rest of the dirt and mud.

Light began to pour into the room as Mar brushed away the final bit of dirt. "What perfect timing for the sun to come out. Now I can really look at this rune." Mar said.

"Thank you, thank you, thank you. You are our savior." a tall woman with strawberry blonde hair said from behind Mar.

"Ahh!" Mar screamed at the top of her lungs. "Where did you come from? Where did all you people come from?" Mar asked. Standing in the room where yellow leaved chenberry trees once grew, were people.

Stepping forward to speak was Ivan, "What the mayor is trying to say is that Deniz over there," Ivan stopped to point a nasty finger at Deniz, "created a rune that turned all the citizens of this fine city into chenberry trees."

Raising an eyebrow, opening her mouth and then closing it, Mar stood puzzled and bewildered. Not knowing what to say she said, "I've got to get back to my field trip group. People are going to be looking for me so don't do anything strange. Mr. Pig, protect me."

Steven asked, "What's a field trip? Ivan, can we go on one?"

"No, you're fired!" Ivan said. "But you, my dear. What's your name?" he asked Mar.

"I can't tell strangers my name and you are a stranger." Mar declared pulling back, inching towards the doorway.

"Don't be silly girl. I am famous." Ivan winked his eyes and raised one eyebrow and then the other. "I'm the marvelous, most unforgettable, terrifically..."

"Terrible," the mayor, Hannah said.

"Terrifying," the former assistant Steven offered up as a description.

With outrage written across his face, Ivan said. "I am none of those things. I am Ivan the Incredible." With his chest held high like a superhero who had just saved the day Ivan declared. "Piggy, come hither so I may sit on you. Everyone knows that I make you look good when I sit on you and do my superhero pose."

The pig reluctantly sauntered slowly over to Ivan's side. The city councilors and mayor exploded. They were shouting about the citizens being turned into chenberry trees. Each one gave a different reason why it was all Ivan's fault in the first place. Clearly, the rune had something to do with it.

Speaking up for the first time, Deniz said, "I am really sorry for not being careful about tracking mud into the room." Everyone stopped their conversation. Hannah was halfway to the window. She was holding Ivan with both hands. She was half a second away from chucking him out the window.

Ivan pulled himself free from Hannah's grip and tried to straighten his shirt but he couldn't seem to get comfortable knowing he was in mortal danger.

"I really am sorry for messing up your rune." Deniz said looking directly at Ivan. She explained to everyone why she needed to rush back to the city quickly to save her friend Sanidi. Deniz even explained how Sanidi wouldn't believe her because of all the pranks she played in the past..

Steven looked at Deniz at the end of her tale and said, "Well, now that everything is cleared up, let's 23 Skidoo and get some food. I've had enough of rainwater over the past 200 years."

The mayor took out her gavel to make a proclamation. "Here, here." The city councilors all stopped and turned to the mayor. "We are grateful for being rescued by this young woman and turned back into people." A polite golf clap came from the city councilors. "From this day forward, The Bite is no more. The city will be named after our savior."

Looking at Mar the mayor asked, "What's your name kid? We are naming the city after you."

Mar couldn't believe it. Her head was shaking back and forth. This shouldn't be her honor. She only moved aside a few pieces of dirt. Daniel had removed most of the dirt and he planned to come back to finish it. If he had finished clearing the dirt, they would be thanking him. She was being rewarded for being curious.

Through the opening of the door came calls from what sounded like a search party, "Mar. Mar! Where are you?"

The mayor said, "That is obviously you."

Nathan walked into the room and said, "Ms. Carson, I found her. She's standing next a guy on a pig and talking to some lady holding a judge's gavel. You better get in here quick."

"Mar! You are in big trouble." Ms. Carson blared. "I always thought you were reasonable. But you just ran off and went into the ruins. I thought you were scared of heights. Why are you up so high? We have been looking for you, for like 5 minutes, which is besides the point. If Bianca hadn't told us where to find you, the ferry would have left us a long time ago." Ms. Carson said a mile a minute.

Banging her gavel down to get everyone's attention, Hannah said, "As the mayor of what was once The Bite, I declare the city named after our rescuer. The city is now called Marserranoville. And you aren't in trouble." Banging on the gavel once more the meeting was over.

"Here, here." went the city councilors.

Daniel stepped from behind Ms. Carson. With his eyes close to the edge of bursting with tears he said, "I can't believe it. I knew I saw something when I was cleaning my glasses. You hid and waited for me and now you have taken all the credit."

"I didn't know you had it in you Mar. You are really sneaky." Nathan said.

"She is our savior." Hannah said.

Ms. Carson didn't know what to make of everything. "She's not a savior, she is late. I won't have someone like you telling me what to think."

"Easy there grumpy." Deniz said to Ms. Carson. "She rescued us from living as chenberry trees." Deniz Added.

"You finished removing dirt on the rune." Steven added.

Stepping forward Nathan pointed right at Mar's head. "I like the way you think. I wish I could have taken credit for this. Now you'll be like, I dunno, the queen of this place or something."

Theo pipped up and said, "Now that is funny Daniel. Ironic, but really funny."

Bianca walked over to Daniel and said, "I told Mar that she should follow you and apologize. I think she didn't know what to say to you. Kind of like right now." Daniel couldn't believe what he was hearing.

Taking his hat off his head and balling it up, Daniel had come up with a decision. "Nathan, maybe you are onto something."

"Nathan isn't on to anything, Daniel." Ms. Carson said. She was still munching on the yellow chenberry she had taken a bite out of earlier. "What? It's delicious. Don't judge me." A glow had appeared on Ms. Carson. It was as if she was become younger with each bite she took from the yellow chenberry. "Nathan was with me the whole time after getting caught playing Hide and Seek in the ruins. I had to babysit him the whole time on the boat. I couldn't even enjoy my chenberry." Ms. Carson quickly said.

Daniel looked on in disbelief. He didn't know what to think. Things just always seemed to work out for Mar. Things like this always happened. She would always make out like a bandit and he would always be left holding the bag when the cops showed up.

"You can trust me Daniel. I went to tell Ms. Carson that you two were in the Mayor's Skyscraper. I told Ms. Carson that Nathan threw a yellow chenberry at you. Ms. Carson sprinted off the boat. Naturally she rounded everyone up." Bianca said.

"If you are thinking she was grumpy, multiply that by 10. No, multiply it by 20 and that was Ms. Carson. She was grumpier than usual." Theo added.

Bianca ignored Theo's comment and said, "We have been doing nothing this whole trip but waiting for you and Mar to become friends again."

"I am sorry Daniel." Mar said to Daniel. "Can we call the town Jungton?" she asked the mayor.

Hannah looked to Mar and said, "Nope, I would have to do my "Here, here" again and I don't want to. So, no. Sorry I'm not sorry."

"Tough luck man. Looks like you've got to either forgive Mar or be upset with her." Theo offered.

Looking at Mar through Bianca's eyes was easy. Things would be the same, nothing would change. Once Daniel started thinking of Mar through Nathan's eyes, it was as simple as pie to see that Mar had used him.

Looking to Ms. Carson for some help Daniel said, "Ms. Carson, you always give the best advice. What should I do?"

She was caught off guard. Ms. Carson was still grumpy from the comments being made about her being grumpy that she almost didn't know what to say. She took a deep breath. Trying her best to speak slowly she said, "I think you should take some time to think about it. No one can force you to feel one way or another. I've heard people say time heals all wounds."

Looking out the window and out to the Chenberry Rainforest, past Mount Blossom, Daniel knew *he* had to do something different. Squeezing his hat even tighter than before he felt something like a seed in his hand. Opening his hand he saw a yellow chenberry with a seed sticking out. Like a salmon swimming upstream or a bird that knows where to migrate, Daniel knew what needed to be done. His life lay in the Chenberry Rainforest. He smiled at Mar and said, "Mar, I am happy for you."

Skipping out of the room Daniel put his hat back on his head and dropped the seed into his pocket. "Where are you going?" Mar asked.

“I’m going to take time to be alone,” Daniel said patting his pocket with the seed in it. “Maybe you’ll see me in the rainforest. Maybe you won’t. But I’ll come back when I am ready.” He said.

Mar wouldn’t let her best friend just leave without a fight. Not like last time. “I climbed this incredibly crazy high tower and faced my fear of heights just to say sorry to you.”

“I appreciate that Mar. I really do. There is just something I have to do first.” Looking around he smiled and said, “Enjoy Marserranoville.”

Mar started to go after him but Bianca held her back. “Some people have to leave before they can stay.”

“That’s deep.” Theo said. “Insightful and very deep.”

Searching

Days, weeks and months had passed. Ivan the Terrible was officially banned from The Bite but since the name had changed, he was allowed to stay. He had built quite the business declaring he was a prophet. His nephew, 45 times removed, helped break the curse of the rune. Steven was no longer the assistant for Ivan the Incredible, but he did help manage Ivan’s social media accounts.

Sanidi and her family moved into town after their close encounter with the flood. They had been the first people to turn into chenberry trees. The rising water didn’t seem to bother them. Deniz seemed to be really happy that her friend was back. The two girls had written a book together, 101 Pranks to Pull on Your BFF.

Things hadn’t gotten any better for Mar. She woke up every morning and walked to the city gate at the edge of the Chenberry Rainforest. She waited to see Daniel walk down the path that lead to Marserranoville. In the first few days she could walk to the city limits and only a few people would stop her to say thank you. After people figured out where she was always going, Mar began wearing disguises to avoid getting stopped to sign autographs and take pictures.

Ms. Carson became a regular on the talk show circuit. She was seen all over the island of Brufftopia saying, “I’m the teacher that lead her students to the discovery of the runes. I always pushed my students to explore and think outside the box.” Ms. Carson and Nathan kept the glow and youthful appearance for decades while everyone else seemed to age normally. No one could really figure out why.

Bianca and Hannah ended up becoming fast friends. The mayor needed someone in her corner who wouldn’t just tell her she was awesome and doing the right thing, Hannah needed a good friend who could let her know if she had made the wrong decision. Although the mayor didn’t always do what she was told, it was good to have another set of ears when making tough decisions.

“I think you should really ban Ivan the Terrible from city.” Bianca had told her.

“But then I’d have to say “Here, here” again. You know how much I don’t like to say that.” Hannah had protested.

“Then let me say it.” Bianca said.

Hannah looked skeptically, “No. Let’s not and say we did.”

Nathan and Theo began giving tours throughout the city sharing their insight on the events that turned The Ruins of the Bite into the beautiful lush city of Marserranville. They called themselves, “Thoughts & Ideas,” because Theo gave his thoughts about how funny or meaningful a comment was and Nathan gave plenty of strong and weak ideas of things tourist should do.

Marserranville began to burst with people who wished to see where chenberry trees had once been people. Citizens from all over Bruffopia traveled to meet and talk with former chenberry trees and hear the story of Mar rescuing the city. Eventually, people who visited regularly began staying long term. They began to feel they were also apart of the city.

But as months stretched out to years and years became decades, Mar decided to do something. “I should have left a long time ago. I am going to go search for Daniel.” Mar said.

“Let me come with you.” Deniz suggested.

“We could stay in my old house in the Chenberry Rainforest.” Sanidi suggested.

Mar was skeptical. After all, the most famous jokesters on the island of Brufftopia were talking to her and giving her a suggestion. “Okay.” Mar finally said. “But I’m taking Theo or Nathan with me. I feel like you pranksters are going to try to play a trick on me.” Deniz looked at Mar with fake horror because she had been busted.

Walking through the rainforest Mar had a chance to really look around and see how beautiful it was. “Sanidi, you left the rainforest to move into the city. How could you? It is so, magical.” The tour guide Nathan asked.

“Once you are living at the bottom of a flooded river for 200 years, you’ll feel a little different about living far away from civilization.” Sanidi offered.



As the group of travelers walked into Sanidi's old chenberry house, they saw a note on the table. "Mar, there is a note for you here." Sanidi responded after turning on the lights.

"Mar, I hope you are doing well. Something inside me knew you would find this letter. I hope you haven't waited for me to come back to Marserranoville because I've found there is much more for me to do out here in the rainforest. People need help and I can give it to them.

Plus there is no shortage of food. It is hard to believe that the rainforest used to be a desert. There are plenty of squirrels to eat and fish to catch. With no one hunting or fishing for 200 years means the animals are thriving here.

The best thing about the rainforest is that I can just relax and not think too much. I can just clear my head and...be.

Last but not least, You told me once that you were sorry. I accept your apology.

Sincerely,

Daniel

The same way Daniel would twist and turn his hat, Mar twisted the letter. "I think I am going to like it here in the rainforest. I think we should rename this part of the rainforest." Mar said.

"Oh yeah." Deniz said. "What do you think we should name it?"

"I've got one. Sledge Monster Town." Sanidi said.

"Ooh, that sounds good. What about New Bite since the Marserranoville used to be The Bite?" Deniz said.

"I think we can do better." Mar said. "How about Jungton? Then it would be named after the person we are searching for."

Everyone in the house tried saying the name. "Yeah." Sanidi said. "It sounds just right."

"Jungton it is." Deniz said. "May Daniel find peace in the rainforest, while we find prosperity in Jungton."

"Inspiring." Theo said. "Touching and very inspiring."

Part 2: The Motto and Words to Live By

Raising her hands with her palms open to the sky, “May Daniel find peace,” Miss Lazaria said in her bold voice and her head held high.

Altogether the crowd that had assembled said in unison, “And we find prosperity.” Everyone learned the town motto of Jungton in school the way every citizen is taught the national anthem in their home country.

“People say Daniel has been seen in and around Jungton. Some say he shows up when we need him most. When people need to learn how to clean up a of the river, build a house correctly or even make a tough decision. You’ll know him by his smile, slanted glasses, and squirrel hat.

A sudden calm and peace had blanketed the crowd. When Miss Lazaria told a story, everyone felt the characters, you knew what they wanted and desired, people cried and cheered, but no one left disappointed. The way she described Daniel made everyone think to a time a stranger with a squirrel hat helped them.

The girl who posed the original question to Miss Lazaria, “What story would you like to tell?” She was staring as if in a trance. Snapping out of it she said, “Thank you so much for telling that story.”

Miss Lazaria had traveled all over the island of Brufftopia for a number of decades and this was the first time she had been thanked for telling a story. Stooping so she could look Nicole in the eyes Miss Lazaria said, “I can see a change in you girl. You aren’t the same person you once were a few weeks ago. You are something new entirely new.”

Reaching for her necklace, Miss Lazaria realized it was no longer there. Before every story she traced the letters with her finger and began speaking. Nicole began to take off the necklace with the key on it. Miss Lazaria gestured for the her to stop and sit back down on the ground. Miss Lazaria walked towards the center of the park and up the steps of the Pi Day Contest stage. She began humming a tune that every citizen in Jungton sung when they needed to make a tough decision. The people closest to Miss Lazaria began waving their hands in the air like Inflatable Tube Men.

“In the jungle, the mighty jungle,” Miss Lazaria sang.

The crowd answered “The lion sleeps tonight.”

Making her way close to a roped off area that held the platform, Miss Lazaria climbed up to the podium and said, “I’ve traveled many different roads. They all lead me where I intended to go. Some paths were dead ends while others had danger signs. Every road has its obstacles.”

“Gather round one and all.” Miss Lazaria’s voice boomed. She had the crowd hooked in again with her voice. They all knew the story she was going to tell was going to be even better than the last. “Anyone could give up. Anyone could be disappointed. I didn’t let things get me down. Let me tell you of the story of a girl who needed to make a choice. Would she take the grumpy path and the happy path?”

The Grumpy or Happy Path



Pi

Every Pi Day, March 14th, the teachers in Jungton held a competition to see who could memorize the greatest amount of consecutive digits in pi. Every year since Nicole was in the kindergarten, she had won the competition. She won the first year by reciting 312 digits. The next closest contestant could only recite 75 digits.

Nicole had grown famous all across the island of Brufftopia. People far and wide had seen the victory picture of Nicole hoisting a trophy over her head. The Pi Trophy, which was a giant slice of pie, was bigger than kindergarten Nicole. She was on late night talk shows, featured in magazines and a straight to TV movie was made to tell the story of a kindergartener winning the Pi Day Contest.

Every year since then, Nicole doubled her effort to memorize more digits of pi to win again. Learning new digits began to grow challenging. Part of the reason why was other students wanted to win the competition too. Nicole's margins of victory had begun to shrink. Last year the second place finisher recited one less digit of pi than Nicole.

There was no room for slacking. Nothing would get in Nicole's way of a dominating performance. She studied nonstop and complained to her teachers if they gave her homework that interfered with her studying.

Pictures of Nicole hoisting the Pi Trophy had begun to only be passed around her family. Looking at her three victory pictures gave most people nightmares. Her cute toothless smile had turned to a smirk, then a grimace, and finally to a scowl that made



going to the dentist seem like a walk in the park.

The only thing worse than her third Pi Day Picture were Nicole's mood swings. Most people avoided her. No one wanted to get on her bad side. All Nicole wanted was to win and be treated like a normal person. With everyone avoiding her, it was easier for her

to continue with her pouting and stay in a continuous bad mood.

Most people stayed away from Nicole. Like a sunburn, she was painful to talk to, irritable to move or even laugh around. Nicole found it was better if she stayed away

from people. She began studying by herself in the center of Jungton Park. She found preferred to study in front of the statue of the founder of Jungton. After all, that was where the contest would be held. Nicole wanted to get every advantage. If she practiced at the site of the contest, she would have a leg up over all the other contestants.

The problem was other contestants began to do the same thing. Studying with other contestants who were reciting numbers of pi out loud became frustrating. At first it seemed like a good way for Nicole to figure out how many digits her competitors had. But after a short time, Nicole realized she wasn't studying, she was listening.

Not being able to take the distractions anymore, Nicole began yelling at other contestants studying by the statue in the center of Jungton Park to move. But they all ignored her. Next, Nicole cried when they studied in her spot and still people ignored her. Eventually she moved to the isolated edge of the park where people rarely visited that was covered in the shadow of Jungton Hospital. There she could study in peace and quiet.

Three weeks before the Pi Day Contest Nicole began skipping school to study. She wasn't actually studying the digits of pi. Nicole was skipping school to practice her victory speech where she talked about smashing the competition like an egg on pavement.

In the final week before the contest, Nicole realized she couldn't recite the number of digits of pi from the previous year. She had spent too much time fooling around. For the final 7 days she would eat and breathe pi. She wouldn't sleep, just eat and breathe pi.

Nicole began walking and reading her Pi Competition Manual. She would eat and flip through the pages of her pi book.

Walking with her head in a book, Nicole didn't see the bright red sign with white letters that said, "Danger. Construction ahead. Turn around unless you want to have an accident." Nicole couldn't be knocked out of her trance once she got into the rhythm of saying the digits of pi.

She continued walking, oblivious to the ominous and dangerous warnings to stop. She looked up at the last minute and threw her precious pi book just before she fell into a hole in the middle of the road.

Seal

Opening her eyes, Nicole looked out to a park. It looked peaceful out there. In the middle of the park was a huge bronze statue of a man in a squirrel hat. On a path leading into a shadow was a hole with a small black box at the bottom. Next to the hole were two people. One seemed to be shaking her fist at the hole. The other person looked to be smiling while looking at the box at the bottom of the hole.

There was something about that hole that looked familiar but Nicole was having a hard time thinking what it was. Every time Nicole tried to go back into her mind, her head felt as if it were being pressed through a hole the size of a quarter.

It was hard for Nicole to stop thinking about the park and her missing memory. She lay in bed giving herself headaches over and over as she tried to connect the dots within her memory. “Two old people in a park, a huge hole, and there is something in the hole that looks like a box, and now I have a splitting headache.” Before long, Nicole would be back at it again looking out the window at the park. “Two old people in a park, a huge hole, and something there is something in the hole that looks like a box, and now my headache is even worse.”

With the voice of an angel, a man in a white coat sang, “In the jungle, the mighty jungle the lion sleeps tonight.” Immediately, Nicole locked her focus onto the man she hadn’t even noticed was sitting next to her the whole time. From his white coat she could tell he was a doctor, but no doctor she had ever sang. His beautiful voice broke all her thoughts about the park, the huge hole, and the object at the bottom of the hole.

The doctor had been tracing the outline of something in his hands. He put what he was holding on the ground and jumped on it. All of a sudden he was skating around the room performing frontside kickturns. The doctor said, “Hey! You’re finally awake. I’ve been serenading you in song while I waited for you to wake up for the past six days.”

“What do you mean for six days? I was just about to...” Nicole stammered out but didn’t know how to finish the rest of her sentence.



“You were just about to what?” The doctor asked. He double checked Nicole’s vital signs. He flipped through the chart at the foot of the bed while he waited for Nicole to finish her sentence. When he realized Nicole wasn’t going to say anything the doctor

said, "My name is Dr. Pedro. I was just about to tell you that you fell into a hole. A really big hole."

Nicole touched her head and was amazed. "No wonder I have a headache." Something was wrong or rather something had gone terribly wrong. Nicole wanted, no, no, no. Nicole *needed* to get her memory back. She was supposed to be doing something important. She dug her heels in and glared at the doctor while he absent mindedly hummed and read over her reports at the foot of the hospital bed.

"I am guessing that you are responsible for wrapping my head in this ridiculous yellow bandage. I thought people could only be wrapped in white bandages, not yellow tape." Nicole barked at the doctor.

Pedro jumped on his skateboard and coasted over to Nicole's pillow. Stopping just centimeters from Nicole's face he said, "This is no good. This will not do."

"Hey, get back. Give me space or you're going to be sorry!" Nicole warned.

Shaking his head, Dr. Pedro sang, "O-wim-o-weh, o-wim-o-weh, o-wim-weh." Nicole just stared back at the doctor until he stopped shaking his arms in the air like a flag blowing through the wind in a hurricane. "No, no, no. You've seemed to have gone down the grumpy path." The doctor warned.

Nicole's hands were slowly bunching into little fists. Looking down, the doctor noticed and jumped back onto his skateboard. He sang, "Hush my darling, don't fear my darling, the lion sleeps tonight." Doctor Pedro did a double kickflip and skated to the foot of her bed. Sitting down he said, "It looked like you were going to hit me with your fists just a minute ago."

That was the least I was going to do to you. Nicole thought. "I was going to hit you. Maybe you should get out of my face. I just woke up from a horrible accident. You weren't listening to me, I don't know where I am, you won't stop singing and I have this crazy yellow bandage on my head. It looks like a giant block of cheese on my head."

"Discount double check!" Dr. Pedro screamed while laughing so hard that he fell off the bed.

Nicole had obviously knocked the doctor off the bed by kicking him. Dr. Pedro landed with one foot on his board and skated to the other side of Nicole. "O-wim-o-weh o-wim-o-weh o-wim-weh," the doctor sang. This time he was sure to stop 6 centimeters from Nicole's face. "Did you know that your legs kicked me off your bed a minute ago? I will tell my assistant to put in a test to see if you are still in control of your legs."

"Ahhhhh!" Nicole screamed. After six days not using her voice, Nicole's scream sounded more like a seal begging for treats rather than a 10 year old girl.

"Nurse, nurse!" The doctor yelled, mimicking Nicole's voice. "I think the patient is turning into a seal. Code seal!"

Assistance

Within seconds, the door to the room is blown off it's hinges and orange smoke came pouring into the room. Drums were pounding as if an elephant were stampeding through the hallways. Voices from the hallway could be heard singing "O-wim-o-weh, o-

wim-o-weh, o-wim-weh.” The doctor’s assistant was jumping and dancing like a graceful gazelle with his arms folded around a skateboard. “I have a replacement skateboard for your Dr. Pedro.” Waving his arm in a vast gesture in front of his yellow t-shirt that said, Pi Day Today, the assistant went down on one knee and presented Pedro with the yellow skateboard.

“Thank you Weston. But I don’t actually need a skateboard. I need some medicine to turn this seal-girl back into a regular girl.” Pedro exclaimed.

Nicole began ripping cords and sensors that were supposed to be keeping track of her vitals. “I’m getting out of here. You guys a crazy!” Nicole screamed. What came out of Nicole was more seal barks. “Ar arrrr. Ar arrrhh!” Weston and Pedro began jumping up and down with their hands in the sky as if they were praying for rain.

Nicole’s barking only got worse. To her surprise every time she pulled a cord out, the assistant’s graceful hands snatched the cord from her and inserted it back where it came from without pain. The doctor and his assistant were singing the same thing over and over with glee as they went around the bed in circles. “O-wim-o-weh, o-wim-o-weh, o-wim-weh.” There was nothing Nicole could do. The happiness was clearly plastered all over Pedro’s face. He lit up like a Christmas tree as he danced around the bed.

Finally, Nicole settled down and the doctor stopped circling the bed, but in no way did he stop dancing. Weston lowered his singing voice so it sounded more like background music. He positioned himself just far enough so Nicole’s bunched up fists couldn’t whack him, but close enough to put the cords back in gently if she tried to rip them out again.

“That took a while.” The doctor said while dancing in front of his patient. “Try talking in a calm voice. If you shout, you’ll probably sound like a seal performing for treats.

“You are kind of distracting me with your dancing. I can’t really take you serious as a doctor.” Nicole forced out.

The doctor said, “You’re telling me you can’t hear it? The music, it’s, it’s...”

“Annoying?” Nicole blurted.

“I would have said peaceful but you’re entitled to your opinion.” The doctor said. Dr. Pedro did the Dabb and his assistant moved next to him. “Look at my assistant, Weston. He was once like you.”

Weston stood still for the first time since he entered the room 10 minutes before. He straightened the sports glasses on his face, tilted his head so that his glasses were now tilted. Again Weston smiled at Nicole and waved to her like a robot in need of a gallon of oil. “Um, hi,” Nicole said awkwardly back as she gave a quick wave and looked away.

“O-wim-o-weh, o-wim-o-weh, o-wim-weh.” Weston sang. “Just try saying it,” Weston encouraged.

“No.” Nicole snapped. She crossed her arms across her chest and scrunched up her face. “I’m not singing that. It’s ridiculous. You both are ridiculous.”

The doctor and his assistant turned and looked at each other as if seeing each other for the first time. As if there was a timer that only the two of them could hear went off, The doctor and the assistant started dancing, waving their hands about as if they

were trying to put out a fire. Both were singing, “O-wim-o-weh, o-wim-o-weh, o-wim-weh.”

Unavoidable

Weston lowered his voice so the doctor could talk over him. “We look ridiculous?” Pedro asked. “Have you noticed the yellow tape on your head instead of white gauze?” Nicole couldn’t help but smile when the doctor said that. Quickly she wiped the smile from her face but her feet seemed to be bouncing to the rhythm.

Somewhere, deep down inside Nicole something began to turn. The motor of life began to turn its wheels again. “Look Doc, she is coming around to our side.”

“Weston, don’t hold back the music now. Bring it to 100%!” Pedro screamed.

The lights in the room all turned out and the smoke that once leaked into the room when Weston first appeared seemed to be rising from a foot on the floor to waist level. Taking a deep breath and putting his head back as if he were howling at the moon Weston yelled out, “OH E-E-E-OH-MUM-OH-WEH.”

“Give into the music, it starts with a smile, then leads to a foot tap, then a nod of the head.” Nicole could feel herself being lost in the music. The doctor was right, the more she tapped her foot, the more she wanted to tap her other foot. The more she tapped her feet, the more she wanted to dance on her feet.

Reaching up into the air Nicole began waving her arms in the air like a tall blade of grass being swayed by the wind. “What have you done to me doctor?” Nicole asked no longer trying to hold back her smile. Just ten minutes before, she was grumpy. But all that was gone now.

As Pedro and Weston danced around the room, Nicole got out of the bed and followed the doctor and the assistant towards the hospital window that overlooked a park. The two people Nicole had noticed earlier were still there. Doctor Pedro said, “Nicole, look at those people outside. Have you ever noticed there are two types of old people in the world?”

For the first time in 15 minutes, Nicole thought about someone other than herself. She looked at the people in the park. She could see the old woman on the left was as grumpy as grumpy could be. The scowl on her face was the same as the Grinch’s on Christmas day. The old woman was clearly upset about the hole blocking her way to the isolated shadowy part of the park.

Meanwhile, the other old person was a sweet old man. He had a bounce in his step as he walked around the hole, tossing bread to birds and squirrels who greeted him like Mary Poppins. The happy old man began straightening signs that said, “Pi Day Contest today in Jungton Park.” Even though you couldn’t see it, the happy old man definitely had a piece of candy in his pocket. He would give that piece of candy to a stranger just to make their day special.

Dr. Pedro said, “Both of the people you see outside made it to the park but they took two different paths to get there. And just like life, those people took different paths, too. It is easy to see one has taken the happy path in life while the other old person has

taken the grumpy path.” Nicole couldn’t help but notice how the grumpy woman hadn’t done anything but raise her arms in the air in frustration and mutter to herself. The grumpy lady had even gone over to a sign about some random Pi Day Contest and smashed it to bits. She could understand what that was like. Fifteen minutes ago when she first woke up, she wished she could have done that to the doctor.

The feeling of being grumpy began to pull at Nicole. All of the confusion of waking up in the hospital, having some silly doctor who wouldn’t stop dancing in her face all the time, and his assistant who wouldn’t stop singing, “O-wim-o-weh,” was really starting to get over whelming.

Nicole began pacing back and forth not sure of what she should do. She knew she should be studying for something. It was important and she couldn’t just forget it because she was busy dancing and singing all the time.

Rising out of the fog that was still waist high Weston asked, “What kind of person do you want to be?” Nicole stopped pacing and looked right into Weston’s smiling face. “You can decide now. Do you want to keep feeling sorry for yourself and continue to be frustrated? Because that is the grumpy path.” Holding out one hand in a fist Weston shook it with all his might until he was knocked off balance and fell into the fog.

Dr. Pedro stepped into Weston’s spot and continued, “Or do you want to make decision after decision with a smile on your face while looking on the bright side of things? That will lead you down the happy path.” An open hand reached out of the fog that was too irresistible not to grab.

Nicole reached for the hand in the smoke and grabbed it. She gasped. Her hand was shocked by Weston who was hiding in the fog. The jolt sent a pulse through her body and pushed her brain into overdrive. Nicole could remember everything before the accident. She could remember that she was supposed to be studying for the Pi Day Contest in 7 days. Looking at Weston’s shirt, she saw teeny tiny numbers. They were the digits of pi. Her eyes flew across his shirt as she committed hundreds of digits of pi to memory.

Doctor Pedro blasted a flashlight into Nicole’s eyes and broke her concentration as she mentally fired off the 6,000th digit of pi. Nicole knew at the moment had come to make a decision. She would always be able to look back at the defining moment of her life. The crossroad of Grumpy and Happy could not be avoided.

Weston rose from the fog and stood next to Pedro. The two looked at Nicole who’s pondering face began to scrunch up. She was not taking this decision lightly. As Weston and Pedro waited for a choice they nervously held each other in a hug. Nicole put her back to the window that overlooked the park. She stepped forward towards Weston and Pedro with a menacing sneer.

“Well, what have you decided?” Pedro nervously asked as he stepped backwards bumping into Weston.

Winning the Pi Day Contest returned to the front of Nicole’s mind. It consumed her thoughts the same way Cookie Monster thinks about eating cookies. Relaxing and singing the song with Dr. Pedro and Weston had allowed Nicole to memorize 6,000 digits. She only had memorized her 500th digit when she fell into the hole.

Inside, Nicole thought inside her head, *"I need to win, no matter the cost. I'll lock people in their rooms the night of the competition,"* Nicole's eyebrows arched down as she rubbed her fingers together the way evil super villains do. *"I'll flatten tires of cars since I didn't get enough time to study. There is only one choice to make."* The grumpy path made it easy for sneers and malicious thoughts to race through her mind.

"On the other hand," Nicole continued. *"I've realized that competition is healthy."* A smile crept onto her face. It was a side effect of taking the happy path. *"Having good people to compete against has allowed me to push my memory of the digits of pi even more than I thought possible. I've stood on the podium and held the Pi Day Trophy three times already. Does it really matter if I hold it one more time?"* Nicole shook the smile off her face.

"She's doing this to build the anticipation." Weston uneasily said.

Nicole narrowed her eyes at each one of them. She took another step forward and both Pedro and Weston bumped into the wall. They whimpered and tried to hide in the fog but Nicole wouldn't let that happen. She grabbed Pedro by his white coat and yanked Weston by his Pi Day shirt collar. Dragging them both to their feet and just centimeter from her own face. Nicole said, "This is no good. This will not do."

Pedro and Weston looked at each other. Looking back to Nicole, all three sang in harmony, "O-wim-o-weh, o-wim-o-weh, o-wim-weh."