





## CHAPTER 14

Everything is quiet and still. The trees, the pool below me, even my breathing.

There's a sudden flash of red feathers as a bird explodes from a tree. It swivels its head in my direction, blinks its beady eyes, then flies away.

I laugh and my voice echoes across the valley. Then I stand up on wobbly legs. The tunnel is behind me and the pool is far below me. But I don't want to think about that. I haven't got a clue how I'm going to get off this ledge. No way am I jumping.

I fumble in my pocket and pull out the map, thinking it might show me a safe way down, but before I can open it the ledge starts to tremble. Seconds later, a loud rumble comes from high above the cliff. Fear flashes through me as the rumble gets louder and the map is whipped from my hands by a sudden gust of wind. I look up just as a wave of water bursts over the top of the cliff and crashes down. *The On-Off Waterfall*, I think as the water smacks into me, knocking me off the ledge. *How could I have forgotten the On-Off Waterfall?*

I somersault through the air before plunging head first into cold, deep water.

My breath is punched out of me and water shoots up my nose. I panic, kicking out with my arms and legs, fighting my way up to the surface where I gasp for air.

I'm trying to work out if any of my bones are broken when something closes round me . . . a net! I struggle against the ropes, but they squeeze tight, forcing me into a ball. With a jerk, I'm whipped back up into the air so fast I don't even

have time to scream.

The net bounces a few times before coming to a stop. Now I'm dangling over the pool with my arms pinned to my sides and both knees squashed into my chin. Looking up, I see that the net is tied to the thick branch of a tree. With a squeak it begins to turn and I try to work out what on earth – or wherever I am – has just happened to me.

I know that I crawled through the camp bed, left Grandad's attic and arrived here. I know my face is stinging from where I smacked into the pool, that my lungs ache from holding my breath and right now the spinning net is making me travel-sick. Could I be in some sort of camp bed-induced coma? Maybe I had a panic attack in the mattress and passed out?

The net comes to a stop, then starts to turn in the opposite direction. No, this is painfully real. And if I'm trapped like a fly in a web, then it means someone, or something, wants to trap me. My eyes flick to the trees surrounding the pool and my heart speeds up as I try to remember if

we ever put any spiders in Roar.

Just then a blood-curdling scream shatters the silence and a robed, hooded figure leaps from a tree and lands on top of me. Trainers dig into my face as the figure yells, 'SUBMIT OR DIE!' and starts whacking me with a long stick.

No, I think as the stick smacks my legs and I catch a glimpse of silver. Not a stick: *a bokken*. Essentially it's a metre ruler covered in silver foil, and I saw an identical one yesterday in Grandad's attic. I know who that bokken belonged to in Roar: Wininja, my best non-real friend in the world.

'Win, stop it!' I shout. 'It's me!'

But he's enjoying himself too much to even hear me. Instead he keeps hitting me and shouting, 'SUBMIT OR DIE . . . SUBMIT OR DIE!'

'I submit! I SUBMIT!' *Thwack* goes the bokken right across my fingers. 'Ow! Win, stop hitting me. It's me, Arthur Trout!'

Win gasps and the bokken splashes into the pool, then he scampers round the net until we're



face to face. His head is covered by a ninja hood, but I can still see familiar grey eyes staring back at me. 'Arthur . . . Arthur Trout? Master of Roar?' He pokes a finger into my face. 'You've come back. I DO NOT believe it!'

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‘Neither do I,’ I blurt out. ‘I didn’t think you were real, but here you are: all solid and real, like me . . . or a wall . . . or a tree . . . or a trampoline —’

‘What are you on about, Arthur? Of course I’m real . . . And what’s a trampoline?’

‘It’s a . . . bouncy thing that people have in their garden. You jump on them.’

Win gasps. ‘I saw a trampoline yesterday, Arthur, when I came looking for you!’

The shadow at the window . . . ‘I knew it was you in Grandad’s attic,’ I say. ‘No one believed me!’

Win nods eagerly. ‘That was me! I came to find you. I couldn’t believe it when I crawled into that room, looked out of that window and saw you and Rose!’

‘But if you came to find us, why did you go back to Roar?’ The net has come to a standstill and is swaying gently over the pool.

‘You and Rose said I was never allowed to visit Home, so I stood as still as a statue until you noticed me, then I disappeared back to Roar. I

knew you’d understand.’

I shake my head. ‘Win, you should have written a note or something. You seriously freaked me out.’

‘Yeah, but it worked, didn’t it? You’re here.’

‘I think so . . .’

For a moment we just stare at each other, me curled in a ball and Win clinging to the net, like neither of us can quite believe our eyes.

Suddenly Win says, ‘Hey, do you like my new hood? Watch.’ He grabs the top of his hood and pulls it up, making it form a neat wizard’s hat. ‘WIZARD!’ he cries and I get a glimpse of his round cheeks and grin, before he pushes the pointy bit down and his face is hidden again. ‘*Ninja* . . .’ he whispers. Then he pulls the hood up. ‘WIZARD!’ Down it goes. ‘*Ninja* . . .’ Up. ‘WIZARD!’ Down. ‘*Ninja* . . . WIZARD! . . . *Ninja* . . . WIZARD!’

‘Wininja, I get it,’ I say weakly. ‘You’ve got a new wizard-hat-hood thingy, and it’s cool, but right now I think I might be sick and I’m struggling to get my head round the fact that I’m

actually in Roar.'

He nods solemnly. 'I know. It's been a long time, and there have been a lot of changes, right? And the biggest change is me. I've buffed up massively. I've been doing ten press-ups a day and eating loads of apples because I've had to get in shape. You see, since you and Rose stopped visiting us, things have gone a bit . . . dodgy.'

The net creaks under our combined weight. 'What do you mean, dodgy?'

Win sucks in his breath. 'First, the unicorns disappeared and then the Lost Girls abandoned their camp. Then the earth wobbles began and sinkholes started opening up and a few weeks ago Roar nearly split in two. Oh, and you hardly ever see furries these days. I reckon loads of them have been eaten.'

Now I'm in Roar I can easily remember what furries are: they're tiny furry fairies, basically mice with wings . . . but with human faces. 'The furries have been *eaten*? Who'd want to eat furries?'

'Crowky, and he doesn't do it because they

taste nice; he does it for fun. Crowky's changed lots, Arthur. He's gone *nuts*!'

I grip the net. 'That's why I'm here. I think my grandad is in Roar. I think Crowky has taken him!'

I'm half expecting Win to laugh or tell me I'm talking rubbish. After all, it was only ever me and Rose who visited Roar. But instead he just nods and says, 'Yep. Crowky's got your grandad.'

'*What?*' I twist and turn, desperate to escape. 'How do you know?'

'He's been sniffing around the waterfall loads recently and going in and out of the tunnel.' Win tugs on the ropes of the net. 'That's why I set this up: to catch him. When I turned up earlier there were feathers and bits of straw all over the place. It looked like there'd been a pretty serious fight.'

I think back to the feathers and straw I found in the camp bed, and the sounds I heard last night. If Crowky was in the tunnel, maybe he managed to grab hold of Grandad and drag him into Roar. That would explain why it felt like Grandad was yanked out of my hands.

‘Oh, and I found this in the mud.’ Win pulls an object out from his robes and holds it in front of my face. I recognise the blue plastic tube immediately: it’s Grandad’s asthma inhaler.

I push at the net as hard as I can. ‘That’s medicine and it belongs to my grandad. He’s got allergies. Feathers make him really wheezy and Crowky’s got those enormous wings. Win, we’ve got to get that inhaler to Grandad right now!’

Win looks incredulous. ‘Mate, if Crowky’s got your grandad – and I’m almost certain he has – then feathers are *not* the issue. Crowky’s probably stuffed him by now!’

‘Stuffed him?’ The words have a familiar ring to them. ‘Win . . . What do you mean?’

‘You know, *stuffed*, what Crowky does when he catches someone – first he squeezes them and drains all the life out of them, and if he clings on for long enough they turn into a scarecrow.’

I nod and a horrible memory comes back to me of Crowky wrapping his arms round me and refusing to let go, and how I felt weaker and weaker and weaker, until Rose leaped on his back

and I managed to escape. But Grandad wouldn’t have had anyone to leap on his back . . . ‘Win, if Crowky drains you completely and stuffs you, you can get better, right?’

Win nods. ‘Mitch told me that the touch of a friend can bring you back, if they can get to you in time. I’ve never actually seen it happen, but Mitch is usually right about stuff.’

‘And if a friend doesn’t get to you in time?’

Win shrugs. ‘You’re a scarecrow for life.’

Right now I feel so weak I can barely push the net away from my face. Draining . . . stuffing . . . these are all things Rose and I would have made up in a game, for fun, to drive each other mad, and Crowky’s gone and done it to Grandad.

‘Please, Win,’ I say. ‘You’ve got to get me out of here.’

‘Don’t worry, Arthur.’ He reaches behind his back and unsheathes a lethal-looking sword. ‘Me and my wakizashi have got this covered.’ Then he pulls back his arm, preparing to strike.

I eye the glittering blade. ‘That doesn’t look like it’s made out of a ruler.’

‘Nah, mate.’ Win narrows his eyes and takes aim. ‘My wakizashi is a step up from my bokken. It’s made from triple-folded nymph steel. It can cut through granite . . . and bone.’ Then he swings the sword through the air and slices through the rope.

This time I hit the pool like a cannonball because a surprisingly heavy boy – half wizard, half ninja – is sitting on my head. And the water doesn’t just go up my nose, it also goes into my eyeballs and enters my brain . . . I think . . . because suddenly . . . everything has gone . . . very . . . very . . . cold . . . and . . . black.



# Chapter 14

## Questions



1. Look at page 63. Copy one word which describes how Arthur travels through the air. **( 1 mark)**
2. Look at page 63. Describe what a *bokken* is and who it belongs to.  
**(2 marks)**
3. Look at page 66. How do you know that Wininja had been to Grandad's house yesterday? Use evidence from the text. **(2 marks)**
4. Look at page 67. Wininja says that he has 'buffed up massively'. What do you think this means and how has Wininja done it? **( 2 marks)**
5. Look at page 69. What does Win think Crowky has done to Grandad?  
**(1 mark)**

