

The Occasionally Interesting
Anti-Adventures
Of an Unnamed Girl

by
Brian Nathanson

CHAPTER ONE:

"Bedtime to Bedtime and All the Boredom in Between"

EXT. SUNNYSIDE LANE - DUSK

Orange stained skies rest above a sleepy suburban street.

Sunnyside Lane is the type of place that everyone dreams of growing up in. Safe, clean, peaceful. Every house looks identical and comes complete with a white picket fence.

The only stirring comes from a constant pop. Pop. Pop.

Soon we discover the source -- a young BASEBALL CAPPED BOY, no more than 5 or 6. He tosses a tennis ball against his garage door and catches it in his mitt. Pop. Pop.

On the next throw, the ball bounces off the garage and past the Boy's outstretched glove. It caroms into the street.

EXT. SUNNYSIDE GATE - DUSK

The Boy chases after the ball, which slides past a menacing steel GATE at the end of the road.

Past the gate, there are no more houses. No more street lamps. It's only darkness.

Simply from the worried look on his face, it's obvious that this is a line that he's never supposed to cross.

As if to tempt him, the Gate suddenly creaks and opens by itself. The Baseball Capped Boy's eyes go wide with wonder.

EXT. ABANDONED STREETS - DUSK

The Baseball Capped Boy marches down the steep road until he finds his tennis ball, resting safely in a pile of mud.

As he wipes off the ball, he hears something in the vacuum of sound. It sounds like horse clops.

The Boy looks around, but doesn't find any horses. Still, something doesn't seem right. He hurries back up the road.

The horse clops quicken as well. Before long, a carriage rolls up beside him.

Seated atop is THE COACHMAN, largely shielded by his cloak. His hair appears straw-like, his nose sharp and pointy.

THE COACHMAN

Are you lost?

The Coachman's lips curl into a twisted and unsettling grin.

THE COACHMAN

Would you like to be?

The Boy keeps walking, not daring to look over.

BASEBALL CAPPED BOY

I'm going home.

THE COACHMAN

These streets aren't safe for a boy your age. I could give you a ride, if you like. It's a long way home.

The Boy considers the distance, but shakes his head.

BASEBALL CAPPED BOY

I'm worried. About my mom.

THE COACHMAN

Oh, is she sick and dying? Grown-ups tend to do that. Best not to get too attached to them, I say.

BASEBALL CAPPED BOY

She told me never to ride with strangers. She'd get mad.

THE COACHMAN

You know why she tells you never to ride with strangers? Because she's worried you'll have so much fun that you'll never want to go back.

Against his better judgment, the Boy relents. He climbs on and settles on the seat next to the Coachman.

THE COACHMAN

What a gloriously well-worn mitt you have there. But what are you doing with that silly green ball?

BASEBALL CAPPED BOY

My mom doesn't let me play with a real baseball. She says I might break a window.

THE COACHMAN

Breaking a window. Now that sounds like fun.

The Baseball Capped Boy smirks.

Noticing his defenses weakening, the Coachman removes his riding glove to reveal his pale and sickly-thin fingers.

THE COACHMAN

Let me show you a game I play.

The Coachman pulls at the edge of his fingernail, extending it into a long claw. He slices the tennis ball in two.

BASEBALL CAPPED BOY

That's so cool!

THE COACHMAN

We play all kinds of games outside the gate. Games with no rules nor childish tennis balls.

The Coachman reaches into his coat and pulls out a real baseball. The Baseball Capped Boy grins.

BASEBALL CAPPED BOY

Can we go play?

THE COACHMAN

I was hoping you'd say that. I have a feeling you'll be a big star. In fact, why don't you give me your first autograph.

The Coachman hands a thick CHARCOAL PEN to the Boy, who scribbles his name on the baseball with amusement.

After he finishes, the Boy finds the pen stuck to his hand. Despite his best efforts, he can't shake it off.

The pen spirals and slithers around his hand, settling as a handcuff on his wrist. He tugs on it, but he's trapped.

THE COACHMAN

Sorry, my boy. The price of fame.

The Baseball Capped Boy finally notices that the carriage isn't pulled along by horses, but by CHILDREN, all his age.

INT. MID'S BEDROOM - DUSK

MID, 9, doe-eyed waif whose humble appearance belies the sparkling worlds simmering in her eyes, shows her crayon illustration of the story.

MID

Once the boy used the pen, he
became the Coachman's slave.

Mid tapes her drawing to the wall. Crude crayon drawings,
colorless but vivid, cover the entire side of the room.

MID

If he didn't, he could've done
whatever he wanted. Especially if
he made it to Crimtow.

Mid points out an entire panel dedicated to a "Crimtow" sign.

MID

There, school is all-day recess.

Mid points out various drawings of the sights of Crimtow,
including the school and the "Not Just Crummy Toys" store.

MID

They sell all the toys, even the
cool ones with choking hazards.
Not just the lame ones like here.
No offense, Teddy.

Mid makes that aside to her oversized teddy bear.

MID

Best of all, in Crimtow, people
never call you weird or --

ALEXIS (O.S.)

Mid...

Mid's sister, ALEXIS, 14, "Mean Girl" in training, scoffs at
the story as she paints her toenails blue.

ALEXIS

You are weird. Really weird. And
in this world, that's not good.

Mid flops down on her bed.

ALEXIS

I try to be normal, but I can't be
if my sister makes up lame stories.

MID

It's not made up. How else can you
explain where our neighbor Mo went?

ALEXIS

He went to college.

MID

He didn't learn to ride a bike until he was twelve. Trust me, college was not in his future.

ALEXIS

Then why don't you go out at night and try to get to Crimtow?

MID

'Cause the Coachman might catch me.

ALEXIS

That's what I'm hoping.

Mid frowns and hugs onto her teddy bear.

MID

Besides, if I ran away, you guys would miss me a lot.

ALEXIS

If you ran away, Mom would call Dad at the office and tell him to come home right away. For the party.

Alexis snickers, but Mid doesn't find her answer amusing.

ALEXIS

Okay, enough sisterly bonding. Put a blanket on so you don't distract me with your weirdness.

Mid puts a blanket over her head to cover herself.

The twins, BILL and JILL, both 6 and competitive, rush in.

BILL

Mom asked me to call everyone down for dinner!

JILL

No she didn't. She asked me!

Jill slaps Bill and chases him out of the room.

INT. KITCHEN - DUSK

MOM, 38, cooks fish on the stove, meticulously following a cookbook's instructions word for word.

Bill and Jill race into the kitchen.

JILL
I'm first to dinner, Mom!

BILL
Yeah, but I'm hungriest.

JILL
Nuh uh. I'm so hungry it hurts.

MOM
Hon... you've got to fight through
that pain, or else none of the boys
in school will ever like you.

Alexis and Mid enter. Mom peeks under Mid's blanket.

MOM
Why are you wearing that, sweetie?

ALEXIS
So she doesn't say weird stuff.

MOM
Makes sense.

Mom places the blanket back on and goes to plate the fish.

MOM
Sit down, kids. Your father will
be home from the office any minute.

Bill and Jill jostle for the best seat at the dinner table.

MID
We're having fish? Again?

MOM
Fish is a staple of a healthy diet.

MID
It's the 16th day in a row.

MOM
We're right in the heart of Fish
Month! Isn't it exciting?

MID
But I'm allergic to fish.

MOM
And whose fault is that, dear?

Mid gives up and takes a seat. The phone rings.

MOM

Oh look, here's Dad now.

Mom places a picture of DAD, 40, straight-laced businessman, next to the phone, and then pushes the speaker phone on.

DAD (V.O.)

Hey, kids. Just calling to check in before Mid's big day tomorrow.

MID

Is it my birthday or something?

ALEXIS

Gross. I refuse to go to the party. It'll ruin my reputation.

DAD (V.O.)

No, it's Mid's big report!

MID

Dad, the report's not a big deal.

DAD (V.O.)

Of course it is. It's 3rd grade!

MOM

That's almost as important as 4th grade. And you know what happens to people who fail the 4th grade.

MID

They don't have to go to 5th grade?

MOM

They're on the streets, unemployed and begging for nickels just to plug the holes in their shoes.

ALEXIS

I aced 3rd grade, obvi.

BILL

I'll ace it too.

JILL

I'll do so well that they'll probably let me teach the class.

MOM

Eat your fish so you do well, Mid.

Mid pokes at her fish, which squirms.

MID
Can I just skip to dessert?

DAD (V.O.)
Sugar rots your brain, dear.

MOM
You can have some graham crackers
in the cupboard. Special treat.

Mid hops up and goes to the cabinet to pull out a dusty old box of graham crackers.

She sits back down and munches on the stale crackers.

ALEXIS
Mom? Mid's hogging all the
crackers. Make her stop.

Mid sighs and hands over both graham crackers. She doesn't complain. She simply puts back on the blanket and shuts up.

EXT. SUNNYSIDE LANE - DAY

A minivan pulls out of the driveway.

INT. MINIVAN - DAY

Mom drives. Alexis sits in the front, while Mid gets stuck in the back between Bill and Jill, who slap at each other.

MOM
Mid, your report should be about
how you want to be a lawyer or
investment banker. Those are the
best jobs in Sunnyside.

Mid gazes out the window. The only action comes from a freckle-faced PAPER BOY and a SUBURBAN MAN mowing his lawn.

MID
I don't want to do boring jobs,
Mom. I like to make stuff up.

MOM
What do you think lawyers do?

Mid sighs and looks over her shoulder at the mysterious gate.

MID
What could I be if I left
Sunnyside?

MOM

There's nothing past the gate.

MID

Then what's the harm in checking?

MOM

It's about boundaries, sweetheart.
 Passing the gate leads to trouble.
 Soon you'd be missing bedtimes and
 next thing you know, boom, you have
 a green mohawk and you're in a
 reggae band with a guy named Bobo.

MID

I don't even know what reggae is.

MOM

And let's keep it that way, dear.

EXT. SUNNYSIDE LANE - DAY

Mid looks back out to the gate. She's stuck behind the steel bars. For her, it's never felt more like a prison.

EXT. GOLDWATER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

KIDS walk to school, all lugging heavy backpacks.

INT. THIRD GRADE CLASSROOM - DAY

Mid sits in the back of the overcrowded class and doodles in her notebook.

On her sides, BULLIES fire paper airplanes at each other.

CLAYBERT (O.S.)

I wanted to be a rocket scientist,
 but then my dad missed the Science
 Fair because NASCAR was on TV.

CLAYBERT, 10, uncommonly nerdy, stands at the head of class, reciting his report. The words "When I Grow Up" are written in sloppy cursive on the blackboard behind him.

CLAYBERT

Now I wanna be a racecar driver so
 my dad will like me. Also, I'll be
 cool enough to get a girlfriend who
 isn't my cousin. The end.

MRS. FROMLEY, 55, smokes three cigarettes simultaneously and scans the newspaper for the new job listings.

MRS. FROMLEY
Claybert, start looking into online dating, because that's the only way you'll get a girlfriend.

Claybert sits down. He gets pegged with a paper airplane.

Mrs. Fromley notices a FIDGETY GIRL, 9.

MRS. FROMLEY
Sarah, sit still or I'll make your parents up your medication.

FIDGETY GIRL
But I have to go to the bathroom.

MRS. FROMLEY
If I have to sit through this, you do too. Who wants to go next?

Simultaneously, every student looks down, except for Mid.

MRS. FROMLEY
You. Weird girl. Make it quick.

Mid walks to the front of the class and shows her drawing, a walrus with a top hat.

MID
When I grow up, I wanna move to Crimtow and own a waliroo farm. A waliroo is rare species of walrus, noted for its impeccable manners and elegant dance moves.

Everyone in the room, including Mrs. Fromley, laughs.

MRS. FROMLEY
I'm afraid that, like girls who'd date poor Claybert, those simply don't exist.

MID
But Mrs. Fromley, that's why it'll be so great when I find one. Supply and demand. I'll make enough money so I don't have to go to school, or live with my parents--

MRS. FROMLEY

Sit down. I don't make enough to deal with kids with special needs.

While Mid retreats to her seat, Mrs. Fromley stands.

MRS. FROMLEY

Kids, they only pay me enough to teach you two things, and since the cursive's clearly not taking --

Mrs. Fromley erases the sloppy cursive writing on the board.

MRS. FROMLEY

I want to hammer down the second part. Realistic expectations, people. This goes for all of you. Some more than others. Hint hint--

Mrs. Fromley makes an aside to an especially CHUBBY BOY, 8.

MRS. FROMLEY

Rethink the soccer thing, Chubs.

Mid crumples up her drawing.

MRS. FROMLEY (O.S.)

In kindergarten we told you that everyone has one special talent. Well, it's been three years, and you've run out of time to find it. So no one's passing this class unless their report's entitled "Why I want to be a lawyer," "Why I want to be an investment banker," or, for you girls, "why I want to marry a lawyer or investment banker."

The Fidgety Girl tugs on Mid's sleeve.

FIDGETY GIRL

Mid, can I have your neat drawing?

Thrilled that someone appreciates her, Mid hands it over.

FIDGETY GIRL

Thanks! I had 'n accident.

The Fidgety Girl takes the paper to wipe her newly wet chair.

Mid sighs and stares out the window, longing for an escape. A paper airplane plunks her.

EXT. GOLDWATER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

At the end of the school day, Mrs. Fromley lights up two cigarettes as she waits for the Children to get picked up.

Mid sees Mom's minivan pull up.

MID

Mrs. Fromley, can I redo my report?
I really need a good grade.

MRS. FROMLEY

Sorry, but my body really needs at
least two cups of whiskey by dinner
time. You understand.

MID

Not really.

MRS. FROMLEY

When you're my age, you will.

Mid reluctantly heads to the minivan to face the music.

INT. MINIVAN - DAY

Mid sulks in the backseat while Mom lectures her.

MOM

We're not mad, just disappointed.
You keep living in this fantasy
world and refuse to accept reality.

MID

But Crimtow's more fun than here.

MOM

Crimtow's fake! You made it up!

MID

That's probably why it's so cool.

MOM

We'll take care of that. Crimtow
won't be any more competition.

MID

What do you mean?

MOM

You'll see.

INT. MID'S BEDROOM - DAY

Mom escorts Mid back into her bedroom.

MOM

We're giving you even stricter rules. That means an earlier bedtime, no more graham cracker sweets, and especially no more weird drawings.

Mid notices her wall, which is completely bare. All her drawings have been ripped off. She looks crushed.

MID

You can't do this to me.

MOM

As long as you live in our house, you'll live by our rules.

MID

I don't want to live in your house.

MOM

Too bad you don't have a choice.

Mid flops down on her bed and tries not to cry.

EXT. SUNNYSIDE LANE - DUSK

The night nears on the suburban street.

INT. KITCHEN - DUSK

Mom consults the cookbook as she cooks more fish. Bill and Jill wrestle on the floor.

The phone rings, and Mom rushes over to turn the speaker on.

DAD (V.O.)

Hey, honey. I wanted to check in and see how Mid's doing.

MOM

Don't worry about her, dear. She knows what she has to do.

INT. MID'S BEDROOM - DUSK

A distraught Mid jams some clothes into the backpack. She packs graham crackers and her teddy bear.

Alexis strolls into the room and notices the backpack.

ALEXIS

Where are you going, dork?

MID

I'm leaving the family and moving to Crimtow. Don't tell Mom and Dad. I don't wanna upset them or --

ALEXIS

Does this mean I get my own room? Awesome! Trust me, there's no way I'll tell Mom and Dad.

Mid pulls a folder out of her backpack.

MID

If they ever want to find me, you can give them this.

Mid attaches a letter to the folder and hands it to Alexis.

ALEXIS

Yeah right. Good luck in Crimtow. Watch out for that coach thingy.

Once Mid leaves, Alexis tosses the folder in the trash.

INT. KITCHEN - DUSK

Mom chats with Dad on speaker phone. She fails to notice when Mid tip toes out the door.

MOM

Maybe she'll cheer up when I give her some fish tonight.

DAD (V.O.)

I thought she was allergic.

MOM

Oh, that's just a phase.

EXT. SUNNYSIDE LANE - DUSK

With her backpack on, Mid wanders down the suburban road.

She tries to flag down passing cars.

MID
Anyone want to take me to Crimtow?
I've got money!

Mid pulls a piggybank out of her backpack and shakes it.

MID
Hear that? It's almost full!

Regardless, the cars roar past her.

Mid slumps down on the street corner and pouts.

MID
Aren't there any taxis in this
stupid town?

Mid slumps down on the street corner and pouts. She pulls out her note pad and scribbles a taxi.

Of course, her crude drawing is nothing more than a big ball with wheels and the misspelled word "Taxsee" on the side.

She sighs and puts the pad down. As soon as she does, she notices something that suddenly appeared just past the gate --

A taxi. Actually, it's more of a big ball with wheels and the misspelled word "Taxsee" on the side.

MID
Whoa.

INT. KITCHEN - DUSK

Alexis strolls back into the kitchen.

MOM
You don't think we were too harsh
on your sister, do you?

ALEXIS
No way, Mom. If she continued to
do that make-believe stuff, who
knows where she'd have ended up.

EXT. SUNNYSIDE GATE - DUSK

Mid stands at the gate, which creaks and opens for her.

CHAPTER TWO:

"Financial Scams and Other Aspects of Adulthood"

EXT. SUNNYSIDE GATE - DUSK

Mid steps closer to the bizarre, sputtering taxi.

BACCATELLI, 47, bulky with a raspy hoodlum voice, peers out.

BACCATELLI

'Ey girl, you call a taxi or what?

Baccatelli chews on a mouthful of something which appears to be tobacco. He spits a gob of it on onto the street.

The gob turns out to be a black slime-coated cockroach, which scurries for a while before it sprouts wings and flies off.

Mid watches in amazement and then looks back to Baccatelli.

MID

I didn't tell anyone I wanted one.

BACCATELLI

But ya drew one, didn't ya. And
'dis is 'da fastest, greatest
taxicab in 'da area. Prolly 'da
whole world too, but I don't wanna
sound boastful. Plus, I ain't
never been to China, so who knows.

Mid studies the broken down taxi.

MID

It doesn't look like the fastest,
greatest taxi in the world.

BACCATELLI

Do you want a ride, or do you wanna
poke fun of my automobile and make
me feel like a lesser man?

MID

I'll take the ride, please.

Mid goes to tug on the passenger door, but finds it stuck.

BACCATELLI

'Dat's an easy fix.

Baccatelli motions to the elaborate buttons on the dashboard.

BACCATELLI
My taxi 'ere's got a hundred and
fitty-nine features.

Baccatelli presses a button. Suddenly, one of the front
tires grows twice its size, tilting the taxi on its side.

BACCATELLI
I ain't exactly figured out which
one does what yet. So why don't ya
climb in 'da back window.

INT. BACCATELLI'S TAXSEE - NIGHT

Mid climbs through the window and tumbles into the backseat.

BACCATELLI
'Dis button, I've mastered.

Baccatelli pushes a button which displays the cab fare.

BACCATELLI
I'll take you anywhere. Except for
China. I'm afraid of what I might
find. So where to?

MID
I can really go anywhere I want?

BACCATELLI
Lil' lady, past 'da gate, you can
do anythin' you want. You can go
to a club where's you can dance all
night. You can go to a restaurant
where's you can eat all you want...

MID
Well I am hungry. I missed dinner.

BACCATELLI
I'll take ya to 'da favorite eatery
of kids everywhere: Le Graisse de
Baleine. Sounds foreign, don't it.
'Dat's how ya know it's good.

MID
Great! Let's go.

BACCATELLI
Want some grublets for 'da road?

Baccatelli holds up a plastic baggie, which houses several
roaches swimming in black slime. He pops some in his mouth.

After chomping on the grublets, Baccatelli spits them out the window. They sprout wings and flutter off into the night.

Mid watches him with disgust, but feigns a polite smile.

MID

Um, I'd rather not ruin my appetite before we get to the restaurant.

BACCATELLI

Good thinkin'. Buckle up, 'cause 'dis is gonna be a wild ride.

Baccatelli cracks his knuckles and slams on the gas. However, the taxi merely putters along down the road.

MID

Let me guess: you haven't figured out which button makes it go faster than any taxi in the world.

BACCATELLI

What did I say 'bout hurt feelings?

MID

Sorry. It wouldn't hurt your feelings if I go to sleep for a bit, would it?

BACCATELLI

Knock yourself out. You's in good hands. We'll be at Le Graisse de Baleine by 'da time you wake up.

Mid yawns, and then pulls out the teddy bear from her backpack. She curls up with it, and goes to sleep.

Baccatelli makes sure she's asleep before he presses another button. This one causes the cab fare to accelerate quickly.

EXT. LE GRAISSE DE BALEINE - DAY

The enormous restaurant, McDonald's on steroids, has dozens of floors stacked like pancakes.

The line of PATRONS outside has a noticeable demographic: they're mostly children, and they are all grossly overweight.

INT. LE GRAISSE DE BALEINE - DAY

Inside, a TUBBY FAMILY finishes off their fatty turkey legs. The plates begin to roll to the side.

Their table is nothing more than a conveyer belt which gives them course after course. Seventeen more courses remain.

GREEBY (O.S.)
Happy birthday to you...

GREEBY, a tiny toad of a man in a green restaurant blazer, carries a tray of thick CUPCAKES to another table.

Once Greeby places the tray on the table, the birthday candles sink into the cupcakes and emerge underneath as legs. The cupcakes use them to skitter and dance around the table.

The cupcakes pop their tops open and closed to resemble mouths as they perform as a barbershop quartet.

SINGING CUPCAKES
Happy birthday to you!!

INT. LE GRAISSE DE BALEINE KITCHEN - DAY

Greeby swings into the kitchen.

GREEBY
Another packed house, Chef Gordo!

CHEF GORDO, green chef's hat and blazer, has no lower body, as his torso rests on a bar stool on wheels.

CHEF GORDO
We need to keep stuffing them.

Chef Gordo sets up ten plates in a circle around him.

CHEF GORDO
Can I get a hand, Greeby?

Greeby rushes over and spins Chef Gordo's bar stool, the top of which turns out to be a lazy Susan.

Chef Gordo whirls around at lightning speed, yet manages to place waffles on the plates, loading them up with syrup, grapes, full sticks of butter, a candy bar here and there.

By the time he finishes spinning, the plates are a mess.

GREEBY
Another brilliant creation, Chef!

CHEF GORDO
Still needs that final touch.

Chef Gordo takes a plump BIRD from the cupboard. He holds it over the plates, and squeezes its stomach. The bird groans and squirts out a thick creamy sauce from its behind.

GREEBY
Pure genius!

Chef Gordo grins and then checks his expensive diamond watch.

CHEF GORDO
I'm gonna take a potty break,
Greeby. Make sure to keep
feeding the pigs 'til I get back.

INT. LE GRAISSE DE BALEINE - DAY

In his own green blazer, WYLER, 36, scruffy and ruggedly handsome with a hint of mischief in his eyes, refills glasses of mayonnaise for a table of OBESE CHILDREN.

WYLER
So I take it you kids are locals?

The Obese Children nod, their double chins jiggling.

WYLER
Fourth dessert's coming right up.
In the meantime, here's a new fork,
knife, defibrillator.

Wyler hands out the utensils to the Children and heads off.

Wyler continues to collect the bills and credit cards from other tables until he slips into the bathroom.

INT. LE GRAISSE DE BALEINE BATHROOM - DAY

When Wyler enters, he hears Chef Gordo shout from inside a bathroom stall, which has been jammed shut by a red cane.

CHEF GORDO
Help! Help! I'm stuck!

WYLER
Want me to order you a bran muffin?

CHEF GORDO
The door's jammed!

Wyler casually hangs his green blazer on a coat rack before he removes the cane. Chef Gordo bursts out.

CHEF GORDO
I got locked in there by accident.

WYLER
It was no accident. Someone must
have jammed the door with this.
Con men use these types of canes.
From what I hear.

Chef Gordo wheels to the coat rack, and quickly puts on the green blazer that Wyler had previously removed.

CHEF GORDO
I'm in the middle of a shift too.

Chef Gordo hurries out, but Wyler stops him with the cane.

WYLER
Then you should wash your hands.

Chef Gordo removes his watch while he washes his hands.

WYLER
You know, you shouldn't let whoever
did this get away with it.

While Chef Gordo washes up, Wyler slyly uses the cane to slide the watch into his hand.

WYLER
There's too much crime in the city
as is.

CHEF GORDO
You're right. Let's go find him.

INT. LE GRAISSE DE BALEINE - DAY

Wyler and Chef Gordo rush out of the bathroom. Chef Gordo looks across the room to Greeby.

CHEF GORDO
Greeby, we have a con man loose!

Greeby looks to the HEFTY PATRON he's currently serving.

GREEBY
I'll get your bill momentarily.

HEFTY PATRON
We already paid. Someone took my
credit card. He did.

Before the Hefty Patron can point him out, Wyler uses the cane to trip a WAITRESS. The commotion causes everyone to look in her direction, while Wyler scurries off.

Wyler weaves in and out of tables on his way to the window, swiping a few pastries for the road. In his rush, he knocks the plate of Singing Cupcakes into a woman's face.

EXT. LE GRAISSE DE BALEINE ALLEY - DAY

Wyler climbs out the window and uses his red cane to swing down to the alley behind the restaurant.

A SAD-SACK BEGGAR CHILD, 10, pops his head out of a manhole.

SAD-SACK BEGGAR CHILD
Sire, do you have any money for an orphan? All I need is some nickels to plug the holes in me shoes.

The Sad-Sack Beggar Child climbs out of the manhole. He rattles his tin can and gets closer to Wyler, who backs away.

WYLER
Where are you from, Sunnyside?

SAD-SACK BEGGAR CHILD
No, sire. I live in the sewers.

WYLER
Then sorry, I'm broke.

Wyler counts his money and stuffs it in his back pocket. The Sad-Sack Beggar Child watches him with a sad pout.

A few more pathetic sniffles later, and Wyler caves.

WYLER
Listen, this is a con man's cane. It's a great way to raise money.

SAD-SACK BEGGAR CHILD
How do I get one?

WYLER
Either steal one, or find someone nice enough to give you theirs.

Wyler hands over the cane. The Beggar happily takes it.

WYLER
Hey, it's not free. I'll give it to you, for a reasonable price.

The Beggar offers the tin can, and Wyler takes it.

WYLER

Fair deal. Seeya around, kid.
Stay outta trouble.

EXT. LE GRAISSE DE BALEINE - DAY

In the front of the restaurant, POLICE arrive on the scene.

Wyler circles around and heads over to a POLICEMAN.

WYLER

In the alley, I saw some kid with a
red cane. He must be the crook.

Wyler disappears into the crowd.

INT. BACCATELLI'S TAXSEE - DAY

Baccatelli chews on his grublets as he drives.

In the backseat, Mid groggily wakes up and looks around.

MID

Are we at the restaurant yet?

BACCATELLI

Yep. Which is exactly 2893 dollars
and 20 cents from where we was.

MID

2893 dollars?

BACCATELLI

And twenty cents.

MID

But I don't have that much money.

BACCATELLI

Somethin' you shoulda said before
you hopped in the world's premier
cab, little miss mooch.

EXT. LE GRAISSE DE BALEINE - DAY

ROLO, 30, portly man-child, holds a heavy knapsack and
patiently waits in the line outside the restaurant.

A CLUB PROMOTER, 19, approaches Rolo with a flier.

CLUB PROMOTER
 Heyyyy! Tired of waiting in line?
 Come check out Qirka's Circus!

Rolo looks at the flier, which is a picture of QIRKA, 34,
 multi-colored haired temptress. The flier speaks to Rolo.

QIRKA'S FLIER
 Plenty of free food for all.
 Qirka's Circus: it's a trip.

ROLO
 Sorry. I'll have to ask my boss.

Rolo stuffs the flier into his knapsack, and the Club
 Promoter moves on.

Wyler arrives, and dumps his loot into Rolo's knapsack.

ROLO
 Find the kid we need, boss?

WYLER
 Not a single kid in there was from
 Sunnyside, so I cut my shift short.

Rolo watches the police pull the Beggar into a police car.

ROLO
 Look at them, arresting some poor
 beggar. Isn't that sad?

WYLER
 Tragic, but completely unrelated to
 us. We still need to find a kid,
 or Rockrane will kill us.

ROLO
 This restaurant is where kids go.
 Where else can we find one?

Baccatelli's taxi sputters past Rolo and Wyler, who catches
 sight of Mid in the backseat.

WYLER
 Bingo.

ROLO
 How do you know that the girl's
 from Sunnyside?

WYLER
 She doesn't weigh a million pounds.
 And, she has a backpack.

ROLO
What's a backpack?

WYLER
It's a sign that she's been
enslaved in one of those school
prisons they have. Let's nab her.

INT. BACCATELLI'S TAXSEE - DAY

Mid digs through her backpack to appease Baccatelli.

MID
We can trade. Do you like graham
crackers? Oh, how about drawings?
If I become famous, then they might
be worth 2893 dollars.

Mid shows off a crayon drawing of a flying giraffe.

BACCATELLI
What is 'dat, a flying --

Suddenly, a miniature giraffe crashes into the front
windshield, shattering the glass. Mid shrieks.

EXT. LE GRAISSE DE BALEINE - DAY

The mini giraffe squeaks as it tumbles down on the ground,
limp and lifeless. Baccatelli stops the taxi and jumps out.

Baccatelli looks to the gathering CROWD, which includes Rolo.

BACCATELLI
'Dat thing came outta nowhere!

ROLO
And now it's headed straight to
giraffe heaven because of you.

BACCATELLI
Screw 'dis. I'm leavin'.

Before Baccatelli escapes, Wyler steps out of the crowd.

WYLER
And going straight to prison.

Wyler walks over and flashes his identification, which is
clearly someone else's driver's license.

WYLER

I'm Wyler and I'm with the MEAPA,
the Miniature Exotic Animal
Protection Agency. The only thing
higher on our agenda than finding a
better acronym is protecting the
miniature giraffe species.

INT. BACCATELLI'S TAXSEE - DAY

Rolo climbs in the backseat. Mid gets set to scream, but Rolo covers her mouth with his hand.

ROLO

I promise I won't hurt you, but you
have to keep quiet. Please?

EXT. LE GRAISSE DE BALEINE - DAY

Wyler lectures Baccatelli.

WYLER

You know how big of a fine this is?

INT. BACCATELLI'S TAXSEE - DAY

Rolo looks to the cab fare display, and relays hand signals.

EXT. LE GRAISSE DE BALEINE - DAY

Wyler reads Rolo's signals, and turns back to Baccatelli.

WYLER

2893 dollars and 20 cents. That's
if this is your first offense.

Baccatelli pulls out a wad of money and hands it over.

WYLER

License and registration?

BACCATELLI

They're in 'da car. Officer, if
there's anythin' I can do...

WYLER

You've done more than enough
already. Stay here.

Wyler climbs in the front of the taxi. He drives off.

Confused, Baccatelli moves to the giraffe. He sees that it's a fake plastic toy. When he picks it up, it squeaks.

BACCATELLI

This ain't good for my self-esteem.

Baccatelli coughs. A grublet flies out of his mouth.

INT. BACCATELLI'S TAXSEE - DAY

Wyler chuckles as the taxi pulls away from the crowd.

Rolo takes his hand off Mid's mouth.

MID

That giraffe was a fake?

ROLO

It's a game we play.

Rolo opens his knapsack and shows her other fake giraffes.

MID

Is stealing cars a game too?

WYLER

We didn't steal the car. We stole you. But it looks like this hunk of junk's a package deal.

MID

What do you want with me?

WYLER

We needed a kid from Sunnyside. The real world. I bet that's where you're from, isn't it?

When Mid nods, Wyler and Rolo exchange grins. Score.

ROLO

I've never met a girl from Sunnyside before! You're as nice as I thought you'd be. You smell nice too. Like graham crackers.

WYLER

My name's Wyler, and that's Rolo. Don't listen to him. Stupid people shouldn't be encouraged to speak.

MID

He seems nice.

WYLER
That means you too. Keep quiet.

MID
Sorry.

WYLER
So what's your name, kid?

MID
You told me not to talk. Are you trying to trick me? That's mean.

WYLER
Get used to it. So what's your name?

MID
I don't know.

Wyler looks back with a skeptical expression on his face.

MID
I don't know my name. Honest.

WYLER
Something's not right, Rolo.

EXT. HILLY ROAD - DAY

Once they are safely away from the restaurant, Wyler pulls the taxi over to the side of the road.

INT. BACCATELLI'S TAXSEE - DAY

Wyler climbs in the back, and eyes Mid suspiciously.

WYLER
This girl's trying to scam us.
She's not from Sunnyside.

MID
I am too.

WYLER
Prove it. What do your parents do?

MID
My dad works all day and night at the office. My mom's job is to make sure we brush our teeth, and to do whatever Oprah says.

WYLER

Well her story checks out. That's the real world all right.

MID

What are you going to do to me? Hold me for ransom? Kill me?!

WYLER

I might if you keep yapping.

Mid seems worried, so Rolo reassures her.

ROLO

Don't worry. Boss wouldn't actually hurt anyone.

WYLER

Shut up, idiot. I'm trying to threaten someone here.

ROLO

I've just never seen you in an actual fight before, boss.

WYLER

Rolo, if I don't kill people, what do I have this for?

Wyler rolls up his pant leg to show the knife strapped to his ankle. He tries to remove it, but has great difficulty.

Mid plucks the knife out for him. Rolo points to the blade.

ROLO

This is the sharp side, boss.

Wyler grumbles and snatches back the knife.

WYLER

Fine, I won't kill her. Yet. But I could if I wanted to.

ROLO

Whatever you say, boss.

WYLER

But I do want her to explain why she doesn't have a name. Don't you have parents, kid?

MID

My parents aren't very creative. Plus, Mom says having your own name promotes an inflated sense of individualism. So they didn't give me one. They just call me "Middle Child." Or "Mid," for short.

ROLO

That's no fun.

MID

That's why I ran away. I hate it there. I want to go somewhere where there's no parents, no rules. Where people can do whatever they want. A place like...

MID

Crimtow.

WYLER

Crimtow.

Naturally, Mid gets excited that Wyler knows it.

MID

Crimtow's real?! I knew it!

ROLO

We used to live there. It's a lot better than that restaurant.

WYLER

Not only can you eat junk food, you can do anything you've ever wanted, all day long.

MID

Ohhh, can you take me there, Wyler?

WYLER

Sure. I'm a charitable guy. It's why I hang out with Rolo. We'll take you to Crimtow, for whatever money you've got on you.

Mid unzips her backpack and pulls out her piggybank.

WYLER

Fair deal. Next stop, Crimtow.

MID

Yes! Thank you, thank you!

Mid goes to hug Wyler. Confused and scared, Wyler scurries away and winds up falling out the car door.

EXT. HILLY ROAD - DAY

Mid and Rolo get out of the car to check on Wyler, who keeps backpedaling away from Mid.

WYLER

Get her off! She's got rabies.

ROLO

She was trying to hug you, boss.

WYLER

Tell her that I don't hug people.

ROLO

Boss doesn't even touch people.
But, can I take his hug for him?

Rolo opens his arms for a hug. Mid obliges.

MID

I can't wait to get to Crimtow!
Come on! Let's go, let's go!

Mid hops back into the taxi. Rolo grins at Wyler.

ROLO

See? I told you she was nice.

WYLER

She's all right, I guess. The
graham cracker smell's not bad.

ROLO

She's a great hugger too, boss.

WYLER

How would you know, idiot? How
many people have ever hugged you?

ROLO

I can still tell.

WYLER

Don't get too attached. We'll take
her to Crimtow. But when we get
there, we're selling her.

ROLO

Whatever you say, boss.

CHAPTER THREE:**"The Appeal of an Anti-Adventure"**

INT. MID'S BEDROOM - DAY

Alexis chats on her cell phone.

MOM (O.S.)
Girls! Time for breakfast!

ALEXIS
Becky, I gotta go. My mom has all these rules about how we have to eat. She's so out of touch.

Mom pops her head in so Alexis hangs up.

MOM
Hon, where's Mid?

ALEXIS
Ummm... she left for school. I think she's gonna be at the library all day working on that report.

MOM
That's great!

ALEXIS
Yep. You like, totally cured her weirdness. Mom of the year.

Alexis gives Mom a high five on her way downstairs.

Mom, preening like a peacock, picks up Alexis' cell phone.

INT. DAD'S OFFICE CUBICLE - DUSK

Cooped up in his overly cramped cubicle, Dad gazes at the family pictures on his desk. His phone rings and he answers.

MOM (V.O.)
Hon, Mid's at the library!

DAD
That's great, dear. Hold on...

Dad notices TWEED, 58, his patronizing boss, hovering around. Dad lowers the phone.

TWEED

Hey buddy, think you have time to fix this broken watch?

Tweed hands his watch to Dad, who checks it against a clock.

DAD

It seems to be working fine, sir.

TWEED

That can't be. The watch says it's office hours, and yet here you are, making personal calls.

DAD

I'll finish up right away.

TWEED

That'd really help me out. And to help you out, I'll find you some work to do.

Tweed hands over a huge stack of papers and exits. Dad grumbles and picks back up the phone.

DAD

I've got to get back to work. But I'm happy Mid's gonna be all right.

EXT. HILLY ROAD - DAY

The taxi puts along past the hills and green palm trees.

INT. BACCATELLI'S TAXSEE - DAY

Wyler drives, and grumbles when he looks to the backseat, where Mid teaches Rolo how to draw with the crayon.

ROLO

I'm sorry, Mid, but I don't think I'm very good at this.

MID

It's only your first try. You'll get a lot better with practice.

WYLER

Knock it off back there. Drawing won't help us get to Crimtow.

Mid puts down her own crayon drawing, which is of bright blue and pink palm trees.

Rolo looks at Mid's drawing, and then notices how the palm trees outside now have bright blue and pink leaves.

Mid doesn't notice herself, but Rolo gets excited.

ROLO
Boss? I think Mid's drawing --

WYLER
I don't care what she's drawing, idiot. I'm trying to figure out these buttons. Preferably the one that puts the partition up.

MID
The cab driver said that one of them makes it go faster than any car in the world.

Wyler presses a button, and the passenger seat ejects.

WYLER
Damn. If only Rolo sat there.

Mid leans over to look at the dashboard buttons. She reaches and flips a random switch.

EXT. HILLY ROAD - DAY

The switch causes the wheels of the taxi to retract, leaving the taxi as nothing more than a ball.

INT. BACCATELLI'S TAXSEE - DAY

Wyler, Rolo and Mid look outside and see that they are stuck.

WYLER
Way to go, kid.

Suddenly, the taxi starts to shift. It's rolling!

ROLO
Uh oh. This could be trouble.

MID
This could be fun!

EXT. HILLY ROAD - DAY

The taxi rolls forward slowly, building momentum.

It picks up speed, especially when it dips down a hill.

INT. BACCATELLI'S TAXSEE - DAY

Wyler, Rolo and Mid fly all over the taxi as it spins along. Wyler and Rolo look like they're about to be sick.

Mid throws her arms in the air and squeals as though it was a roller coaster ride.

MID

Wheee!

EXT. HILLY ROAD - DAY

The taxi rockets like a pinball at the mercy of the hilly road. It spins along, faster than any taxi in the world. (China excluded)

The taxi shoots up a hill and flies off into the air.

EXT. FISHING DOCK - DAY

Two old SLOW-MOVING FISHERMEN sit on a bridge and dangle their fishing poles in the serene lake.

SLOW-MOVING FISHERMAN

You stickin' with those worms, Ed?

SLOW-MOVING FISHERMAN 2

Yep. Only two things I keep loyal to is my worms and my wife.

The taxi flies into the lake behind them, landing with a loud splash. The Fishermen don't notice, and keep fishing.

SLOW-MOVING FISHERMAN

Neither one of them got you seeing fish for awhile.

Slow-Moving Fisherman 2 gets a tug on his line. When he reels it in, Rolo bursts above water.

SLOW-MOVING FISHERMAN

Got any more of those worms, Ed?

EXT. FISHING LAKE - DAY

The Slow-Moving Fishermen give towels to Rolo, Wyler, and Mid, who are all soaking wet.

Mid pours the excess water out of her backpack. Rolo tilts his head to let water leak out of his ear.

Wyler rushes to a bucket of fish. He sticks his head in it and hurls. After, he offers to return it to the Fishermen.

SLOW-MOVING FISHERMAN

You can go 'head and keep that.

EXT. FISHING VILLAGE - DAY

Mid waves goodbye to the Fishermen and hurries to follow Wyler and Rolo as they leave the fishing village.

WYLER

We'll have to walk to Crimtow now, because someone, who shall remain nameless, had to pull that switch.

MID

It was fun though, wasn't it?

WYLER

Well, we did get free dinner.

Wyler waves the bucket. Mid grimaces at the thought.

MID

I'm allergic to fish. And, while I've never tried it, I imagine vomit's not great for me either.

WYLER

I didn't actually throw up.

Wyler shows off the bucket's still-clean fish.

MID

Then why did you pretend to?

WYLER

To get free fish.

MID

So you lied?

ROLO

It's not lying. It's just a game. Games are the one thing we're good at. In fact, boss is the ki--

WYLER

Shut up, Rolo.

ROLO
 Sorry, boss. Anyway, it's just for
 fun, Mid. No one gets hurt.

MID
 But won't they get hurt, when they
 find out you stole their fish?

Wyler and Rolo are stumped. Wyler eventually responds.

WYLER
 You think too much. And you think
 about other people, which is even
 worse. Knock it off.

They come to a crossing, where an ominous forest looms.

WYLER
 Rolo, do you remember how to get to
 Crimtow from here?

ROLO
 No, boss. But I bet Mid knows.

WYLER
 How in hell would she know?

Rolo steps away, and waves Wyler over for a conference.

ROLO
 Boss... I think Mid's magic.

WYLER
 Rolo, you're a moron. You think a
 toaster oven's magic.

ROLO
 But, I saw her draw pink trees, and
 it came true. She's special.

Wyler looks back to study the unassuming child in his care.

WYLER
 Especially valuable, maybe. I knew
 I got a prize piece of loot with
 her. She's worth a fortune.

As Wyler and Rolo huddle, Mid taps her foot impatiently.

MID
 Come on, guys. We can't get to
 Crimtow by standing around.

Mid comes to tug Rolo's hand and lead him into the woods. Rolo looks to Wyler for guidance. Wyler shrugs and follows.

WYLER

At least Rockrane won't look for us in here.

ROLO

Whatever you say, boss.

EXT. WOODS - DUSK

The spooky sounds of the darkened forest cause Rolo to keep close to Wyler, who looks nervous himself.

Mid leads the way, marching ahead bravely.

MID

Do you think we can get to Crimtow before bedtime?

ROLO

What's a bedtime?

MID

You know, the time your parents make you go to bed.

Wyler and Rolo stay quiet, so Mid turns back to them.

MID

Don't you have any parents?

Ashamed, Rolo meekly shakes his head.

MID

That would explain why it smells like no one's made you guys take baths in a really long time.

WYLER

Hey, I'm happy we don't have parents. The whole concept of families is a big scam.

Wyler leans against a tree and explains.

WYLER

Grown-ups get tricked into getting married. The girls do it for the pretty dress, and the boys do it for the sex. The scam is, neither of those last more than a day.

(MORE)

WYLER (CONT'D)

After that, all you do is get stuck with a bunch of stupid kids. Sort of like I am now.

MID

I'm happy you're stuck with me, Wyler. I always wanted to go on an adventure like this.

ROLO

An adventure?

Rolo and Wyler share a hearty laugh.

ROLO

We don't go on adventures, Mid.

WYLER

In fact, we avoid them on purpose.

MID

But this is an adventure right now. The crazy car, the spooky forest. Why, the trees could come to life and gobble us up any second.

Wyler slips away from the tree, just in case.

WYLER

Mid. This isn't an adventure. This is an anti-adventure.

ROLO

Yeah, we're anti-adventurers. That's what we do.

MID

What's an anti-adventure?

WYLER

An adventure's full of excitement and danger. When we find those, we go the other way.

ROLO

Some people get mad at us when we play games. We have to go on anti-adventures, until they calm down.

WYLER

A few of them are still mad at us now, which is why we have to keep moving before they find us.

EXT. LE GRAISSE DE BALEINE - DAY

The lunch crowd forms around the restaurant.

Baccatelli whines to a PATRON.

BACCATELLI

'Den I find out, there ain't even
no such thing as the Miniature
Exotic Animal Protection Agency.

Suddenly, two BANDITS grab him. They're tough looking guys,
wearing snakeskin outfits.

EXT. LE GRAISSE DE BALEINE ALLEY - DAY

The Bandits shove Baccatelli into the alley. He topples down
at the feet of someone.

Baccatelli looks up, past the more elaborate snakeskin
outfit, to the battle-scarred sneer of ROCKRANE.

BACCATELLI

Rockrane! It's really you!

The Bandits lift Baccatelli up.

BANDIT 2

Tell us what happened with Wyler.

BACCATELLI

'Dat's the guy who stole my taxi!

BANDIT 1

Was there anything else in the car?

BACCATELLI

I had a pack of grublets left.

BANDIT 2

Anything else?

BACCATELLI

Nothin' I can recall.

Rockrane eyes narrow to near slits, not saying a word. The
intimidating look causes Baccatelli to reconsider.

BACCATELLI

Ya know, lookin' back, there may
have been somethin' else. A girl.
From Sunnyside.

Rockrane and the Bandits exchange looks.

BANDIT 1
What should we do, King?

ROCKRANE
Kill him before he gets to Crimtow.

Rockrane shoves past Baccatelli and marches out.

EXT. WOODS CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Wyler tries to cook a fish by holding over a campfire.

Rolo and Mid sit on a log and play with the teddy bear. Mid shivers, as the air has gotten cold.

ROLO
Are you cold, Mid? Here, I have some blankets.

Rolo reaches into his knapsack and pulls out a blanket.

WYLER
Don't give her our blankets.

ROLO
We have plenty of blankets, boss. I don't mind if she has one.

WYLER
I do. She's never going to learn if you do that.

Wyler turns to Mid.

WYLER
You need to learn to look out for yourself, kid. Like I did. No one's going to help you out in life, and you shouldn't help out anyone else either.

Wyler's fish catches on fire. He beats it against the ground, which leaves it burnt and covered in grass.

MID
I don't mean to break your rules, Wyler, but I have some graham crackers you can have.

Mid digs into her backpack and pulls out a pack of graham crackers. She offers one to Rolo, who accepts.

WYLER

I'm fine. I got my own dinner. I know how to look out for myself.

Wyler takes a bite of his fish. He winces and tosses it aside. He takes another long look at Rolo and Mid, who munch on their graham crackers happily.

Wyler reluctantly gets up and joins them on the log. Without a word, Mid hands him a graham cracker.

INT. MID'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mid's folder remains hidden in the trash.

Alexis pulls Mid's bed closer to her own in order to make one giant bed. She sprawls out over both and grins.

ALEXIS

Now this is living.

INT. TWINS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

In their side-by-side twin beds, Bill and Jill snore. Bill begins to snore louder, so Jill snores even more loudly.

BILL

I know you're faking.

JILL

So what? I'm a better fake snorer than you are.

The twins get into a fake snoring contest.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mom looks out the window and talks to the speaker phone.

MOM

Either Mid's still mad at us, or she's working hard on that report.

DAD (V.O.)

She's working. Which is good.

INT. DAD'S OFFICE CUBICLE - NIGHT

Exhausted, Dad keeps reading through his stacks of work.

DAD
Work builds character.

Tweed comes over and hands him more files. Dad groans.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mod peers out at the street again.

MOM
I just wish she brought a sweater.
That nasty librarian keeps it two
degrees below room temperature. I
hope she's not chilly.

EXT. WOODS CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Mid shivers wildly as she sits on the log.

Rolo sleeps peacefully under his blanket, but Wyler can't get to sleep. He glares over to Mid.

WYLER
You're keeping me up, you know.

MID
I'm sorry.

Mid tries her best not to shiver as she gazes into the woods.

MID
Wyler, do you think my family
misses me yet?

WYLER
They don't care about you, and you
shouldn't care about them. You
shouldn't care about anyone, kid.

Wyler rolls over to go to bed. He can't, especially when he hears Mid's teeth chattering.

He grumbles and after a few seconds of internal debate, he tosses her his blanket.

MID
But you said you don't share.

WYLER
I owe you for the graham cracker.

Mid wraps herself in the blanket.

MID

What are you gonna do?

WYLER

I'll keep watch. This way, if someone comes to get us, I can escape while they get you two.

Mid rolls her eyes and snickers.

MID

You know, Wyler, you pretend to be mean, but I know you're not.

WYLER

Shows what you know. But you can think whatever you want, as long as you shut up and get to bed.

MID

Goodnight, Wyler.

WYLER

Night, kid.

Mid snuggles up with her the teddy bear and falls asleep. Wyler watches her, and struggles to fight off a smile.

EXT. WOODS CAMPSITE - DAWN

Morning birds chirp. A lump remains under Mid's blanket.

EXT. WOODS - DAWN

The Bandits peer through the bushes at the campsite.

EXT. WOODS CAMPSITE - DAWN

Rockrane emerges from the bushes. He chucks a dagger at the blanket. The dagger lands square in the lump, which squeaks.

Rockrane and the Bandits stalk over and withdraw the blanket to reveal another fake miniature giraffe.

EXT. WOODS - DAWN

Safe ahead, Wyler leads Rolo and Mid deeper into the woods.

CHAPTER FOUR:

"The Wonders of Wood-bound Witches"

INT. KITCHEN - DAWN

Bill and Jill race into the kitchen and find Mom, haggard and in last night's outfit, still up and looking out the window.

JILL

Mommy, have you been up all night?

BILL

I've been up for a thousand --

Jill slaps Bill to shut him up.

MOM

Mid's not back yet.

Alexis strolls in.

MOM

Alexis, do you know where Mid is?

ALEXIS

Don't look at me. Geez, it's not like she told me where she was going or left a note or anything like that.

MOM

Still, I'm calling the police. Mid could be in trouble.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Tired by the long walk, Wyler, Rolo, and Mid drudge along.

WYLER

Crimtow should be up ahead.

ROLO

How far ahead? I'm tired, boss.

QIRKA'S FLIER

Tired? Need a break? Come to Qirka's Circus. It's a trip.

Mid follows the voice to Rolo's knapsack. She pulls out the talking flier that Rolo was given earlier.

QIRKA'S FLIER

In need of an adventure? Fast
times and fun at Qirka's Circus.

Wyler snatches the flier and looks it over.

QIRKA'S FLIER

Looking for a getaway? Blend in at
Qirka's Circus. It's a trip.

Wyler drops the flier and moves on.

MID

Wyler, can't we check out the
circus? She says it's fun.

WYLER

She's a flier.

QIRKA'S FLIER

She's an informative pamphlet,
thank you very much.

WYLER

Sorry, pamphlet. We have to keep
moving to get to Crimtow.

QIRKA'S FLIER

On the long road to Crimtow? Why
not take the shortcut, through
Qirka's Circus, of course.

Rolo and Mid look to Wyler for approval.

WYLER

How are we gonna find this circus?

QIRKA'S FLIER

Qirka's Circus: now franchised in
abandoned woods everywhere. Follow
the winds for one near you.

A wind picks up, sending the flier off.

MID

If we have to trust a pamphlet, at
least we got an informative one.

Mid chases the fluttering flier. Wyler and Rolo follow her.

EXT. ABANDONED SHACK - DAY

The flier floats next to a run-down shack.

MID
This is Qirka's Circus?

WYLER
Maybe it closed down.

They turn to the woods and find QIRKA, wild multi-colored hair, the P.T. Barnum of wood-bound witches, spinning a wand.

QIRKA
Maybe you're not looking hard enough, handsome.

Qirka approaches them. Wyler backs away.

QIRKA
I've heard about you. Wyler, isn't it? The king of --

WYLER
I've heard about you, too, Qirka. You've got quite the chatty flier.

QIRKA'S FLIER
Informative pamphlet!

QIRKA
Why don't you step inside, and we can revel in each other's esteem.

WYLER
No thanks. Next time, spend more on your shack and less on your PR.

Wyler leads Rolo and Mid away.

Mid glances back to Qirka. Qirka scoops up some dirt from the ground and tosses it in the air. The dirt explodes into miniature fireworks. Mid can't help but be intrigued.

MID
Wyler? Maybe we should give it a shot. The informative pamphlet said it's a shortcut to Crimtow.

In a puff of purple smoke, Qirka appears behind Wyler.

QIRKA
It's the ultimate gateway.

MID
Please, Wyler?

QIRKA

Give in, Wyler. Like I have to your brooding charm. It's forced me to give you a discount. Three for the price of one. Or, we can trade. I do love jewelry. Rings, bracelets, amulets...

WYLER

We'll take the discount.

Qirka appears back at the entrance to the shack, and waves them in. Mid rushes to join her.

The flier quickly recites the small print.

QIRKA'S FLIER

Qirka's Circus is not liable for any damage that may occur --

Qirka blows the flier away.

INT. QIRKA'S CIRCUS - ENTRANCE - DAY

Qirka glides into the plain-looking room, which is about the size of a closet. Mid and Rolo shuffle in.

Wyler presses against the wall to avoid contact with anyone.

WYLER

Is it too late for a refund?

Qirka laughs and slides closer to Wyler, who grows increasingly uncomfortable.

QIRKA

Ohh, you amuse me endlessly, Wyler.

Mid puts on her most intimidating glare.

MID

He doesn't like to be touched, lady. So back off.

QIRKA

Wyler, why does someone as enchanting as yourself hang out with such a bite-sized buzzkill?

Mid keeps the glare on. Qirka relents and backs away.

QIRKA

Fine. Let's get on with the show.

Qirka holds up the wand and smiles suggestively to Wyler.

QIRKA

The room may seem small now, but
like many things, it can grow to
impressive sizes with one stroke.

Qirka rubs the wand. Suddenly, the room expands three times
its previous size. Mid gasps with excitement.

QIRKA

The room's as big as your
imagination. Give it a try.

Rolo takes the wand. The room shrinks down, nearly squashing
the four of them together.

ROLO

Sorry.

MID

It's okay, Rolo. That's really
good, for your first try.

ROLO

Here, Mid, give it a shot.

Mid takes the wand and gives it a rub.

The room expands into a giant ballroom, complete with dancing
waliroos, the top hat wearing walruses of Mid's drawing.

Mid and Rolo look amazed. Wyler smirks proudly to Qirka.

WYLER

That's why we hang out with the
bite-sized buzzkill, bitch.

Qirka huffs and takes the wand back.

QIRKA

Ready for the trip of a lifetime?

Qirka rubs the wand, which causes the floor to vanish.
Wyler, Rolo, and Mid scream as they free-fall.

INT. QIRKA'S LOUNGE LEVEL - DAY

Wyler, Rolo, and Mid land safely on a bed of grass. They
find themselves in a strange smoke-filled lounge.

On a stage, the one-man reggae band, BOBO, has several heads
and arms, all which work different instruments.

Qirka appears next to the three of them.

QIRKA

Enjoy Bobo's reggae band, you two.
But Wyler, keep me company in the
VIP area. I'll explain how you can
get to Crimtow from here.

Wyler reluctantly follows Qirka. Mid turns to Rolo.

MID

Why does she think Wyler's famous?

ROLO

He's become well known recently.
In some circles.

MID

Why?

ROLO

I'm not supposed to say. Come on,
Mid, let's find some food!

INT. QIRKA'S LOUNGE BUFFET - DAY

Qirka's buffet can't compare to the spreads at Le Graisse de
Baleine. In fact, it's merely a few bowls of jelly beans.

Still, HIPSTERS eat the jelly beans with satisfied grins, so
Mid reaches into the jar and pops one in her mouth.

Once she does, one of the Hipster's tattoos speaks to her.

TATTOO

Tasty, isn't it?

After that, Mid quickly puts the other jelly beans back.

INT. QIRKA'S LOUNGE VIP AREA - DAY

Qirka sprawls out on a grassy couch, while Wyler still seems
uncomfortable. He watches Mid.

QIRKA

That little girl's special. No
wonder you're worried about her.

WYLER

I'm not worried about her. We're
using her.

(MORE)

WYLER (CONT'D)

If can get to Crimtow, we can sell
her for protection from Rockrane.
She's an investment.

QIRKA

Ooh, you are deliciously devilish
after all, aren't you?

INT. QIRKA'S LOUNGE BUFFET - DAY

Mid notices a Hipster's chunky green dreadlock fall to the floor, and crawl away like a caterpillar. She takes this as a sign to go and explore somewhere else, leaving Rolo.

INT. QIRKA'S LOUNGE LEVEL - DAY

Mid watches Bobo work all the instruments with his various hands and heads. One of his heads, the one with a green mohawk, chats with a GROUPIE, and jots down her phone number.

Mid hears a faint noise coming from the floor. A more chaotic and up-tempo beat.

She kneels down to listen, pressing her ear to the ground. The floor around her begins to turn into quicksand. Without much warning, it envelopes her and she sinks completely.

INT. QIRKA'S CLUB LEVEL - DAY

After a fall, Mid lands on a small dune of white sand.

On this level, a wild rave takes place, accompanied by pounding beats of music. There are several dance floors, including one on the ceiling where RAVERS dance upside down.

INT. QIRKA'S LOUNGE VIP AREA - DAY

Wyler scoots away when Qirka slides an arm around his neck.

WYLER

Do you see Mid anywhere?

QIRKA

No and I don't care to look. I
have to go attend to other guests,
but don't go anywhere, gorgeous.

Qirka vanishes. Wyler gets up to search for Mid.

EXT. ABANDONED SHACK - DAY

Qirka appears at the door to the shack.

QIRKA
Why, hello there.

She's shown to be speaking to Rockrane's gang. Rockrane holds up his dagger, which is lodged in Qirka's flier.

ROCKRANE
We heard this was a fun place.

QIRKA
You fellas don't strike me as the partying type.

ROCKRANE
We make our own fun. We're here to kill Wyler.

QIRKA
Here at Qirka's Circus we don't want anyone to feel threatened or --

The Bandits hold out handfuls of jewels. Qirka grins.

QIRKA
Of course, we don't want anyone to feel excluded either. Come slither hither, you sexy snakemen.

INT. QIRKA'S LOUNGE BUFFET - DAY

Wyler rushes to Rolo.

WYLER
Rolo, where's the kid?

ROLO
I dunno, boss.

Wyler takes off looking. When Rolo follows, he stumbles and falls into the quicksand.

ROLO
Boss!

INT. QIRKA'S CLUB LEVEL - DAY

Rolo crashes down on top of the white sand pile. Wyler follows down shortly after.

WYLER
Let's split up and find Mid.

INT. QIRKA'S CLUB DANCE FLOOR - DAY

Wyler tries to sidestep Ravers without being touched.

INT. QIRKA'S CLUB LEVEL - DAY

Rolo searches around for Mid. Mid emerges from the crowd.

MID
Rolo! This is so much fun!

ROLO
It's all right. But maybe we
should find boss and get going.

MID
This isn't Sunnyside, Rolo. I'm
allowed to do what I want.

Qirka appears with a sneaky smile.

QIRKA
You're not going to spoil a sweet
little girl's fun, are you, Rolo?

Rolo shakes his head, so Qirka pats him like a dog.

QIRKA
That a' boy.
(to Mid)
Are you having fun, darling?

MID
Uh huh.

QIRKA
I wonder if you're adventurous
enough to try the next level.

A clear crystal elevator grows out of the floor.

MID
Come on, Rolo, let's go!

ROLO
Umm. I'm gonna find boss first.
Then we'll meet up with you, okay?

Mid nods and hops into the elevator.

INT. QIRKA'S ELEVATOR - DAY

Mid presses the down button, and the elevator lowers a level.

INT. QIRKA'S CRYSTAL CAVERN LEVEL - DAY

The elevator stops in a deserted and cold crystal-coated cavern. Mid shivers when she walks around.

A CAVE DWELLER, flaky blue skin, emerges.

CAVE DWELLER

A young one.

When the Cave Dweller speaks, his jaw comes unhinged. He snaps it back in place. More deformed Cave Dwellers emerge.

CAVE DWELLER

Help me scratch an itch, young one?

The Cave Dweller scratches his arm. Chunks of skin fall off.

MID

I don't mean to be rude, but I'm going to find my friends now.

INT. QIRKA'S ELEVATOR - DAY

Mid rushes back into the elevator and frantically presses the button to go back up. An "out of service" screen flashes.

Qirka appears in the elevator with her.

QIRKA

I'm so sorry. Did I forget to mention that it's a one way trip?

Qirka cackles and then vanishes.

INT. QIRKA'S CLUB DANCE FLOOR - DAY

Lighter than air, ethereal DANCING GIRLS hover above the dance floor. One especially limber girl leans so far backwards that her head dips under her legs.

Wyler swings by in his search for Mid. The Dancing Girls float around him, their arms wiggling like streamers.

Uninterested, Wyler avoids contact and keeps looking for Mid. Instead, he spots Rockrane, and immediately ducks down.

INT. QIRKA'S CLUB LEVEL - DAY

Wyler, still laying low, crawls over to Rolo.

ROLO
Why are you down there, boss?

WYLER
Rockrane's here.

ROLO
Rockrane?! Where?

When Rolo looks around, he gets spotted by Rockrane.

ROLO
Huh. You're right. There he is.

Rockrane and the Bandits march over.

Wyler grabs Rolo's knapsack and pulls him down to the floor.

WYLER
We've got to get out of here.

ROLO
But boss, what about Mid? She took
an elevator down to the next level.

WYLER
Good. It'll be easier to avoid
adventure without her.

ROLO
But, boss...

WYLER
She's a luxury, Rolo. She'd buy us
protection, but right now, we need
to protect ourselves. We'll leave
her behind if we have to.

ROLO
If we do, we'll be running for the
rest of our lives.

WYLER
I'd rather run for my life than
stay and get killed, idiot.

INT. QIRKA'S CRYSTAL CAVERN LEVEL - DAY

Cave Dwellers surround Mid, who backs into a wall.

MID

I don't suppose you're interested
in graham crackers?

A dark black tentacle wraps around Mid's arm, and tugs her tighter against the wall. She screams.

Tentacles pull her down through a crack in the cavern.

INT. QIRKA'S DUNGEON LEVEL - DAY

Tentacles wrap Mid firmly against the wall of a dungeon.

The only other inhabitants of this level are decaying corpses, which are also tied up by tentacles.

INT. QIRKA'S CLUB LEVEL - DAY

Wyler and Rolo crawl through the crowd.

INT. QIRKA'S CLUB DANCE FLOOR - DAY

Rockrane shoves the floating Dancers out of his way. One of his Bandits takes out a dagger and chucks it at Wyler.

INT. QIRKA'S CLUB LEVEL - DAY

The dagger narrowly misses Wyler and Rolo, who look over to find Rockrane on their tail. They leap up and run for it.

INT. QIRKA'S CLUB DANCE FLOOR - DAY

Rockrane and his Bandits push past Ravers in pursuit of Wyler and Rolo. A Bandit hurls another dagger.

INT. QIRKA'S CLUB LEVEL - DAY

Wyler and Rolo run frantically away from the daggers.

They scurry inside the elevator and push the down button.

INT. QIRKA'S ELEVATOR - DAY

As they descend, they see Rockrane hurl a dagger. The dagger gets stuck in the elevator, an inch from Wyler's head.

ROLO
 Wow. He's good, isn't he, boss?

INT. QIRKA'S CRYSTAL CAVERN LEVEL - DAY

Wyler and Rolo emerge from the elevator and into the cavern. Wyler dodges Cave Dwellers as he looks for an escape.

ROLO
 Boss, I think I hear Mid!

Rolo follows the faint sound of Mid's screams to the crack in the cavern. He tries to squeeze his way down.

Rockrane and the Bandits stalk out of the elevator.

Qirka appears, with an amused grin on her face.

QIRKA
 Ooh, now the show's getting good.

Wyler swipes Qirka's wand. Large chunks of crystal grow, blocking Rockrane's path. He tosses the wand back to Qirka.

WYLER
 Show's over.

Wyler follows Rolo down the crack in the cavern.

INT. QIRKA'S DUNGEON LEVEL - DAY

Rolo and Wyler climb down to the dungeon. Rolo rushes to help Mid, but can't pull the tentacles off.

Rather than help Mid, Wyler searches for an escape.

WYLER
 Qirka said there's an exit in these floorboards. Help find it.

ROLO
 But boss, what about Mid?

WYLER
 She's not much help now, is she?

Rolo sighs, and helps pull up floorboards.

INT. QIRKA'S CRYSTAL CAVERN LEVEL - DAY

The Bandits try to climb over the crystals blocking them.

INT. QIRKA'S DUNGEON LEVEL - DAY

Rolo pulls up a floorboard to reveal a deep dark hole.

ROLO

Boss! Here's the gate. Can we go
save Mid now?

WYLER

Jump through, idiot.

Rolo take an extended look at the struggling Mid, but nods.

ROLO

Whatever you say, boss.

Rolo hops down through the hole.

INT. QIRKA'S CRYSTAL CAVERN LEVEL - DAY

Rockrane smashes through the crystal barricade.

INT. QIRKA'S DUNGEON LEVEL - DAY

Wyler stands at the edge of the hole. He gets set to jump,
but backs away at the last second and looks to Mid.

WYLER

Listen, this isn't because I don't
like you. I don't, but, that's not
the reason. It's just... less
dangerous to go on without you.
You understand, don't you, kid?

Mid pouts, and stops fighting against the tentacles.

A dagger whizzes down, nearly hitting Wyler.

Wyler readies to jump, but once again stops himself.

WYLER

Ahh, hell.

He grumbles, and picks up the dagger that missed him. He
rushes over towards Mid, and cuts away the tentacles.

Now free, Mid runs to the hole and leaps down. Wyler follows
her, covering the hole with the floorboard as he drops.

Rockrane and the Bandits climb down the crack and look
around. They find nothing but floorboards.

INT. TUNNEL SLIDE - DUSK

Wyler follows Mid down the hole, which leads to a windy and steep slide. Mid screams with excitement as she slides down.

INT. CAVE - DUSK

The slide spits Wyler and Mid out in a mammoth cave. Rolo rushes over excitedly, and scoops up Mid in a tight hug.

ROLO

Mid! How did you get out?

MID

Wyler saved me!

ROLO

Really?

MID

Yeah! Can I give you a hug, Wyler?
Just this one time?

WYLER

No chance. I've been through
enough today already. And for the
record, I only saved you 'cause
you're our lone source of graham
crackers.

Mid nods and starts down the cave path.

Rolo smirks to Wyler.

ROLO

Graham crackers, huh?

WYLER

You know I only saved her because
we need to sell her.

ROLO

(grinning)
Or because you care about her.

WYLER

Don't be such an idiot, Rolo.

Wyler scoffs, and heads down the cave path.

CHAPTER FIVE:**"Surviving the City Life"**

INT. LE GRAISSE DE BALEINE - NIGHT

POLICE OFFICERS sit around a table full of doughnuts. One of the Officers talks on a cell phone.

POLICE OFFICER
We'll get right on it, ma'am.

Greeby comes over, his arms stacked with giant doughnuts.

POLICE OFFICER
Actually, it might be a while.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mom, a ball of nerves, talks on the other end of the line.

MOM
Let us know when you hear anything.

Mom hangs up and dials another number.

INT. DAD'S OFFICE CUBICLE - NIGHT

The phone rings in Dad's office. He looks around to make sure no one sees him, and then ducks down to take the call.

DAD
Any news on Mid?

Tweed pops his head over the cubicle wall, and Dad hangs up.

TWEED
Sorry to bother you during social hour, Chatty Cathy, but think you might do some work today?

DAD
Sir, you know I'm devoted to this job, but I have a family problem.

TWEED
I understand. I have a family. I think. My wife did get pregnant. Twenty years ago, actually. I've been at the office since then, so I don't know what happened.

DAD
You haven't left the office for
twenty years?

TWEED
Something for you to aspire to.

Tweed heads off. Repulsed, Dad looks between his work and his family photos. Before he can make a decision, Tweed returns and hangs a chain and lock on the cubicle's opening.

TWEED
This is to make sure you don't try
to leave early. After all, I
wouldn't want those cute little
kids to have a daddy with no job.

Dad tugs on the lock, and finds himself trapped.

INT. TWINS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Bill and Jill, both in pajamas, smack each other.

JILL
How long do we do this for?

BILL
Usually until Mid stops us.

JILL
I miss her.

BILL
I miss her more.

Jill smacks Bill, and the two wrestle again.

INT. MID'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Alexis lies across her double beds, and chats on her cell.

ALEXIS
You're right. Courtney totally
smells like boogers. We can't be
friends with her. She's like,
lamer than Mid was. And Mid never
did anything cool.

INT. CAVE - NIGHT

Mid colors in her drawing of Qirka's Circus with her crayons.

Rolo sleeps under his blanket, while Wyler sits on a large rock and keeps watch.

MID

Wyler, wanna see my drawings?

WYLER

What I want is for you to shut up and go to bed. But since that never seems to happen, I guess you can show me.

Mid excitedly jumps up to join Wyler on the rock and show him her drawing. Wyler scoots a safe distance away.

MID

It's Qirka's Circus. See? Here are the mean guys chasing you.

WYLER

What's the point of drawing something we just saw?

MID

I drew it before. I always draw the adventures I want to go on, and when they happen, I color them in.

WYLER

So your drawings are coming true.

MID

Some haven't happened yet.

Mid unzips her backpack and takes out uncolored sketches, including the Coachman.

Wyler picks out one sketch of a man with two heads.

WYLER

Is that the singer at Qirka's?

MID

The singer had five heads. This guy has two. I haven't seen him yet.

Wyler takes a hard look at the two-headed man, who looks eerily similar to himself.

MID

Even the ones that happened haven't been like I wanted.

(MORE)

MID (CONT'D)

The taxi was a dud, the flying giraffe was fake. Hopefully Crimtow will be better.

Mid shows Wyler some colored drawings of her playing with Wyler and Rolo.

MID

The only thing that's come true exactly like I wanted was having real friends to play with.

Wyler looks between the pictures of the three of them playing, and the one of the evil two-headed man. He can't help but look sick with himself.

WYLER

Yeah, you're lucky you found us.

Mid holds up the picture of Rockrane chasing Wyler.

MID

Why were these guys chasing you?

WYLER

Why would I tell you?

MID

Because. We're friends.

WYLER

I don't have friends, kid.

MID

Yes you do. We conned you into it.

Mid grins, and even Wyler smirks. He digs into his shirt and pulls out an amulet hanging around his neck.

MID

They wanted to steal your necklace?

WYLER

First of all, it's an amulet. Amulets are very masculine, and this one's very important. Whoever has this amulet is considered the King of Thieves.

Wyler taps on Mid's drawing of Rockrane.

WYLER

This is Rockrane. The biggest, toughest thief in the world.

MID
Even counting China?

WYLER
What?

MID
Nevermind.

WYLER
Rockrane was the King of Thieves,
until I stole the amulet from him.
Now, he wants it back. That's why
we had to leave Crimtow.

MID
Why are you going back now?

WYLER
There's only one way to get
Rockrane off our tail, and that's
to get protection from someone
tougher than him.

MID
How can you do that?

WYLER
Give them something they want.

MID
What do they want?

Wyler looks hard at Mid, and debates telling her that she's his bargaining chip.

WYLER
You... don't want to know.

MID
Why don't you just give the amulet
back to Rockrane?

WYLER
Because I've gotten a lot of things
over the years. A knapsack full of
things. And a lot of them are even
worth something. But this...

Wyler tucks away the amulet safely under his shirt.

WYLER
This is the only one that makes me
feel like *I'm* worth something.
(MORE)

WYLER (CONT'D)

It's the only thing I care about.
It's stupid, I know.

MID

It's not stupid. I understand.

WYLER

No you don't. Not yet. You don't even understand the most important thing -- that you only have to look out for yourself. When you get to be my age, I hope you do. And I hope you forgive everyone who was doing the same thing along the way.

MID

I'll try my best.

WYLER

Try your best to get to bed. I don't know what a bedtime is, but I imagine we're getting close to one.

Mid crawls off the rock and goes to curl up next to Rolo.

Wyler studies the drawing of the two-headed man. He tears off one of the heads and tosses it aside.

INT. CAVE - DAWN

Wyler leads the group past the discarded drawing.

INT. CAVE ROAD - DAY

Tired from their walk, they march onward. Wyler points to a source of light at the end of the cave.

WYLER

See that up ahead? That's Crimtow.

MID

That's Crimtow?! What are we waiting for? Come on, let's go!

Mid sprints ahead to the opening. Rolo hurries to catch up.

EXT. CAVE ENTRANCE - DAY

Mid steps onto a ridge that overlooks a gorgeous island.

MID
Rolo! This is amazing!

Rolo emerges from the cave.

ROLO
This isn't what we're looking for.

Rolo directs her attention down the mountainside, to a dark and dingy city with "Crimtow" lettering on the gates. Smoke pours out from the chimneys, and thick smog coats the air.

ROLO
That's Crimtow.

Wyler steps out and grins when he sees Crimtow.

WYLER
Ahh, how I've missed the sweet
smell of burning buildings.

Wyler and Rolo rush excitedly down the mountain path. Mid looks confused, but follows along.

EXT. CRIMTOW GATES - DAY

Wyler, Rolo and Mid approach the gates of Crimtow. Clearly, the sign used to say "Crimetown," but the gold letters for the E and N are missing, leaving hollow ones in their place.

MID
Wait, is it Crimtow or Crimetown?

ROLO
It's officially Crimtow right now.
Someone stole the E and the N.

WYLER
And we all figured it'd be cheaper
to leave the name like this than to
replace the letters.

ROLO
Think they'll remember us, boss?

A FRIENDLY MAN pops his head out of a departing black Hummer.

FRIENDLY CRIMTOW MAN
Is that you, Wyler? Welcome home!

Wyler waves to the Friendly Man. Suddenly, the Friendly Man ducks into his car and comes back with a crossbow. He fires at Wyler, and narrowly misses him.

WYLER

We tend to leave an impression.

Wyler, Rolo and Mid scurry to avoid crossbow shots.

EXT. STREETS OF CRIMTOW - DAY

Wyler and Rolo savor the smoggy air as they walk along.

Mid glances at the decrepit buildings and shops, all of which have scratched off the E and N from their letterhead.

ROLO

Aren't you excited to be here, Mid?
You can finally do whatever you
want, with no parents and no rules!

Mid sees two DRUNKARDS stumble out of a bar, swinging at each other. A COMPASSIONATE WOMAN screams.

COMPASSIONATE WOMAN

Ahh! They're fighting! Somebody
do something!

A BOOKIE rushes in to help.

BOOKIE

Don't worry, lady, I got it. Fat
guy's a three to one favorite.

COMPASSIONATE WOMAN

I'll take the underdog.

The Compassionate Woman hands the Bookie cash. A CROWD forms to watch the brawl, making bets and cheering along.

EXT. CRIMTOW GHETTO - DAY

Wyler and Rolo lead Mid to a dingy apartment building.

WYLER

Home sweet home.

While Wyler picks the lock to get in, Mid looks to a nearby apartment, which is on fire. Instead of put out the flames, FIREFIGHTERS laugh and use the hoses to spray PASSERSBY.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - DAY

Wyler and Rolo lead Mid to their apartment. They pass by a JANITOR, whose vacuum cleaner sprays dirt onto the carpet.

Wylar kneels down to pick up an envelope left by their door. He opens the envelope and reads the letter to himself.

WYLER

It's from our mailman. He's holding all our letters for ransom.

INT. WYLER AND ROLO'S APARTMENT - DAY

Mid steps into the apartment, which looks recently ransacked. The only thing that remains is a rat that scurries by.

MID

I think you guys got robbed.

WYLER

That tends to happen in Crimtow.

ROLO

At least they left the rat.

From outside, a CAT BURGLAR slides open the window. He leans in and swipes the rat before climbing away.

MID

So... is there anything to do in Crimtow for fun besides felonies?

WYLER

I have a meeting with Swogglehorn.

ROLO

Awwh, I don't like Swogglehorn.

WYLER

It's a good thing you weren't invited then. You show Mid the city and we'll meet up later.

ROLO

Whatever you say, boss.

EXT. CRIMTOW GHETTO - DAY

Rolo and Mid exit the apartment building.

ROLO

We're finally in Crimtow, Mid, so let's do whatever you want.

MID

Rolo, do you ever do what you want?

ROLO

Sure. I get to do what I want all the time. Unless boss wants to do something different.

MID

Why do you always let him decide?

ROLO

Because he's smart and I'm not.

MID

You don't need to be smart to make good decisions. The best choices come from your heart. And you've got a huge heart, Rolo.

ROLO

Really? You think so?

MID

Yeah! So you can pick where to go.

ROLO

Umm... we could go... um... we could... we could go ask boss!

Off Mid's disappointed look, Rolo frowns.

ROLO

I messed up, didn't I? Sorry.

MID

Don't worry, Rolo. That was really good, for your first try. You'll get a lot better with practice.

Mid looks down the road to an outdoor flea market.

MID

What's that place?

ROLO

That's the shoplifting district.

As they near, Mid watches the SHOPLIFTERS steal trinkets from the VENDORS, who hack at their hands with cleavers.

Mid seems put off, but then she sees the store of her dreams -- "Not Just Crummy Toys."

MID

I know exactly what I wanna do.

CHAPTER SIX:

"Great Escapes and the One That Didn't Take"

EXT. SWOGGLEHORN'S ACADEMY PLAYGROUND - DAY

Wyler walks by the playground of the local school -- Swogglehorn's Academy for Young Criminal Minds.

A YOUNG GIRL gets strangled in a twisted game of jump rope.

Another group plays dodgeball with bombs. When the ball hits a PLAYER, it explodes and knocks him unconscious.

EXT. SWOGGLEHORN'S ACADEMY - DAY

Standing at the school entrance is SWOGGLEHORN, 61, the unpleasantly plump principal and city's ultimate hustler. When he sees Wyler, he grins, revealing decaying teeth.

SWOGGLEHORN

If it isn't one of my all-time
favorite students and friends...

Swogglehorn checks the note written on the palm of his hand.

SWOGGLEHORN

Wyler!

INT. SWOGGLEHORN'S ACADEMY HALLWAYS - DAY

Swogglehorn waddles along, taking Wyler on a tour.

They pass classes like the mathematics of pyramid schemes, swearing in foreign languages, and the history of Richard Nixon.

SWOGGLEHORN

I'm so proud of you, Wyler. I
always knew you had it in you.

WYLER

You kicked me out of the Academy
when I was ten.

SWOGGLEHORN

You didn't need it! I could tell
you were ready for the real world.

WYLER

You said I was worthless.

SWOGGLEHORN
Reverse psychology!

WYLER
And you tried to have me killed.

SWOGGLEHORN
You know, we can walk down memory lane all day, but let's get down to business. I heard you recently came into possession of something that I might want to buy.

INT. 'NOT JUST CRUMMY TOYS' AISLE - DAY

Unaware that she might be on sale herself, Mid checks out the pricetags of toys in the store, which has every violent toy imaginable, including Rockrane-sponsored throwing daggers.

Mid reaches up to pick out some crayons, but Rolo stops her.

ROLO
Wait. Watch how it works first.

INT. 'NOT JUST CRUMMY TOYS' - DAY

A SHOPKEEPER, 82, a harmless little old lady, sits behind the counter and reads an article in Slammer Glamour magazine about which prison jumpsuit works best for your body type.

A SHOPPER approaches the counter with a toy car.

SHOPKEEPER
Another toy car, Lou?

SHOPPER
Lil' Danny burnt the last one.
With our hamster in it.

SHOPKEEPER
Boys will be boys.

SHOPPER
My wife says we shouldn't push him,
but I think he's got a real talent
for arson. How much is this?

SHOPKEEPER
That'll be \$5.95, hon.

The Shopkeeper rings up the purchase on the register. When she does, an alarm rings. The Shopper bolts for the door.

INT. 'NOT JUST CRUMMY TOYS' AISLE - DAY

Mid and Rolo watch as the toys come to life.

The army men march out after the Shopper. Toy cars and helicopters spring to life to join in the chase. Crayons shoot out of the box as though they were missiles.

INT. 'NOT JUST CRUMMY TOYS' - DAY

The Shopper dodges the shooting from the toy soldiers. Stuffed animals leap at him, baring their claws.

A toy train tangles his feet and causes him to trip.

The Shopkeeper saunters over, wielding a giant shotgun. The Shopper gives up and hands over the money. In return, the Shopkeeper pulls the trigger. The gun shoots out a receipt.

SHOPKEEPER

Have a great day, Lou.

The Shopper gives a friendly smile and wave as he leaves.

INT. 'NOT JUST CRUMMY TOYS' AISLES - DAY

Confused by the events, Mid looks to Rolo for an explanation.

ROLO

It's a game, Mid. Let's play!

Rolo picks up a slinky, and the alarm rings. Rolo grins excitedly and rushes off. The toys target them.

INT. SWOGGLEHORN'S ACADEMY HALLWAYS - DAY

Swogglehorn unlocks a double-bolted door for Wyler.

SWOGGLEHORN

There's one more thing I want to show you, Wyler.

INT. SWOGGLEHORN'S ACADEMY STORAGE ROOM - DAY

Swogglehorn leads Wyler into a room stacked full of stolen property, including the "E" from the Crimtow gates.

SWOGGLEHORN

Crimtow's greatest collection of stolen goods.

Wyler walks around, impressed.

SWOGGLEHORN

You're about to make it complete.
Once you give me the amulet.

WYLER

The amulet?

SWOGGLEHORN

Yeah. Why else do you think I set
up this meeting? I want to be the
King of Thieves.

WYLER

That job's taken.

SWOGGLEHORN

I'll give you anything for the
amulet. The "E" from the gates.
Flip it around and it kinda looks
like a "W" for Wyler.

Sensing Wyler's disinterest, Swogglehorn picks up a framed
trading card.

SWOGGLEHORN

Al Capone rookie card, back when he
was a petty thug. It's pre-scar!
Only sixteen of these still exist.

WYLER

There's only one amulet.

SWOGGLEHORN

Listen. You don't deserve the
amulet. I do. I've been in this
business for forty years!

WYLER

And in all that time you've never
had the amulet? How sad.

SWOGGLEHORN

You're a two-bit thief, Wyler. A
coward! You're a nobody!

WYLER

Au contraire, my dear Swogglehorn.
I'm the King of Thieves.

Wyler grins. Swogglehorn storms through a side door.

INT. SWOGGLEHORN'S OFFICE - DAY

Swogglehorn leads Wyler into his office, which is decorated with shipwrecks in a bottle.

SWOGGLEHORN

Be reasonable, Wyler. We all know you're no fighter. Give me the amulet, or I'll take it from you.

WYLER

You're not very threatening either, Swogglehorn. The only time I've seen you fight people was to get ahead in line at the buffet.

SWOGGLEHORN

True, I'm not physically tough. But I know people who are. And --

The chair behind the desk spins around to reveal Rockrane.

SWOGGLEHORN

I'm one hell of a double crosser.

Rockrane withdraws his dagger and flips it around his hand expertly. Wyler reaches for the knife strapped to his ankle, but once again can't figure out how to remove it.

Swogglehorn chortles with amusement and presses his intercom.

SWOGGLEHORN

Students! Report to the principal's office.

Several of SWOGGLEHORN'S STUDENTS pour in behind Wyler, playing with their dodgeball bombs.

SWOGGLEHORN

Fun fact you might not know about me, Wyler: I got my doctorate in torture. Mother said it wasn't practical. She loves to judge. I love to prove her wrong. Kids, give our old pal Wyler here a... Great. Big. Hug.

The Students converge on Wyler, who nervously backs away. Swogglehorn chortles, enjoying the show.

SWOGGLEHORN

People who say crime doesn't pay aren't considering the benefits.

Wyler steals a Student's dodgeball and chucks it at the wall. It explodes and creates a hole, which he escapes through.

INT. 'NOT JUST CRUMMY TOYS' PRESCHOOL AISLE - DAY

Chased by stuffed animals, Rolo hurries down the aisle. Lego blocks fall off the shelves and form a wall to block him.

Rolo smashes through the block wall, knocking over a preschool aisle. A specialty See n' Say wheel moans.

SEE 'N SAY
The victim says: AHH!

INT. 'NOT JUST CRUMMY TOYS' DOLL AISLE - DAY

On the run from toy soldiers, Mid rushes by the doll aisle. An EATING DISORDER BARBIE waves the others into formation.

EATING DISORDER BARBIE
Get her, Bulimic Barbies!

The Bulimic Barbies vomit in Mid's path, causing the floor to become slippery. Mid slides by without falling, while the toy soldiers get caught up and crash.

EXT. SWOGGLEHORN'S ACADEMY PLAYGROUND - DAY

Wyler flees from Swogglehorn's Students, who throw dodgeball bombs in his direction and try to trip him with jump ropes.

Swogglehorn waddles, struggling to keep up. Rockrane and his Bandits march at a slower, confident pace.

SWOGGLEHORN
Bring him to me alive! Comas don't count! I want him to feel pain!

INT. 'NOT JUST CRUMMY TOYS' - DAY

Mid leaps over toy cars as she runs to the exit.

Rolo hurries, but the toy train ties up his feet.

The Shopkeeper strolls over with her shotgun in hand.

Mid rushes back to save Rolo. She tugs at the toy train to no avail, as the other toys get set to seize them both. Finally, she opens the train and pulls out its batteries.

Rolo shakes his feet loose, and they both rush out of the store in the nick of time.

The Shopkeeper waves pleasantly to the pair.

SHOPKEEPER
Have a great day! Come again!

EXT. CRIMTOW TOY STORE - DAY

Rolo and Mid catch their breath. Still giddy from the fun of the chase, Rolo giggles and grins. Mid does not.

MID
Rolo? I don't want to question your decision making so soon after our talk, but, what was the point of that? Why didn't we just pay?

ROLO
Where's the fun in that, Mid? And look what I got!

Rolo shows off his new slinky and a stuffed animal. Mid gasps with excitement when she sees the animal is a waliroo.

MID
Hey look. It's a waliroo!

ROLO
Hey look, it's boss! Hi, boss!

Wyler, running down the street, waves to Rolo and Mid.

WYLER
Meet me at the apartment.

Wyler runs off.

MID
Why's he going the wrong way?

Soon after, they see Swogglehorn's Students on his tail.

ROLO
That tends to happen in Crimtow.

EXT. CRIMTOW SHOPLIFTING DISTRICT - DAY

Wyler sprints down the shoplifting district, dodging tables expertly. He distances himself from the Students, until he gets tripped by a red cane.

He sees the culprit -- the Sad-Sack Beggar Child. The Beggar snickers. Wyler grumbles and takes off again.

INT. WYLER AND ROLO'S APARTMENT - DAY

Rolo plays with the stuffed waliroo as Mid colors in her adventure at the toy store.

ROLO

It's amazing that you drew that store before you ever went, Mid. I knew you were special.

Rolo notices that Mid doesn't look particularly excited.

ROLO

What's wrong, Mid?

MID

It's just, Crimtow's not how I thought it would be.

ROLO

Do you mean the architecture or... how everyone tries to kill you?

MID

Mostly the second part.

ROLO

Yeah, I can see how that takes getting used to.

MID

I mean, my mom's strict, but when I forget to do my chores, she doesn't take a flamethrower to my head.

ROLO

That does sound nice.

MID

Yeah. I think I want to go home.

ROLO

If I had a family, I'd want to go back to them too. So when boss comes, we'll tell him, and we'll get you home.

Mid grins and gives Rolo a hug.

MID

I hope Wyler comes back okay.

ROLO

Why don't you draw him coming back?

MID

My drawings don't exactly work out the way I want them to. I think I need more practice.

ROLO

It's worth a try.

Mid sits down and scribbles Wyler bursting in the door.

On cue, Wyler bursts through the door. Mid leaps up.

MID

Wyler! I was worried about you.

WYLER

What did I tell you about worrying about other people?

MID

I mean... the only reason I was worried was 'cause I didn't wanna have to pay for your funeral.

Mid smiles sweetly. Wyler cracks a grin.

WYLER

That's my girl.

Wyler fiddles with Mid's backpack.

MID

What are you doing?

ROLO

Yeah, what happened to Rockrane and Swogglehorn?

WYLER

Oh, they got tired and quit.

Wyler steps away from the backpack, and moves to the window.

ROLO

Boss, Mid has an announcement.

WYLER

Oh yeah? Can't wait to hear it.
Let me grab some fresh air first.

Wyler climbs out the window.

Rolo picks up Mid's drawing and grins.

ROLO

See, Mid? You made it happen.
Just like you wanted.

Rockrane bursts through the door, followed by his Bandits.

ROLO

On second thought, maybe you do
need more practice.

Rockrane and the Bandits surround Rolo and Mid.

BANDIT 1

Tell us where he is, and we won't
kill you. Too painfully.

Mid turns to Rolo for guidance. Rolo plays dumb.

ROLO

Where who is?

BANDIT 2

Wyler. Tell us where he is.

ROLO

Wyler? Who's Wyler?

Mid catches on, and plays along.

MID

Wait, Rolo, do you think he means
Wyler, the King of Thieves? The
Wyler who took the amulet from that
other, uglier, smellier guy whose
name escapes me and no longer seems
significant anyway? The Wyler who
will keep it as long as he lives?

Mid turns back to Rockrane with a thin smirk.

MID

Sorry. Never heard of him.

Rockrane's eyes turn into snakelike slits as he glares down
at the little girl who dares to defy him.

ROCKRANE
Take them to the town square.

EXT. STREETS OF CRIMTOW - DAY

Rockrane and his Bandits drag Rolo and Mid down the street by chains. The familiar Outraged Woman watches.

OUTRAGED WOMAN
Oh my god! They're going to
execute that little girl!

A CONCERNED CITIZEN rushes over to her.

CONCERNED CITIZEN
Let's hurry and get good seats!

EXT. CRIMTOW TOWN SQUARE STAGE - DAY

An EXECUTIONER practices his axe chopping on a dummy.

EXT. CRIMTOW TOWN SQUARE - DAY

The Concerned Citizen and Outraged Woman are among the crowd by the stage. The Bookie walks by, collecting bets.

BOOKIE
Over/under's three and a half chops
before the kid's head falls off.

EXT. EDGE OF CRIMTOW TOWN SQUARE - DAY

With paper and pen in hand, a young ROCKRANE FAN hurries over to Rockrane, who watches from the back of the crowd.

ROCKRANE FAN
Rockrane! I'm your biggest fan!
Can I get an autograph?

Rockrane takes the pen and jams it through the Fan's hand. Despite the trickling blood, the Fan grins.

ROCKRANE FAN
I'll never wash this hand again!

EXT. BACK OF STAGE - DAY

Rolo and Mid, still chained up, look to each other nervously.

MID
What should we do, Rolo?

ROLO
I don't know. I wish boss was here
so we could ask him.

MID
I don't think Wyler's coming. This
is too big of an adventure for him.

EXT. EDGE OF CRIMTOW TOWN SQUARE - DAY

Wyler hides his face behind a newspaper's sports page, which
shows a picture of a man getting punched. The headline:
"Soloway gets hit in 58th consecutive brawl."

Wyler whispers to an AUDIENCE MEMBER.

WYLER
Pst, hey. How much is a bus ticket
out this town?

EXT. BACK OF STAGE - DAY

Swogglehorn approaches Rolo and Mid.

SWOGGLEHORN
I'll give you one chance to change
your mind. Tell me where Wyler is.

MID
We'll never give him up. Wyler's
our friend.

SWOGGLEHORN
Ohh, aren't you a little sweetie
pie. Don't you ever change.

Swogglehorn pinches her cheek, harder than necessary.

SWOGGLEHORN
After all, suckers like you keep us
in business.

Swogglehorn gestures out to the blood thirsty crowd.

SWOGGLEHORN
You picked the wrong city to be
loyal in. And the wrong man to be
loyal to. Did you know that your
"friend" wanted to sell you?

MID
That's not true. Wyler wouldn't do
that. Would he, Rolo?

Mid turns to Rolo, who keeps quiet.

MID
Rolo? He wouldn't, would he?

Rolo simply hangs his head, essentially admitting guilt.

EXT. CRIMTOW TOWN SQUARE STAGE - DAY

Swogglehorn steps out to address the crowd.

SWOGGLEHORN
Ladies and gentleman -- please
leave now! Because the rest of us
swine are gonna have some fun!

The crowd cheers wildly.

EXT. EDGE OF CRIMTOW TOWN SQUARE - DAY

As the crowd cheers, Wyler sneaks towards Rockrane from
behind. Rockrane sees him, and throws him against a wall.

WYLER
Nice to see you too, Rockrane.

ROCKRANE
Tell me where the amulet is.

WYLER
Rockrane. Buddy. Calm down. You
think I'd keep the amulet from you?
No chance. I'm a huge fan.

ROCKRANE
Tell me where the amulet is.

WYLER
I don't have it.

Rockrane draws a dagger and presses it against Wyler's neck.
Wyler whimpers at the contact, but manages to lower his
collar to show that he's not wearing an amulet.

WYLER
Swogglehorn already took the amulet
from me. He's trying to frame me.

Rockrane glares at Swogglehorn on the stage.

WYLER

And he's making you look like a
fool. Which is so disrespectful.
Even I feel offended. As a fan.

Rockrane tosses Wyler aside and marches towards the stage,
throwing audience members out of the way as he does.

EXT. CRIMTOW TOWN SQUARE STAGE - DAY

Rockrane leaps on stage and grabs Swogglehorn by the neck.

ROCKRANE

Tell me where the amulet is.

SWOGGLEHORN

Haven't you been paying attention,
meathead? Wyler has the amulet.
We're looking for him, remember?

Rockrane hurls Swogglehorn into the crowd.

EXT. CRIMTOW TOWN SQUARE - DAY

Swogglehorn crashes down on the stage. His Students draw
their weapons to protect him.

BOOKIE

Rockrane's a ten to one favorite!

Swogglehorn and Rockrane's respective gangs collide. Soon
the crowd joins in, resulting in massive chaos.

EXT. BACK OF STAGE - DAY

Wyler finds Rolo and Mid. First, he frees Mid's backpack.

ROLO

Boss! What happened?

WYLER

I stashed the amulet here.

Wyler digs into Mid's backpack to remove the amulet. With
the amulet in tow, Wyler bolts.

ROLO

Boss! You forgot us!

Wyler stops in his tracks and hustles back.

WYLER
Oh right, sorry.

Wyler frees them. Wyler and Rolo start to run off, but Mid refuses to join them, standing still.

WYLER
What's wrong now?

MID
Were you gonna sell me to Swogglehorn?

WYLER
Who told you that? Rolo?

MID
Swogglehorn did. Is it true?

WYLER
Kid, I might never be nominated for sainthood, but one thing I am is more trustworthy than Swogglehorn.

MID
Promise me you'd never do that. Or I'm not coming with you.

WYLER
Then don't come. I don't care. Have fun playing in the riot.

Wyler storms off, but Rolo stays behind, urging him to reconsider. Wyler grumbles, but returns.

WYLER
Fine. I promise I wasn't going to sell you to Swogglehorn. Happy?

MID
I knew it! I knew you'd never do that to me!

WYLER
If you keep slowing us down, I might reconsider.

Mid snickers and scurries off to safety. Rolo gives Wyler a disappointed look, but follows him out anyway.

EXT. STREETS OF CRIMTOW - DAY

Wyler, Rolo, and Mid rush through the streets, as a massive riot takes place in the square behind them.

EXT. CRIMTOW GATES - DAY

Wyler, Rolo, and Mid leave behind the gates of Crimtow, where THIEVES work on stealing the gold "T" letter.

EXT. GRAVELLY ROAD - DAY

Mid skips along as Wyler puts back on the amulet.

MID

I was hoping to go back to my family, unless you had something else you want to do first.

WYLER

To be honest, I didn't plan much past this point, kid.

They stroll along the path. With Crimtow's cacophony behind them, silence fills the air. Until...

Mid hears a familiar sound. Horse clops. She looks back to find a carriage following them, and freezes in horror.

MID

Oh no. It's the Coachman!

Rolo and Wyler look confused, so Mid frantically reaches into her backpack to show them her crayon drawing of the Coachman.

MID

He kidnaps neglected kids and makes them his slaves. We need to run!

Mid runs down the road. Wyler and Rolo follow.

WYLER

Mid, wait!

The carriage picks up speed, and easily gains ground on them.

Wyler trips on a rock and tumbles. Mid rushes back to him.

MID

Come on, Wyler! Hurry!

Wyler does not budge. He gives Mid a cold look, and grabs onto her backpack in order to restrain her.

MID
Wyler, what are you doing?!

WYLER
This isn't my fault, kid. I told you the rules.

Mid stops trying to run. She looks back to Wyler, confused.

MID
I don't get it. You tricked me?

Mid turns to Rolo, who does nothing but fight tears and hang his head. She finally gets it, and turns back to Wyler.

MID
You're the two-headed man.

WYLER
You draw everything that happens. You had to have seen this coming.

MID
But, but... you promised.

WYLER
I promised you I wasn't going to sell you to Swogglehorn. I didn't say anything about the Coachman.

The carriage pulls to a stop. The Coachman jumps down.

THE COACHMAN
It's time to go, my love.

Too devastated to try an escape, Mid lets the Coachman lead her up the carriage. Her teary eyes remain locked on Wyler.

MID
So... this whole time, you pretended to be my friend so you could trick me? It was all a game?

Wyler rubs the back of his neck, wrestling with guilt.

WYLER
If it makes you feel any better, it wasn't a very fun game.

The Coachman snaps the reins, and the carriage takes off.

CHAPTER SEVEN:**"Fortunes of Friendship"**

EXT. WINDY MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY

The carriage presses up a spiraling mountain road.

EXT. COACHMAN'S CARRIAGE - DAY

The Coachman talks to the dejected Mid.

THE COACHMAN

I heard that you don't have a name,
my love. Fortunately, where we're
going, a problem like that will
seem rather trivial.

EXT. GRAVELLY ROAD - DUSK

Wyler plods along the road. Rolo follows, still hanging his
head. Wyler looks back at him and scowls.

WYLER

Don't give me that look.

ROLO

I'm not looking at you, boss.

WYLER

Exactly! You should be looking at
me. You should be thanking me.

ROLO

But... Mid was our friend.

WYLER

The Coachman's a much better friend
to have than Mid. He's going to
protect us from Rockrane. Why
would I pick Mid over that?

ROLO

Because she'd never sell you out.
Swogglehorn and Rockrane were gonna
kill us, and she stood up for you.

WYLER

That's not loyalty; it's stupidity.

ROLO
I did too. Was I being stupid?

WYLER
It'd certainly be characteristic.

Rolo stops following Wyler.

ROLO
Boss? I don't want to come with you. If that's all right.

WYLER
It'd be wonderful. All you do is slow me down. I don't need you. Without you, I'm still the King of Thieves. Without me, you're nothing but a useless fat fool.

Wyler moves on. Rolo looks down the lonely path behind him, and reconsiders. He hurries to catch up with Wyler.

EXT. VOLCANO SUMMIT - DAY

The carriage climbs a snow-covered volcano and passes a single cottage on its way to the summit.

EXT. COACHMAN'S CARRIAGE - DAY

The Coachman stops the carriage at the summit.

THE COACHMAN
Welcome to your new home, my love.

Mid peers over the edge to look into the volcano.

EXT. VOLCANO PRISON - DAY

A few cages fill up the hollowed-out volcano. They are shaped like the Coachman's hand. His clawed fingers make up the bars, and leave an opening at the top.

CHILD PRISONERS, emaciated and miserable, look up to Mid.

EXT. VOLCANO SUMMIT - DAY

Mid doesn't see the Coachman come up behind her and grab onto her. She shrieks.

The Coachman flaps his coat to resemble wings and leaps down.

EXT. MID'S CAGE - DAY

Holding onto Mid, the Coachman floats into an empty cage.

Once they land, Mid scurries away. She tries to squeeze through the bars, but they are too narrow. She tries to climb them, but they are too slippery. She's trapped.

She looks back with horror to the Coachman.

THE COACHMAN

You may think me strange now, but
you'll find we've a lot in common.

The Coachman motions to the walls of the volcano. They are covered end to end with children's drawings.

Only, these charcoal drawings are far more demented than Mid's original work. Childish sketches of bloody heads, dead pets and severed bodies, among others, add to the ambiance.

THE COACHMAN

I'm not an artist myself, but I am
a passionate collector.

The Coachman admires the work, then turns to Mid with a grin.

THE COACHMAN

You must have noticed how your
drawings come to life. In fact,
every part of this world was
created by the dreams of children.

Mid backs away from the Coachman as he approaches her.

THE COACHMAN

And every one of my powers comes
from their fears. The claws, the
flying. Billy over there is afraid
of spiders. Aren't you, Billy?

The Coachman looks to BILLY in the next cage over. He blows Billy a kiss, and when he does, dozens of SPIDERS fly out from his lips.

Despite her fear, Mid puts on her bravest face.

MID

I'm not afraid of you.

THE COACHMAN

I'm not trying to frighten you, my
love; I'm trying to encourage your
talents.

(MORE)

THE COACHMAN (CONT'D)

Your mind is the most powerful one we've ever seen. You haven't mastered your powers yet, but in time you will.

The Coachman lovingly sifts a hand through Mid's hair.

THE COACHMAN

In Sunnyside, they stifled you. Your parents, your teachers. They called you weird and took away your drawings. But here, you can use them to help me become a god.

The Coachman produces his charcoal pen and hands it to Mid.

MID

Why would I help you?

THE COACHMAN

Because it's a lot smarter than disappointing me.

The Coachman extends a claw against Mid's neck.

Mid is, understandably, terrified.

EXT. VOLCANO - DAY

An exhausted Wyler and Rolo trek up the volcano.

ROLO

Couldn't he have given us a ride?

WYLER

He's called the Coachman, not the Chauffeur.

Wyler and Rolo see the Coachman emerge from the volcano.

ROLO

Something about him creeps me out.

WYLER

No idea what you're talking about.

The Coachman spreads his coat and flies towards them.

WYLER

Okay, so he has a few quirks. Just be nice.

When the Coachman lands, Rolo struggles to be polite.

ROLO

Umm... cool kid jail you got here.

THE COACHMAN

It's not a "kid jail." I nurture children whose parents were rotten.

ROLO

What if their parents come?

THE COACHMAN

Then I'm obligated to return them. Unless they've already used my pen. Then, they're all mine.

WYLER

Well, we didn't come here for any kids, so how about you protect us from Rockrane now?

THE COACHMAN

I can't do that quite yet.

WYLER

But we already gave you the kid.

THE COACHMAN

Your history includes a wee bit of back stabbing, Wyler. I want to make sure she uses the pen first.

ROLO

Mid won't do that.

THE COACHMAN

If she doesn't do it by tomorrow, I'll make her. My claws can be very persuasive.

The Coachman heads off. Rolo immediately spins to Wyler.

ROLO

Boss! We need to save Mid!

WYLER

We need to mind our own business.

ROLO

It is our business. It's our fault she's here.

WYLER

Rolo, you're as dumb as a rock, but you must have learned one thing.

(MORE)

WYLER (CONT'D)

That you shouldn't care about anyone but yourself.

ROLO

Well, I do. And I like that I do. In fact, I don't wanna go on anti-adventures anymore, boss. I don't wanna play games and trick people.

WYLER

Don't be an idiot, Rolo. I told you, without me, you'd be --

ROLO

A useless fat fool. I know. But at least I wouldn't feel so bad. I don't wanna do whatever you say anymore, boss. You're not a nice person. You're not a good friend.

WYLER

What took you so long to figure that out?

Rolo walks away, back down the volcano.

ROLO

I'm leaving. By myself.

WYLER

Good riddance.

EXT. COACHMAN'S COTTAGE - DAY

Wyler rushes to catch up with the Coachman.

THE COACHMAN

What happened to your friend?

WYLER

Don't worry about him. He's an idiot.

INT. COACHMAN'S COTTAGE - DAY

The Coachman leads Wyler into his cottage.

THE COACHMAN

After a few days here, the children forget all about home. So I keep their belongings as souvenirs.

The Coachman motions to the mementos that stack the cabinets. Children's items: teddy bears, paper dolls, etc.

EXT. MID'S CAGE - DUSK

Mid snuffles in her cage. She looks around at the various demented charcoal drawings, all of which have attributions.

Sarah drew a picture of Santa burning in the fireplace. Jacob drew a tombstone saying "RIP Dad."

Then, one drawing gives Mid pause. A young boy in a baseball cap, being captured by the Coachman. The attribution: Wyler.

INT. COACHMAN'S COTTAGE - DUSK

Wyler looks at an autographed baseball with his name on it. He picks up an old baseball mitt and tries it on.

THE COACHMAN

I doubt that still fits you, Wyler.
You've grown a lot since then.

Wyler dusts off the mitt.

THE COACHMAN

You were a meek little boy, and look at you now. After I was done with you and gave you to Swogglehorn's school, you turned into a fine villain.

WYLER

I'm not a villain. I've met bad guys, and I'm not one of them.

THE COACHMAN

So you fancy yourself a hero then?

WYLER

Not even close. But not everyone's a hero or a villain. Some people are in between. Some people never had anyone to teach them how to be good. Even if they wanted to be, they can't. They don't have it in them.

THE COACHMAN

I'm a hero, in a way. Don't you find it heroic of me to give purpose to these poor children?

Wyler doesn't respond, and looks visibly sick with himself.

THE COACHMAN

I don't particularly care if you approve of what I do, Wyler. Because, as you said yourself, you don't have it in you to stop me.

WYLER

You're right. I don't.

Wyler sighs and looks out the window. He sees Rolo sneak back up the volcano, and tries to hide his excitement.

WYLER

But maybe someone else does.

EXT. VOLCANO SUMMIT - DUSK

Rolo wanders to the summit rather clumsily, since he's covering his eyes with his hands.

ROLO

Mid? Are you there?

MID

Rolo! What are you doing?

ROLO

Hi, Mid! I figured you didn't wanna look at me right now, so I'm gonna cover my eyes the whole time.

MID

I can still see you if you close your eyes, Rolo.

ROLO

Oh. Right. Sorry.

Rolo removes his hand sheepishly.

ROLO

I'm so sorry we let this happen.

MID

It's all right, Rolo. I'm not mad at you. I know selling me to the Coachman wasn't your idea. You can stay. With your eyes open, even.

ROLO
Oh good. Because, it'll be a lot easier to free you if I can see.

MID
You guys are going to free me? I knew it! Where's Wyler?

ROLO
Boss isn't coming. But I'm gonna try and rescue you without him, if it's all right.

MID
Of course it is!

Rolo tries to climb down the volcano, but it's a long way down. He nearly slips off the edge.

MID
Rolo, stop. It's too high. You're gonna get hurt. And even if you come down here, we won't be able to get back out. Leave before the Coachman captures you too.

ROLO
I can't leave you here, Mid. Now that boss is mad at me, you're the only friend I've got left.

MID
You tried your best. And, I'm really proud of you for doing this all by yourself. But can you just do one more thing for me? Tell my family that I love them.

A light bulb goes off for Rolo. He goes deep into thought.

MID
Rolo, that's the look babies have when they poop their diapers. Of all the things you can do, that's probably the least helpful.

ROLO
I've got an idea!

MID
Uh oh. And I thought I was in trouble before.

ROLO

I can find your parents! The Coachman said that if they come here before you use that pen, you can go free!

MID

You don't know where they are. But... I can draw you a map!

Mid starts scribbling a map with her crayons. She finishes quickly and writes her address.

Mid crumples the map into a ball and throws it up to Rolo. The ball barely makes it half way before falling back down to her. She tries again, with no luck.

MID

It won't work. It's too high.

ROLO

It's okay. We don't need your parents. I'll find a ladder, or --

MID

A plane!

ROLO

That might be more expensive than a ladder, Mid.

MID

No, a paper airplane. This kid in my class does it all the time.

Mid folds her map into a paper airplane. She hurls it up to Rolo. The plane spins and soars and makes it to him.

MID

I can't believe it. I did learn something in school after all.

EXT. VOLCANO - DUSK

Rolo runs down the volcano, but tires quickly.

Then, he sees the Coachman's carriage parked nearby.

EXT. WINDY MOUNTAIN ROAD - DUSK

Rolo rides the carriage down the mountain, as fast as he can.

CHAPTER EIGHT:

"The Heroism of Claybert and Other Assorted Characters"

EXT. GRAVELLY ROAD - DAWN

The Kids tug Rolo and the carriage down the gravelly road.

ROLO

I'm really sorry about making you
do this, but I need to save my
friend Mid. If it's all right.
Trust me, she's worth it.

They try their best, but they are clearly tired and slowing.
Even Rolo seems defeated.

He perks up when he sees a pick-up truck in the distance. He
hops out of the carriage and flags it down.

The truck slows to a stop. The Slow-Moving Fishermen poke
their heads out the window.

ROLO

Hey, you're the fishermen who
pulled us out of the lake!

SLOW-MOVING FISHERMAN

Well, look at that, Ed. It's that
big talkin' fish we found.

ROLO

Can you guys help me?

SLOW-MOVING FISHERMAN 2

Whatcha want, more worms?

SLOW-MOVING FISHERMAN

He's a hungry fella, Ed.

ROLO

No, no, I was hoping you might
drive me somewhere.

SLOW-MOVING FISHERMAN

We'd like to help, worm eater, but
we got us a big ol' load to haul.

EXT. FISHERMEN'S TRUCK - DAWN

The Slow-Moving Fisherman hops out and shows Rolo that the
truck is attached to a mammoth tub of fish.

SLOW-MOVING FISHERMAN
 Turned out Ed was right 'bout those
 worms. They do the trick.

Rolo notices something, and brushes fish away. It reveals
 Baccatelli's taxi, buried in the huge pile of fish.

SLOW-MOVING FISHERMAN
 This here's the biggest darn fish
 we ever caught. Fished it out,
 right 'bout the time we found you.

ROLO
 Can I buy it?

SLOW-MOVING FISHERMAN
 My, you are hungry, ain't ya?

EXT. GRAVELLY ROAD - DAWN

Rolo rushes back to pull the reins off the kids.

ROLO
 You guys can go now. You're free!
 Oh! And here, take some presents.

Rolo grabs the knapsack, and hands out the stolen goods.

INT. BACCATELLI'S TAXSEE - DAWN

Rolo uses the windshield wipers to bat away the leftover
 fish. He uses Mid's map for directions as he drives.

EXT. MID'S CAGE - DAWN

Miserable, Mid pouts in her cage. She sees the charcoal pen
 near her, and chucks it away.

The pen squirms back toward her. Mid whimpers.

MID
 Oh, Rolo, please hurry.

EXT. SUNNYSIDE GATE - DAY

Rolo arrives at the gate and jumps out of the taxi.

Nervous about crossing the gate, Rolo pauses for a moment.
 The gate creaks open for him.

EXT. SUNNYSIDE LANE - DAY

Rolo sneaks around cautiously, worried that someone might find him. A loud BUZZING causes him to duck for cover. He looks over to see the Suburban Man using his lawn mower.

The Paper Boy rolls by on his bicycle and chucks newspapers at driveways.

Rolo assumes that he's being attacked. He flees, ducking and dodging the papers. He dives into a rosebush.

EXT. MID'S HOUSE - DAY

Rolo pulls thorns out of his arm and checks the map until he comes to Mid's house.

He touches the white picket fence to test its sharpness, and then leaps over it.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Back to their routines, Mom follows the cookbook to make fish omelettes. Bill and Jill jostle at the table. Alexis paints her toenails beige. They all seem lifeless and depressed.

Alexis spots Rolo at the door.

ALEXIS

Mom! There's an ugly stinky fat guy at the door.

Everyone turns to Rolo. He waves sheepishly.

MOM

Alexis, don't be rude to a guest.

Mom approaches Rolo. One sniff later, she steps away.

MOM

Although she does have a point about the smell. Is it possible for you to come back later? I just finished cleaning up in here.

ROLO

Um, it's kinda urgent. Are you Mid's family?

BILL

Yeah! Mid's my sister.

JILL

She's more my sister than she is
your sister.

BILL

That doesn't even make sense.

Bill and Jill slap each other again.

MOM

Do you know where Mid is? Is she
all right?

ROLO

For now. But, she's in trouble.

The family stops and listens to Rolo with concern. Alexis' face has a hint of guilt as well.

Rolo launches into the explanation at a feverish pace.

ROLO

Mid left the gate and became
friends with us, but we let her
down, so now she's trapped in a
volcano by this madman with claws
who's gonna make her a slave so he
can take over the world as soon as
she uses his magic pen.

The family looks at Rolo like he's a crazy person.

MOM

That seems a little farfetched. I
mean, you really expect us to
believe Mid has friends?

ROLO

I don't know exactly how families
work, but aren't you supposed to
care about each other?

MOM

We do care. But the police told us
to stay put. I'd rather play by
the rules than listen to some
stranger with made up stories.

The made up story line triggers recognition in Alexis. Just before a defeated Rolo gets set to leave, she speaks up.

ALEXIS

Hey wait... smelly guy. The guy
who captured Mid. What's his name?

ROLO
They call him the Coachman.

Alexis finally gets bowled over by her guilt.

ALEXIS
Mom? I think I need to show you
something. I'll be right back.

Alexis rushes upstairs. She returns quickly with the folder
Mid left behind, and the letter attached to it.

ALEXIS
Wow what a coincidence. I totally
like, just found this now. It's a
letter from Mid.

Jill rushes over to take the letter.

JILL
I wanna read Mid's letter!

BILL
I wanna read it first!

Bill tries to steal the letter. After a struggle, Jill
regains possession of the letter and stares at it.

JILL
I just remembered I can't read yet.

Jill hands the letter to Bill.

BILL
Me neither.

Bill hands the letter to Mom, who reads it.

MOM
"Dear family, I'm running away and
leaving behind my most prized
possession" -- wow Mid really needs
to work on her spelling. Anyway,
"my most prized possession -- my
old book of adventures."

Bill and Jill open the folder and find a collection of Mid's
crayon drawings.

MOM
"I always draw the adventures I
want to go on, and when they
happen, I color them in."

Bill and Jill flip through the assorted drawings, all of which are colored in.

BILL

Hey look! It's when we built that giant monster snowman!

JILL

Remember this? When we explored those creepy caves at the beach?

Curious, Alexis strolls over and takes a peek.

ALEXIS

These suck. That's me? I'm much prettier than that.

JILL

No, that's Mid.

ALEXIS

Oh. These aren't bad then.

Bill and Jill keep flipping through the illustrations, which are now nothing more than sketches.

MOM

"But when I got older, the adventures stopped happening. They got replaced by rules and homework and other grown-up stuff. I couldn't do what I wanted anymore."

The pages become just a series of blank sheets of paper.

MOM

"That's why I have to go find new adventures past the gate. I'll miss you a whole bunch, even if you don't miss me. Love, your unnamed daughter."

Everyone seems saddened by the note.

MOM

Kids, you know what we have to do.

ALEXIS

Respect the letter's wishes and worry about our own problems?

MOM

No... we have to go save Mid!

JILL
I'm going to save her first!

Bill and Jill wrestle as they hurry out the door.

EXT. SUNNYSIDE GATE - DAY

The family rushes over to the taxi, but pauses at the gate.

ALEXIS
We can't cross the gate, Mom. What
about the rules?

MOM
Some things are more important.

Mom shoves open the gate and leads them through.

INT. BACCATELLI'S TAXSEE - DAY

Rolo, Mom and the kids stuff themselves inside the taxi.

ROLO
Wait. We can't free Mid unless we
have your dad too. Where is he?

INT. DAD'S OFFICE CUBICLE - DAY

An exhausted Dad continues to slave over his work. He takes
a quick break to stretch. Of course, Tweed catches him.

TWEED
I'm sorry, is this an office or a
gym? Work out on your own time.

INT. DAD'S OFFICE ENTRANCE - DAY

When Rolo and the family enter the office, a siren sounds.

OFFICE SIREN
Family alert! Family alert!

INT. DAD'S OFFICE - DAY

Tweed cuts the family off as they approach the cubicle.

DAD
What are you guys doing here?

MOM

We need to go save our daughter.

TWEED

Not during office hours.

JILL

Let my dad go, or I'll beat you up.

BILL

I'll beat you up worse.

DAD

Kids, don't. Let daddy do it.

Dad picks up all his work files and throws them at Tweed, knocking him over. Dad climbs on his chair, leaps over the cubicle and runs out with his family.

INT. BACCATELLI'S TAXSEE - DAY

With Dad in tow, Rolo and the family cram back into the taxi.

ROLO

We don't have much time. I don't know if we're gonna make it.

ALEXIS

Oh well. We tried. We failed. Moving on: Anyone up for shopping?

ROLO

Wait...

Rolo moves his hand to the speed switch.

ROLO

Everyone, buckle up.

Rolo flips the switch.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREETS - DAY

The taxi's wheels contract, and it becomes a ball. The taxi starts to roll, and quickly picks up tons of speed.

Soon the taxi whizzes down the streets like a bullet.

INT. BACCATELLI'S TAXSEE - DAY

Rolo and the others hold on for dear life.

Rolo loses control of the wheel, and the taxi crashes.

EXT. SUBURBAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

The taxi lands in a tree nearby Mid's elementary school.

INT. BACCATELLI'S TAXSEE - DAY

Rolo sighs as he finds the taxi stuck in the tree.

ROLO
I can't control the car. I don't
think anyone can.

CLAYBERT (O.S.)
Think again, civilian!

EXT. SUBURBAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

Rolo looks out the window.

He sees Claybert pop out of a trash can that rests underneath the tree. He's got paper airplanes stuck in his hair.

CLAYBERT
When a crisis arises, a hero
emerges. Enter: Claybert.

ROLO
Why are you in the trash?

CLAYBERT
Bullies. My arch nemeses. Alas,
my extensive training in the art of
video gaming has not increased my
physical attributes. But I can
push buttons with the best of 'em.

INT. BACCATELLI'S TAXSEE - DAY

Rolo scoots aside to let Claybert take the wheel. Claybert looks back and sees Alexis.

CLAYBERT
For the record, I'm single. At
least until my cousin comes back
for Thanksgiving.

He winks at a disgusted Alexis and then flips the switch.

EXT. SUBURBAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

The taxi, still a ball, bounces out of the tree and spins down the road.

EXT. HILLY ROAD - DAY

The lightning-fast taxi shoots up dust in its wake.

INT. BACCATELLI'S TAXSEE - DAY

Rolo and Mid's family look petrified, but Claybert stays in complete control of the wheel.

EXT. ABANDONED SHACK - DAY

Qirka's talking flier speaks to teenage THRILL SEEKERS.

QIRKA'S FLIER
Qirka's Circus is the greatest
thrill ride around.

The taxi zooms by. The Thrill Seekers toss the flier away.

THRILL SEEKER
Dude, let's go check that out.

Left alone, the crumpled-up flier whimpers.

QIRKA'S FLIER
I knew I should have pursued a
career as a take-out menu.

EXT. CRIMTOW GATES - DAY

The taxi spins by the gates of Crimtow. The gold "T" letter has been removed, leaving it as "Crimow."

EXT. WINDY MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY

The taxi rolls up the thick snow, but ultimately slows down and stops before it can climb the entire volcano.

INT. BACCATELLI'S TAXSEE - DAY

Rolo climbs out of the taxi, followed by Mom and Dad.

MOM
Kids, stay here. We'll be back.

Alexis smiles at Claybert, clearly impressed by his skills.

ALEXIS
So you're single, huh?

After a few moments of waiting, Bill and Jill get impatient.

BILL
So are we really waiting?

JILL
Not a chance.

The kids pile out of the taxi.

EXT. WINDY MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY

Rolo, Mom and Dad run up the mountain.

EXT. COACHMAN'S COTTAGE - DAY

The Coachman and Wyler see Rolo and Mid's parents run up the mountain. The Coachman grumbles, while Wyler grins.

EXT. VOLCANO SUMMIT - DAY

The Coachman heads up the volcano. Wyler follows.

WYLER
Wait! Her parents came! That means you have to let her go.

THE COACHMAN
They're not here yet. I still have time to get her to use the pen.

The Coachman takes off his gloves and extends his claws. He leaps up and flies into the volcano.

EXT. MID'S CAGE - DAY

The Coachman soars above Mid's cage.

THE COACHMAN
I'm tired of being polite, my love. Use the pen before I get mad.

The black charcoal pen leaps into Mid's hand.

THE COACHMAN

Use the pen!

The Coachman swings his claws menacingly. Mid screams.

EXT. VOLCANO SUMMIT - DAY

Wyler hears Mid's scream, and then looks back to Rolo, Mom, and Dad, who are still too far away.

WYLER

Come on. Hurry up, idiot.

After another scream, Wyler can't help but step over to the edge and gauge the distance down.

He closes his eyes and prepares to jump. However, he backs off just before he does.

WYLER

No way. This is her damn problem.

Wyler looks over the edge again, but again backs away. He grumbles to himself, obviously conflicted.

EXT. VOLCANO - DAY

Rolo and Mid's parents near the volcano, a mere minute away from reaching the summit. They run with all their energy.

EXT. MID'S CAGE - DAY

The Coachman hovers over Mid. She tries to squeeze through the bars in vain, and screams for help.

MID

Someone help! Mom! Dad! Rolo!

The Coachman's smile grows evil as he closes in on Mid.

MID

Wyler?!

Mid sees Wyler jump off the ledge. On his way down, he tackles the Coachman from above.

The two of them tumble down into Mid's cage.

Mid looks over to her pack of crayons. She runs over for them, but the Coachman blows to unleash a swarm of spiders. The spiders pull the crayons away from her.

Severely injured, Wyler crawls back towards the Coachman, but he's too hurt and slow to get very far.

The Coachman backs Mid into the corner of the prison.

THE COACHMAN

You had so much potential, my love.
Shame it had to go to waste.

The Coachman lunges at Mid. Just as he does, Wyler removes his amulet and wraps it around the Coachman's neck.

Wyler chokes the Coachman with the amulet. After a struggle, the amulet shatters, and the Coachman falls down, dead.

EXT. VOLCANO PRISON - DAY

As soon as the Coachman dies, all the prison bars fall over, freeing the Child Prisoners.

EXT. MID'S CAGE - DAY

Mid rushes to Wyler.

MID

Wyler, are you all right?

WYLER

I'm fine, kid. Just a scratch.

Despite his assurance, Wyler collapses again.

Mid kneels over him, careful not to actually touch him.

MID

I can't believe you saved me.

WYLER

I can't believe it either.

Mid picks up the pieces of the amulet.

MID

Oh no, your amulet. It's broken.

WYLER

It's fine. You give me some graham crackers and we'll call it even.

EXT. VOLCANO PRISON - DAY

Rolo jumps down into the volcano, taking a hard landing.

He gets up and rushes over to Wyler and Mid. Mid leaps into his arms for a hug.

MID

Rolo! You came back to save me!

ROLO

Yep. And look, so did your family.

Mid looks up to the volcano's edge to see Mom and Dad. She rushes over to wave to them.

EXT. MID'S CAGE - DAY

Rolo approaches Wyler, who still writhes in great pain.

ROLO

Boss! You killed the Coachman!

WYLER

Not bad for my first fight, huh?

ROLO

I knew you had it in you. And hey, boss? I'm sorry I left. I'm sorry I didn't listen to you.

WYLER

No, Rolo, I'm sorry I didn't listen to you. You were right. And you proved it, all by yourself. I'm proud of you.

ROLO

Really?!

WYLER

Really. Just don't rub it in.

Rolo sees Wyler's cuts, which are severe and still bleeding.

ROLO

Are you gonna be all right, boss?

WYLER

I don't think so. This adventure stuff's a tough business.

A teary-eyed Rolo starts to sniffle.

WYLER

Hey, idiot. Toughen up. And don't tell the kid. She never listens to a damn thing I say, so I think she might have gotten attached to me.

ROLO

And you didn't? You're saying you accidentally fought the Coachman?

WYLER

I guess some goodness accidentally slipped out of me from somewhere.

ROLO

I'm glad it did.

Wyler looks over to Mid waving to her family.

WYLER

Me too.

Mid excitedly rushes back over, and tugs on Rolo's hand. When she returns, Wyler covers up the extent of his wounds.

MID

Guys! Let's get out of here.

ROLO

I think we might leave boss here.

MID

But why would you want to stay here, Wyler?

WYLER

None of your business. What did I always tell you? Just worry about yourself.

MID

Sorry.

WYLER

But, I guess it's all right for you to care about that family of yours. They came for you. Mine never did.

MID

You sure you don't want to come? After all, I owe you a graham cracker. You know, for saving my life and all.

WYLER

It's on the house. Although, I wouldn't mind one thing.

MID

Whatever you want.

WYLER

Rolo keeps blabbing about how great of a hugger you are. I wouldn't mind seeing for myself.

Mid smiles and kneels down to hug Wyler.

WYLER

Eh. Not terrible. I guess.

Wyler doesn't let go, holding on tightly and whispering.

WYLER

I'm sorry I wasn't a better friend.

MID

Don't worry. It was really good, for your first try. You'll get a lot better with practice.

Rolo takes Mid's hand and leads her away, letting Wyler lay down on the ground and rest.

ROLO

Come on, Mid. Let's get you home.

EXT. VOLCANO PRISON - DAY

Rolo and Mid pick up one of the set of prison bars and prop them against the volcano wall, creating a de facto ladder.

MID

You're coming with us, aren't you?

ROLO

I might stay here for a while too. If it's all right.

MID

But don't you want a family?

ROLO

Yeah, but, I think it's good for me to spend some time traveling by myself. Making my own decisions.

MID

What are you gonna decide to do?

ROLO

Well, there are these other kids here. I wanted to get them home safe. Think it's a good idea?

MID

Best idea I've ever heard.

Mid gives Rolo a hug. After, she digs into her backpack, and pulls out the teddy bear. She hands it to him.

MID

I want you to have this, Rolo. Teddy's a really good hugger too. And, well, he'll remind you that you do have a family. In a way.

Rolo takes the teddy bear, and then reaches into his knapsack for the last remaining item, the waliroo stuffed animal.

ROLO

I kept this, for you. So you can always remember us here.

MID

I could never forget you guys. Thanks so much. For everything.

Mid takes the waliroo and climbs up the prison bar ladder.

EXT. VOLCANO SUMMIT - DAY

Mom and Dad help Mid climb up the volcano.

The rest of the family, as well as Claybert, come up the volcano as well. Mid rushes towards them.

MID

Claybert?

CLAYBERT

I know what you're thinking. But listen, I'm taken. Deal with it.

Claybert motions to the lovestruck Alexis. Mid rolls her eyes, but gives all of her siblings hugs.

She rushes back over to Mom and Dad, who shower her in hugs.

MID

I'm so sorry that I ran away. And that I was weird and bad in school and allergic to fish. But please please take me home.

MOM

Mid, we're the ones who should be sorry. And we'll change.

BILL

I'll stop fighting with Jill.

JILL

I'll stop first.

BILL

I already stopped.

JILL

I stopped ten seconds ago.

Another slapfight breaks out, but Bill and Jill catch themselves and stop.

JILL

We'll *try* to stop fighting.

DAD

I'll spend less time working. So I can come to dinner. In person.

MOM

And I'll trust you enough to go on adventures. As long as you come back before bedtime.

The family looks to Alexis to contribute. She shrugs.

ALEXIS

Fine, I'll let you stay in my room.

Mid looks back at the strange world, and then to her family.

MID

You know what? Us living together, taking care of each other? That's as big of an adventure as anything out here. So let's go home.

The family celebrates.

EXT. VOLCANO PRISON - DAY

Rolo sits next to Wyler, who grows increasingly pale.

ROLO
Don't get mad at me for this, but,
I'm gonna miss you, boss.

WYLER
Don't say that.

ROLO
Sorry. I know I'm not supposed to
care about --

WYLER
No, I mean, don't say "boss." Call
me a friend. I'm starting to like
the way it sounds.

ROLO
Whatever you say, friend.

Wyler smiles but then goes limp and lifeless.

Rolo sniffles, and covers him in a blanket.

EXT. VOLCANO - DAY

Mid and her family walk back to the taxi.

MID
You know, before I go home, there
is one thing I want. More than
anything.

MOM
Anything you want, dear.

MID
I want... a name.

JILL
Ooh I want to name her!

BILL
No I want to!

DAD
Kids, stop. We'll do it together,
as a family.

With Mid back in tow, the happy family heads home.

EPILOGUE

EXT. VOLCANO - DAY

Months later, the snow has melted off the mountain.

EXT. VOLCANO PRISON - DAY

Swogglehorn and Rockrane and their respective gangs climb down the hollowed-out volcano.

SWOGGLEHORN

Allegedly, this is where Wyler
sacrificed himself for the girl.

Rockrane's snakelike eyes give a skeptical look.

SWOGGLEHORN

Yeah, I don't buy it either.

Swogglehorn and Rockrane explore the volcano for clues.

Rockrane finds the blanket, with something underneath. He pulls off the blanket to reveal... a fake mini giraffe.

Rockrane growls and glares to Swogglehorn. He takes out his dagger, and his Bandits follow suit.

SWOGGLEHORN

Now wait a minute, Rockrane, it's
not my fault. Be reasonable.

Rockrane and Swogglehorn's armies clash once again.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Mom's cookbook collects dust as she works on dinner.

MOM

I hope you guys like this recipe.
I made it up myself.

DAD (O.S.)

Looks great, dear.

This time, Dad joins them in person. He takes the plates and hands them to the kids, who sit at the dinner table.

Mid colors in a drawing. She tapes it on the wall, which is entirely covered with pictures of her new family adventures.

Mom peeks out the window.

MOM
Your friends are here.

MID
Can I go off and adventure?

MOM
You can do whatever you want. As
long as you're back by bedtime.

Mid hugs her parents and then hurries out the door.

EXT. SUNNYSIDE LANE - DAY

Wyler and Rolo wait outside Baccatelli's taxi.

Mid runs and jumps into Wyler's arms for a hug.

EXT. SUNNYSIDE GATE - DAY

The gate slowly creaks open, just in time to let the taxi
shoot by. It flies into the air, off on another adventure.

FADE OUT.