

The Missing Zmulobeast

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One sunny Sunday morning, three children, Arthur, Zuke, and Maria, were talking in Arthur's backyard.

"We saw him take the wallet. It's out of our control. How about we let the police figure it out?" said Maria, a nine year old with short brown hair.

"But Mr. Jackson hired us. We have to get his wallet back. It's our job!" said Arthur, a ten year old boy, who always wore a suit and tie.

"Look, Arthur, we can't do anything now," Maria explained. "Chasing a criminal is way too dangerous! After all, we aren't even real detectives."

"What do you think, Zuke?" Arthur asked.

"I'm not sure, but I think we should leave this one to the police," Zuke, a tall and thin nine year old, replied quietly.

"Not you, too!" Arthur exclaimed. "This is the whole reason we made our detective agency, to do crimes that police won't help with."

"I know, but think about it. Even though we made our agency to help with crimes, we can't help with all," Maria said. "This is something that the police can do, and something that we shouldn't get involved in. It isn't worth risking our safety for."

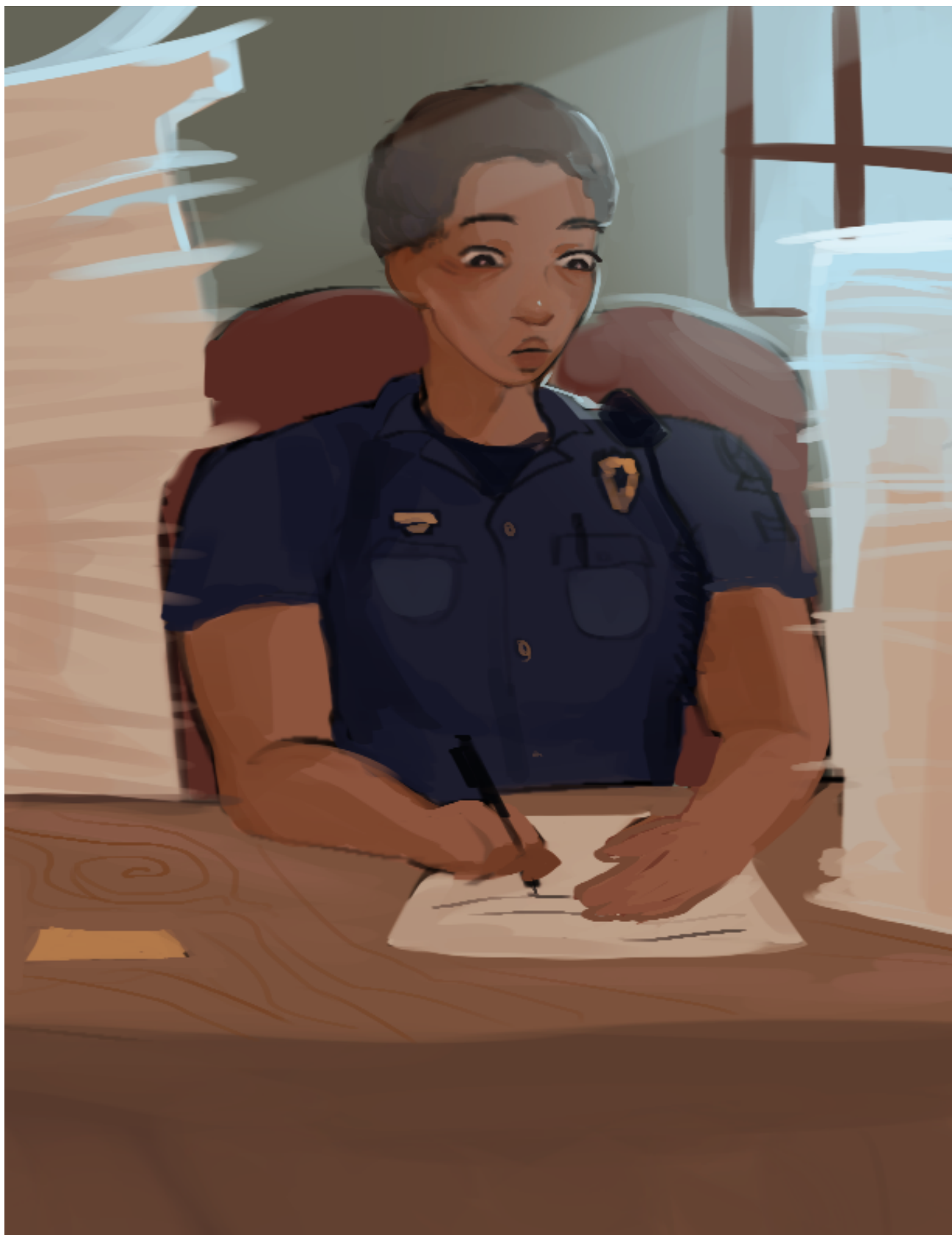
"How do you even know that the police will care just as much as us or Mr. Jackson?" Arthur argued.

"How about we ask Chief, then? We know we can trust him," Maria told Arthur.

"Fine," Arthur said disappointedly. The three kids took their bikes and biked to the police station. The police station was very old, with faded yellow walls and creaky doors. The children walked inside and saw a friendly police officer at a desk.

"Hi, do you happen to know where Chief is?" Maria asked, trying to be polite.

"Of course. Go down to the end of this hallway and make a right. His room should be there," the kind lady smiled. The children thanked her and walked to his room.



Chief, a middle aged African American man, was sitting at his scratched up wooden desk, with stacks of papers that made it hard to see him. Arthur knocked on the rough, wooden door, but the Chief didn't seem to hear him.



"Excuse me?" Arthur asked. "Can we talk to you?"

"Oh hi, come on in!" Chief responded enthusiastically. "I didn't see you there, what's up?"

“So, Mr. Jackson hired us to find his missing wallet. We were about to find it, but then we caught a man who was holding his wallet. The man ran away before we could stop him,” the three children explained. “It’s out of our control, so we wanted to make sure the police can help retrieve Mr. Jackson’s wallet.”

“I’ll definitely make sure Mr. Jackson gets his wallet back,” Chief explained. “I’m gonna need more details than that, though.”

“Hold on, I’m getting a phone call.” Chief said. The Chief walked out of the room and returned a few minutes later.

“Sorry, I had to pick up my phone,” Chief explained. “Actually, Zippy, Ursula, Spike, and Zmulo are at my house waiting for me. How about you guys drive home with me? We can have the whole Pi in the Sky Squad meet up together.”

“Great!” All three children exclaimed. They all headed to the Chief’s red Toyota and drove to his house.

“Took ya long enough to get here!” Spike exclaimed. He was a small, medium-aged dog with black fur. He had experiments done on him, which gave him the mind of a supercomputer and the ability to speak English.

“Hi! We have everybody together!” Zippy, a green, floating alien with a tube sticking out of his head, exclaimed once they got home.

“Hello, everybody,” Ursula said seriously. Ursula was a secretive woman who always had random information, and wore sunglasses any time you saw her.

“Hi guys!” Arthur exclaimed.

“It’s been a while since I’ve seen you Spike!” Zuke said.

“Wait guys, where’s Zmulo?” Maria said, confusedly.

“I don’t know. He was right here a second ago before you guys came,” Zippy explained. Everybody looked around the Chief’s house to look for the Zmulobeast. All they found was a note on the floor.

“Dear the Pi in the Sky Squad, your precious Zmulobeast has been taken. You’ll never find him again,

so don't bother to go looking for him. I mean YOU, Arthur, Zuke, and Maria. Yes, I know who you are. I also know a lot more things about you. If you go looking for him, there will be consequences. If you don't interfere, I will give him back unharmed. From, Boris Greedy."

"Who is Boris Greedy?" Arthur asked, confusedly.

"He's a criminal known for kidnapping and theft. He's been at large for over five years, but the police have never been able to catch him. They never mentioned him because they got blackmailed, like us," Ursula said. "He also has a robotic assistant named Wingnut, who is a lot like Zippy. Wingnut floats and talks, but can't teleport like Zippy does."

"Why would Boris Greedy want Zmulo in the first place?" Zuke asked.

"I'm not sure," Chief said, "but I haven't ever heard of him."

"Well, did Boris say anything else or leave anything?" Maria asked.

"Nope," Arthur replied. Everybody looked around to see if there were any clues to where the Zmulo-beast was.

"Everybody come here!" Spike yelled.

"What is it?" Chief replied. "Did you find anything?"

"No, I didn't find anything. I yelled for no reason," Spike replied, sarcastically.

"Haha, very funny," Chief sarcastically replied back.

"It's a candy wrapper, one from the old candy factory. It's been closed for seven years, but you would never find this wrapper anywhere else. It had to be from there. I think that's where Boris is keeping Zmulo," Spike said.

"Sounds right to me, let's go save the Zmulo-beast!" Arthur yelled, enthusiastically.

"Slow your roll, Sherlock," Spike snapped. "We can't just go. We don't even know how to get in or if it's safe."

"Well, none of this is going to be safe. We're dealing with a criminal right now," Maria explained. "If we

want to get the Zmulo beast back, we have to be willing to take some risks.”

“I think we should go save Zmulo. We can’t just leave our friend,” Zuke said. “If this happened to one of us, he wouldn’t hesitate to come help us. We should do the same.”

“If all of us agree, what are we waiting for?” Spike said, enthusiastically. “Let’s get in Chief’s car!” They all hurried to Chief’s car and crammed into the seats.

“Why are you sitting on me Spike?” Ursula asked.

“There’s no space, in case you haven’t looked around,” Spike rudely replied back. “I’m a dog anyway, not a 100-pound human.”

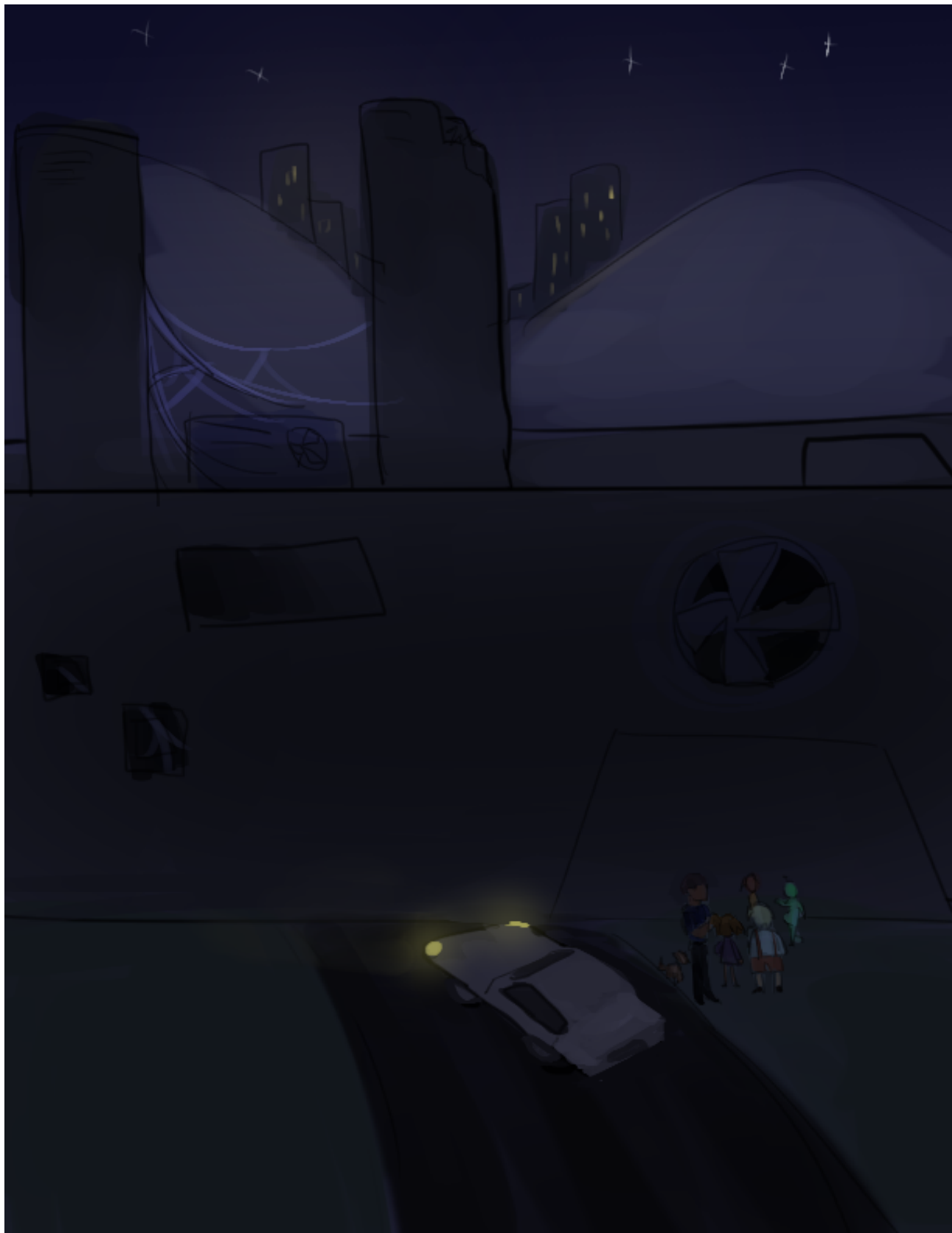
“Normal dogs don’t talk, and definitely don’t have the mind of a supercomputer,” Ursula sarcastically replied.

“Touché,” Spike replied. After ten minutes, they reached the candy factory.

It was huge, with dusty cylindrical chimneys and broken windows. There were doors at the front of the factory that looked like they haven’t been used in years. They all walked to the doors and Zippy floated quickly behind.

“Look,” Maria whispered. “The door is dusty, but the doorknob is clean. Someone would had to have been here.” Chief slowly opened the door, while it made an eerily creaking noise that echoed throughout the building.

“Everybody go in groups. I’ll go with Arthur and Zuke, Ursula will go with Spike, and Maria will go with Zippy. Let’s all go in different directions to cover more space. Remember to be quiet. We don’t want to attract attention. If you see or find anything, flash the “π” sign in the sky.” Chief whispered quietly. Everybody nodded and took off.



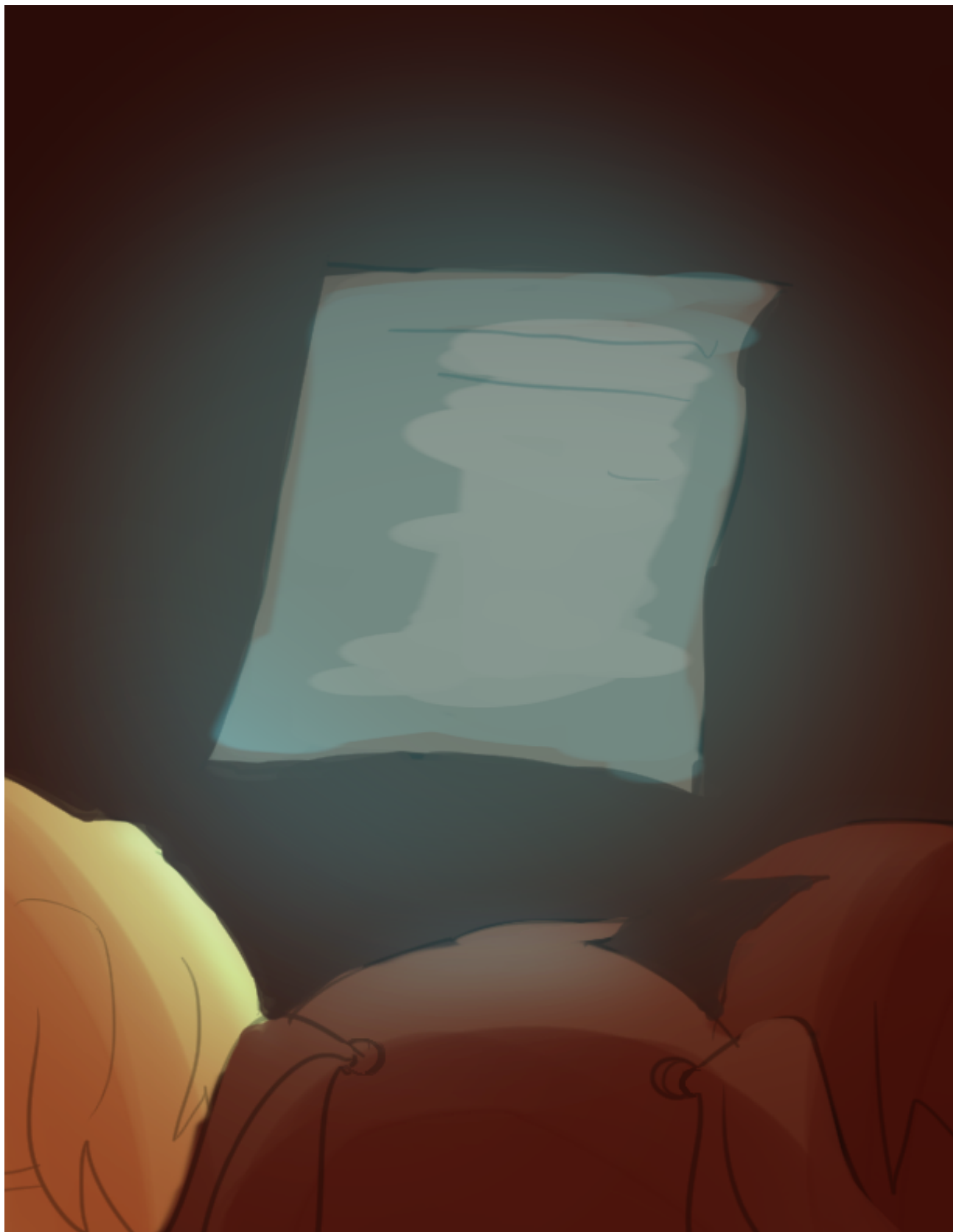
Nobody heard or saw anything until someone flashed the “π” sign in the sky. It was coming from the direction that Maria and Zippy went.



"You guys gotta see this!" Zippy yelled.

"It's some kind of scratch paper," Zippy said to everybody, once they came.

"Couldn't you have been quieter?" the Chief said.



“Oh, come on, ya think anybody is here in this crusty place? We’ve been here for 30 minutes and the only thing I’ve heard is your loud footsteps!” Spike said to the Chief.

“Quit arguing, you guys.” Maria said while scanning the scrap of paper.

“Don’t blame me. He started it,” Spike responded.

“Hold on! They look like letters. They’re too tiny to have been done by any other animal. The Zmulobeast had to have been here,” Maria said.

“Why would Boris Greedy and the Zmulobeast come here in the first place? It’s an old, beaten down candy factory. There’s nothing useful here,” Zuke asked. Ursula suddenly pointed to the crates of candy.

“They came here because of the candy,” Ursula said. “We all know Zmulo always had a sweet tooth, and maybe Boris knew that, too. Boris somehow had to lure him here with candy. See that open crate?”

“Boris probably knows just as much about the Zmulobeast as we know,” Chief noted.

“Arthur, do you have your notebook with you?” Maria asked.

“Always!” Arthur said enthusiastically while pulling it out of his suit pocket. Maria began writing the letters down in the notebook.

“renvreege odows? I thought Zmulo could spell,” Spike said sarcastically.

“He can. He did this on purpose.” Zuke said.

“It’s an anagram. Zmulo loves them,” Chief said. Everybody thought, until Ursula suddenly said something.

“The Evergreen Woods,” Ursula said. “It’s probably where Boris is taking Zmulo.”

“How did you?” Arthur asked, confusedly. “I’m not even gonna ask.”

“Why are we wasting time? We have to get to Evergreen Woods!” Arthur exclaimed.

“Okay, kid,” Chief sighed. They all ran out of the factory and started to drive.

“How far is Evergreen Woods?” Zippy asked.

“Not too far,” Ursula answered. “About 10-15 minutes.”

“We still don’t know where in the woods they are, or if they are even in the woods,” Zuke said.

“You’re right, kid,” Chief said. “We don’t know where Zmulo is, but that doesn’t mean we aren’t going to try to find him.”

“We’re here,” Ursula said as the car passed a welcome sign.

“Nobody’s here, though,” Arthur said.

“The park is closed on Sundays,” Maria said.

“Well, we’re gonna have to go anyway,” Chief said as he parked.

“Uh guys, I think we have a problem. There’s an electric fence. We can’t get in through this way,” Arthur said.

“We can. If it’s an electric fence, it most likely uses circuits, which I can easily turn off without the password,” Spike said, confidently. “I just need to find the circuit box.”

“I found it. It’s right in front of us,” Zuke said, pointing to the gate.

“Okay, good job. I’m gonna need someone to hold me so I can see,” Spike said.

“I’ll help you,” Zuke said.

“Great, I’ll walk you through it. Just follow my directions,” Spike said. Together, they disabled the fence.

“The fence is still pretty tall though. How are we going to get over it?” Maria asked.

“I’ll help Zippy up, Ursula will hold Spike, and the rest of you can just climb over,” Chief explained. After all of them got over the fence, they decided to split up.

“Okay, here’s what we are going to do. Zippy, Arthur, Zuke and I will go together and Maria, Ursula and Spike will go together. My group will head west, the other group will head east,” Chief explained. “Also remember, if you’re in danger or you find something, signal “π” in the sky.”

“Something’s not right,” Maria said.

“Where’s Zuke?!” Arthur yelled.

“Don’t worry, I’m right here,” Zuke said. “Look to your right.” Everybody quickly darted their eyes to their right to find Zuke petting a horse.

“What are you doing?” Arthur asked.

“I’m just petting the horse,” Zuke replied, calmly. “Maybe we can find more horses and ride them so we don’t have to travel by foot.”

“Good idea, but where are we going to get more horses? Honestly, I’m surprised the horse isn’t running away right now,” Maria said.

“If there’s a horse here, there has to be more nearby,” Zuke explained. “Horses usually travel in groups or stay together. We just have to look for them. Remember, if you find one, don’t do any sudden movements. You’ll scare them. Just slowly walk up to them and pet it. When it’s comfortable enough with you, you can get on them and ride them.” Everybody looked around and found four other horses.

“Chief can ride with Zippy, Ursula can ride with Spike, and the rest can ride alone,” Zuke said. Everybody got on their horses and looked around.

“Everybody, stop!” Chief yelled. Everybody got off their horse and went to go see what was wrong.



"It's a piece of the Zmulobeast's fur. He has to be near here, somewhere," Chief said. This soft, fuzzy, rainbow-colored fur has to be his."

They were riding for a while until something strange happened. Maria's horse stepped on something hollow.

"Uh, what was that?" Maria said.

"I don't know but it better be something related to Zmulo," Spike said.

Ursula, Maria, and Spike got off their horses to see what it was. Maria stepped at the same place in the ground and it was still hollow.

"This isn't normal, something's underneath. Help me dig," Maria said. They all dug until they found a wooden trapdoor.

"Woah!" exclaimed Maria. Ursula tried to pull the handle, but it wouldn't budge. It was broken.

"Let's call the others. They can help," Ursula said. They signaled "π" in the sky. After a few minutes, everybody arrived.

"What is it?" Arthur asked.

"We found a trapdoor, but the handle is broken," Ursula said. "We can't get in."

"I can try to teleport inside and see if I can open it from the inside," Zippy said. Everybody agreed, so Zippy teleported. One "poof" and he was gone. A few seconds later, the trapdoor opened!

"I hear voices! Be quiet," Zippy warned them as they walked down the narrow, dark staircase. At the end of the staircase, there was an empty room. Connected to the room was another room with the door open. Inside, the Zmulobeast was kept in a cage. His fluffy, thick, rainbow colored fur and golden, glowing wings were getting squished from the cage.

Chief signaled the Zmulobeast to stay quiet while they slowly approached the room. They were about to enter, when they saw a tall man with dirty, black clothes. There was also a small, gray, floating robot. It was Boris Greedy and his assistant, Wingnut.

Chief signaled for everyone to hide out of sight, so they wouldn't get caught.

"Don't be sad. I just need your fur, and you can go back to your annoying, little friends," Boris said.

"They aren't annoying. At least, they don't try to sell my fur!" the Zumlobeast said.

"Oh, I'm not selling it. I'm keeping it for myself," Boris said, slyly.

"I don't care what you're going to do with it. Just leave me and my fur alone!" The Zmulobeast yelled.

"Well, too bad, that's not going to happen," Boris said while holding a pair of scissors. "Shall we start?"

"Not so fast. You're not getting a single piece of fur from him. Now step away. Leave him unharmed, and we can forget this happened," Chief said, seriously.

"Who are you?!" Boris yelled.

"That's unimportant," Chief said. "Now step away." Boris stepped a few steps away.

"Better," Chief said. "Now open the cage."

"No! I need the fur, even just a little bit!" Boris yelled.

"Why?" Chief seriously asked.

"You wouldn't understand. Can I just please have a little and you can have him back." Boris Greedy pleaded.

"Try me. Why do you need it?" Chief asked.

"I need it to live! When I was a kid, I heard about this tale that the Zmulobeast had magical fur and could heal the sick forever. Recently, I've been really ill, and I couldn't stop thinking about the old fairytale. I decided to find him. I lured him into the candy factory with candy, and then took him into the woods so no one could find us," Boris explained. "I never meant to hurt you all. The plan was that I would take a little bit of the fur, and give him back to you guys and nobody would notice."

"Take it," the Zmulobeast said. "It'll grow back anyway. I never knew you needed it that badly.

"Are you sure about this?" Chief asked.

“Yes, I’m sure.” The Zmulobeast said confidently as Boris opened the cage and cut a few strands.

“Zmulo!” Everybody yelled as they all hugged.



“Yay, yay, we found you.” Spike said, sarcastically. “Can we save all the sappiness for when we get home? It’s dark, and I’m hungry.”

Everybody laughed and was heading up the staircase.

“You good?” Chief asked Boris.

“Yeah, don’t worry about me. You guys carry on.”

They all got in the car and drove to Chief's house for dinner.

“That was a crazy adventure,” Arthur said while fixing his tie.

“Definitely,” Maria replied with a smile.

“At least we got a nice story to tell about what happened during our weekend at school!” Zuke said.

“Hold on. Where’s Zippy? Maria asked.

