

# Chapter One

The river glistened and sparkled in the sunlight as it hurried on its way to the sea. Dragonflies dipped and darted across the surface, their wings buzzing noisily. Willow trees along the bank draped their long branches lazily into the water while, nearby, ducks dived and bobbed and wagged their tail feathers.

Burlington Bear (Burly to his friends) stood in the shallows of the river under the cool shade of a large oak tree. He was staring as if hypnotised at the river, sure that at any moment a large fat fish was going to swim by.

Just a few yards upstream was Grum the groblin who was up to his ears in mud. Literally. Mud for a groblin was apparently the best thing in the world.



Burly knew this because on the way to the river Grum had talked endlessly about how wonderful mud was and how the thicker, blacker and stickier it was, the better. Personally, Burly always tried to avoid mud because it stuck to his fur and he was very proud of his thick, glossy coat but he'd tried to look interested as Grum had chattered on. All Burly could see of Grum now were his eyes, the tips of his ears and the top of a red straw that he used to breathe through. His lucky straw he called it.

Burly liked peace and quiet. He liked fish. He knew he wasn't having any luck catching fish because his human friend, Max, who was just a few yards upstream of Grum, was scaring them away. As soon as they'd arrived at the river Max had run up and down along the river bank like an excited puppy, until he'd discovered a tree that had fallen so that part of it hung over the river like a diving board. He'd whooped with delight at the discovery and immediately raced along the tree trunk and dive bombed into the water. Max had spent almost an



hour doing this and each time emerged from the water with a huge smile and a sparkling clean body. One clean friend, one muddy friend, thought Burly.

Now, before I go any further I feel I should explain a couple of things. I know, of course, that you know what a bear is because the chances are you have one of your own at home (not a real live one of course) and, being human yourself (I hope), you will know what a human being is, but you may not know what a goblin is so I'd better explain.

Goblins are creatures that live in the wild where there are no humans so you would probably never have seen one. They are pea green in colour, with large red eyebrows and red eyes. They're very vain and boast about the number of warts they have and the crookedness of their yellow teeth. They're not very tall – maybe about the size of a large child but they are very strong and they argue a lot amongst themselves. They speak their minds; this can make them seem rude but they don't mean to be, they just see things differently. Their arms reach the ground



and they swing them forward when they're walking – they can move very quickly like this. Oh, and they love eating food like fungus, insects and tree bark. But funnily enough, despite all this, they can be very endearing. Maybe it's because their honesty is refreshing. Who can say?

Burly, Grum and Max had been friends for just a few weeks. They'd met when Grum had been thrown out of his home by his two brothers, Gripe and Grimly, who'd told him he couldn't come back until he'd proved himself to be a brave and worthy groblin. Grum had been wandering about in the Great Forest when he came across Burly who took him under his paw and together they went to a human town so that Grum could find a way to prove he was brave. It was while they were there that they met Max who'd shown them around and taught them how to use a skateboard.

To other bears, humans and groblins it may have seemed an unusual friendship but none of them noticed.



Even though the summer air was soft and warm, the river was icy cold and Max shivered as he clambered out of the water. His goosebumps had goosebumps, but still he couldn't resist the thought of running along the tree trunk one more time and dive bombing into the clear water. "Hey, Burly!" he shouted and waved his arms. "Look at me! I'm going to see if I make a wave big enough to splash Grum."

Burly politely tore his gaze away from the water. "I'm watching!" he called back.

Max took a deep breath then ran as fast as he could along the tree trunk until he got to the point where it hung over the river when he jumped, quickly curling up tightly into a ball. "Incoming!" he yelled as he barrelled through the air. He hit the water like a ton of bricks.

Just above the mud, Grum's eyes widened as he saw the equivalent of a large bucket of water flying through the air in his direction. He squirmed



and tried to bury himself deeper but didn't move fast enough and clean water hit him square on top of his head. He pulled his lucky breathing straw from his mouth and wriggled his way to the surface.

“I'm so going to get you!” he shouted.

Max laughed and swam away. “Come on then!”

Grum muttered and grumbled as he slurped his way out of the clinging mud.

Burly smiled but then heard a disturbing sound - his stomach rumbling. “I think it's time we had something to eat, don't you? Are you ready for a picnic?” he called. They were magic words. Max and Grum immediately forgot their squabble and turned and headed for the riverbank where three separate bags sat waiting for them.

Max got there first. He grabbed a large towel and wrapped it around his shoulders before rummaging through his backpack to see what his mum had prepared for him. His teeth chattered noisily with cold. “C..c..come on you guys,” he called. But as Grum got nearer to him, however, a



strong and horrible smell hit him. Max wrinkled his nose. “Maybe you should sit down wind a little bit – are you sure that was *mud* you were lying in?”

Grum shook himself like a dog and lumps of thick mud flew everywhere. “Why don't you check?” he snickered.

“Ew gross...” said Max as he picked a sticky glob of gunk off his towel. “Burly, can't you stop him from being disgusting? That could have gone in my sandwiches!”

Burly sat down heavily next to Max and the ground shook a little. “Grum, behave,” he said. “And I'm afraid I have to agree with Max, you can't eat when you're covered in mud - go and have a quick wash in the river.”

Grum looked horrified. “But the mud...”

“I know how much you love mud,” said Burly as kindly as he could. “But it's only manners to be clean when you sit down to eat.”



Grum pouted but turned and made his way to the edge of the river. He touched the surface of the river and shuddered.

“Go on,” said Burly.

Grum put a large hand in the water, scooped a little bit up and lightly sprinkled himself. He turned to face them, a wide smile on his face. Burly raised his eyebrows. “A bit more than that - go on!”

Grum’s face fell and he waded into the river. Dark mud spiralled away from him as the water flowed around him. He looked crestfallen as the mud disappeared downstream. A minute later he stomped out of the river, clean and almost sparkling, back to their picnic area.

“Well done,” said Burly. “Max?”

“You smell a lot better,” said Max handing him his bag. “Why don’t you see what your mum’s packed for you?”

A huge smile filled Grum’s face and he rummaged through his bag with excitement. “I know what she’s given me, all my favourites, and she’s



the best cook ever... look - crispy fried earwigs with green fungus sauce, ancient tree mould, freshly baked cockroaches and mushrooms seasoned with.....”

“Stop!” Max’s face paled. “That is all just so gross – and don’t put it out, I don’t want to see it, it’s horrible and smells revolting.”

Grum looked offended. “Actually it smells great and I haven’t commented on all the stuff you’ve brought along.” He pointed at Max’s pile of food – sandwiches, biscuits, apples and crisps.



“That’s all good stuff and none of it smells,” replied Max.

“Stop it both of you!” instructed Burly sternly. “Max, I have to agree with Grum this time. He may eat food that’s different to yours but you have to accept that if you want Grum as a friend.”

Grum stuck out his tongue at Max. Burly rolled his eyes. “I suggest you both ignore what the other one is eating. Now, who’s going to unwrap this bag of cupcakes for me, it’s a bit difficult with these claws.”

“I will,” Max volunteered. “*My hands are really clean,*” he added pointedly to Grum.

“*My hands are really clean,*” mimicked Grum.

“Oh go eat your grasshoppers or whatever they are,” replied Max as he tore open the packet of cupcakes.

“Earwigs,” said Grum tetchily. “They’re earwigs and you should try them, they’re really crunchy and tasty.”



Max made a face. “I don't think so somehow. Here you go Burly, they look nice – are they ones that Mike made?”

Mike was a friend of Burly's. He was an angel who lived in the forest and when the three of them had got into trouble in town he'd come to their rescue. Although Mike worked full time as an angel his hobby was baking cakes. Burly's hobby was eating cakes. They were very good friends.

“Mmm, yes.” Burly wiped some pink icing from his mouth. “He made them fresh this morning. He sends his love by the way – he'd liked to have come along, but he's very busy at work at the moment.”

“I can imagine it must be a tough job being an angel,” said Max solemnly.

“Indeed it is,” said Burly. “He does look very tired sometimes.”

“Maybe we could take him something back as a present – y'know, cheer him up a bit?” suggested Max.



“That’s a good idea,” said Burly, “when we’ve eaten let’s go and explore, see if we can find him a nice flower or rock or something.”

“Maybe something to decorate his slide?” said Grum. Mike had a steep red slide that Grum loved.

“Good idea,” said Max.

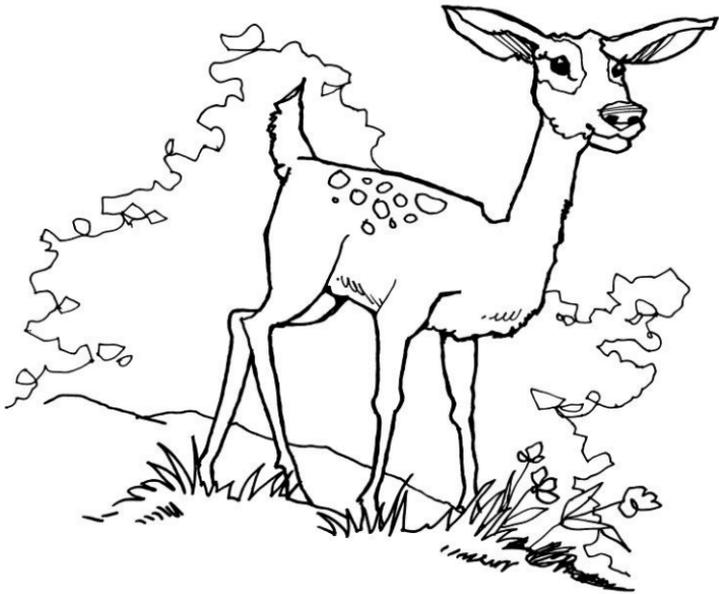
They ate in peace for a few minutes when Burly said, “Shhh, we have a visitor...” Grum and Max stopped eating and looked around. Burly nodded in the direction of a silver birch tree. Standing close by the trunk of the tree, watching them with large wary eyes, was a deer.

Burly lowered his voice. “It’s alright, we won’t harm you,” he said to the shy creature.

The deer stepped out into the clearing. She had a dappled honey brown coat and delicate features; she walked daintily past them to the water’s edge and lowered her head to sip the water.

“Oh wow!” said Max quietly. “This is *such* a cool place.”





Burly nodded his head and smiled. “It certainly is,” he replied. “Now, I think we should carry on but be just a bit quiet so we don’t frighten her.”

“Here,” said Max. “Do you want a peanut butter sandwich Burly? Mum always makes way too many.”

Burly sniffed it with his snout and popped it in his mouth. “Mmmm, good,” he mumbled, “crunchy.”

“The only way to go,” said Max. “Smooth peanut butter is rubbish.”



The deer finished drinking and shook her head.  
Drops of water plinked into the river.

“She's beautiful,” said Max.

“Why thank you,” replied the deer.

Max dropped his sandwich. “She... it... the deer...” He looked at Burly and pointed at the deer, “...spoke...”

Burly raised his eyebrows. “Any reason why she shouldn't? You've been talking to a bear and a goblin for a few weeks now.”

“I suppose you've got a point,” muttered Max picking up his sandwich and flicking off the bits of dirt. “Why was I even surprised?”

The deer walked daintily towards them. “Hello,” she said and lifted her nose to sniff the air. “Are those peanut butter sandwiches you're eating? They smell good.”

“Here you can have one,” offered Max.

“Smooth or crunchy?”

“Crunchy.”

“Ah, thank you, but I prefer smooth.”



Burly laughed out loud at the expression on Max's face.

"You want some crispy earwigs instead?" asked Grum.

The deer flicked her ears. "I must be going," she said politely. "Good day." She disappeared quietly into the wood.

"Wow," said Max. "That was really cool. And odd. Cool and odd. And weird."

"The forest," said Burly, "is all of those things, now come on you two, let's get looking for something to take back for Mike."

The three of them finished off their lunches and packed all their rubbish away tidily. Grum stretched and patted his stomach. "That was great, my mum's the best cook in the world," he declared. "Come on, let's explore. We should go that way." He pointed randomly into the forest.

"Hang on," said Max. "I just want to wash my hands." He ran to the river through the little hoof marks that the deer had made and bent to swirl his



hands in the water. At the bottom of the river bed he saw something glinting and reached down to pick it up. "Hey guys!" he shouted. "I've found something!" He picked up the shiny object and rubbed it on his shorts.

Burly ambled down to see. "What is it?"

Max scraped off some dirt and held it up to the sun. "I think it's a coin - y'know, money."

Both Grum and Burly remembered money, they'd got into a lot of trouble when they'd gone to town and had lunch without being able to pay for it. Burly winced at the memory. "It's nice and shiny," he commented.

"Maybe Mike would like it?" asked Grum. "He can stick it on his slide."

Max examined the coin. He'd never seen one like it before, it was very old and, now it was clear of mud, it was a shiny yellow colour - gold? On one side there was a picture of a bird and on the other side a man's head. The man seemed to be wearing some kind of hat made of feathers. He handed it to



Burly who sniffed it with his large snout and looked at it closely. “Could be from one of the Old Ones,” said Burly.

“Old Ones?” Max felt a quiver of excitement in his stomach.

Grum laughed. “Humans don’t know much do they?”

Burly frowned. “There’s no reason for them to know, Grum, everything has been lost.”

“What? What’s been lost, tell me!” Max was really excited now and hopped from foot to foot.

“Men used to live here,” said Grum.

Burly nodded. “A long time ago there used to be a big town in the middle of the forest. The story says that they were good people who lived well with the animals but one day they all disappeared. We don’t know where they went - maybe to another forest. They left their buildings and everything they had.”

“Wow, oh wow!” breathed Max. “Really? A secret city? Are the buildings still there?”



“Some,” shrugged Burly. “Mostly they’ve fallen down now and it’s a dangerous place.”

“Me and my brothers play there all the time,” said Grum who could tell Max was interested.

Max’s eyes were shining. “Really? Can I go and see it? Please, please?” The thought of going to see a secret ruined city in the middle of the forest made Max’s head almost explode with excitement.

“I’m really not sure that’s a good idea.” Burly shook his head.

“But what if we find something, you know, stuff they left behind? Oh please Burly....”

Burly looked down at Max. All his instincts were telling him it wasn’t a good idea but he wasn’t sure why. “What do you think Grum?” he asked. “You and your brothers play there, is it safe?”

“Course it is,” said Grum. “And there’s loads of stuff like that.” He took the coin and examined it closely. “I think Mike would really like it for his slide.”





Max almost screamed. Treasure, there was treasure!!!

“Please, please, please Burly.....”

Burly hesitated. “If we go you have to listen to me, the way we listened to you in town.” The memory of skateboarding flew through his mind. “Well, maybe not quite the same way; but this isn’t a town Max, this is a forest and it can be dangerous.”

Max took Burly’s paw. “Burly I trust you and I promise I’ll listen to what you say.”

“Oh go on,” said Grum. “What can happen?”



# Chapter Two

A narrow road wound its way like a black ribbon through the dark forest. Not many humans used the road because they found the tall trees that loomed on either side of them quite scary and threatening. Even in summer, when the sun was shining, the road was dark and cool with little or no sign of the sky above.

No one willingly stopped along the road but a large scruffy white van had driven off it and parked between two large trees.

Two men stood next to the van. One was young, tall and handsome but with sharp features. He had broad shoulders and thick blond hair that had been gelled firmly into place. He wore a brilliant white t-shirt that showed off his muscles and held a rifle with both hands. His name was Captain Quentin Tee. The second man was very short and fat. His light brown shirt and shorts were too tight



and dark sweat stains showed under his armpits and down his back. He wore a flat cap to hide the fact he had no hair. His name was Tyre.

“Watch!” commanded the Captain. He raised the rifle to his shoulder, aimed it into the darkness of the forest and squeezed the trigger. *Pouf!* A little dart flashed out. Almost immediately there was a loud squeal followed by a crashing sound.

Tyre trotted into the undergrowth and a couple of minutes later, grunting and sweating, pulled out a large hairy boar by its front legs. “Cor blimey,” he gasped. “That was a great shot Sir, you’ve got a great eye.”

Captain Q Tee walked over and nudged the pig with one foot. “He’ll still be sleeping when we get back. Tie him up Tyre and we’ll take him back with us, there’s nothing quite like fresh bacon. And Tyre?”

Tyre mopped his brow as he pulled the boar closer to the van. “Yes Sir?”

“Hurry up.”





“Yes Sir, course Sir, sorry Sir.” Tyre quickly tied the boar’s legs together and hauled him up and into the back of the van. Four large cages were inside the van and Tyre locked the pig in one of them. He hopped out of the van, padlocked the door and ran to the Captain.

“Right,” said Captain Q Tee. “Let’s go bag ourselves a bear then shall we?”

Grum’s mother was preparing tea when she



stopped, as still as stone, with only her ears quivering as if listening carefully to something. Her red eyebrows knotted together in thought. “Gripe! Grimly!” she bellowed at the top of her voice.

Gripe and Grimly were in the forest collecting dried up mushrooms when they heard her shout. They immediately dropped their baskets of mushrooms and ran - when their mother called they didn't hang about. It took them a couple of minutes to get back to the house where she was already waiting for them. She didn't look happy.

“What took you so long?” she demanded.

Gripe and Grimly opened their mouths but she interrupted. “Your brother is in trouble, go and find him.”

Gripe's jaw dropped. “How do you...”

“I know,” said his mother sternly. “Us mothers always know. Grum is in trouble. He's with Burly and the skinny human - where did they go?”

Grimly shook his head. “I'm not sure, I think Grum wanted to show them some mud...”



“Go now, go and find him and don’t - I repeat - *don’t* come back without him,” demanded their mother, “or your ears will be red for the rest of your lives.”



They stood like deer caught in headlights.

“Now!” she yelled and clapped her hands. “Go now!”

They turned and ran. “Aw,” said Gripe as they crashed through the undergrowth, “not again!”



Burly, Grum and Max walked in single file through the forest. The deeper they went the denser it became. The trees became larger, taller and grew closer together so it was difficult to see the sky, but Grum led the way confidently, swinging and marching with ease. Max was directly behind him, his head full of ruins and treasure, with Burly taking up the rear.

Something was troubling Burly but he couldn't lay his paw on what it was. But if there was one thing he was sure about, it was that he had good instincts and at the moment they were on full alert. He'd have to keep a very careful eye on Grum and Max.

"Not much further now," said Grum. "In fact - we're here!" He stepped into a small clearing and Max rushed in after him.

Max stood and gazed open mouthed at the scene in front of him. A tall, thick curved wall covered in a sea of green vines and ivy, rose out of the forest as if it were an ocean liner ploughing



through water. Some parts of the wall had crumbled and broken and beyond it he could see the ruins of a large city.



Grum was excited to be showing Max something special. “This is only part of it,” he said. “It goes on forever once you’re inside.”

“There’s more?” said Max who already could not believe his eyes.

“Lots more,” said Grum. “Come on, I’ll show you where my brothers and I hide out, it’s really great.”



This way!” And they ran off to explore without a second thought. Burly followed more sedately behind them, noting that the forest had fallen silent.

Grum and Max spent a happy hour exploring the town that lay within the walls. There were hundreds of small houses, narrow alleyways and shops. Some houses still had furniture in them, bowls and cooking pots lay scattered; swords, bows and arrows looked as though they’d been tossed aside, abandoned. They also found lots more coins and Max’s pockets were soon bulging.

The forest had, of course, moved in. Plants and trees grew wherever they could and many small animals, birds and reptiles lived in the shelter the buildings provided. All the streets led into a wide, cobbled road at the end of which were steep stone steps that went up and up.

“What’s that?” Max pointed at a building at the top of the steps.

“Don’t know, man stuff I guess,” replied Grum. “There’s lots of things there made from the same



metal the coins are made of - we can have a look for something for Mike.”

Max’s eyes widened with delight - treasure! “Come on!” he shouted. “Race you to the top! You coming Burly?”

“Hold on there both of you,” said Burly firmly. “It’s getting late, too late to explore, we should turn around and head back.”

“Awwwww” came the cry from Max and Grum.

“There’s plenty of time,” said Grum sulkily.

Burly frowned. “Your mothers will be worried and we need to leave now. It’ll be dark in a couple of hours.” He looked at their disappointed faces. “Look, we can come back tomorrow morning and then you can have all day to explore, how about that?”

Grum looked at Max. “It does get dark quickly in the forest and well, you’ve met my mum, I don’t want to be late home...”



Max stuck his hands in his pockets and looked up at the building standing there just waiting to be explored.

“You promised you would listen to me,” reminded Burly.

“We can come back tomorrow?” asked Max.

Grum grinned. “Yes, and I can show you everything properly, it’ll be great and Grimly and Gripe can come along as well!”

Max nodded. “Okay,” he said slowly. “Let’s go home...”

Captain Q Tee was by the riverside examining the prints left on the ground. He frowned in thought. “There were three animals here,” he observed. “The large bear that we’re looking for, a deer and... and... something else. I’ve never seen anything like those prints before. Tyre?”

Tyre peered at the huge footprints that were Grum’s. “Never seen anything like ‘em before either Sir.”



“If you look closely you’ll also see hand prints... no, knuckle prints.... close to the foot prints, as if it were moving by using its hands.” He stood up and scratched his chin. He couldn’t scratch his head because of the thick gel he used. “Could be we have a rare animal here Tyre,” he said and rubbed his hands. “Money, I smell money.”

Tyre beamed. “We could do wif some o’that Sir,” he replied.

“Indeed, indeed. Now, what’s this?” He stooped down once more. “Tyre, there was also a child here.”

“A child Sir?”

“A child, maybe ten years old or so, look, footprints are all over the place.”

“D’you think the bear ate him Sir?”

The Captain followed the footsteps back to where Grum, Max and Burly had had their picnic. “No, no I don’t think so - he sat down with them here - look.”



“Could he be a wild boy Sir, y’know, like Tarzan, brought up by wolves and stuff?”

“Don’t be stupid,” Captain Q Tee snorted, but then he hesitated. “Although maybe not so stupid... a wild boy? A wild boy... what an attraction! This is a good day, Tyre - boars, bears, boys... we could retire if we play our cards right.”

“Cor blimey Captain Cutie, that would be good, my poor old bones....”

“Tyre?”

“Yes Sir?”

“Don’t call me Cutie again.”

“Yes Sir, sorry Sir, just sort of slipped out Sir.”

“Now, come on, let’s follow these tracks. Our fortune is at the other end.”

“Comin’ Sir.”

“Lead the way then Tyre.”

“Yes Sir.”

Tyre found the three pairs of tracks leading away from the clearing. “Nice and easy tracks Sir.



That bear's a big un, he's flattenin' everything in sight."

Captain Q Tee held his rifle firmly in his hands. "Let's hope we flatten him first Tyre, let's hope we flatten him first."

