

CHAPTER FOUR

Gearing Up to Go Into the Mine

If Solomon had been drinking something, he would definitely have snorted it out his nose. “Stink?” Chortled Solomon, “that is way tooo funny!”

“Solomon, be polite!” Tsked Lillian.

“Perhaps you could tell us a little more about yourself, Mr. Dewberry, er, Stink,” said Martin. He motioned for Solomon to vacate the chair he was sitting in and they all watched, fascinated by this small person, as he clambered up on the chair, just like a child would.

“Thank you, you are too kind,” said Stink as he settled into the chair, “what a comfy chair!”

“Why thank you,” said Martin, obviously pleased that someone liked his new office chair. “Now, let me introduce myself, I’m Martin Boughtom, the owner of the...” Martin hesitated; he swallowed and continued, “of the Fairy Inspection Agency. This is Coach Dribble from the Derry Organization and Recreation Centre, these are the Corrigan children, Lillian and Solomon and this is,” Martin looked around the office for Gladly, who had backed himself up into the far corner of the office, “there you are, and this is Gladly Yarble.” Maybe it was the fact that he had moved himself into a darker corner of the office, but Gladly’s jacket was distinctly darker. Lillian noticed the change but didn’t say anything.

At the mention of Gladly’s name a look of recognition seemed to pass over Stinknose Dewberry’s face. He looked concerned for a moment and then smiled brightly at Martin. “I’m happy to meet all of you,” he said in his tinkly little voice.

“So what brings you to the Fairy Inspection Agency,” said Martin, kindly. He still had difficulty saying the name.

“Well, first of all let me say how delighted I was when you unveiled your sign earlier this afternoon. I thought to myself, “Stink, you’re finally not alone anymore in the Fairy and Pixie field, there might be a colleague to confer with” and then I thought I really should get over here and introduce myself and see how we can collaborate.”

“I see,” said Martin slowly, “just what did you have in mind?”

“Oh there’s plenty of work to be done,” Stink said brightly, “but I suppose first, I should

tell you a little about myself!”

Lillian, Solomon, Martin and Coach Dribble were all entranced. Gladly shrank back even further into the corner of the office as Stink started to tell his story.

Stinknose Dewberry was, as he explained, a Fixie. His father was a Pixie and his mother, a Fairy. Calling himself a “Fixie” was Stink’s own idea. He didn’t want to be called a “Pairy” and besides, as he pointed out, he did “fix” things for both Pixies and Fairies. He’d stumbled into being a PHD quite by accident. The New Yarthkin Pixie District, also know as the NYPD, actually not far from Derry Dell, had hired him to bring some control to the young Pixies in the area. It seems there had been a sudden surge in bad behaviour and the district assumed that lack of parental supervision had something to do with it. Pixie parents had seemingly been abandoning their children and the teen Pixies began running rampant with tricks and hijinx. Then all of a sudden, Stink explained, there seemed to be fewer and fewer incidents. At first people thought it was because the Pixies had tired of causing havoc. Then a few members of the NYPD council realized it was because there were fewer and fewer Pixies around. Stink made it abundantly clear that Pixie parents were actually very good parents. If anything they were often stricter than most. They knew what it was like to be wild and crazy since they’d all been young Pixies themselves and prone to Pixies hijinx. They really did try to contain their rambunctious youngsters and were usually pretty good at.

Then there were the Fairies. Stink had more or less stumbled into that one too. Sometimes he thought it was easier to deal with the Pixies than with the Fairies. They were an argumentative lot. There was constant bickering amongst the Fairies as to who had jurisdiction over what. Some of the Fairy Godmothers had Grandfather clauses in their contracts that allowed them to transfer back to their previous Fairy positions. Those positions were usually filled and of course that meant those Fairies pushing someone out of their position. The garden Fairies were constantly bickering over where the flower garden ended and the vegetable garden started. What if they overlapped? What if someone planted edible flowers in the vegetable garden? Where did herbs or container gardens fit? Suffice to say, Stinknose Dewberry never envisaged himself being a policy wonk for a bunch of Fairies, but that’s what happened. But there had been no bickering or squabbling over the last few weeks, because there were very few fairies around to argue with each other. Stink let out a tinkly sounding sigh.

“So you can see I need help. I’ve got to find out why they’ve been disappearing and I

thought a Fairy Detective Agency would be a good place to start. And it sounds like we have similar problems, so maybe we can help each other?"

Martin had been busily typing on his computer, making notes on Stink's story. Coach Dribble, Lillian and Solomon had been focusing intently on what Stink had been saying and Gladly sat silent in the corner of the office. So when the sound of a loud, long fart broke their concentration, they all looked shocked and embarrassed. The farting continued.

"Excuse me," said Stink, tapping Lillian lightly on the arm, "but I think your purse is, uhm, er, farting."

Lillian's face turned tomato-red. She started fumbling around in her hobo-style bag that she'd grabbed when they left the house. She rooted around in the bottom of the purse and finally found the source of the offending noise. It was her mother's cell phone.

Solomon burst out laughing. "Way to go Darwin! Too funny Lil, that little twerp managed to change the ring on mom's phone! I caught him messing around with it just after they left this morning and wondered what he was up to!" Solomon continued laughing.

Lillian pulled the phone out of her purse and looked at the call-display. "Solomon, stop laughing, its Aunt Ina's number which can only mean its mom checking up on us!"

The phone continued its farting.

"Well, Lil, I guess you're going to have to lie, unless you want to tell her that Darwin's been captured by an evil Leprechaun and was carried off by gnomes."

"I hate lying," said an agitated Lillian. "Oh, what am I going to do?"

Martin spoke up. "You could say that Darwin is with new friends, if your mother asks and I'm sure she will. When are your parents back, Lillian?"

Lillian was biting her bottom lip. She bit her lip when she was nervous. "I'm not sure. Mom said either Sunday night or Monday morning, depending on how Aunt Ina is doing. Oh rats, what should I do?"

"Answer the fart-phone and lie," said Solomon, smirking.

"I'd try being as vague as possible," suggested Martin, sympathetically.

Lillian nervously smoothed back her hair, took a deep breath and flipped back the phone.

"Lillian? Is that you?" It was Aunt Ina.

"Oh no! Thought Lillian, "don't tell me Mom and Dad are on the way home!" "Hi Aunt

Ina, how are you doing? Are Mom and Dad still there?"

"Of course dear, they're both out in the garden doing some weeding and pulling some carrots for dinner. They just wanted me to call and see how you were getting along!"

Lillian heaved a huge sigh of relief. She crossed her fingers and said, "We're fine, all fine, yes, just tell them we're fine."

"I told them you'd be fine, but of course they worry," said Aunt Ina, cheerfully. "They've just been wonderful. I really do appreciate that they could come and help me out. I still can't believe I tripped over my own back door!"

Lillian thought Aunt Ina was amazing. She was 87 years old and still lived on her own, in her own house. Her husband, the children's Uncle Jack had died a number of years ago in a golfing accident. He'd been struck by lightning on the golf course. Aunt Ina had had the sense to get off the course at the first rumble of thunder, but not Uncle Jack. He wanted to take one last swing and well, he did. Aunt Ina after her initial grief realized that her beloved Jack had died doing something he loved. So she continued to golf and regularly beat the pants off the club pro. She was a wicked golfer.

Ina had tripped at her back door when one of the straps on her golf bag caught on the door handle. Ina fell down the steps and ended up with a long gash in her arm. She'd reluctantly called her niece, Jay, to take her to the walk-in clinic in Mingle Valley and was very annoyed to have missed her usual Friday morning golf game. Jay and Peter had phoned Lillian from the clinic to let her know they would have to help Aunt Ina for the weekend.

"I'm glad you're going to be okay," said Lillian, visibly relieved that her parents were not on their way home.

"I'll be fine, but that ridiculous doctor says I can't golf for at least six weeks and my arm looks like it should belong to Frankenstein! Twenty three stitches, Lillian, and my arm in a sling!" Huffed Aunt Ina. "Did you want to speak to your parents, dear?"

"No!" Lillian said, perhaps a bit too quickly. "No, I mean everything here is fine and it sounds like they're out in the garden, and don't bother them for our sakes. Just give them our love and, uhm, do you know when they'll be back Aunt Ina?"

"Well I'm sure I could manage on my own by tomorrow, but your mother insists that they stay until Monday morning. She's going to run me back to the clinic to have the doctor check the stitches."

“That’s great Aunt Ina, I mean not about your arm, but that’s fine, tell Mom we’re all fine and we’ll see them Monday morning. Big kisses from all of us,” Lillian let out a quiet sigh of relief.

“Will do dear, you take care. I’m sure you are all enjoying your day off from school! Stay out of trouble and big smooches to you all!”

“Thanks Aunt Ina, bye now.” Lillian flipped the phone shut. “Phew.” She said with a huge sigh of relief. “Okay, we’ve got until Monday morning to get Darwin back.”

Martin looked like he’d been thinking while Lillian was on the phone. He looked at his watch. “Alright everyone, here’s what I think we should do. It’s 4:23 pm and that means that most offices will be closing in a few minutes because it’s Friday. So, I’m going to make a quick phone call to my friend Freddie,” said Martin as he looked up the phone number on his display phone and pushed the button to dial.

Coach Dribble, Lillian, Solomon and even Stinknose looked at him with puzzled expressions on their faces.

Martin looked over at them, “Freddie Bent, from Thrasher, Bent and Fog.”

Everyone continued to look puzzled.

“Oh.” Martin said when he realized that no-one knew what he was talking about.

“They’re land surveyors. Freddie owes me a favour, I can get him to get me the surveys for the old Pruitt mine. And I want all of you to head home and get gear together as if you were going hiking, you know, back packs, good shoes, flashlights, snacks, water, an extra layer of clothes. Then meet me here at 8:00 am sharp; you’re going mining in the morning!”

“Freddie,” said Martin, “it’s...” Martin paused, he almost used his first initial, but he didn’t, “it’s Martin Boughton and I need a favour.” He waved them out of the office.

Lillian, Solomon, Coach Dribble and Stinknose Dewberry headed towards the door. “Where’s Gladly,” said Lillian as she looked around the office. She finally spotted him in behind the credenza. “Come on Gladly, you can stay with us tonight.” She turned to Stink. “You can too.”

“Thank you kindly,” said Stinknose, “but I have a very cozy little trailer, just on the edge of town, I’ll meet you here in the morning.” And with that he turned and went out of the office and up the street.

“See you in the morning,” shouted Lillian, as Stink disappeared up the street.

Coach Dribble coughed and spoke up. “Well, er, okay kids, we’ll see you in the morning. I’ll, uhm, head home and get my gear together.”

Strangely it was Solomon who twigged to the Coach’s apparent discomfort.

“So Coach,” asked Solomon, “do you have any hiking gear?”

“Well, I’m sure I can throw something together at the Centre. I mean, I think we have some kind of hiking gear there. I’m pretty sure...” The Coach’s voice trailed off.

“Why don’t I bring along my dad’s in the morning,” said Solomon, “he’s got some hiking shoes he hasn’t used in a couple of years.”

“Yes, yes,” said Lillian, finally realizing that the Coach was embarrassed to admit that he didn’t have any equipment, “and we’ve got that extra knap-sack and we’ll grab Darwin’s flashlight, I’m sure he won’t mind.”

“Ahem,” coughed Gladly, who seemed much perkier since Stink had left.

“And of course we’ve got gear for you,” said Lillian, as she turned back to Gladly. She was oddly relieved to see that his jacket had returned to light colours and fun, swirling patterns. The jacket had been dark and clouded over while they were in Martin’s office.

“Great then,” said Coach Dribble as he clapped his hands together, he looked much happier, “8:00 am it is then! Everyone get a good night sleep!” Coach Dribble turned and headed off in the opposite direction that Stink had taken. Lillian, Solomon and Gladly quickly crossed one of the bridges and headed back to the Corrigan house to get their gear get organized and get some sleep.

