

CHAPTERS

	<i>Prologue</i>	1
	<i>A Brief Explanation of the Prologue</i>	3
ONE	<i>The Weather Closet</i>	5
TWO	<i>The Lunarian Grand</i>	8
THREE	<i>An Everything-Filled Life</i>	13
FOUR	<i>Forty Winks</i>	19
FIVE	<i>Sugar-Spun Snow</i>	23
SIX	<i>The Dream Collector</i>	28
SEVEN	<i>Friday-Flavored Popcorn</i>	32
EIGHT	<i>The Snorys</i>	36
NINE	<i>Code Grim and Mournful Black</i>	41
TEN	<i>One Crooked Whisker</i>	43
ELEVEN	<i>Horn Monsters and Tire Goblins</i>	46
TWELVE	<i>Worryworts, Anxiefleas, and Fretlettes</i>	51
THIRTEEN	<i>The Department of Forgotten Things</i>	57
FOURTEEN	<i>The Self-Typing Typewriter</i>	62
FIFTEEN	<i>Worst Regards</i>	67
SIXTEEN	<i>Coco and the Bad Dreams</i>	69
SEVENTEEN	<i>AAAAAAAAHH!!!</i>	73
EIGHTEEN	<i>The Guilt Trip</i>	74
NINETEEN	<i>The Best Last Day</i>	77
TWENTY	<i>The Overly Talkative Teakettle</i>	81
TWENTY-ONE	<i>Le Saboteur</i>	86

TWENTY-TWO	<i>The Lockcrawler and the Not-a-Trap Trapdoor</i>	92
TWENTY-THREE	<i>Bloomwit and Wormwood</i>	98
TWENTY-FOUR	<i>Sandbars</i>	104
TWENTY-FIVE	<i>Turnipheaded, Sludgely, Gormless, Biffing, Mandrake-Brained, Flabwinked Fool</i>	110
TWENTY-SIX	<i>A Star Is Torn</i>	114
TWENTY-SEVEN	<i>Greetings, Fellow Jerkface</i>	122
TWENTY-EIGHT	<i>Tea & Greeph</i>	127
TWENTY-NINE	<i>The Muscles, the Brain, the Lookout, and Me</i>	132
THIRTY	<i>The Questling Beast</i>	138
THIRTY-ONE	<i>The Unrememberables</i>	145
THIRTY-TWO	<i>New Wortchamfordshire</i>	149
THIRTY-THREE	<i>Bedboogs & Broomsticks</i>	157
THIRTY-FOUR	<i>Essence of Murph</i>	163
THIRTY-FIVE	<i>A Memoir of Missing You</i>	169
THIRTY-SIX	<i>Planet-Shaped Lollipops with Sugar-Coated Moons</i>	176
THIRTY-SEVEN	<i>Sunscreening My Shellephone Calls</i>	182
THIRTY-EIGHT	<i>The Unreliable Map</i>	189
THIRTY-NINE	<i>The Missing Part of the Map Society</i>	193
FORTY	<i>Haunted Pencils</i>	198
FORTY-ONE	<i>Inside the Writers' Room</i>	204

FORTY-TWO	<i>Like an Octopus, We Contain Several Hearts</i>	215
FORTY-THREE	<i>The Counting Sheep</i>	221
FORTY-FOUR	<i>Madame Grimelda Tells Your Fortune</i>	227
FORTY-FIVE	<i>The Off-Kilter Filter</i>	235
FORTY-SIX	<i>Cheering from Every Seat</i>	241
FORTY-SEVEN	<i>Fleas and All</i>	246
FORTY-EIGHT	<i>A Goodbye Duet</i>	249
FORTY-NINE	<i>I Will Always Murphr You</i>	255
FIFTY	<i>Cloudy with a Chance of Teeth</i>	260
FIFTY-ONE	<i>The Dormys</i>	266
FIFTY-TWO	<i>The Murphrless Memory Garden</i>	271
FIFTY-THREE	<i>Waffles!</i>	276
FIFTY-FOUR	<i>Dancing Ham Sandwiches in Sliced Pickle Hats</i>	280
FIFTY-FIVE	<i>Half an Inch Each Day</i>	285
FIFTY-SIX	<i>Bowl, Leash, Collar, Bory</i>	288
FIFTY-SEVEN	<i>Full Bloom</i>	293
FIFTY-EIGHT	<i>A Collection of Keyholes</i>	296
FIFTY-NINE	<i>A Very Memorable Dog</i>	299
SIXTY	<i>That Kind of Glow</i>	301
	<i>Epilogue</i>	307
	<i>A Brief Explanation of the Epilogue</i>	309

Cast List

(Dreamatis Personae)

Luna, a dreamer

Matias and Ted, her parents

Murph, a beloved dog

Dormir, a lowly theatre assistant

The Director

Circadia, lighting department

Nox, set designer

Tuck, costumes

Dozer, a handyman

Reverie, an actress

The Forty Winks Orchestra

Winks, conductor

The Unseen Playwright

The Bad Dreams

Coco, the worst

Greeph, a poet

The Counting Sheep

The Memory Vault Keepers

The Questling Beast

PROLOGUE

Onstage, a dream is unfolding.

The theatre's lighting department has outdone itself—somehow managing to perfectly re-create the amber glow of a late-afternoon sun, right down to the dappled and dancing light through the leaves. The set builders have grown giant sunflowers that tower on the stage, and the actors have transformed themselves into dragon-sized bumblebees, emerging from the flowers with their fuzzy bodies covered in golden pollen. Even the air in the theatre feels crisp and edged with the smell of apples.

A great wind starts blowing, and yellow leaves begin swirling around the stage, some blowing out into the theatre and over the velvet-covered seats. The leaves change to snow, and the stage is transformed—now a lone lantern glows through the fluffy flakes, the ground sparkles like a million tiny moons, and the air smells of nutmeg, gingerbread, and a hint of pine.

This is the magic of the theatre; the way the creaking floorboards seem to speak in their own language; the way every prop, light, and velvet seat seem to know the audi-

ence by name; the way a stage can also be bumblebees and lanterns, cinnamon, and snow.

This is where dreams are written, says the creaking floor.

This is where dreams are born, built, brought to life, say the blinking lights.

This . . . is the Lunarian Grand.

But then, the sweet smells begin to sour, and the big, beautiful flakes of snow begin to whip in the wind, turning to hail, then lashing sleet. The theatre goes cold—colder than cold—causing icicles to form below the box seats and balcony.

Crunch.

Crunch.

Crunch.

Something is stalking through the snow. Something is crushing fallen branches. Something is howling with a cry like screeching tires. The footsteps come closer and closer, carrying something wrong, something bad, something that smells of fear and darkness and something worse, far worse, too awful to even imagine.

“Cut!” yells the Director. “Wake up!”

“Wake up. Wake up!” join in the rest of the cast and crew.

“Wake up,” I whisper, less sure than the rest. “Wake up, it’s only a dream . . .”

A BRIEF EXPLANATION OF THE PROLOGUE

Only a dream? you're probably saying. *Was that whole prologue just a dream? But I HATE when writers do that. It's lazy! Just stay in reality, pal.*

Don't worry, I totally agree. Lazy, lazy, lazy.

Well . . . that is . . . except in this one, specific, very particular case. Because, you see, dreams *are* our reality.

Hey! Come back. Where are you going? Okay, okay, I can see I'm starting to lose you. How to explain, how to explain . . .

Let's see . . . have you ever woken up from a dream and thought, *What was THAT? My auntie Gertrude shaped like a giant platypus waddling through my middle school while singing the word "farfanoogle" over and over?* Well, that dream? That was us! Or a dream theatre just like us. We built the middle school set, one of our actors played Aunt Gertrude the platypus, and our orchestra performed the Farfanoogle Waltz in Zzz Minor.

That's because we are the members of the Lunarian Grand Theatre, affectionately referred to among our-

selves as the Dreamatics. Every night we perform the dreams of one Luna Grande, age ten and three-quarters. Well, every night until tragedy struck and changed everything forever.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. Let's start at the beginning . . .

Chapter One



THE WEATHER CLOSET

Someone hadn't fully closed a jar of winter in the weather closet, and everything was covered in drifts of snow. *Again.*

Frost glazed the bottles of wind and the jugs of raining rain, and I had to dig to find the glass orbs of sunsets I'd been sent for in the first place. I finally found the one that Nox had told me to find—"colored peach pie with clouds à la mode, fading into a melted sherbet horizon."

"Team, your desire for a snowball fight later," said the Director, "is not an excuse to leave winter open in the set department again and give . . . uh . . . Whozamacallit here frostbite."

I smiled and shook the snowflakes from my overalls. Sure, call me Whozamacallit. Or Whatsername. Or So-and-So. I answered to them all. Who needs to learn the name of the lowliest of low assistants?

(It's Dormir, by the way. My name, that is.)

"Sorry, boss," said Nox, our set designer. "My bad. Also, you said you wanted to change the snow for tonight's performance? What kind of snow d'ya want?"

"Ugh, must I do everything?" asked the Director. "Just make it romantic. Make it fun." She was wearing one of her usual stress-related T-shirts, which always featured things like a picture of a lightbulb saying "I'm burnt out!" or a head of lettuce saying "Romaine calm!" Today was another classic—a cat shouting "DON'T STRESS MEOWT!"

"We've got all the kinds of snowy precipitation," continued Nox. "Ice pellets, blizzard, squall, thundersnow . . ."

"Do *you* think 'thundersnow' sounds romantic?" asked the Director.

"I wouldn't know," said Nox, putting her dirty work gloves on her hips.

"Something unique," continued the Director. "Something poetic."

"Unique . . . poetic . . . well, we have one thing, fairly rare," said Nox. "It's called watermelon snow."

"And that is . . . ?"

"It's technically caused by a red-colored green algae called *Chlamydomonas nivalis*," said Nox with the poetry of a snowplow.

The Director stared, bewildered.

"It's pink," said Nox. "Pink snow. It happens in the real world."

I didn't hear the end of the conversation, as I had plenty

of my own work to do before the theatre opened for the night.

Not that I was complaining. I may have been a lowly-low assistant, but I was lowly-low at the *Lunarian Grand*, which was, in my humble opinion, the most majestic, magical, beautiful theatre in the entire universe. I was sawing, nailing, painting, and rigging most of the time, sure, but I was also part of the *show*. I felt the tingling excitement every time the houselights dimmed, knew every line by heart, and whispered them under my breath from the wings, loving every moment, but knowing that I would never be in the spotlight.

You will never bask in that kind of glow, I'd tell myself.

You will never capture moments, say things unsaid, stir hearts, feel the thrill of the unknown.

You will always be only what you are: a lowly stage-hand, a set painter, an assistant to all, but never the star.

Still, I thought. Still.

Even a dream like me was allowed to dream.

Chapter Two

THE LUNARIAN GRAND



"If it isn't the wizardess of illumination," I said to my best friend, Circadia, opening the door to the lighting department. "Need anything before the show?"

Circadia, her giant eyes magnified even more by thick glasses, looked up from her table of various-shaped light-bulbs. She had a giant-insect-genius-who-may-accidentally-demolish-the-theatre vibe about her.

"Dormir!" she said. "Check it out."

"Uh, which one?" I asked, my eyes traveling around the room.

Every shelf, every wall, and most of the ceiling were covered with lamps, sconces, chandeliers, and lanterns. There was an acorn lamp that made the entire theatre fill with giant shadows of trees, a bat light that made stalactites appear on the ceiling and balcony, and an orb pendant filled with fog that could engulf the space in mist. They

ranged from pea-sized to a chandelier the size of a blue whale.

“I think I’ve got it,” said Circadia, pointing to the whale. “It illuminates the stage with the exact light of being underwater, with a hint of sky far, far above. Took me ages to get it just right.”

Circadia turned on the whale lamp, and even though I was used to her brilliance, the glow that filled the room still caught my breath—it was like we’d been plunged into deep blue-green water, and near the ceiling—which now looked like sunshine and water-blurred clouds—there were darting schools of fish like specks of twinkling silver. A jellyfish floated by, but when I reached out to touch it, my hand went right through it. Just another trick of the light.

“One of my new almost-favorites,” I said. I licked my lips and could swear I tasted salt water.

“Noted,” said Circadia.

This, I knew, was Circadia’s way of knowing someone better—much like anyone else might ask about a favorite band or movie or book, Circadia wanted to know about favorite kinds of light. Circadia’s favorite, which changed constantly, was currently “the flame of an over-toasted marshmallow.”

After my visit with Circadia, I checked in with Tuck (favorite light: the way sequins glittered onstage) in the costume department. Tuck was to wardrobe what Circadia was to light, and he made costumes that could

transform any actor's details—change their voice, walk, mannerisms, even their smell. The walls were lined with spools in every color, the strings all made from threads of memory.

“Need anything before the show?” I asked.

“Ooh, yes, could you try on this dragon scale cape?” said Tuck. “I’m having some trouble with the pyrotechnics.”

I let Tuck fit the hooded cape made of green scales over my head, and as soon as he did, I felt a tickling in my throat. I coughed once, twice, then POOF! A giant flame shot out of my mouth.

“Perfect,” said Tuck, removing the costume. “You okay?”

“It feels like I burned my tongue on hot soup.”

“Intriguing,” Tuck said, making a note. “What flavor soup?”

Next on my preshow rounds was Nox in sets (favorite light: moonbeams on dewy grass). Both her hands were filled with watering cans and she was holding one in her mouth as well, so I grabbed a can and started helping her with the watering.

“These buildings are coming in real nice,” I said, looking at the saplings, which were shaped like wee skyscrapers.

The sets in the set department were planted by Nox as little seeds, then watered, fed, and grown to full beauty and size. It took just as long as building by hand but

made everything seem more natural and realistic.

“Let’s sing,” said Nox. “They prefer jazz, really helps them grow.”

And so, we sang:

*“With soft rain showers and sunlight
Your walls grow strong, your angles right
Now floor by floor and room by room
Become a building in full bloom”*

After helping Nox I walked toward the lobby, where I ran into Dozer (favorite light: a night-light). Dozer was our handyman, and in charge of changing the nightly show titles on the marquee. His name was fitting since he was almost always napping; most days he even fell asleep as he was putting the giant letters into place on the marquee. Luckily, the Lunarian Grand would usually just get exasperated and change its marquee itself.

Entering the lobby, I stared at the letters on the marquee. “We’re putting on a show called *POO DAY AT SCHOOL?*” I asked. But then I realized what had happened.

“Dozer!” I shouted up to him on his ladder. His head was resting on the top rung. “Hey Dozer, you fell asleep again. I think you’ve left the H and the T out of the word *PHOTO.*”

“I’m on it,” said Dozer, not opening his eyes.

Next, I did a final check backstage before heading to the main theatre. Lanterns lined the hallways backstage,

halls that I'd always thought might be endless. There were rooms filled with all kinds of familiar voices and laughter, rooms with school assignments wallpapering the walls, and rooms that held secrets that echoed like whispers down a well. One room housed a giant clock, and instead of numbers, it had degrees of sleepiness of Luna, each sounding like a distant relation of Sleepy from Snow White.

Drowsy.

Alert.

Perky.

Tuckered.

Overtired.

Sluggish.

Invigorated.

One Eye Open.

Sprightly.

Fatigued.

Energetic.

Asleep.

Were I Snow White, Asleep would be my favorite. Asleep was where the action was. Asleep was where the Dramatics really shined.