The Hex Hunt

Surviving the Sea

by

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To my daughters, Mia & Kirsten

In the first segment of The Hex Hunt, Rain was visited by a magical fox named Sage. Sage explained that she had been sent by a powerful sorceress to hunt down a dangerous hex that had escaped her.

Sage asked Rain to join her on her quest and read off a specially designed spell code that would pull the hex back to the sorceress's home island where she awaits to contain it.

Rain agreed to join Sage's quest. The pair journeyed over many miles through strange lands.

Eventually, they reached the deserted Town of Caves where they learned that the townspeople had been taken away to a nearby château.

Rain and Sage went to the château and found that all the townspeople had been placed under a wicked spell, that forced them to dance for the hex's amusement.

After a scary encounter with a few of the hex's guards, Rain was able to read off the spell code.

The hex had no choice but to leave the château and continue towards its next location.

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Sage transformed into a Pegasus, and together she and Rain took chase!

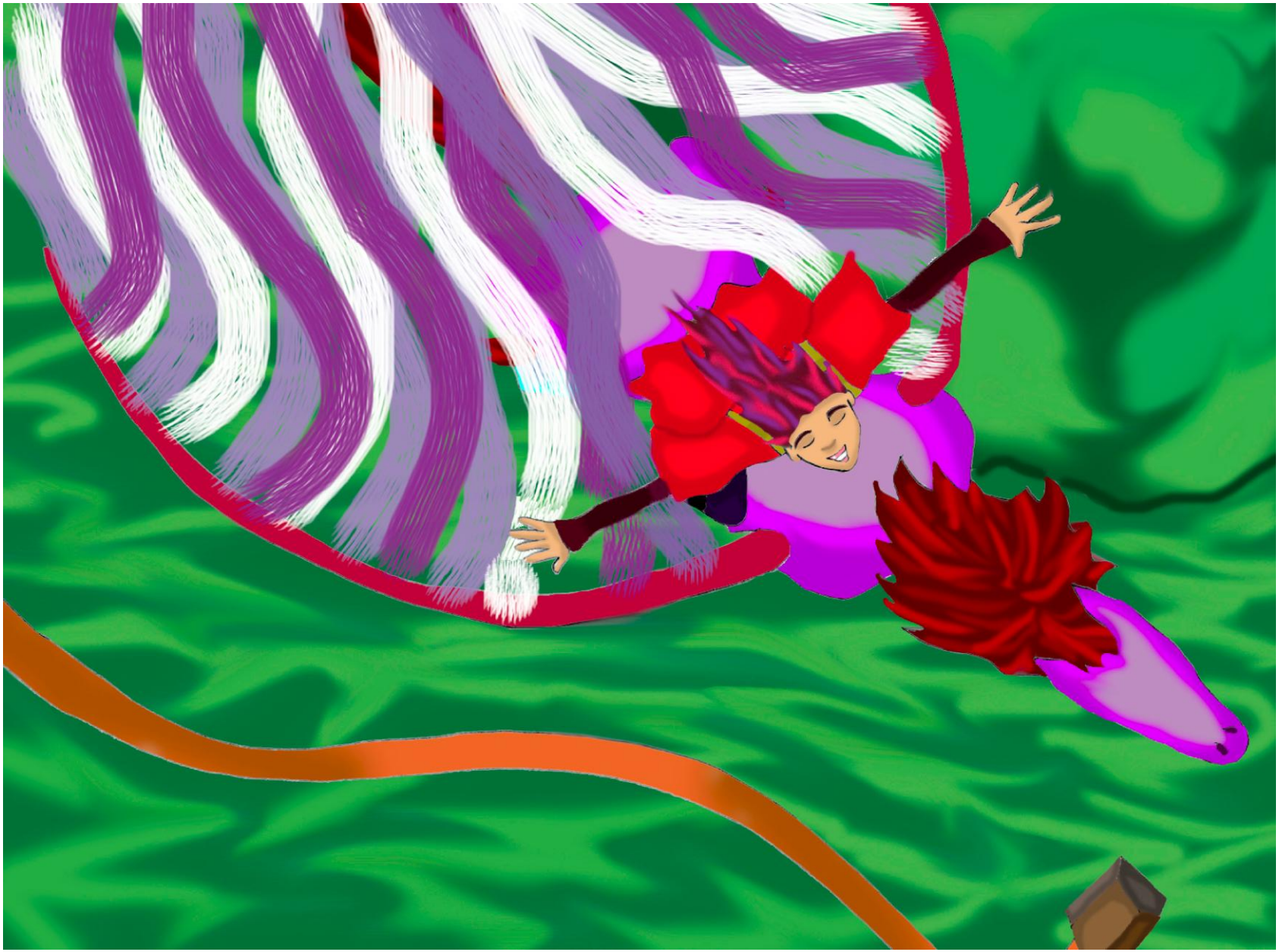
And now, the continuation of
The Hex Hunt!

Chapter 1
Industrial City

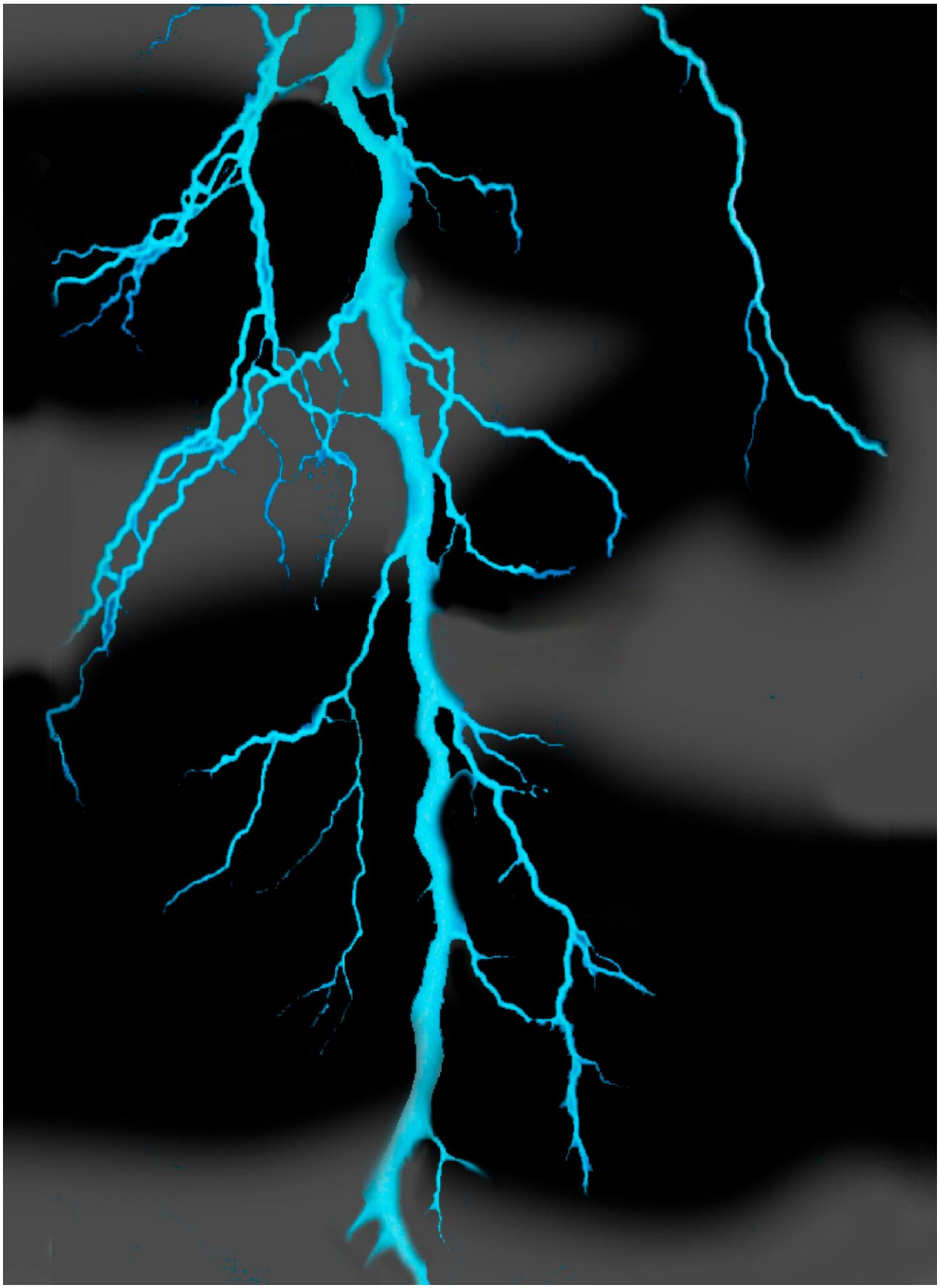
The world below grew smaller as they rose into the air.

What a sensation as they soared over the countryside, towns, and villages with the cool wind brushing against Rain's face.

She couldn't believe it was real.



Minutes into their fast and blissful journey, a massive thunderstorm materialized in their path. Each raindrop struck them like a sharp pebble. The sheets of water around them stole all visibility and the thunder cracked with great fury.



Such a storm forced them to seek shelter in a barn.

'This is the work of the hex,' Sage said. *'It knows we are after it.'*

"How long will the storm last?"

'Not long. It is using a lot of its own strength to create such a dynamic energy. Eventually, the storm will expire while the hex remains tethered to the city.'

That gave Rain some comfort. She was running out of food and knew staying inside the barn wouldn't be an option if she became hungry enough.

The rain continued throughout the evening.

Rain built a small fire and cooked what little food she had left.

"Sage?" Rain said.

'Yes?'

"Every time I've recited a spell, a strange electrifying sensation comes over me."

'*That is no surprise,'* Sage said. *'Magic words are more than mere syllables. They carry with them strong power to act out what they are meant to do. Otherwise, they would not be magic words. Every time you say a spell word, some of its magic is imprinted on you, causing the electric charge you feel.'*

"You mean, with each magic word I say, some power stays with me?"

'In a small way, yes. But do not get excited, it will eventually fade away. You are not going to become a Magic Keeper.'

"Oh," said Rain. "That's disappointing."

'Be glad. It is a lonely life being a Magic Keeper.'

"If you're referring to your master, doesn't she have you to keep her company?" Rain asked.

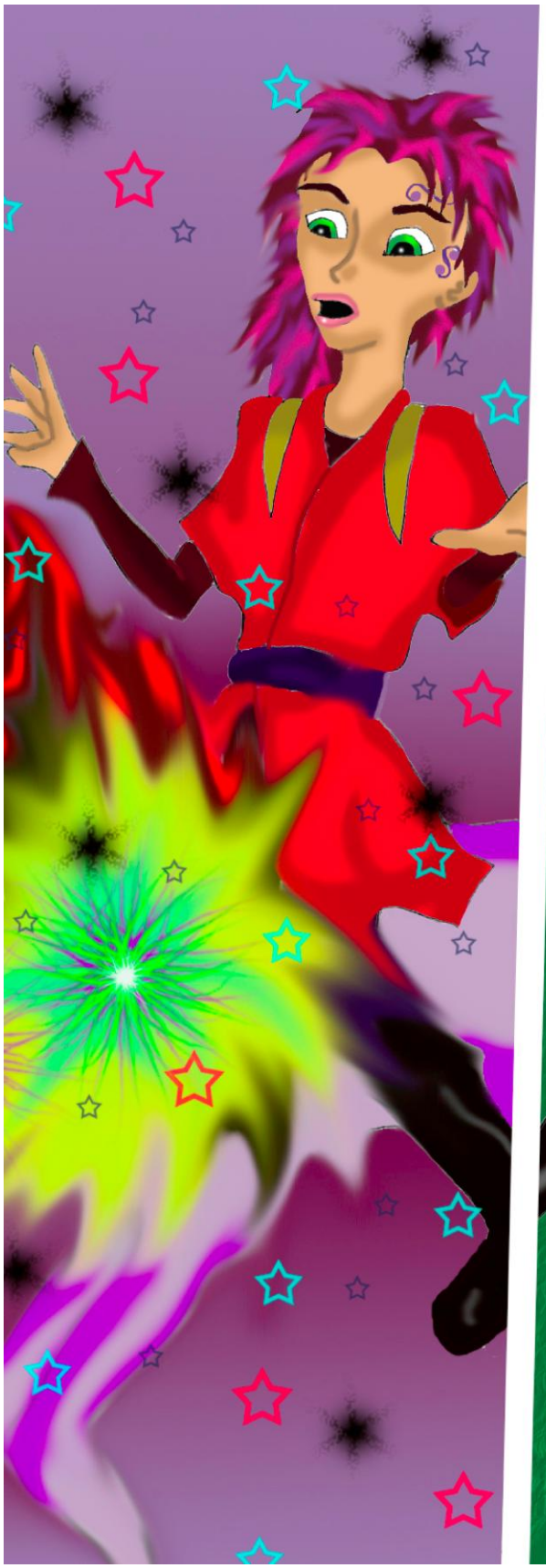
Sage didn't answer, instead said, *'Get some sleep. The rain may let up tomorrow.'*

But the rain did not. It continued for a few days more. On the third day, the storm weakened and stopped just as the new day began. Rain and Sage took to the sky once again.

As they drew closer to the Industrial City, the air became smoggy and started to smell. Sage transformed again while Rain was still on her back, causing her to drop straight to the ground.

"You could've waited till I dismounted," Rain grumbled.

'No time,' said Sage, flapping her new wings.



Crow's wings!

"Why a crow?"

'I cannot go into the city as a Pegasus. A crow is far more common in the eyes of modern people.'

They headed deep into the city where the air fell heavy and dark with pollution. Rain couldn't breathe and it became difficult to see.

Frightening things were all around her.

Some things had glowing eyes and rumbled down the road. One of them honked at her when she found herself in its path.

Yet the most frightening of all were the monsters. They dressed like people, but their heads were of creatures she'd never seen before. They had large round eyes and they rasped and wheezed through protruding snouts. Even their horses had heads the same way.

Everything terrified her. The air choked her.

'Rain? What is it?' asked Sage.

"I can't breathe," she gasped before she collapsed. "Help me!"

Just then, a small monster appeared and lifted her to her feet.

"It's alright," it said. "Come with me."

Rain hadn't the strength to resist. Her eyes burned and her throat had closed in.

Before she knew it, the smaller monster had led her inside a building, up a flight of stairs, and into a small room. Sage followed overhead

Rain collapsed to the floor, gasping.

"I'll fetch you some water," said the monster.

Although the room was mostly clear of the choking air outside, Rain believed she would suffocate.

By the time the monster returned, Rain's eyes had cleared. When she saw it kneeling down to her, she screamed out, "Don't touch me, you monster!"

"Monster?" it said. "Oh, you mean the mask?"

The monster slipped off its face to reveal that it wasn't a monster after all, but a boy.

"Hi. I'm Jayden."

Once Rain realized she was safe, she relaxed and finally accepted the water. With her throat quenched she said, "I…I'm Rain. I thought this city was overrun by shiny eyed monsters. How can people live in such a polluted place?"

"It hadn't always been so bleak. Granted, the city air had always been a wee bit on the smoggy side due to the factory stacks and all the chimneys, but nothing as horrible as this."

"What happened?" asked Rain.

"No one knows," Jayden shrugged. "Only a few days ago what pollutants hung in the air began building and drifting downward, suffocating everyone. To be able to breathe outside, we wear these old gasmasks leftover from the War for Property. To keep the smog out of our homes, we've nailed the windows shut and stuffed rags in every nook and cranny. We've even bricked up our own chimneys. The mayor has issued a state of emergency!"

'This is the hex's doing,' Sage spoke up. *'It has become angry and vengeful since we spoiled its fun.'*

"That crow just spoke!" Jayden shouted.

"Her name is Sage," Rain explained. "She's a magical creation sent by a powerful sorceress. I'm helping her bring back an escaped hex to the sorceress's island."

"Wow!" Jayden exclaimed. "No kidding? So, it's some runaway spell that's causing all this damage?"

'Yes,' said Sage. *'And if we do not stop it, your city will suffer worse. I must go and find the spell code. Rain, stay here and recuperate. I will be back for you when I have located it.'*

Sage then vanished from the room.

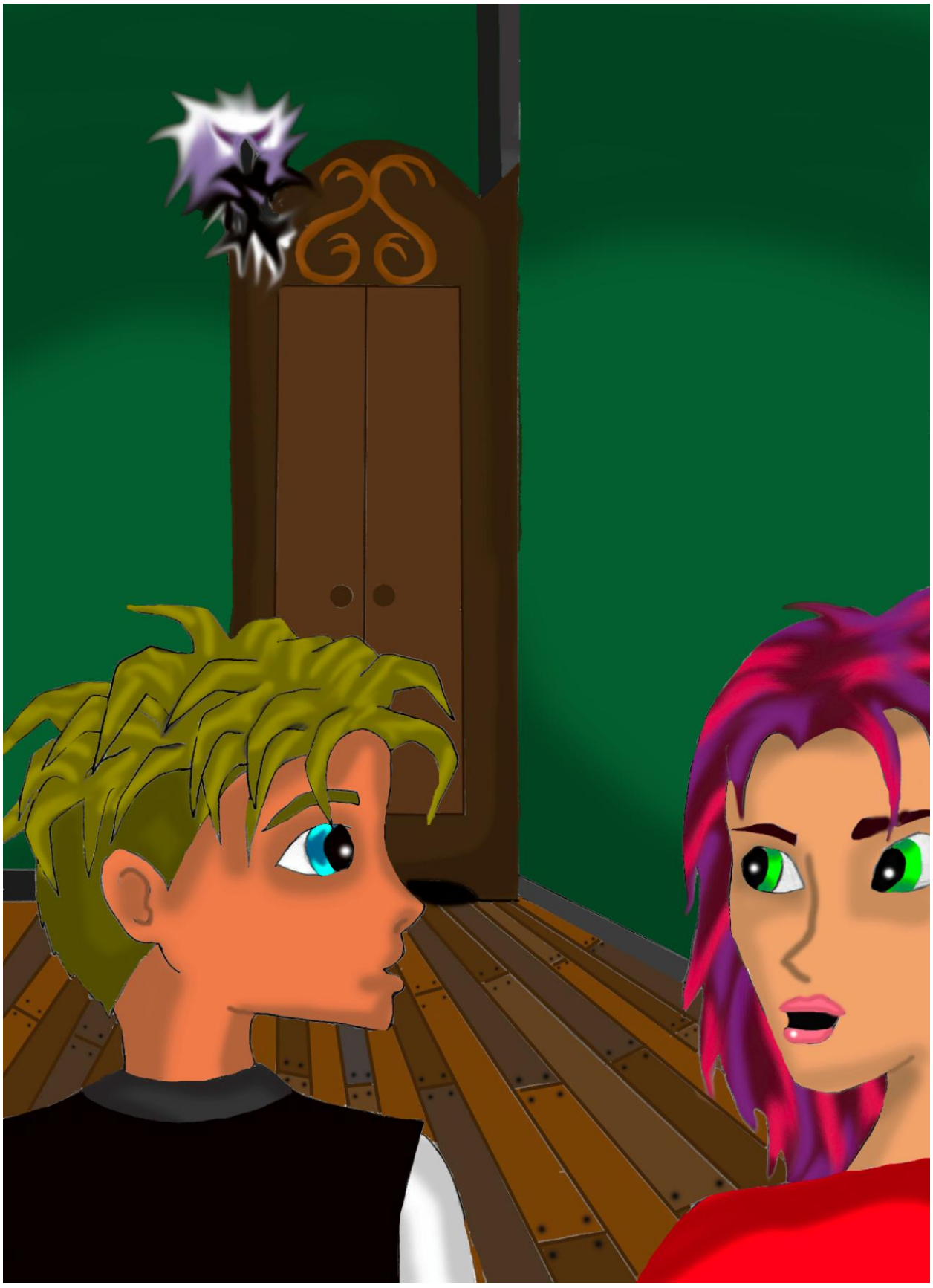
"Whoa," said Jayden.

"I didn't know she could do that," said Rain.

"She really *is* magical, eh?" asked Jayden.

"She can also change into other animals. You ought to see it. It's really a sight!"

"Incredible!" Jayden said astonished.



Rain's stomach started to grumble loudly, causing her face to flush with embarrassment.

"Hungry?" Jayden asked while standing.

"A little," Rain confessed. "I ran out of food a couple of days ago while waiting out a storm."

"No worries," assured Jayden, carrying a bag of food over to a table. "I'll have something whipped up in no time."

While Jayden prepared the food, Rain took another drink of water and went over to a wall where more masks hung on hooks.

"You sure do have a lot of these."

"My mom used to work in a factory making them during the War for Property. My father was a soldier," Jayden said, slicing the bread in half.

"Where are they now?"

Jayden's face grew very long and sad.

"Oh," said Rain when seeing his melancholy expression. "I'm so sorry."

"It's alright. The War for Property was a dirty and ugly business. A bomb fell on my mother's factory and my father died on the battlefield. I was only a baby then."

"What happened to you after that?"

"My uncle took me in until I got old enough to work in his bakery. He's not too keen about having kids living with him, so I stay in this flat."

"He doesn't sound like a very nice man. He doesn't seem to even clothe you properly."

Jayden looked down at his oversized pants.

"Oh, yeah. He gave me his old pants that he wore when he was a teenager. I was able to find a belt and stitched up the cuffs so I won't trip over them." Jayden handed her a sandwich. "Here you go. This ought to sooth your hunger pangs."

They ate together, and just as Rain's belly filled with sweet bread and corned beef, Sage returned.

'I found the spell code!' she announced.

"Where?" asked Rain.

'It is in a tall glass building on the south side of the city.'

"That sounds like the Mechanical Garden," said Jayden.

"Mechanical Garden?" Rain questioned. "Don't you mean *Botanical* Garden?"

"You'll understand once you see it."

'We must go,' Sage urged. *'You. Boy. You may come with us if you like. We might need your help.'*

Rain hoped he would say yes. Jayden was a kind young boy, and chasing the hex would be a little less scary with someone else around.

Jayden expressed confusion as if he wasn't sure he wanted to tag along until seeing the pleading look on Rain's face.

"Uh. Sure! Why not? I could use a little excitement."

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