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MUNMUN

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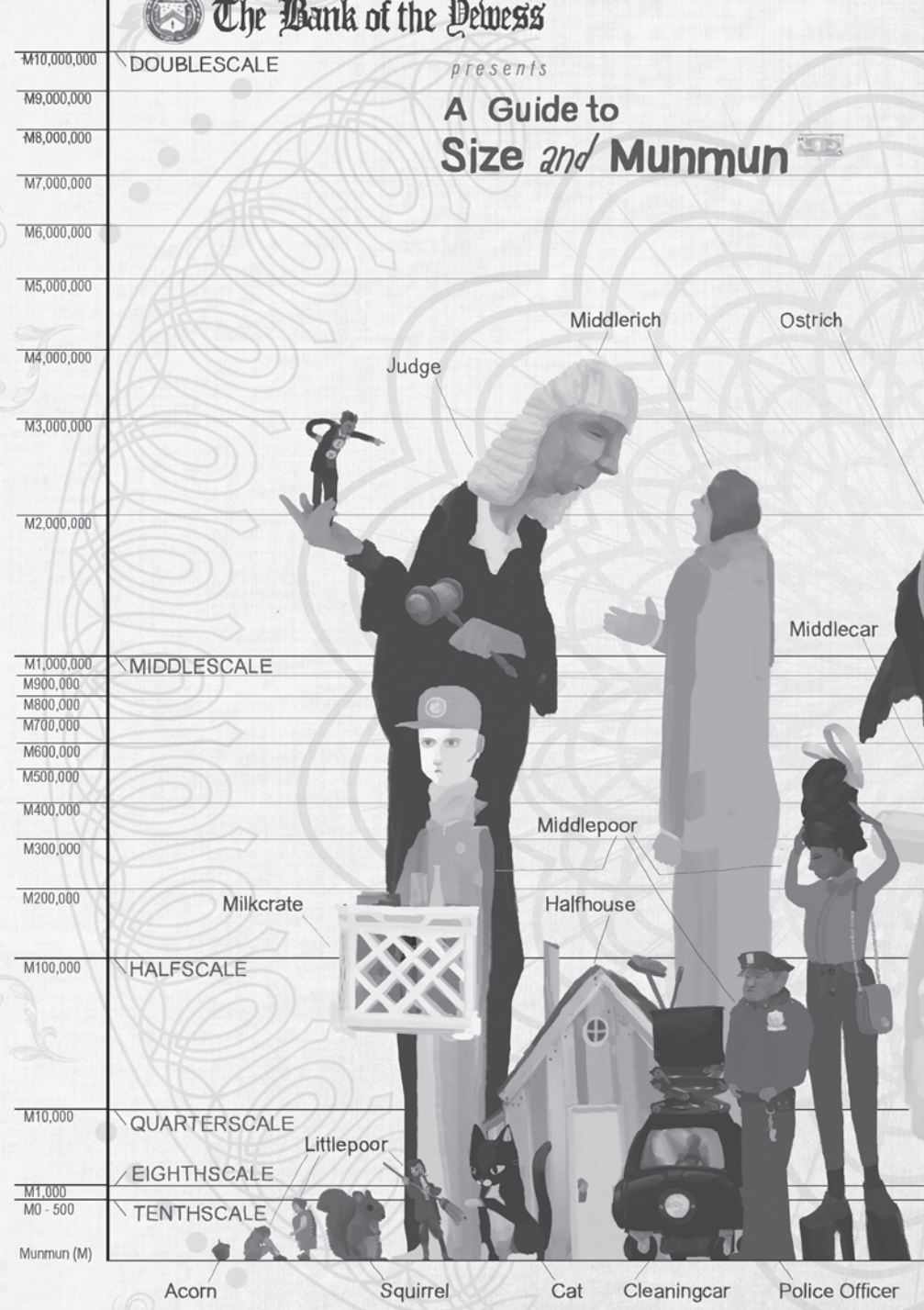
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MUN

JESSE ANDREWS

ALLEN&UNWIN


The Bank of the Yewess
presents
A Guide to
Size and Munmun
M10,000,000
DOUBLESCALE
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M200,000
M100,000
HALFSCALE
M10,000
QUARTERSCALE
M1,000
EIGHTHSCALE
M0 - 500
TENTHSCALE
Munmun (M)
Middlerich
Ostrich
Judge
Middlecar
Middlepoor
Milkcrate
Halfhouse
Littlepoor
Acorn
Squirrel
Cat
Cleaningcar
Police Officer


Bigrich
Middlerich
Screenphone
Saintbernard
Apple

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TO TAMARA, OFCOURSE

Nothing is great or
little otherwise than
by comparison.

—Jonathan Swift,
Gulliver's Travels

I.

PRAYER



LIFEANDDEATHWORLD

Being littlepoor is notsogood.

I know I know, you think you know this already, howabout I just tell you though.

I want to see if this makes you laugh. A middlerich kid stepped on our house and crushed my dad to death. Then that same year a cat attacked my mom at the dump and snapped her spine. Okay there. That's it. Did you blurt a little giggly laugh? No you didn't, okay good, ofcourse thanks for not laughing, sorry for being the Laugh Police. That story to me is just not super funny. But to other people, a littlebit funny. Mostly these are the people too big to worry about getting stomped, squashed, catcrippled, sewerdrowned, mudburied, any of your classic littlepoor terrors.

We were as littlepoor as you can get, a tenth of middlescale, about as big as rats. We preferred to say squirrels, because a squirrel is a little bigger and ofcourse less disgusting. But squirrels are more like eighthscale and we were tenthscale, littler than squirrels, more exactly the size of average rats. We lived in the beachy capital of Lossy Indica, down in an alleyway near the docks. Our house

was a onestory block of twinedtogether milkcrates, roofs and walls of smasheddown tincans, everynight the stovesmoke tickled our lungs and flavored our skin.

So this middlerich kid who killed my dad, he was named Jasper, I would say he was doublescale, so he outscaled us by twenty, maybe twentytwo. His class was in the middle of a Let's See The Middledocks fieldtrip, and he was in the situation of getting bullied and shoved by some other bigger middleriches. They chased him into the alley and gave him a shove and his balance was bad and he planted a foot right through our roof and it snapped the plastic milkcrate gridding and smashed my dad almost immediately to death, not rightaway immediately though. I was screaming and trying to stop the blood from blopping out where the shardy plastic forked him, and he was staring at me and he tried to say a few things. But ofcourse his lungs were smashed in, so, no capability to push air out of there for talking with, and prettyquick he was dead.

This kid Jasper felt terrible obviously. And also the kids who were bullying him. I mean the bullies got out of there pretty fast, mumbling muttering and skulking away all sulky and ashamed. Jasper stuck around crying for a while, then suddenly he ran away too, like, *hey, I just realized I don't have to stay here either, whatarelief.*

Sometimes with accident killings, bigs and bigger middles feel so much guilt they'll pay you some munmuns of Now I Can Feel Less Bad About This. But nosuchluck for us, when we found Jasper's parents in Dreamworld they refused to pay us anything, because was it really poor little Jasper's fault that some bullies

shoved him into stepping on our house?, look at this shaky blubberer, he's completely traumatized, infact if anything he's a victim here too.

I thought about asking, *is it possible Jasper was being such a piece of crap that he deserved to get bullied into stepping on a house, therefore actually it kind of was his fault*, but probably that wasn't true, anyway you weren't talking his parents into that.

And so the next night in Dreamworld we tracked down the bullies' parents but ofcourse they got huffy and puffy and thought it was crazy we would even ask for munmun, look, sorryforyourloss but was it *our* kid's foot who smashed through your roof and killed your dad, I mean do you really think it's fair that we give up munmuns and scale down over something like that?, you seriously do?, well, I guess you can think what you want, but unless you want to throw munmuns away on a lawyer for Accident Court, please don't contact us anymore, again obviously though we are super sorryforyourloss.

So we got no munmun and stayed littlepoor, but now with no dad and a busted house, and so my mom and my sis Prayer and me moved into a crowded publicgarden of littlepoors up the coast in a donated or abandoned Yewess Coastguard beachhouse, mostly wrecked families and orphans all trying to look out for each other and not get robbed or flooded or attacked by rats.

That same stupid year, my mom was working at the dump in the middle of the night, salvaging rags, wires, burnable coals and oilrocks, when a homeless tortashell cat started stalking her, and she jumped into the well of a tire, but the cat just perched on the

tirelip and started reaching into the tire with one arm the jerky way cats do, bat bat batting, rummaging around in there, and he slapped her a few times in the head and the back, and his spiky paw slashed her face, and tossed her around, and hooked and broke part of her spine, and then she couldn't move, so the cat got bored and left.

The doctor told Prayer and me later that our mom's spine probably got broke worse by everyone dragging her out of the tire the way we did, so we asked him, okay doctor, what were we supposed to do, and he admitted, yeah, probably there wasn't any equipment for it. It's not like they make ambulances in our scale, stretchers, wheelchairs, anything. Our best option was just pick her up out of the tire and onto a rag, then pick up each end of the rag and carry about five hours to the closest hospital we knew about that had a littlepoor clinic, and the doctors did what they could. But even the littlest doctors outscaled our poor mom by atleast ten and when you're samesize as a doctor's hand you won't get fixed up so great.

So the doctors couldn't fix her spine, and they didn't cut her legs off but the legs didn't work anymore, and on top of that our mom went blind in one eye and the sewing job on her slashedup face was all sloppy with giant stitches half as fat as a littlepoor finger. One nurse pitied us and gave us a chair from his kid's dollhouse to make a wheelchair out of. Mom was a little too big for it but toobad, we had to use it. It was that or just carrying her around in a rag hammock.

Our dad was dead, our mom couldn't work anymore, Prayer

was fifteen, I was thirteen, we lived with women and children, and prettymuch all of our day was trapping ants, roasting them, trying to sell roasted ant to other littlepoors, and getting the crap robbed out of us anytime we tried to take munmun to the bank. It was grim.

"Prayer, Warner," our mom said. "The Lord King God is wise and great but at some point you two will need to come up with some kind of a plan."

I was so mad all the time, it kept me from making a good plan. My plans all had to do with getting strong. I wanted to get superstrong through constant workouts and stunts, also fashion a knife or a sword or some type of weapon to carry around, basically become a guy who guards other littlepoors on trips to the bank in exchange for a cut. Or else join one of the squads that hangs out near the bank and follows you home to rob you if you didn't hire a guard. But Mom and Prayer had no respect for any of these plans.

"Nope, no way should you do any of that," Mom said. "Warner, you're going to make the Lord King God sad and mad with such dumb plans."

"My plans are actually kind of smart," I suggested.

"Bro, they're super dumb and here's how," Prayer said. "Your plans are all about muscles and weapons, so, ay kay ay, they are how your lazy brain tells you, *Don't use me, use your muscles and weapons instead.* That is an unmistakable sign of very stupid planning from a rightnow lazy brain."

"No, you're stupid," I argued, "because here's what my smart brain did, it asked, what are Warner's top gifts and resources lying around, hmmm probably these good muscles and running ability, nottomention handtohand combat skill."

"Manohman do you need to do some work on that brain," worried Prayer.

"Also think more about the Lord King God," suggested Mom.

But meanwhile Prayer's plan didn't involve working on the brain either, or the Lord King God forthatmatter.

Instead it was a very basic and common plan for littlepoor girls of Prayer's age who were cute, specifically, find a nice smart godfull middlerich guy, probably in Dreamworld, and maybe if he loves Prayer enough he'll agree to get married and join his munmun with all of us and scale down while we all scale up to him, middlepoor atleast, the size of average dogs.

"How come my brainless plans are dumb but Prayer's brainless plan is not," I said.

"It's not really my plan," said Prayer.

"Yes it is," said Mom.

"Fine," said Prayer.

"It's *our* plan," said Mom.

"I said fine," yelled Prayer.

"Just got to find a middlerich guy who loves Prayer's face more than his really good life," I said.

Mom and Prayer ignored this.

"Maybe that guy's in Dreamworld rightnow, how about I go look for him," I suggested, but they kept ignoring.

I continued, “I’ll just conk out and fly around Dreamworld yelling, Hey, sister for sale, fifteenyearold sister with aboveaverage face, one annoying sister for the lowlow price of you have to lose a bunch of scale joining your munmuns with not just her but also her mom and bro,” at that point Prayer interrupted that actually Warner you won’t get to join muns and scale up and if you want to live with us it has to be as a pet, cooped up in a littlecage stapled to the side of their middlehouse, Mom made Prayer say she was kidding but I knew she probably wasn’t.



DREAMWORLD

The littlerpoorer you are, obviously the more you love Dreamworld. Dreamworld is where you and everyone else is exactly middlescale and no one can get attacked or robbed or killed, and you can drive the cars and dial the phones and shoot the guns and use all the things they don't make little enough for you in Lifeanddeathworld.

Infact Dreamworld is unspeakably better than Lifeanddeathworld and plenty of littlepoors love it so much, it kills them. Here's how. They decide they need to spend all their time dreaming, but without chemicals you can only sleep so much. So they get sloppy and goofy knocking themselves out with some beers or some weeds and they get super careless and prettysoon they're asleep somewhere unsafe like a gutter or a parkinglot, and a bus squishes them or a sewer drowns them or a snake or a hawk eats them or out in the desert even bigenough spiders.

You have to be a little mistrustfull of Dreamworld obviously because anything can get dreamed into your head by anyone. Although not really anyone and infact mostly no one, because most people don't dream super well. So actually if you're good at it, you can be the one dreaming into other people's heads most of the time.

And if you want to put something nice in people's dreams, beautifull pictures in people's heads, that can feel really good and even great. Infact I would say that's the best part about Dreamworld if you have the talent and the energy for it, making nice wild things everyone's seeing for the first time and saying, wow, holy crap, who made this beautifull dreamstuff.

I mean forexample you could make a pool out of cloud, or mountains of teeth. You could lift an orchard of roiling boiling rivertrees out of the dirt, trunking and churning and branching. You could make accordion palaces, whale buses, glinty trains of fourwheel ants scurrying up vines of road. Give hindlegs to stoves, puppyears to the sun. Wear skirts of fishflocks flashing like leaves, make a room in a big cat's heart. You could give a whole suburb a ceiling of sea, you could dive into it from the rooftops, peek down at the seafloor and it's a nightsky foaming with stars.

By you I mostly mean me, the only dreamer anymore who really plays Make Stuff Out Of Other Stuff, but maybe you could do it too.

Anyway that's all great and nice if that's what you want to put in the minds of the people traveling through your dreamzone. But if you're sad, mad, frustrated and furious, you can also make traps and dungeons. Skyless shitscapes and gutterzones mazing under the skin of the world. Buzzing burning dust, stinking poison dew, air clotted up with mean little suns. Fake light so dull and blank it dries your heart. Rooms that crumple on you like bags, weapons to keep you from dying, a place where every escape is to somewhere worse.

You can make that too if you're sad and mad and want to

trick middleriches into a bad dream. But look, let's say it works and a few of them end up there for a night, it's still no good. It doesn't really hurt them, because you can't actually get hurt in Dreamworld. And in the morning the middleriches you tricked wake up in Lifeanddeathworld with all these new ideas of mean things they can do, and terrible things they might have the scale to make, in the world of your life where you can actually bleed and starve and die, also the world holding your delicat brain.

A few nights before it was time to leave, Prayer caught me gutterbuilding, I'd been doing it kind of a lot.

"Warner, don't make that sad crap," she told me. "Make the nice dreamzones instead."

"I'm too mad," I said, and dreamed a swarm of flying spiders right into the middle of a conversation of softskinned jerks, who ofcourse began freaking out.

"Gross," she said. "Stop."

"No," I said, and whipped them up into a whole cyclone of fluttering sputtering spiders and it was sort of fun to watch the jerks scramble around, try to dream them away and can't, toobad, jerks.

"Okay, look," said Prayer. "Don't get a big head. But you make very strong dreamstuff, pretty great when you want it to be."

"Can't argue with that, I guess," I admitted.

"Okay, shut up and just listen," she said. "My point is, most of us can't even make anything half the time and all we can do is tumble and drift through other people's foggy halfmade random crap. So don't be a peen and please just make some nice dreamstuff for the rest of us, okay, I'm asleep and I need to relax."

So I dreamed the spiders into soothing glimmery glass jellyfish, swaying in the air all gentle and liquidy. But if you're mad or sad it's really hard to dream nice stuff without poisoning it in some way. So their glassy pearlstrings did from timetotime keep casually settling around a jerk's neck and arms and kind of strangling him a little bit.

The biggerricher you are, usually the less you like Dreamworld. Because in Lifeanddeathworld you feel completely superior to littlepoors, but in Dreamworld some of them might be stronger at dreaming than you. And additionally just in general you can't completely avoid talking to poors, hearing about their sufferings, getting reminders of *hey, if you were born littler your life would be definitely notasgood,* and ofcourse feeling guilt about breaking their houses or dumping garbage on them or killing them some of the time.

But riches mostly don't remember their dreams so good either, so sad or bad dreaming doesn't bother them as much as maybe it could.

Sometimes I let myself tumble and drift like everyone else and get a good look at other people's dreamstuff and for the most part it was like Prayer said. No one's stuff was as good as mine. I mean sometimes I'd see something new that gave me an idea or something I could improve upon or whatever. But mostly it was traveling through weedy dry dreamzones with nothing good growing out.

I did once find someone as good as me, honestly probably better if you need to compare. I was above a little parky forest

and right as I got the twitchy feeling I wasn't alone, the treetops breathed a cloud of seedfluff. And the seedfluff twinkled into flowerheads, and the flowerheads sprouted into birds, and the birds drew a floating house with a thousand doors, and I began to hear a quiet hum but not through my ears, instead through my whole body so it felt like the murmur of something huge and faraway.

I opened a door and fell down in the sky because out poured a voice like the richest drink. A voice with twenty thick dizzy flavors in it, singing a song of notes made out of notes made out of notes. I couldn't even move. Then I could move and I opened another door and another voice glided out and wrapped the first with fluttering ribbons of itself. And again I couldn't move, until I could, and I opened door after door and the voices all twined each other and cascaded in every direction, inward outward forward backward in and out of time, and the song grew huge and bathed me and my skin went liquid and my bones glowed.

I was weeping with happiness, also full of a sad ache. I was sad because I knew I would probably only get to hear it once and then lose it forever. And the song was so far beyond what I could dream, I wouldn't even be able to remember it.

I knew I would never hear the song again without this floating seedflowerbirdhouse to sing it to me, so that was the ache, every musicswell and beautybloom was a fist clenching my heart.

I put my head in one door and looked inside and it was a girl my age, eyes shut.

I tried to squeeze through into the house, noluck, the air netted me. She opened her eyes and smiled.

"Uh," I said. "Well, ofcourse, hi. I'm Warner. What's your name."

But she just shook her head.

"That's okay, don't tell me," I said. "But, heresthething, I have an idea for something I could make you, so come out and let me make you something, please."

She shook her head again.

"No, but please," I said. "I don't think you understand. I'm really good at this, and I would make you something really good."

"It's time to get up and go to morningschool," she told me in a dark little voice that hollowed me out completely, and the morningschool part was how I knew this girl was middlerich, and that's why it hurt extra much when it dissolved and vanished and I woke up with the tears not all the way dry on my stupid littlepoor face.



LIFEANDDEATHWORLD

But I didn't get to worry about the girl very much during the day or night because it was time to pursue Prayer's crappy plan.

Sure, Prayer was cute. She had the big deep eyes and the wide bright mouth that the agreement among men is, that's cute. She also had the rubywine skin that some guys especially like who like ruby skin. On the minus side, her head was narrow and shaped like a bean, and her arms were too long with big knobbyknuckle hands on the end like paddles. And long legs which men like but huge feet which men don't like. Her hair was very fine, by which I mean thin and not good, and there wasn't quite enough and if you got too close you could see through to her weird pink scalp. So what I'm saying is, she was cute, not amazing, but maybe I just think that as her brother and actually some men love to see some scalpskin the color of a baby rat, who knows.

But Prayer was definitely cute enough that some of the local squads and crews wanted to involve her in a big bangsesh in some garbage somewhere, and anytime she left the coastguard station she wanted me to bodyguard her, other boys too if possible.

It was usually me and Usher. Usher was a publicgarden orphan, grayskinned and squinty, a year older than me but smaller with

incredible shrimpiness and a little bit of palsy. He was ofcourse pointless in a fight. But he could atleast scream pretty loud, and maybe from a distance you just see two boys with a girl, you don't see that the two boys are pretty young or that one is a shrimp, so you decide not to chase them, and anyway Usher was lovesick for my sis Prayer, so, sure, let him help bodyguard.

The point is, Prayer needed to meet middlerich guys, not just in Dreamworld but also intheflesh. So where was the best place for that.

"Warehouses," I suggested.

"Nope," said Prayer. "It's all middlepoors in there."

"Business offices," I said.

"Those men are married or old," complained Prayer.

"I think you want old," I said. "Old guys are lonely, desperate, might die tomorrow. Perfect."

"I guess you're not thinking of this as How Prayer Meets Her Soulmate," said Prayer.

"You already have a soulmate," I pointed out. "Usher."

"Ugh," she said. "Shut up."

"Right now Usher is thinking about you and either crying or banging a hole he made in the sand," I said.

"Warner, it's time to shut up," commanded Mom. "I'll tell you where Prayer is going to find a husband. Law school."

"Ohcrap," I said.

The closest law school we knew about was twenty miles away, on the other side of Lossy Indica, in the suburb of Sand Dreamough.

"What about business school," said Prayer.

"Law school," ordered Mom.

"Business school though has guys learning to make deals, sell products, start a big corpo in a little garage, build munmuns and power out of just your thoughts and words and confidence, that might be exciting maybe," daydreamed Prayer.

"Law school puts guys in the bank and the government," said Mom. "That's the most safe, safe is the most important, most important is what you need to focus on. Prayer, you're going to law school. Warner, you're going with Prayer and you're bodyguarding her, also if you find other ways to help out, that would really be great. Me, I'm giving myself to a church."

"No, no, no. Nope," I said, for lots of reasons. I didn't want to be the assistant to stupid Prayer in her gross quest to find a bangpartner for life, and I didn't want to leave for a strange new place full of middleriches who were smarter than me, and I didn't want my mom to go sleep sickteen to a room with randos in the leaky littlepoor shelter of some crummy church.

But my mom can make her mind tougher than mine, tougher than Prayer's, and she flattened us with it. So after a few days of fighting we wheeled her off to Middlechurch of the Lord King God and said our goodbyes, and she wouldn't cry even when we did.

The first phase of Find Prayer A Husband was even just getting on the road somehow. We had nineteen munmuns that I had folded deep in a pouch, but that was emergency munmun you can't spend on transport. So how to get there for free? Well, you could hike through the city. But Sand Dreamough was all the way past Sentrow and basically right up to the mountains. So the hike

would have taken atleast a month, forget that hopefully. As for the bus, the muncounter near the door has a special broom for littlepoors trying to sneak on. If you're by yourself you can hop buses from the outside sometimes, scramble up the tire when it stops and hang out in the wheelwell, but with two people, basically forget about it. Metro made the most sense but who even knows how to use that thing? First of all, you have to read the Metro map and who has any idea how to read? Usher, that's who.

Usher ambushed us on our way out of the church. We were strapped up with little pouches of extra clothes and waterbags so he knew something was up.

"Are you leav ving?" he asked.

"Prayer's going to law school," I said, so it wouldn't break his heart.

"Oh w woww," said Usher.

"Yeah," I said. "So, Prayer, tell him goodbye, and thank him for guarding you all those times obviously."

But Prayer was making extra big eyes at him and Usher was frozen like an animal corpse and my heart kind of flopped over, I knew what she was doing.

"Well hey," she said. "Not so fast. Usher, you can guard me one last time if you want."

Poor lovesick dumbass, he had no chance. So off we went the three of us, on the mission of Take My Homeless Cantread Sister To Law School.

The Dockseye entrance to the Metro had three kinds of doors. Way off to either side you had battered eighthdoors for littles like us to go through, onefoot high, just need to pay two

munmuns for those. Next in were the halfscale doors, about fourfeet, littler middlepoors get to use those, ten munmuns please. Then in the middle you have big glossy twoandahalfscale doors for bigger middlepoors and most middleriches, a twenmunmun fare for dressy ladies and sweatsuit gentlemen striding through. And ofcourse if you're bigger than twoandahalfscale you don't fit on the Metro, but when you're that big you don't want to squeeze into trains with other losers anyway, instead you're zooming around on the bigroads in your own monstertruck.

All entrances had floortoceiling doublesliders so littlepoors couldn't race through, plus you had sternlooking muncounters roaming around with brooms. And as for paying three twomun littlefares, forget it. Fortunately I had a plan.

"Fortunately I have a plan," I announced, and I jogged out of the entrance and up the sidewalk, and Prayer and Usher jogged with me, and we jogged for an hour or two all the way to where the tracks came up out of the ground. Sure enough, you had here and there some ratscale holes in the sidewalk and fencing where the rats could wriggle through.

My idea was, follow the rats, because rats get in the Metro all the time without paying any munmun. And the rats won't be a problem because there are three of us, if we all just stick together then no one's getting facechewed by a rat today.

"Warner, your plans are terrible," said Prayer, panting, but we did it anyway. We wriggled through the holes and down onto the gravel next to the tracks, and started walking back toward Dockseye Station, and ignored the little picturesigns the Metro put up to scare littlepoors, of little circleheaded people getting

pancaked by trains and deathshocked by the ground and ofcourse mauled by rats. The deathshock one made no sense, thankgod Usher was there to read some important words.

"It says t that rail in the m middle," explained Usher, pointing to a tarcolor bar zipping up the middle of the tracks that I guess if you touched it you died.

So we stood to one side of the tracks and put our right hands on the metal wheelrail and Usher put his left hand on Prayer's back and Prayer put hers on mine and I just put mine out in space and we followed the tracks back underground into the total blindness and walked that way for three or four hours.

It was loud, dark, long. You could hear rats rustle and chatter but you couldn't see them, except when the train was on its way and light was leaking in around the corner, and then yes, as we scouted a place to flop down and wait for the train to pass, always a scene materialized of way too many rats all nestling up in their little chewedout bunkers, cowering from the light and the rumble.

And when finally we made it to Dockseye Station, there was no clear way to get off of the tracks and up onto the platform where people were waiting. I mean there wasn't just a ladder up from the tracks for us with a label of Hey Littlepoors, Climb Here, Bytheway Congrats On Getting This Far Without Dying.

So we climbed the train itself. It was parked but beeping like it was impatient to leave, and we took turns clambering up the wheel, and as you can imagine palsied Usher was not amazing at that, so I had to basically pull him up onto the wheel and then drag him across some cables and finally shove him onto the metal lips between cars.

After a few stops the doors opened and some middlepoor kids came stomping through and we followed them into a car, and a kind old middlerich man lifted us onto a seat onebyone with his magazine because he didn't want to touch us with his hands, and he even gave us a few giant hardcandies to gnaw, and the seat was blessedly soft and it did smell like a giant's peensweat but we still collapsed into it in exhaustion.

"That was terrible and I'm not listening to your ideas anymore," Prayer told me, but the truth was, we were atleast headed to law school, and also Usher got to touch Prayer's sweaty back for four hours, so you have to believe it was the best time of his entire life.



DREAMWORLD

Usher took the first watch while Prayer and I slept. I dreamed the train half full of feathery coralcolor munmun bills and we sat in them like the tub.

"It's notsogood you tricked Usher into coming," I said.

"It wasn't a trick," she said. "He wanted to come."

"Do you think Usher also wants to help you marry off to some completely other guy from Usher," I said.

"I can't marry someone whose mouth can't even say the first letter of my name," said Prayer.

"Wow," I said. "That's mean and terrible."

"It was a joke," Prayer said. "Sorry. I like Usher, okay. And look, he's not stupid. I'm sure he knows what this trip is about."

"Well, I'm going to tell him, so, if he runs away crying, your fault," I said.

Prayer took the second watch and Usher dozed into the dream. I sundried the bills of munmun up to the ceiling, where they cried paint.

"Usher, I hate to tell you this, but Prayer isn't going to law school to study law," I said.

"I know that," he said, unpalsied from the dream. "Prayer can't read."

"Tobehonest I would have to say this law school trip is more about her finding a hubby," I said. "A lawgrad hubby with munmun so she and my mom can scale up."

"I know that's her plan," he said. "But anything could happen."

"Usher," I said. "You don't want hope to make you stupid."

"Anything could happen if I'm a good enough guy to her," said Usher, and my heart just broke for this poor stupid idiot.

I took the third watch, listening for Sand Dreamough, and the old middlerich guy was still sitting there.

"Pardon me," he said, in that deep frummy middlerich style. He was about doublescale and he had a buttcheek in each seat.

"Pardon me," I said, because what else can you do with middleriches except repeat and hope it's polite.

"I just wanted to tell you how much I enjoyed your dreaming," he said. "I dozed off and I have to tell you it was quite beautifull, even moving."

"Moving, thank you," I said. "Beautifull, well, thank you again. Please."

He gave me a smile that was buttclenched with pity or something. His skin was about the lightness of palmwood, sunsplashed with black and gray, and the hair on his head was like trees on a mountain, up to the ears and no higher.

"May I ask where you are headed?" he tried to say quietly.

"Yes, please," I said. "The law school in Sand Dreamough."

He snuffled a little and his brows climbed his head.

"Well goodness, what a coincidence," he told me, he lived nearby up in High Dreamough and could carry us from the station.

"Goodness goodness," I nodded, "a coincidence for sure."

I woke up Usher and Prayer and we discussed it quietly, ontheonehand this will save us a bunch of time, ontheother can we trust him, ofcourse we can he seems nice, but what if he eats us, Warner you idiot that doesn't happen, forstarters middles have way better food to eat than littles, infact what if he gives us some.

So I told the old middlerich that sounded good and a few stations later he scooped us up into the outerpocket of his smoky-smelling leather bag. There was more hardcandy floating around in there, magazines, books, bottles, plastic bendy sheets that were probably screens or cameras or something, no idea how to use them though.

We bounced in his bag, peeking over the pocketlip, as he strode through a middlepoor neighborhood, ducking the awnings and overstepping carts and bikes. I tried looking for a law school. I knew a little what it might look like from other people's dreaming, basically oldtimey parthenons like stone grills hatted with pyramids. But I didn't see any, just dusty middlepoor twostorys crowding the parkinglots and cardstock signs and foldingchairs he had to dance around.

It was a different landscape from Dockseye for sure, lots of shops and restaurants and middlemalls, mostly halfscale to middlescale. We zoomed over the heads of old middlepoors playing

cards and eating soups, young tatty daves leaning on janky halfcars and also eating soups, giggly sceneteens eating even more soups, what the heck is this, Neighborhood Souptime.

Off the sloping streets above us nowandthen I could see some real palaces nosing over the trees.

Then we got a better look at those palaces when he turned up one wide slopestreet and started bounding uphill and prettysoon it was just super groomed middlerich houses hugging the cliffsides, walled off from each other by forests.

After a while it became hard not to worry about whether we were actually heading toward a law school.

"Oh," I announced eventually. "You know, I don't recognize this part of Sand Dreamough, perhaps you could kindly tell me about it, I mean not to be rude, nopressure."

"Well, now we're in High Dreamough," explained the guy.

"Ah," I agreed, while we all tried not to get too freaked out.

A few minutes later I piped up again, "Well, I guess I'm curious about where law school is from here exactly, and you know what, come to think of it, we can probably just walk the rest of the way, so, what I'm saying here ofcourse is, if you please, thank you."

"No no no," he said. "We're not far. I can't drop you off here, anyway."

We traveled another mile or so.

"Are we going to law school or what," hissed Prayer.

"I guess I am a little curious about whether we can be close to a law school if around here it's all just homes and dwellings and forests," I said to the guy.

"You're quite perceptive," he purred.

I had no idea what the crap that meant so I just said, *"You're* quite perceptive, thanks."

"I just need to make a quick stop at my house, if that's allright with you," he said.

There was nothing really to say to that except okay fine.

We rattled in his bag as he bounded up the steps to his huge fairytale house.