

← HALF → PAST
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PECULIAR

FINDERS CREEPERS

DEREK FRIDOLFS AND DUSTIN NGUYEN

Scholastic Inc.

*For Maximus. A loyal companion.
A fighter until the end. And greatly missed.*

—Derek

For Bradley and Kaeli. Stay inspired and seek adventure every day.

—Dustin

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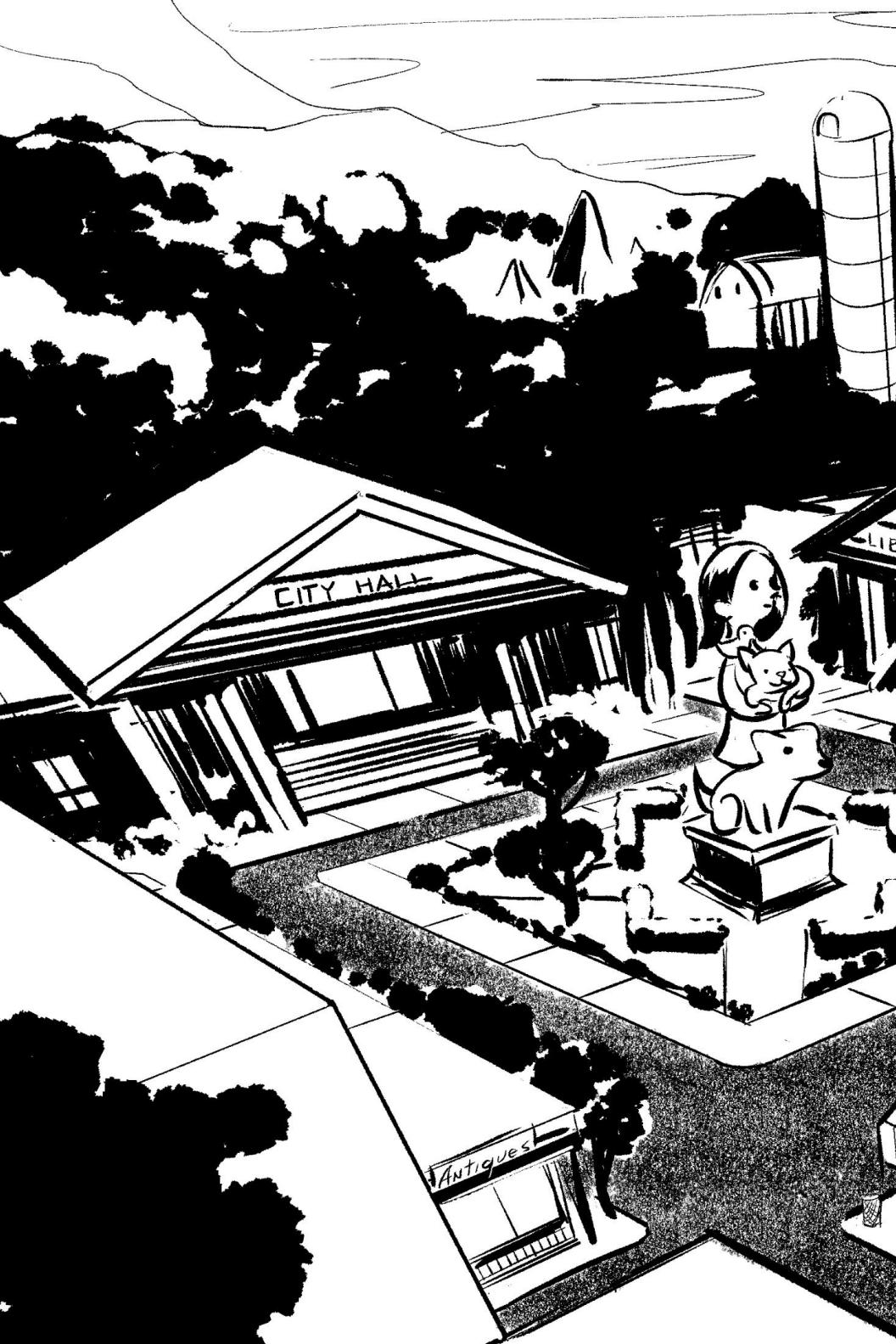
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THE HOLLOW HERALD



TOWN HALL RECORDS

The city of THORNS HOLLOW was founded in the year 1642 by frontierswoman ABIGAIL CROWLSLEY. Not content to live in the earliest colonies of settlers on the east coast of the Americas, headstrong and earnest Abigail struck out toward the northwest on her sixteenth birthday with only her loyal Irish Setter as her traveling and hunting companion. After surviving a harsh winter living off of snow birds and berries, she settled in an unclaimed valley. This unique area was noted for having one perpetual season of autumn. The valley's dreary fading colors, falling leaves, and dying trees became the town of Thorns Hollow. And because of its sleepy qualities, it has also become home to one of the largest populations of domesticated animals as its residents attempt to combat the dourness.



CITY HALL

LIE

Antiques



Thorns
Hollow

BIRD
FEED

COMICS!

BRARY



MISSING
PAULY
111-111-1111
111-111-1111
111-111-1111
111-111-1111

MISSING
PAUL
111-111-1111
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111-111-1111

FERON
MAX!
call Kaeli
111-111-1111
111-111-1111

MISSING
Sanchez
111-111-1111
111-111-1111
111-111-1111

MISSIE
Jackie
LUCKY
111-111-1111
111-111-1111
111-111-1111

BANDIT
contact Tim
111-111-1111
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CHAPTER 1



In the middle of the city, in the middle of their neighborhood, was a house that everyone knew.

Their father was a deep-sea explorer. Their mother, a relic hunter and professor. And the children were twin siblings who followed in the family business of searching for things.

This was the home of the family Fetch.

At the edge of the lawn stood a metal mailbox, shaped in the form of a dog. With one quick twist of its metal tail, it released its mouth hinge, allowing the stack of letters to be retrieved by a girl, who ran up the

sidewalk to burst through the front door.

“Mail call!” Esmeralda yelled, chucking the letters onto the kitchen table.

“Let’s see what we’ve got,” answered Atticus, entering the room to greet his sister.

The Fetch Twins were of normal size and stature for children their age. Esmeralda was half a head taller and seventy-four seconds older than her shorter and younger brother. Both had dark hair. Both a thin frame. While Atticus was the more book smart of the two, Esmeralda was the more adventurous, with bruised knees and elbows to prove it.

But they both had one thing in common: a desire to find missing pets.

Atticus flipped through the stack of mail, carefully separating it into piles, before arriving at the most important piece. “Bills, advertisements, and a card.”

“From who?” asked Esmeralda, already eating a banana she took from the fridge.

“Jack Webster. Thanking us for finding his dog, Disco.”

“Pretty clever of you adjusting the fire sirens to amplify a melody while driving around town. That

dog is drawn to music,” smirked Esmeralda. “How did you get the fire department to agree to that?”

“Well, they did owe us a favor for finding their firehouse dog, Spot, the week before,” replied Atticus.

Esmeralda quietly walked over and stood behind her brother. Only after reading through the rest of the mail did he realize she was there, waiting to be noticed.

“Okay, what is it? Is there something else?” asked Atticus, almost afraid to find out. “And please don’t muss up my hair.”

“Only this,” said Esmeralda, dangling a piece of paper a few inches in front of her brother’s face.

“A lost pet flyer? Don’t we have enough personal requests to go through? And *homework*?” reminded Atticus.

“We can always do that when we get back. That’s why it’s called homework,” she winked. “Besides, there were lots of other missing flyers, but I only took this one. You might say it jumped out at me.”

Not acknowledging her intended joke, Atticus got up from the table and walked down into the

den as Esmeralda followed. This was their office. Their base of operations. Along the staircase wall were certificates of appreciation, a key to the city, a thank-you letter from the mayor, and various articles to showcase their prosperous operation of finding lost pets. And the rest of the den was stocked with all the tools for their success. A full set of animal encyclopedias, stacks of books checked out from the library, blueprints and maps of the city, and a card catalog of all their past clients. Also flashlights and hiking equipment, which sometimes were necessary in their line of work.

“Um, I don’t think we’re going to find it in here, Atty,” said Esmeralda.

“No. But we can do a little preparation before we go,” he advised.

“Not everything can be found in a book,” stamped Esmeralda.

“And not everything can be found out there without it,” answered Atticus.

With her arms folded, Esmeralda scuffed her shoe along the floor in an annoying fashion. It did not go unnoticed.

After flipping open some books and unrolling some papers, and feeling angry eyes on him, Atticus looked over at his sister and let out a sigh. “Don’t worry, Es, I’ll make it fast. Then we can get our hands dirty.”

“My hands, little brother. I don’t want you to fall and break that big ol’ brain of yours,” she smiled. And he smiled back.

Now satisfied, Esmeralda walked around the den. There was a corkboard pinned with clients whose pets they were currently working to find. Photos of various animal footprints to study. Even a funny little cat statue given to them as a gift that now acted as a paperweight, complete with a paw that moved up and down.

Stopping in front of a wall, Esmeralda looked up at a framed photo of a small white schnauzer dog. Its face was so furry that it hid its eyes and gave it a funny looking mustache. Not realizing it, she clutched the locket around her neck. The photo inside it matched the one on the wall.

Standing next to her, Atticus tried to assure her, “You know, he’s probably okay. Lost dogs in this

town . . . Well, any dogs in this town . . . seem to do okay. He's probably out there eating and playing and enjoying his life. Even if we haven't been able to find him yet."

"That doesn't make it any easier. No matter how many years he's been gone," she said bluntly.

Atticus placed a hand on his sister's shoulder. "And it's why we do the best we can to help others find their lost pets. So they don't have to experience what we have."

She nodded. Then spoke. "Can I help you look through some of these books?"

"I'd rather you help me check out the map," he said. "It will give us an idea where we can look."

He unrolled a giant map that covered their entire work desk and hung over to the floor. A map of Thorns Hollow. Every landmark, every area of interest. And every possible place to find a missing animal.



BILLY MOUNTAIN

- Keep on all hiking trails.
- Avoid rockslides!
- Annual mountain goat racing

WATTS MINE

- Popular for lost canaries and other treasures.
- Always bring a flashlight when riding the mine cart.

OLD HOBBS GROVE

- Watch for slippery moss.
- Keep your balance and watch your step!

KURMS POND

- Local watering hole, voted #1 for frog catching.
- Bug repellent required!

CRAWLY CREEK

- Water boots needed.
- Snakes inside boots ... most definitely not! SSSSS



Just a note of thanks
for finding my
lost dog. I hope he wasn't
much treble. He always
likes to play haydn go
seek. Sincerely,
Jack Webster

