



KEY HUNTERS

**BATTLE
OF THE BOTS**

by Eric Luper

Illustrated by Lisa K. Weber

SCHOLASTIC INC.

*For every teacher, librarian,
and bookseller who took the time to put the
right adventure into my hands*

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CHAPTER 1

“Vines are harder to climb than they seem!” Evan yelled up to Cleo as he struggled to get to the top floor of the magical library under their school. It was a floor that had only appeared since they came back from their last adventure—where they traveled into a book about the Amazon. And it wasn’t the only thing that was new.

A boy named Gabriel had followed them out of the book. He’d been an adventurer

there, too. And somehow, Evan and Cleo knew they had to get to the top of the library to help Gabriel return to his own world.

“Use your legs,” Cleo called over her shoulder as she and Gabriel zipped up two other vines. “It’s just like climbing the rope in gym class.”

“I’m terrible at climbing the rope in gym class!” Evan wrapped his legs around the vine, but his ankles just got twisted up in the leaves, and he slid back down.

“Looks like you’ll have to go into your next story without your friend,” called an irritatingly familiar voice. Locke, the evil librarian who had been racing to find four priceless books called the Jeweled Greats inside the library’s stories, was climbing up after Cleo. “If Evan can’t reach the next book, he can’t join you . . . or should I say *us*?”

Evan looked around the magical library. Rows of shelves surrounded him. Tables and comfy chairs lined the walls. At the very end of the huge room, a fire crackled in the stone fireplace. The newest addition to the library, a huge tropical tree, stood in the corner against the wall.

Evan slouched on one of the benches. On the table in front of him sat the biggest book he had ever seen. It was at least a foot thick, and the pages were bound in dark leather. Fancy gold designs decorated the front cover around a single word: **DICTIONARY**. It was the only book Evan had ever seen in this magical library that didn't have a lock on it.

He ran his hands over the book. "All this information, and I still can't get to the top floor of this library. I'm just not strong enough."

The book grew warm, and golden words appeared below the title. They read:

Being smart is important . . .
Find the word in this dictionary
That is spelled incorrectly.

Evan sighed. “One word in this whole book is spelled incorrectly and you expect me to find it? There must be a million words in there.”

The book didn’t answer.

Above him, Cleo squealed. Locke had grabbed her ankle. She spun around and kicked him with her free foot. “Evan, hurry! We’ve got to go into the next book and get Gabriel home.”

Evan’s hand went to his pocket. He still

had the key they'd found on their last adventure, which would transport them into the next magical book. He needed to catch up to Cleo fast. "How am I supposed to know what word in this giant book is spelled incorrectly?" he whispered. The dictionary contained too many words to start hunting at the beginning. There had to be a trick.

He read the cover again. *A word spelled incorrectly . . .*

Evan gasped. He knew the answer! He flipped along the pages until he came to the letter I. "The only word spelled incorrectly is I-N-C-O-R-R-E-C-T-L-Y!"

When he got to the page that should have had that word on it, Evan found a small brass oval with a tiny keyhole in the center. But what key was he supposed to use? He pulled

out the “key” from their last adventure, but it was an electronic keypad. There was no way it would fit.

Then Evan remembered. He took out the necklace that he’d been given as an honorary librarian in this magical library. From the chain hung a small silver key. Evan inserted it into the keyhole and turned it.

The dictionary glowed, and the bookshelf behind him slid open to reveal a room.

There was no time to lose. Evan ran inside.

The round room was small enough that he could reach each side with outstretched arms. The walls and floor were made of glossy wood. When he looked up, he could see a distant light at the top of the shaft. The door slid shut and the floor began to turn. As it did, Evan felt himself rising. He spun and he spun as the light above him grew closer.

Before long, another door slid open. Evan ran out to find he was on the top floor of the library.

Meanwhile, Cleo was still climbing. Her arms burned and her shoulders ached. Gabriel was still going strong beside her, but Cleo wasn't sure she would make it. This vine reached much higher than the ropes in gym class!

"You're not going into any book without me," Locke hissed as he grabbed at her again.

Cleo shook him off, but she wasn't sure she had the energy to climb the last foot to the edge of the balcony. *What's the point?* she asked herself. She couldn't get into the next book. Evan had the key. Maybe they'd be better off coming back another time. *Where is Evan anyway?*

Suddenly, someone grabbed her sleeve.

“Looking for me?”

“Evan?!?” Cleo cried out. “How’d you . . . ?
You were . . .”

Evan grinned. “There’s more than one way to solve a problem.”

He pulled Cleo and Gabriel onto the balcony and looked around. The top level of the magical library was filled with computers, from the newest tablets to ancient gray cabinets with blinking light bulbs and spinning tape reels. Screens blinked, discs whirred, and processors hummed.

“What’s all of this doing in a library?” Cleo asked.

“It’s a technology center,” Evan said. “Lots of libraries have them these days.”

“People don’t just read books,” Gabriel added. “They use tablets and computers, too.”

“But this tech center doesn’t just have modern-day computers. It has ones from years ago,” Evan said.

Cleo slid a pair of high-tech gray gloves onto her hands. With a wave of her arm, several multicolored screens popped up in the air around her. “And maybe some from the future. These gloves control some sort of virtual computer.”

Evan pulled the small black keypad from his pocket. “What do we do with this?”

“You . . . give . . . it to me!” Locke panted, lifting one leg and then the other over the balcony railing. He tumbled to the floor in front of them. “You children don’t know what you’re doing. You’re going to hurt yourselves.”

“We’ve done okay so far,” Evan said.

