

Gilbert Ruffelstum's

Outlandish Curiosity





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Written by Kevin Focke
Illustrated by Daniel Sherekin (Boro)
Prototype by Robin Fasel

Chapter one

Preliscious



Welcome my dearest strangers & acquaintances to another one of my journeys. This time around, our ship wharfs on the gorgeous beach of Preliscious.

Immediately, we stumble upon an unfamiliar sight: On the beach there is grass sticking out above the sand. Curious, is it not?



Whose peeping eyes are those? Well I am glad you asked, they belong to the Hillström Crab who burrows itself into the warm sand.

Instead of hunting, the Hillström has adapted to a leisurely life of basking in the sun whilst photosynthesis does the hard work.



There is a strong belief among Ockilare that the Hillström Crab used to be the crown of Draimaniras Trees. There they sat in a fossilized state, feeding the stump.

It was Urund-di, the Wind of Thunderous Cold, which shivered them awake. Henceforth, none such trees are found anywhere, begging the question how the Hillström Crab reproduces.



Where once there were ample questions, science has amply answered! The reproductive organs are found on the head of the Crab.

In a wonderfully weird manner, the female Crab has to topple over and lay upside-down on the male.

The male then proceeds to jump with all the power its legs can muster. One jump! Two jumps! And the deed has been done!

Now the female lays eggs and a new generation lives on.

Here in the lush jungle of Warb there is a constant game of who's who at play.

Can you guess who's the plant and who's the pretender?



A fantastical forest scene with Kerlim plants and glowing snakes. The scene is set in a dark, misty forest with tall, thin trees and dense foliage. In the foreground, there are several Kerlim plants, which are tall, thin trees with large, green, curled leaves. One Kerlim plant in the center has a glowing yellow snake coiled around its trunk. To the right, another Kerlim plant has a glowing purple snake coiled around its trunk. In the background, there are more Kerlim plants and a large, glowing purple flower with a yellow snake coiled around it. The overall atmosphere is mysterious and magical.

Kerlim is the name of this odd-looking plant. During the brief time it is uncovered, the hypersensitive harvesters of Kerlim absorb enough sunlight to last a night and a day. Thereafter, it closes again and slumbers away.

The Dellonius is a sneaky little Snake, a pretender par excellence!

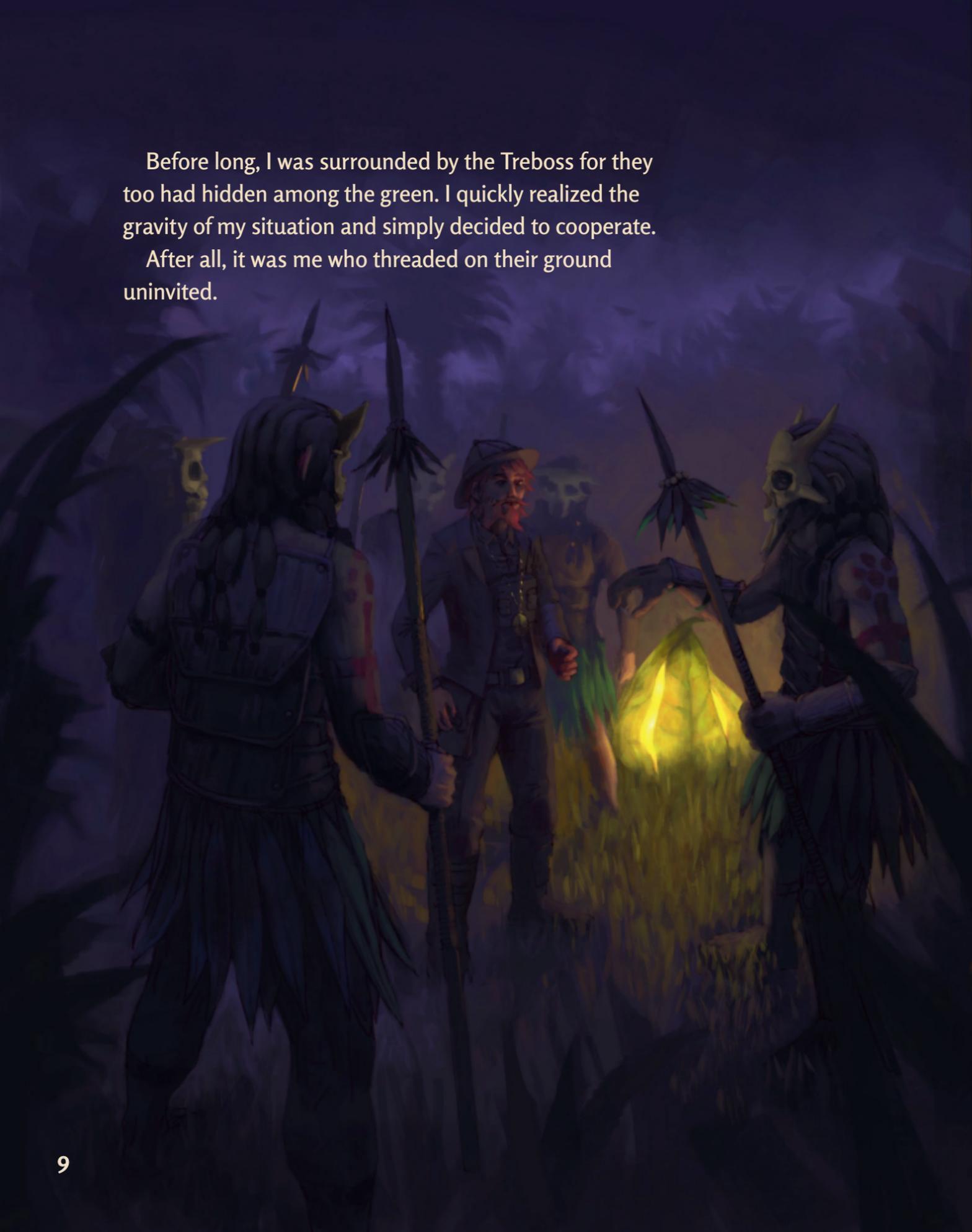
Insects should be very wary: The stamen are sticky and do not contain any pollen. It would be too good to be true, a Kerlim opened for such a prolonged stretch of time.

Remarkably, the strategy of the Dellonius is so effective that the locals have started placing them around their huts as insect repellents.

Talking about the locals, it seems I've been caught in an ambush...

Before long, I was surrounded by the Treboss for they too had hidden among the green. I quickly realized the gravity of my situation and simply decided to cooperate.

After all, it was me who threaded on their ground uninvited.



They brought me to a huge bonfire around which the whole tribe was gathered.

Three towering figures spoke to me in an uncanny unison:

'Forth came the men. From high? No, low; the men from low, down the paths as they flow through the sea and the soil. Which wind brought they? The Wind of Woe. Such evil, terrible troubles we mourned.'

'Yet pass us comes a man with an understanding of our land. Witnessed by Fire Wind roar, a restoration of bond is forged.'

'Receive thus man a mask unbroken.
A soul wrapped in bone.
A connection surviving when Fire
Wind is long gone.'

My capture took an unexpected twist for the better. I had already imagined all kinds of horrendous outcomes and found myself quivering at their advent.

Perhaps this whole ordeal was a tad too adventurous for my liking.

From here on out I hoped to continue my journey unhindered, but first I needed to rest. The Treboss offered me a hut to sleep in and sleep I did.

The sparkling dew of morning marks the perfect time for exploring.

I expressed my gratitude and bid farewell to the Treboss.

Always a pity to leave new-found friends behind.



After last night's cornucopia of emotions, I was left giddy with joy.

I still can hardly believe it; I received my very own bone façade!



Unfortunately, I reckon it's a tad bit small for my head, not to mention the bone gets incredibly hot in the sun. How the Treboss handle the heat is one of the world's many mysteries.



Up in the Burdrinul Tree a Bulburdrin is enjoying scrumptious purple Bulb-berries.

What more is there to say about the simple-minded Bulburdrin? Not much, it turns out.

Often, by sheer mistake, a Bulburdrin eats things not belonging in its mouth: Fingers, leaves, twigs, rocks... And, yes, predators.

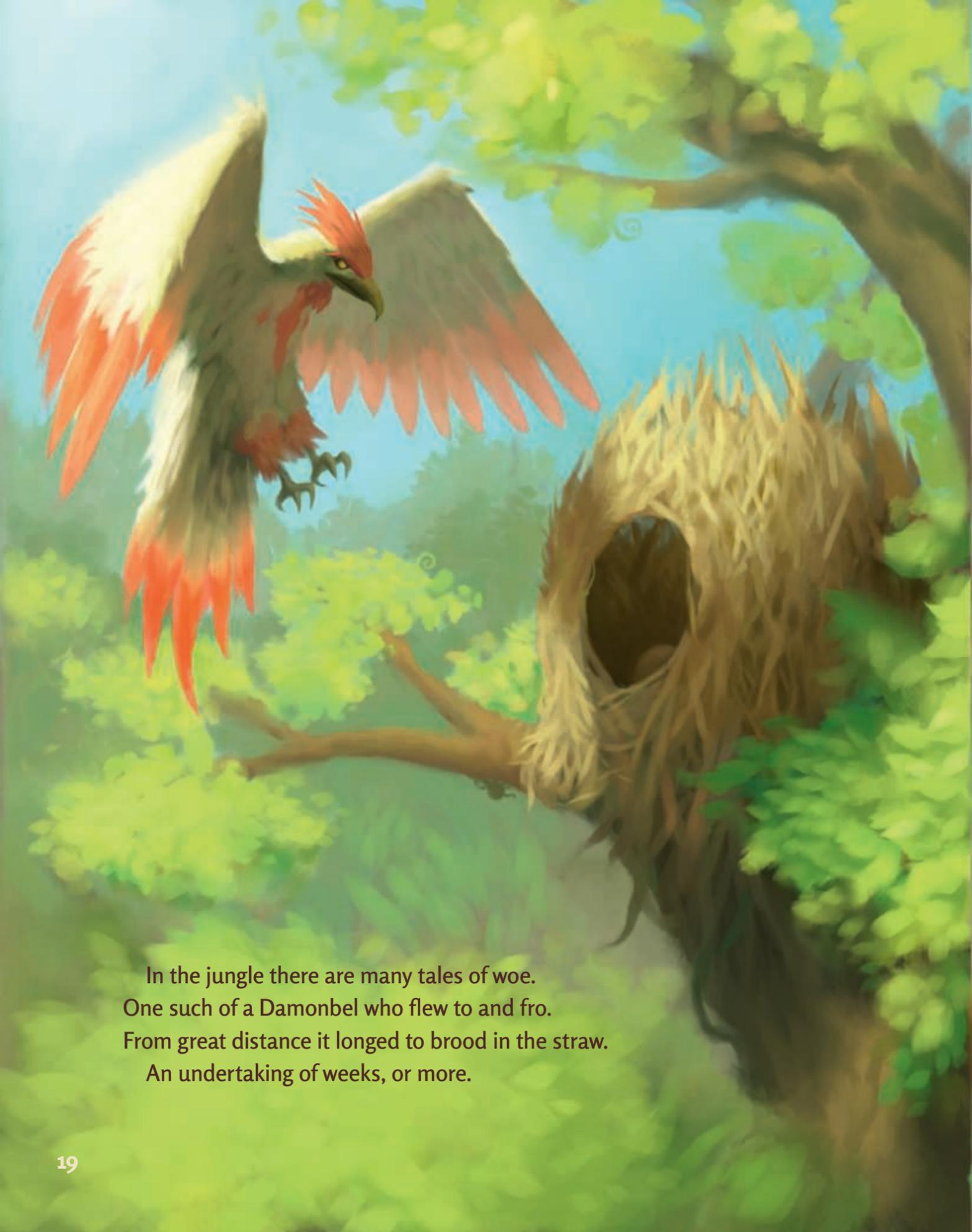


Oh golly, a poor little Krikweet charged my right boot! Look at it, all dazed and confused; it must have seen me as a dangerous threat.

Understandably so; it's a big world out there for small creatures. To them, I'm a giant!



Named after the sound it makes, the Krikweet forages Berries with its pincers and funnels them straight into its mouth in a gutter-like fashion.



In the jungle there are many tales of woe.
One such of a Damonbel who flew to and fro.
From great distance it longed to brood in the straw.
An undertaking of weeks, or more.



Now it's cobbling together a cosy, warm nest...
When something peculiar creeps dispossessed...

Softly threads the Ragova Leech...
Nothing marks the breach...

'It's odd, but it's beautiful,' the mother bird
thinks, just another baby bird...
...With devious plans...



Flashback

The Linèn are a delicacy;
ubiquitous once, extinction unplanned.

Unscrupulous poachers the enemies;
the Linèn a plant, defense unwarrant.

Immobile as they are, they have a trick
up their sleeves: Waging a mind-control
war; kings and queens with powerful
peons.



But in the Kingdom of Nature, no reign is
ever static: The climate always rules.

But in the Kingdom of Nature, they
cannot be melancholic: Where there is fire
it shall burn.



Fire! Fire! **DANGER** spelled the wildfire.

Higher! Higher! Pink Pelicans
Linèn's guardians.

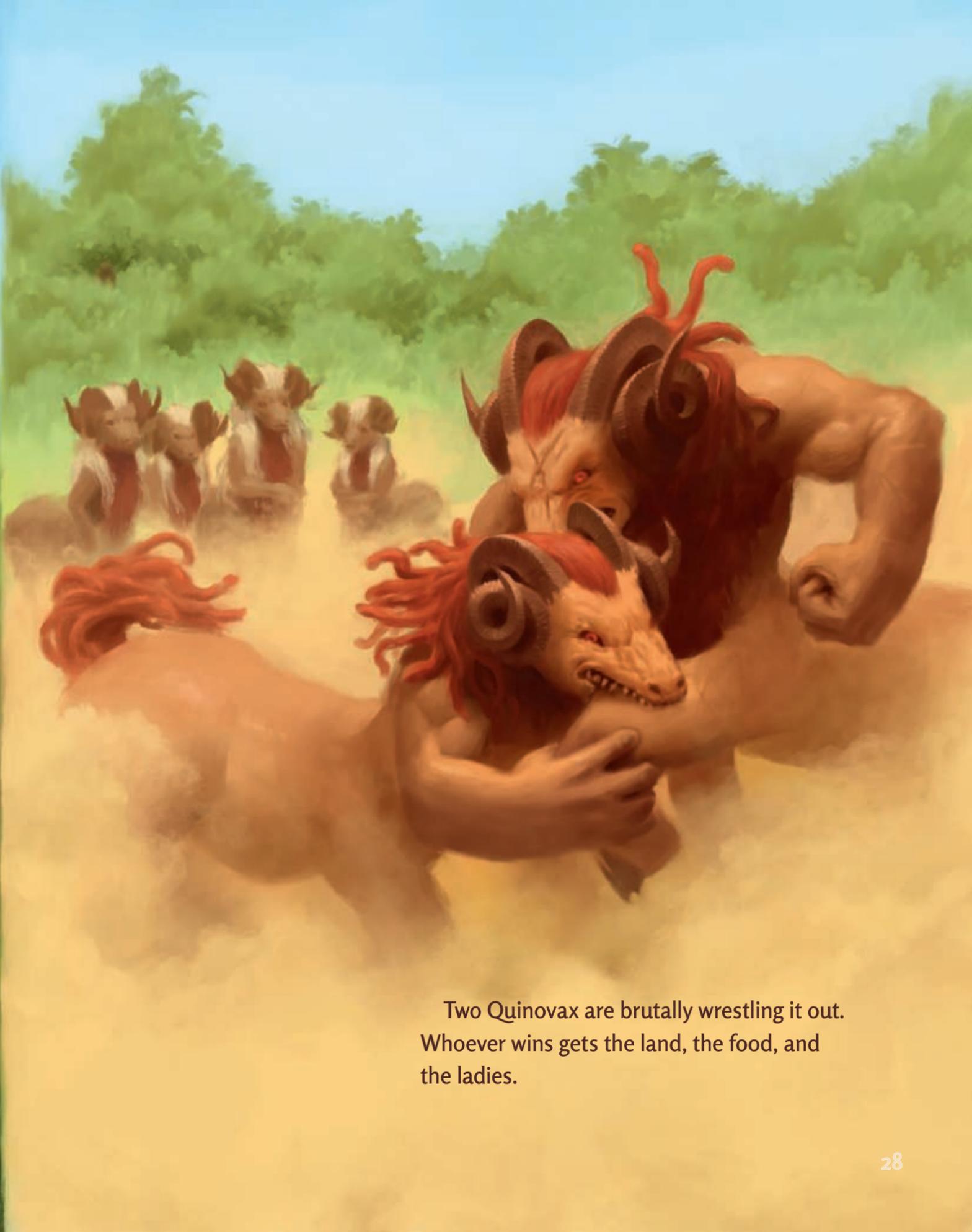
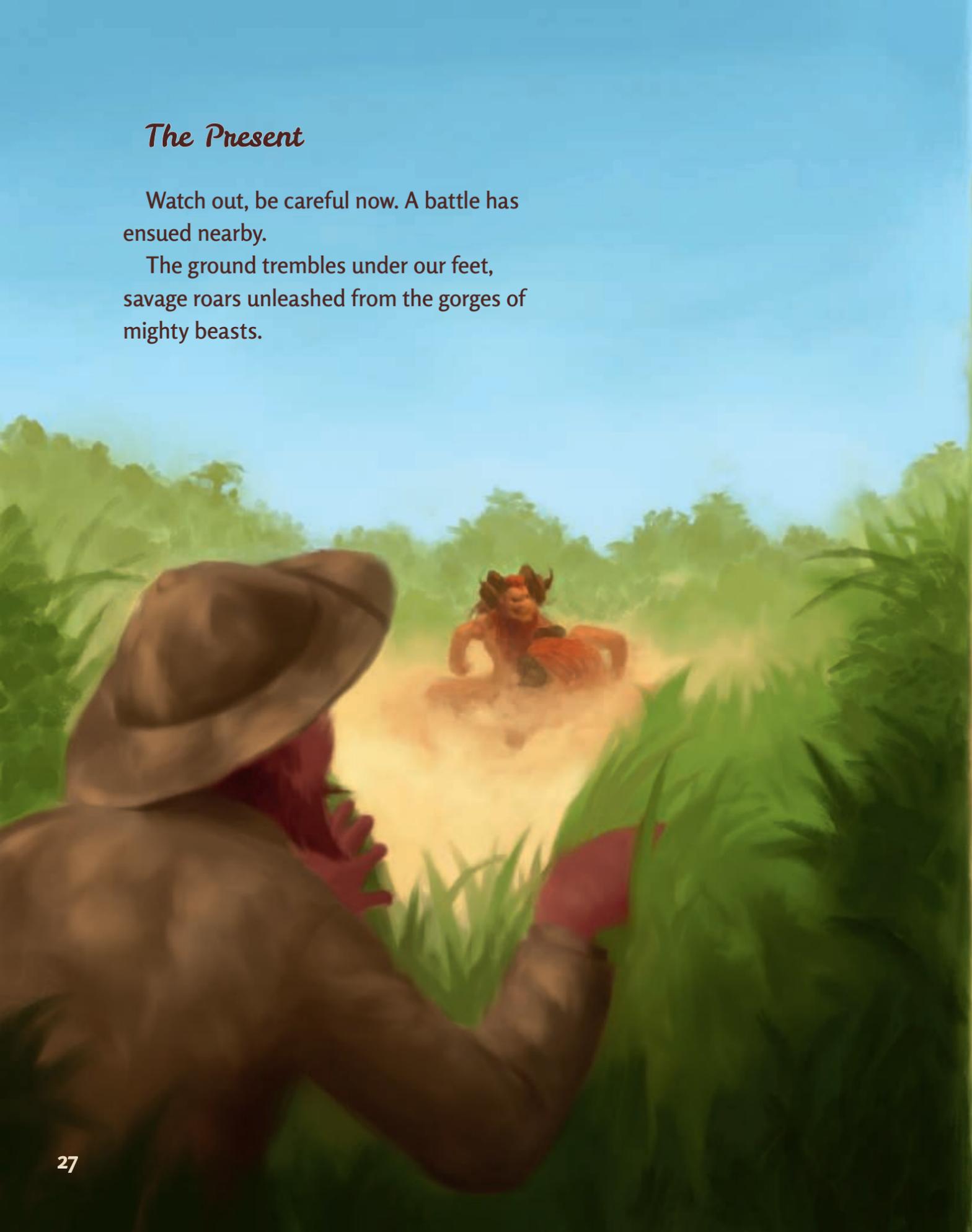


Across the sky they soared. Across the
land and sea. Across the Qoomar's deep.
They found home in Preliscue.

The Present

Watch out, be careful now. A battle has ensued nearby.

The ground trembles under our feet, savage roars unleashed from the gorges of mighty beasts.



Two Quinovax are brutally wrestling it out. Whoever wins gets the land, the food, and the ladies.





The veteran has won, his foe terrified of what's to come...

Chapter two

The Clearing





After wading through the jungle we reach an open blue sky. Before us lays a splendid profusion of female Spring Folley, and a winding road that leads to the Garizzo Bridge.

We will, however, take the shorter, scenic route through the flowery field. What is the point of a winding road anyhow?



Here in the height of spring a truly remarkable event takes place: On the mountains yonder, male Spring Folley release a flurry of seeds, wrapping the sky into a fertile blanket. With a graceful descent, the seeds drop down into the loving flowery basket of the female Spring Folley.

Some female Spring Folley have already closed off their baskets. They have entered the period of gestation in which they prepare wondrous miracles of nature.

I wish from the bottom of my heart I could show you a specimen, but alas we must wait. My wonderful mother always counselled me: Have patience, Gilbert; it's a virtue for fishers and explorers alike.

A man with a beard, wearing a brown hat and a matching suit, stands in a field of vibrant yellow flowers. He is holding a dark bottle in his right hand and a brown bag in his left. He is looking towards a large, green mountain peak in the distance, which is partially obscured by thick, white, billowing clouds. The sky is a clear, bright blue. The overall scene is a surreal landscape where nature's elements are combined in a dreamlike way.

The pollination is in full swing.
What a sight to behold.

It sure sounds crazy, does it not, plants
rooted on the mountainside?

Well you don't have to take my word for
it... Have a gander at it yourself!





Oh golly, what's that? It's gigantic!



I swear it was much bigger from my point of view...



This wee fellow is the Dansofy, the seedling of the Spring Folley.

After the period of gestation, it leaves the basket, fluttering on the wind, searching for a nice place to take root.



I grew up in a tiny town called Zurt. It is located in the south of Expedia, where the Lumenon and the Drainor rivers cross. This made it ripe for fishing, and fishing we did. Generation upon generation we perfected the craft.

You could thus imagine the surprise when I told my parents where the line ended. They weren't elated, but they understood: I never much cared for catching the fish; I wanted to let it swim freely, and follow wherever it went.

Peace and quiet matched with a marvellous vista...
Flowing rivers with eddying streams...
Mountains delighting in the sky's high...
Verdant forests infused with mystery...
Oh, how it reminds me of home.





Just a hop, skip, and a jump away we find ourselves at the Lonely Serenade.

During a real doozy of a whirlwind, Jorob was windswept, flung away from Myrtha. Myrtha searched and searched, but as the days went by, Jorob was nowhere to be found.



In remembrance of their love, reminiscing with nothing but the wailing sound of the wind, the strings forever play the loneliest serenade.



Besides, I have always liked things wrapped up with a nice and tidy bow.

Odd place for such a merry red trinket. Somebody must have lost it...
What a sumptuous fabric it is, a rich tapestry of texture and colour...
I reckon it'd be a real shame if I left it here... Finders keepers!

Chapter three

Xartano



Survival is not a simple matter of having brawn or wits. Creatures and plants seek to occupy a niche for food is oft' limited, and so is time. So let us not tarry; let us seize the moment and leap straight into the abyss of discovery!





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