
Beyond
PLATFORM 13



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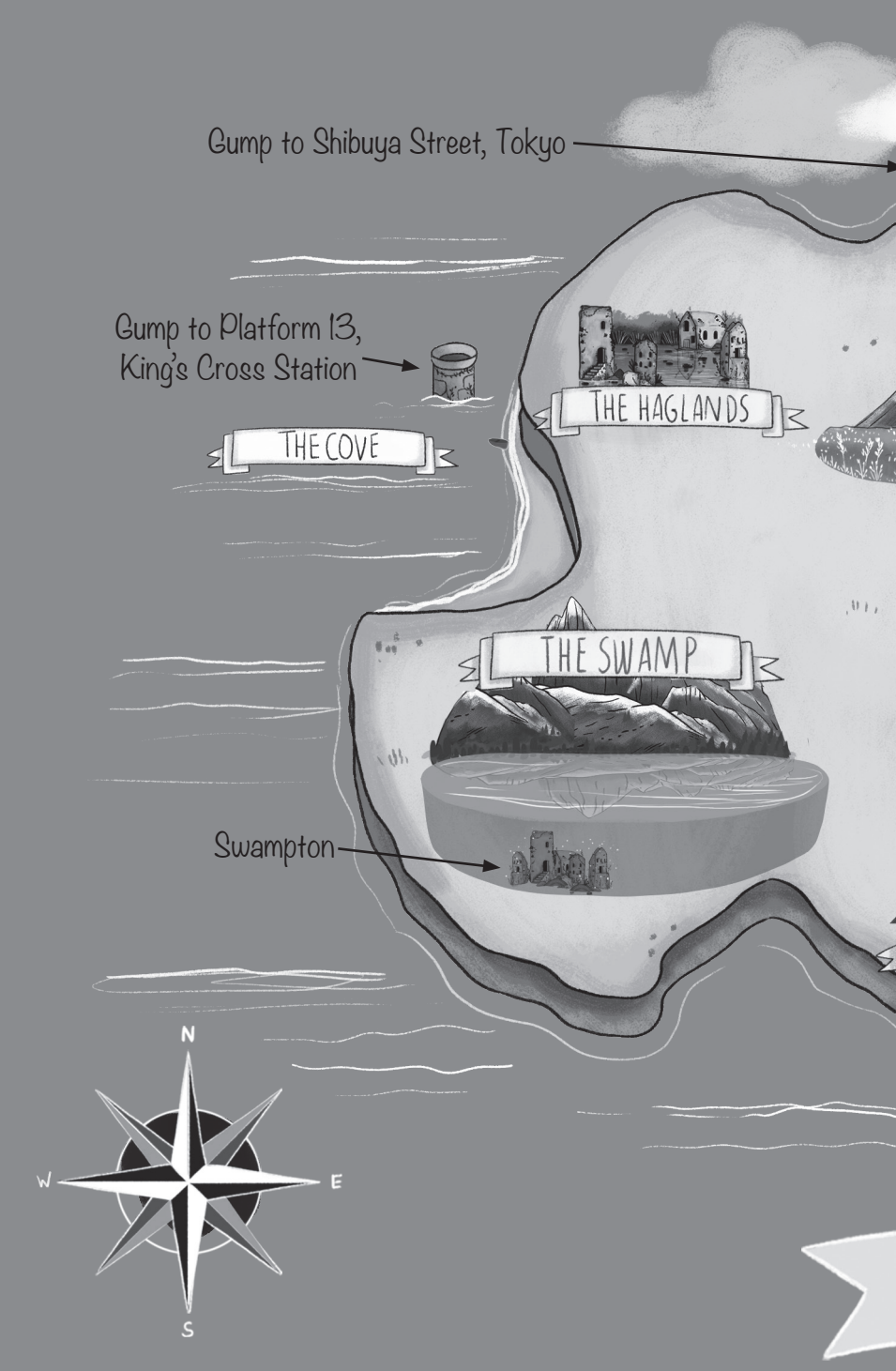
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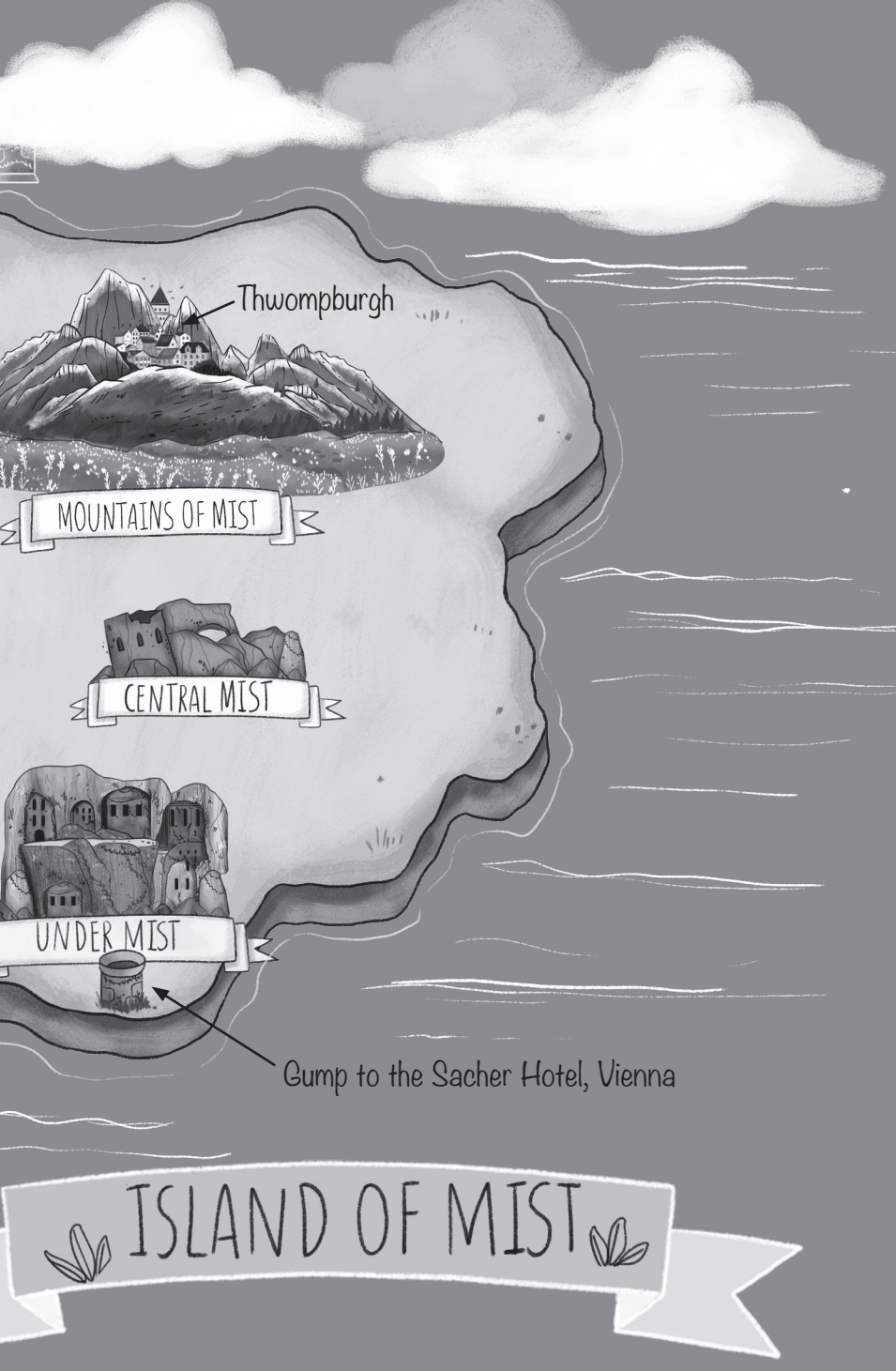
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Gump to Shibuya Street, Tokyo
Gump to Platform 13,
King's Cross Station
THE COVE
THE HAGLANDS
THE SWAMP
Swampton
N
W
E
S


Thwompburgh
MOUNTAINS OF MIST
CENTRAL MIST
UNDER MIST
Gump to the Sacher Hotel, Vienna
ISLAND OF MIST

PROLOGUE

No one noticed the young woman in bright blue boots walking along the platform at Vienna Central Station. I suppose you could argue she was easy to miss: just an average-height teenager with a long black bob and mismatched eyes of green and brown. She had always hated how human she looked, but even she had to admit it came in useful sometimes.

A man with a face as angry as crumpled paper was the only one to spot her. She was in his way, so he barged straight into her, as if the platform belonged more to him than it did to her.

'WATCH WHERE YOU'RE GOING, LADY!' he shouted as they collided.

Odge Gribble didn't break her stride as she turned and said, 'It's *hag*, actually.'



CHAPTER ONE
LINA LASKY

Lina Lasky believed in almost every kind of magic. She believed in wizard spells and witches' potions and sometimes even in the people who pull rabbits out of hats, depending on the party. She saw mermaids in her dreams and trolls dancing with vegetables. Once, when daydreaming, she'd imagined the fluffiest of mystical creatures, plump like a little pillow, with a whiskery nose and huge black eyes – a little bit like a seal, only without the flippers. She'd immediately refashioned her pom-pom backpack to look just like her vision.

All her friends had stopped believing in magic long ago, but that's the thing about magic – it's

only real if you believe in it. Though Lina didn't know it, the things she imagined were very real – even the trolls dancing with vegetables.

'If magical creatures are real, then they must be hiding somewhere,' Lina said to her mother and father one day over breakfast. There's no better time to discuss magic than over some good cereal or toast. 'A hairy hag or a fairy wouldn't be able to blend in, so they must all *be somewhere else*. A place we haven't found yet.'

Of course, her parents barely listened; adults rarely do when you speak of magic. The more wrinkles a person has, the less tolerance they have for things like that. They want proof.

'We have a surprise,' her father said, trying to change the subject.

'We're taking you to see your aunt in Salzburg for your birthday! A whole long weekend, all of us together!' Lina's mother grinned as she handed over the train tickets. 'Surprise! Oh, and I'm almost *positive* that your aunt's neighbour is a *hag*,' she added, hoping to sweeten the deal.

‘That’s a terrible thing to say about Mrs Frampton,’ her father scoffed.

‘It’s a huge compliment, actually,’ Lina corrected him. ‘I would do anything to meet a hag! They can grow hair out of their ears and tell the weather with their eyelashes – or, at least, that’s what the stories say. I’d say Mrs Frampton’s more of a witch, though.’

‘Oh really, Lina!’ Her mother laughed. ‘Your imagination is something else.’

Lina paused, her fork hovering over her plate. She did occasionally worry she might be wrong.

‘Right – come on, Lina,’ her father said. ‘Grab your seal backpack.’

‘It’s a magical being,’ Lina said, hugging her backpack defensively.

‘Of course, *magical being*,’ her mother said with a small smile.

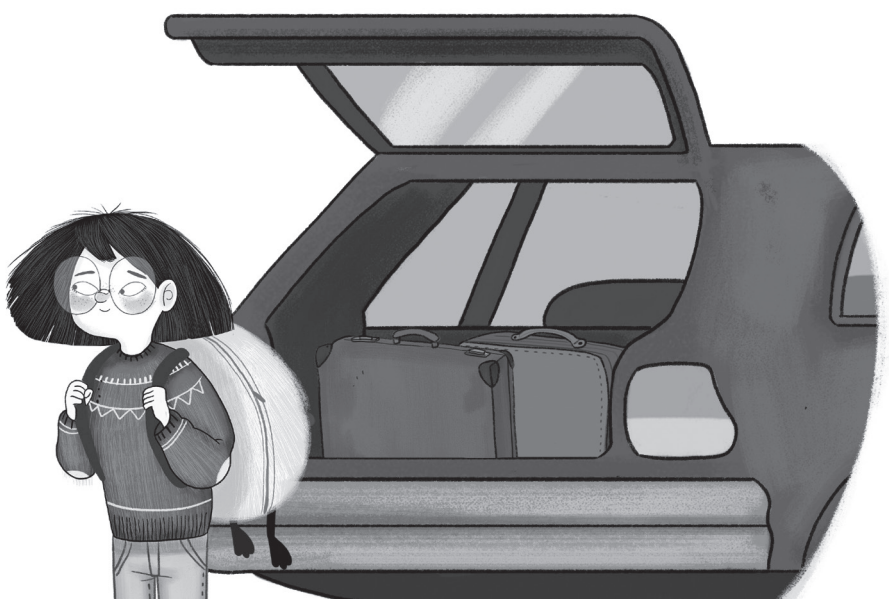
Her father took her plate away and pulled out her chair. ‘Come on, you magical being, or we’ll miss our train.’

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Lina grabbed her backpack from the car boot and slung it over her shoulder. She'd teamed it with a chunky jumper, jeans and her favourite silver trainers. She didn't like the station at that time in the morning.

'It smells of coffee and damp hair.'

'Your mother has taken time off work especially for your birthday, Lina,' her father whispered. 'Try to be a little more enthusiastic.'



Lina dragged her feet along the platform, and then she saw her, just up ahead – a teenager in bright blue boots. Lina watched as a man rudely barged into her. But then the most peculiar thing happened: he bounced off her as though she were nothing but bones and magic. The teenager turned and mouthed something at the man. Something that looked a lot like—

'HAG!' Lina shouted.

And then everything went black.