Books in the Magical Rescue Vets series

Oona the Unicorn
Jade the Gem Dragon
Blaze the Phoenix
Holly the Flying Horse

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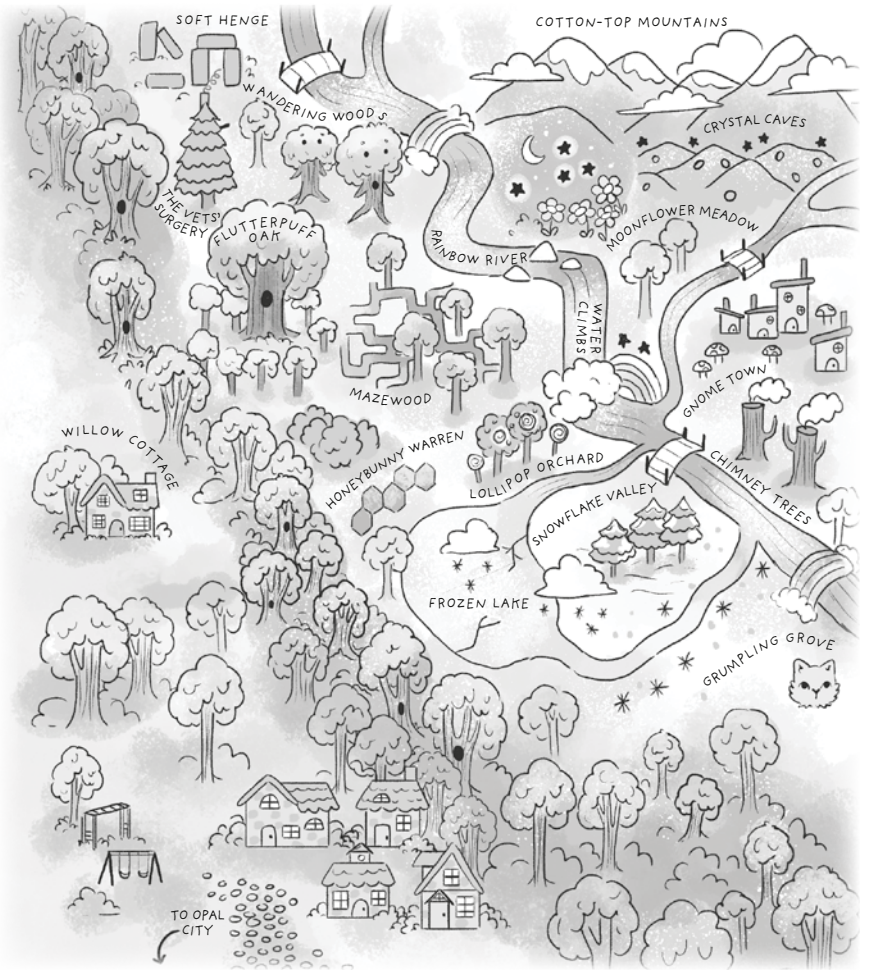
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Starfall Forest Map



Chapter 1
A Baby Grumpling

"Rosie! Are you listening?"

Rosie jumped as she suddenly remembered where she was. "Ooh, I'm sorry, Miss Lavender," she gasped.

It was Friday. She was in her new school in Springhaven. Outside, the sun was shining on the schoolyard, but Rosie had been daydreaming about the enchanted place that lay beyond it. Starfall Forest was home to the most extraordinary magical creatures —and it was where she and her best friend Kat had spent most of the summer, having amazing adventures.



Miss Lavender bent over Rosie's book and looked at the tidy row of sums. "This is nice work," she said. "You must have had a good teacher at your old school."

"I did," said Rosie, smiling. Her family had only moved to Springhaven a short while ago, but her time in Opal City already felt like a lifetime away.

As Miss Lavender walked over to another student, Rosie's eyes were drawn back to the window and the white clouds that were sailing across the blue sky.

"That one looks like a flutterpuff," thought Rosie, "and that big, scruffy one looks like ... a bugbear." The thought made her grin. Before she and her parents had moved into Willow Cottage, she had never heard of flutterpuffs or bugbears! But over the summer, she and Kat had helped out at Calico Comfrey's Veterinary Surgery, taking care of all sorts of curious creatures. She couldn't wait for the weekend so she and Kat could go into the magical forest again.

Suddenly, there was a flash of scarlet in the corner of the playground as a bright red bird took off from a tree. He left a sparkling trail of light behind him as he soared into the sky. Rosie stared in astonishment. Surely this was a magical creature of some sort? But that was impossible! The magical animals hardly ever left the safety of Starfall Forest.

Just then, Miss Lavender clapped her hands to get everyone's attention. "Now I want to talk about the school council," she said. Rosie turned her attention to the teacher. "Every class has one student on the council," continued Miss Lavender. "They meet once a week to discuss important matters."

A girl with curly, red hair put up her hand. "What sort of matters?" she asked.

"They talk about everything from lunches to recycling," smiled Miss Lavender, "and of course, they help to plan events like next week's school fundraiser."

Rosie knew all about the fundraiser. There was going to be a musical show and a bake sale after school on Monday. Her mother had promised to make mini cheesecakes!

"So, do I have any volunteers?" asked Miss Lavender.



Rosie put up her hand eagerly—but so did everyone else! She stretched her hand as high as she could, and wiggled her fingers, as the teacher looked around the classroom.

"Thank you, Luca," said Miss Lavender. "You can represent our class on the council this year."

Rosie put down her hand, feeling sad. She would have loved to be on the school council! She enjoyed taking on responsibilities. And now that she was helping at Calico Comfrey's, she felt quite grown up. Apart from Kat, none of the other kids knew anything about taking care of the Starfall animals.

The bell rang for the lunchtime break and everyone jumped to their feet, calling to each other as they scrambled for the door. Rosie stood up slowly. She didn't know many of their names yet.

"Rosie!" sang a friendly voice behind her.

Rosie let out a sigh of relief. "Hi, Kat!"

Her best friend was hopping from foot to foot, her curly black ponytail bouncing. She took Rosie's hand and gave it a squeeze.



"Let's go out and play!" she said.

Rosie was so glad she had met Kat at the start of the summer. Kat lived in Springhaven with her parents, her twin brothers Jordan and Jayden, and her baby sister Brianna—as well as six chickens, four hamsters, two cats, and an iguana. Together, the two girls had explored Starfall and met the vets. Kat had never ventured into Starfall Forest before, so they had discovered its magic together.

"Hey, Maisie! What shall we play?" shouted Kat, as she tried to pull Rosie into the middle of the schoolyard.

Rosie hung back. She wasn't sure who Maisie was. Everyone seemed to be shouting and running around. What she *really* wanted to do was sit on a bench and talk quietly to Kat about the bright red bird she had seen through the classroom window.

"Let's play Never Wake a Gem Dragon," called someone.

Rosie saw that it was Luca—the boy who was on the school council. "How does *he* know about gem dragons?" she muttered.

Gem dragons lived in the Crystal Caves deep in the heart of Starfall Forest. There was an enchantment on the forest that meant most people never even thought about entering it. It was only thanks to the magic of Rosie's home—Willow Cottage—that the spell didn't work on her and Kat.

"He doesn't," giggled Kat. "Kids here know the names of lots of magical creatures, but everyone thinks they're just stories."

"Oh, I see," said Rosie. "Well, if he'd ever met a gem dragon—like *we* have—he'd know that it's okay to wake them, because they're very friendly."



Kat wasn't really listening. She jogged up and down on the spot, eager to get into the game. "C'mon, Rosie, let's play!" she said.

The children formed a circle around Luca, who closed his eyes and started to count.

"Luca's the gem dragon," explained Kat. "We have to creep up and tap him on the shoulder—but if he opens his eyes, we all scatter before he can catch us."

"You play," said Rosie. "I'll watch."

"I'll be back in a minute," Kat promised.

Suddenly, Rosie heard a faint buzzing noise coming from her pocket. She turned away from the other children and took out the crystalzoometer the vets had given her. From the outside, it looked like an ordinary, heart-shaped locket. Yet hidden inside was a crystal that buzzed whenever a magical animal was near.

Now, the crystal was glowing with a milky light, and its tip pointed to the edge of the schoolyard, where the trees of Starfall leaned over the fence. None of the other children noticed as Rosie crossed the yard, the crystal quivering and glowing brighter with every step she took.

Rosie had almost reached the fence before she saw it. Sitting on the branch of a tree was a baby grumpling covered in soft brown fur, with cornflower-blue stripes around its tail.



The little creature was fast asleep, sucking its thumb and twitching its long fluffy tail as it dreamed. What was this baby doing so far from Grumpling Grove? And why was it all alone? Baby grumplings needed a lot of looking after! They usually rode on their parents' backs, clinging to their fur—but this baby looked as if it could tumble out of the tree at any moment!

With every suck on its thumb, it swayed backward, then forward again.

"Wake up, little one," Rosie whispered.

The baby opened its wide, blue eyes and used its tail to give its nose a scratch.

Rosie raced across the schoolyard. "Kat!" she called. "Come and see what I've found!"

At the sound of Rosie's voice, Kat ran toward her … but so did all the other children she was playing with! Before Rosie knew it, they were *all* following her across the yard.

"What is it? What have you found?" everyone asked excitedly. Rosie pointed up into the tree—but the grumpling had gone!

"There's nothing there," said the girl with curly, red hair.

"It's just a tree," grumbled Luca.

Rosie felt her cheeks flush with embarrassment. Everyone must think she was so silly. Before she had a chance to explain, they were all walking away.

"Kat," she whispered. "It was a baby grumpling all on its own."

"We'll go and tell the vets tomorrow," Kat said. "Come and play."

"I don't want to," snapped Rosie. "It's babyish." As soon as the words had left her mouth, Rosie was sorry she'd been rude. But Kat hadn't heard her. She was already running back to the game.

