## Praise for THE LAST FIREFOX series:

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Author photo © Desiree Adams

Lee Newbery lives with his son and dog in a seaside town in West Wales. By day he works for an arts charity, helping people to share their stories through creative writing, painting and participatory arts, and by night he sits down at his laptop to write.

Lee enjoys adventuring, drinking ridiculous amounts of tea, and giving his dog a good cuddle – or a *cwtch*, as they say in Wales. His first book, *The Last Firefox*, was shortlisted for the Waterstones Children's Book Prize.



BOOKS BY LEE NEWBERY

The Last Firefox

The First Shadowdragon

The Lost Sunlion

LEE NEWBERY

# THE LOST SUN LION

ILLUSTRATED BY LAURA CATALÁN



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*For my lovely Nan and Gramps,*
*under whose roof I penned my first little stories.*


N
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THE FOREST PLATEAU
~FARGONE~



# Chapter 1

When you first get a firefox, nobody warns you about the firefox zoomies. They're like ordinary zoomies except, well . . . fiery. And after three weeks of being stuck in the house, the firefox zoomies start to get a bit, let's just say, *explosive*.

'Noooooo! Not my prize-winning tea cosy!'

A comet whizzes past me, bounces off the back of the sofa like a pinball, then catapults across the room. I ignore it and keep slotting my trading cards into their little sleeves, like I've been doing for the last two

hours, while the rain continues to hammer away at the windows.

I have come to realize that the best way to deal with the firefox zoomies is to pretend they aren't happening.

My pa has not learned this lesson.

He skids into the room, his expression one of utter desperation. I can tell he's trying to catch Cadno and rescue the scrap of wool between his jaws, but the cub is moving too fast. He makes two laps of the coffee table in the time it takes to blink, then shoots through Pa's legs and into the hall in a trail of flames.

'Charlie, do something!' Pa gasps.

I slowly close my trading-card file, place my hands on my lap and look up. 'Oh, hello, Pa. How nice to see you.'

'You have to get my tea cosy back!' Pa cries, dashing my attempt at pleasantries. 'It took me a week to knit. Doesn't that mean anything to you?'

Frankly, it doesn't. I don't understand why a teapot needs to wear a coat when it gets filled with boiling

water and probably just wants to cool down. But this is clearly very important to Pa, so I give him a sympathetic look.

'Erm, of course it does,' I say. 'But, Pa . . . it is too late for your tea cosy. The only thing you can do is accept it and move on.'

As though backing up my statement, a sudden puff of light illuminates the hallway behind Pa, like a mini explosion has just taken place, followed by a delighted yip.

Pa hangs his head. The tea cosy is no more.

'I'm sorry for your loss,' I tell him. 'Maybe you can knit another one that's even better?'

Pa nods, but he doesn't look like he means it. I pat the space on the sofa next to me.

'Do you want to help me sort out my trading cards?'

Pa shakes his head.

'Where's Dad?'

'He's upstairs, trying to make a giant hamster wheel,' says Pa with a sigh. 'Something for Cadno to spend his energy on until we can go outside.'

We lapse into silence. Pa's gaze moves to the living-room window, a blur of spitting, watery grey.

'When is it ever going to end?' he finally says. 'It's been ages now. Surely this isn't normal?'

'You remember we live in Wales, right?'

'I know that, but even we don't usually get *this* much rain. It hasn't stopped, has it? Not even for a second.'

He's right. It started in the middle of what had been a sunny day. There wasn't any rain forecast, but the clouds just rolled across the sky into a moody grey ceiling that blocked out the sun, and then the droplets started falling.

And haven't stopped since.

That was last month, and things are starting to get out of hand. The river has burst its banks, slowly swallowing the surrounding fields, and the castle on the hill has practically become an island. School closed a week ago after the grounds flooded, and part of the canteen roof collapsed under the weight of all the water.

We've been stuck at home ever since, watching the minutes creep by. I haven't been able to see my best mates, Lippy and Roo, nor have I been able to take Cadno out. The last time we got caught in a rainstorm, his fire dimmed and we had to run home. He was weak for hours afterwards. Firefoxes and water do *not* mix.

Weather experts are calling it a freak phenomenon, and it's showing no signs of stopping. Neither are Cadno's zoomies. If anything, both the rain and the zoomies only seem to be getting more and more intense. The zoomies started not long after the rain did, and we've had many household casualties since. Pa's tea cosy, countless socks, a throw, a lampshade, enough teddy bears for a whole picnic, and even a couple of cushions.

'I haven't once been able to take Edie out to try her new raincoat,' Pa laments.

He reaches behind him and grabs a pink coat, covered in rainbows and glossy from lack of use. It's still got the price tag on.

Cadno slinks back into the room and, refusing to

meet Pa's eye, hops on to the sofa and curls into a ball on my lap. I place my hand on his belly, still hot from the excitement of destroying Pa's tea cosy, and gradually feel his flames cool beneath my fingertips until he starts to snore, his energy spent for another half-hour or so.

Pa sits himself down on the sofa, muttering about how we're all starting to lose our minds, when the TV lights up. I had anime on in the background as I was sorting through my cards, but it's automatically switched to what looks like a news bulletin.

The words *EMERGENCY ANNOUNCEMENT* flash across the screen in red.

'What's going on?' I ask.

Pa looks troubled. He shoots me what I think is supposed to be a comforting smile but just ends up looking like he's got gas. He hurries to the bottom of the stairs.

'Honey?' he calls up. 'I think you might want to come down.'

'Now?' Dad's voice drifts from the spare bedroom.

'But I've almost finished! You're not going to believe what I've made. Cadno will never want to go for a walk ever again –'

'Let me rephrase,' Pa replies. '*Get your butt down here right now, or I'll –*'

But Dad has already appeared at the top of the stairs, a flailing Edie in his arms. 'All right, all right, I'm here,' he says, quickly descending with a worried look on his face. 'What's the matter, dear? You just used your Angry Pa voice.'

'Just go into the living room and sit down,' Pa growls through gritted teeth. 'There's something weird on TV.'

Dad obeys and comes over to sit next to me. He gives me a *what's up with him?* sort of look. All I manage is a shrug before a news reporter appears on the screen, her expression sombre.

Behind her is a live video of a lake, the waters dark and choppy as the rain drives down. It switches to a bloated river that's being fed by a powerful jet of water which erupts from an enormous pipe, and then,

lastly, to a scene showing a towering stone wall that runs from one side of a valley to the other, with water gushing over the edge and into the river far below.

'Wait a minute,' says Dad. 'Isn't that –'

'We are coming live to you this morning from the Llyn Reservoir,' the news reporter begins, 'just five miles north of the rural farming town of Bryncastell, where unprecedented rainfall is the cause of growing concern.'

The video cuts to a close-up of the dam wall, where a crack has appeared in the stone near the rim. We often take Cadno for walks at the Llyn Reservoir – or used to before this rain started. We've stood on the walkway atop the dam countless times, clutching the railings, peering over at the dizzying drop below.

The walkway is gone now. Water surges over it, cascading down the dam in a mighty waterfall.

'I'm here with the local mayor, Gavin Howells,' the reporter goes on, and the shot zooms out to show a man with worry lines all over his face sitting next to her. 'Mr Howells, what is the problem?'

The mayor shuffles uncomfortably. 'W-well, we haven't seen rainfall like this since records began,' he stammers, 'and, as such, the dam – which was built almost a century ago, I might add – has never experienced such pressure from the reservoir. If the rain doesn't stop soon, we're worried that it might . . .'

He peters out into a strained silence.

'Burst?' the reporter puts in.

The mayor winces. 'No. Well, y-yes. But we absolutely do not want anybody to panic –'

'And what would a breach in the dam mean for the villages and towns that lie in the valley below the reservoir, Mr Howells?'

'Oh, it would be catastrophic,' the mayor replies, then gasps, like he's said the wrong thing. 'But that's a worst-case scenario!'

The news reporter's eyes glint hungrily. I can tell that she's mining for the juiciest possible story, even if it means stirring fear – which I can already feel beginning to churn in the pit of my belly.

'Mr Howells, this part of Wales has a history of



villages being flooded so that valleys could be turned into reservoirs,' she goes on. 'Are you saying history might be about to repeat itself? Could Bryncastell be about to meet the same fate as some of its counterparts?'

'There is a very small possibility, and I mean *tiny*, so tiny it's barely a possibility at all,' the mayor replies, holding up a pinched forefinger and thumb, 'that Bryncastell could get flooded when the dam – I mean, *if* the dam bursts. But we are monitoring the situation closely and we have emergency measures in place to

evacuate in plenty of time, should such an occasion arise, which it *won't* –'

'But it *is* a possibility?'

Mr Howells's shoulders drop in defeat. 'Yes,' he says, with a sigh.

'Thank you for your time, Mr Howells,' says the reporter. She returns her attention to the camera. 'Stay tuned for hourly updates on the crisis at the Llyn Reservoir. But now it's time for the weather with Lisa . . .'

The image switches to a big map of Bryncastell and the surrounding county and a red-haired woman standing before it.

'Thank you, Karen. Well, I'm sorry to say that there doesn't seem to be an end in sight when it comes to this rain –'

The screen turns black. My heart pounds into the silence. Even Edie seems to have sensed the change in atmosphere – she just sits on Dad's lap, quietly sucking her thumb.

'It's just scaremongering,' says Dad, putting the

remote back down on the coffee table. 'The dam isn't going to burst. It's made from metres-thick stone, for goodness' sake. Not even a giant could make a dent in it.'

'But, Dad –'

Dad holds his hand up. 'Pay it no more mind, Charlie. You heard the mayor. There's no need to panic. They're monitoring the situation.'

'I don't know,' says Pa, who looks a bit queasy. 'Maybe we should pack some bags, just in case . . .'

Dad snorts. 'Will you listen to yourself? This is what they *want*. To make sure we all freak out so we stay glued to our tellies. Well, not in this household! Anyway, come on. I've got something to show you!'

Dad gets to his feet and heads back upstairs with Edie still in his arms. Pa and I exchange nervous glances. Cadno leaps off my lap and across the room, his fire already dancing over his fur, regenerated even by just a few minutes' sleep.

Pa and I dutifully follow.

'In here!' comes Dad's voice from the spare room.

We enter and find him standing proudly before what I can only describe as the most peculiar object I've ever seen. 'I present to you . . . the Firefox Rambler Three-Sixty!'