# THE WHIMSTRICK

## DISCOVERY OF WHIMSBURROW

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*For Cameron and Michael*

# PROLOGUE

As the clock struck midnight, two intruders, up to no good, entered the Edwoods' house. But it wasn't money or jewels they were looking for. It was something a little different.

"Hurry up, or he'll wake up and we'll get caught! You know what happens if we get caught," said an ancient, croaky voice.

"Shut up, Grubbling," another voice whispered. "I'm doing this for you!"

"You won't get what you want if you keep talking to me like that, boy," the grubbling grumbled.

"Hush! Just let me finish this," hissed the whimstrick, as he dug his knife deep into the wooden flooring, carving the same symbol that was inked on the slip of paper in his hand.

The household remained fast asleep, including Mikey, who slept in the wooden bed that was magically floating above their heads.

"That young lad is going to wake up from motion sickness any second," muttered the grubbling.

The whimstrick chuckled. "Well, I'm safe. I'm under

the bed."

"If he throws up on me, I'm throwing up on you!"

"Urgh. Can't be anything worse than grubbling sick."

"Mmm, I had fish stew for dinner as well."

"Shut up, I'm nearly done."

The snoring boy above them started to twist and turn in his sleep.

"He's waking up!" hissed the whimstrick.

"Then put him back to sleep!"

"With what? Lullabies?"

"Call yourself a whimstrick? You're useless."

Climbing the bookshelf beside Mikey's bed, the grubbling peered over the side of the floating bed.

"It's done, I finished it!" whispered the whimstrick.

The grubbling tiptoed back to the floor. "Well, he woke for a second, but now he's out for a few more hours."

"How did you get him back to sleep?"

"I knocked him out with a book."

"There's no way you read a story that fast."

The grubbling rolled his eyes. "I didn't read it to him, you idiot. I used it to clonk him on the head! Works every time."

"Well you better not have hurt him," warned the whimstrick. "I don't want to get into any trouble. I just want to get out of here and get home."

"Best get that bed back down then, before he rolls off and knocks *himself* out. Don't know what's so special about that boy, anyway."

# CHAPTER ONE
## NIGHTMARES

Mikey could vividly remember the first time his sleep became plagued by nightmares.

Something had woken him up that night, and he had felt like he was floating, as if he was back on that boat from their holiday in Egypt. Opening his eyes, he had quickly realised that the ceiling was much closer than it should be, but just as he was about to call for his mum, everything went black.

From then on, every time he fell asleep, the same nightmare came to haunt him.

It always began with a black trinket box, covered with golden gears and copper pipes. Nothing but darkness surrounded him, except the light that shone onto the box and his trembling hands. A deep, devilish voice shouted at him, though he couldn't see who it was. All he knew was that the voice needed him to open the box. What was inside that was so important?

Then a high-pitched hissing sound began, caused by steam coming from the copper pipes, and the box became hot to touch. He wanted to put it down, but he couldn't.

"Open it!" the deep voice continued to roar.

Mikey's hands trembled as he grabbed the box and rotated it in his hands like a Rubik's cube, trying desperately to open it. There was no opening, just endless pipes and gears that hissed and ticked menacingly. Mikey's hands couldn't take much more of the burning metal, and his heart raced faster every time the devilish voice hissed at him.

"Now, now, NOW!"

Tears streamed down his face; the thudding of his heartbeat loud in his ears. The blackness around him felt as though it was growing bigger, while he was shrinking.

Then the light that shone on to the box turned blood red. He felt like he was on a stage, with an audience watching him, being judged. He knew his time was up.

The spotlight switched off, leaving him in complete darkness.

His mind went blank, but he knew he wasn't awake. There was still more to come.

He began to run then, not sure where he was, or what he was running from. He just knew he had to run.

As he became aware of his surroundings, he realised he was in a forest, at nighttime. The full moon beamed down and he watched his red trainers below him as he ran: left foot, right foot, left foot, right foot.

Suddenly, in the grass beneath him, giant worms began to burst from the floor, trying to grab hold of his feet.

*It's not real, Mikey*, he told himself. *It's not real. Look up.*

As he glanced towards the sky, he saw the worms taking over the moon, stopping the light from reaching him. He could just about see the branches that clawed at him as he ran. He knew there was a cave up ahead; it was the same cave as the one near his house. Crow's Cave, it was called, because the opening looked just like a crow's beak.

Head first, he dived into the familiar darkness of the cave, stumbling straight down a steep tunnel, blindly feeling his way down to the bottom. At first, his eyes wouldn't open, and he rubbed them frantically, blinking until his vision adjusted to the light.

He had always thought this was the strangest part of the dream, even stranger than the giant worms.

He was in his classroom, and Mrs Roberts was teaching a lesson about planets. She was talking to all the empty desks in the room, as though there were other students present, but Mikey was the only one.

Or so he thought.

Suddenly, three rows in front of Mikey, a man appeared, dressed entirely in black. He looked like a funeral director from the olden days, except for his strange black balaclava and vintage Victorian pilots' goggles. Mikey wondered if he could see through his mask, or if the goggles were just for show. He also wore a black bowler hat with a clock-like contraption on one

side, made of wires and gears with a brass key sticking out. His hands were covered in black leather gloves.

The eerie man's head began to turn in Mikey's direction, and when they found themselves making eye contact, the stranger lifted his arm and pointed at Mikey.

Terrified, Mikey looked behind him for a way out of the room, and found himself looking at a large stump made of rock. Racing over to it, he discovered that the rock was filled with crystal-clear water, so clean that his reflection was just like looking into a mirror. He stared at himself, but his reflection had a mind of its own, smiling at him before turning around. Now all Mikey could see was the back of his head.

Someone tapped his shoulder, and as he looked behind to see who it was, there was the Victorian man, standing right next to him. Before Mikey could blink, the man had put his hand on the back of his head and shoved Mikey's face into the water.

Mikey jolted awake, gasping for air.

That was the fifth time he'd had the dream.

*Why me*? Mikey thought to himself. Why was he having these horrible nightmares?