

Diaper Chimp: Discovery

by

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Part One

CHAPTER 1: TRACK SIXTY-ONE

Sidney Mayo, age twelve, lived in Grand Central Terminal, that block-long train station on 42nd Street in Manhattan. Sidney came to take in a small chimpanzee whom he named Diaper Chimp, because he always wore a diaper in which he stored bananas (and other smelly items). If you had asked Diaper Chimp his name, he probably would have called himself 'The Chimp Who Saved Sidney Mayo's Life, With Tragic Consequences To Himself'.

This name would have been correct.

Sidney's father was the chief boiler custodian at Grand Central Terminal (G.C.T. for short). A perk of his job was that his family lived, rent-free, in the magnificent apartment that had been custom-built for the Vanderbilts in 1913.

There was one condition: his family would be immediately evicted from the Vanderbilt Apartment in G.C.T. if they ever took in a pet.

It was on a spring Thursday that sixth-grade Sidney Mayo found himself in a train tunnel that smelled of garbage. He sat in railroad gravel, hugging his knees and biting his lip, next to Track Sixty-one, a secret track that was used to whisk Presidents and other VIP cargo in and out of G.C.T.

Sidney knew Track Sixty-one's great flaw: one section of it had a nasty bump that made trains bounce. When this happened, objects often fell from the trains. Sidney and his beloved grandfather, Bud Matuzek, used to lurk in the shadows and retrieve these fallen treasures. But on

this spring school night, Sidney sat alone next to Track Sixty-one. That's because Sidney's grandfather had been killed a month earlier in a boiler explosion at G.C.T.

Sidney tasted blood. He realized he had bitten through the epithelium (that's the skin) of his bottom lip. His lip-biting was interrupted by the scream of a jet engine coming from the shadowy hole of Track Sixty-one. Sidney smelled gasoline. Air pushed at him from the tunnel mouth. Sidney and Pop-Pop had stalked a thousand trains; none had ever sounded like a jet.

A train emerged from the darkness of Track Sixty-one and raced towards Sidney. The train was short, an engine with a raging jet turbine atop it, and one bouncing car. The train hit the bump on Track Sixty-one. A door on the train sprang open, and a crate bounded out of the door onto the track. Just before the train flashed out of view, Sidney saw two women wearing lab coats dash onto the back platform of the train. They pointed at the crate that lay in the dark gravel. Sidney noticed something odd about the women's lab coats: they were the color of honey.

Sidney ran down Track Sixty-one and studied the metal crate. It was the size of a window air conditioner, and on its side, stamped in big, angry letters, were these words:

FOUNDATION PROPERTY

TOP SECRET

Sidney wondered what Pop-Pop would have done with this booty. He smiled as he bulldogged the crate up seven stories to his bedroom in the Vanderbilt Apartment in G.C.T.

CHAPTER 2: THE CRATE OPENS

Sidney Mayo leaned over the crate that rested on his bed. The crate smelled of straw and was made of polished stainless steel, drilled throughout with dime-sized holes.

Sidney was dressed for warm weather - a white tee-shirt, jeans, and sneakers - but he felt overheated. A drop of sweat dripped from Sidney's chin onto the crate. This pleased him. Sidney liked sports, but he was unforgivably uncoordinated. Sweating made him feel like a jock.

Sidney rapped on the stainless-steel box.

It tapped back once.

The lid of the crate was secured by a padlock that had broken apart in the fall from the train. Sidney was frightened, but he had to know what was inside the stainless-steel crate. His hands shook as he removed the broken lock and opened the lid.

Inside was a semi-conscious chimpanzee lying on his back. The chimp was small, the size of a plush toy you might win at a county fair. The chimp wore a white diaper with a smelly, mashed banana sticking out of it.

An intravenous bag with the word 'Propofal' written on it hung from a hook in the crate. Sidney was nerdy, particularly with medical things, and he happened to know what propofal was.

"Propofal is anesthesia," whispered Sidney. "You're being drugged."

Blood gushed from a gaping slash the size of a lead pencil in the chimp's left arm. Sidney saw a needle buried beneath the skin.

Sidney said, "The fall from the train pushed that needle under your skin."

Blood from the chimp's arm-gash pulsed out of the wound and splashed on to the side of the crate. Sidney knew he had to get the buried needle out from beneath the chimp's skin. But how? Sidney had never touched a needle in his life.

Without knowing why, Sidney laid both thumbs on the bump in the chimp's skin that was caused by the needle. He pressed. The needle popped its bloody head through the tear in the chimp's flesh. Sidney picked out the needle and threw it on the floor. He grabbed a ball of white tube socks and pressed it to the wound. Sidney wondered how he, a sixth-grader who was such a bad athlete that he couldn't chuck a Frisbee, had known how to extract an IV needle from beneath a chimpanzee's skin. The chimp, now stirring, didn't seem to have felt a thing.

The chimpanzee opened his deep-brown eyes. Sidney lifted him out of the box and cuddled him. The chimp smelled like a dog after a bath.

“You're hurt, and so weak,” said Sidney.

This statement of Sidney's was only half-correct. Yes, the chimp was hurt, but he was far from weak. The tiny chimp, who stood no taller than an office trash can, could have punched Sidney in the mouth so hard that his four front teeth would have been sticking out of the back of his neck.

Sidney slid the crate into his bathroom with his foot and said, “You can live with me till you get better.”

Sidney apparently had forgotten that his family would be kicked out of the Vanderbilt Apartment in G.C.T. if the chimpanzee was found in his room.

CHAPTER 3: NATURAL SELECTION

As the anesthesia wore off, the chimp regained his senses. He felt warm arms holding him. He took a deep breath through his nose.

I'm in a city, he thought, possibly New York, for I can smell the flowering crabapples that bloom this time of year.

The chimp closed his eyes and focused on his injured body parts.

Four-inch gash in my arm. Lacerated kidney. Not too bad, thought the chimpanzee. I'll be fully healed by tomorrow.

The chimp had heard Sidney's declaration that he would keep the chimp.

Do I want to live with this boy?, thought the chimpanzee. If I live on my own, I'll have to forage for my own food, newspapers, and art supplies.

The chimp concluded, as do most animals, that living with a human can be a decent gig. The human feeds the animal, keeps him warm, and cleans up his droppings. All the animal has to do is answer to his name and occasionally play a silly game of tug-of-war with the human.

The chimp studied Sidney Mayo.

Looks reasonably intelligent, thought the chimpanzee. For a human. Brown eyes, like a chimp's, that's always good. But there's lots of tension in that forehead. He's sad about something. A temporary condition, I hope. I can't abide clinical depression. He's skinny, though. Does he have enough food for me to steal?

Chimps take instant likes or dislikes to people, and it was at this very moment that the small, diapered chimp became instantly and irrevocably bound to Sidney Mayo. Why?

Because Sidney had freed the chimp from captivity for the first time in his life.

How do I close the deal?, thought the chimpanzee. A handshake. Humans love handshakes.

The chimp stuck out his right hand.

Sidney burst out laughing and said, "He wants to shake my hand!"

Sidney and the chimp shook hands.

"You need a name," said Sidney.

This statement was also untrue. The chimp had been given a name the day he had been born at The Foundation, five years earlier. This name had been whispered in the chimp's ear by women wearing honey-colored lab coats as they had strapped him to a table and had performed awful surgeries on his body. Oh yes, the chimp knew his name, and he hated it beyond reason. He would accept a new name.

"You're wearing a diaper," said Sidney. "I shall call you Diaper Chimp."

"WRAAH," screamed Diaper Chimp.

To celebrate his freedom and his new name, Diaper Chimp jumped out of Sidney's arms. He sprang across the room and intentionally landed on and crushed a model of the Chrysler Building that sat on Sidney's dresser.

"I've been working on that model for a month," yelled Sidney. "You just destroyed it!"

"WOO-WOO," hooted Diaper Chimp, feeling not the slightest bit guilty. Diaper Chimp noticed that Sidney had a wart on his left ear. He jumped on Sidney's shoulder and fingered Sidney's wart.

"Stop that," said Sidney, as he tried to brush Diaper Chimp's hand away. "That's my ear wart. I hate it and want it removed, but my dad is too cheap to pay for it."

Someone knocked on the door to Sidney's bedroom.

A woman said, "Hi Sidney, it's me. What are you doing in there?"

The door opened and in walked Sidney's mother.

CHAPTER 4: LOCKING UP

Sidney's mother, Stephanie (Matuzek) Mayo was big of hip and small of chest. She had the smile of a woman who didn't realize that seventeen years of hard marriage to Sidney's father had bled away her beauty. Stephanie Mayo designed fruit displays for a living, and she smelled of cantaloupe. She looked at Sidney with Diaper Chimp sitting on his shoulder and gasped.

“Sidney!” she said. “You’ve got a pet! If Appleby finds out, we’ll be kicked out of our apartment!”

The 'Appleby' that Sidney’s mom referred to was Stuart Appleby, head of electronic security at Grand Central Terminal. Stuart Appleby had lusted after the Vanderbilt Apartment for years. He constantly snooped on the Mayos with his little spy toys, hoping to find a reason to evict them. If Stuart Appleby found a pet in the apartment, the Mayos would be out on 42nd Street by nightfall.

Sidney’s mother stood nose-to-nose with Diaper Chimp.

“That’s a real monkey. Isn’t it?” she said.

Diaper Chimp fell from Sidney's shoulder. He hit the floor of Sidney's bedroom with a loud *thunk* and lay there. His body was rigid. The chimp’s eyes were open, but were not blinking.

"Goodness gracious," said Sidney’s mother. “That stuffed animal is so life-like, I thought for a moment it was alive.” Sidney’s mother grabbed Diaper Chimp by the hair on his chest and tossed him on the bed. He bounced once and fell to the floor, stiff as a gargoyle.

“Amazing what the Chinese can make,” said Sidney’s mother. “Are you up for a smell-séance tonight, in the séance room?”

The séance room. Formerly known as the guest bedroom. Sidney’s mom was Pop-Pop’s only child. Like Sidney, she had been shattered by his sudden, violent death. Every night she held a smell-séance, hoping to draw Pop-Pop's soul back to the Vanderbilt Apartment with the smell of cooked cabbage.

“Not tonight, Mom, got a new project to work on.”

"Okay Sidney, maybe tomorrow."

Once the door closed behind Sidney's mother, Sidney knelt over Diaper Chimp, who lay still as stone on the floor.

“Diaper Chimp,” said Sidney. “Please, don’t be dead.”

Quicker than the eye could follow, with one tiny hand Diaper Chimp pushed Sidney hard in the chest. Sidney flew backwards across the room, hit the front of his dresser, and crumpled to the floor. Diaper Chimp jumped on Sidney's chest and picked at Sidney’s ear wart.

“HOO-HOO-HOO,” shouted Diaper Chimp.

“Leave my wart alone, you big faker!” said Sidney. “You just did a total freeze-job. How?”

The accurate answer was that surgeons at The Foundation had cut out every joint in Diaper Chimp’s body and had replaced them with titanium implants. Wires had been threaded into Diaper Chimp’s brain so that he could lock up the joints at will. Diaper Chimp knew this, of course, and could have demonstrated how he made himself rigid, but he was hungry. He smelled peanut butter crackers in Sidney’s backpack. Diaper Chimp leapt over to Sidney’s backpack, found the crackers, and bit into them.

Sidney said, “Okay, I get it. You’re hungry.”

Sidney picked up Diaper Chimp and sat him on his bed. He put his face close to the chimp's face and spoke to him, slowly, as if speaking English to a foreigner.

“I. Get. Indian,” said Sidney. He pointed to his bed. "You. Stay. Here. Why do I think you're not going to listen to me?"

“HEE-HEE-HEE,” panted Diaper Chimp.

CHAPTER 5: THE CHIMP THIEF

A half-hour later Sidney returned to his bedroom with two bags of food. He found Diaper Chimp swinging upside-down from the elegant crystal chandelier that hung in the center of Sidney's bedroom.

"This. For. You," said Sidney to Diaper Chimp. He took bananas, apples, and pumpkin seeds from a bag and spread the food on his dresser. "You're supposed to like this kind of food. I looked it up."

Diaper Chimp jumped down from the chandelier, grabbed a banana, and stuffed it in his diaper. Sidney sat down on his bed and opened a paper carton of food. Diaper Chimp smelled curry.

Sidney pointed at the carton. "This Indian food. For Sidney. Chicken tikka masala and parantha. I'll get us drinks."

Sidney went to his bathroom and poured two glasses of water. When he returned to his bedroom, Diaper Chimp was sitting on Sidney's bed, eating the chicken tikka masala. None of the chimp food on the dresser had been touched.

"Hey!" said Sidney. "Stop eating my food!"

Sidney grabbed for his Indian take-out. With insane quickness Diaper Chimp sprang from the bed to the crystal chandelier, taking the Indian food with him. The parantha, still in its take-out box, hung from Diaper Chimp's toe. Sidney jumped up and down, trying to snatch the white box. Every time he got close, Diaper Chimp pulled it back out of Sidney's reach.

"Oh well," said Sidney. He took a bite from the apple that he had bought for the chimp. "I didn't mean to snap at you when you broke my Chrysler Building. But things haven't been going too well for me. The Fairchild twins are trying to get me kicked out of school because I won't join their stupid club they call The Order Of Validus."

Sidney chomped on a few of the pumpkin seeds.

“These taste awful.” He spat out the seeds. “That's what I get for eating chimp food. And why am I telling you my problems? You don't even know where we are.”

Grand Central Terminal, thought Diaper Chimp, *often mistakenly called Grand Central Station*.

Sidney said, “My Pop-Pop got killed a few weeks ago when a boiler blew up in his face. Before he died, he made me promise him that I'd graduate from Fairchild Academy, where I go to school. At this point, my goal in life is to pass sixth grade. I made that model of the Chrysler Building for an extra-credit competition.”

That explains the tension in your forehead, thought Diaper Chimp. He dropped the box with the parantha on Sidney's head.

“Ouch,” said Sidney as he opened the take-out box. The parantha smelled of chili powder. Sidney wolfed it down, careful to keep the food out of reach of Diaper Chimp, who now hung upside-down from the chandelier.

Sidney stifled a yawn. “I'll make a bed for you.” Sidney opened the top drawer of his dresser and took out an armful of sweaters. “You. Sleep. Here.”

The chimp jumped down from the chandelier into Sidney's arms.

Sidney said, “You're a good chimp.”

Not really, thought Diaper Chimp.

Sidney laid Diaper Chimp in the drawer and tucked him in with an old sweater.

“Good night, Diaper Chimp,” said Sidney. “Sometimes I think you're smarter than you look.”

Smarter than I look?, thought Diaper Chimp. *Wait till tomorrow morning*.

CHAPTER 6: A SKYLIGHT CLEANED

When Sidney awoke the next morning, a school Friday, the first thing he did was look in the drawer where he had put Diaper Chimp.

The drawer was empty.

“Diaper Chimp!” said Sidney. “Where are you?”

From the attic over Sidney's head came the sound of loud thumping.

Sidney said, “Is that you in the attic?”

Louder thumping.

A wooden trap door the size of a trash can lid was the only entrance from Sidney's bedroom to the attic overhead. The trap door hung open. Sidney, still wearing his pajamas, pulled a chair beneath the trap door, stood on the chair, and stuck his head in the attic.

He saw sunlight and Diaper Chimp in the attic. Both didn't belong there. Sure, the attic had a skylight the size of a car door, but it had long been painted over with green paint. No sunlight had ever entered Sidney's attic.

Sidney pulled himself into the attic and sat on the wooden attic floor. The room smelled of dust, and it made Sidney sneeze. All the green paint on the skylight had been removed. Through the skylight Sidney saw a helicopter pass overhead.

“Who did this?” yelled Sidney.

“WRAAAH! WRAAAH!” screamed Diaper Chimp as he jumped up and down. The chimp's hair was coated with chips of green paint. It was obvious to Sidney that Diaper Chimp had cleaned the skylight. It was more than obvious to Sidney that Diaper Chimp didn't care that Sidney was displeased about it.

Sidney looked at his watch. “It's 8:15! I'm going to be late for school! Ohhhhh!”

Sidney climbed down through the trap door and stood in his bedroom. "Diaper Chimp! You come down here! Now!"

The chimp stuck his small head down through the trap door. He looked at Sidney, hung from the trap door for a few seconds, then dropped to the floor.

Sidney glared at the chimp.

"Listen you," said Sidney. "You made me late for school. Stay in this room." Sidney changed into his school uniform as he spoke. "There is leftover Indian food in my fridge for you to eat. No trouble while I'm gone. Got it?"

Sidney shut his bedroom door and locked it from the outside.

"AAAAAHHHH," screeched Diaper Chimp.

CHAPTER 7: STUART APPLEBY

Sidney Mayo dashed across the main concourse of Grand Central Terminal. He wore his Fairchild Academy uniform; white shirt, blue blazer with the Academy crest on its pocket, and a burgundy-colored tie. Sidney looked at his watch. 8:20. If he ran as fast as he could, he might get to school on time.

As Sidney sprinted, he saw a man in a dark-blue police uniform filming him with a tiny camera the size of a pack of cigarettes. The man attempted to look inconspicuous - faking great yawns, studying his watch - but he succeeded only in making himself the most conspicuous photographer, in a room that was filled with conspicuous photographers.

When the man realized that Sidney had spotted him, he turned off his midget camera and walked across the G.C.T. main concourse towards Sidney.

"Uh oh," said Sidney.

The man was Stuart Appleby, head of electronic security at G.C.T. Like Sidney's father, Appleby's job required him to live at G.C.T. round-the-clock. Unlike Sidney's father, Appleby lived in a shabby basement room with a cot and a hot pot. Sidney always remembered Pop-Pop's warning about Appleby: he would do anything to get the Mayos evicted from the Vanderbilt Apartment so that he could live in it.

Appleby adjusted his police hat so that its brim hung low over his eyes. He stood in front of Sidney, blocking his path to the exit doors.

Appleby said to Sidney, "Mayo, I have to talk to you." His breath smelled of cigarettes.

Sidney said, "I'm running late for school."

Although Stuart Appleby was in his late-thirties, he was only a few inches taller than Sidney. Most of this height advantage was caused by the elevator shoes that Appleby religiously wore.

Appleby said, "One of our customers lost some VIP cargo on Track Sixty-one. Know anything about it?"

Sidney said, "Why are you asking me?"

Appleby said, "You and your grandfather spent a lot of time sneaking around G.C.T., sticking your noses where they didn't belong."

Sidney said, "My grandfather died last month in the boiler explosion. Don't think he's been doing much snooping since then."

Appleby squared up in front of Sidney-the-sixth-grader and rested his hand on the black wooden police baton that hung from his weapons belt. No doubt Appleby would have preferred to have rested his hand on a large revolver, but a wooden baton was the best he could do. That's because Appleby wasn't an actual policeman.

Appleby had tried many times, but he could never pass the N.Y.P.D. written exam. He had settled on joining the Volunteer Auxiliary Police. As a member of this fine organization Appleby got to work very hard, for no pay, helping the N.Y.P.D. with crowd control at city festivals. Why did Appleby work for free? The uniform. Because he had joined the Volunteer Auxiliary Police, Appleby got to wear a cool police uniform with a big, silver-star badge.

Appleby took a step sideways, so that his badge was right in Sidney's face.

Appleby said, "You know of my surveillance skills?"

Sidney said, "I know you like to spy on people with sneaky cameras."

Appleby said, "If you find anything that fell off a train, turn it over to me." He kept his silver-star badge directly in front of Sidney's face.

Sidney said, "If I find anything that fell off a train, I'll turn it over to a *real* policeman." Sidney brushed past Appleby and headed for the G.C.T. exit doors.

"Punky kid," said Appleby. He unpinned his silver-star badge from his shirt and studied it. He had drilled a small hole in the middle of his badge, and had inserted a tiny camera in the hole. He smiled when he saw that the camera was still in place. Appleby fished a small recorder from his pocket, hit 'play', and watched the video of Sidney he had secretly recorded.

If Appleby was honest with himself, he would have noticed a major flaw with his recording: he had pointed the camera too far to the left of Sidney's face, and had just created a fine video of Sidney's ear wart. But Stuart Appleby was never honest with himself. The flaw in his recording never registered. He turned the recorder on, held his silver-star-badge with its hidden camera in front of his face, and spoke to his star.

Appleby said, "The badge-cam. Successfully used for the first time on Sidney Mayo." Appleby watched Sidney race out of the G.C.T. exit doors. "Subject is acting suspiciously. Behavior warrants a one-level increase in surveillance level. New level: Appleby Three."

CHAPTER 8: JACKED UP BY A JAMAICAN

Sidney Mayo exited Grand Central Terminal through the main entrance. Stuart Appleby's goofy interrogation had put him badly behind schedule, and he just couldn't be late for school. Sidney put his head down, raced towards Fairchild Academy, and crashed into a large Jamaican who smelled of cinnamon.

The Jamaican said, "What's fa' lunch, Sidney Mayo?"

Sidney looked up. It was Fitzroy, the Jamaican street merchant, who stood in front of Sidney and blocked his way. Fitzroy ran a couple of businesses from a sidewalk kiosk. Some of Fitzroy's businesses were legal (selling Jamaican-style sandwiches) and some weren't so legal (selling pot). To protect his illegal businesses, Fitzroy had armored his shed-sized kiosk with bars on the windows and a roll-down gate made of heavy steel on the front.

Sidney said, "No time to buy a sandwich today, Fitzroy, late for school." Sidney dodged to Fitzroy's right.

Fitzroy stood six-foot five, with tight dreadlocks and fingernails that were long enough to slice lunch meat. Fitzroy flicked out his right arm and snagged Sidney. Fitzroy casually flipped Sidney into a nearby trash dumpster that smelled of dog droppings.

"I hate you!" yelled Sidney.

Fitzroy held up a white paper bag with a grease stain on its side and said, "I got me a fine chicken sandwich for you, just ten dollars."

Sidney said, "I'm late for school!" Sidney tried to climb out of the dumpster. Fitzroy pushed him back in.

Fitzroy said, "You're where you belong, 'mon."

Sidney said, "What?"

Fitzroy said, “My chicken scraps in dis' dumpster. Chicken always goes better with Mayo.” Fitzroy beamed at his humble pun as the morning sun glinted off of his two gold front teeth.

Sidney realized he was going to stay in the dumpster until he bought Fitzroy's overpriced sandwich. Sidney took his lonely ten-dollar bill from his wallet and gave it to Fitzroy. Fitzroy helped Sidney out of the dumpster and handed him the sandwich.

Fitzroy said, “Enjoy your lunch, 'mon.”

Sidney raced towards the Chrysler Building, the home of Fairchild Academy, his school.

CHAPTER 9: BEES

As Sidney sprinted towards the Chrysler Building, a tan-colored electric car passed him going the opposite way. The car stopped underneath the bridge that extended from the main entrance of Grand Central Terminal across 42nd Street. The electric car's trunk had been removed, and had been replaced with a large steel box that looked like a side-by-side refrigerator.

Two women emerged from the car and stood behind it. They each grabbed a door handle on the large steel box and gave a great pull.

The doors opened. The box was stuffed with bees. Out they flew. The bees were like any honeybee you might find in your backyard, with two notable exceptions. First, each bee had a computer chip the size of a fingernail clipping glued to its back. Second, every bee had an extra antenna growing straight out of the top of its head.

The bees flew upwards and crashed into the underside of the bridge in front of G.C.T. Some died instantly and dropped to 42nd Street. Most clung to the underside of the bridge. The two women, with anxious looks, watched the bees. One woman, tall, fit, and Hispanic-looking, spoke quietly into a cell phone, describing what the bees were doing.

The other woman, middle-aged and dumpy, with pale-white skin, raced into the Friday-morning traffic. She carried a battery-operated vacuum cleaner, and she sucked up the dead bees as they fell to the street.

Groups of bees began to release themselves from the underside of the bridge. A mass of bees the size of an outdoor trash can flew down Park Avenue and attached itself to the window of a medical imaging center. The rest of the bees, a cluster the size of a dresser, flew straight upwards towards a microwave transmission disc atop a nearby building.

The Hispanic-looking woman and the pale-skinned woman climbed back into the electric car. The vehicle rolled for a few feet, then stopped. The driver's side door reopened. The

Hispanic-looking woman who was driving had gotten an article of clothing stuck in the door. The woman pulled her honey-colored lab coat into the car, shut the door, and drove away.

CHAPTER 10: SHAFTED AT THE ELEVATOR

When Walter P. Chrysler had completed the Chrysler Building in 1930, he had been desperate for tenants. He had signed a ninety-nine year lease with Agatha Fairchild, the founder of Fairchild Academy. The school occupied the top twenty-two floors of the Chrysler Building, with an open, five-story library nestled in the Chrysler Building's stainless-steel spire.

Fairchild Academy had its own elevators on the back side of the Chrysler Building. Sidney ran towards them. A miracle! The elevator doors were still open! If Sidney made this elevator, he'd be on time for school.

“Hold that elevator, please!” shouted Sidney as he dashed towards the elevator.

Sidney saw two faces inside the elevator smiling at him. The faces belonged to Candyce and Tab Fairchild. The Fairchild twins. Sixth-graders, same as Sidney. Haters of all things Sidney.

Sidney was steps away from the elevator door when Candyce Fairchild's hand shot out towards the elevator's control buttons. With her chewed-to-the-nub fingernail, she pushed the 'door close' button.

“No!” shouted Sidney.

The elevator doors closed in Sidney's face. The elevator began its slow crawl to the top of the Chrysler Building. Sidney was going to be late for school.

CHAPTER 11: THE DOMINUS

Sidney stepped off the elevator into the main lobby of Fairchild Academy on the sixty-first floor of the Chrysler Building. This floor was called the Eagle Level, named after the eight stainless-steel eagles that perched on the four corners of this level and glared at the city below.

The Headmaster of Fairchild Academy, Remo Persechetti, was standing by the elevator door. By tradition, the Headmaster was called the Dominus.

"You are late, Mister Mayo," said the Dominus. He had been born in Italy, and spoke with an Italian accent. The Dominus was in his early sixties, and was short, the kind of short that looked at you as if eyeballing a place to punch you that would really hurt. The Dominus' hair was a shocking black mop that was thicker than an assassination plot. Sidney could smell Persechetti's acidic hair dye.

"You are attending Fairchild Academy for free," said the Dominus.

Sidney said, "I'm on a full scholarship." Sidney was one of the few students at Fairchild whose parents weren't business persons or professionals. The Dominus believed that Sidney, son and grandson of men who tended boilers for a living, did not belong in this school.

"You respect our school so little that you are tardy," said the Dominus. He always wore a dark suit and a long, flowing, silk scarf that made him look like a European soccer coach. "What is Fairchild Academy's rule regarding tardiness?"

Sidney said, "Tardiness equals one strike."

The Dominus made an extravagant mark with a red pen on his clipboard.

"Today's strike is your ninth," said the Dominus. "One more strike and you will be expelled from Fairchild Academy. Good day." The Dominus turned his back on Sidney and walked away.

How could Sidney make it to the end of the school year, two whole weeks away, without getting a strike? A bell rang. First period was about to begin. Sidney's class was on the sixty-sixth

floor, five stories above the Eagle Level. If Sidney was late for class, he'd get another strike and would be expelled.

Sidney blasted through the fire door and charged up the stairs.

CHAPTER 12: THE FAIRCHILD TWINS

The fourth-period bell rang. Sidney, weak with hunger, dragged himself into the cafeteria on the sixtieth floor of the Chrysler Building. The Dominus stood in a corner of the cafeteria with his clipboard and red pen. Sidney knew he'd have to be careful. He spied an unoccupied table and stumbled over to it. Sidney dropped his backpack on the table and pulled out the white paper bag that held Fitzroy's Jamaican chicken sandwich.

Sidney opened the bag, and the smell of peanuts, ginger, and cinnamon floated out. He opened the foil and was about to take a bite when he heard two backpacks drop on his table with a *thud*. He didn't even look up from his sandwich. Sidney knew that the backpacks belonged to Candyce and Tab Fairchild.

Sidney said, "Thanks for giving me that strike, Candyce."

Candyce Fairchild sat next to Sidney and said, "Whatever do you mean?"

Candyce Fairchild was twelve. She wore the female Fairchild uniform: blue blazer, white polo shirt, and burgundy kilt. Candyce's shape: boyish and bony. Her color: red. But not a flashy Marilyn-Monroe red. Candyce was brush-burn red. Her red started at her freckled toes and stopped at the end of her long, red hair. Sidney hated Candyce's redness, but to her it was an anointment.

Why? Because Agatha Fairchild, her great-great-grandmother and the founder of Fairchild Academy, had been a redhead. And Candyce was her only descendant who had ever inherited Agatha's red hair.

Sidney said, "I saw your red finger hit the elevator button and close the door on me."

Candyce smiled at Sidney and said, "That wouldn't have happened if you had joined my Order Of Validus."

Sidney said, "I'm not joining your silly club."

Candyce said, "Sidney, you're way smarter than me."

"No kidding."

"But I'm the President of the sixth grade. I have power, but I want more. You can help me."

Sidney said, "I'll never help you."

Candyce slid her chair closer to Sidney. Their hips touched. Sidney smelled honeysuckle, Candyce's favorite perfume.

Candyce said, "With your smarts and my ambition, we could be the ultimate power couple."

Sidney said, "Power couple? We're in the sixth grade."

"If you join The Order, all you have to do is help other members with test preparation."

Sidney said, "You mean make cheat sheets for them?"

Candyce frowned. "Unartful. But accurate."

Sidney said, "No thanks. I'm not joining your Order."

While Candyce was talking to Sidney at the cafeteria table, her twin brother Tab Fairchild had snuck in behind him.

Candyce said, "Your loss." She looked at Tab. "Grab it."

Tab reached over Sidney's shoulder and snatched Sidney's sandwich and lunch bag. He put the sandwich in the bag and held it high.

Candyce said, "Light it."

Tab Fairchild was tall for a sixth-grader, and wiry. Tab's eyes flickered left and right as he scanned the cafeteria. He licked his lips, twice. If you think that Tab looked like a young, guilty criminal with shifty eyes, you'd be correct. That's because Tab Fairchild *was* indeed a young, guilty criminal with shift eyes. Tab was Fairchild Academy's resident drug dealer.

Tab Fairchild had been born allergic to pretty much everything. Some of his allergies were hilarious, like shoes (the leather), cute little plush toys (the plastic), and bunnies (the fur). Tab had to carry a black medical bag stuffed with allergy pills and needles. Fairly early in the game Tab had

discovered how easy it was to stuff his black medical bag with illegal pills, which he sold to Fairchild students.

It was from this black medical bag that Tab drew a lighter and lit Sidney's lunch bag on fire.

CHAPTER 13: FLAMING LUNCH

"Give me that!" shouted Sidney, as he reached for the flaming bag that held his lunch.

"But of course," said Tab Fairchild. He threw the burning bag under Sidney's chair. Sidney pushed his chair over on its side. He jumped up and down on his Jamaican chicken sandwich, that by now smelled like dinner burning on the stove.

"Out! Out! Out!" Sidney shouted at his burning lunch, involuntarily timing his shouts with his stomps.

A crowd of Fairchild students formed a circle around Sidney. They laughed as he stomped his ten-dollar sandwich into next week. They stopped laughing when the Dominus broke through their circle.

"Mr. Mayo," said the Dominus. "Starting a fire is grounds for a strike!"

Sidney stopped jumping on his lunch and picked it up. It looked like one of his father's skanky bedroom slippers.

"Tab Fairchild did it," gasped Sidney. "He lit my lunch on fire."

The Dominus looked around. "I see no Fairchilds in this cafeteria."

Sidney saw a cluster of smirking students standing in front of the chute where students put their dirty trays and silverware. Sidney's heart sank. Every student who stood in front of the chute was a member of Candyce's Order Of Validus.

Sidney said, "Tab and Candyce left the cafeteria through that chute into the kitchen. Their friends hid their escape."

The Dominus walked over and looked at the chute. Tab and Candyce were nowhere to be found.

"You started a fire in the cafeteria," said the Dominus. "For that you get a strike, your tenth. Sidney Mayo, you are hereby expelled from Fairchild Academy."

Sidney sat down on a metal cafeteria chair. He felt light-headed, like he was about to pass out, and he put his head down between his knees. He thought about the promise he had made to Pop-Pop that he would graduate from Fairchild Academy. Sidney felt ready to cry. He pushed his head lower so that no one would see his tears.

A man's voice said, "That's a bunch of nonsense, Persechetti. You can't expel Mr. Mayo here in the cafeteria and you know it." Sidney recognized that voice. It belonged to William P. Murphy, Sidney's favorite teacher at Fairchild.

Sidney didn't have to lift his head up very high to look at Teacher Murphy's face. The man was short, with bow legs. William P. Murphy was in his mid-fifties, dark-Irish handsome, with twinkling blue eyes, black hair, and a fine nose. Teacher Murphy had been kind to Sidney over the years, and now Sidney eyed him the way a man drowning at sea eyes a floating deck chair.

Murphy said, "Nobody gets expelled without a hearing."

The Dominus said, "I'm Chairman of the Expulsion Committee. Since it is obvious that Mr. Mayo must be expelled, I thought I'd save the Expulsion Committee some time by ----"

Murphy interrupted him. "I'm on the Expulsion Committee. I've got time for a hearing."

The Dominus ran his hand through his inky-black hair and said, "So be it. I hereby convene a meeting to take up the expulsion of Sidney Mayo from Fairchild Academy."

CHAPTER 14: EXPULSION

The Dominus' office was on the sixty-third floor of the Chrysler Building and was decorated in the style of an Italian opera house. The room smelled of flowers, but the smell was overpowering. It reminded Sidney of the syrupy smell of the funeral home where his grandfather's viewing had been held.

The Dominus said, "Fairchild Academy's Expulsion Committee is meeting to discuss the expulsion of Sidney Mayo." Sidney's stomach flipped when he heard the Dominus say 'expulsion'.

The Dominus said, "Is it not true that your lunch was on fire in the cafeteria?"

Sidney said, "Yes, but Tab Fairchild lit it."

The Dominus said, "You are ultimately responsible for the condition of your lunch. The fire is your tenth strikes. I vote for expulsion. Teacher Murphy, how do you vote?"

"I vote against expulsion," said Murphy. "There's a tie vote, and Sidney stays."

The Dominus said, "Teacher Murphy, your well-known friendship with Mayo is impeding your judgment. I shall go to the Board of Regents and ask them to replace you on the Expulsion Committee."

Murphy said, "The Board doesn't meet for two weeks, when this school year is over."

The Dominus said, "Then in two weeks I will have you replaced. The new Expulsion Committee will expel Mister Mayo for next year."

Murphy sighed. He took his glasses from his nose, wiped them clean with his shirt cuff, and put the glasses back on.

Murphy said, "In that case, I will vote in favor of expelling Sidney Mayo from Fairchild Academy."

CHAPTER 15: A SENTENCE SUSPENDED

Sidney's breath caught in his throat. Teacher Murphy was deserting him! He was going to be expelled from Fairchild Academy! The smell of dead flowers in the Dominus' office overpowered Sidney. He gagged. Sidney felt sweat dripping down his neck onto the collar of his white shirt.

Teacher Murphy said, "I will vote for Sidney's expulsion only if we suspend it until after the Sixth-grade Medal Competition. If Sidney wins the Sixth-grade Medal, his expulsion is rescinded."

The Dominus said, "Inadequate." He turned to Sidney. "The Chrysler Building model competition is Monday. You are submitting a model, correct?"

Sidney thought of his Chrysler Building model that Diaper Chimp had destroyed.

He squeaked, "Yes."

The Dominus turned to Murphy. "Mayo has to win the Chrysler Building model competition *and* the Sixth-grade Medal. Then I'll rescind his expulsion."

Murphy brushed dust off of his brown suit and said, "I accept your terms."

The Dominus smiled at Sidney. "You know that Candyce Fairchild has won the Class Medal for your grade every year?"

Sidney mumbled, "Yes."

The Dominus said to Sidney, "Just to show you how fair I am, I'll tell you the subject of this year's Sixth-grade Medal Competition."

Murphy said, "That's nothing special. The whole class will find out on Monday."

The Dominus said, "And today is Friday, so Mayo gets four extra days of notice. Come here, I'll show you." The Dominus walked to the window of his office. Sidney stood next to him, close enough to smell the Dominus' hair spray.

The Dominus pointed out the window. "Mayo, see that large, white ship docked in the Hudson, with the big red cross painted on its side?"

Sidney said, "That's Fairchild Floating Hospital."

"That's the topic of this year's Sixth-grade Medal Competition: Fairchild Floating Hospital."

Teacher Murphy broke into a huge grin.

The Dominus said, "What's so funny, Murphy?"

Murphy said, "Remo, I think Candyce's winning streak is about to end. Sidney, come with me."

CHAPTER 16: BRICKS

Sidney and Teacher Murphy entered Murphy's office on the sixty-third floor of the Chrysler Building. The walls of Murphy's office were lined floor-to-ceiling with wooden bookshelves, none of which contained any actual books. A scale that was small enough to weigh a lightning bug sat next to a long, curved saw that looked like it would excel at cutting off a leg.

Murphy popped a frozen pizza in the microwave and said, "Sidney, you must be angry with me for voting for your expulsion."

Sidney said, "I thought you liked me."

Murphy said, "I like you very much, Sidney, but the Dominus had me in a trap."

Murphy's hobby was bricklaying. In one corner of his office sat a waist-high, half-finished brick wall. Everything in the room was coated in a pleasant layer of grainy construction dust. Murphy put a brown smock atop his tired brown suit and mixed mortar as he spoke.

"The Dominus was about to remove me from the Expulsion Committee. The new Committee would have expelled you."

He set the bubbling pizza in front of Sidney. The smell of cooked pepperoni made Sidney's mouth water.

"Have some pizza, Sidney," said Murphy as he stretched a string across the top row of bricks. "Eat the whole thing."

Sidney was famished. He picked up a piece of pizza and bit into it. It was hot, and it burned the top of his mouth.

Murphy said, "You have to win the Chrysler Building model contest on Monday, and the Sixth-grade Medal in two weeks. I'm sorry I put you in this position, but it was the only way to prevent your expulsion. Besides, I'm convinced that you'll win them both."

Sidney spoke as he chewed the pizza. "Candyce has won our grade medal every year. Why do you think I can win?"

Murphy sat down next to Sidney. "Because this year's medal competition involves Fairchild Floating Hospital."

Sidney said, "So?"

Murphy put his trowel down and said, "Sidney, you have a great gift: you are a natural healer."

Sidney said, "I'm the klutz of the sixth grade."

"Do you remember in second grade biology class, when we discussed myrrh?"

Sidney said, "The Three Wise Men stuff?"

"That's what my students usually say. But you asked if myrrh could be used on cuts. I didn't know. I looked it up and found that myrrh coagulates blood, and was widely used as a wound dressing in biblical days. Now how did you know that?"

Sidney said, "I read it some where?"

Murphy's blue eyes gleamed. "In second grade? Improbable. Sidney, have you ever done something medical, and done it right, and not known why?"

Sidney thought about how he had extracted the needle from beneath Diaper Chimp's flesh.

"Yes."

"Sidney, you have a great deal of power."

Sidney tossed the piece of pizza he was eating on the tray and stood up.

He said, "You're wrong, Teacher Murphy. I have no power, no power over anything. I can't walk to school without getting bullied by a street vendor. Disgustingly-red Candyce pushes me around because I won't join her Order Of Validus. My mom and I never have any money 'cause my dad is so cheap I could scream. I got kicked out of Fairchild, which means I broke my promise to

Pop-Pop. And I can't talk to him about it because he's dead." Thinking of Pop-Pop made Sidney fill up. "I am powerless, Teacher Murphy. Powerless to change any part of my crappy, crappy existence."

Sidney heard his own voice echo off the far wall of Murphy's office, and he realized that he had been yelling. He sat down and stuffed a piece of pizza in his mouth as he felt his face glow red with shame.

Murphy handed Sidney a brick. "Sidney, help me lay this brick." Sidney took the brick. His hand sagged to his waist when he held the brick's full weight. Sidney was embarrassed by his weakness, but Murphy didn't seem to have noticed.

Murphy gave Sidney the trowel. "Scoop up some mortar and lay it on the wall."

Sidney jabbed the trowel into the mortar which smelled like vinegar.

"Sidney, what was the most powerful empire of the ancient world?"

Sidney said, "The Roman Empire?"

Murphy said, "That's right. Put some mortar on one end of the brick, like you're putting butter on bread. Do you know why the Romans were so powerful?"

Sidney wasn't huge on history. "Their soldiers?"

Murphy said, "Their bricklayers and stone masons. These men build the roads and bridges that let Roman soldiers march to trouble spots. Now put that brick in the little bed of mortar. The top edge of the brick should just touch that string."

Sidney reached over the string and placed the brick in place.

Murphy said, "Perfectly done, Sidney. You just laid a brick. Do that a thousand times, and you have a brick wall. Rome began as a swampy little nothing, a salt-trading post. But the Romans built their Empire one brick at a time. If you do the little things, one brick at a time, you'll find your power, most likely in the medical field. One final observation about the brick-by-brick approach."

Murphy opened the window to his office. Outside the sixty-third floor of the Chrysler Building the wind always blew. Cold air that smelled of car exhaust rushed into the room.

"Sidney, reach out the window. Feel the outside wall."

Sidney stuck his hand out the window and placed his palm against the outside of the Chrysler Building.

Murphy said, "What are you touching?"

"Bricks."

"That's right. The Chrysler Building - closing in on a hundred years and beautiful as ever – was built with bricks."

CHAPTER 17: TRACKING

The fit, Hispanic-looking woman and the dumpy, middle-aged woman with pale skin, both wearing honey-colored lab coats, stood on 42nd Street. Each woman held what looked like a large calculator with a TV screen on its face. If you guessed that these women held Radio Frequency Identity Readers (RFIDs) you'd be correct.

The bees the women had released would latch onto The Foundation's missing property. The RFIDs would lead the women to the bees. Once The Foundation retrieved its property, it would use it to remake the world.

The Hispanic-looking woman and the pale-skinned woman walked in opposite directions down 42nd Street, never taking their eyes off of their RFID trackers. Across Manhattan, thirty other women, all wearing honey-colored lab coats and carrying RFID trackers, did the same.

CHAPTER 18: TROUBLE IN THE ATTIC

Sidney trudged into his bedroom in the Vanderbilt Apartment at G.C.T. He dropped his backpack on the floor and plopped in his bed. It was Friday night, the start of the weekend, but Sidney looked exhausted.

Sidney called out, "I'll have to spend the weekend making a new Chrysler Building model, thanks to you!"

Sidney's bedroom was silent.

"Diaper Chimp, you rascal, where are you?"

Sidney looked for the chimp in his room. Nothing. He locked the door to his room and climbed into the attic.

"Diaper Chimp!" Sidney bellowed. "Where are you? Come---"

Sidney never completed the sentence. He was struck in the back, right between his shoulder blades, by something round and hard. He fell to the wooden floor of the attic and lay there, face down, sucking wind. Sidney rolled over.

Diaper Chimp stood next to him. He jumped on Sidney's chest and pawed Sidney's ear wart.

"You!" shouted Sidney. He tried to swat Diaper Chimp's hand away from his ear wart.

"HE-HE-HE," hooted Diaper Chimp. He jumped straight up to the attic ceiling and hung, one-handed, from a ceiling rafter.

In the center of the attic sat an opened box of baby diapers and a cardboard box lined with twigs.

Sidney picked up a diaper. "How in the world did these diapers and this box get here?"

I stole them, of course, thought Diaper Chimp. From a store on 43rd Street.

Diaper Chimp dropped to the attic floor. He climbed into the cardboard box lined with twigs. He made an extravagant show of lying down in the box.

"You want to play in this box?" said Sidney.

Diaper Chimp closed his eyes and pretended to sleep.

God, how I hate mime, thought Diaper Chimp.

"Of course!" said Sidney. "You want to use the attic as your bedroom, don't you?"

"HOO-HOO", panted Diaper Chimp. He jumped into Sidney's arms and looked straight into his eyes.

This sincere-chimp act should work, thought Diaper Chimp.

Sidney said, "Okay, okay, I'll let you use the attic for your bedroom. But the trap door to my room always has to be open. Got it?"

Diaper Chimp yawned in Sidney's face.

Sidney said, "Mom's got dinner ready, but I've got to take a shower first because I was inside a smelly dumpster."

No kidding, my man, thought Diaper Chimp. *You smell like a trash truck.*

"We can play after dinner."

Sidney climbed down through the hatch into his bedroom. Diaper Chimp heard Sidney enter his bathroom and run the shower.

With shower and dinner, he'll be busy for the next hour or so, thought Diaper Chimp. *Now I can go to my other bedroom.*

CHAPTER 19: THE CHIMP'S OTHER BEDROOM

Diaper Chimp sprang up to the attic ceiling and grabbed an exposed rafter. Hand-over-hand he crossed the attic until he came to a brick wall. There was a phone-book sized air vent in the brick wall, covered by a metal grate. Diaper Chimp removed the metal grate, climbed through the hole, and replaced the grate behind him.

Home sweet home, he thought, as he jumped to the attic floor.

Diaper Chimp had set up his other bedroom on the back side of a brick wall in the attic. Diaper Chimp flicked a light switch on the wall. Two stolen lava lamps on the floor lit up.

A chimp-sized hammock made from an Elvis-on-velvet beach towel that Diaper Chimp has filched from a street vendor hung between two ceiling rafters. Diaper Chimp had painted the walls in his attic bedroom yellow ocher, a color preferred by Vincent Van Gogh, his favorite artist. Diaper Chimp could still smell the drying paint.

Diaper Chimp closed his eyes and focused his surgically-augmented hearing on the shower in Sidney's bathroom. He heard Sidney slop a wash cloth against his chin.

Sidney will be in the bathroom for at least ten more minutes, thought Diaper Chimp.

In the middle of his bedroom sat a low wooden easel, paints, and blank canvases. All had been liberated by Diaper Chimp from the art store in G.C.T. He squeezed Prussian-blue paint onto his palette, took out a black brush with a medium tip, and dipped it in the paint. He applied the paint to a canvas.

I should be able to complete at least one knock-off of Vincent Van Gogh's Starry Night by the time Sidney finishes his shower.

CHAPTER 20: DINNER WITH BIG SID

Sidney, his mother, and Big Sid, Sidney's father, were eating Friday night dinner together in the cafeteria-sized Vanderbilt Apartment dining room. Or to put it more accurately, Sidney and Mrs. Mayo were eating dinner together. Big Sid was indeed sitting at the dining room table, and he was definitely eating, but he was watching the Rangers play hockey on a nearby TV and was ignoring his wife and young son.

As Sidney ate, he told his mother most of what had happened to him that day. His swim in Fitzroy's dumpster. How Tab and Candyce lit his lunch on fire. The Dominus' unfair expulsion. Sidney omitted discussing those portions of his day that had to do with a certain diaper-wearing chimp.

Sidney was unaware that the very same chimp was now resting comfortably not six feet from Sidney's left elbow. Diaper Chimp was hiding in a shaft, long since wallpapered over, that had once housed a dumbwaiter. As he snooped on Sidney, Diaper Chimp ate egg rolls he had stolen from a delivery man's bike. Diaper Chimp could smell the cooked peppers, garlic, and tomato sauce that the Mayos were eating.

Sidney said, "So I can stay at Fairchild if I win the model competition and the Sixth-grade Medal." Sidney looked at Big Sid, who stared at the TV screen and shoveled pasta in his mouth.

"Dad," said Sidney, "what will you do if I get expelled from Fairchild?"

Big Sid wore orange sweatpants, size XXL, but his gut still pushed out his sweatpants as if he were nine months pregnant. Big Sid's New York Jets tee-shirt was too short. He reached for the gravy, his shirt rode up, and his belly button said hello.

Big Sid said, "I ain't payin' for you to go to private school. There's nothing wrong with New York City public schools. I went to public school and look at me. I'm chief boiler custodian, living in the Vanderbilt Apartment in Grand Central Terminal!"

While Big Sid was technically correct, he seemed to have forgotten that his job and the right to live in the Vanderbilt Apartment had passed to him only because his father-in-law, Sidney's pop-pop, had been killed in a boiler explosion one month earlier.

Pop-Pop seemed to be on Mrs. Mayo's mind as well, for she glanced at Pop-Pop's empty chair and the dishes and silverware she set for him every night.

"Sidney," said Mrs. Mayo, "are you up for a smell-séance tonight?"

Sidney said, "The cooked cabbage you put out for Pop-Pop makes me gag."

Mrs. Mayo said, "I'm desperate, Sidney. I can't have a smell-séance by myself, and I want to say good-bye to Pop-Pop."

Sidney said, "Okay Mom. Let me work on my Chrysler Building model first."

Sidney's mom nodded. "You start your model; I'll cook Pop-Pop's cabbage. And by the way, the microwave stopped working while you were at school today."

CHAPTER 21: POP-POP'S TYPEWRITER

Friday night after dinner Sidney and Diaper Chimp entered Pop-Pop's office in the Vanderbilt Apartment. Sidney wore dark-brown pajamas. Because he was so thin, he had criss-crossed the unbuttoned pajama tops across his chest and had wrapped a black leather belt around his waist.

Sidney said, "These pajamas look like a karate outfit, don't you think?"

You're too skinny, my man, thought Diaper Chimp. *I'll slip some muscle-builders in your drinks.*

Diaper Chimp heard a motor on the other side of the wall turn on. Water gurgled in a pipe beneath the floor. Sidney must have heard the sounds too, for he smiled.

Sidney said, "That's the heater turning on. Pop-Pop intentionally lived next to the heater and the water pipes. He loved the sound of machinery."

Sidney slid a box containing an unassembled model of the Chrysler Building out of a brown paper bag. "You know that model you destroyed last night? I have to build a new one by Monday, and win this model contest, or I get kicked out of school."

"SSSSSSS," hissed Diaper Chimp.

Sidney said, "D.C. I'm serious. All work and no play this weekend. But I bought something for you." Sidney showed Diaper Chimp a book. "This is an American Sign Language book. There was this chimp named Washoe? He learned 350 signs. I'm not expecting you to be as smart as Washoe, but maybe you can learn a few signs."

Washoe, smarter than me?, thought Diaper Chimp. *Please.*

Diaper Chimp saw a manual typewriter, a Royal Portable, sitting on Pop-Pop's wooden desk.

How beautifully mechanical, thought Diaper Chimp. *And well-maintained. I can smell the oil Pop-Pop used to lubricate it.*

Sidney said, "Pop-Pop had the worst handwriting. He typed everything on this typewriter."

Sidney inserted an index card in the typewriter and centered the carriage.

Sidney said, "Go ahead D.C., push a key, see what happens."

Diaper Chimp knew that on a Royal Portable the 'Q' frequently looked like an 'O'. He pushed the 'Q' key. Sidney pulled the index card out of the typewriter.

"Very good," said Sidney. "You typed the letter 'O'."

God, he is dense sometimes, thought Diaper Chimp.

Sidney said, "There's a theory, if you give a hundred chimps infinite time on a hundred typewriters, eventually one will write a Shakespeare play."

I've written a play, thought Diaper Chimp. *Decent, but not Shakespeare.*

On Pop-Pop's desk sat a wooden box the size of bible.

Sidney pointed to the box and said, "That was our money box. Mom, Pop-Pop, and me, we all were supposed to put money in it. Pop-Pop said we were pooling our funds. When we needed money, we took it out."

Sidney opened the box, Diaper Chimp smelled dust. There was no money in the box.

Sidney said, "Pop-Pop knew that Mom and me took out a lot more money than we put in, but he never let on. It was his way of helping us without looking like he was helping us. God, I miss him so much." Tears starting rolled down Sidney's face.

Diaper Chimp wrapped his little arms around Sidney's neck and hugged him. Sidney's tears dripped onto Diaper Chimp and disappeared into the thick hair of his back. Diaper Chimp didn't let go until Sidney's tears stopped flowing.

"My dad's cheap, D.C., he makes good money but he keeps it to himself. Mom and I never have any money now that Pop-Pop's dead," said Sidney. He wiped the tears from his face with his

karate-pajama sleeve. "I guess being broke will make me strong." Sidney took a dollar from his pajama pocket, put it in the money box, and closed the lid.

"For you, Pop-Pop," sniffed Sidney. "I'm paying you back. D.C., let's go back to my room. I want to see if you're smart enough to learn how to fingerspell."

CHAPTER 22: A NAUGHTY STUDENT

Sidney and Diaper Chimp sat on Sidney's bed. The hatch that led to the attic above Sidney's bedroom was open, and light from the Manhattan night sky dripped down through the hatch into Sidney's bedroom.

Sidney, wearing his brown karate pajamas, frowned as he studied a large chart that covered his pillow. The chart had pictures of human hands in various positions, with letters of the alphabet superimposed over them.

Sidney said, "We're going to fingerspell our names." Sidney made two hand signs. "This is 'D' and this is 'C'. 'D-C', for Diaper Chimp. You try."

Sidney grabbed Diaper Chimp's right hand and formed his little fingers into the signs for 'D' and 'C'. Diaper Chimp had glanced at the fingerspelling chart and had instantly memorized all the hand signs for the letters in the alphabet. But Sidney's hands were warm, and Diaper Chimp liked it when Sidney touched him, so he moved his fingers in all different directions in order to prolong the lesson.

Just for giggles, Diaper Chimp fingerspelled the word 'P-O-O-P' a few times. Sidney didn't know the fingerspelling alphabet well enough to realize that Diaper Chimp had just fingerspelled a profanity.

After what Diaper Chimp guessed was an appropriate number of repetitions, Diaper Chimp stopped pretending he didn't understand, and he fingerspelled 'D' and 'C' on his own. Sidney clapped with delight.

"And this is me." Sidney fingerspelled the letter 'S'.

Sidney manipulated Diaper Chimp's hand, and after a few minutes Diaper Chimp fingerspelled the letter 'S', and 'learned' how to fingerspell 'Y-E-S' and 'N-O'."

Sidney said, "Brilliant! You are absolutely the smartest chimp ever!"

Duh, though Diaper Chimp. Suddenly, he smelled cantaloupe. He launched himself up through the trapdoor into the attic.

Sidney looked up into the attic through the trap door and said, "D.C. why did you ---"

There was a knock on Sidney's bedroom door.

"Sidney?" It was Mrs. Mayo. "I heard you talking. Is someone in there with you?"

Sidney opened the door and his mom walked in. The smell of cantaloupe clung to her like strong perfume. Mrs. Mayo saw the chart on Sidney's bed.

Sidney's mom said, "You're interested in fingerspelling?"

Sidney smiled and said, "Yes indeed Mom, I am very interested in fingerspelling."

Sidney's mom said, "That's nice. Come over to the séance-room. Let's see if we can lure Pop-Pop's spirit home with a nice cooked cabbage."

CHAPTER 23: THE SMELL SÉANCE

Mrs. Mayo had converted the guest bedroom in the Vanderbilt Apartment into the séance-room. The use of the word 'guest room' was deceiving; 'guest airplane hangar' was probably more accurate, for the room was cavernous.

Mrs. Mayo turned off the gold-and-crystal chandelier that loomed overhead like an alien spaceship. She and Sidney sat across from each other at the séance-mandatory round table. A single lit candle that smelled of strawberry illuminated the room. A level with an air bubble, Pop-Pop's favorite tool, sat in the middle of the table.

Mrs. Mayo said, "First, the bait." She put a black pot filled with cooked cabbage on the table. Sidney gagged at the smell.

Mrs. Mayo closed her eyes and intoned, "Our beloved father and grandfather, Bud Matuzek, we bring you gifts from life into death. Commune with us, Bud Matuzek, and move among us."

Mrs. Mayo whispered to Sidney, "The easiest way for him to respond is by moving that tool."

The air bubble in the level didn't move.

Mrs. Mayo smiled and said, "I was prepared for this." She took a large fruit display from a closet and placed it on the séance table. "This should draw Pop-Pop's spirit."

Mrs. Mayo was a freelance fruit designer. Years ago she had decided to shake up the stuffy world of New York City fruit design with her imaginative fruit displays. On the table sat one of them.

Stalks of celery were laced together to form green monkey bars. Brown dates perched on the monkey bar. In front of the celery monkey bars sat a yellow ball of pineapple atop a piece of light-green melon.

"Mom," said Sidney. "What in the world is that?"

Mrs. Mayo said, "Isn't it obvious? It's 'Crows In The Playground' from *The Birds*, Pop-Pop's favorite movie. The pineapple and melon are Tippi Hedren." Mrs. Mayo spoke into the cabbage-steam flowing from the pot. "Bud Matuzek, we bring you a scene from *The Birds*."

Tippi Hedren didn't move.

Mrs. Mayo whispered to Sidney, "Say something to your grandfather."

Sidney said, "Hello, Pop-Pop. This is Sidney. I got kicked out of Fairchild. Mom and I don't have any money."

"Sidney, no negative energy!" said Mrs. Mayo.

"Mom, let me finish," Sidney spoke to the air in a loud voice. "But I'm gonna be okay. I'm gonna win the Chrysler Building model competition and the Sixth-grade Medal. You'll be proud of me."

Suddenly, the heater turned on. Warm air flowed through the floor vent beneath the table and washed over Mrs. Mayo's legs.

Mrs. Mayo gasped, "That's Pop-Pop, giving us a sign! That's just like a boiler-repair man, to contact us through the heating system!"

Sidney said, "Mom, the warm air flows through the floor vents whenever the thermostat tells it to. That flow of air on our legs was just a coincidence."

Sidney's mom started crying. "Thank you, Sidney, for drawing Pop-Pop back to us. It means so much to me." She picked a crow off the monkey bars and ate it. "Our smell-séance is officially over."

In the mechanical room just down the hall, a small chimp wearing a diaper sat on the heater that warmed the séance room. Satisfied with what he had just heard from Mrs. Mayo, the chimp switched off the fan that pushed warm air through the floor vents of the séance room and made his way to Sidney's bedroom.

CHAPTER 24: CRUEL SURGERY

Sidney climbed up through the open trap door and into the attic space above his bedroom. Diaper Chimp was sitting on the wooden floor of the attic, staring at the full moon through the skylight. Sidney sat down on the attic floor. Diaper Chimp instantly climbed onto Sidney's lap.

Sidney had read that chimps liked to be groomed, so he starting sorting through the hair on Diaper Chimp's head.

Sidney said, "Hey, what's this...."

Sidney felt a raised welt the thickness of a candy worm on Diaper Chimp's scalp. The welt ran completely around Diaper Chimp's head like a halo. Sidney felt the chimp's skull. He found a groove in the skull bone that lined up precisely with the worm-thick scar on his scalp. Instinctively, Sidney knew what the scar and the groove meant.

"You poor thing," he whispered to Diaper Chimp. "Somebody experimented on you. They removed the top of your skull, then put it back."

CHAPTER 25: THE MYSTERY MODEL-MAKER

Later that same night, Diaper Chimp jumped down from the attic above Sidney's bedroom onto the bed where Sidney slept.

"HUH-HUH," Diaper Chimp panted in Sidney's ear. Sidney didn't budge.

Diaper Chimp climbed over to Sidney's desk. He hooked one arm around the box that contained the unassembled model of the Chrysler Building and the other arm around the book on American Sign Language. He saw a tube of model glue. The chimp opened it and took a sniff.

Stimulating, isn't it, thought Diaper Chimp.

He jumped straight up through the trap door and into the attic. He opened the grate in the brick wall, climbed through the opening, and dropped to the floor of his other bedroom.

The chimp spent an hour memorizing all the signs in the American Sign Language book. Then he opened the model box and studied a few pieces.

This won't take long, thought Diaper Chimp. *I can't wait to see the Chrysler Building tomorrow,* he thought. *The real Chrysler Building, that is.*

CHAPTER 26: CONFUSION

Sidney was awoken early Saturday morning by the smell of hot chimp-breath. Sidney opened his eyes. Diaper Chimp was sitting on Sidney's chest, his nose an inch from Sidney's.

"WRAAAH," screeched Diaper Chimp in Sidney's face.

"Yeoooooww," cried Sidney. He fell out of his bed on to the floor. He looked at his watch. It was 7:30 in the morning.

"Why'd you wake me up so early?" Sidney said. "It's Saturday. There's nothing to do today except work on my model. Which I wouldn't have to do if you hadn't destroyed it....."

Sidney glanced at his desk. There sat the model of the Chrysler Building, completely assembled.

Sidney gasped, "It can't be....."

Sidney studied the model. It was flawless. The joints were so tight a hair couldn't squeeze between them. Sidney smelled model glue, but not a drop of it could be seen on the model. The tiny eagles on the sixty-first floor and the gargoyles on the thirty-first floor stared out from their perches. All Sidney had to do was paint the model, and it would be ready for the model competition.

Leaning up against the Chrysler Building was an index card. Centered on the index card were these neatly-typed words:

Love, Pop-Pop

Sidney felt woozy and sat on his desk chair. Last night at the smell séance, a gust of warm air flowed when he spoke to Pop-Pop. A model, assembled while he slept. Sidney turned to Diaper Chimp, who sat uncharacteristically still on Sidney's bed.

Sidney said, "Well, I guess we can go out, since I don't have to build this model all weekend." Sidney held up the index card. "First, I want to show this stuff to Mom."

"Why are you confused, Sidney?" said Mrs. Mayo. "Of course Pop-Pop's ghost built the model and left you that note." Sidney, wearing his brown karate pajamas, sat in the Vanderbilt Dining Room eating a cooked-pepper omelet his mother had made him. The model of the Chrysler Building and the index card rested in the middle of the dining room table.

Sidney's mother wore a tired purple robe as she sat across from Sidney and ate what was left of Tippi Hedren. Big Sid, master of the house and of the orange XXL sweatpants, sat at the far end of the table. Sidney could smell the garlic on the everything bagel with double cream cheese that he ate, as he read the newspaper and drank a Diet Pepsi.

Sidney looked at his father and said, "Dad, did you build that model?"

Big Sid said, "I got better things to do with my time."

Mrs. Mayo smiled at Sidney and said, "The model is a gift from someone who loves you. Why not accept it for what it is?"

"Because it's creepy, Mom. Somebody made a model and entered my room while I slept."

Mrs. Mayo said, "So what's the harm with that? Everyone wants a guardian angel who ---"

Big Sid interrupted his wife. He pointed to the newspaper spread out before him. "Paper says somebody broke into the art store downstairs. Stole art supplies. The burglar must think he's the friggin' Pink Panther."

Mrs. Mayo said, "Why do you say that, Sid?"

Big Sid said, "The burglar left a calling card at the scene of the crime."

Sidney said, "What was it Dad, a glove?"

Big Sid said, "Something called 'Starry Night'. Ever heard of it?"

Sidney said, "It's a painting. By Van Gogh."

Big Sid said, "The 'Starry Night' was a forgery, but an art dealer liked it so much he bought it. Paid the store owner more for the knock-off than the stolen art supplies were worth. The owner made money on the burglary. Only in New York."

CHAPTER 27: DONE IN BY A DIAPER

By ten o'clock on Saturday morning, Sidney had finished painting the model of the Chrysler Building. He put the model on his dresser so the paint could dry.

Sidney put on his jacket and said, "Climb up on my shoulders."

Diaper Chimp climbed up on Sidney and wrapped his legs around Sidney's neck, like a baby sitting on her father's shoulders watching fireworks. Sidney pulled his hood up so that it covered Diaper Chimp's body. The chimp could still peek out from beneath the hood.

Sidney said, "It's raining this morning, so people won't think it's weird for me to have my hood up. Let's check out Manhattan."

Sidney and Diaper Chimp stepped outside of the Vanderbilt Apartment and into a long hallway. In his right hand Sidney carried a white, plastic bag of trash which contained a few of Diaper Chimp's soiled diapers.

Sidney gestured to the trash bag as he walked down the hall. "Gotta get rid of these dirty diapers. Can't leave any evidence at the scene of the crime, you know what I mean?"

Sidney stopped at a solid-brass door the size of a kitchen cabinet that was imbedded in the wall to his left.

He said, "This is the Vanderbilt Apartment's private trash chute. Anything dropped in here falls right into the trash compactor, five floors down."

Sidney dropped the white trash bag in the trash chute. He put his ear to the trash chute and listened for a few seconds. When he heard a *thunk*, he shut the brass door.

"Hear that, D.C.? *Thunk* means dirty diapers go bye-bye."

Unfortunately for Sidney, *thunk* did *not* mean dirty diapers go bye-bye. In fact, it meant quite the opposite.

The trash bag slid down the chute and dropped into a blue trash compactor the size of a pick-up truck. Stuart Appleby had secretly installed a small camera on a ledge overlooking the trash compactor. The falling trash bag and the *thunk* of its impact were recorded on Appleby's secret camera and immediately sent to his cell phone.

Stuart Appleby sat on a green swivel-stool in his messy office/workshop/bedroom located on the lowest level of G.C.T. His workshop looked like an auto parts store, with black metal shelves loaded with camera parts on either side of the dusty desk at which he sat. A smelly, half-eaten slice of onion pizza rested on a paper plate at Appleby's right elbow. He must have unintentionally dunked his elbow in the pizza, for a sliver of onion rested on the sleeve of his dark-blue shirt.

Appleby was soldering a green wire to the back of a tiny camera when his cell phone rang. He punched in his password - *TOP-COP* - and replayed the video of Sidney's trash bag going *thunk* in the trash compactor.

Appleby put on his Volunteer Auxiliary Police hat and weapons belt, sighing just a bit as he adjusted his only weapon, a wooden baton. He exited his workshop. After a brisk walk through dingy tunnels, Appleby opened a squeaky, grey-metal door and stepped into the trash-compactor room. As one might expect, the room did indeed smell like a trash truck, but this room was overlaid with a hint of smelly subway, finished off with a reduction of diesel fumes.

Appleby had known from prior trysts with the Vanderbilt Apartment trash compactor that he was too short to stand next to the blue metal box and look inside. Last month he had stolen a stepladder from the nice ladies in housekeeping. Appleby pulled the stolen ladder over to the edge of the trash compactor, climbed up the ladder, and stepped into the trash compactor. He used his wooden baton to lift up the white plastic trash bag that Sidney had just dropped into the Vanderbilt Apartment trash chute.

Appleby returned to his office. He spread newspaper on his desk. He put Sidney's trash bag on his desk and opened it.

On top of the trash sat four of Diaper Chimp's used diapers. Appleby retrieved a black ballpoint pen from his pen cup, used it to fish out a diaper, and held the diaper up to the light.

"Well, well, well," said Appleby. "A soiled baby diaper, in Sidney Mayo's trash."

There was a sharp knock on the door to Appleby's workshop. He stuffed the baby diaper in the white plastic trash bag and hid it in the kneel-hole of his desk.

"Come," said Appleby. On *Star Trek*, Captain Picard said 'come' when people came to his door. Stuart Appleby did the same because he thought it made him sound cool.

It didn't.

The brown metal door to Appleby's office opened and in walked Captain Akilah Branch, Stuart Appleby's boss.

CHAPTER 28: CAPTAIN BRANCH

Akilah Branch was everything that Appleby wasn't. Tall. Female. African-American. And a member of the New York City police force. In junior high school Akilah Branch had gotten pregnant and had dropped out. Her life story of poverty and drug abuse was written by age fifteen. But Akilah Branch never read the script. She became an army paratrooper, an army Command Sergeant Major, and by her early forties was a New York City police captain.

As she stood inside Stuart Appleby's dingy office, the light reflected off of her N.Y.P.D. shield and the Smith & Wesson pistol on her hip. Everything about her spelled discipline and competence.

Naturally, because of this, Stuart Appleby hated her guts.

Captain Branch said, "Mr. Appleby, a word please." Captain Branch used the word 'please' in her sentence, but her tone of voice indicated that this was a command, not a request.

Captain Branch said, "Before we talk, turn off anything that is recording this conversation. And do I smell onions?"

Appleby took a sniff. He too smelled onions, and he traced the smell to the sliver that lurked on his elbow. He flicked the offender into the trash. Appleby picked up a thick black pen that sat on his desk and twisted it three times, clockwise. It beeped after the third twist. The look on Captain Branch's face told Appleby that he should have turned off the pen-cam before she had asked him to do so.

"Can't be too careful, I always say," said Appleby.

"For once I agree with you," said Captain Branch. She pulled what looked like a walkie-talkie out of her pocket, turned it on, and began to scan Appleby's grimy office. The moment she did, Appleby's face turned red.

"Know what this is?" said Captain Branch.

"A frequency detector," mumbled Appleby.

"That's right," said Captain Branch. "It says 'beep' when it detects a hidden camera in operation." On the metal shelf next to Appleby's desk sat a white, plastic clock with a large, dial face. Captain Branch pointed the frequency detector at the white clock.

The frequency detector said 'beep'.

Captain Branch looked at Stuart Appleby. Appleby's face grew redder by the second. Appleby stood up. Even with his elevator shoes he was a foot shorter than Captain Branch. He grabbed the clock, flipped it over, and pushed a panel on the bottom of it. The frequency detector became silent.

Appleby said, "Forgot about that one."

Captain Branch said, "And you wonder why you never get promoted. A metal crate fell from a VIP train on Track Sixty-one on Thursday night."

Appleby said, "So I heard."

Captain Branch said, "The crate contained something extremely valuable. We've been all over Track Sixty-one looking for the crate and its cargo and have found nothing. Did your cameras see anybody carry away a metal crate?"

Appleby said, "Nada."

Captain Branch said, "We're getting a lot of pressure from our customer to find the cargo."

Appleby said, "Maybe if somebody told me what was inside the crate, I'd know what to look for."

Captain Branch sighed. "That knowledge is only for those with 'secret' security clearance, which you don't have."

"Might be a good time to raise my security clearance."

Captain Branch said, "Might *not* be a good time to raise your security clearance. But I will tell you what was inside the crate. It was a chimpanzee."

"A chimpanzee? What's so important about a chimpanzee?" Appleby glanced at Sidney's trash bag that was stashed in the kneehole of Appleby's desk. "Do they wear diapers?"

Captain Branch said, "'Don't know' to both your questions. But I do know that the owner of the chimp has offered a \$100,000 reward for information leading to its recovery."

Appleby saluted Captain Branch. "Finding the escaped chimp will be my top priority."

A smile tricked across Captain Branch's face. "No need to salute, Mr. Appleby. Just stay on top of your cameras. Have them take a picture of the chimp or of the crate, and bring the image to me for analysis."

The moment Captain Branch exited Stuart Appleby's office, he pushed a button atop the camera that perched on his computer. A red light glowed on the camera. Appleby centered the camera on his face and spoke to it.

"Personal log. Based on the diapers found in Sidney Mayo's trash, Officer Appleby suspects that he is in possession of the missing chimp. Will pop a surprise inspection on Mayo. If Officer Appleby finds the chimp in Mayo's bedroom, Officer Appleby will be \$100,000 richer, and will be living in the Vanderbilt Apartment."

CHAPTER 29: FITZROY'S KIOSK

Sidney had forgotten about his diaper drop by the time he exited G.C.T. a few minutes later. It was a rainy Saturday morning in Manhattan. Diaper Chimp, sitting on Sidney's shoulders, peeped out from beneath Sidney's hood. As Sidney walked down 42nd Street, he pointed to the steel-reinforced kiosk that belonged to Fitzroy, the Jamaican street vendor. The kiosk smelled of cinnamon, and Sidney saw a man inside grilling chicken.

Sidney whispered to Diaper Chimp, "That kiosk belongs to Fitzroy. He picks on me every day."

Next to the cash register in Fitzroy's gunmetal-colored kiosk sat a man with a string of tears tattooed under his left eye. He glared at Sidney. Behind the kiosk, in a narrow alley, lurked the smelly dumpster that Sidney had inhabited only yesterday.

Sidney told Diaper Chimp about his Fitzroy encounter and his swim in the dumpster.

"Ssssssss," hissed Diaper Chimp at the kiosk.

Sidney said, "Not so loud!"

"SSSSSSS," hissed Diaper Chimp, louder.

The gentleman with the tattooed tears must have heard Diaper Chimp hissing, for he craned his neck left and right.

Sidney chuckled. "Fitzroy's tough guy heard you D.C., but he can't see you. One for us. Come on, I want to buy some donuts. Then I'll show you my school."

CHAPTER 30: A LEAP

Sidney and Diaper Chimp stood on the outdoor terrace that encircled the Chrysler Building on the sixty-first floor. This terrace was called the Eagle Level Terrace, after the eight stainless-steel eagles who made their homes on the terrace's four corners. The Eagle Level Terrace wasn't as high as the Empire State Building's observation deck, but it was just as wide. Only Fairchild Academy students could access the Eagle Level Terrace. Because of this, the terrace had no metal caging to keep people from jumping off. It was always windy on the terrace, and Sidney smelled car fumes.

The rain had stopped. Sidney leaned over the terrace's metal railing and tried to spot Fitzroy's kiosk sixty-one stories below. Heavy mist hugged the streets of Manhattan. Sidney couldn't see the streets below, nor could anyone there look up and see him.

Sidney moved Diaper Chimp from his shoulder to his hip. He walked over to his favorite spot on the terrace, the corner from which Central Park could be seen. Two stainless-steel eagles, each bigger than a mini-van, were mounted on the corner. Sidney rested his right hand on the wet, cool steel of the eagle's neck. The moment he did, Sidney felt Diaper Chimp's body stiffen. The hair on the chimp's scalp stood straight up.

"What's with you?" said Sidney. "This is a famous Chrysler Building eagle."

Diaper Chimp snarled, and jumped off the Chrysler Building.

CHAPTER 31: CALLING OUT THE DEVILS

"D.C.!" yelled Sidney.

Sidney bent over the railing as far as he could and looked down into the mist below. Nothing.

"D.C.," he yelled. "Where are you?" Sidney looked around. He could hear Diaper Chimp screeching, but couldn't see him.

"WRRRAAAAAHHH!"

Sidney ran around the Eagle Level Terrace. The chimp's screeches grew louder. Sidney stopped when he got to the eagle that faced the Empire State Building.

Diaper Chimp was clinging to the eagle's beak. He was screaming at it, sixty-one stories above the sidewalk.

"WRAAAAHHHH!!!"

Diaper Chimp had one hand on either side of the eagle's beak. His two feet were braced against the beak, like a miniature mountain climber rappelling down a cliff. Diaper Chimp's mouth was wide open, every tooth was bared.

Diaper Chimp glared at the eagle's enormous, stainless-steel eye. He shrieked at the eagle, a shriek primal and ferocious, a shriek better suited to a jungle battle-to-the-death than to the Manhattan skyline.

Sidney wracked his brain: why was Diaper Chimp screaming at the eagle? As Diaper Chimp's screams echoed off the side of the Chrysler Building, Sidney suddenly saw the connection: the eagle and the crate that had imprisoned Diaper Chimp were both made of stainless steel.

Sidney guessed that when Diaper Chimp looked at the eagle's eye, he was seeing the eyes of the surgeons who had strapped him to a gurney and had removed the top of his skull. Diaper Chimp

was calling out the devils at The Foundation who had imprisoned him in stainless steel his whole life.

Sixty-one stories below and three blocks away, a mass of bees the size of an outdoor trash can clung to the plate-glass window of a medical imaging center. Suddenly, the third antenna of every bee quivered. Moving as a single unit, the bees flew towards the Chrysler Building, homing in on the one-of-a-kind magnetic signature they had just found.

CHAPTER 32: BAIT

Sidney leaned over the metal railing that surrounded the Eagle Level Terrace and yelled at Diaper Chimp as he clung to the eagle's beak.

"Diaper Chimp! Get back here! Now!"

Diaper Chimp bit the nose of the Chrysler Building eagle. Sidney saw a chimp-sized bite mark on the eagle's beak. Sidney's mind was filled with questions: how could Diaper Chimp cling to the eagle's wet and slippery beak? And how strong was he, to bite through stainless steel?

Sidney knew he had to get Diaper Chimp off the eagle. On the streets below, the mist was clearing, and Sidney caught a glimpse of Fitzroy's kiosk. Soon people on the street would be able to look up and see Diaper Chimp on the eagle's beak.

"Donuts," whispered Sidney.

He took a few donuts from his backpack and lay them on the railing. Sidney could smell the powdered sugar on one of the donuts.

"D.C., come here. I have donuts."

CHAPTER 33: WE HAVE A SWARM

The trash-can sized swarm of bees, each with a tiny computer chip glued to its back, reached the base of the Chrysler Building. Moving as one, they flew up the side of the Chrysler Building.

Three blocks away, two women wearing honey-colored lab coats walked down the street and stared at the little TV screens on their RFID trackers. A dark image the size of an eraser suddenly appeared on their TV screens.

"Motion," said the tall, Hispanic-looking lady to the short lady with pale skin. "Near the Chrysler Building."

The Hispanic-looking woman pulled out her cell phone and made a call.

"Dr. Hospodar," she said. "We have a swarm."

The two woman broke into a dead run towards the Chrysler Building.

CHAPTER 34: SAVED BY THE DONUTS

"D.C.," yelled Sidney to Diaper Chimp as the chimp took a second bite of the eagle's beak. "If you don't come here right now, I'm eating all the donuts myself!"

Sidney picked the powdered-sugar donut off of the metal railing that surrounded the Eagle Level Terrace on the sixty-first floor of the Chrysler Building. Overacting beyond dignity, Sidney made an elaborate show of opening his mouth and pretending to eat the donut.

Diaper Chimp flashed by. He ripped the donut out of Sidney's hand and landed on the metal railing like a bird landing on a feeder. Diaper Chimp bit into the donut. Sidney saw powdered sugar at the corner of the chimp's mouth. Sidney took baby steps towards the chimp.

"Easy D.C., nice and easy." Sidney lifted a jelly donut from the railing and held it out as he approached the chimp.

"Here you go buddy, here's a jelly donut." Diaper Chimp grabbed the donut from Sidney and chomped on it. As he did, Sidney lifted Diaper Chimp from the railing and rested him on Sidney's hip. The chimp felt hot as an oven door to Sidney, and he smelled of chimp sweat.

The trash-can sized swarm of bees was ten floors below Sidney and Diaper Chimp.

"Whatever got into you out there?" clucked Sidney. With one hand Sidney tried to open the heavy metal door that led inside, but the wind pressed against the door, making it hard to open.

The bees were five stories below Sidney.

Sidney said, "I have to put you down to open this door." Sidney put Diaper Chimp on the paving bricks of the Eagle Level Terrace.

The bees were one story down from Diaper Chimp.

Sidney opened the door with both hands. Diaper Chimp scampered inside the Eagle Level. Sidney entered the building. A gust of wind closed the door behind him.

The mass of bees reached the Eagle Level Terrace. They swarmed over the eagle that Diaper Chimp had just bitten, covering the eagle's chin like a lumberjack's beard.

Sidney put his face to a window on the Eagle Level.

"Look at all those bees, D.C.," said Sidney. "What are they doing up here?"

Diaper Chimp, sitting on the floor, ate the jelly donut and ignored Sidney.

After a few moments, the swarm of bees broke up. The magnetic signature they were tracking had disappeared, blocked by the stainless-steel and brick walls of the Chrysler Building. Heavy rain started to fall. The bees left the Eagle Level Terrace and flew towards a microwave transmission disc that sat on the roof of a fifty-story building one block away.

At the foot of the Chrysler Building two women wearing honey-colored lab coats stopped running in the drenching rain. The short, pale-faced woman frowned at the little TV screen on her RFID tracker.

"I thought we had a swarm, but now the bees are roaming," said she to the tall, Hispanic-looking woman, who looked at her own RFID tracker. Rain flattened the pale woman's dyed blonde hair against her head, and it dripped onto her RFID tracker. "Is the rain interfering with my signal?"

"No," said the Hispanic-looking woman. "My reader is showing the same. The bees lost their target. I'll call Dr. Hospodar and tell her. She will not be happy."

CHAPTER 35: BUSTED

Sidney sat on the very-last seat of the very-last subway car. Diaper Chimp perched on his lap. It was mid-day on Saturday. Sidney groomed Diaper Chimp from behind as the chimp looked out the window and watched the dark subway tunnel slide by.

Sidney said, "What was going on with you and that Chrysler Building eagle?"

Diaper Chimp ignored Sidney.

"I thought maybe the eagle's stainless steel reminded you of your cage."

Diaper Chimp continued to look out the window.

Sidney said, "Remember that freeze thing you did, when my mom came into my room?"

Diaper Chimp locked all his joints and fell sideways on the seat of the subway car.

Sidney said, "That's it. People think you're a stuffed animal when you do that." Sidney showed Diaper Chimp two hand signs. "These are the ASL signs for 'FREEZE' and 'UNFREEZE'. Once you learn these, I'm taking you to the Central Park Zoo."

Sidney and Diaper Chimp entered the Tisch Children's Zoo in Central Park. Diaper Chimp sat on Sidney's shoulders and hid underneath Sidney's pulled-up hood. Sidney smelled animal manure, but the smell was pleasant, for it reminded him of Pop-Pop, who had taken Sidney to this zoo a hundred times.

Sidney was about to take Diaper Chimp to see the snow monkeys when he noticed a young girl handing out zoo brochures to zoo visitors. The girl was dressed in a brown safari outfit, she was about Sidney's age, and she wore a badge that said 'Junior Volunteer - Brooklyn'. The girl looked like she might have been born in India, for she had large dark eyes and a braid of thick black hair that fell down her back. She was skinny, all arms and legs, but the broad safari hat and the safari outfit made her look older than she probably was.

She was, without a doubt, the prettiest girl that Sidney had ever seen.

The girl said to a middle-aged Muslim woman, "The Tisch Children's Zoo is open from ten to five today." Sidney was surprised by the girl's accent; it sounded nothing like the melodic accent of Sidney's Indian teachers at Fairchild.

Sidney wanted to get a closer look at the girl, but he was too frightened to approach her and ask her for a program. He took two shuffling steps towards her, pulled out a map from his pocket, and pretended to read it as he eavesdropped on her conversations with zoo visitors.

The Indian girl said to a group of first-graders, "That's the George Delacorte Musical Clock, built in 1965. The bronze monkeys ring the bell every..."

"I don't get it, D.C.," Sidney whispered. "Her badge says she's from Brooklyn, but her accent sounds nothing like a Brooklyn accent." Diaper Chimp started pulling Sidney's hair.

Sidney said, "Okay, I get it, you're bored." Sidney walked down a zoo path and turned a corner. He pointed at a half-dozen goats eating feed in a pen. Sidney felt Diaper Chimp stiffen.

"Easy, D.C.," Sidney whispered. "They're just goats." Diaper Chimp's legs tightened around Sidney's neck. "D.C., you're choking me."

"SSSSSS," hissed Diaper Chimp.

"You're afraid of a few goats?" Sidney hustled over to a different pen in which raccoons nosed around. Diaper Chimp, still hiding in Sidney's hood, tried to stand up when he saw the raccoons.

"What's wrong with you?" said Sidney.

"WRAHHH," growled Diaper Chimp. He bobbed up and down inside of Sidney's hood. Sidney had to get Diaper Chimp out of his hood so that he could calm him down. He spied a deserted path that led to an exhibit that was closed for renovations. Sidney walked down the empty path and sat on a wooden bench next to an unused popcorn stand with a red plastic tarp on it.

Although the stand was closed it still smelled of popcorn, and it partially hid Sidney and Diaper Chimp from view. Sidney lifted Diaper Chimp from his shoulders and sat the chimp on his lap.

Diaper Chimp was agitated. He hopped back and forth on Sidney's lap. His toes dug into Sidney's thighs. Sidney took a cream donut out of his backpack and offered it to Diaper Chimp. The chimp slapped the donut out of Sidney's hand.

Sidney said, "What's the matter? Are you afraid of the raccoons?"

Diaper Chimp fingerspelled, "N-O."

Sidney saw that the hair on Diaper Chimp's back was standing up.

Sidney said, "Then why are you freaking out? I thought that being around other animals would make you comfortable."

Diaper Chimp fingerspelled, "N-O."

"I can't fix the problem until I ---" Sidney stopped talking. The girl in the safari outfit was standing right next to the closed popcorn stand, staring at Diaper Chimp.

She said to Sidney, in that unfamiliar accent, "Your chimp knows how to fingerspell, doesn't he?"

Hiding his left hand behind his leg, Sidney signed, 'FREEZE'. Diaper Chimp locked up all his joints and became rigid.

Sidney said to the girl, "He's a stuffed animal, see?" Sidney held Diaper Chimp sideways. "I'm just a crazy kid, crazy like talking to stuffed animals."

The girl in the safari hat said, "I know sign language. I just saw you make the 'FREEZE' sign." She made the 'FREEZE' sign, ten fingers tickling the invisible piano keys. "That chimp is real. And he understands sign language."

Without any 'UNFREEZE' sign from Sidney, Diaper Chimp unfroze and jumped into the girl's arms.

CHAPTER 36: BROOKE MALHOTRA

The girl in the safari hat broke into a wide grin as she held Diaper Chimp. She was so pretty when she smiled, with perfect white teeth, that Sidney thought he would faint. Sidney only wished that the beautiful Indian girl was smiling at him instead of at a small chimp wearing a diaper. The girl sat down on the bench next to Sidney and held Diaper Chimp on her lap. Sidney smelled what he guessed was Irish Spring soap.

She said to Diaper Chimp, "Aren't you the cutest ever! What's your name?"

Sidney said, "I named him Diaper Chimp, because he likes to wear a diaper."

The girl ignored Sidney.

Diaper Chimp fingerspelled, "D-C."

She said, "Are you kidding? Did you just fingerspell 'D-C'? Is that your name, D.C.?"

Sidney said, "I call him D.C. for short."

The girl in the safari hat paid no attention to Sidney.

Diaper Chimp fingerspelled, "Y-E-S."

The girl said, "Oh my God! You can understand human speech!" The girl hooked a thumb at Sidney and said to Diaper Chimp, "What's his name?"

Diaper Chimp fingerspelled, "P-O-O-P."

The girl burst out laughing. Sidney was angry that the girl was ignoring him.

He said, "Just because you're pretty, doesn't mean you can ignore people when they talk."

No reaction from the girl, which made Sidney even angrier. It was clear to Sidney that she found the chimp more interesting than he. Sidney was about to grab Diaper Chimp from the girl when she took off her safari hat and put it on Diaper Chimp. The girl wore two hearing aids. Sidney thought for a moment. Hearing aids. Odd accent. The girl knows sign language and can fingerspell.

Sidney said in a loud voice, "I am the Wizard Of Oz."

No reaction from the girl.

Sidney realized why the girl wasn't responding to his lame repartee: she was deaf. Sidney got up from the wooden bench and stood in front of the girl. The instant Sidney came into the girl's view, she looked at him with her big brown eyes.

Sidney found it difficult to speak, but he managed to say, "His name is Diaper Chimp, D.C. for short. He's amazing, isn't he?"

The girl said, "He's unbelievable. Did you teach him sign language and fingerspelling?"

Sidney fingerspelled, "Y-E-S."

The girl smiled at Sidney. Suddenly he couldn't remember his name.

The girl said, "Where did you get him?"

Sidney said, "I found him in a tunnel in Grand Central. He was in a cage that had fallen from this weird train."

The girl coed to Diaper Chimp, "You fell off a train, poor little guy." She said to Sidney, "Does he live with you?"

Sidney said, "For now."

"In Manhattan?"

Sidney said, "Yes."

The girl frowned. "You know that living in a human household is a horrible environment for a chimp." Sidney had read as much.

"Yes, I know, he's not my pet," said Sidney. "He was in a lab of some sort before I found him. I'm trying to figure out what would be best for him. I've only had him for three days."

The girl said, "You don't have him on a leash or a collar. Does he listen to you?"

"Not even a little bit. But I think he likes me, so he hangs out with me. Look at this." Sidney pushed aside the hair on Diaper Chimp's skull. "Feel this groove in his skull, right here."

The girl felt the indentation that ringed Diaper Chimp's skull and gasped, "You've been experimented on. How cruel!" She grabbed Diaper Chimp and hugged him. Sidney thought the girl was about to cry. Sidney wished he were a chimp.

Sidney looked at her name tag with 'Zoo Volunteer - Brooklyn' written on it and said, "What part of Brooklyn are you from?"

"I was born and raised in Queens. Jackson Heights."

"Why does your tag say 'Brooklyn'?"

The girl said, "That's my name, Brooklyn Malhotra. Everybody calls me Brooke."

Sidney extended his hand. "I'm Sidney Mayo."

Sidney notice that Brooke stared at his lips as he spoke, and he figured that she must be lip reading.

As she shook Sidney's hand she said, "Mayo, like the County in Ireland?"

Sidney said, "That's right."

Brooke said, "What grade are you in?"

Sidney said, "Sixth."

Brooke said, "Same as me. What school?"

"Fairchild Academy."

Brooke wrinkled her nose. "You're rich."

"I'm not rich. My dad fixes boilers at Grand Central Terminal."

Brooke said, "How come you're going to Fairchild?"

Sidney lowered his eyes and mumbled, "Scholarship."

The girl's eyes grew wide. "I took that same scholarship test, in kindergarten. Fairchild didn't give me a scholarship."

Sidney said, "Sorry."

Brooke said, "That's okay. I go to Renaissance School in Queens, which I absolutely love. They have softball, a dance team, cheerleading, lots of stuff I like."

Sidney wondered how a deaf girl could hear the music well enough to be on the dance team, but he said nothing. Brooke looked at her watch. She stood up and tried to hand Diaper Chimp back to Sidney, but the chimp didn't want to let go of her.

"Gotta go back to work," she said. She took her safari hat off of Diaper Chimp and lifted his arms from around her neck.

As Brooke handed Diaper Chimp to Sidney she said, "Thanks for letting me play with your chimp. You can bring him back any time; I'm here every day after school."

Sidney said, "I think he likes you more than me."

Brooke took a few steps away from Sidney, then stopped. She turned to Sidney and said, "By the way, I know you figured out that I'm deaf. You didn't say a word about it. That was cool."

Sidney tried to speak, but his tongue had stopped working.

Brooke said, "Goodbye Sidney. Goodbye Diaper Chimp."

Diaper Chimp wiggled his tiny hand and fingers at Brooke Malhotra.

Brooke giggled and said, "D.C. just signed 'GOODBYE!'!"

Sidney stared at Diaper Chimp and said, "Hey! I didn't teach you the sign for 'GOODBYE!'!"

"WRAAHHHHH," hooted Diaper Chimp.

CHAPTER 37: APPLEBY AT THE DOOR

Five hours later, Sidney Mayo sat on his bed. He was so excited about having met Brooke Malhotra that he had forgotten to take off his jacket. Sidney felt overheated. He couldn't figure out why, and didn't care.

Sidney had Brooke Malhotra on the brain.

"Honestly, D.C., she's the coolest girl ever. Brooke Malhotra! Even her name is cool, don't you think?" said Sidney.

Diaper Chimp hung upside down from the crystal chandelier in the middle of Sidney's bedroom, unpeeling a banana. As each peel came off the banana, Diaper Chimp flipped it at Sidney. Sidney tried blocking the flying peels, but his infatuation with Brooke Malhotra and his serious lack of hand-eye coordination kept him from intercepting a single peel. By the end of the game, Sidney smelled of banana.

Suddenly, Diaper Chimp dropped his banana. He jumped from the chandelier to the carpeted floor of Sidney's bedroom. The chimp hurled himself up through the trap door into the attic space, and closed the trap door behind him.

Sidney remembered that the last time Diaper Chimp acted this way, a visitor had come. Moments later Sidney heard someone knock on the front door of the Vanderbilt Apartment. He heard his mother walk to the door and open it.

Sidney's mother said, "Mr. Appleby." Her voice was cold. "Can I help you?"

Sidney put his ear to the front door of his bedroom and listened to the conversation between Stuart Appleby and his mother.

Stuart Appleby say, "Sorry to bother you, Mrs. Mayo. One of our customers lost a chimpanzee in the terminal. We think it may be hiding out somewhere. Mind if I take a quick look around the apartment for it?"

Mrs. Mayo said, "I would certainly know if there was a chimpanzee in *my* apartment."

Sidney chuckled that his mild-mannered mother was rubbing in Appleby's face the fact that the Mayos, and not Appleby, lived in the Vanderbilt Apartment.

Appleby said, "I'm not trying to frighten you. But a few years back a chimp in New England got loose and ripped off some poor lady's lips and hands."

Sidney stomped his foot in anger; Appleby had indeed frightened his mother. She was going to let him in the apartment to look for Diaper Chimp.

Mrs. Mayo said, "A chimp, tearing off a woman's hands, how awful! By all means, Mr. Appleby, come in, make sure there's not a wild chimp in here."

Sidney heard the hinge squeak as his mother opened the front door to the Vanderbilt Apartment. Sidney looked around his bedroom for chimp evidence. No diapers; he had thrown them down the trash chute. No chimp food lying around anymore; Diaper Chimp wouldn't eat it.

Sidney heard Appleby walk down the hall towards his bedroom door. The crate! Where was Diaper Chimp's crate? Sidney remembered that he had hidden the metal crate in his attic and had covered it with a red Christmas blanket. The banana that Diaper Chimp had been eating sat on the floor. Sidney picked it up and took a bite so that the bite mark would be human-sized.

Sidney heard a knock on the door to his bedroom.

Sidney said, "Who is it?"

"Stuart Appleby."

Sidney said, "What do you want?"

Sidney's mother, on the other side of his bedroom door, said, "He's looking for a wild chimpanzee. Let him in, Sidney."

Sidney opened his bedroom door. "I've got nothing to hide. Do you snooping and get out of here."

CHAPTER 38: APPLEBY IN THE BEDROOM

Stuart Appleby walked into Sidney's bedroom. Sidney's mother stayed in the hallway. Appleby wore his Volunteer Auxiliary Police uniform, even though it was eight o'clock on a Saturday night. The uniform smelled of cigarettes. Sidney noticed that Appleby was walking shoulders back, chest out, with no body motion from his waist on up.

Appleby stood in the middle of Sidney's bedroom and did a slow, 360 degree turn.

Sidney said, "G.C.T. isn't a zoo. Why are you looking for a chimpanzee?"

Appleby said, "Only those with 'secret' security clearance - like me - are privy to that information." He pulled his wooden baton from his weapons belt. He used it to point to a drawer in Sidney's dresser.

Appleby said, "A chimp could be hiding in that drawer. Open it."

Sidney's heart jumped. Appleby was pointing to the very drawer that Sidney has put Diaper Chimp in that first night. Thank heavens Diaper Chimp hadn't listened to Sidney and had set up his bedroom in the attic.

Sidney opened the drawer. "Take a look."

Appleby looked in the deep drawer. No chimp.

Sidney said, "Be sure to check under the bed. That's where I keep all my zoo animals."

Appleby slid his wooden baton into its proper place on his weapons belt. "Clever. You're using reverse-irony on me, to keep me from looking under your bed." Appleby fished out a long, black flashlight from his weapons belt. "It won't work."

Appleby dropped to his knees and shined the flashlight under Sidney's bed.

Sidney said, "It's called reverse-psychology, not reverse-irony. And you can look under the bed all you want."

Appleby popped his head up beside the bed. He looked surprised, as if he really had expected to find a chimp stashed under Sidney's bed. Appleby tried to get up from his knees, but as he did his wooden baton caught the underside of Sidney's nightstand. He lost his balance and lurched forward into Sidney's bathroom. He reached out to Sidney's sink for balance and got a glob of toothpaste on the cuff of his left sleeve. Sidney decided not to mention it. Appleby checked himself out in Sidney's bathroom mirror and straightened his silver-star badge.

Sidney's mother stuck her head into Sidney's bedroom and said, "Mr. Appleby, be sure to check the attic." She pointed to the trap door through which Diaper Chimp had bounded not two minutes earlier.

Sidney felt himself getting red-faced. He said, "Mom, there's nothing up there. The only way into the attic is through this trap door. I'd know if a wild chimpanzee was living up there."

Appleby said, "I bet you would." Appleby, who now smelled of toothpaste, pulled a chair beneath the wooden trap door. He looked Sidney in the eye and gave him a vicious smile. "Why don't we check for a chimp in the attic."

Sidney's heart jumped in his throat. If Appleby finds Diaper Chimp, his family will be kicked out of the apartment!

Appleby stood on a chair and pushed open the trap door. He boosted himself up into the attic. He sat on the rim of the trap door, his legs dangling down into Sidney's bedroom, as he looked around the attic.

Appleby said, "I thought I'd find a chimp up here."

CHAPTER 39: APPLEBY GETS A SURPRISE

Sidney's heart beat so fast he could hear his pulse in his ears. Appleby had discovered Diaper Chimp! Diaper Chimp would be returned to The Foundation and experimented on!

Sidney shouted, "No, no, no!"

He stood on the chair and pushed himself through the trap door, past Appleby and his toothpaste smell, and into the attic. Sidney wasn't going to let Appleby touch Diaper Chimp. He'd open the skylight and let Diaper Chimp escape into Manhattan first. Sidney grabbed the handle that opened the skylight. Sidney started to call Diaper Chimp's name.

"D-,"

He looked around and saw that Diaper Chimp was gone. So were the crate and the red Christmas blanket. Sidney looked in the corner where Diaper Chimp kept his twig bed and diapers. The attic was empty, except for an index card that sat in the middle of the attic floor. Sidney was stunned. Where was the crate? And where was Diaper Chimp?

Appleby picked up the index card. He read it, and handed it to Sidney.

Appleby said, "What's this all about?"

Typed on the index card were these words:

Love, Pop-Pop

Sidney pressed the index card to his chest. He barked out a nervous laugh.

Appleby said, "What's so funny?" Moonlight streamed in from the skylight, lighting Appleby and the attic from overhead. Appleby's huge police hat shadowed his face, so Sidney couldn't see his expression. But Sidney saw that Appleby gripped his wooden police baton with two hands, squeezing the baton so tightly that Appleby's hands were turning red.

Sidney said, "What's so funny? You being so sure that there was a chimp up here. And you being so wrong."

Appleby said, "I thought...the diapers."

Sidney stiffened. "What diapers?"

Appleby didn't seem to hear Sidney. He climbed down out of the attic trap door, and walked out of Sidney's bedroom.

As Appleby passed Mrs. Mayo she said to him, "That's it? Aren't you going to check the rest of the apartment for the wild chimpanzee?"

Appleby muttered, "I was so sure...the diapers in the trash..." He exited the Vanderbilt Apartment without shutting the front door behind him.

Mrs. Mayo turned to Sidney and said, "Sidney, I'm frightened. A crazed chimp got out of his cage right her in G.C.T.!" She must have been working on a fruit display, for Sidney smelled strawberries on her.

Sidney smiled. "Is that a fact."

"Yes that's a fact. There's nothing funny about it. This chimp might pull off people's lips."

Sidney said, "Your lips are safe, Mom."

"How can you be sure?"

Sidney was trying hard not to crack up. "Just a hunch."

Mrs. Mayo said, "I'm still afraid. Would you check my bedroom, to make sure the chimp isn't hiding there?"

Sidney said, "No problem, Mom. I am positive I will not find a chimp in your bedroom."

Sidney's mom said, "But wait: what will you do if you find the chimp?"

Sidney said, "I'll buy him Indian food and teach him sign language."

Sidney's mom laughed. "You're such a kidder."

CHAPTER 40: THE CRATE IS FOUND

Stuart Appleby entered his office/workshop/bedroom. He sighed as he took off his weapons belt and placed it on the shelf next to his desk. A long-forgotten heat duct ran behind Appleby's office wall, less than a foot from Appleby's computer camera. Diaper Chimp was sitting in the duct, listening to Appleby talk to himself and eating a glazed donut he had stolen from Sidney. In his toes he held a jar of peanut butter, a can of lighter fluid, and an index card with typing on it.

Appleby sat down at his workbench and rubbed his eyes. He saw the toothpaste smear on his cuff and tried to rub it off without success. He still smelled of toothpaste. Appleby pushed a button atop the camera that perched on his computer. A red light glowed on the camera.

Appleby spoke to his camera. "Personal log. Based on the diapers found in Sidney Mayo's trash, Officer Appleby searched suspect's bedroom."

Diaper Chimp had spent his first night of freedom investigating all of G.C.T. while Sidney had been sleeping. The chimp had quickly discovered that Appleby was a dishonest sneak who was rooting through Sidney's trash. Since Diaper Chimp took pride in being the sneakiest and most dishonest mammal in all of G.C.T., if not in all of New York City, he felt it was his personal obligation to out-sneak Appleby.

Appleby paused for a moment to collect himself. "The search of Mayo's bedroom was unsuccessful."

Diaper Chimp had anticipated Appleby's surprise inspection, and had removed everything from the attic the night before. And while Appleby had been snooping around Sidney's bedroom, Diaper Chimp had been in Appleby's quarters doing a bit of redecorating.

Appleby took his star police badge - the one which contained the hidden camera - off of his chest and plugged it into his computer.

Appleby said to his computer camera, "Officer Appleby was wearing the badge-cam. He will examine the badge-cam recording to see if it reveals any evidence of the missing chimp."

This should be fun, thought Diaper Chimp.

Appleby pushed a button. The computer whirred. Snow appeared on his screen.

"This can't be right," said Appleby. He punched another button. Nothing but snow on the badge-cam recording.

"Now how did that happen?" said Appleby.

I fried your camera, thought Diaper Chimp. Doctors at The Foundation had implanted a small metal box at the base of Diaper Chimp's skull. This box gave Diaper Chimp the ability to create an electromagnetic pulse at will. The moment Appleby had knocked on the front door, Diaper Chimp had fired off a pulse that had disabled Appleby's badge-cam.

Appleby said to his computer camera, "Appleby will focus on finding the metal crate which housed the chimp."

You're going to find the crate quicker than you think, thought Diaper Chimp.

There was a knock on Stuart Appleby's door.

"Who is it?" said Appleby as he turned off his computer camera.

"Captain Branch."

"Come."

Captain Branch walked into Appleby's office.

Captain Branch said, "You had success finding the crate?"

Appleby said, "Nada."

Captain Branch said, "Then why did you send me an email, telling me to come to your office right away?"

Appleby said, "I sent no such email."

Captain Branch tapped a button on her cell phone and showed the phone to Appleby. "Is this your email address?"

Appleby read the message on the Captain's phone. "Yes."

"Unless you're telling me someone hacked your email, you sent this message." Captain Branch pointed at the far corner of Appleby's workshop/office. "And what's under that red blanket over there?"

Appleby huffed, "There is no red blanket..." He twisted in his swivel chair and looked where the Captain was pointing.

He saw a red Christmas blanket covering a large, rectangular object.

Captain Branch walked over to the red blanket. "Do you not see this?"

Appleby sputtered, "I see it, but I didn't put it there."

Captain Branch said, "You didn't send me an email, and you didn't put this box in your office, is that right?"

Appleby said, "Sometimes truth can be stranger than fiction."

Captain Branch said, "Neither is stranger than you." She pulled off the red blanket. There, in the corner of Stuart Appleby's office, sat the stainless-steel crate that had imprisoned Diaper Chimp.

"Mr. Appleby, I've had ten men looking for this crate non-stop for three solid days, and it shows up in your office. You've got some explaining to do."

Diaper Chimp climbed up the heat duct and onto the roof of G.C.T. carrying the peanut butter, lighter fluid and index card. He stood on the roof of G.C.T.

One down. Three more scores to settle tonight, thought Diaper Chimp. Peanut butter for Tab. Lighter fluid for Candyce. An index card for my visit to Fitzroy's kiosk. Sooner or later, these people are going to have to realize something; nobody gives Sidney a hard time but me.

CHAPTER 41: FUNDS

Early Sunday morning, Sidney and Diaper Chimp entered Pop-Pop's office. Sidney held two index cards: the one he had found leaning against the model of the Chrysler Building, and the one Appleby had picked up from the attic floor.

He said, "The type on these cards looks familiar. I want to see if they were typed on Pop-Pop's typewriter."

Sidney sat down at Pop-Pop's desk and typed 'Love, Pop-Pop' on a blank index card. He held the three index cards next to each other.

Sidney said, "D.C. check this out! These two index cards I found were typed on Pop-Pop's typewriter. Now I'm completely freaked out." Sidney looked around Pop-Pop's office and shivered. "Maybe Mom's smell-séances are actually working, and Pop-Pop's ghost is here."

Yesterday Sidney had put a dollar in Pop-Pop's money box.

Sidney smiled at Diaper Chimp and said, "I wonder if Pop-Pop's ghost left me any money."

Sidney opened the money box.

It was stuffed to the brim with money.

"It can't be," whispered Sidney. He counted the money. Three-hundred-sixteen dollars, all in small bills. Sidney held the money to his nose.

Sidney said, "This money smells like cinnamon. I wonder if Mom put the money in here." Sidney put some of the money in his pocket, the rest he put back in the box. "I'll leave a hundred for Pop-Pop, give a hundred to Mom, and keep a hundred for myself. Come on, D.C. I've got to take a walk to try and figure this out."

CHAPTER 42: THE BULLY IS BULLIED

It was Sunday morning. Sidney walked on 42nd Street with Diaper Chimp sitting on his shoulders, peering out from underneath Sidney's hood. A flashing light atop a police car down the street caught Sidney's eye. The police car was parked on the sidewalk. Fitzroy the Jamaican street vendor stood next to it.

Sidney said to Diaper Chimp, "Good, the cops are talking to Fitzroy. Let's see if he got busted for selling pot."

Sidney strolled towards Fitzroy. Fitzroy was talking to a police officer, a woman, skinny, with the dried skin of a smoker. The policewoman wrote on a small pad. Sidney expected Fitzroy to be in handcuffs, but instead he was walking around, pointing up and down 42nd Street. Once Sidney looked down the street, he understood why.

Fitzroy's armored kiosk had been flattened. The inch-thick steel bars that had covered Fitzroy's windows had been twisted into figure eights and tossed on the sidewalk. The drop-down metal shutters had been ripped into a dozen pieces and stacked like firewood in the middle of 42nd Street. Sidney could smell Fitzroy's cooked chicken that lay in the street like so much litter.

Fitzroy pointed at the hunks of metal and said, "Look at 'dis shutter. It's thick steel, and the burglars tore it up like newspaper."

The policewoman said, "Did the burglars take anything?"

Fitzroy said, "I had ten thousand in lottery tickets and ten thousand in cash. They took it from my kiosk, and threw it in here." Fitzroy opened the lid to a dumpster in a nearby alleyway. It was the same dumpster in which Fitzroy had imprisoned Sidney two days earlier.

Fitzroy said, "I counted the cash, I'm only missing a few hundred. Who would go to all the trouble of breakin' up my shop, but not steal everything?" As Fitzroy was talking to the

policewoman, he saw Sidney. Fitzroy froze. He stared at Sidney, but the stare wasn't the hard, thuggish look that Fitzroy usually reserved for Sidney.

Fitzroy looked like he was afraid of Sidney.

Fitzroy pulled an index card from his shirt pocket, read from it, and shook his head 'no'. From beneath the collar of his Bob Marley tee-shirt Fitzroy fished out a charm in the shape of a marijuana cigarette that hung from a gold chain. He kissed it. Fitzroy took a step backwards from Sidney.

The policewoman said to Fitzroy, "Is that all for the police report?"

Fitzroy mumbled, "Yeah, that's all." He turned he back on Sidney and walked away.

Sidney whispered to Diaper Chimp, "What's gotten into Fitzroy? It looks like he's afraid of me."

Diaper Chimp bobbed up and down inside Sidney's hood and panted, "HOO-HOO-HOO!!"

"Easy, buddy," said Sidney to Diaper Chimp. "Why are you so happy?"

CHAPTER 43: UNWANTED COMPANY

It was early Monday morning, the day of the Chrysler Building model competition. Sidney exited Grand Central Terminal with his Chrysler Building model nested in a box.

There, waiting for him on 42nd Street, stood Fitzroy the Jamaican. His eyes were glassy, and he smelled like pot.

Fitzroy said, "Something important in dat' box?" Sidney heard a quiver in Fitzroy's voice.

Sidney said, "No."

Fitzroy said, "You're lying. I have to protect 'dat box."

Fitzroy grabbed for Sidney's box. Sidney turned his back on Fitzroy, trying to keep the six-foot five Jamaican from taking his box.

Sidney shouted, "Don't touch this box! I need it for school!"

Over Sidney's head, the three figures in the sculpture 'Transportation' that adorned the front of G.C.T. paid no attention as Sidney tried to block the Jamaican. Had Sidney looked up at the sculpture he would have seen a fourth figure, a tiny chimp wearing a diaper, on Mercury's hat. The chimp stood on all fours, his teeth were bared, and he glared at Fitzroy four stories below.

Fitzroy said, "I have to protect dat' box, mon!"

Sidney said, "You're not my friend. On Friday you overcharged me for a sandwich and threw me in the dumpster, remember?"

Fitzroy pulled out a wad of money and tried to hand it to Sidney.

Fitzroy said, "Here's the money back, with interest."

Sidney said, "I don't want your money! Just leave me alone." Sidney danced back and forth, trying to get by Fitzroy, but the Jamaican blocked Sidney's way.

Fitzroy said, "I'm desperate, mon'. Take the money. Just no more trouble."

Sidney said, "What trouble?"

Fitzroy said, "My kiosk was destroyed on Saturday night."

Sidney said, "That's got nothing to do with me."

Fitzroy pulled an index card from his pocket and showed it to Sidney. "Read 'dis."

Sidney read from the index card.

*Give Sidney back his money.
Protect his box on Monday.
If you don't, more of this will happen.*

The words were neatly typed.

Fitzroy said, "I found this card in my broke kiosk. No man is strong enough to tear up steel bars. You got some mean voodoo on your side. I don't want to mess wit' it."

Sidney said, "I don't care about voodoo, I have to get to school!"

Sidney saw a heavy-set couple dragging two suitcases down the street. Sidney ran behind the couple and, using them as blockers, walked towards Fairchild Academy. Fitzroy ran ahead of Sidney, matched Sidney's pace, and walked in front of him. With a large Jamaican clearing the way, Sidney's walk from G.C.T. to the Chrysler Building was the quickest of his life.

A tiny chimp in a diaper, swinging hand-over-hand on telephone wires overhead, followed Sidney and Fitzroy as their two-man parade marched down 42nd Street.

CHAPTER 44: AN UNFAIR FIGHT

Fitzroy and Sidney arrived at Fairchild Academy's private path behind the Chrysler Building that lead to the Fairchild elevators.

Fitzroy said, "School property starts on 'dis path, so I got to stop. Take 'dis sandwich. On the house."

Fitzroy handed Sidney a bag and walked away. Inside the bag was a sandwich and a ten-dollar bill. Sidney took out the ten-dollar bill and sniffed it. The money smelled like cinnamon, just like the cash that had mysteriously appeared in Pop-Pop's money box.

Sidney took two steps down the path that led to the Fairchild elevators. Waiting for him were three players from the Fairchild Academy football team. All were twelfth-graders. All were huge. And all were members of Candyce's Order Of Validus.

The oldest of the students, a tall, Asian boy who smelled of shaving cream, walked towards Sidney. The other football players followed him.

The Asian football player said, "Hey Mayo, what you got in that box?"

Sidney said, "Nothing."

The Asian football player said, "Just give me the box, Mayo. You know you can't run from all of us." The Asian boy reached out for the box. Sidney pulled it back and tried to run.

The football players charged Sidney.

Sidney saw a streak of brown fur drop from the sky and land on the back of the Asian football player, pushing him face-down onto the concrete walk. It was Diaper Chimp. Blood gushed from the boy's nose.

"WRAHHHH!" screamed Diaper Chimp. He launched himself, head first, into the chest of a heavy-set, dark-skinned football player who was trying to grab the box from Sidney. The heavy-set boy flew backwards, fell, and hit the back of his head on the sidewalk.

A third football player, long-limbed with a freckled face, advanced on Sidney, crouched in a karate position. Karate-boy stood on one leg and started to fire a roundhouse kick at Sidney's box, but Diaper Chimp flew into the side of the boy's support leg. Karate-boy's knee bent the wrong way, the boy screamed, and he crumpled to the ground. As he lay on the sidewalk, clearly out of the fight, Diaper Chimp bit him twice on the ankle.

Sidney yelled, "D.C., what are you doing here?"

Diaper Chimp ignored him. He jumped off of karate-boy, then onto the roof of a passing bus, and out of sight.

Three members of Candyce's Order Of Validus lay writhing in pain on the path that led to the Fairchild elevators. Sidney picked his way around them, entered the Fairchild elevators and pushed the button for the Eagle Level.

CHAPTER 45: THE MODEL COMPETITION

Sidney got off the elevator at the Eagle Level of Fairchild Academy with his head spinning. Fitzroy was Sidney's new best friend. Diaper Chimp had protected Sidney from Candyce's Order Of Validus.

And Teacher Murphy was waiting for him on the Eagle Level.

Sidney said, "Teacher Murphy. You're up early."

Murphy said, "I thought there might be an attempt to interfere with your arrival this morning."

Sidney said, "That just happened. A few kids in Candyce's Order tried to jump me."

Murphy looked at Sidney and said, "It would appear that you got away, unscathed."

Sidney said, "I had a little help."

Murphy said, "Put your model over here."

In the lobby of the Eagle Level sat a long table covered with a burgundy cloth. On the table were twenty-seven models of the Chrysler Building. In front of each model was a card with a number written on it in black magic marker.

Murphy said, "All the entries are numbered, so as to prevent favoritism. Put your model here, you'll be number twenty-eight." Murphy gestured to a space on the table.

Sidney put his model on the table and sat down in a roped-off area with the other contestants. Candyce Fairchild sat in the first row. Sidney sat as far away from Candyce as he could, but he could still smell her honeysuckle perfume. Sidney looked around and saw that Tab Fairchild was missing. This was odd; Candyce and Tab were always together.

Three judges entered the room and studied the models. One judge, a woman in her thirties, was a Fairchild teacher. The second judge, a man with beefy hands, wore a name tag that said he was the head of a union. Sidney heard the third judge, a man who was completely bald, introduce

himself as an architect from a firm that had a long name. The judges studied the models with Sherlock-Holmes-style magnifying glasses. All three judges jotted down notes on pads of yellow paper. By the time the judges had finished examining all the models, the Eagle Level was filled with students who had come to watch the competition.

The Dominus strode to the front of the Eagle Level and stood at the podium. The smell of his hair gel followed him. All went silent.

He said, "Welcome. Faculty. Students. Judges." His long, white scarf has slipped off his shoulder, and he flipped it back in place with an operatic hand-wave. "Each judge has written down the number of their winner. They will show their winning numbers one-by-one. Contestants, if your number is shown, please stand in front of your model."

The judge who was the Fairchild teacher said, "This is my winner." She flipped over a card. 'Seventeen' was written on it.

"Yes!" shouted Candyce Fairchild. She ran to model seventeen and stood in front of it.

The head of the union spoke. "It is clear to me that one model is superior to the rest." He flipped over a card. Sidney held his breath.

'Twenty-eight' was written on it, the number of Sidney's model. The Dominus glared at Sidney as he crossed in front of him and stood before his model. Professor Murphy caught Sidney's eye and winked at him.

The bald architect cleared his throat. If he chose a number other than twenty-eight, Sidney would be expelled from Fairchild.

The architect said, "I have admired the Chrysler Building my whole life. On that table sits the finest model of the Chrysler Building I have ever seen." He flipped over his card.

The card said 'twenty-eight'.

"No!" gasped Candyce Fairchild. She chomped down on the knuckles of both index fingers.

Sidney had won the model competition! He could stay at Fairchild until the Sixth-grade Medal was awarded in two weeks! Sidney's face felt hot, as if he had just gotten a bad sunburn. The palms of his hands hurt. Sidney saw that he had driven his fingernails into his palms and had drawn blood.

Teacher Murphy started to clap for Sidney. Two of the judges, the union head and the architect, joined in the applause, as did a half-dozen students. The rest of the audience, including the Dominus, sat on their hands.

The Dominus walked to the podium, his face so angry that Sidney could see the muscles of his jaw working. One end of the Dominus' long soccer-scarf had fallen from his neck and was dragging on the ground behind him like a kangaroo's tail, but the Dominus seemed too angry to notice.

The Dominus said through gritted teeth, "Congratulations to the winner." He seemed unable to actually utter Sidney's name. "The sixth-grade class will now board the bus to Fairchild Floating Hospital. There the topic of the Sixth-grade Medal Competition will be announced."

CHAPTER 46: KARMA

A stubby, yellow school bus carried Sidney's sixth-grade class to Fairchild Floating Hospital. Sidney sat in the back of the bus, as far as possible from the Dominus, who sat behind the driver. No one sat with Sidney, of course, for Candyce had instructed her Order Of Validus to stop anyone from sitting next to Sidney. Sometimes Sidney felt lonely because of this, but not today. He had won the model competition, and wasn't going to be expelled today! And he had defeated Candyce Fairchild for the first time in his life!

As Sidney looked out the window, he saw a ball of brown fur drop down from the sky.

"Uh-oh," said Sidney.

Two lanes over, Diaper Chimp sat on top of a yellow taxi and stared at Sidney.

Sidney fingerspelled, "N-O," to Diaper Chimp.

"Y-E-S," Diaper Chimp fingerspelled back.

Diaper Chimp bounded off of the taxi and up in the air. Sidney twisted his neck to follow Diaper Chimp, but the chimp was out of sight. Sidney heard Candyce, three rows up, talking to a freckle-faced girl with brown hair. The girl was a member of Candyce's Order Of Validus.

The freckle-faced girl said to Candyce, "Where is Tab today?"

"Sick," grunted Candyce.

Freckle Face said, "Sick sick, or allergy sick?"

Candyce said, "Allergy sick. Somebody smeared peanut butter on his pillow on Saturday night. Tab had a bad allergy reaction and woke up Sunday with a face so puffy I didn't recognize him. He's in the hospital."

Freckle Face said, "How was your weekend?"

Candyce said, "A disaster. We went to a polo match, had a nice spread laid out near the Rolls-Royce. Somehow lighter fluid got on everything and caught fire. The food and Dad's Rolls-

Royce were incinerated." Candyce twisted around and glared at Sidney. "And I lost the model competition. To Sidney Mayo!"

Sidney said, "Sorry to hear that your dad's Rolls-Royce caught fire. Happened to my lunch the other day, in the cafeteria. Ever hear of karma?"

CHAPTER 47: FRIGHTENED

The bus carrying Sidney Mayo and his sixth-grade class pulled up to Fairchild Floating Hospital, which everybody called F.F.H. F.F.H. was docked on the west side of Manhattan, where 56th Street met the Hudson River. The rest of the sixth-graders exited the bus and walked up the wide gangplank into F.F.H., but Sidney stopped to admire the hospital ship. It was as big as a cruise ship and was white, with a great red cross painted on its side.

Sidney was about to walk up the gangplank and enter F.F.H. when he heard an animal cry out behind him. Sidney turned around.

Diaper Chimp was sitting atop the bus, and he was whimpering. Sidney ran to the bus and Diaper Chimp jumped down into his arms.

Sidney said, "What's the matter? Are you hurt?" The chimp was shaking and was damp with sweat.

Diaper Chimp fingerspelled, "N-O."

Sidney stroked Diaper Chimp's hair. Diaper Chimp didn't appear injured, but he shook so much that Sidney thought he might be having a seizure.

"Are you scared?"

D.C. fingerspelled, "Y-E-S."

This surprised Sidney. Diaper Chimp had jumped off the Chrysler Building. He'd beaten up three Fairchild twelfth-graders. He'd never shown any fear.

Sidney said, "What are you afraid of?"

Diaper Chimp pointed a shaking finger at F.F.H.

"You're afraid of this hospital?"

D.C. fingerspelled, "Y-E-S."

Sidney cuddled Diaper Chimp. "Of course you'd be afraid of a hospital. You spent your whole life in one, being experimented on. Well don't you worry." Sidney opened his backpack. "Hop in."

Diaper Chimp climbed into Sidney's backpack, his little frightened eyes peering out from the see-through mesh panel of Sidney's backpack. Sidney walked to the open door of the bus that had taken him from Fairchild Academy. In the driver's seat sat a thin, African-American woman with stylish glasses.

Sidney said, "Are you going to wait for us?"

She smiled and said, "I'll be here all day. I'm taking you back to school."

Sidney said, "Can I leave my backpack on the bus?"

The bus driver said, "Sure, I'll keep an eye on it."

Sidney re-entered the bus, went to his seat and put his backpack on the floor.

Sidney said to Diaper Chimp, "You stay here, okay? I'll get you when we're done at F.F.H."

Diaper Chimp whimpered. Sidney slipped him the chicken sandwich that Fitzroy had given him. Diaper Chimp unwrapped the chicken sandwich. It smelled of peanuts and cinnamon. Diaper Chimp took a vigorous bite. This seemed to calm him down, so Sidney said goodbye and ran into Fairchild Floating Hospital.

Sidney caught up with his sixth-grade class as they stood outside a closed set of wooden double-doors.

The Dominus addressed the class.

"Who would like to see a dead person?"

CHAPTER 48: THE SURGICAL AMPHITHEATRE

"On the other side of these doors is the Surgical Amphitheatre," said the Dominus. "In it medical students are performing a knee replacement on a cadaver. Step forward, those who wish to observe it."

Sidney thought it would be interesting to see knee surgery, so he walked to the front of the class. The other sixth-graders shrank away, with looks of revulsion on their faces.

The Dominus frowned when he saw that only Sidney had stepped forward. He said, "Follow me."

Sidney entered the Surgical Amphitheatre. The large room was similar to any amphitheatre classroom you might find, with the possible exception that most amphitheatres did not have a dead person on a table in the middle of the stage. Next to this dead person stood a medical student in blue surgical gear. He fiddled with a clamp. The room smelled of alcohol.

A man's voice boomed out over the sound system, "Mr. Orakpo, don't touch that tibial jig until the knee is completely opened up."

The sound came from atop the stage. There, behind curved-glass windows, Sidney saw a man dressed in surgical scrubs with a microphone and earpiece. Sidney figured he was the instructor. Sidney saw the instructor disappear from behind the curved glass windows, then reappear moments later on the floor of the amphitheatre. The instructor grabbed the cadaver's knee and gave it a twist.

"This is the proper position for the knee!" said the instructor through his microphone, his amplified voice booming through the amphitheatre.

When the practice-surgery was finished, a royal-blue curtain dropped from the ceiling and cut the amphitheatre stage in half. The curtain concealed the cadaver, the medical student, and the observation booth overhead.

On the still-visible half of the amphitheatre stage Sidney saw a long, glass-enclosed trophy case, with gleaming metallic objection behind the glass. Sidney's class had not yet entered the amphitheatre, so he walked up on the stage and looked at the trophy case.

It contained needles. Hundreds of them. One needle in particular dwarfed the others. This needle had a grip the size of a hand drill. Atop the grip sat eight needles, each as big as a cigar. These needles were bound in a tight circle with their painful ends all pointing in the same direction. They looked to Sidney like the barrel of a gattling gun.

When Sidney saw the framed patent award below this enormous needle he gasped, "That's the very first Fairchild Needle! The one that Agatha Fairchild invented in the First World War!"

The double-doors to the amphitheatre opened. Sidney's sixth-grade class, led by the Dominus, streamed in and sat down. A tall, African-American man walked onto the amphitheatre stage and stood in front of the trophy case which contained the scary Fairchild Needle. He wore a blue suit with a calm tie, and he held a clipboard.

The man said, "I am Doctor Jamison, the President of Fairchild Floating Hospital. I am here to announce the topic for the Sixth-grade Medal Competition."

CHAPTER 49: SIDNEY'S ASSIGNMENT

Doctor Jamison walked across the stage. Sidney could smell his lime aftershave.

The doctor said, "Which of you sixth-graders can tell me what kind of work we do at F.F.H.?"

A girl with black hair stuck up her hand and said, "Boob jobs. For rich ladies."

Doctor Jamison smiled and said, "I wouldn't have put it quite that bluntly, but you are correct. F.F.H. is where people go when they want high-quality cosmetic surgery in a cruise-ship environment."

Sidney noticed that Dr. Jamison gripped his clipboard so tightly that the tendons (tendons attach muscle to bone) in his hand were sticking out from the strain. Why was the President of the hospital announcing a grade-school medal competition, and why was he so tense?

Dr. Jamison said, "For the next two weeks, you will spend half of your school day here at F.F.H. working in various departments. I want you to think of ways to make F.F.H. more profitable." Dr. Jamison raised his arm as he spoke, and Sidney saw a massive sweat stain on his white shirt.

The girl with black hair raised her hand and said, "How does F.F.H. profitability affect us?"

Dr. Jamison said, "All the profits from this hospital go to support Fairchild Academy. If we were to go out of business, so would your school. That's why we want you to really try and come up with some good ideas on how we can make more money. Two weeks from now, each of you will present your ideas to F.F.H. management. The person with the best idea wins the Sixth-grade Medal Competition. Questions?"

Candyce Fairchild asked, "Where were we be working?"

Dr. Jamison said, "The Dominus has personally placed each of you in a job that best suits your talents. Look at the list, it's posted on the double-doors."

The rest of the students ran to the double-doors and surrounded the list of names and job placements, but Sidney took his time walking over to the list. He knew his assignment would not be good.

Candyce Fairchild pointed to the chart. "I'll be working with the surgical unit, right in this room! Tab has pharmacy, how appropriate. And let's see where Mayo has been assigned." She put her red finger next to Sidney's name and burst out laughing. "The brilliant Sidney Mayo has been assigned to the department that most fits his abilities. Guys, stand aside so that Mayo can read his assignment."

Candyce flicked a finger and the students instantly parted, making a path for Sidney. He walked up to the chart and read his name.

The Dominus had assigned Sidney to housekeeping. He was going to be a janitor. How could he win the Sixth-grade Medal and stay in school when he would be cleaning toilets for the next two weeks?

CHAPTER 50: MARCELLUS BABINEAUX

The Dominus clapped his hands, and the sixth-graders turned to face him.

The Dominus said, "Sidney Mayo, take the elevator to the lowest level and report to Marcellus Babineaux in housekeeping. You'll know him when you see him. He's African-American, and he only has one arm."

Sidney entered Marcellus Babineaux's office on the basement level of Fairchild Floating Hospital. The office was neat, small, and undecorated. The smell of bleach came from a nearby closet. In the corner of the room Sidney saw an African-American man in his mid-forties. The man was trim, and his back was turned to Sidney. The man swept the floor with a broom, and he was doing it with only one arm.

Sidney stared at the ingenious rig made of plastic pipe that the man was using. The rig made the broom an extension of the man's arm. The man turned to face Sidney. Sidney, embarrassed that he had been caught gawking, looked at the floor.

The man said, "Sidney Mayo? From Fairchild Academy?"

Sidney said, "Yes."

The man said, "I'm Marcellus Babineaux. How long were you watching me sweep?"

Sidney said, "Just a few seconds."

Marcellus Babineaux said, "I like things to be neat. An old habit."

Sidney blurted out, "From your army days, sir?"

Marcellus Babineaux said, "Don't 'sir' me, I work for a living. What makes you think I was in the army?"

Sidney said, "My Pop-Pop and I used to watch army shows on TV. Guys in the army wear their ties tucked into their shirt, the way yours is tucked in. And your shoes are very shiny."

Marcellus said, "For a janitor, you mean?"

"I didn't mean it that way."

Marcellus said, "Anything else make you think I was in the army?" Marcellus looked at the place where his left arm should have been, then at Sidney.

Sidney said, "No."

Marcellus said, "This missing arm got nothing to do with your analysis of the situation?"

Sidney blushed. "People can lose arms in lots of ways, Mr. Babineaux. Industrial accidents. Cancer."

"But I didn't lose this arm that way, did I?"

Sidney said, "I can't honestly say, Mr. Babineaux."

"What's your honest guess?"

Sidney looked down at his feet and said, "My guess is that you lost your arm in the army."

"You're correct. Catch," said Marcellus. He softly tossed the broom to Sidney. Sidney grabbed for the broom with both hands, but of course he missed it. The broom fell to the floor with a loud crack.

Marcellus said, "Sports not your thing?"

Sidney said, "I'm the most uncoordinated kid in the sixth grade."

Marcellus said, "Pick up the broom and follow me. You're gonna help me clean Crazy Princess Katarina's room. Meet me at room 305."

CHAPTER 51: THE CRAZY PRINCESS

Sidney pushed a housekeeping cart loaded with cleaning fluids and plastic bags down the hall of F.F.H. Marcellus Babineaux was waiting for him outside of room 305. The sign on the door said, 'Katarina', with no last name.

Marcellus said to Sidney, "Crazy Princess Katarina is incontinent. Do you know what that means?"

Sidney said, "She wets herself."

Marcellus pushed open the door. The smell of urine assaulted Sidney. In the bed was a very old woman. She was shriveled and frail. Her hair, though, was incongruously thick and luminous, and it made a long, grey braid on her pillow. The woman lay on her back, eyes open, and she shrugged her shoulders, over and over. Her face was a wreath of misery. Beneath her bed was a puddle of urine.

Marcellus said, "Clean it up."

Sidney grabbed paper towels, got on his knees, and began to sop up the urine.

Sidney said, "Mr. Babineaux, F.F.H. does cosmetic surgery. Why is she here?"

Marcellus said, "The cops found her wandering in Central Park. No I.D., babbles all day in Russian, tells everybody she's a princess. F.F.H. took her in so that they could say they serve the community." Sidney swabbed up the urine on the floor as Marcellus emptied the trash and dusted the tray table.

Sidney said, "What's wrong with her?"

Marcellus said, "She never sleeps."

Sidney stood up to throw out the paper towels. Katarina looked at him through her twilight eyes.

"Doktor, help me sleep, please," she said to Sidney as she rolled her shoulders.

Sidney said, "I'm sorry. All I can do is clean your room." He felt heartless.

Marcellus said, "We're done here Sidney, let's move out."

Katarina reached out towards Sidney and said, "Doktor, help me sleep." Her words tore at Sidney.

Sidney said, "Mr. Babineaux, can I talk to her for a minute?" Marcellus Babineaux nodded. Sidney put his paper towels down, washed his hands, and took the old woman's hand.

Katarina said, "Small hand, Doktor."

Sidney said, "I'm in the sixth grade."

Katarina said, "Young Doktor." She grasped Sidney's hand with both of her hands. "Help me sleep. Please."

As Sidney held Princess Katarina's hands he studied her. Not sleeping. Shrugging her shoulders. Lustrous hair in a braid. Sidney's brain began to fire off unconnected thoughts. Russian Princess...a long braid of rich hair.....Rapunzel with her long hair...fairy tales....Princess Katarina...

"The Princess and the Pea," Sidney whispered.

Marcellus said, "What was that?"

"The Princess and the Pea, the Princess who couldn't sleep because she felt a pea through her mattress," said Sidney. "Could we sit her up and see what she's sleeping on?"

Marcellus said nothing, but he walked over to Katarina, and with one powerful arm, gently sat her up. Sidney felt her mattress. It was warm and wet with urine, but Sidney didn't care. He was feeling for something, anything that didn't belong there.

Nothing....nothing....nothing....then he touched something hard. Sidney reached beneath the sheet. He felt hard plastic, pulled it out, and held it up to the light.

It was a plastic hair brush.

Sidney said, "She's been sleeping on this hairbrush. Bristles out."

Katarina said something to Sidney that sounded like Russian. She grabbed the hair brush from Sidney's hand and started brushing her hair. Marcellus gave Princess Katarina clean bed sheets. He laid her back in her bed, gentle as a mother putting her baby in the crib. Sidney though he saw a hint of a smile on Marcellus' face. The moment Princess Katarina's back hit the clean sheets, she closed her eyes.

"Good Doktor," Katarina said.

Marcellus and Sidney piled their cleaning supplies on the cart. By the time they ushered themselves and the cart out the door, Katarina was asleep. Sidney and Marcellus stood outside of Katarina's room. Marcellus looked at Sidney.

"My, my, my," said Marcellus. "I was told that something like this might happen. I got to make a decision about you."

Sidney said, "I'm sorry, Mr. Babineaux. Janitors don't treat patients, I know that, but Katarina was suffering. I had to help her, I just had to."

Marcellus stroked his chin. He seemed to be making up his mind.

Marcellus said, "I've been ordered to give you lots of latitude. The question is, how much? Sidney, what do you think of homeless people?"

Sidney though it was an odd question, but he said, "I'm fine with them."

Marcellus said, "Good, because I'm one of them."

CHAPTER 52: UNDER THE OVERPASS

Sidney said, "You're homeless?"

Marcellus said, "Me and some homeless vets live beneath an overpass in Central Park, off of 97th Street. Would you like to visit our camp?"

Sidney said, "Right now?"

Marcellus said, "Right now. I'll get you back in time for the bus. We live beneath the Central Park Loop, in a place we call Camp Lucky Strike."

Sidney said, "I'll go, as long as I can bring my backpack and a friend. They're on the bus."

Sidney and the one-armed janitor took two subways to get to 97th Street and Park Avenue. As soon as the first subway lurched out of the station, Sidney opened his backpack and Diaper Chimp climbed out. It took most of the first subway ride for Sidney to explain how he had come to befriend Diaper Chimp. By the end of the subway ride, Diaper Chimp was sitting on Marcellus Babineaux's lap, eating peanuts that Marcellus was cracking open with one hand.

Sidney said, "I don't understand how you could be homeless. You must make enough money to have a house."

Marcellus said, "I like living off the grid."

Sidney said, "But you look so....presentable."

Marcellus laughed and said, "Homelessness isn't always what it seems. Like you. I expected you to be some rich brat, not a kid who is kind to Russian princesses and has a chimp. What did you do wrong at Fairchild Academy to get assigned to me?"

It took the entire second subway ride for Sidney to explain to Marcellus why he had to win the Sixth-grade Medal in order to stay at Fairchild. Somehow Sidney felt better after talking to Marcellus. By the time Sidney finished telling his story, he and Marcellus were standing at 97th Street and Park Avenue, near the Jacqueline Onassis Reservoir in Central Park.

Marcellus pointed down the 97th Street Traverse and said, "Camp Lucky Strike is right down there, beneath that overpass."

Marcellus and Sidney, with Diaper Chimp in his backpack, walked down the 97th Street Traverse. The street quickly dipped below ground level, and Sidney and Marcellus stood beneath the stone overpass that carried the Central Park Loop over 97th Street.

Sidney had expected Camp Lucky Strike to be out in the open, but when he looked around he saw no homeless people, only a stone archway and two stone walls on either side of the traverse.

Marcellus stood before a rusty steel door set in the stone wall. He grasped the handle on the door and gave it a great pull. The door opened with a fingernails-on-a-blackboard scream to reveal a dark, enclosed cavern beneath the overpass. Marcellus lit a match, stepped into the darkness, and turned to Sidney.

Marcellus said, "Welcome to Camp Lucky Strike."

Sidney stepped into the dark cavern.

CHAPTER 53: THE TEST

Marcellus Babineaux reached behind Sidney and pulled the steel door shut behind them. Camp Lucky Strike smelled of human body odor, urine, and spilled beer. As the darkness closed around him, Sidney realized it might have been a mistake coming here. He looked over his shoulder and saw that Diaper Chimp was sitting in his backpack with his head sticking out of the flap. The chimp was looking around the cavern and he seemed relaxed: none of his hair was standing up. Sidney remembered how Diaper Chimp had beaten up three football players, and decided not to worry about his safety for the moment.

Marcellus handed Sidney a small flashlight and said, "Use this to find your way, but don't shine it in anybody's eyes. Keep Diaper Chimp in your backpack for now."

Sidney scanned the cavern with his flashlight. It was the size of a two-car garage, with an arched ceiling that matched the arch of the overpass. Sidney heard water dripping, and a heavy drop hit him on the top of his head. As Sidney's eyes adjusted to the light, he saw a man sitting at a low table on which a few candles burned.

Marcellus gestured to the man. "Over here, Sidney, I'd like you to meet an army buddy."

Sidney walked over to the man who sat at the low table. The man was heavy-set, in his forties, and he wore a crusty, cranberry-colored military beret adorned with campaign pins.

Sidney said, "Hello."

The man wearing the cranberry-beret smelled of human body odor. He turned to face Sidney and said, "How's it going?" He stuck out his right arm to Sidney as if to shake hands. The problem? There was no hand attached to the man's arm, only an amputated stump. The skin of his stump was a mottled lump of scar tissue, red as road kill.

Sidney was fascinated by what he was seeing. How had this vet lost his hand? Why hadn't he gotten a skin graft, or a prosthetic hand? As Sidney's mind tried to answer these questions,

Cranberry-beret's scarred stump hung in the air, waiting for Sidney to shake it. Marcellus Babineaux stood behind Cranberry-beret, fussing with a blanket and carefully not-looking at Sidney.

Cranberry-beret said to Sidney, "Won't shake hands with a vet?"

Sidney's mind returned to real time. He shook his head and said, "Sorry sir, I was thinking stupid medical thoughts." Sidney reached out, wrapped his right hand around the man's stump, and said, "Pleased to me you."

The moment their hands touched, Cranberry-beret gave an involuntary shudder. His eyes grew large.

He looked at Sidney's hand holding his stump and said, "What the devil....."

Marcellus stopped fiddling with the blanket and said to the vet, "Charlie, you okay?"

Cranberry-beret said, "I can feel my hand again."

Marcellus said, "Phantom limb, Charlie. My arm's been gone for twenty years, but once it a while it feels like it's still there."

Charlie said, "No Marcellus, this is the first time since my Bradley got hit that it feels like my hand is there." The man pursed his lips and closed his eyes. It looked to Sidney that he might start crying.

Marcellus said to Sidney, "Come over here. Bring D.C. I want to show you something."

Sidney, with Diaper Chimp in his backpack, stood next to Marcellus in front of a beat-up wooden door that was set in the back of the cavern. The door was big, like a church door, but it had no handle, no window, and no keyhole. Ten rusty bolts, each the size of a donut, stuck out of the lintel above the door. Marcellus reached up, grabbed the fourth bolt from the right, and gave it a twist.

A motor hummed, and the thick, wooden door swung open, smooth as a bank-vault door. Sidney felt a rush of warm air wash over him from the opening. Ahead of him stretched a tunnel.

Marcellus pointed to the tunnel. "Walk with me, Sidney, down this tunnel. I want to show you something you may find interesting."

CHAPTER 54: A SECRET IS REVEALED

Marcellus Babineaux, the one-armed janitor, stepped out of the dingy cavern into a tunnel no wider than a subway car. Overhead, Victorian-era chandeliers made of polished brass threw down quiet light.

Sidney pointed at the chandeliers and said, "How did they get here?"

Marcellus said, "You'll see."

As Sidney followed Marcellus into the tunnel, he felt Diaper Chimp wiggling in his backpack.

Sidney said, "Can I take Diaper Chimp out of my backpack? He's acting curious."

Marcellus said, "Of course." He stuck out his arm. Diaper Chimp climbed out of the backpack, up Marcellus' arm, and took a seat on Marcellus' broad shoulder.

Marcellus Babineaux marched down the tunnel and said, "The Camp Lucky Strike you just saw is a fake. A stage set. We all take shifts there, acting like crazy homeless vets."

Sidney had to hurry his steps to keep up with Marcellus, but as he walked he managed to run his hand over the green tiles that lined the walls of the narrow tunnel. Sidney felt no dirt or dust: the tiles had been recently cleaned.

Marcellus said, "When a social worker, journalist, or a cop comes by, we show them what they expect to see. The fake Camp Lucky Strike is also a test. Nobody gets through that door unless they pass the admission test."

The air in the tunnel smelled pleasantly humid to Sidney, like that of an indoor swimming pool. Directly ahead, coming from the end of the tunnel, Sidney heard the sound of running water.

Marcellus said, "The 'Shake Hands With The Stump' test tells us a lot about a person. If they won't shake hands with an amputee, they fail the test and never get to witness what you're about to see."

When Sidney and Marcellus arrived at the end of the narrow tunnel, they stopped. Diaper Chimp stood up on Marcellus' shoulder. The chimp moved his head in a complete rotation, drinking in all that surrounded him.

Sidney looked overhead. To his left. To his right. Sidney took a deep breath and stepped backwards.

"Oh.....my.....God," he said. "This is impossible."

Marcellus smiled. He gestured to what Sidney and Diaper Chimp were gaping at, the way a maitre'd would gesture to an open table.

Marcellus said, "Welcome to the *real* Camp Lucky Strike."

Sidney and Diaper Chimp were seeing something that couldn't exist beneath Central Park.

In front of them was an underground, Victorian-era Venice.

A river flowed from left to right, straight down the middle of a vaulted tunnel. The tunnel was as wide as a cathedral and just as high, but it was long. Sidney bent over and looked down the tunnel. He couldn't see where tunnel or river ended.

The walls of the tunnel were covered with ornate, Victorian-era brickwork: pillars, windows, doorways, all made of brick. The ceiling was supported by curved, wrought-iron latticework. Something about the Victorian-era ironwork reminded Sidney of the Eiffel Tower.

Docked on the river, directly in front of Sidney and Diaper Chimp, was an old, wooden sailing vessel. The ship had a wrought-iron spiral staircase, like the staircases in Captain Nemo's *Nautilus*, which led to an upper deck. Sidney smelled varnish, leather, and canvas. A bearded man in his fifties, fit, and dressed in a trim navy uniform, stood on the ship's deck.

He said, "Welcome Sidney. And welcome to your chimp. We've been expecting you. Come aboard." He reached out his hand to Sidney.

Sidney, not knowing what to do, looked at Marcellus.

Marcellus said, "It's okay, Sidney. This is Captain Tarsus. He's our grip-man for today." Marcellus hopped onto the wooden deck of the boat. "This beautiful lady on which we are riding is called the schooner. Everybody uses it, it's the best way to get around."

Diaper Chimp hopped off of Marcellus' shoulder. He scampered up the wrought-iron spiral staircase, and climbed to the top of the schooner's single, arched sail.

Sidney pointed to Diaper Chimp. "Should he....?"

Captain Tarsus said, "Smart chimp. He got the best view in the house."

Captain Tarsus helped Sidney onto the boat. The Captain put on gloves and walked over to two wooden levers, each as tall as a stop sign, which stuck out from the middle of the ship's deck. He gave the levers a great pull. Sidney heard a *clank*, felt the deck shudder beneath his feet, and the schooner began to slide down the river. It didn't make a sound.

Marcellus said, "No doubt you have a million questions. This tunnel was build by Alfred Ely Beach in 1880, directly beneath what is now the Jacqueline Onassis Reservoir. The tunnel flooded, and was abandoned in 1885. "

Sidney said, "Why doesn't anybody know about it?"

Marcellus said, "It was dug in secret, so that Boss Tweed wouldn't get his dirty hooks into it."

The schooner passed a row of mid-sized boats that were tied up on the far side of the river. The boats sat low in the water and resembled house boats - a man in army fatigues sat on one of them, reading a newspaper - but the boats were made of corrugated metal and had cockpits and windshields.

Marcellus said, "Those are duck boats, Sidney. We use them for everything down here."

Sidney said, "How did you find this place?"

Marcellus said, "A couple of World War II vets discovered it right after the war. Flooded up to the ceiling. Kind of a handyman special. We've rehabbed it over the years, and named it Camp Lucky Strike. This is where we supposedly 'homeless' vets live. I'll take you for a tour, and then we'll say hello to the General. He'd like to offer you a job working here."