

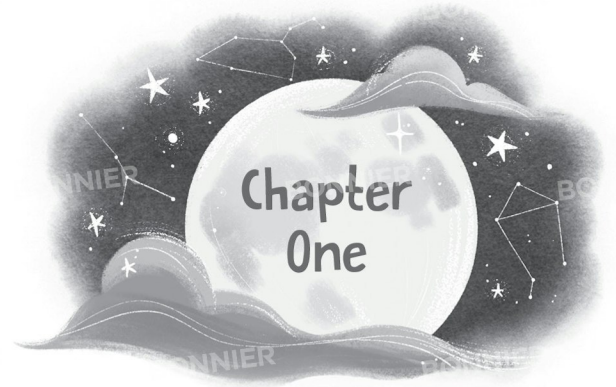
DREAM KEEPERS

MAP TO STARLIGHT HOLLOW



REBECCA LEWIS-OAKES

ILLUSTRATED BY
ANASTASIYA KANAVALIUK



The sound of giggles filled the cafe. Paisley never laughed so hard as when she was with her best friends, Bella, Fatima and Mai.

They usually met in the Sunny Wood town library after school, but it was so busy now after its make-over – *which we helped with*, Paisley thought to herself with a secret smile – that today they were hanging out in Sugar Scoops cafe. There were only two things that made it bearable not to be in their beloved library. First, they didn't have to be quiet, hence the loud laughter. Second,

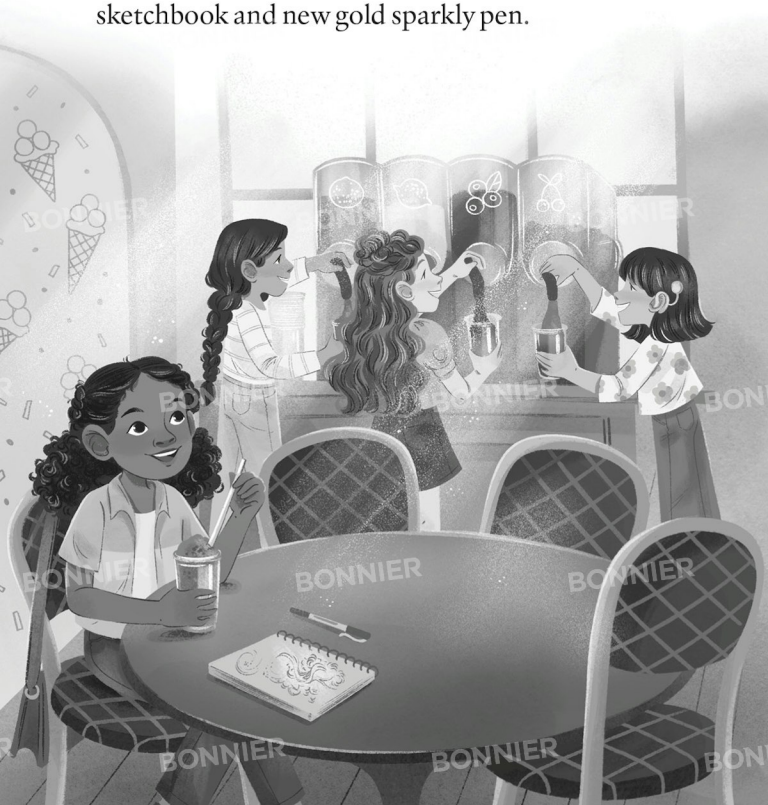
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the little ice-cream parlour had also had a bit of a glow-up. There was a brand-new slushie station with four different flavours and colours to mix.

Paisley had got herself a bright orange slushie and sat down to sip it. Then she took out her sketchbook and new gold sparkly pen.



Paisley loved to draw. She couldn't remember a time when she wasn't filling pages with her doodles. Every time her family moved to a new place – which was *a lot* due to her dad's job – Paisley's mum would buy her a sketchbook to remember their travels. She had one full of drawings of the Eiffel Tower, croissants and *chocolat chaud* from their time in Paris. Another was packed with Shinto shrines, cherry-blossom trees and sushi from Tokyo. And she even had one brimming with endless white-sand beaches, coconut-milk smoothies and steel-drum bands from the year they'd spent in the Caribbean.

'We're an adventure family!' her parents always said. However, they'd been in Sunny Wood for two whole years now, which was the longest they'd stayed anywhere, and Paisley never wanted to leave.

THE
**DREAM
KEEPERS**
SERIES

SECRETS OF MOON WOOD
MAP TO STARLIGHT HOLLOW
SONG OF MIDNIGHT MEADOW



Look out for more soon!

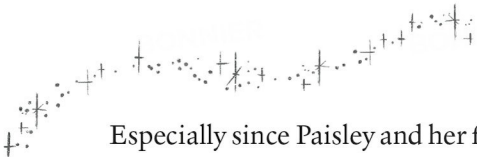
**DREAM
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Especially since Paisley and her friends had a secret.

They were Dream Keepers!

At night, if they put their special token under their pillow, they woke up in Moon Wood – a magical midnight version of Sunny Wood. It was their job to look after the night-time town and to keep the dreams of Sunny Wood’s residents sweet.

They’d discovered this when the apothecary shop in Sunny Wood had reopened. Its mysterious owner, Joya, had become a mentor to the girls, as she had once been a Dream Keeper herself.

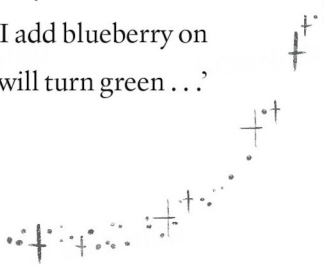
Best of all, each girl had their own Dream Guardian – an animal companion to help them with their work in Moon Wood. Paisley smiled as she found herself sketching her Guardian.

Quill was a jackalope – a rabbit-like creature with beautiful antlers. She and Quill had so much fun together, while they were taking care of the town.

And the work they all did in Moon Wood made a real difference. The Sunny Wood library had been really rundown before the girls had cleared up the Moon Wood library. This was because everything in Moon Wood and Sunny Wood was linked – what happened in one affected the other, meaning that Paisley and her friends had a big responsibility on their hands. But it was great fun too.

Right now in Sunny Wood, her friends were still fixing their own drinks.

‘Are we allowed to mix flavours?’ asked Bella, pushing the lever to release icy yellow juice into her cup. She tucked a long, curly red lock of hair behind one ear. ‘I wonder if I add blueberry on top of the lemon whether it will turn green . . .’



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For Madeleine, Theo and Freddie

R. L-O.

For my mom

A. K.

Paisley smiled. Bella always thought very carefully about everything. She loved books and often seemed as though she was daydreaming in one of the adventures she'd read about.



Fatima, on the other hand, was decisive and bold. She knew what she wanted and was never afraid to say it. She flicked her long, dark plait over her shoulder and pointed to the menu. 'It's "all you can drink". If you want a weird lemon-blueberry mix, you go for it.'



The girls watched as Bella took her friend's advice and mixed the slushies. The blue ice began to form a green line in the cup where it met the yellow lemon juice.



'It's working!' said Bella delightedly. Mai giggled and said, 'It's a slushie rainbow!' Then she started singing 'I Can Sing A Rainbow' and waving her arms in the air. Her short, shiny

bobbed hair swished back and forth, her cochlear implant peeking out behind her left ear. Paisley loved how confident Mai was. Mai adored music and drama, whereas Paisley was far too shy to stand on stage with everyone looking at her.

Fatima laughed. 'Can you have a rainbow with only two colours?'

Paisley stopped drawing and pointed her pen at Bella's slushie cup. 'It's actually a two-tone ombre,' she said, 'when it's one colour sort of merging into another.'

'I love that! "Ombre",' said Mai. 'Although *I can sing an ombre* doesn't rhyme as well.' She poured herself a half-cup of blueberry ice and topped it with cherry-red slushie, then took a sip. 'Mmm, but it tastes great!'

'Is that the Dream Tree you're drawing, Paisley? It's gorgeous!' said Fatima, sitting down

with her own lemon–orange drink that looked like a sunrise.

Paisley blushed. ‘Yes, this is my Moon Wood sketchbook,’ she said. ‘And I found this gold pen, which is just perfect for the Dream Essence, so I’ve been drawing the tree over and over again.’

The Dream Tree was the source of all the magic in Moon Wood, and it connected the dream town to Sunny Wood. It grew right out of the Moon Wood apothecary and there was a mini version in Joya’s Sunny Wood shop. When it bloomed, its flowers released golden Dream Essence – the magic that created sweet dreams.

Bella’s jaw dropped when she saw the drawing. ‘You’re so talented!’

Paisley blushed again. ‘It’s just practice,’ she said modestly.

‘It is not!’ said Mai, slurping her slushie.

‘You’re amazing – but the Dream Tree is a pretty magical subject, I’ll give you that!’

Paisley smiled. When they’d first arrived, Moon Wood had been overgrown and uncared for – it had been a long time since any Dream Keepers had been called to the magical town. The Dream Tree didn’t even have leaves, let alone the sparkingly beautiful flowers that now covered it. But when the four girls had started caring for the wood again, it came back to life, fuelled by the power of their friendship.

At that moment, the cafe owner, Portia, came to clear a table nearby.

‘Enjoying the slushies, girls?’ she asked. She had super-long braids, like Paisley’s mum had,



but she wore six hoop earrings in each ear and a nose ring, which her mum definitely didn't have. Portia pointed to Paisley's sketchbook. 'Ooh, I love that tree! I was thinking of getting something beautiful designed on the wall over there. Do you think you could paint it big, like a mural?'

Paisley's eyes nearly popped out of her head. 'What, me?' she squeaked. 'Paint a mural? Here?'

Portia laughed. 'Why not? Think about it,' she said as she headed back to the counter.

Bella clapped with joy. 'Paisley, you have to do it! That would be so cool!'

'Maybe we'd all get free slushies for life if you did!' said Mai, slurping the dregs of her drink. 'Ouch, brain freeze!' she giggled.

The friends were wowed by the idea of leaving their mark on Sugar Scoops in Sunny Wood. Full of excitement, they discussed designs for Paisley

to use as they finished their drinks.

Still chatting about how to paint a giant Dream Tree, Paisley and her friends said goodbye to Portia, and the Sugar Scoops doorbell tinkled as they left the cafe to go home.

Mai spun round and blew the girls a kiss. Then, with a huge wink, she said, 'See you tonight! Sweet dreams!'

Paisley waved and said 'Sweet dreams!' to her friends. It was what they always said when they planned to put their magical tokens under their pillows before they went to sleep, so they could meet up in Moon Wood.

Paisley smiled and hugged her sketchbook tight as she headed down the lane to her house. She might have travelled to lots of cool places, but her friends made Sunny Wood the best place she'd ever lived!





Paisley was still humming ‘I Can Sing A Rainbow’ as she put her key in the front door. She was about to call out ‘I’m home!’ but heard loud noises from down the hall, so she took off her shoes and tiptoed towards the kitchen.

‘We can’t tell them yet – it’s not finalised,’ her mum was saying.

A pot clanged on the stove and the kettle whistled as it boiled. Paisley wondered what wasn’t finalised. Did her parents have a surprise for her and her brother?

Brandon’s birthday *was* coming up. Maybe Mum and Dad were going to take them to the amusement park after all. Brandon was adamant he was tall enough for the biggest roller coasters now and he was desperate to go on every ride.

‘They’ll be excited, though. They love moving!’

Dad replied. ‘It’s all a big adventure.’

‘*You* love moving,’ Mum countered. ‘And I’m proud of you for getting promoted, but we need to take a minute to decide how to tell them.’

Dad chuckled and Paisley could hear him give Mum a kiss. ‘You’re right. We’ll sort out a proper plan and then we can tell them.’

Paisley couldn’t move her feet even if she tried. She was frozen, stuck stock still.

Move?



Leave Sunny Wood?

Paisley didn't know what to do. She couldn't tell her parents that she'd been eavesdropping. But she also couldn't unhear what she'd just heard.

Suddenly the kitchen door creaked, jolting Paisley out of her shock. She ran as quickly and quietly as she could upstairs.

What was she going to do?

Paisley worried about it all evening. At dinner, when Mum asked why she was so quiet, she shrugged it off. She daredn't say anything in case she blurted out what she'd overheard. She couldn't even concentrate on drawing. And, worst of all, Paisley was so distracted that at bedtime she forgot to put her pressed white rose token under her pillow, and slept fitfully throughout the night instead of meeting her friends in Moon Wood.



Fatima

Paisley! Where were you last night?

Mai

Yeah! We missed you!

Bella

Quill missed you too

Paisley

...

Mai

Helloooo? Are you there???

Paisley

...

Bella

Paisley, are you OK? Are you coming to Joya's after school?

Paisley

I can't believe it! I was so tired I forgot to put my token under my pillow! Can't wait to hear about what you got up to!

Bella

OK, phew, see you soon x

Paisley chewed her lip as she closed her messages. She wasn't *technically* lying – she *had* forgotten, just not for that exact reason.

But she didn't know what to say. How could

she tell her friends she might be leaving?

As Paisley brushed her teeth, she told herself that nothing was decided. Maybe they wouldn't even move. However, they had lived here for longer than anywhere before and her parents were probably itching to try somewhere new . . . She spat out her toothpaste and looked sternly at herself in the mirror.

Stop worrying. Just focus on school and go to Joya's afterwards and have a good time . . .

Despite her best efforts, though, concentrating at school was tricky and nothing in the apothecary could distract Paisley. Bella, Mai and Fatima were all engrossed in planning a berry garden for their Dream Guardians. Anything they placed under their pillow before they went to sleep would appear with them in Moon Wood and there were plenty of seeds in Joya's apothecary to look at.

While her friends debated what they were going to plant, Paisley nestled into the cosy window seat and buried herself in her sketchbook. She was trying to capture the miniature Dream Tree, the one that grew under a glass case on Joya's counter.

‘Do you think Onyx would like cloudberry as a treat?’ Fatima asked as she looked through seed packets on a shelf by the window.

‘What even are cloudberry?’ said Mai, also rifling through packs. ‘Ooh, huckleberry – they sound fun!’

Bella nodded, running a finger down the page of a book called *More-ish Morsels in Moon Wood*. ‘It says here that wolves eat wild blueberry in our world and cloudberry are similar, so, yeah, I bet Onyx would like them.’

Mai twirled. ‘Pais, are you getting anything for Quill? Paisley? . . . Paisley!’ Mai waved a hand in front of her friend’s face and Paisley finally looked up.

Before Paisley could answer, a rattling of beads announced Joya’s entrance.

‘Hello, girls!’





The apothecary owner bustled through the green beaded curtain with a flourish, smiling as usual, her grey-streaked curly hair piled on top of her head in a purple scarf.

She went over to the seeds drawer with a big smile. 'If you sprinkle a bit of Dream Essence on the seeds, they'll grow even quicker.'

Paisley tried hard to focus on her sketch, but she kept getting the perspective wrong, because every time her friends mentioned Moon Wood it made her want to cry. Especially since she'd missed out on a trip last night. What if she didn't have many visits left?

The pen became scratchy on the page. Paisley looked at the nib, then shook it. Sometimes the ink needed help to run. Nothing about the drawing was going right today.

'Paisley! Earth to Paisley!' Mai waved a seed



packet. 'I said, will Quill like these?'

Paisley tried to recall what Mai had been saying before she'd caught Paisley's attention. 'Umm, yeah. I'm sure Quill will like poisonberries.'

That made Mai laugh. 'Not *poison*! Boysenberries!'

The other girls laughed too, but Paisley just kept trying to draw the Dream Tree while they went back to talking about seeds.

Then the ink ran out completely!

'Urgh. Stupid pen!' She slammed the pen down onto the page in frustration.

Mai put up her hands. 'Whoa, Pais! You can get another pen.'

'It's not just the pen,' said Paisley, biting her lip. She didn't want to cry.

Bella came over and put an arm around

Paisley's shoulders. 'What's up?' she asked kindly. 'You've not been yourself today.'

'Yeah, did you *really* forget to come to Moon Wood last night?' said Fatima, raising an eyebrow.

'You didn't go last night, Paisley?' Joya looked shocked.

Mai shook her head. 'And it wasn't as sparkly without her,' she added.

Paisley's lips wobbled – she really didn't want to worry them.

Luckily, Joya seemed to notice her discomfort and changed the subject. 'That's exactly like the Dream Tree, Paisley. It looks so happy – you girls must have been working hard in Moon Wood,' she said.

Her compliment cheered Paisley up a little, but as her gaze met Joya's kind eyes, she felt her lips wobble again. Joya sensed this too, and carried on.

'Actually, I was going to ask for your help with an important task, Paisley!' she said, disappearing behind the counter, where she rummaged for a minute before popping back up and smiling.

Joya held out an old parchment scroll, shaking it teasingly from side to side. Then she unrolled it and smoothed it out on the countertop.

Paisley got up and went over to look closer, grateful for the distraction. As she took in what was on the scroll, she couldn't help but let out an 'Ooh!'

'It's a Moon Wood map!' she said.



In the very centre of the parchment was an ink line drawing of the Moon Wood town square, surrounded by a few trees and then lots of smudges towards the dark edge of the paper. It looked like a storybook map, not like a geography one.

Fatima peered over her shoulder. 'Only the town square has labels. What are all the faded areas?' she asked.

Joya smiled and shrugged. 'That's what I need you to find out,' she said. 'It's been years since someone drew this . . . since the last time there were Dream Keepers in the wood. You can see how faded it is. Each set of Dream Keepers must explore the town and surrounding woods, then draw the map anew. So much changes in Moon Wood, and . . .'

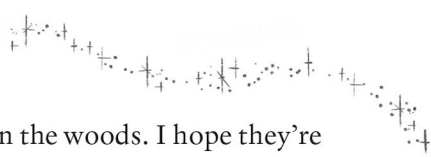
'And what?' Mai asked excitedly. But Joya's face was solemn.

She sighed and spoke again. 'Well, I'm afraid it's important to check where the Dream World now ends and the Nightmare Realm begins. The Dark Queen will be lurking in the shadows.'

Moon Wood wasn't only the source of sweet dreams for the residents of Sunny Wood. A terrible Dark Queen lived there too, spreading nightmares. When Paisley and her friends had restored the Dream Tree, they'd also awoken the Dark Queen.

Fatima scoffed. 'But we sent her away! We fought her off from the library, remember?'

Paisley shivered. The lightning-storm battle had been a dramatic and dangerous night in Moon Wood. The Dark Queen herself had appeared, a terrifying shadow figure in the sky, but the power of the girls' friendship had banished her – or so they thought.

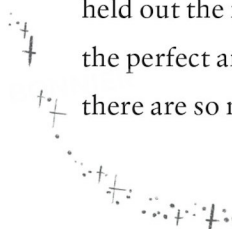


Joya's eyebrows raised at Fatima's words. 'She might be gone for now, but she always finds her way back. The entire wood needs your protection . . . the Dream Tree's protection.'

'How do we do that?' asked Bella.

'I can't tell you everything, I'm afraid,' said Joya. 'Some things you have to work out for yourselves. The magic might have changed since my time in the woods anyway! But I promise you have everything you need to spread light in Moon Wood. Start with the map. It needs a little –'

'Pizzazz?' suggested Mai, flipping her short hair back, breaking the tension and making everyone laugh.



'Pizzazz would be great,' said Joya, then she held out the map to Paisley. 'And I think I know the perfect artist to make that happen. Oh, there are so many more exciting places for you

girls to discover in the woods. I hope they're still there!'

Paisley smiled for the first time since they'd entered the shop. The map was beautiful but patchy. She loved the idea of putting her own spin on it. The miniature drawings were really accurate and tidy. Everything from the library to the fountain and cafe in Moon Wood town square were there, but the area around it had lots of smudges that faded to dark grey at the edges.

'Will you redraw the map, Paisley?' asked Joya. 'With all your help, of course,' she said to the others.

Paisley nodded, smiling shyly. 'I'd love to.'

Joya took a sharp intake of breath. 'I just hope these shadows haven't made it too far into the woods. The Nightmare Realm needs to stay at the

edge of the wood. Only the four of you can stop it overtaking Moon Wood, and keep the Dream Tree safe. '

The girls all nodded. They knew how serious the Dark Queen's threat was.

In fact, Paisley was so determined to get started that she'd forgotten all about her earlier worries. Her fingers were itching to take hold of the map.

'May I keep it?' she asked Joya.

'Of course!' Joya laughed. 'And take it into Moon Wood with you tonight. Once you reactivate it there, it will be yours and you can draw all over it. I hope you girls use it to have wonderful adventures. And as you explore, say hi to Aurora, my nightingale Guardian, if you see her.'

Joya packaged up their seeds, then bade a cheery goodbye to the four friends. Paisley smiled

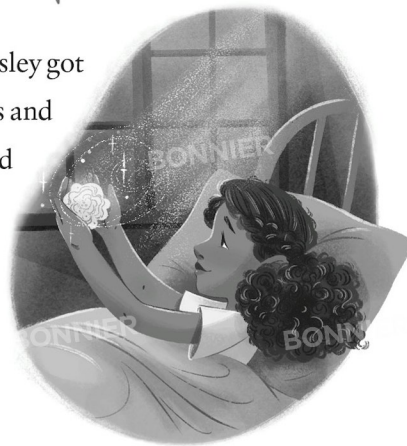
all the way home. She couldn't wait to see Quill tonight and tell her all about their new project.

But that thought set Paisley's lips quivering again.

If her parents really did make them move away, how much time would she have left to explore Moon Wood? Would she even be here long enough to complete the important task of drawing the map?



Later that night, Paisley got under her bed covers and picked up the pressed white rose that she kept on her bedside table. She raised it to the moonbeam



shining through her curtains. For a second, she considered putting it back on the bedside table. It was almost too painful to think about this being one of her last trips to Moon Wood. But then she thought about not seeing Quill for a second night, and slipped the rose and the map under her pillow.

Bella

Sweet dreams, everyone!

Mai

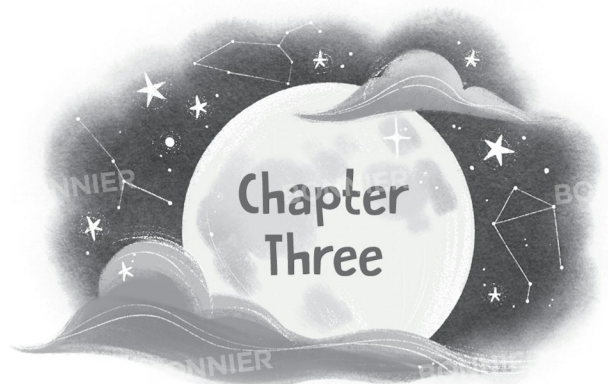
Can't wait to see you all soon!

Fatima

Don't forget the map, Paisley.
Or your token – ha ha!

Paisley

Got them ready! Sweet
dreams ...



Paisley stirred in her sleep. The air smelled crisp, cool and full of possibility, just like it always did in Moon Wood.

Then, she opened her eyes to a waterfall of gold glitter. *How strange!*

She was also sitting on something knobbly and uncomfortable. She looked down and saw tree roots.

She was underneath the Dream Tree – and it was flowering more than ever before!

Thump, thump.

A familiar sound came from the other side of the flowing Dream Essence and a smile spread across Paisley's face. That had to be her Guardian.

'Is that you, Quill?' Paisley called, and she got another, louder *thump, thump* in return. 'All right, I'm coming!'

She laughed, then parted the waterfall of Dream Essence and stepped through.

The little jackalope bounded in a happy circle when she saw her, before hopping into Paisley's arms. However, Quill immediately

drew back a little and tilted her head to one side, twitching her nose as if to ask Paisley what was wrong. But as Paisley looked deep into her companion's beautiful brown eyes, she felt all her troubles melt away.

She gave Quill a hug, then turned round to look at the Dream Tree. She was home and she was happy – and so was the tree! Flowers were blossoming all over the tree canopy. Each bloom spilled out shimmering Dream Essence, creating the sparkly waterfall that became a golden



stream, flowing across the cobbled town square towards the woods.

‘It’s more magical than ever!’ Mai cried as she appeared in the square, across from Paisley.

Paisley’s fingers itched for her sketchbook and pencil, and instantly they appeared, as dreamed things always did in Moon Wood. Quill hopped over to greet Mai, then turned to look back at Paisley. The scene was so cute that Paisley simply had to sit down and draw it all quickly. Quill had

such a playful, expressive face, and Mai was framed by giant bluebells, almost

big enough to be hats, and enormous daisy

flowers bending like an arch over her head. The square was illuminated by a soft glow of moonlight, and fireflies danced all around.



Then Paisley heard a loud purr and Crystal,

Mai’s silver-furred lynx Guardian, slinked out from the woods. Paisley smiled and added her to the sketch with a few quick pencil strokes.

Bella appeared next, from behind the Dream Tree waterfall, giggling and covered in Dream Essence.

‘Wow!’ she said. ‘The Dream Tree looks incredible! Joya was right – it must be happy.’

Paisley felt a light breeze and looked up. Bella’s white pegasus, Skye, swooped down from over the turreted library, her pink wings fanning them all as she landed gently on the cobbles.

Bella gave Paisley a hug and said, ‘I’m so glad you’re here tonight.’ Then she grabbed Paisley’s hand and pulled her over to the steps to see Skye.

The library was more beautiful than ever, with sweet-scented jasmine and clematis plants climbing up the spiral staircase on one corner.

The almost-full moon shone behind the roof, and plenty of stars looked down on them.

Awooooo!

Onyx, Fatima's ink-black wolf, howled from the edge of the woods. The sound made a kaleidoscope of butterflies fly up and flutter across the square towards the girls.

Paisley laughed and gently moved to the side as a fat bumblebee buzzed past her to the flowers climbing the library.

'Fatima will be here soon too – don't worry, Onyx!' And, as she spoke, Fatima indeed appeared right next to them.

'How am I the last? I went to bed super early tonight!' said Fatima, before running over excitedly to give Onyx a hug.

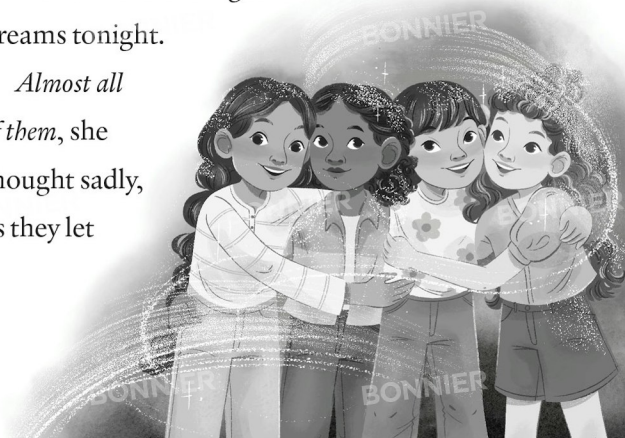
'We were just saying how happy the Dream Tree looks,' said Bella. 'Our hard work is paying off!'

Quill started jumping in and out of the waterfall of glitter from the Dream Tree, and the other Guardians copied her. The Dream Essence coated them with a dusting of sparkle. Mai pulled her friends into a big hug as they watched their animal companions enjoy themselves.

'I think it's us all being together as well,' said Mai. 'We're so happy you're back, Paisley. And Moon Wood is too.'

Paisley sighed happily and thought of how happy the plants and creatures of Moon Wood seemed to be, and how the residents of Sunny Wood would be having sweet dreams tonight.

Almost all of them, she thought sadly, as they let



go of their hug, then she shook her head. She was determined not to think about her potential move. Tonight, all she wanted was to enjoy the woods with her best friends.

Sensing that she was glum, Quill nudged her furry antlers under Paisley's arm.

Paisley stepped aside. 'That tickles,' she said, but Quill kept nudging until Paisley giggled. Her Dream Guardian was always there for her – she loved that about Quill.

'Did you bring the map?' asked Bella, turning to Paisley.

'Of course!' Paisley reached into her pocket and held it up.

The map seemed extra magical and shimmery in the moonlight. It still had the simple line drawings but now . . .

'Wow, it's moving!' exclaimed Mai, peering closer.

Sure enough, on the parchment, the leaves on the Dream Tree were wafting gently, and the golden waterfall had appeared.

'That wasn't there before!' said Fatima.

Paisley eagerly sat down on the cobbles and spread the map out, her friends gathering to look.

'Here's the town square. Is that the butterfly glade?' said Mai as a tiny illustrated butterfly flitted across the other drawings.

Bella clapped her hands in delight. 'Of course the map is even more magical in Moon Wood!' she said. Then: 'Oh.'

'What?' asked Mai.

'*They're* moving too.' Bella pointed to the dark outline of the map, where the shadowy borders that represented the Dark Queen's Nightmare Realm creeped in. They smoked and swirled.



Fatima shrugged. 'It's all the way at the edges – I think we're fine,' she said.

Quill bounded over then and bumped her way into the group. With a snuffle, she pointed her little nose at one corner of the map. To Paisley's surprise, a drawing of some trees appeared amid the smudges! There was a label but she couldn't make out the letters.

'You want us to go there?' asked Paisley, and Quill nodded.

Bella looked unsure, but Paisley reassured her. 'Quill wouldn't lead us into danger, would you?' She gave her Guardian's head a scratch between her long ears.

'Aww, I really wanted to see if Moon Wood Sugar Scoops has a new magical slushie station too, like in Sunny Wood!' said Mai, a bit disappointed.

Bella put her arm around Mai's shoulder. 'This is an important job that Joya asked us to do,' she said. 'We need to start restoring the rest of the wood and the map.'

'I know, but . . . slushies!' Mai said, looking up with wide, doleful eyes.

'Mai! This is Moon Wood,' said Fatima, laughing. 'We can magic up any treats we want. Just close your eyes and dream of them!'

All four friends smiled as they closed their eyes. Paisley thought about those ombre slushies they'd made back in Sunny Wood. When they blinked their eyes open, each girl was holding a huge takeaway cup filled with a seven-coloured rainbow drink!

Mai slurped hers and gave a thumbs-up. 'Genius,' she said. 'Let's go!'

Quill led the way, hopping along the woodland





path out of the town square, past the Moon Wood sign. Everyone followed her to the wildflower meadow, with its sweet delicate perfume and butterflies gently fluttering on a light breeze. They'd explored here before but never gone further. More of the path revealed itself on the map as they walked along it.

'Are we nearly there yet?' asked Fatima.

Paisley consulted the map. 'Well . . . it looks like . . . yes, we should be here, wherever here is!'

Here looked like a glade, with a close group of large, gnarled trees in the middle that was overgrown with rhododendron bushes and ivy vines crisscrossing their trunks. Quill jumped around, bounding onto a low-hanging branch and off it again.

Paisley giggled. 'OK, OK – we get the picture. Let's get to work!'

Everyone started pulling the ivy down. It was hard work, even when Fatima dreamed up some gardening shears to help cut it back.

After a while, Paisley stopped for a moment, wiping her forehead and catching her breath. The sight of her friends working together filled her with pride at how much they could achieve – and what a difference they could make. Under the starlight, this little clearing felt like a special place.

But that gave her a pang of longing. How many moments like this did she have left? Quill nuzzled against Paisley's leg and she scooped up the jackalope in a hug, but even that didn't cheer her up.

'Done!' said Bella, pulling the last vines from a tree. Finally, the huddle of elm trees were revealed in all their glory.

‘This is *so* cool!’ said Mai, running in to the newly cleared copse, Crystal at her side. ‘This one’s hollow!’ she exclaimed.

Paisley picked up the map and couldn’t believe what she was seeing. The elm trees appeared more clearly, as if an invisible hand was drawing them in ink right in front of her. And, just as Mai spoke, the label wrote itself:



A pair of opalescent dragonflies danced through the air, as fireflies hovered all around them. Paisley sighed as Fatima and Bella rushed over to Mai with their Guardians in tow. It felt extra magical. She wanted to call out and tell her friends that this special place had an even more special name – but the ache in her heart choked her words.



She pulled Quill over for a cuddle. ‘Thank you for bringing us here,’ she told her furry friend. ‘I only hope I have many more visits to Starlight Hollow.’

‘Paisley!’ yelled Fatima. ‘Seriously, get in here!’

The other three had squeezed inside the biggest elm tree together. The centre of it was completely hollowed out. The girls were laughing, calling Paisley to join them.

But tears sprang to Paisley’s eyes as she continued to hug Quill fiercely and she was rooted to the spot.

Bella leaned out of the tree. ‘Are you OK, Pais?’

Paisley shook her head and tears fell down her cheeks.

‘Oh no!’ Mai rushed over to give her friend a hug.

‘Come on, spill,’ said Fatima. ‘Something’s up with you.’

Bella joined them and they all sat down on the soft leaves carpeting the woodland floor. ‘You can tell us anything, you know that.’

Paisley sobbed and Quill nuzzled against her cheek. Stroking her soft back helped to calm Paisley.

She cleared her throat and said in a small voice, ‘It’s just . . . I overheard . . . my dad’s been offered a new job.’

‘But . . . that’s great!’ said Mai, looking confused.

Paisley shook her head. ‘It’s not in Sunny Wood. They . . . My parents said we’d have to move . . . And I don’t want to go!’

Bella went straight in for a hug. ‘Oh no!’

‘Is it definite?’ asked Fatima.

‘No,’ Paisley sniffed, ‘but they’re thinking about it.’

Mai clapped her hands. 'Well, if they're only thinking about it, it might not happen! How could they leave Sunny Wood? It's perfect!'

'You think so?' said Paisley.

'I'm sure you have nothing to worry about,' said Bella.

Paisley desperately wanted to believe that, but she also knew how much her parents liked to move around. She thought she *did* have something serious to worry about, but she couldn't quite get any more words out. Even with her best friends being so kind, she hated that she was the centre of attention. All of them looking at her made her clam up, unable to find the words.

Quill curled up in her lap and Paisley was



grateful to keep her hands busy stroking the jackalope's lovely soft fur. She took a deep breath and spoke again: 'I think they're really serious, though.'

Paisley noticed her friends exchange a concerned look.

Mai reached out a hand. 'It will be OK, I'm not sure how, but I just know it will be,' she said, and Crystal purred loudly in support, which made Onyx howl and everyone else laugh.

Paisley gulped back tears through her giggles.

'We won't let anything come between us,' said Fatima firmly, but that only made Paisley's eyes well up again. She had such good friends – she couldn't bear the thought of not seeing them every day! She shivered. The sad thoughts lingered like shadows in her mind.

Bella pointed to the map. 'Drawing always

takes your mind off things. Can you update this glade on the map?’

‘Actually,’ said Paisley, grateful for the distraction, ‘I wanted to show you this.’

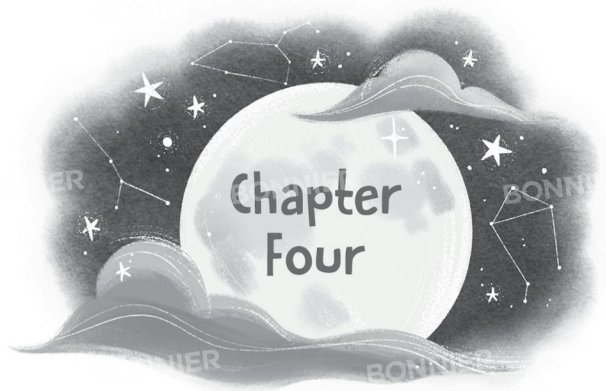
As she pointed out Starlight Hollow on the map, her friends all gasped.

‘That’s the perfect name,’ Bella said. ‘Like a place where dreams come true.’

Paisley dreamed up a special pen. She’d imagined one with a calligraphy nib, so it could draw thick lines one way and thin lines another way. She wanted to vary the strokes to give a more dramatic look to the map. Quickly, she sketched her version of the trees, the previous illustration melting into her own under the pen. Finally she rewrote ‘Starlight Hollow’ in her own curly handwriting.

‘It’s even more magical now!’ said Mai.

Paisley gave a weak smile. Her friends were doing their best to cheer her up, so she wanted to put on a brave face for them . . . but she still couldn’t shake the unhappiness weighing on her chest.



Paisley was trying to eat her cereal left-handed so she could keep drawing at the kitchen table. After the cascade of Dream Essence that had greeted her in Moon Wood, she'd been trying to capture it in her sketchbook but couldn't quite get the right pen strokes to show the soft movement of the glitter.

She still had an uneasy feeling inside her, as if she was standing on a wobble board all the time. As if nothing was going right. Even her pen wasn't right. She now only had the silver glitter pen from

her set, since the gold one had run out, and it didn't really do the Dream Tree justice.

'Earth to Paisley!' Brandon, her little brother, waved his hand over her cereal bowl.

She looked up.

'What's going on?' she asked, blinking.

'I've asked you the same question three times,' said her mum. Her eyebrows were way up her forehead, like they always were when she was exasperated.

'Yeah, what's going on with you, Paisley?' asked her dad.

'Nothing,' she replied.

'Seriously, Paisley, even you're not usually this doolally,' said Brandon.

'Helpful, thanks,' she said, cracking a smile and nudging her little brother with her elbow.

'Paisley?' asked Mum. 'You haven't eaten

much and you're not answering the question. Something's up.'

Paisley took a huge spoonful of cereal and shrugged, but that made her cough and Mum came over to sit down and rub her back. When she'd managed to swallow the cereal and Mum was still looking at her, she realised she was going to have to tell them. She felt nervous but also wanted them to reassure her she was worrying about nothing. Maybe she'd even heard their chat earlier in the week wrong. She'd only find out the truth if she asked.

So, staring down at her bowl, she mumbled, 'I'm just really worried that you're going to move us away, because I overheard you talking about Dad's new job promotion . . .'

Now Dad's eyebrows shot up towards his hairline. He and Mum looked at each other in

surprise. Brandon's jaw fell almost to the table.

'Your new *what*?' Brandon gasped.

'I didn't mean to listen in,' said Paisley, hastily trying to explain. 'I'm sorry. I came home early the other day and -'



Mum took a deep breath. 'It's OK, it's OK. I'm sorry you overheard that. Because we did want

to talk to you both properly about it.’ She put her other hand over Dad’s on the table. ‘Your dad has been offered a promotion, it’s true. We wanted to make sure everything was confirmed first before we told you – and, well, we actually heard last night it’s all going ahead. Now we have the fun part of deciding on location!’

Dad nodded. He couldn’t keep the grin off his face. ‘It’s going to be so exciting – more travels for all of us. There’s an office in Spain that could work. It’s right by the beach, which would be awesome. Or there’s one in Switzerland that’s near the mountains. You guys could take up skiing!’

Paisley looked at Brandon. His face was shocked too.

‘But, Dad – Mum – my swimming!’ Brandon had become really good since they moved to

Sunny Wood. He was now in a club and competed in galas at weekends.

Mum smiled. ‘There are great swimming pools everywhere! You can pick up right where you leave off.’

‘But I don’t want to pick up *somewhere else* – I like my team here. And my coaches.’ He started shovelling cereal into his mouth. Paisley could tell he was trying not to cry.

‘We’d make sure to find you a great new club, Brandon. And you can draw anywhere, right, Paisley? We’d find you a school with a fantastic art department.’ Her mum’s face was hopeful.

Paisley made a weird noise as she tried to clear her throat. She wanted to tell them how she was feeling, but it was hard. ‘Um, I guess . . . I just feel like . . .’

Dad's work phone rang. 'Sorry, guys – let's pick this up later, OK?'

He got up to take the call and Paisley was left staring after his back.

Mum looked at Paisley and Brandon brightly. 'It's a great opportunity, and think of all the adventures we could have. We can talk it through some more, though – don't worry.'

Everyone kept telling Paisley not to worry. But she couldn't help it. She was already having amazing adventures in Sunny Wood. And, more importantly, in Moon Wood. Couldn't that be enough?



Paisley walked slowly down the lane into town later that morning. She was meant to be meeting everyone at the library, but the breakfast

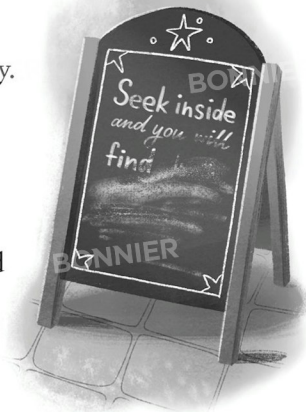
conversation had left her in a weird mood and she didn't really feel in a hurry to talk to her friends. They'd been so sure that the move wouldn't happen. But this morning her parents had been super keen.

'Whoa . . . whoa . . . ouch!' Paisley walked into something and took a spectacular tumble to the ground.

Looking up, she saw she was outside Joya's apothecary. There was a new sandwich board on the pavement.

At least, there *had* been a new sign outside. Paisley had knocked it over and rubbed half the chalk off in the process.

She could already feel a bruise blooming on



her left knee, and felt bad she'd ruined Joya's sign. Joya must have heard her making a racket because she came running outside.

'What happened?' she cried, reaching out to help Paisley to her feet.

'I knocked this over – I'm so sorry,' said Paisley, hoisting up the signboard. 'I can redraw it if you give me the chalks.'

Joya's hands flew to her head. 'No, *I'm* sorry. It tripped you up. Come on inside and I'll get you some tea.'

'And the chalks?' Paisley grinned, following her into the apothecary.

'Of course!' said Joya, rummaging around behind the counter, then handing over the box of chalks. 'How's the map going? Did you take it to Moon Wood?'

'Yep!' Paisley pulled it out of her pocket and



soon they were poring over the map, spread out on the little table by the cosy window seat, while they sipped freshly brewed herbal tea.

'It's fantastic!' said Joya, thrilled with their updates. 'You're so artistic.'

Paisley blushed. 'Well, Quill and the other Guardians showed us where to go. And all the girls helped clear Starlight Hollow. I just drew it on the map.'

'You have real skill.' Joya beamed at her. 'Moon Wood is lucky to have you – oh, what's wrong?'

Paisley's cheeks had turned bright red. She felt hot and scrunched up her mouth, trying not to cry. She didn't want to say it out loud, not again. Every time she said anything about the move it made it feel a little more real, and she wanted to keep it as *unreal* as possible. She started drawing with the chalks to try to calm down.

Joya gently set down her cup on the table and said, 'A problem shared is a problem halved, Paisley.'

That was all Paisley needed for it all to spill out. She let out a shuddery sob and told Joya everything. 'Dad's got a promotion at work, so we have to move and my parents think it's a great adventure because we've moved so much, and it *has* always been a great adventure, like, we've been to some really cool places, but Sunny Wood – Moon Wood – is the coolest place *ever* and I don't want to leave my friends!'



Paisley was fully crying now. Joya didn't say anything. Instead, she handed Paisley a dark blue box of tissues covered in delicate gold and silver constellations like the ceiling of her shop, then poured them both more tea.

'Thanks,' said Paisley, taking a tissue and blowing her nose.

Unlike her friends, and her parents, Joya didn't jump in and try to offer a solution or tell her not to worry. She simply waited till Paisley was ready to talk again.

'I just . . . I wish we could stay, that's all,' said Paisley glumly.

Joya looked thoughtful. 'I don't know about wishes, but you of all people know that *dreams* can come true. Your work in Moon Wood affects what happens in Sunny Wood in all kinds of ways. Look at my little Dream Tree. See how happy it is.'

Paisley glanced up. The miniature Dream Tree *was* extra sparkly today. There was even a small river of gold glitter round it, just like in the night-time town!

‘I remember when we first met you, Fatima thought the tree was actually a stick in the glass case – it was so unhealthy,’ Paisley said, giving a slight giggle at the memory.

Joya grinned broadly at Paisley finally cheering up. ‘It was hibernating . . . but it’s flourishing now because you’ve been working so hard out there in Moon Wood.’

It was true, Paisley knew, but she still felt sad. ‘I don’t know what I’d do without seeing Quill,’ she said, blowing her nose into another tissue. ‘Or my friends!’

‘Great friendships are the gift of a lifetime,’ said Joya. ‘Wherever you are, you’ll always have

each other. You have a special bond.’ She paused and looked at the tree again. ‘You know, the tree is also able to flower because its roots are strong. Your roots are strong too, Paisley – they’ll help you do what you need to do.’ She smiled at her and then noticed what Paisley had been doing while they were talking. ‘Gosh, Paisley, the sign looks fantastic!’

Paisley dried her face and put down the chalks. She’d done a galaxy of stars curling around a little Dream Tree growing strong and beautiful at the bottom.

‘Portia in Sugar Scoops asked me if I’d do a mural of the Dream Tree for



her. I mean, she didn't know it was the Dream Tree obviously, but she saw my sketchbook and liked it.' Paisley didn't want to boast, but she was proud to be asked. 'I won't get the chance to do that anywhere else. I just feel like I have so much to stay for. In Sunny Wood *and* Moon Wood.'

Joya spread out her hands. 'Well then, I think you have to be honest with your parents. If you really don't want to move, you have to tell them. They aren't mind readers. I know it will be hard, but you have courage – I've seen it before. And, besides, I want to see what's waiting on the rest of this map. So we all need you to stay.'

Paisley decided then that she would tell her parents how she really felt. Joya was right about so many things, but most importantly that talking through your worries did help after all.

They finished the tea and their talk turned to happier things, like their Dream Guardians. When Paisley left, she felt lighter than she had in days and headed happily to meet her friends at the library to research ancient maps of the world. They gave Paisley so many ideas for the Moon Wood map and how to really make it her own.

When she went home, Paisley was even more confident about telling her parents how she really felt. But she'd had so much fun at the library she was back later than planned and her parents had gone out to the theatre. She felt a bit deflated, as if she'd worked herself up to show a piece of art in class but the teacher had run out of time.

Still, she was resolved to be honest with her parents as soon as possible. In the meantime, as she put her pressed white rose, which was

the exact shade of Quill's tail, under her pillow, she told herself she'd enjoy her night in Moon Wood as if it was her last, even though she was determined it wouldn't be!



Tonight, at least, Paisley's wish to be in Moon Wood came true. She arrived after Bella but before Mai and Fatima, and gave her friend a big hug before Quill bounded over. Paisley giggled as her jackalope played hide-and-seek, hopping in and out from behind the fountain. Skye joined in the fun too.

'What's that?' asked Bella, pointing to Paisley's pocket.

'It came through!'

 Paisley was delighted. She pulled out the box of chalks she'd borrowed

from Joya. 'I had an idea,' she said.

Paisley went over to the Moon Wood sign and started drawing intricate curls and swirls in a pattern around the words. She did one corner and stood back, turning to Bella.

'Do you think it's OK? Do you think I'm allowed?' Paisley asked nervously.

Bella's grin gave her all the response she needed. 'It's gorgeous! I love that you're making your mark on Moon Wood. Do the rest!'

Paisley felt a familiar lump in her throat about making her mark on Moon Wood while she still could, but she shook the thought away and chose another chalk. Concentrating on the design and filling in the rest of the sign left no room for anxiety in her mind. By the time Fatima and Mai had arrived, Paisley was adding the finishing touches to the last corner.

At the same moment, the other Guardians emerged from the woods and were gesturing to the girls to follow the river of Dream Essence, which was still flowing from the Dream Tree, through the square and into the woods.

'Adventure this way!' said Mai, flinging her arms in the air and pointing towards the opposite side of the square, where the golden stream disappeared between the trees.

Paisley laughed, picked up Quill and hurried after her friends.

'Umm, are you sure we're going the right way?' Bella asked Skye as Paisley and Quill caught up with them at the edge of the square.

Skye nodded and pawed her hoof at the ground insistently.

'It's just that . . . there's a wall of prickly hedge blocking our way,' said Mai, pointing to the

large, thorny bushes in front of them. The river was beginning to pool nearby, also unable to get through.

Crystal gave a low purr and Quill nudged Paisley with her little nose.

‘Let’s consult the map,’ Paisley replied, pulling it out of her pocket.



Sure enough, on the map a very faint path led off the town square in this direction – but in front of them there wasn’t a path anywhere to be seen!

‘How do they expect us to get through?’ asked Fatima, peering at the map to try to see what the Guardians meant. Onyx prowled around her, then went to crouch by the hedge.

Curious, Bella watched Onyx. There seemed to be a dent in the hedge, just behind the wolf.

‘Oh – look! There’s a stile,’ said Bella as she approached the hedge. She pushed away some

branches to reveal a wooden post. ‘Ouch! These thorns are super sharp!’

‘Yeah, looks like a stile to nowhere,’ said Fatima, but then she paused. ‘Wait . . . Can you hear that?’

They all stopped to listen.

Trill-trill, chitter-chitter-chitter.

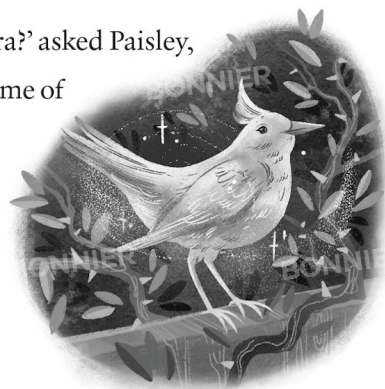
‘What’s that?’ asked Bella.

‘There!’ said Mai.

She was pointing at the stile, where a shining golden nightingale had landed and started singing to them.

‘Are you . . . Aurora?’ asked Paisley, remembering the name of Joya’s Guardian.

Trill-trill-trill! the little bird sang in agreement.



‘You’re sure we’re supposed to go this way?’ said Bella, and the girls watched, amazed as Aurora trilled her beautiful song again. Onyx howled as if to say, *I told you so*.

Mai walked over and peered at the stile. ‘How do we even get over? There’s loads of prickly brambles covering it,’ she said.

As soon as Mai had spoken, four sets of heavy-duty gardening gloves appeared on the ground in front of them.

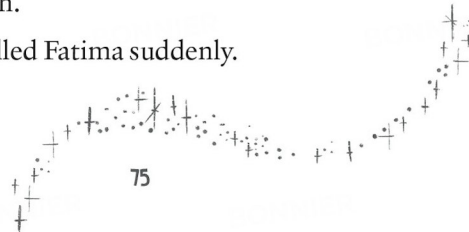
Paisley pulled the gloves on and clapped her hands. They made a soft *thwack* sound, which made Quill jump. Skye stomped her hooves and everyone turned to see that tall shears and clippers had appeared next to her, leaning against the hedge.

‘Well,’ said Paisley, ‘I guess we have to hack our way in!’

Slowly, branch by branch, the girls cleared a small path over the stile. When the branches snapped back in their faces, protective goggles appeared. Mai thought they looked like weird scientists and couldn’t stop giggling, which slowed them down somewhat, but they didn’t mind. After a while, though, the brambles were all cleared and they were able to climb over the stile.

Beyond was a path framed by a series of arches, tangled with the same thorny branches as the hedge, like an open tunnel. The four Dream Keepers and their Guardians carefully made their way down the path, with the Dream Essence stream trickling along with them. Overhead, Aurora swooped in and out of the arches, her song getting more melodic the further they walked down the path.

‘Look!’ yelled Fatima suddenly.



As the golden stream of Dream Essence flowed over the dusty earth, every plant it touched – including the thorny branches – began to burst with flowers.

‘The thorns weren’t brambles – they were rose thorns!’ squealed Paisley as fragrant roses bloomed all around them. Pink, white, red and even peachy-yellow. The girls took a moment to bask in their beauty.

Then Aurora chirped one final time and flew off, following the stream as it continued to weave a channel through the woods.

‘Where does it lead? Oh, that’s what you’re trying to tell us,’ said Paisley, looking down the opening path in the bushes. Blossoms flowered above the running river, with shallow banks on either side for the girls to walk along under the tunnel of roses.

Skye picked up Bella on her back and together they rose into the air.

‘You’re not going to believe this!’ Bella called down to them.

Mai grabbed Paisley’s hand and pulled her along, Crystal and Quill at their sides. ‘Come on!’





Mai, Paisley and Fatima ran to the end of the tunnel with the Guardians and emerged in a glade of oaks, ash and willow trees. Bushes were crowded with juicy berries, and bees buzzed from flower to flower. The Dream Essence continued to flow through the glade, though, and so the girls followed it, barely stopping for breath.



Just as they reached the edge of the woods, Fatima flung her arms out.
‘Stop!’ she cried, just in time.

Paisley stumbled back with a bump, then:
‘Oooh!’

In front of them, the Dream Essence merged with a small stream of water trickling out of some rocks and tumbled over the edge of a cliff into a beautiful waterfall. A rainbow arced in the spray below. Lush green moss furred the

sharp rocks cascading down the sides.

‘It’s so beautiful!’ Bella called from above, still on Skye.

‘Come down!’ Mai shouted back.

Once again they heard Aurora’s beautiful song as she landed on a branch beside them. It was like having Joya with them. Paisley was sure that the little bird winked at them before flying off. Had she led them here for a reason?

‘How will I do justice to this on the map?’ wondered Paisley out loud, staring in amazement at the beautiful scene before her.

Mai gave her a hug. ‘You can do it, Pais – you can draw anything!’

Her friend’s confidence encouraged Paisley to get out a pen and start sketching the path they’d taken from the town square, through the rose tunnel and the glade to this waterfall.

Skye and Bella set down next to them, but Bella seemed a bit uneasy.

‘Why the long face?’ asked Fatima.

Bella pointed in the distance, past the waterfall. ‘Over there,’ she said. ‘Beyond the pool . . .’

‘Shadows,’ said Mai.

The girls looked at each other.

Paisley frowned. ‘You mean . . .’

Bella nodded. ‘The Dark Queen’s shadows,’ she said, worriedly nibbling her lip.

‘She can’t be back already,’ said Fatima. ‘We banished her. Blasted her out of the sky – *zap, zap, pow!*’

Paisley felt solemn. She remembered the Dark Queen’s shadows bursting apart with the combination of Dream Essence, moonlight and the power of their friendship, but Joya had warned them that the Nightmare Realm was

always pushing at the edge of Moon Wood, trying to get in.

‘Bella’s right,’ she said, sadly agreeing. ‘It’s exactly like the map shows – the Dark Queen is trying to get back into Moon Wood.’

‘Well, her shadows are all the way down there and we’re safely up here,’ said Fatima, confidently waving her concerns away.

Paisley wasn’t so certain, though. ‘But it looks like the shadows have grown,’ she said, showing her friends the map. ‘They were just flickering on the edges of the map before – and now . . .’

Mai gasped. ‘They’re denser and closer.’

‘Are you sure?’ said Fatima, crossing her arms. She was always sceptical, but she also didn’t actually want bad things to happen.

Paisley stepped forward, gently taking her friend’s arm and pointing over the waterfall.

‘Right there – oh!’

But as Paisley leaned over, her foot slipped on the damp moss at the cliff edge. One second she was standing upright, and the next she was falling. And she took Fatima with her.



Paisley plunged into cold water.

In shock, she felt like time had stopped still. She was underwater and had no idea which way was up or down.

A tug made her realise she was still holding Fatima's arm. Paisley tried to open her eyes, but it was weird without goggles. She wasn't like her brother, Brandon – she really wasn't the greatest swimmer.

Brandon . . . thought Paisley. My family . . . moving house . . .

The tugging got stronger. Now it was Fatima clutching *her* arm. Suddenly Paisley was being pulled upwards, and at last she and Fatima burst through the water's surface.



Gasping, Paisley pushed the soaking wet hair out of her face and frantically looked for her friend.

'Are you OK?' Bella called from above.

'We're fine!' Fatima shouted as she treaded water, still gripping Paisley's arm.

They swam to the edge of the waterfall pool, then helped each other up over the mossy rocks onto a dry ledge.

Your friends let you fall, they don't want you around any more. The thought took Paisley by surprise. Then she shook herself. That didn't make sense! If anything, it was her fault that she and Fatima had slipped. And Fatima had saved her!

Her friend was wringing out her long, wet plait. 'Phew! That was a thrill I don't want to repeat in a hurry,' she said, laughing.

But Paisley didn't feel like laughing. A cold stone of sadness had dropped in her chest. She looked out into the shadows of the Nightmare Realm beyond.

They won't miss you when you're gone, the voice in her head chimed in.

Paisley turned to Fatima, wondering if that voice could be telling the truth, then she did a double-take as she took in her friend's appearance. 'How are you dry already?!

Fatima put her hands on her hips. 'I dreamed it – like you dreamed up those rainbow slushies,' she said with a shrug.

Paisley smiled, then closed her eyes and imagined herself dry. She felt her hair curling up again, and her clothes went from clingy and wet to soft and warm.

You made your friend fall.

Paisley's smile turned back to a frown.

'Fatima, I'm so sorry. That was all my fault. I didn't mean to . . .' she stuttered.

Fatima let out a bark of laughter. 'Don't worry – I didn't think you'd try to push me over a waterfall.'

'They're laughing! They're fine!' said Mai.

'Can you climb back up?' Bella called down from the clifftop.

Fatima wiped her face and looked around.

'We can try!' Paisley shouted back, and reached up to an outcrop of rock above her head, keen to get away from whatever was causing the weird thoughts in her mind down here. She put one foot in a nook in the cliff face and tried to hoist herself up, but immediately fell straight back down on her bum.

'I think that's a no!' Fatima called to their friends at the top.

'Should we just wake up at home to fix this?' Paisley asked.

'Aw, but I don't want to wake up yet – we haven't had snacks at Sugar Scoops!' said Fatima.

'You can do it!' called Mai. 'Think of the rainbow slushies!'

'Can you, like, draw a ladder on the map or something?' asked Fatima.

Paisley got out the map, which had

miraculously survived the soaking. ‘I’m not sure it works like that. I think I can only draw what’s here. I can try, though.’

She drew a ladder, but it kept disappearing, as though her pen was out of ink.

All of a sudden, a breeze blew past them and Paisley had an urge to look up at the moon. She thought she saw wings flap across it. It made her shiver. Something definitely seemed off – it was as if the Dark Queen was trying to reach them. Paisley remembered how it had felt to be in her presence all those weeks ago.

‘Do you feel cold, Fatima?’ Paisley said with chattering teeth, her eyes on the shadows in the distance.

Fatima grabbed her hand. ‘Don’t worry, Pais – it’s our rescuer!’ she said.

To Paisley’s relief, it wasn’t one of the Dark

Queen’s creatures that had landed next to them but Skye. She had flown down to their rocky ledge. As Skye bowed her head, Paisley instantly relaxed.

‘Are we allowed to fly you?’ asked Paisley.

Bella peered over the cliff edge above. ‘Just get on! She’s happy to help! Please! She can bring you up, one at a time!’

Carefully, Fatima climbed onto Skye’s back, and the pegasus flapped her beautiful pink wings to rise up and take Fatima to safety.

Paisley was glad that Fatima was being flown to safety – it would be her turn next. But then she looked out over the





waterfall pool again, at the shadowy tendrils of the Nightmare Realm, lapping at their happy Dream World. By herself on the ledge, those sad thoughts started creeping back in.

You'll be alone when you move.

Your family doesn't care about what you want.

They're taking you away from all this.

Might as well stay away from Moon Wood now. You won't be around very long anyway.

Paisley shrank back down to sit on a rock and wait for Skye . . . but was Skye even coming back for her? Would her friends leave her here?

She shook her head – she didn't like thinking like this. She had to have confidence. So Paisley did what she always did when she was nervous or worried: she started sketching. She pencilled the boundary of the shadows meeting the waterfall on the map. She hoped the faint line would stay

where it was and not move closer into Moon Wood.

Before she knew it, Skye was back, and Paisley climbed on and they flew up to her friends. Quill bounded over the instant she landed on dry ground, nuzzling to tell her she was relieved she was safe.

‘Hooray!’ cried Bella, and the girls pulled her into an extra big hug with their Guardians.

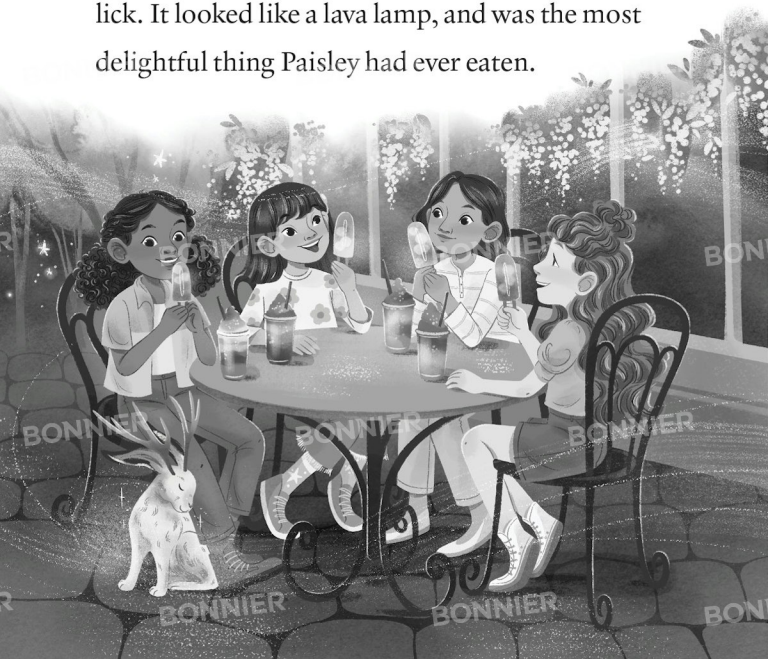
‘That was scary,’ said Paisley.

Mai clapped and did a happy celebration dance. ‘If Moon Wood Sugar Scoops is still on that map, Paisley, you’d better lead us there right this second to celebrate.’

Paisley didn't shiver at all on the way back, through the woodland glade and the rosebush tunnel. It was as though the further they were from the shadowy boundary of the wood, the happier she felt. And with her friends beside her,

she could feel their love pushing away all her worries.

When they arrived back in the square, they sat outside at the pretty little round mint-blue tables at Sugar Scoops, and each girl dreamed up not just a rainbow slushie but the most magical treat they could come up with: a swirling, colour-changing ice lolly that had a different flavour with every lick. It looked like a lava lamp, and was the most delightful thing Paisley had ever eaten.



Mai was cracking jokes and the Guardians were playing together in the square. It was a beautiful dream night, even after all the drama.

‘Seriously, though, for a minute,’ said Fatima, finishing her lolly, ‘that *was* a bit scary.’

‘I’m so sorry,’ said Paisley, covering her face in her hands.

Fatima bopped her on the nose with her lolly stick. ‘I wasn’t blaming you, silly! I have to admit that I’m worried . . . I think the Dark Queen is really there in the shadows. It’s like she was pulling us to her.’

Paisley looked at the table. ‘I . . . I think I heard her voice, in my head, when I was alone.’

‘Well then,’ said Fatima, ‘it’s not all rainbow lollies here in Moon Wood and I’d never forgive myself if something happened to one of you without me. Let’s make a pact – to never come to

Moon Wood alone. It's all for one and one for all, and all together, every time.'

'I agree!' said Mai, pointing her lolly stick up in the air.

'Me too,' said Bella.

'Me four,' giggled Paisley, and they linked pinkie fingers around the table to seal their pact.

Paisley felt so loved by her friends and the Guardians. Did they really mean it when they promised that they would always come to Moon Wood together? They seemed to have forgotten that she might be moving away. Would they come without her if she really did leave Sunny Wood? But would that put them in danger? Without the full protection of their friendship, perhaps the darkness would have more of a chance to creep in . . .

She wanted to do everything she could to stay

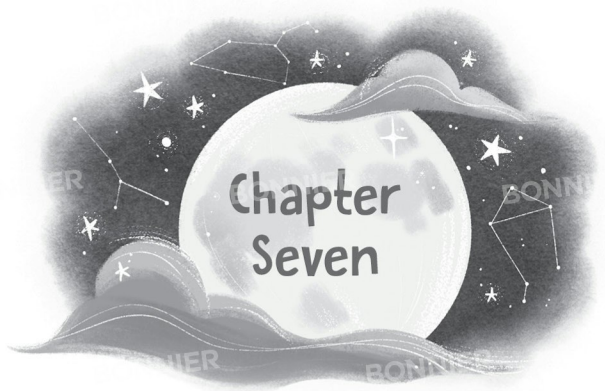
in Sunny Wood. Not only because she couldn't bear to miss out on adventures with her friends but because she couldn't risk putting them or the residents of Sunny Wood in danger.

No, her family *had* to stay. She would persuade her parents, no matter what. She'd talk to them the very next morning as soon as she woke up!

Paisley yawned. Feeling sleepy was the telltale sign that her time in Moon Wood was coming to an end.

She checked that she had the map in her pocket and gave Quill an extra-big hug as she felt herself being pulled back to Sunny Wood. In her heart, she knew it would be OK. She had survived falling down a waterfall . . . she could definitely cope with a chat with her own family.





Paisley stretched and smiled. She'd woken up in her own bed, the most dramatic dream night in Moon Wood behind her. Even though it had been dangerous, Paisley couldn't wait to return and see Quill and the others!

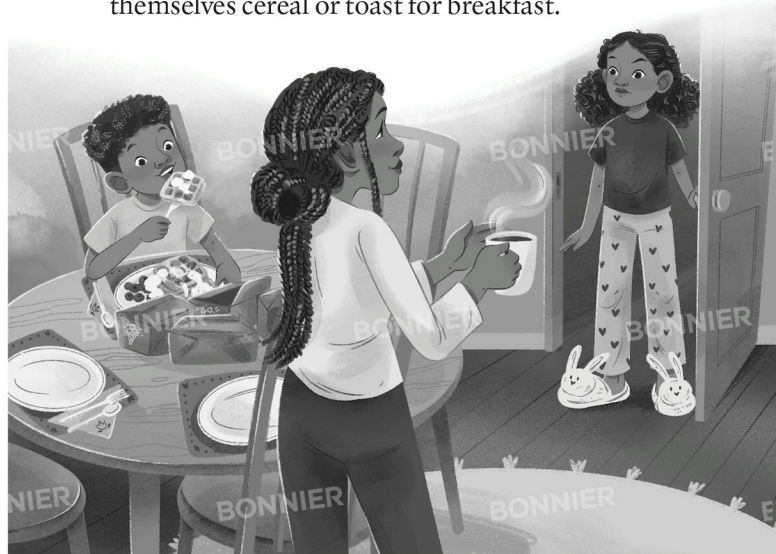
Luckily, it was still the weekend and she had a full day planned, hanging out with her friends in Sunny Wood. As soon as she spoke to her parents about this moving business.

Paisley flung off her duvet and swung her feet over the side of the bed to slip into her

fluffy bunny slippers, then she made her way downstairs.

'Morning, sunshine!' said Mum as Paisley entered the kitchen.

Paisley opened her mouth, ready to lay out her argument for staying, when she suddenly stopped in the doorway. The table was fully set with napkins as if it was a fancy dinner but with cardboard takeaway boxes piled in the centre. What was going on? Her family usually just made themselves cereal or toast for breakfast.



Mum even handed her a hot chocolate!

‘You OK, Mum?’ asked Paisley.

‘I picked up some waffles from Sugar Scoops on the way back from my run,’ said Mum. ‘I thought it would be a fun weekend treat.’

Brandon was already tucking into a plate piled high with waffles and berries. ‘Can I have seconds?’

‘Not before I’ve had firsts!’ Paisley laughed, sitting down and helping herself.

Dad came in and Paisley caught him sharing a look with Mum. Her heart dropped. All this tasty food was for a family meeting, wasn’t it?

Paisley had to get in before they did. She took a deep breath and managed, ‘Um,’ but Dad was already talking.

‘Paisley, Brandon, we wanted to have a family meeting.’

I knew it! thought Paisley.

Dad carried on. ‘You know I was offered a job in Europe. Well, we’ve done a lot of research and in Zurich there’s a great leisure centre with a very promising swimming programme for you, Brandon. And, Paisley, the school there has a prestigious art department. Now, ultimately it’s a family decision, but Mum and I are excited about the prospect of this new adventure, and we’d love to hear what you think.’

Brandon gulped down his fresh orange juice noisily. ‘How close is the pool to where we’d live?’ he said.

Paisley closed her eyes. She could hear the curiosity in her brother’s voice – was he considering it? This conversation wasn’t going the way she wanted, not at all.

Mum laughed. ‘There’s a great apartment

complex in town near it, so you could walk,' she said.

Her parents really had thought it all through. Paisley tried not to panic. She wished she'd brought down a sketchbook to doodle in, to calm her nerves.

'I mean, I'd rather stay here,' said Brandon, 'but if we have to move, then OK.'

'No!' exclaimed Paisley. She immediately opened her eyes and covered her mouth, shocked at her outburst. She lowered her hands and said, 'I mean, I love it here. I don't want to move.'

'But there's art there too, honey,' said Mum. 'There are great opportunities. For all of us.'

'I just . . . My friends . . .' Paisley stopped, took a breath and started again. She'd thought of all these great reasons not to move and her words weren't coming out right. 'We've been

here for a long time now, and I've made really good friends . . .' She tried to remember what she wanted to say. 'I feel like we've put down roots here for the first time, and it makes us all stronger.'

Brandon cleared his throat and reached for another waffle, but Mum stopped him with a look.

'Don't you love trying new countries, though, Pais? Seeing the world?' asked Dad.

'I do,' said Paisley. 'We've lived in some awesome places. I think that's one of the reasons I love art so much, because you guys have taken us to such inspiring places! But I've been having so many adventures here and I'm really happy. I mean, I don't want to stop your career or anything, but . . .'

But you'd be stopping my job as a Dream Keeper,

she thought but couldn't say.

Paisley stared at her plate. She realised she'd been cutting her waffle into smaller and smaller pieces. Finally she put a tiny corner in her mouth and chewed it unhappily, not really tasting anything.

'Thank you for being honest,' Mum said. 'We'll keep thinking about it – but we do have to decide soon.'

Paisley looked up in time to see Mum and Dad having a silent conversation with their eyes.

She couldn't bear it. She pushed her chair back and said, 'I'm going to get dressed. I'm meeting the girls at the library.'

Mum called upstairs after her. 'Are you OK, Paisley?'

'Fine!' she called back, going into the bathroom to shower and locking the door.

Paisley leaned her head back against the door. She was anything but fine. She didn't want to leave! Not her friends in Sunny Wood, and definitely not their adventures in Moon Wood.



Paisley had had a good day with her friends, she supposed. They'd been working on a school history project on the suffragettes at the library. They were making replica newspapers and protest signs and were going to recreate a historical protest outside the school gates. It was going to be really fun, and Paisley loved the suffragette colours of green, white and purple, but her heart hadn't been fully in it that afternoon.

She left early, saying she wanted to work on the signs at home with a different kind of paint, but really she wanted to stop pretending she was fine.

On the way home, Portia was clearing tables outside Sugar Scoops and called out to say hello.

‘Any thoughts about my mural?’ she asked with a big smile.

Paisley’s eyes widened in panic. She didn’t want to let Portia down, but she didn’t know how long she’d be in Sunny Wood. She tried to smile and said, ‘Still working on my sketches!’ then hurried off home.

When she got there, Paisley sat for a long time flicking through her Sunny Wood and Moon Wood sketchbooks.

After a mostly silent dinner, she got ready for bed early. Even with everything going on, she was looking forward to seeing Quill in Moon Wood. She carefully put her token under her pillow, fingertips grazing the soft parchment of the map already there.

In a blink, Paisley closed her eyes to go to sleep and then reopened them in the Moon Wood town square. The air was warm, like a summer night, and she was clutching the map.

Paisley realised she was the first to arrive again.

Maybe I’m desperate to get here these days, the only place I’m happy, she thought, and she wandered over to the Dream Tree, illuminated under a full moon.

She loved seeing the shapes swirl in the Dream Essence: the dreams of the residents of Sunny Wood.

Tonight, wisps of a striped cat playing with two little kittens tumbled by, then burst into golden sparkles. A football soared into a goal, morphed into a

trophy, then scattered in a shimmer. Over there was an aeroplane and a boat. *Maybe someone's dreaming of their summer holidays*, she thought.

Paisley reached up to touch a Dream Flower and a handful of Dream Essence sprinkled into her palm. It twirled and sparkled and tumbled into a little golden ball. It felt both solid and empty at once, as if she could scrunch it like a dandelion puff.

What else could it do? She put the map down under the Dream Tree to play with the Essence with both hands.

Holding her left palm out flat, Paisley quickly shaped the Dream Essence with her right hand. She pushed and prodded it, playing around with different shapes. It was like the clay in the art studio at school, but way more magical. She found herself pulling the top up into a point and realised

she'd made a house.

Her house.

That's my dream, she thought. *To stay in Sunny Wood.*



She sighed, and thought she heard her sigh echo around the town square . . . but then another sigh followed, which definitely wasn't her own. Was her Guardian nearby?

'Quill?' Paisley called.

A sudden chill rippled through her as a breeze whipped across the square and she put her hands in her pockets.

'Hello?'

Squeak, squeak!

Not Quill but another animal – and it sounded as though it was in pain.

Paisley noticed a flapping movement in the

trees across the square, and ivy leaves rustled across the woodland floor, then went still.

‘Hey, are you all right?’ Paisley asked. She crept towards the trees and thought she saw some little silver pointed ears. Maybe it was a kitten? Whatever it was, Paisley was desperate to help. It was their job as Dream Keepers after all.

‘It’s OK – don’t be frightened. Can I help you?’ she said gently, and knelt down, hoping she looked unthreatening.

The ears poked up again, and a silver furry head rose from under the ivy leaves. At first, Paisley thought it was a little mouse or a kitten with pointy ears. Then she realised . . .

It was a bat!

Paisley was startled,
but tried to look calm.
Bats were a little spooky.



There had been a flock of bats at the library the night of the battle with the Dark Queen. But then the bat mewled again and Paisley felt a tug on her heartstrings. It seemed like a frail little baby. She wondered what a baby bat was called – a pup? A cub? Wonkily, it hopped out of the undergrowth towards her.

‘You’re limping!’ exclaimed Paisley. ‘Where are you hurt?’ she asked, but the bat only scrambled up to its feet and tried to fly.

It flopped, but it persisted through the ivy, half flying and half hopping over pebble stepping stones across the Dream Essence river and into the woods.

‘Wait! Let me help you!’ Paisley called, but the bat kept going.

Paisley looked around, wondering where her friends – and Quill – were. Then she remembered

she'd gone to bed pretty early. No one else was here yet. It was up to her.

As the little bat fluttered off in fits and starts, Paisley followed it into the dark of the wood.



Paisley was surprised at how quickly the injured bat could move. Every time she approached it, it started trying to fly off lopsidedly again.

‘OK, I’ll follow you, then. You show me where to go.’

She scolded herself for leaving the map behind under the Dream Tree. This journey through the woods would have been a great chance to update it, as she was discovering areas of Moon Wood that were literally off the beaten path. Also, it would have helped her find her way back to the

square once she'd helped the injured bat, because right now she had no idea where she was. Paisley frowned. How would her friends know where she was if they arrived now? She felt a pang that she hadn't kept her promise to always stick together in Moon Wood.

But they hadn't arrived yet, she thought to herself. *And I need to help this bat.*

Following the little creature through the trees made her think of her Guardian. Where *was* Quill? She always appeared when Paisley arrived in Moon Wood.

A huge cloud floated across the moon, blocking out its light. It was getting increasingly hard to see in the shadows.

'Oh!' Paisley exclaimed when she finally stumbled into a clearing and recognised where she was.

It was Starlight Hollow, the glade where they'd cleared the elm-tree copse a few nights ago, except the cluster of trees was overgrown with vines again. Everywhere looked parched and no wildflowers bloomed any longer. Paisley shivered. Something felt off – Starlight Hollow didn't feel like the happy place it had been when they'd first discovered it.

The little bat had stopped by the elm trees, panting and exhausted. Finally, it let Paisley creep up to it. Reaching out a knuckle, she gently stroked the bat's head between its large, pointed ears. It squeaked, then let out a sound like a purr.

'Are you OK? Are you sad? I'm sad too,' she said, kindly. 'Is this where your home is? Did you get lost? Did you miss it? I know how that feels. I haven't left yet, but I already miss home. *And I miss Quill. Where is she, I wonder?*'



Paisley tried to blink away tears, and she sniffed to stop a sob. It wouldn't help the bat for her to get upset right now! However, the bat seemed to sense her sadness and hopped closer. She picked it up and held it against her chest.

It blinked big, shiny eyes at her, and she found herself telling it all about her family moving away.

About how much she loved Moon Wood and all the things they did there.

'Me and my friends, we even defeated the Dark Queen,' said Paisley. The bat chirruped, as if it recognised the name. She saw its tiny pointed teeth. Was it smiling? Was it frightened? Paisley carried on. 'She's a scary witch. Well, I think she's a witch. She's definitely magic, but *dark* magic. Like the opposite of the Dream Tree.'

Paisley shuddered and hugged the bat closer.

But something seemed strange. When she shared her heart with Quill, she always felt warm inside. Now though, she was cold, as if this little bat was sucking her heat and energy away from her.

At that moment, a chilling shock enveloped Paisley's ankle and she thought she'd stepped in a puddle. Her foot was frozen. Icy. With a jolt, she



realised she'd felt this particular kind of coldness before.

It meant that nightmare magic was near. And, with it, its source: the Dark Queen.

The dread-cold tendrils of the Dark Queen's shadow curled around her ankle like a vine. A low fog crept in across Starlight Hollow, covering the ground in spooky white cloud.

Paisley looked down at the injured bat in her arms and had a horrid feeling she'd seen the bat somewhere before. She tried to let go, but its claws sank in to her jumper, pricking at her skin underneath.

And in the distance, out there in the darkness beyond the woods, Paisley heard a cackle, then: 'Welcome to my realm, Paisley. Meet my familiar, Wraith.'

Paisley hoped she was imagining all this, then



she looked into the little bat's eyes, which now glinted darkly.

This wasn't an innocent creature in need of her help.

This was the Dark Queen's bat. And Paisley had walked right into their trap.



Bella arrived next to the Dream Tree and her smile quickly turned to a frown.

'Finally!' Mai cried, flinging herself at Bella.

Skye trotted over and nuzzled Bella's arm insistently. Fatima was hugging Onyx tightly and looked up at her friend with soulful eyes.

'What's up?' asked Bella. 'Am I late?'

'Yes, but so is Paisley,' said Fatima.

'And something feels weird,' said Mai. 'Super weird.'

‘What are you talking about?’ said Bella, worried now.

‘It’s hard to explain,’ said Mai. ‘Moon Wood feels all cold and sad.’

Fatima nodded in agreement.

Bella chewed her lip. ‘Do you think she’s coming at all? She didn’t come that time before she told us about her parents . . . What if they’ve left already?!’

Fatima took Bella by the shoulders and said calmly, ‘Bella, we were with Paisley all afternoon at the library. You think her parents packed up their entire house and left between then and now?’

Bella sniffed. ‘OK, well when you put it like that, I guess it is a bit unlikely.’

Mai tried to hug Crystal, but the lynx nipped her by the sleeve and tugged her over to the

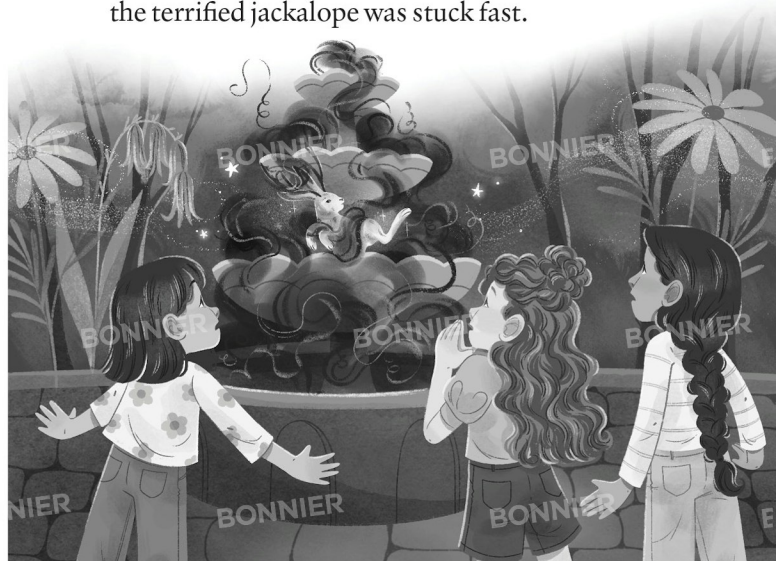
fountain. ‘I really can sense something – *Quill!*’

‘What?’ cried Bella and Fatima, running over to their friend.

The little jackalope was stuck fast to the fountain, bound by shadows. She was trapped and getting soaked, but had freed one foot, which was thumping on the stone. Her little eyes lit up when she saw the girls.

Mai gasped. ‘Shadow vines!’

She tried to pull Quill out of the fountain, but the terrified jackalope was stuck fast.



‘This must mean the Dark Queen was here!’ said Fatima. Seeing Quill, she’d raced back to pluck a Dream Flower and she wasted no time in sprinkling Dream Essence onto the shadows to dissolve them.

The instant that Quill was freed, she bounded off in a blur to the Dream Tree.

‘Where are you going?’ called Bella, and she ran after her with Skye.

The girls found Quill on the other side of the Dream Tree, thumping her foot at something on the ground.

‘The map!’ exclaimed Mai. ‘So Paisley *is* here?’ Quill shook her head.

Fatima’s eyes widened as she realised what the jackalope was trying to tell them. ‘She *was* here, but I’m guessing if the Dark Queen got Quill . . .’

The girls all looked at each other solemnly.

Had their friend been captured?

Bella picked up the map. It had all Paisley’s new, intricate artwork on it. Each area in the wood was carefully and beautifully labelled – but there was something else new on the map.

‘What’s this golden path heading towards Starlight Hollow?’ asked Bella, then she looked more closely. ‘It can’t be the Dream Essence river – it doesn’t flow that way, but this *does* look like it.’

Fatima peered over her shoulder and traced the golden line with her finger. ‘You’re right. Maybe . . . maybe Paisley has some Dream Essence on her. Maybe this is the map showing us where she is!’

‘If she’s gone to Starlight Hollow, won’t she be safe there?’ asked Mai.

‘Oh *no*!’ Bella squealed suddenly,



pointing to Starlight Hollow on the map.

All three Dream Keepers watched,
shocked, as shadows crept
into the glade and a shape
emerged within them. The
shape of a crown.

Bella looked up and
met her friends' fearful
gazes. 'The Dark
Queen's there too.'

'Paisley *has* been
captured!' said Fatima,
her voice breaking.

Just then, the girls
heard Aurora's beautiful
song, and the golden bird
swooped in to land on the
cobblestones. She was pecking at the ground.

'Aurora!' said Mai. 'It's terrible! Paisley's been
captured!'

But Aurora ignored them, pecking at a
cobblestone until it shifted. The Dream Essence
river ran in a trickle around it, creating a second,
smaller stream. Fatima watched with interest.

Thump, thump, thump.

Quill had dashed across the square and was
now stomping the ground impatiently at the stile
to the rosebush tunnel, where the main Dream
Essence river flowed.

Bella shook her head. 'Sorry, Quill, she's not
that way – that river leads to the waterfall. If we
want to find Paisley, we have to follow the other
path, through the wildflower meadow,' she said.

'Come on!' cried Mai. 'Starlight Hollow is
miles away – let's start now!'

'No – look!' said Fatima, tracing a line on the

map. 'The waterfall and Starlight Hollow are actually really close and there's a . . . um, a . . . Is that a dam?'

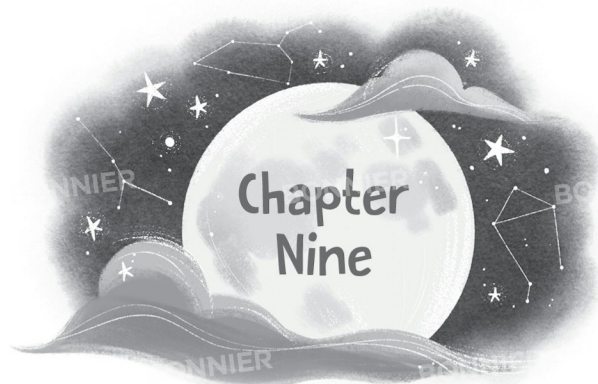
Quill hopped in an excited circle. Fatima was right.

'I have a plan,' said Fatima.

'I have a plan too,' said Mai urgently. 'My plan is run to Starlight Hollow and free our friend from the Dark Queen's clutches! Why are you all taking so long? Let's go!'

But Crystal, Onyx and Skye went to join Quill. Even Aurora flew over to land on Skye's shoulder. The Guardians were in agreement – they had to go this way.

Fatima smiled at her friends. 'Don't worry – my plan is also to free Paisley. Follow Quill!'



Bella, Mai and Fatima hugged their Guardians tight, then set off along the Dream Essence river to help their friend. And banish the Dark Queen. Again.

Mai's teeth chattered. Fatima gave her a hug, but Mai shook her head.

'Thanks, but I'm not cold,' she said. 'I'm just scared.'

Fatima kept her arm around Mai's shoulder. 'Me too. But we defeated the Dark Queen before and we can do it again,' she said firmly.

Bella crossed her fingers. ‘Maybe she’s not even there. Maybe the map is wrong,’ she said hopefully, but Skye whinnied in response.

Bella sighed. ‘OK, the map is magic, and Moon Wood magic is never wrong,’ she said. ‘Fatima’s right too, though: we can banish the Queen again.’

‘Are you sure this is a good plan?’ asked Mai.

All at the same time, Skye whinnied, Crystal and Onyx growled, and Quill stopped to stare hard at Mai.

Fatima laughed. ‘They agree, see? Come on – all for one and one for all.’

Aurora and Quill led the way. The Dream Guardians stuck even closer to the three friends than usual as they all charged down the rose tunnel, following the path of the Dream Essence. It was a horrid feeling to know that they could be separated in this wood.

‘Why would Paisley go off on her own like this, especially when we said we’d stay together?’ Mai asked.



The other girls shrugged, also trying to figure it out.

Soon, they reached a point along the path where the river now split into two. One stream was flowing towards the waterfall, and the other was trying to head in the direction of Starlight Hollow, but – as Fatima had said – there was a dam blocking it. Dream Essence pooled up against it, flooding the ground in front of them, but unable to flow through.

Bella and Mai crouched down.

‘Why are you crouching?’ asked Fatima.

Bella whispered, ‘I’m scared of the Dark Queen.’

Mai whispered too. ‘I just crouched because Bella did.’

Fatima rolled her eyes. ‘We can do this, girls,’ she said. ‘Joya always says we have everything we need to spread light in Moon Wood. We have to

do it. To keep Sunny Wood safe. To keep Paisley safe.’

She held out one hand and the others put theirs on top of it. ‘Let’s go and save Paisley!’ they said together.

‘Do you hear that?’ Fatima said, moving further off the path, past the dam. She beckoned the others to follow, and the girls and their Guardians peeked past a hawthorn bush and into the glade beyond.

They’d arrived at Starlight Hollow, at least the map said so. Even in the palest moonlight they could usually see their way in Moon Wood, but tonight it seemed as though the shadows were pressing in on them.

‘It’s so dark,’ said Mai.

‘I can hardly see anything,’ said Bella. ‘Are you sure Paisley’s here?’

Fatima nodded and showed them the map. The golden trail following Paisley stopped right under her finger, beside to the 'Starlight Hollow' label. Next to it was the large, dark crown.

A cackle echoed through the air.

'There's our answer!' whispered Mai. Then: 'Over there!'

In the shadows they could make out a shape – no, two shapes.

One was Paisley with her trademark big curls. The other figure wore a sharp, glittering crown. The Dark Queen.

She was tall, her robes whipping around her in the cold wind. She looked like the eye of a storm, cackling and raising her arms up to the sky.

'I've got you now! One Keeper down, three to go,' she sneered. 'You're more foolish than I thought, to have fallen for my trick so easily. Now

that I've got you, I will keep you here in Moon Wood. That will stop your silly happy magic flowing back into Sunny Wood. And my nightmares will take over once again and stop all those pathetic "sweet dreams" from rising. Get ready to go to sleep here. For *ever*.'

Bella, Mai and Fatima looked at each other.

'Does she mean *just* sleep or . . . *something else*?' asked Bella.



‘I don’t know, but it sounds really, really bad,’ said Mai. ‘What’s your plan, Fatima?’

‘We need to act quickly,’ Fatima said, then she whispered her plan to her friends and the Guardians. When she finished, they looked disbelieving but determined to try. ‘Remember – if we dream it, we can do it,’ Fatima told them.

Hurrying back to the dam, the girls dreamed up some tools to help loosen the sticks, and Onyx, Crystal and Skye began nudging boulders and branches out of the path of the Dream Essence river.

Fatima gave Quill a hug. ‘Good luck!’ she whispered, as the jackalope scurried off through the foggy undergrowth to the Starlight Hollow to carry out her part of the plan. Aurora flew with her over the tree canopy to keep watch.

Now it was time to free the river, like Aurora

had showed them with the cobblestone back in the square.



Paisley struggled against the shadow vines that bound her legs to a tree, but pushing at their cold strength only made them wind tighter around her ankles.

Wraith had flapped out of her arms and landed on the Dark Queen’s outstretched hand.

‘Well done, my pet,’ she said, stroking the creature, then she turned her attention back to Paisley. ‘Where’s your silly little horned bunny now? None of your animals are a match for me.’

‘Quill is the bravest and best Guardian ever. She’s a jackalope, not a *silly little horned bunny*, and she’s coming for me. You’ll see!’ shouted Paisley, desperately hoping she was right.

‘She’s not here, though, is she? Your “Guardian”. Not guarding you very well – but then why would she? You’re the one who let me back into Moon Wood.’

Paisley’s eyes snapped up to meet the queen’s, shocked and confused by her words.

The Dark Queen smirked. ‘Oh yes, you did this. When you fell from the waterfall and landed so close to my realm, your sadness and loneliness called to me. I answered you – did you hear?’

Paisley remembered the horrible thoughts she’d had on the ledge next to the waterfall, waiting for Skye to rescue her. So it *had* been the Dark Queen in her mind, feeding on her worries.

‘Your pathetic whining gave me a great energy boost. Now I shall retake what’s truly mine,’ said the wicked queen.

Paisley’s heart sank. It was all her fault – her

worries, which she’d kept bottled up all week, had allowed the Dark Queen in.

What’s going to happen now? Paisley wondered. What did the Dark Queen mean when she said she’d keep Paisley here in Moon Wood? Would she see her friends again? And her family? Paisley didn’t want to move house, but she definitely didn’t want to leave her family! And if she stayed forever in Moon Wood, would that really mean constant nightmares for everyone in Sunny Wood?

The vines tightened and Paisley felt one start to creep up her leg. A cold, slimy sadness dropped down through her chest.

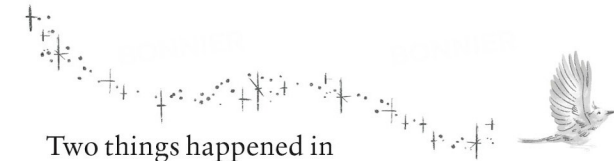


But wait, she thought. *That's what the Dark Queen said drew her to me.* Paisley had to think happy thoughts if she wanted to weaken the Dark Queen's power.

If only her friends were with her! They always had happy thoughts. What if she never saw them again? Paisley blinked her eyes, hard. She *had* to get rid of these sad thoughts but it was as if the Dark Queen's presence was making them harder to fight. If only she could draw something to calm herself down!

She nervously put her hand in her pocket, desperate for something to cling onto, and her fingertips tingled. Uh-oh, was that more dark magic?

But the thing in her pocket was solid, like a little toy or model. Paisley smiled when she realised what it was. Her little Dream Essence house!



Two things happened in that moment. First, Paisley heard birdsong and saw a flash of gold. At the same time, bursting out of the trees from across the glade, a pair of little antlers bobbed through the long grass.

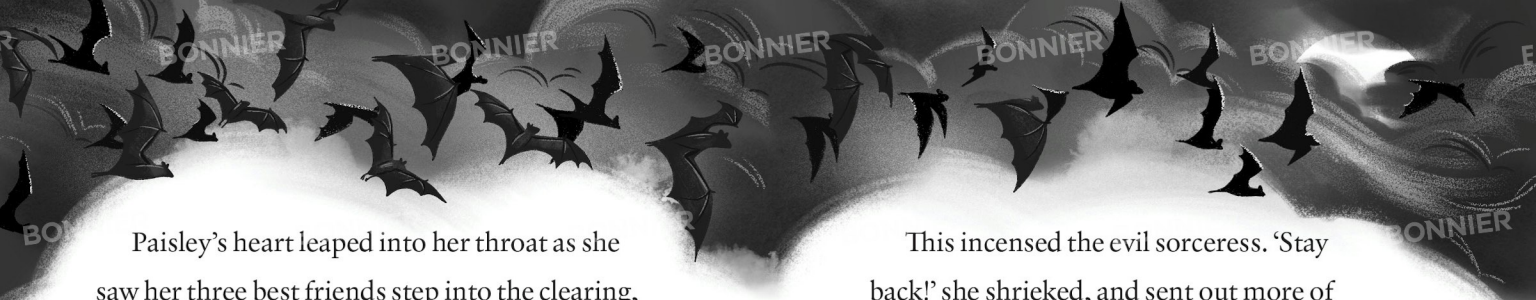
‘Quill!’ Paisley yelled, then: ‘No! Stay back!’

She couldn’t let her Guardian bound right into the Dark Queen’s clutches!

‘Come here,’ cackled the Dark Queen, and a shadowy vine shot out from the undergrowth surrounding Starlight Hollow. It curled around Quill and lifted her high in the air, as if she was an aerial acrobat.

‘Quill, are the others here too? Send them away! Don’t let them come to the Queen!’ Paisley cried out desperately.

‘Too late,’ called Fatima from behind a tree.



Paisley's heart leaped into her throat as she saw her three best friends step into the clearing, holding hands. Even through the pressing shadows, her heart flooded with joy to see Skye with them. But where were Onyx and Crystal? Paisley could only hope that they were safe.

'Are you OK?' Bella shouted.

'I'm caught in vines! Please – go back!' Paisley pleaded. 'I shouldn't have come here by myself. I don't want to get you in danger too!'

'Quiet!' ordered the Dark Queen, and vines shot up around Paisley's shoulders and mouth.

'*Mmf mmff!*' Paisley couldn't speak, but she saw her three friends look each other in the eyes and smile. They weren't abandoning her. They were going to take on the Dark Queen, together.

This incensed the evil sorceress. 'Stay back!' she shrieked, and sent out more of her wicked vines.

'Paisley, we need the moon!' called Bella.

Recalling the battle at the library, Paisley remembered they'd needed to let the moon shine in to activate the Dream Essence to its highest power. Her friends clearly had a plan, but they needed this last part to make it work.

'Think happy thoughts!' yelled Mai.

'I will not let you defeat me!' screeched the Dark Queen.

A racket of flapping burst through the woods. Bats streamed overhead. Quill struggled against her vines. The girls ducked down, but they didn't move from their spot. Skye whinnied and flew

straight through the flock, scattering the bats.

Paisley watched as her friends bravely stood against the Dark Queen and love rose in her heart.

I don't know about wishes . . . but dreams can come true . . . Joya's words came into Paisley's mind.

Paisley couldn't speak, but she felt the Dream Essence house in her pocket. She thought about home and her friends, and all their care and hard work in Moon Wood. She thought about how much she loved Quill, and her family, and her life by day in Sunny Wood. She let those happy thoughts burst out of her.

Suddenly the sky was awash with bright moonlight, in time for a golden wave to ripple through the trees and pour into the glade.

Sparkling Dream Essence flooded Starlight Hollow, with Onyx and Crystal riding the wave.

The Dark Queen shrieked in terror, but she was powerless to hold back the power of the magical stream. She flew up into the sky, in a rage.

Paisley gasped as the golden sparkles reached her. Instantly, the vines binding her faded away and she was free.

She took the Dream Essence house out of her pocket and squeezed it. The Dream Keepers' bravery had reminded her of the power of friendship, which was needed to combat the Dark Queen. Knowing that they'd risked so much for her tonight, Paisley was certain that she, Bella, Mai and Fatima would be friends for ever, no matter where she lived.

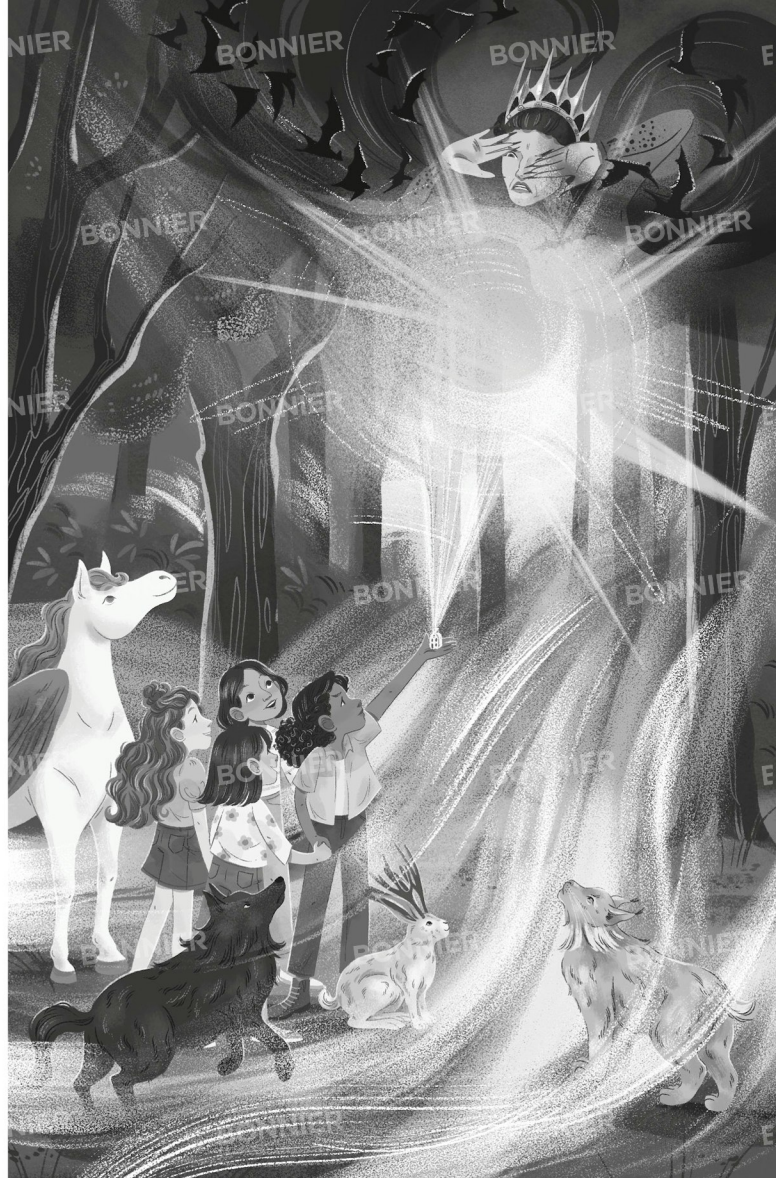
Great friendships are the gift of a lifetime, Joya had said – and, as always, she was right.

Paisley raised her Dream Essence house towards the Dark Queen, who was suspended in the sky.

‘I believe in our dream of Moon Wood,’ Paisley declared. ‘Not your nightmare vision.’

Quill’s vines were dissolved by the Dream Essence as it flooded through the glade and she bounded over to be reunited with Paisley. At that moment, Bella, Mai and Fatima reached her too, along with their Guardians. They stood together in the glistening glade, holding hands, and the Dream Keepers and Guardians stared down the Dark Queen.

Paisley wasn’t sure what came first. The bloodcurdling scream of the Dark Queen being shattered into shadows, or the lightning burst of Dream Essence that shot up from her little house. It erupted into a huge fiery, glittering fountain, right up to the sky – the light so bright that Paisley had to close her eyes to its brilliance.





Paisley didn't dare open her eyes. The brightness of the Dream Essence explosion had been dazzling. Was it over now? Had they won?

She couldn't hear the Dark Queen's wicked cackles any more, that was for sure, and she could feel Quill's soft fur, cuddling up to her legs. A warm breeze blew across her cheeks. Did she dare open her eyes? Was the Dark Queen truly gone?

Blinking cautiously, Paisley let out a gasp. She thought at first she had been transported somewhere else in the blast. But then she saw

Bella, Mai and Fatima also standing next to their Guardians. They were still in Starlight Hollow, but it couldn't have looked more different.

The full moon shone down from a clear sky and the pressing walls of shadow had disappeared. The river of Dream Essence had coated everything in its magical shimmer, and had now retreated to run round the outside of the glade, like a protective barrier.

'She's gone!' said Mai happily.

Bella ran over to Paisley and gave her a fierce hug. 'Are you OK?'

Before she could answer, Fatima shouted, 'Whoa!'

Where Bella had run, a trail of wildflowers had sprung up in the long grass. The Guardians scampered around, and vibrant, scented flowers bloomed



wherever their feet took them. Bella jumped onto Skye's back and flew a circle above the clearing. Snowdrops and crocuses and lily-of-the-valley burst out beneath the shade of the pegasus's wings until the entire glade had blossomed back to beautiful life.

'Look up here!' Bella called from somewhere amid the copse. Paisley and the others looked around until they spotted her. The hollow elm tree had grown into a three-storey treehouse! Bella and Skye were on a platform overlooking the tree canopy.



'Race you!' Mai giggled, and the others quickly ran to the tree, climbing a carved wooden staircase that had appeared inside the thick trunk.

When they were all together at the top, Paisley turned to her friends and sighed. 'I'm so sorry – this was all my fault. I let the Dark Queen in by bottling up all my worries and she fed on all my sad thoughts. I should have said something to you.'

'We will always be here for you, Paisley,' said Fatima solemnly. 'We were here for you tonight! We were so worried when you hadn't arrived, then we saw the map,' she continued, holding out the scroll.

'The map!' Paisley reached for it and carefully unrolled it. As the parchment unfurled, it sparkled with Dream Essence and the drawing of Starlight Hollow changed to show the golden river now running round it.



The girls took a moment with the view from their new treehouse. They could see all the way to the tips of the library turrets back in the town square.

‘I don’t know,’ said Mai. ‘Maybe you should wander off into the woods more often if we get to find treehouses like this!’

As they continued looking around, it became clear how far back they had pushed the Nightmare Realm’s shadows. The river didn’t just run round Starlight Hollow – it encircled the



whole of the wood, leading all the way back to the Dream Tree where it began. Aurora flew above the trees, which reminded Paisley of something Joya had said when she first gave them the map.

‘Joya said there used to be natural protection for Moon Wood that kept the Dark Queen at bay. Maybe it was this river and it’s taken Dream Keepers to restore its path.’

Fatima nodded. ‘It’s like a huge protective ring she can’t cross.’

Indeed, on the map, the grey swirls of the

Nightmare Realm were still there but were now merely a smudged border along the very edges of the parchment, kept out by the Dream Essence river's course.

Gazing at the golden horizon in front of her, Paisley let out a heavy sigh.

'What's wrong?' asked Bella. 'We defeated the Dark Queen again – aren't you happy?'

'Of course, but I may not have long to enjoy it.' Paisley had learned her lesson – no more bottling up her worries and sadness. She didn't want the Dark Queen making another comeback. 'My parents are serious about the move, guys. What if this is my last night in Moon Wood?'

She started to cry and her friends bundled in for a big hug.

'Paisley, we're best friends for ever! Nothing can change that,' said Bella, rubbing her back.

'Yeah, we need you. Even if you move away, we'll keep in touch however we can!' promised Mai.

'Um, I think you're all forgetting something,' said Fatima, and the others pulled back to stare at her. 'We come to Moon Wood *in our dreams*.'

'I know – that's what's so awesome. I'll miss it,' said Paisley.

'No – I mean . . .' Fatima tried again. 'Wherever you live, you dream, so maybe you could still come here at night?'

Mai pretended to faint. 'That is a *stunning* idea!'

Paisley laughed and felt a bit lighter. 'You're always so logical, Fatima.'

Bella hugged Fatima, and said, 'It was Fatima's idea to burst the dam to save you too. The Dark Queen must have put it there to stop the river from flowing through.'

Fatima blushed. ‘Well, Aurora gave me the idea,’ she said, uncharacteristically modest. ‘And Crystal and Onyx did the bursting . . .’

Paisley pulled all three of her friends into a huge hug. ‘I’m really grateful you did. And who knows? Maybe I will stay . . . I did dream it . . .’

She showed them the Dream Essence house, and the other girls all oohed and aahed.

‘I didn’t know you could do that with the Dream Essence!’ said Mai.

Paisley shrugged, blushing. ‘Neither did I. I was worrying about the move when I was playing with it and this sort of happened.’

The girls admired the little golden house. Its sparkles swirled and danced, hovering above Paisley’s hand.

Paisley sighed again, happily this time. She desperately wanted to stay in Sunny Wood and

keep coming to Moon Wood with her friends, but now she knew for sure that the girls would be her friends for ever, no matter where any of them lived. And maybe, just maybe, she could come back to Moon Wood in her dreams. even if she was away from Sunny Wood in the daytime.

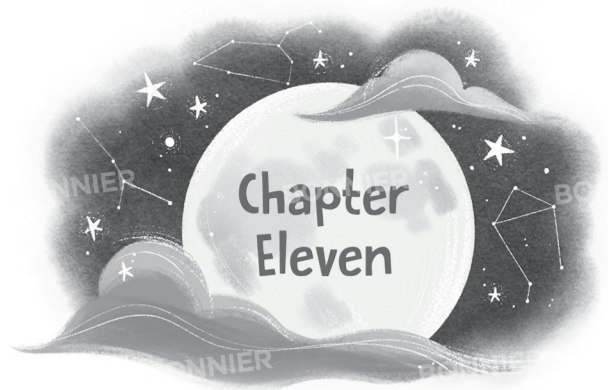
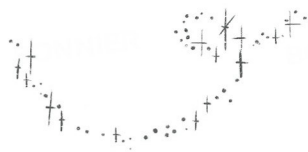
Onyx howled happily from the ground and the girls climbed back down the treehouse’s spiral staircase.

Crystal was panting heavily at the base of a nearby elm tree, and Mai went over to scratch her ears.

‘I’m thirsty too after all that battling of dark forces. I don’t know about you, but I could do with a rainbow slushie,’ said Mai, making everyone laugh.

They linked arms and used Paisley’s Dream Essence house to light their way back to Moon

Wood town. When they arrived at the cobbled square, the little house flew off Paisley's outstretched hand and loop-the-looped its way over to the Dream Tree, then it burst into a cascade of sparkles, joining the other happy dreams of Sunny Wood.



For the first time since Mum and Dad had sprung their surprise announcement on Paisley and her brother, Paisley woke up relaxed and feeling well rested. She had the best friends in the world. In fact, in any realm! And with them she could face any challenge. Even moving away.

So when everyone was smiling at the breakfast table, Paisley gave herself a little pep talk. Although she didn't want to move, she loved her family and would accept whatever decision her parents made. It might take a while to settle in

somewhere new, but she knew deep down she'd be happy wherever they were.

'Finally, she's awake – now you can tell me!' said Brandon, grabbing a banana. A scraped-clean cereal bowl and plate covered in toast crumbs sat in front of him.

'Calm down, Brandon,' said Mum, and she gave Paisley a kiss. 'Morning, sleepyhead. Can I get you anything for breakfast?'

'I'm fine, thanks,' Paisley said, sitting down and reaching for her favourite granola. 'What do you need to tell us?'

Mum and Dad exchanged a look, then Dad said, 'Well, we listened to you both, and you know we really think of ourselves as an adventurous family . . . and we love to travel.'

This is it, thought Paisley. They've decided we're moving. Look happy!

'But,' Mum cut in, 'while there's magic in trying new things, we realise we've put down roots here.'

'And with strong roots we can all flower?' said Paisley hopefully, reminded of what Joya had said about the Dream Tree being able to flower because its roots were strong.

Mum smiled. 'That's very poetic. But, yes, we're really pleased with how happy you two are here – and what great friends you've made.'

'And the escapades you get up to,' said Dad, ruffling Brandon's hair. 'We realised that family life is an adventure wherever we are. And so . . . if it's all right with you, I've asked to take my promotion in Sunny Wood. We're excited to see what happens right here.'

Paisley and Brandon didn't answer. Instead, they both leaped up and almost knocked Dad over with a huge hug.

‘I think they’re happy about it!’ Dad said, muffled from under their embrace.



Mum laughed and joined the bundle. ‘Well, don’t get too comfortable, because it’s a Bank Holiday. We’re off to the DIY store.’

‘Why?’ asked Brandon.

‘I’ll be honest . . . I was looking forward to doing up another house. So, we thought, let’s do some redecorating here instead!’ said Mum.

‘Can I get some paint?’ asked Paisley, an idea coming to mind.

‘Of course!’ said Dad. ‘And, again, it’s a team decision, but I had a dream last night where our windowsills were sort of gold and sparkly . . . It actually looked pretty good . . .’

Paisley smiled. A gold sparkly house in a dream? Wherever could he have got that idea?



Paisley

Urgent news. Sugar Scoops ASAP.

Bella

OK!

Fatima

On my way.

Mai

I hope it's news I can handle . . .

As soon as they were back from the DIY store, Paisley ran to the town square to see her friends. She was so excited to tell them that her family would be staying in Sunny Wood!

As she opened the door to their favourite cafe, she saw her friends were already there – and they were holding a banner that said: WE'LL MISS YOU, PAISLEY!

Standing frozen in the doorway, Paisley covered her face.

'Oh no! We made her cry!' squealed Bella, running over to give her a hug.

'When you said it was urgent, we thought that your parents had decided they'd be moving right away,' said Fatima.

Paisley pulled her hands down. She was

laughing, not crying. 'We're not moving! I'm staying in Sunny Wood!'

While Bella and Fatima cheered, Mai hastily pulled the banner down and ran behind the counter. By the time Paisley had walked in and sat down at their table, Mai popped up again. She'd crossed out 'We'll miss you' and written 'We're happy you're staying' – there wasn't much room, so the words got really small and curled round the edge of the banner.



Paisley would have cried happy tears if her friends didn't make her laugh so hard. She was super happy that she could stay in Sunny Wood with them!

So it turned into a 'hurray you're staying' party and the girls had ice-cream sundaes with rainbow sprinkles. When they finished, Mai suggested getting more, but Paisley shook her head.

'What? No seconds?' Mai asked, pretending to faint.

'Maybe after. I want to tell Joya that I'm staying,' said Paisley.

The girls nodded in understanding. As they headed for the door, Portia came out from behind the counter.

'I couldn't help but overhear and I'm so thrilled you're staying, Paisley!' she said, grinning from ear to ear. 'Does this mean you

might be able to do that mural for me?'

Paisley nodded. 'I got the paint this morning.' Then she pulled something out of her pocket. 'And I, um, actually did a sketch already . . .'

Portia gasped as Paisley unfolded the Moon Wood map and studied it with delight. 'It's like Sunny Wood but all topsy-turvy,' she said. 'Like a magical town. I love it!'

Portia didn't know why the girls giggled so hard at that, but she did arrange a time with Paisley for her to start work on the mural.

The four friends went to the apothecary. Joya was so happy with Paisley's news that she turned the 'OPEN' sign to 'CLOSED' early and set up a little tea party for them in their favourite window seat.

They told her all about the Dark Queen coming back and how they had defeated her once again.

‘Well, I’m so proud of you all. Dream hard and you can make anything happen,’ said Joya, lifting the teapot to offer more mint tea.

Paisley blushed. ‘I still feel bad. It was sort of all my fault – I got us into trouble with the Dark Queen. I shouldn’t have followed Wraith.’

‘You weren’t to know,’ countered Fatima. ‘*And* you got us out of it by making that house out of Dream Essence.’

Joya gasped and almost dropped the silver teapot. ‘You . . . you *made* something out of Dream Essence?’

Paisley fluttered her hands as she spoke. It felt so intuitive at the time – she still wasn’t sure how to explain it. ‘It kind of . . . became like clay. Like sparkly gold-dust clay. And I was thinking about the move and about how it was my dream to stay here, and the Dream Essence sort of shaped itself

into a house. And then it burst the Dark Queen’s shadows away.’

Joya’s smile was wider than they’d ever seen. ‘You did your first Dream Work, Paisley. Oh, girls, this is very advanced Dream Keeping. This . . . this is the start of an even bigger adventure . . .’

Paisley blushed to the tips of her ears, and sipped her tea to stop tears of happiness from falling. She got to stay in Sunny Wood, with her best friends. Their hard work and dreams had made this happen.

And, by the sounds of it, there was even more magic to come . . .

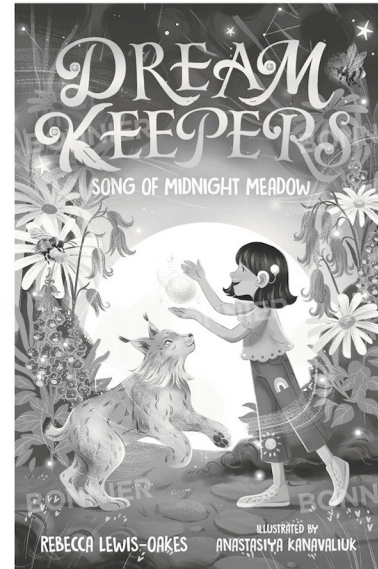


DISCOVER HOW IT ALL BEGAN . . .



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