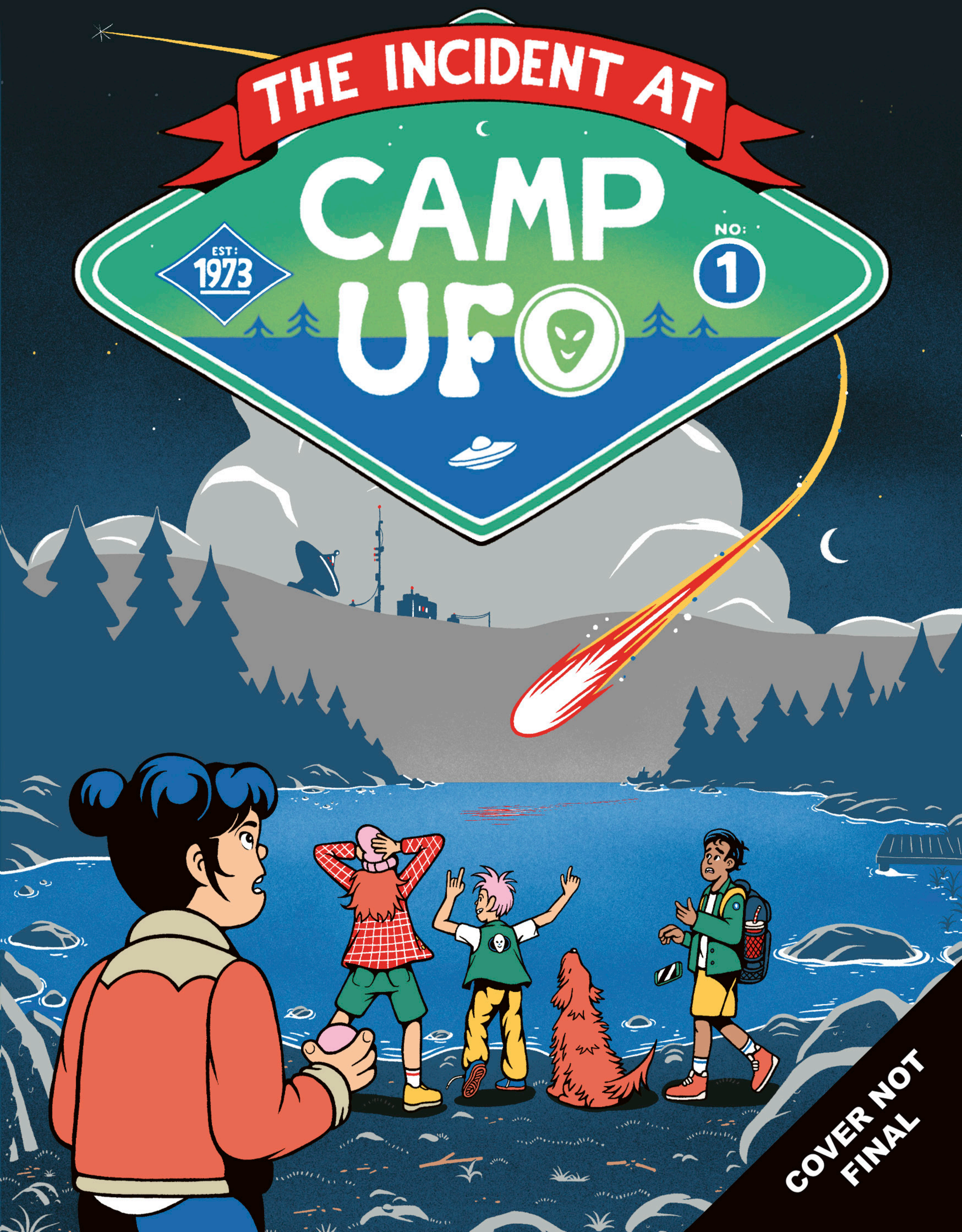
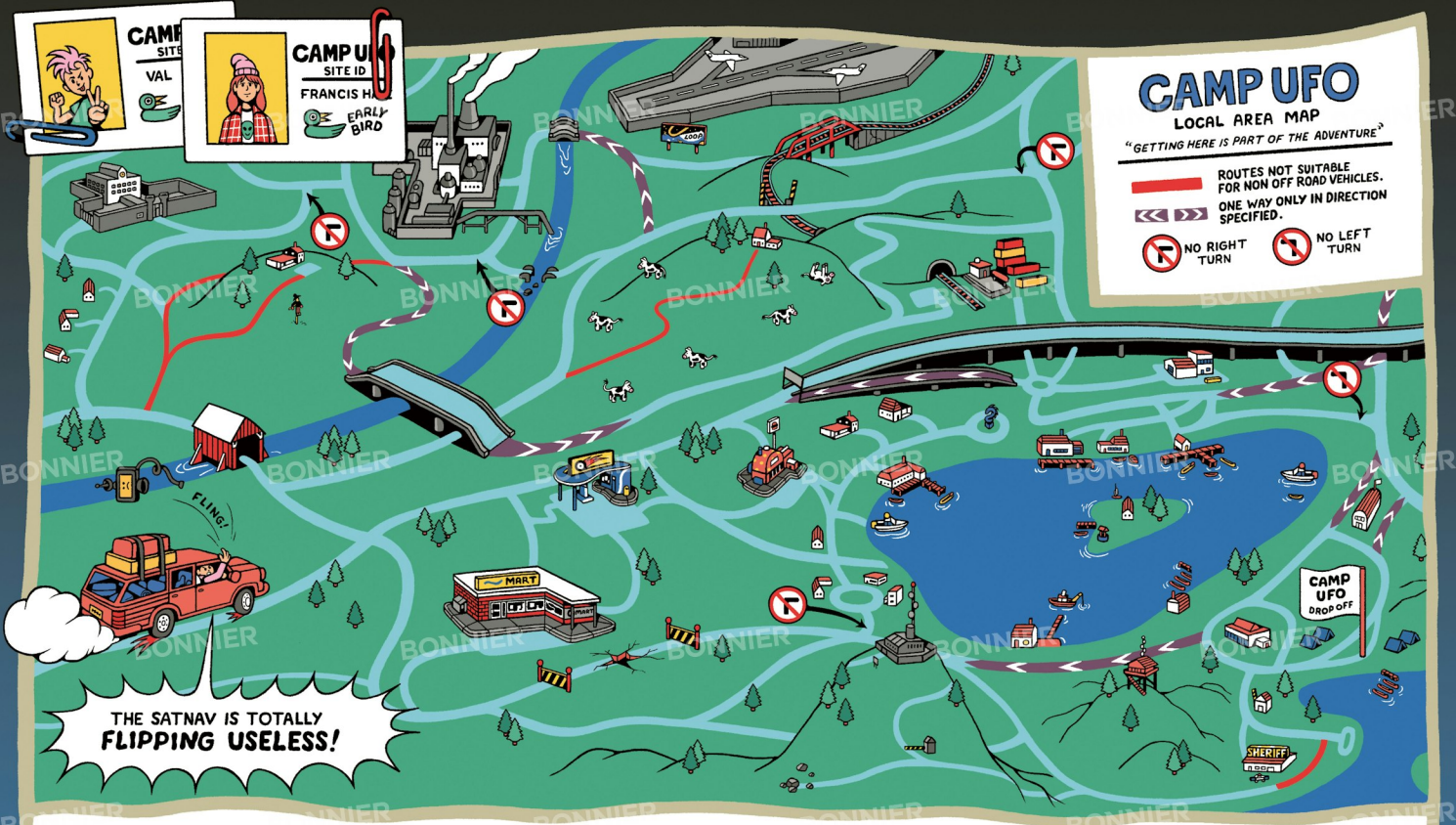


Written by
Owen Lloyd-Fox

Illustrated by
Stephen Maurice-Graham





The day was dwindling and Frankie and Val's dad was very lost (and has been for some time...)

"Um, maybe we should just use the map they sent, dad?" suggested Frankie.

"Bored" said Val, kicking the seat in front "Bored. Booo-red..."

"NOT HELPING, VAL!" snapped Dad, passing another identical – and unhelpfully signposted – junction. He tossed the map at Frankie.

"Go on then! Use the map!"

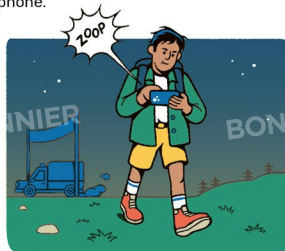


Use the map to help Frankie and Val to camp!



FRANKIE and **VAL** weren't late, though. They were early. 'Early Birds' – kids whose parents paid extra for them to start camp a day before the others. "Cheaper flights" was a common reason to be an Early Bird. Frankie wondered whether her dad's reason was "one less day with Val".

PAWAN was also an Early Bird, but he was quite looking forward to camp. I mean, he didn't generally like to stray too far from his **EPIC** gaming setup, but he was intrigued by a UFO-themed summer camp. Most of the other camps seemed to be off-puttingly outdoorsy – or themed around ***shudder* SPORT**. And anyway, he always had his phone.



XINYI did **NOT** want to be an Early Bird. She didn't want to be at camp **AT ALL**. She missed her home and she really missed her dog. She also struggled to talk to new people, so naturally, just as she was trying to pluck up the courage to utter a 'Hi', **DAZ**, the bad camp counsellor, interrupted.

WELCOME TO CAMP UFO...

CAMP UFO COUNSELLOR APPLICATION FORM

NAME: DARREN 'DAZ' CLENCHWARTON

AGE: 19

INTERESTS: FAST CARS, INSPIRING YOUNG PEOPLE

CAMP UFO

Daz wasn't bad as in **EVIL**, you understand. He was just bad as in a bit rubbish. Although he **did** lie on his Camp UFO counsellor application form:

Daz couldn't care less about "inspiring" anyone. He just wrote that to get the job. "I think I'm supposed to be giving you a tour..." Daz said with absolutely no confidence.

"Quick question: why is everything alien-themed? Do we get to do space stuff?" asked Pawan, hopefully.

"WAIT! STOP THE TOUR! START AGAIN!"



"Frankie and Val," said Frankie, introducing the siblings. "Sorry we're late, Dad got grumpy with the satnav..."

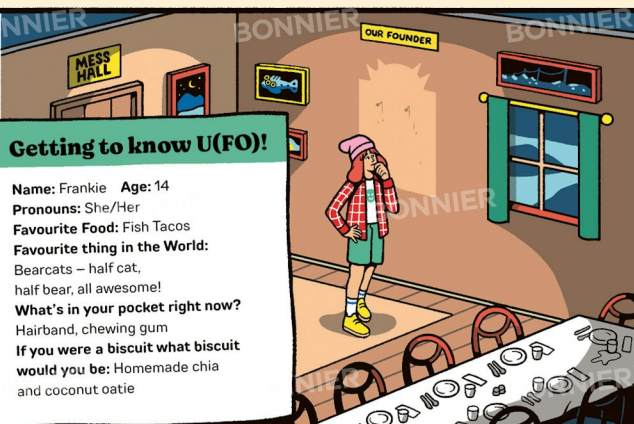
"Yeah, reception is **RUBBISH** here," agreed Pawan. He offered Frankie a fist to bump. "Pawan. Ninth level Sword Mage, max XP." Frankie bumped him back with polite hesitation. She was fairly sure he just introduced himself with a video game rank (?) and didn't really know how to react. Pawan figured she was too impressed to speak.



"I'm Xinyi," offered Xinyi softly from behind the group. Frankie smiled at her.

"Right, everyone's here. Let's do the tour," said Daz, somewhat attempting to do his job. "Oh and um..." he pulled some crumpled up forms from the clipboard, "I think you're meant to fill these out."

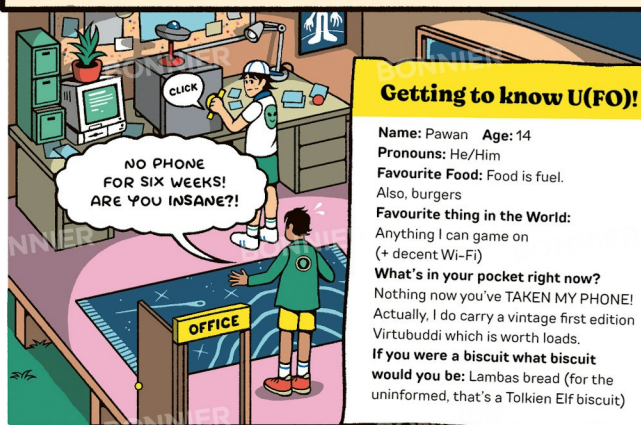
'Sixty years ago, our founder, James Aldiss-Kneale III, was camping by the lake when he saw strange lights in the sky...'



Getting to know U(FO)!

Name: Frankie **Age:** 14
Pronouns: She/Her
Favourite Food: Fish Tacos
Favourite thing in the World: Bearcats – half cat, half bear, all awesome!
What's in your pocket right now? Hairband, chewing gum
If you were a biscuit what biscuit would you be: Homemade chia and coconut oatie

'Inspired to share the magical splendour of the great outdoors with young people...'



Getting to know U(FO)!

Name: Pawan **Age:** 14
Pronouns: He/Him
Favourite Food: Food is fuel. Also, burgers
Favourite thing in the World: Anything I can game on (+ decent Wi-Fi)
What's in your pocket right now? Nothing now you've TAKEN MY PHONE! Actually, I do carry a vintage first edition Virtubuddi which is worth loads.
If you were a biscuit what biscuit would you be: Lambas bread (for the uninformed, that's a Tolkien Elf biscuit)

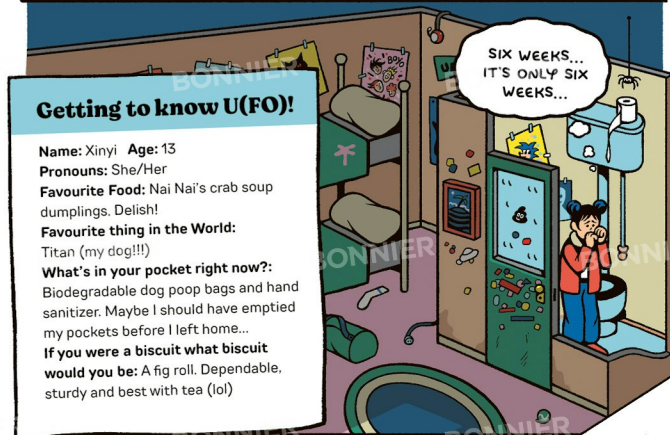
'... and, no doubt, keen to cash in on the craze for all things extra-terrestrial sweeping the nation...'



Getting to know U(FO)!

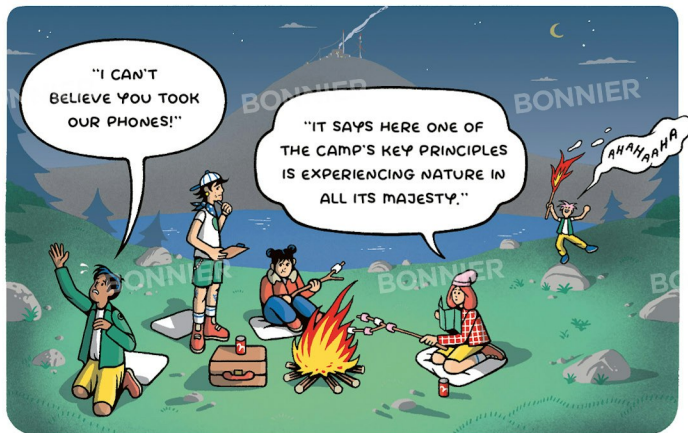
Name: Val **Age:** 12
Pronouns: Whatever
Favourite Food: I literally eat anything – even you *gnom gnom gnom*
Favourite thing in the World: My sister... NOT. Umm... loud noises? BLAM! Hahaha!
What's in your pocket right now?: A can of sticky string. Waterbombs. A bottle of water to fill the bombs.
If you were a biscuit what biscuit would you be: ALL THE BISCUITS! Call me Captain Biscuity 'Le Crumb' Biscuit Lord Mayor of Biscuit-Town

'...And so Camp UFO was born. Are YOU ready for an Out of This World Adventure!'



Getting to know U(FO)!

Name: Xinyi **Age:** 13
Pronouns: She/Her
Favourite Food: Nai Nai's crab soup dumplings. Delish!
Favourite thing in the World: Titan (my dog!!!)
What's in your pocket right now?: Biodegradable dog poop bags and hand sanitizer. Maybe I should have emptied my pockets before I left home...
If you were a biscuit what biscuit would you be: A fig roll. Dependable, sturdy and best with tea (lol)



Pawan glanced around at the dark forest, the glistening lake and the far-off mountains... "Right, done that. What now?"

"Um..." said Daz, scanning his list. "How about ghost stories? Anybody know any?" Nobody did.

"Come on!" Val whined. "Something scary HAS to have happened here. A masked local with a murderous vendetta against camp kids? Mutant blood-sucking leeches? A tragic dodgeball accident?"

Daz thought for a moment. "Well, there is OLD JIM. He's this weird old timer who's lived alone in the woods for... well, longer than anyone can remember. He's just always there. Lurking. Sometimes you see him on the lake in a boat, cackling like this." Daz pulled a face like a cat that was about to be sick and produced a deep hacking cough.



Frankie, Val and Xinyi tensed. Even Pawan looked momentarily less sulky. "Go on..." prompted Frankie after quite a bit of silence. "Well... that's it really," Daz admitted. "So that's your ghost story, is it?" said Val "An old bloke lives in the wood, has a cough and boats around a bit?" "Well, yeah," Daz mumbled, defensively. "I mean, he is quite weird..."

ACH! ACH! ACH! ACH!

The gang froze as a deep, hacking cough echoed across the valley. On the lake, a rusty old boat quietly chugged into view with a hooded old man hunched over the wheel.



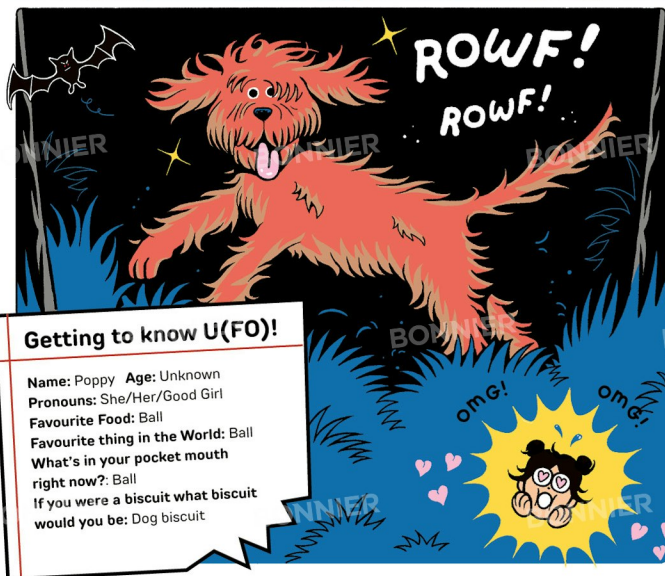
The Early Birds watched in silence as the boat disappeared out of view. "I mean... he's not that scary...?" said Frankie. "Yeah," Val agreed, rather uncharacteristically. "He can't help being old and coughing." "Forget it!" huffed Daz, giving up all pretence of 'inspiring young people' for the day. "I'm going to bed. Put the fire out before you leave and be careful of the... uh... water." He waved vaguely towards the lake before scuttling off in the direction of the hut.

"C-can he do that?" asked Xinyi. The others turned to her, surprised. This was the first thing they remembered Xinyi saying since they arrived. "He is a TERRIBLE camp counsellor!" she added.

Then suddenly, she screamed.

AAAAHHHH!!!

Out of the dark wood, a furry figure with teeth and claws rampaged toward the gang.

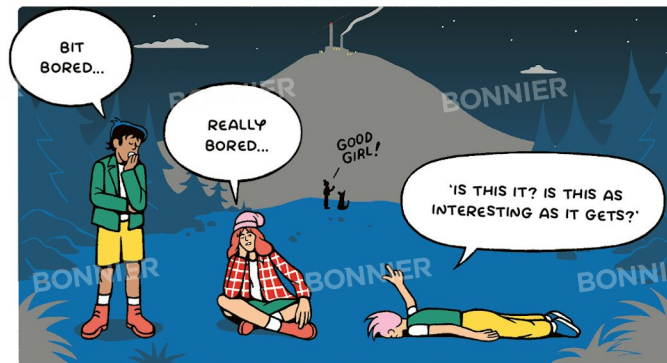


"It's a DOG!" exclaimed Xinyi, bundling over to the furry creature before the others could even register the transformation of their quiet campmate to a doggy fangirl. "Who's a good boy! Who's a good...No! She's a girl! On her collar it says Poppy! Hellooo Poppy!" Poppy's tail thumped in reply. She LOVED when people knew her name.

"Where did she come from?" frowned Frankie.

"I don't know," Pawan shrugged. "Maybe she's the camp dog?"

Xinyi excitedly grabbed the ball Poppy had dropped. "Do you want your ball, Poppy? Okay, go fetch!" She launched the ball as far as she could, to which Poppy sprang up in response, skilfully turning herself over mid-air to catch it.



SPOILER ALERT: THIS WAS NOT AS INTERESTING AS IT WAS GOING TO GET.

INCIDENT INCOMING

LOOK AT THAT STAR.
IT'S MOVING!

THEN IT'S NOT A STAR, DUH.
IT'S A PLANE, OR A SATELLITE.

DOES IT... DOES IT LOOK LIKE IT'S
GETTING BIGGER? OR... CLOSER?

OH MY GOSH ITS FALLING THIS WAY!
IT'S FALLING THIS WAY!!

KAABLAMMOOO!!



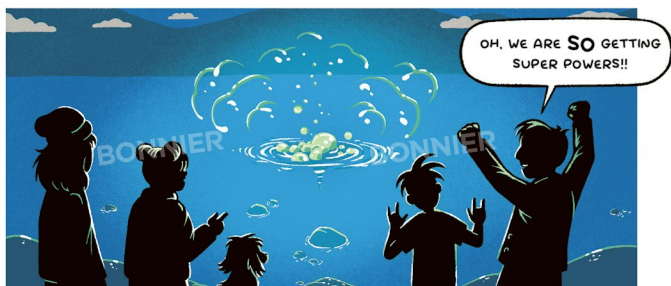
The Early Birds looked at each other in utter astonishment, then sprinted towards the lake. Poppy followed, running madly. She didn't have a clue what was going on, but she loved running.



"Y-you realise what's happening now right?!" puffed Pawan, struggling to keep up with the others. "A SUPERHERO ORIGIN STORY! Space rock falls from the sky, local kids find space rock, space rock makes them FLY or TURN STRETCHY or give them the power to make people EXPLODE or something!"

"Was it definitely a space rock?" asked Val. "Whatsit called? An asteroid. Maybe it was a satellite. Or a part of a PLANE! I heard once that an aeroplane's toilet chute opened and the stuff inside fell out of the sky, and because it's SO cold up there, it FROZE and hit a man and everyone knew that he'd been squashed by a massive frozen ball of POOI!"

"Definitely not poo," said Frankie, who had made it to the shore first. The others arrived and stared out at the emanating water. "Poo doesn't glow."



"Woah" said Val, astutely.

"I guess we should report this to, uh, whoever you report asteroids to?" Frankie posited.

"Um, sorry, I think you mean meteorite," said Xinyi, apologetically. "Asteroids are when they are in space. When they fall they are a meteor, and when it lands it's a... meteorite..." Xinyi frowned. WHY did I have to say that for? Now they'll think I'm a COMPLETE dweeb...

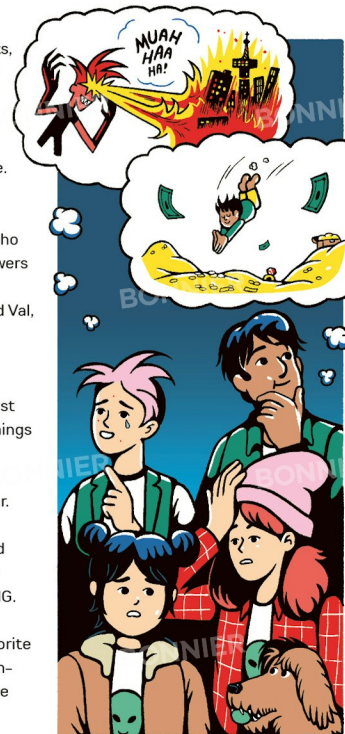
Frankie turned to her and smiled. "Thanks, Xinyi. It's probably best we know exactly what it is when we tell—"

"Or," interrupted Val, "we DON'T tell anyone and fish it out ourselves!" The gang looked down at the glow once more. Pawan nodded slowly. "Yeah. I mean, do you KNOW how much meteorites go for online?" He said, biting his lip. "Like, mucho gold coins. Plus, still hoping for superpowers here..?"

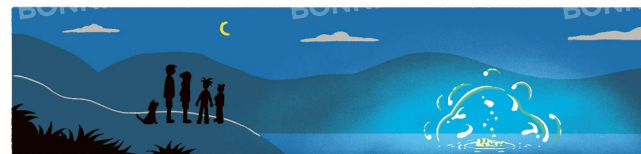
"Yeah! Come on Frank-le-plank," beamed Val, "I wanna make people explode!"

Frankie sighed. She saw what this was. Just because she was older – just because she wasn't suggesting stupid things like FISHING FOR (potentially) MAGIC SPACE ROCKS – they were making her be the mum. The sensible one. The leader. Frankie took a deep breath. Not today. Not this entire summer, actually. She had decided in the car that this summer, she wasn't going to be in charge of ANYTHING. Especially not Val.

"Yeah, okay. Let's get the meteorite out of the lake," the new, relaxed go-with-the-flow Frankie replied. "So... how are we going to do that?"



How COULD the gang fish the meteorite out the lake? When you think you've got it, turn to the next page – or check the answer at the back!



Hint: Try skipping back a few pages and see if there's any helpful lake-related gear!

"Howdy! How the devil are you? Come in!"

Old Jim ushered the gang inside, handing Frankie a worn piece of paper. "Here," he beamed, "have a map! And no, I don't mind if you borrow my boat."

The Early Birds looked at each other. Pawan coughed. "Um, we haven't asked you that yet..."

Old Jim whipped his head around and stared at Pawan, impressed. "This one's mastered chronology! Glad to hear iiiii—" Suddenly, Old Jim froze. He was still looking at the gang, but for a moment it was like he was also looking through them. "They're here about the beetles. Not the beetles, the bee-tas. They can't see under the hill, you see? Aunty. Money. Don't scare them off! That one looks scared," Old Jim added, pointing at Xinyi.

Xinyi attempted to look less scared. "Um, s-sorry. You said something about beetles?"

"You said a lotta weird things, actually," added Val.

"And, just to check," piped up Frankie, "how did you know we were going to ask to use your boat?"

Old Jim smiled and seemed to relax again. "Because I saw the meteor fall and I have a boat with a grabber. Plus, someone has to fish it out. Young people love fishing things out! And I've always loved teaching young people the ways of underwater."

"Oh, good," Frankie smiled at the others, warily.

"And generally sharing the magical splendour of the great outdoors," he added.

"Brilliant!" said Pawan.

Old Jim stared out the window at the lake. "For we all need the methods to tame the leviathan, to hold back the cataclysm of dark water, the slavish heraldic shades of the void..."

"Aaand he's gone again," muttered Val.

Pawan ushered the gang to a corner while Old Jim continued to stare out the window.

"We aren't still planning to work with this guy, are we? Because Daz was spot on about the weirdness!"

"Poppy likes him," said Xinyi, watching Poppy gently butt Old Jim's leg, prompting him to absent-mindedly give her doggy head a scratch. "But I agree, we don't know anything about him—"

"Sorry!" said Old Jim, making them jump. "I've not been myself recently. I'm not sure I know who I am anymore." He suddenly looked incredibly sad. "Perhaps you're best keeping away..."

"No," said Frankie, her eyes drawn to something. "It's okay. I know who you are. And it makes total sense that you would want to help us!"

WHO IS OLD JIM?



Hint: Have a look around Old Jim's shack – has something been moved there?

"That's it!" Frankie announced. "You're James Aldiss-Kneale III, the founder of Camp UFO. You literally built this camp to share your love of space and nature with young people!"

"Th-that's right! I am. And I did!" beamed Old Jim, seemingly delighted to be reminded. "Quickly, kids, to the boat! Let's go meteorite fishing!"



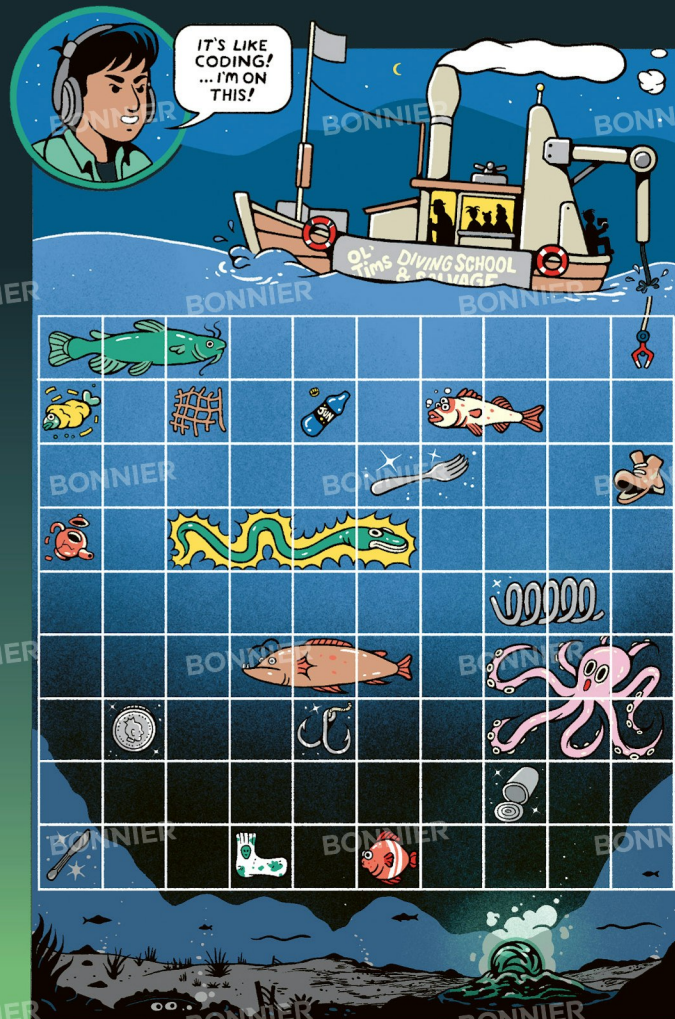
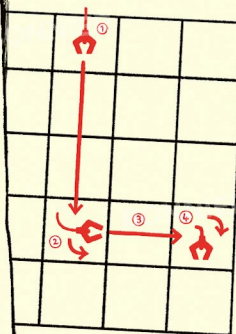
Help Pawan use the Salvatron to get the meteorite!



QUICK START GUIDE

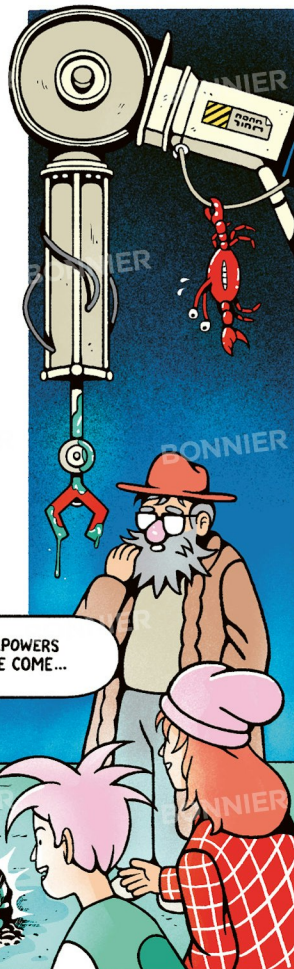
- The Salvatron™ is equipped with a powerful **Electromagnetron™** that will automatically grab ANY metal object in the next square if it is facing that object. Therefore, always take care to rotate the Salvatron before reaching unwanted metal object (e.g. underwater junk).
- The Salvatron has no reverse gear.
- Programme commands before use. Recognised commands are forwards and clockwise and counterclockwise rotations.

Example commands:
 Forwards 1,
 Rotate 90° Counterclockwise,
 Forwards 3,
 Rotate 90° Clockwise.



With the meteorite firmly secured in the Salvatron's jaws, Old Jim piloted the boat ashore and secured it at the jetty. Pawan hopped down and joined the others, basking in the glory of some deft manoeuvring. Old Jim, conversely, seemed to quickly lose interest now the rock was out of the water. He made himself scarce, scuttling off back towards his hut. "Well, you got your space rock, so I'll leave you to it," he called over his shoulder before adding, "have fun and don't get horribly vanquished by the dark forces of evil!"

The gang watched him go, then, with trembling hands, slowly eased the glowing rock from the Salvatron onto the jetty. It was large – about the size of a basketball, with rough, mottled sides – and heavy, but oddly, not as heavy as it looked. It felt comfortably heavy, like a well-structured backpack containing a pleasingly generous picnic. But the oddest thing of all was the glow. It was less pronounced now it was out of the water, but it still emanated a low azure light.



"Give us a look!" Val complained, pushing forwards. "Look with your eyes," muttered Frankie on autopilot, unable to tear her gaze from the rock in her hands. Something about it had her enraptured, like the meteorite was speaking to her. Thousands of small voices calling out to her from across—

"Seriously. Stop hogging it!" Val snatched the rock, but Frankie hung on. Somewhere in the middle, gravity took over and the rock fell heavily onto the concrete jetty. It broke into two perfect semi-circles.



"VAL!" screamed Frankie.

"But you were hogging it..." sniffed Val, lamely.

"You do this EVERY time!" Frankie continued, angrily. "Whenever something cool happens, you mess it up! And I'm always the one who—"

"Okay! Okay, I'm sorry," said Val, meaning it. It was rare to see Frankie this angry.

"Uh, everyone..." Xinyi interrupted, pointing at the rock. In the centre of the two broken pieces was a small spherical stone. Pawan hurried to pick it up.

"Careful!" warned Frankie, but she was too late. Pawan had already plucked the stone from its rocky casing. He held it up to the moonlight: a hard, shiny obsidian black sphere the size of a marble. It was still glowing, but now the light wasn't just blue...





'Hi There!' came a voice from behind them. The gang jumped and Pawan quickly hid the stone in his pocket. A man in a shiny black suit stepped out from the woods and was approaching the jetty. He smiled, flashing his brilliant white teeth.

"My Name Is Artie!" the strange man announced. "I've Just Seen That You Have A Meteorite!"

"Maybe. What of it?" said Val, guarded.

'That Is So Cool! I Love Meteorites! Let Me Buy It Off You! Here Is A Briefcase Full Of Cash!' True to his word, Artie held up a briefcase in his hand and opening it, demonstrated it was indeed full of money.

'Oh YES! We're going to be SO flipping rich!' whooped Pawan.

'Er, Artie...' said Frankie, a little more cautious. 'Where did you come from?'

Artie paused, listening. Or at least he looked like he was listening. Or, to be more specific, he looked like someone who wanted to look like someone who was listening. He smiled even harder. "Where Did I Come From?! These Woods Behind Me! Here! Have Some Cash!"

"Um, one sec. I mean, One Sec!" said Frankie, smiling nervously as if she was looking at a toddler brandishing a flaming torch. She turned to the others, "Quick word, everyone?"

"Sure! No Problem!" Artie beamed. "I'll Wait Here With The Cash!"

Frankie kept her voice down. "So I'm getting some weird vibes from Artie."

"You think?" sputtered Val. "We CLEARLY can't trust him!"

'But all that cash!' Pawan whinged, worried the opportunity to finally buy a mint addition Wizard Wonders™ Blue Lotus trading card was slipping away from him.

"Old Jim was weird and we borrowed his boat."

Frankie frowned. "What do you think Xinyi?"

Xinyi gulped. They were all looking at her. Although it was nice for Frankie to include her, the staring was not. Just say something, she thought. "Um, I guess we don't know anything about him..."



"Yeah!" agreed Val. "And that's what we DON'T know. What we do know is... well. Look at him." They all turned to face Artie.



What six things are alarming about Artie?

Getting to know U(FO)!

Name: Artie! Age: Unknown!
 Pronouns: Unknown!
 Favourite Food: Unknown!
 Favourite thing in the World: Exclamation Marks!
 What's in your pocket right now?: Unknown!
 If you were a biscuit what biscuit would you be: Unknown!



After tallying the results, the gang assessed that something was very wrong with Artie. "We should go," Frankie decided, nodding towards the wood. The gang were in complete agreement, and this time it didn't bother Frankie that she was taking charge. Going definitely seemed like what they should do. And quickly.

Artie stopped smiling. "No! Wait! Do Not Go! Give Me The Meteorite!" But the gang kept running. Behind them, Artie's voice cracked and grew deeper. "Otherwise Bad Things Will Happen."

The gang stopped and turned around slowly. Then things got really weird.

Artie began to grow. His torso shot upwards, extending in front of their eyes before suddenly lurching forward. From his slumped back, sharp black spines burst through the suit jacket, which soon grew longer and longer, protruding over his neck and head before finally snapping shut around his face. The insect-like skin shone like black armour, calloused like a beetle's shell. His transformation complete, Artie the alien looked at the gang. He grinned.



"RUN!" screamed Frankie, more helpfully. The gang turned to flee and the terrifying alien version of Artie immediately leapt forward in pursuit. But just as suddenly, Artie was blasted out of the air! Seconds before Frankie, Pawan, Val, Xinyi and Poppy plunged into the dark woods, they caught a glimpse of five or six soldiers dressed in high-tech body armour leaping into a pitched battle with the alien.

"Woah," uttered Val, this time, frankly, under-playing the whole thing.

