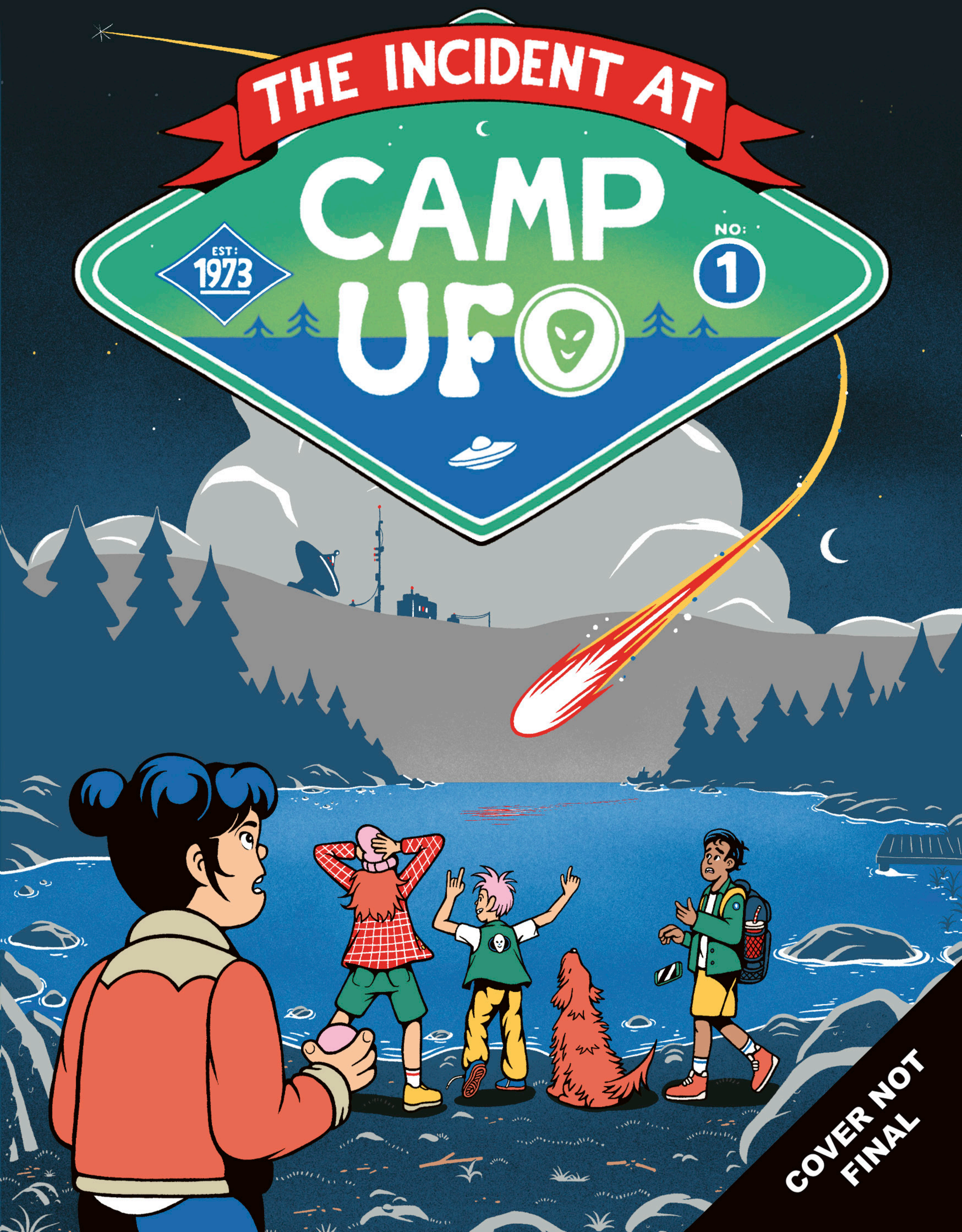
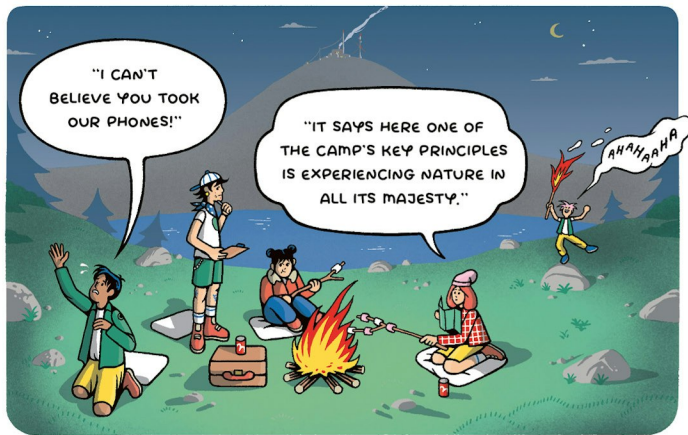


Written by
Owen Lloyd-Fox

Illustrated by
Stephen Maurice-Graham





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.



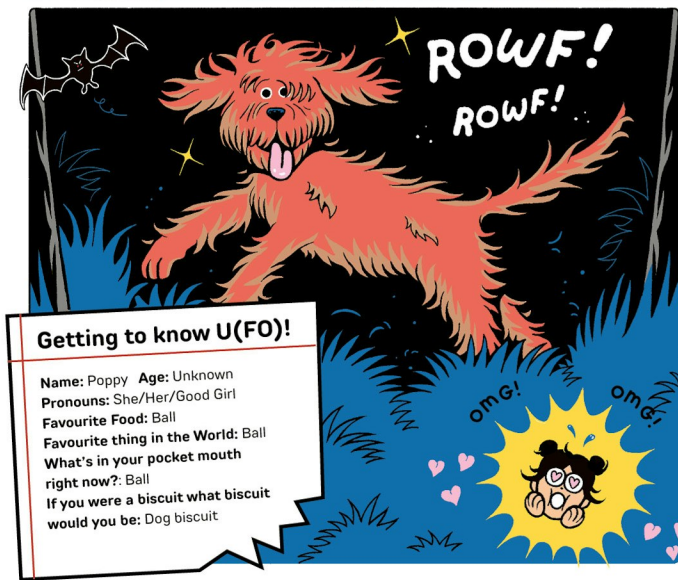
The Early Birds watched in silence as the boat disappeared out of view.
 "I mean... he's not that scary..." said Frankie.
 "Yeah," Val agreed, rather uncharacteristically. "He can't help being old and coughing."
 "Forget it!" huffed Daz, giving up all pretence of 'inspiring young people' for the day.
 "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.

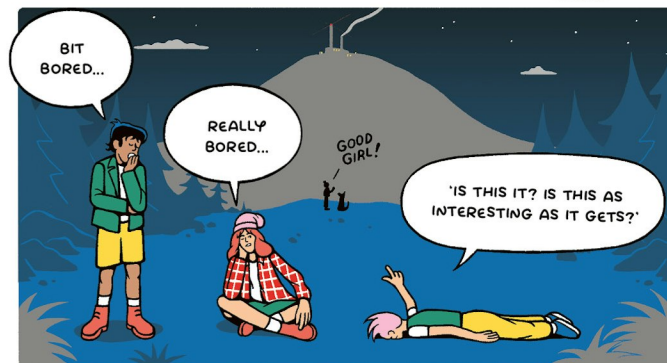


"It's a DOG!" exclaimed Xinyi, bundling over to the furry creature before the others could even register the transformation of their quiet campmate to a doggy fangirl. "Who's a good boy! Who's a good...No! She's a girl! On her collar it says Poppy! Hellooo Poppy!" Poppy's tail thumped in reply. She LOVED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

"Where did she come from?" frowned Frankie.

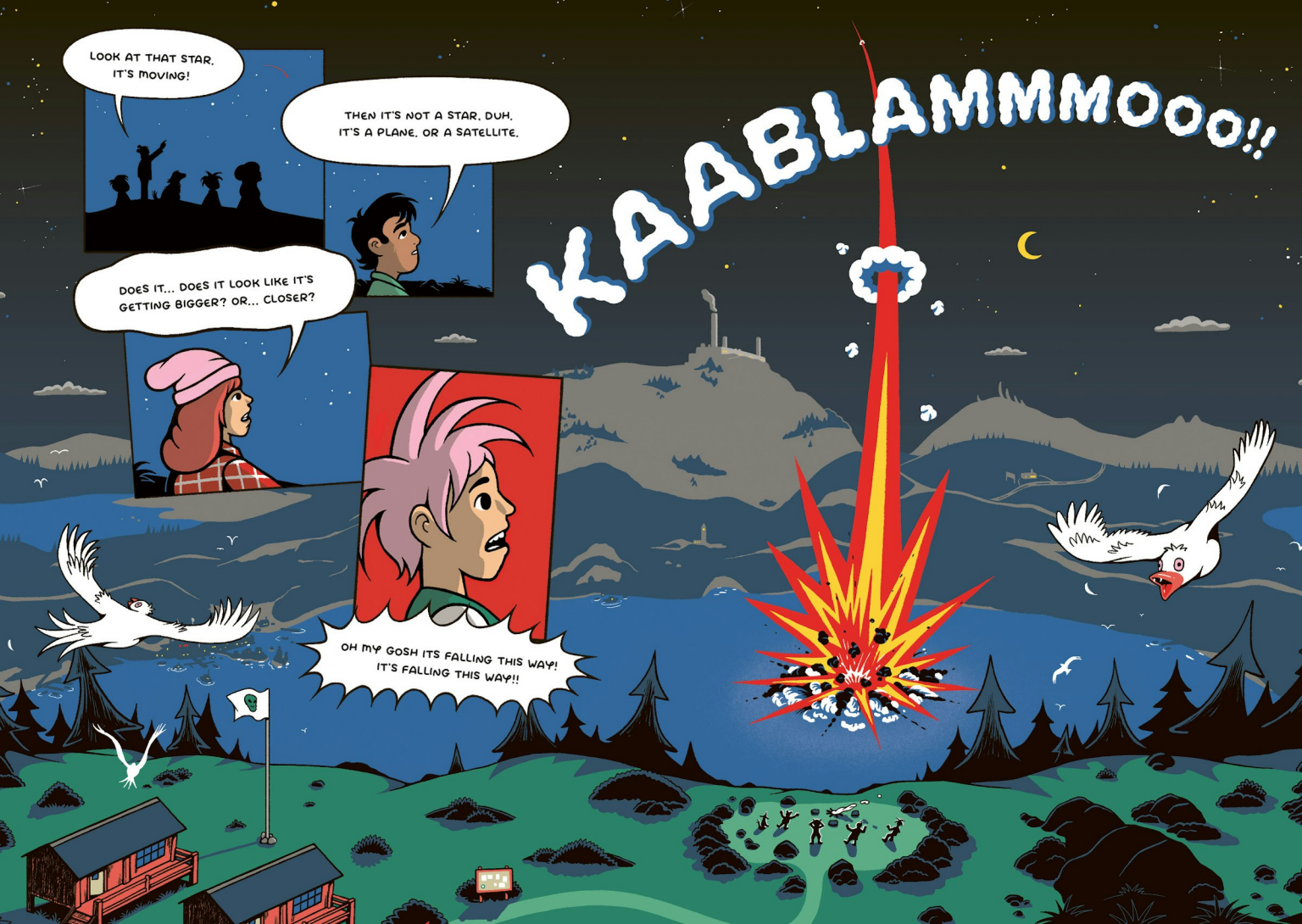
"I don't know," Pawan shrugged. "Maybe she's the camp dog?"

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, barking 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 POO!"

"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...

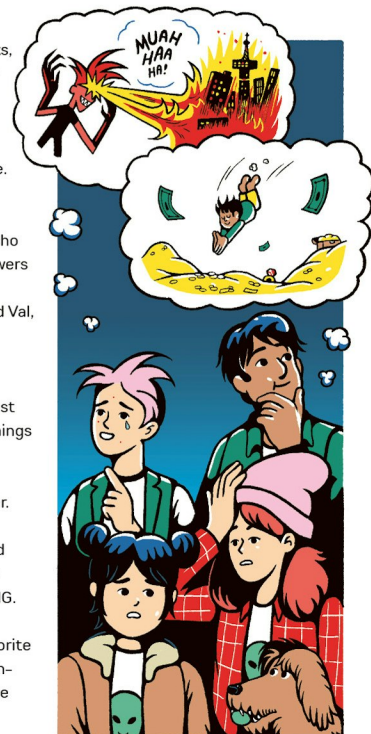
Frankie turned to her and smiled. "Thanks, Xinyi. It's probably best we know exactly what it is when we tell—"

"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...?"

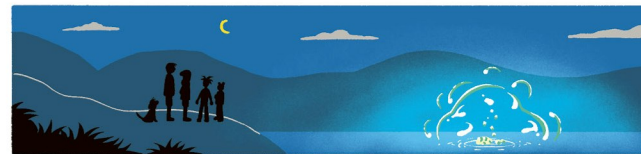
"Yeah! Come on Frank-le-plank," beamed Val, "I wanna make people explode!"

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!