

Moon looked out the window. It was raining harder than she'd ever thought it could possibly rain. It thundered down in a furious storm, echoing the sound of gushing water throughout the house. She could barely see anything past twenty feet into the yard. They'd even cancelled school because driving was too dangerous.

"The sky's really sad, Moon!"

"Uh... Yeah, Preston."

Preston jumped up excitedly. "I'm gonna make her a present! Then maybe she won't be so sad."

Moon smiled. "Sure, go do that."

Her brother skipped out of the room, humming the tune to a song Moon didn't recognize.

Moon was very bored. She'd stayed inside for the last few days, and her best friend Tess, who came over two days ago for a sleepover but couldn't go home yet because her dad couldn't get here in the downpour, was still asleep. She nibbled at her toast and pet Timbre, her Norwegian Forest Cat, who was sitting right next to her. Normally Timbre spent a lot of time outside, but even for him the rain was a bit much. They'd gotten him from a bankrupt breeder who needed to get rid of his kittens.

Around half an hour later, Moon heard a noise coming from upstairs. Tess rushed down the steps. She had her I-have-an-idea-for-something-we-should-do look on her face.

"Moon! Moon!"

"What is it?"

Tess grabbed a banana off the counter and sat down next to Moon and Timbre. "I have an idea."

"I knew it!" Moon said, and they both laughed.

"We should go... *treasure hunting*."

"Y'know, I've been looking for an excuse to go out in the rain," Moon confessed. "Where should we go?"

"I was thinking in the woods out back," Tess suggested.

Moon liked the sound of that. She'd always imagined those woods as a special place, like the kind of strange forest where you would find a magical portal or discover it was haunted.

After quickly finishing their breakfast, they put on their raingear and got ready to head out the door.

"You sure you girls want to head out in that torrent?" Moon's father asked.

"100% sure!" Moon shouted.

"Yup! No second thoughts here!" Tess said.

"Alright," he concluded.

Tess and Moon walked out the door and were about to head around to the backyard when they heard the *schuff* of the pet door. Timbre walked over to them.

Tess smiled. "Oh! I guess Timbre wants to come too,"

The two friends walked along the muddy path into the woods, Timbre following them the whole way. Soon the tall birch trees finally came into sight. They were both wet, even with all their gear, but they didn't mind. After all, treasure hunters brave jungles, deserts, and mountains to find where X marks the spot. At least in movies, anyway.

"Hmmm... Where should I dig, Dr. Moon?"

"Right there, Dr. Tess," Moon said, pointing to a large gray rock.

Tess giggled and went over to the rock. After pushing it aside, both of them started digging a hole with the shovels they had brought. Timbre sat and watched them. At first they were just shoveling up mud, but after a few minutes Moon's shovel hit something metal.

"I think I actually found something,"

Tess's eyes lit up. "Really?"

Moon nodded and started carefully excavating it.

"Awesome. What do you think it is?" Tess asked.

"Guess we'll find out," Moon said.

Moon carefully scooped the object out of the ground. It was a blue metal box, with the letters *A. B.* written on it in gold.

"Woah," Tess said.

Moon gently picked it up and carried it underneath a tree. She and Tess both sat down in the mud next to it. Tess undid the latch and they each placed a hand on the lid and slowly opened it.

Inside was a small journal with a cracked brown cover. Moon flipped it open to the first page.

My research has led me to debate the notion that Earth is an independent planet. Our world may be linked to another. I would call this world, if it does exist, Fratterva, from the Latin words for "sibling" and "land". The shape of the moon, the light of the stars... Legends and stories told by ancient civilizations hint to this as well.

The girls looked at each other in awe. *What is this? Who did it belong to? What does it mean? Why is it buried here?* Both of their thoughts circled around frantically in their heads, some of them escaping out of a mouth every once in a while.

"...Turn the page," Tess said.

Moon carefully turned the page, crouching over the journal slightly to keep it dry. They read the next few entries.

Today I discussed some of my findings with my colleague, Patricia Woodstock. She listened to every word with interest, and then hurriedly left as soon as I finished. I'm not quite sure what to think of this.

It's been a few days since my last entry. I explored some caves for research. Though I observed some interesting animal behavior, I found nothing that would help support my theory. When I told a few colleagues about my expedition, Patricia nodded. Does she not want me to find anything?

I investigated some legends and found a few intriguing details that seem to reference real-world locations. I may be getting closer to reaching Fratterria.

After over two months of research and work, I have finally found it, the path to Fratterria! I am currently planning a journey there now. When I announced my plans, Patricia burst out into a fit of rage and stormed out of the room. A bit concerning. I will bring my journal along so I can record the sights I see and the things I discover. I hope my family will be all right while I'm gone.

The next section was written in a sloppy scrawl, like whoever wrote it was writing in a hurry.

I have reached Fratterria. Patricia

The pen went off in a long line across the page, like someone had yanked the journal out of the author's hands.

"Is there any more?" asked Tess.

Moon flipped through the journal. The rest of the pages were blank. She shook her head sadly.

Tess sat there, thinking, too much at once to speak, even for her.

Moon ran through her thoughts over and over, trying to think of something.

Then she realized.

"My **MOTHER!** My mother was a scientist! She did a lot of research in caves! Her name was Alaina Berry! She went missing 4 years ago! Patricia didn't want her to find Fratterria! Patricia trapped her in Fratterria and buried this journal here!"

Tess realized that it all connected too, after what Moon said.

"Why?" Tess asked.

"I don't know." Her words echoed, and for a few moments there was a silence.

Moon's eyes lit up with a combination of anger, determination, and curiosity.

“We-we have to find out more! We have to go to Fratterra! We have to save my mom! Everyone in my family thinks she’s dead!”

Tess nodded. “Honestly, that sounds impossible. I would never have even imagined doing anything like this. But I’m up for it,”

Moon placed the journal back in the box so it wouldn’t get wet and picked it up. She tucked it in her coat so her father wouldn’t ask any questions about what she was carrying and ruin the whole thing. Timbre following them, Moon and Tess walked back to Moon’s house in the rainstorm, ready to make a plan.