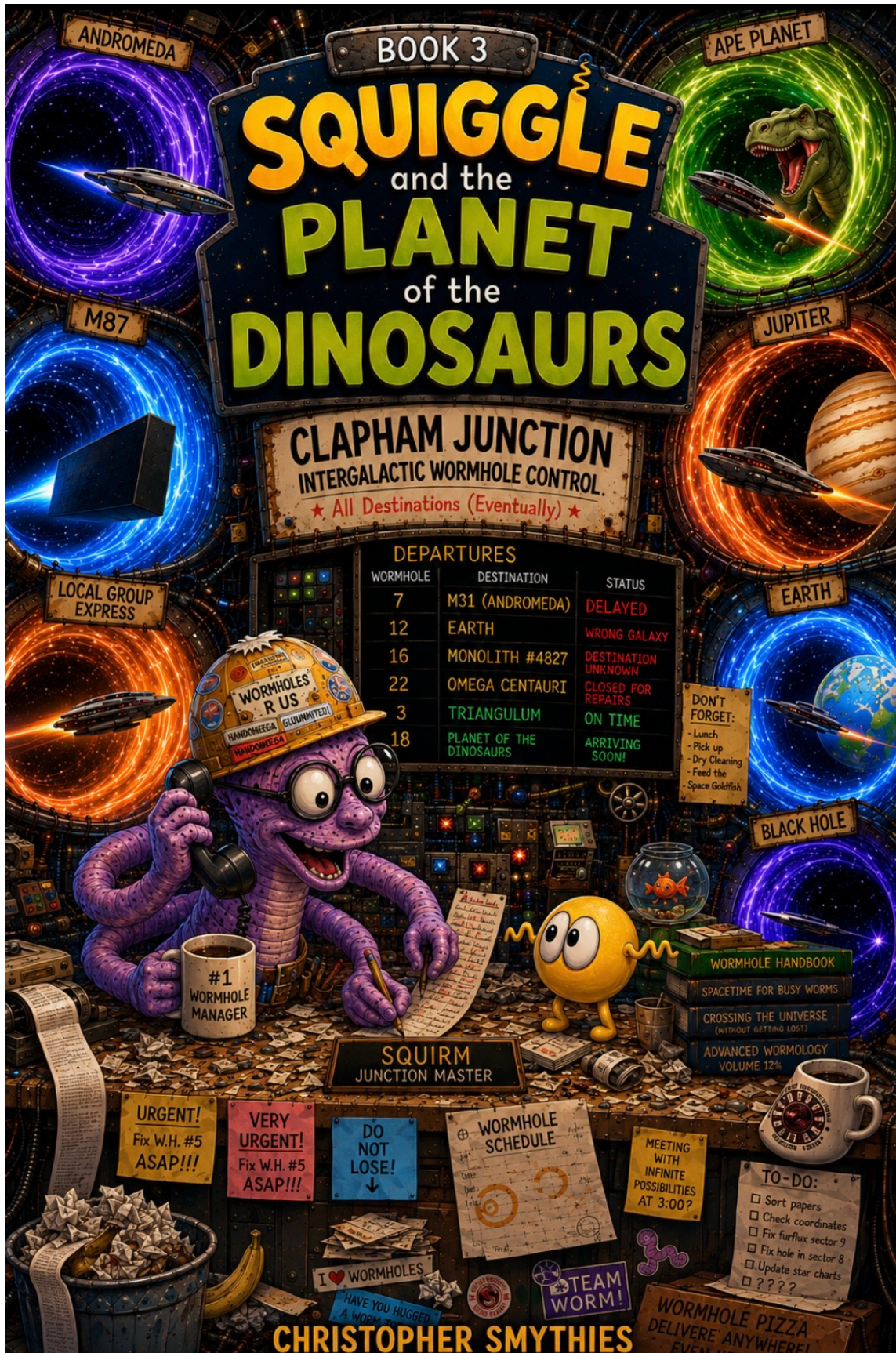




## Chapter 1

I am Squiggle the Photon, born from the fusion of two hydrogen atoms in the galaxy NGC 3972 66 million years ago, traveler to the Milky Way, and resident at Goldendale Sky Village. Rachel is my human companion, the villagers are my friends, and the L-HOP is my home.

After I discovered the rectangular block of black something-or-other standing amongst the trees at GSV, I wanted to tell Rachel what had happened and show it to her. I found her in the L-HOP, deeply asleep in her regular clothes after a busy night of observing. I shook her eyes open and described what I'd seen.

"Weird!" she said, suddenly wide awake. "Take me there!"

"Follow me!"

I quickly returned to the clearing with Rachel behind me. When I arrived, I stopped in my tracks and looked around. "It's gone!"

"Squiggle," said Rachel, looking at me with skepticism. "Is this your idea of a joke?"

"It was right here!" I searched the area, kicking bushes and looking behind trees. But the black block thing was nowhere to be seen. Not even any trace of it left in the dirt.

"While you're looking," said Rachel, "I'll go back to bed. Let me know if you find anything." She turned to leave, took a few steps, and then suddenly disappeared into thin air.

Gone!

I blinked in disbelief. And blinked again. What happened to her? People don't just vanish like that. "Rachel?" I called. "Where are you?"

There was no response. I took a few steps towards the ground where I had last seen her standing, and, in an instant, everything around me changed. No longer was I amongst the trees and bushes of GSV. The sky was gone, and with it the sun. I was in a tunnel with translucent walls embedded with spiraling strings of blue light. Rachel was right in front of me, her eyes as big as saucers.

"Are you okay?" I asked her.

"Wha . . . What happened?"

"No idea."

"I don't like it here. How do we get out?"

I looked behind me and saw a wall. In the other direction, beyond Rachel, the tunnel's blue light gradually tapered to a tiny point. I didn't see daylight or an exit sign anywhere. "We don't have a choice," I said. "We've got to follow this tunnel and hope it leads somewhere."

"Are you sure?"

"No."

Rachel pursed her lips as she considered the situation. Then she seemed to reach a decision. "Well, the sooner we start, the sooner we'll get out of here." Without another word, she began walking briskly down the tunnel, and I followed her.





*The inside of a wormhole.*

## Chapter 2

After walking for about thirty minutes, Rachel and I noticed a change ahead. Instead of tapering into a fine point, the spiraling strings of blue light were feeding into a warm yellow glow. As we got closer, the circle grew larger. We were reaching the end of the tunnel.

“Listen!” Rachel whispered. “I can hear something!”

I stood still and cocked my head. A phone was ringing. But that wasn’t all. Somebody was typing on a typewriter. Drawers were opening and closing. Papers were being ripped apart and crumpled. “I can hear it too!”

“Sounds like some kind of office. Let’s go see!”

We edged forward and peered into a large chamber. All around the walls there were tunnel entrances similar to ours. Each was labeled with an astronomical name—Andromeda, Milky Way, M87, Local Group Express, Ape Planet, Jupiter, Earth, Black Hole—and was illuminated with a different color. At the center of the chamber, sitting behind a small desk, we saw . . .

. . . a worm!

A big purple worm with spectacles and a hard hat covered with stickers was frantically scribbling notes on a crumpled piece of paper with one hand and holding a phone with another. A third hand was holding a coffee cup and a fourth was dropping fish food into a goldfish bowl. He had four hands! And four arms! The area around him was littered with overflowing wastepaper baskets, reminder notes, empty pizza boxes, and books. On the wall behind him hung a prominent sign which read:

## CLAPHAM JUNCTION

### INTERGALACTIC WORMHOLE CONTROL

#### ALL DESTINATIONS (EVENTUALLY)

A large schedule board—something you might see hanging in a busy train station—displayed a list of departures. Exactly what was departing I did not know. Whatever they were, they were leaving from numbered wormholes instead of platforms, going to space destinations instead of other train stations, and, judging by the amount of red showing, most of them were running late.

The worm was talking animatedly to somebody on the telephone. “Let me explain, Mrs. Boggle,” he said. “I booked you on a transport to the Triangulum Galaxy that doesn’t actually exist . . . Yes, I know the Triangulum Galaxy exists. I’m saying the transport I booked you on doesn’t . . . No, it wasn’t my fault. My schedule book got sucked into one of the wormholes by a heavy cruiser and I’ve had to rely on my memory ever since . . . Yes, I understand the tomatoes in the Triangulum Galaxy taste better, but if you need one for your salad tonight, couldn’t you buy it in your local supermarket instead, just this once? I mean, who really wants to travel 50 million light-years to buy a tomato? . . . You do? . . . Yes, of course you have the right to spend your money however you want.”

A spaceship suddenly popped out of a wormhole and hovered over the worm’s head.

“You’re late!” the worm shouted, wagging a finger at it. He slammed down the receiver and accidentally dropped the cup he was holding. Coffee flooded across the desk. The fourth hand—the one holding the fish food—dropped the whole box into the goldfish bowl and reached for a roll of paper towels. “Now look what you made me do!”

“I’m not late!” said a voice from the spaceship. “I’m early!”

“Not according to my clock!”

I could see the face of the clock from where I was standing and noticed that the second hand was ticking backwards.

“So where do you want me to go?” asked the spaceship.

“What’s your destination?”

“The Beta Gamma star cluster in the Whirlpool Galaxy.”

“See the wormhole labeled ‘Whirlpool’? Go down there . . . No, not *that* one! The one next to it! And hurry up, before it closes—”

The telephone rang again. The goldfish hand picked up.

The worm spoke into the receiver. “Clapham Junction. How may I help you? . . . Oh, hello Mrs. Buggle—Boggle. It’s you again . . . You’re filing an official complaint? You have a perfect right to do that too. Just so you know, the paperwork in the complaint department has a way of getting lost these days.” This time, he didn’t slam the receiver back into its cradle. Instead, he dumped it into the goldfish bowl, splashing water over the rim and sending the fish inside scurrying for cover. With Mrs. Boggle safely submerged, three of his hands reached over to a wooden cabinet marked ‘Complaint Department’. They opened the door, pulled out a big hose, and aimed it straight at Rachel and me.





*Squirmy the Worm hard at work.*

“This is what we do with complaints around here, Mrs. Biggle—Boogle—Bagel—Beagle—whatever your name is! Let me introduce you to my Complaint Vaporizer!” He pulled the trigger and a blast of crumpled paper sprayed out of the nozzle and hit the entrance to our wormhole. Rachel and I were knocked off our feet and tumbled into the chamber. We came to rest right in front of the worm, who looked down at us with surprise. When he recovered his composure, he blew away a wisp of smoke that was curling out the nozzle of his vaporizer and put the weapon down.

“You’re not allowed in here,” he said with aplomb. “Strictly against regulations.”



*The Complaint Vaporizer in action.*

### Chapter 3

"I'm Rachel," said Rachel, brushing crumpled paper off herself and struggling to her feet. "And this is my friend Squiggle. Who are you? And where are we?"

"I'm Squirm the Worm, and this is Clapham Junction. What are *you* doing here? Where did you come from?"

"Goldendale Sky Village."

Squirm looked over at the schedule board. "I'm not expecting anything from Goldendale Sky Village this morning."

"We weren't planning on coming here," said Rachel. "Squiggle wanted to show me a big rectangular black thing when we suddenly found ourselves inside a tunnel. We're trying to get back home."

Squirm looked pensive. "A big rectangular black . . . Do you mean a Monolith?"

"What's a Monolith?" I asked.

He picked up a photo from his desk and held it up. The word 'MISSING' was stamped on it in big red letters. Coffee dripped from its edges. "This."

"That's it!" I cried. "That's what I saw!"

"I've been looking for it too," said Squirm, tossing the photo into the air and letting it flutter to the floor. "Monolith B 3405-2. It was supposed to go to a planet in the Sombrero Galaxy. The apes there are showing a lot of promise. Somehow, its wormhole got misdirected and ended up on Planet Earth where it's obviously not needed. You *are* already intelligent, aren't you?"



*Missing in action.*

"You've lost me," said Rachel. "Do you mind explaining what a wormhole is?"

"I suppose I could," said Squirm. "It's break time, and I have nothing better to do with it." He took a piece of paper from his desk and a pencil from his hard hat, then drew a long straight line from one corner of the paper to another. "The universe is huge and it takes an

impossibly long time to get around,” he explained. “But if you fold space-time like this . . .” He folded the paper so the two corners were now touching. “. . . your starting point becomes your ending point. Wormholes are basically shortcuts. You go in one end, and come out somewhere else a few minutes later. If everything goes according to plan, that is.”

“So, what about Clapham Junction?”

“Clapham Junction is at the center of the largest wormhole system in the entire universe, and I’m Junction Master. You wouldn’t believe how much traffic passes through here every day. Spaceships, freighters, cruisers, tourists, monoliths . . . Even that horrible Mrs. Beggles—Boggle wants to buy a tomato at a farmer’s market 50 million light-years from where she lives! My responsibility is to make sure all my customers, whether I like them or not, get to their destinations safely and on time. Trouble is, it’s hard to keep up with the high volume of traffic! I have my limitations, even if I do have four arms!”

“Did you dig these wormholes yourself?”

“Goodness no. Most of them were dug by worms many years ago. New ones are being created every day. Much younger worms take care of that side of the business. Back-breaking work.”

“What’s the story behind the Monolith?” I asked.

“You two *are* inquisitive, aren’t you?” Squirm opened a nearby pizza box, peered inside, then threw it away. “Monoliths travel around the universe, planting seeds of intelligence inside the minds of apes so they can evolve into humans. The process takes about 2 million years. There are several thousand of them and they’re kept busy all the time. We keep a close track. Can’t have a Monolith ending up in the wrong place, you know. They’re very powerful. Something unthinkable might happen! So, you’re telling me you saw the Monolith at Goldendale Sky Village?”

“Yes,” I said. “I was the one who saw it.”

“And it disappeared? That can only mean one thing. It must have found its way back into the wormhole and returned here. But I never saw it. Must have zipped right past me and entered another wormhole. There’ll have to be an investigation, of course.”

“Well, I hope you find it,” said Rachel. “But Squiggle and I should really be getting back to the village before somebody notices we’re missing. Let’s see . . . I think we came out of that wormhole up there—the one full of paper. Wormhole 65 it says.”

“You’re not going anywhere through there,” said Squirm.

“We’ll just move the paper out of the way. Shouldn’t be too much trouble.”

“I’m not concerned about the paper,” said Squirm. “You see, Goldendale Sky Village is no longer at the other end of Wormhole 65. The destination just changed. Go through there, and you’ll end up somewhere else.”

“Where?” I asked.

Squirm looked at the schedule board. “Let’s see . . . Wormhole 65 . . .” His eyes suddenly widened and his face turned a paler shade of purple. “Oh, dear! You *really* don’t want to go through there.”

“Why not? Where does it go?”

“Mrs. Baggle’s kitchen.”



## Chapter 4

Rachel and I looked at each other, and we both knew what we were thinking. We were trapped in Clapham Junction, the most dysfunctional wormhole transportation center in the universe! The wormhole we had found was being used for some other destination now and there was no other way home. By the sounds of it, we weren't even on Earth any longer. The observable universe is about 93 billion light-years across, and for all we knew, we could have been anywhere in it.

I plucked up the courage to ask the obvious question. "How are we going to get home?"

"That's the end of my break!" announced Squirm, snapping all four of his hands back into action. One mopped up the coffee on his desk, the second took the phone receiver out of the goldfish bowl and returned it to the cradle, the third put the Complaint Vaporizer back in its cupboard, and the fourth crumpled up the wormhole diagram he'd just drawn and threw it into the wastepaper basket. "Monolith J 5607-3 arriving at Wormhole #14 in 5 minutes! Destination: Ape Planet #864. You're cleared for final approach!"

Rachel and I watched quietly as Monolith J 5607-3 arrived on time, but emerged from the wrong wormhole. It looked exactly the same as the one I had seen at GSV, but Squirm said it wasn't. After only a couple of minutes, it left from Wormhole 33, on its way to start another human civilization somewhere, presumably Ape Planet #864 although no particular destination seemed a certainty. I was about to repeat my question, when the telephone rang again.

"Clapham Junction. How may I help you? . . . Yes, sir! . . . Yes, sir! . . . No, sir! . . . On it, sir!"

Squirm hung up, buried his face in all four of his hands, and screamed loudly enough to make all the red departures on the schedule board switch to green.

"What's the matter?" asked Rachel.

"This is a major Cat 5 disaster!"

"What happened?"

Squirm raised his head and looked at us with bleary eyes. "That was my boss. He says he discovered a mix-up that occurred two million years ago. Reports are coming in that the junction master back then accidentally sent a Monolith to a dinosaur planet instead of an ape planet. A *Tyrannosaurus rex* touched it and now the place is full of highly intelligent T. rexes! He wants me to go there, find the Monolith, and bring it back."

"What's a T. rex?" I asked innocently.

"It's a huge dinosaur with sharp teeth that can rip meat to shreds," explained Rachel. "Got tiny little arms too." She lifted her own forearms in front of her chest and wiggled her fingers, imitating a T. rex. "Ever seen *Jurassic Park*?"

"My boss ordered me to go," Squirm wailed. "But how can I leave my post here? Intergalactic commerce will collapse. Apes will stay apes!"

"I can go to the Planet of the Dinosaurs and see what I can do," offered Rachel.

Squirm's eyes lit up. "You're hired!"

"Hired?"

"Emergency Deputy Wormhole Inspector. Congratulations!"

"I'll go too," I said, stepping forward. "How do we get there?"



*My idea what the Planet of the Dinosaurs might look like.*

“Wormhole 45,” said Squirm. “I’m scheduling an emergency transport. It’ll depart in five minutes. Here—” He reached for a desk drawer and took out something that looked like a remote—“Take this with you. It’s a Wormhole Summoner. Press this big red button, and within 5 seconds one will open up above you and suck you in. Anything close enough to you will get sucked in too. So, make sure you’re standing next to the Monolith when you press the button. Best way to get it back here without hurting your back. They’re really heavy!” He handed it to Rachel who slipped it into her pocket. “Now go! And good luck!”

## **Chapter 5**

Wormhole 45 was very similar to Wormhole 65, the only difference being the lights in the walls were green instead of blue. As we walked along it, Rachel and I reviewed the instructions Squirm had given us right before we stepped through the entrance.

“He told us to walk to the end of this wormhole and wait,” said Rachel, remembering Squirm’s words. “Once it’s safe, the walls of the tunnel will dissolve and we’ll find ourselves on the dinosaur planet. Pretty neat trick considering the place is a billion light-years from Clapham Junction.”

“He’s sending us to an isolated area with plenty of trees for cover,” I continued. “We’re supposed to stay out of sight for a day or two and assess the situation. When it’s safe, we can try to locate the Monolith, stand next to it, and activate the Wormhole Summoner.”

“I hope it works,” she said. “Otherwise we’re going to be in big trouble. I don’t fancy living amongst T. rexes for the rest of my life.”

When we reached the wall at the end of the wormhole, we did as we were told—we waited. And waited. Time went by. My thoughts went back to the clock at Clapham Junction, and I hoped it was ticking forward instead of backwards. Just when we were beginning to wonder whether we should return to the chamber, the green walls of the tunnel suddenly dissolved.

Given the level of disorganization at Clapham Junction, I don’t know why we ever believed we would be dropped into an isolated area with plenty of cover. Unfortunately, the laws of probability prevailed, and instead of a secret location where we could observe the comings and goings of dinosaurs, we found ourselves right in the middle of the busiest intersection of the planet’s capital city.

And a school bus full of little T. rexes was heading straight for us!

## Chapter 6

The bus screeched to a halt, missing us by inches. A cascade of other screeches immediately followed as other vehicles—cars, trucks, vans—slammed on their brakes. Foul-smelling clouds of blue smoke filled the air and drifted away. Despite the traffic mayhem, not a single horn sounded. When I had regained my wits, I looked around and saw dozens of well-dressed T. rexes standing on the sidewalks, staring at us. There were big ones, small ones, males, females, old ones, young ones, some wearing suits, others more casually dressed in jeans and T-shirts. I remember thinking: *this is the end—eaten by a bunch of hungry city dinosaurs on their lunch break. I hope it’s quick and painless.*

The school bus’s door flew open and the driver jumped out. This T. rex was female, dressed in a frilly blouse and blue skirt. A pair of reading glasses hung on a chain from her neck. Waving her tiny arms around with alarm, she hurried over.

“Are you alright?” she asked. “You appeared from nowhere! I didn’t see you until the last second!”

“I think I’m okay,” said Rachel, staring at the talking T. rex with amazement.

I had heard black holes, nebulae, and Saturn speak before so a talking dinosaur didn’t come as so much of a surprise. I was much more preoccupied by the prospect of becoming a photon sandwich with cheddar cheese and extra mayo. “Not even a scratch,” I managed to reply, stepping back.

“Thank goodness! Sorry for frightening you like that! If you don’t mind, I’d better check the children now and make sure they’re okay too.”





*A near miss!*

She hurried back into the bus, and I remember feeling immensely relieved. A large male wearing a three-piece suit with a yellow flower in his lapel approached.

“What *are* you?” he asked, sniffing Rachel with curiosity.

“I’m Rachel,” she said calmly as if being sniffed by a dinosaur was perfectly normal, “and this is my friend Squiggle.”

“Nice to meet you,” he said. “I’m Stanley. You don’t look like you’re from around here. Is there anything I can help you with?”

Rachel looked around. The traffic was showing signs of unclogging and the dinosaurs on the sidewalks were beginning to move on. “As a matter of fact,” she said, “we have a lot of questions about this place. Do you have time to go somewhere with us so you can answer them?”

“Of course,” said Stanley. “Let’s get something refreshing to drink at that cafe over there.”

When we were seated around an outdoor table, Stanley ordered a pot of tea from a waiter and then said he was ready to take our questions.

Rachel started off by asking about the Planet of the Dinosaurs’ history.

“Our history goes back millions of years to ancient times,” he said. “In the beginning, we were big, ugly, meat eaters who spent most of our time hunting and killing other dinosaurs. Then something changed and we began to evolve in a much more civilized way. We grew smaller, smarter, and peace-loving. We started to wear clothes to look respectable, and to use speech and writing to communicate. We cultivated the land and added plants to our diet. Eventually, we built cities and developed a sophisticated civilization. Pretty good for a bunch of oversized lizards, don’t you think?”

“What happened to make you change?”

“Grakk came.”

“Grakk?”



*Having tea in Rexopolis.*

“Reptilian for ‘Messenger from the gods’. He arrived from the sky one day and has looked after us ever since.”

“Grakk wouldn’t happen to be a rectangular block of black material, would he?”

“Yes, that’s what he looks like.”

Rachel and I exchanged glances. We were both thinking the same thing.

Grakk was the missing Monolith!

The waiter arrived with a pot of tea and three cups on a silver tray. He poured for Stanley and Rachel. When he tried to pour for me, I quickly covered my cup with a wiggle. “Not for me, please,” I said. “I don’t have a mouth.”

When the waiter left, Stanley delicately picked up his cup of tea with a small front claw and took a sip. “I can take you to see Grakk, if you like,” he said, returning his cup to its saucer.

“Yes, please!”

“Okay. We’ll leave in a few minutes. But first, we drink our tea.”

## Chapter 7

After we were finished at the cafe, Stanley, Rachel, and I set off towards the center of Rexopolis, the name of the city. It was enormous—as big as some of the largest cities on Earth. T. rexes were everywhere—in the shops and restaurants, on the sidewalks, in cars, taxis, and buses. They strolled along banks of a large river that flowed past skyscrapers and played games



in leafy parks. Bullet trains whisked dinosaur passengers to other cities nearby, and airliners soaring overhead flew them to the furthest regions of the planet. Everything was spotlessly clean and well organized. Whatever dark reputation T. rex may have earned on Earth, it certainly didn't exist here.

Our destination was Grakk Park, an island of green tranquility amongst many square miles of concrete and steel. The closer we got, the more representations of Grakk I saw around me. There were statues of Grakk, restaurants named after Grakk, tourist shops filled with Grakk T-shirts and mugs, Grakk cultural centers, Grakk bookstores, and Grakk museums. When we reached the entrance to Grakk Park, we saw a large, bustling crowd of visitors, many of whom were trailing behind guides holding umbrellas high into the air.

Once inside the park, we followed a wide pedestrian-only road that wound its way up a hill. Here, the crowds were more subdued, as if they were turning their thoughts to weightier matters. At the top, we turned a corner, and suddenly there it was, on a grassy mound, right in front of us.

The Monolith that went missing from Clapham Junction two million years ago!



*Grakk.*

Stanley was the first to speak. "Beautiful, isn't it? Such perfect proportions! To think that before it arrived, T. rex culture didn't even exist! Every dinosaur on the planet owes it so much!"

Rachel nudged me and drew me aside. "What's our mission?" she whispered.

"To find this Monolith and return it to Clapham Junction."

"We *can't* return it to Clapham Junction! It belongs *here*!"

"I know!"



“If one of Squirm’s wormholes sucks it up, it’ll be like stealing the most sacred and historically important object belonging to an entire civilization! We can’t allow that to happen!”

“I know that too.”

“What are we going to do?”

“That, I don’t know.”

“Maybe I do,” said Rachel mysteriously. “Follow me!”

Rachel returned to Stanley who was still admiring Grakk. She stood close to him, and motioned me to do the same. When all three of us were as near to each other as we could possibly get, she pulled the Wormhole Summoner out of her pocket and pressed the big red button.

## Chapter 8

Squirm was sitting at his desk in Clapham Junction with all four hands fully occupied. One of them was holding the telephone receiver to his ear.

“Yes, sir! I can reliably report that the Planet of the Dinosaurs mission was a complete success! Wormhole 18 has just been activated and sensors indicate that there are three arrivals inside—two small, and one big. Got to be the photon, the girl, and the missing Monolith . . . No, I haven’t seen them yet, but I expect them any minute . . . Yes, I’ll call you as soon as they show up . . . A pay raise? For me? Thank you, sir! I really appreciate it!”

Squirm hung up and punched the air with all four arms. “Yes!” he cried. “Now I can finally buy a house! Can’t wait until the missus hears about this!” His eyes focused on the entrance of Wormhole 18. There, standing side by side, were Squiggle, Rachel, and a rather bewildered-looking T. rex dressed in a three-piece suit.

Squirm drew in a sharp breath. “That’s a dinosaur!” he squeaked somewhere high above top C.

“Sure is,” said Rachel, climbing down from the wormhole.

“There’s a yellow flower in its buttonhole!”

“So there is.”

“Where’s the Monolith?”

“We left it behind,” I said. “Decided to bring Stanley instead. Stanley, meet Squirm the Worm. Squirm, meet Stanley the—”

“Dinosaurs are not allowed in here! It’s against regulations!”

“They thought of dinosaurs when they wrote the book?”

“What good is a dinosaur to me? I need the Monolith!” Squirm brought all four fists down on his desk, and the goldfish bowl became momentarily airborne.

“Let Stanley speak,” said Rachel. “He has something very important to tell you.”

“He does, eh? What could be so important?”

“Excuse me for interrupting your busy schedule,” said Stanley, taking a few steps into the chamber. “I’m from Rexopolis, the capital of the Planet of the Dinosaurs. Grakk has been an integral part of our world for millions of years—”

“Grakk is what dinosaurs call the Monolith,” I quietly explained to Squirm.



*A special visitor to Clapham Junction.*

“He gave our ancestors the intelligence that made our civilization possible. Everything we are today began with him. He’s part of our history and our culture. Please don’t take him away from us. Let him stay in Grakk Park for everybody to enjoy. What do you say?”

“Is this true?” asked Squirm, addressing Rachel and me. “Is this Monolith as important to his planet as he claims?”

We nodded vigorously.

“But I have orders to bring it back here! And I was getting a pay raise for it too!”

“What’s more important?” asked Rachel. “Getting a pay raise or saving a culture?”

Squirm sighed. “If you put it *that* way,” he said. “I guess I don’t have much of a choice. There are thousands of Monoliths in the universe. Who’s going to miss them if one or two go astray? A pay raise would have been nice though.”

“Thank you!” said Stanley. “You’ll be a hero on our planet. We’ll name a worm farm after you.”

Rachel and I also thanked Squirm, but we weren’t able to cheer him up.

“I can arrange for a transport to take you back to Goldendale Sky Village in about twenty minutes,” he told us, crestfallen. “And the next one for the Planet of the Dinosaurs will leave in 2 hours.”

“We’ll miss you, Squirm,” I said. “You’ve been very kind.”

“And understanding,” added Rachel.

“This isn’t good-bye for ever,” said Squirm with a faint smile. “I’ll always be here. If any of you need to go somewhere far away, like the other end of the universe, just call me. My number is in the phone book.”

## Chapter 9

Rachel and I passed through Squirm’s wormhole and found our way to the same clearing at GSV where I had first seen the Monolith. When we stepped into the morning sunshine, we realized the sun itself was at exactly the same angle in the sky as before and that we couldn’t have been gone for more than a few minutes. The normal passage of time was evidently distorted within the wormhole system. The only real difference in our surroundings was the presence of thousands of crumpled pieces of paper scattered throughout the trees—the remains of Squirm’s Complaint Department that he’d blasted into our wormhole before it had had a chance to close.



*The remains of Clapham Junction’s Complaint Department at GSV.*

At first, we didn’t talk to the sky villagers about our adventures at Clapham Junction and on the Planet of the Dinosaurs. They wouldn’t have believed us, and so what was the point? Our little secret, however, was much harder to keep after the next new moon when, all of a sudden, a *Tyrannosaurus rex* dressed in a three-piece suit bounded onto the Portal carrying a telescope in its tiny arms.



“Hi everybody!” he said with unbridled enthusiasm. “I’m Stanley, and I heard you were having a star party!”



*Stanley visits GSV for a star party.*

