

Chapter 3

Of Maps and Doors

Rebecca looked down from the top of the bookshelf. The climb had been long and frightening, but she had been determined to finish it. When she peered over the edge, Silver Sky and Germaine looked very small.

Feeling a bit woozy from the height, Rebecca returned to the task at hand. Germaine had mentioned that what they needed was a map, and that the book of maps was on the top shelf. Unfortunately, there were a number of books up there.

“Ooh, try that one!” Silver Sky suggested, pointing to the red book near the end. He was safely on the floor after suggesting it would be most difficult for him to climb the bookshelf without hands. Germaine had insisted that she was much too small.

Rebecca looked at the cover of the red book. “*Alice in Wonderland?* That doesn’t sound right. What was the name of the place again, Germaine?” she asked.

“Idaho, dear. Really, you must work on your memory,” the fluffy gerbil replied. “Is that in *Wonderland?*”

Germaine scratched at her fur covered chin. “I don’t think so. Keep looking.”

Rebecca moved on to the next book. “Is it near *Treasure Island* or *Oz?*” she asked, not sounding hopeful. She looked over the edge of the shelf towards the model horse and rodent.

Germaine leaned on her walking stick. “No, that does not sound right either,” she said after a moment of reflection. “It’s a big book,” she said, holding her arms out wide.

Rebecca paced the top shelf looking for the big books. There were three that stood out. Each one was tall and thick. The dictionary she recognized. Her Samantha had used one for class. But the other two she wasn’t sure of.

“Ok, is it *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* or *Rand McNally?*” Rebecca asked.

Germaine paced back and forth at the bottom of the bookshelf. Silver Sky followed close behind, not wanting to be left out. Germaine looked up at the shelf where Rebecca stood patiently next to the last two books. One book stood, tall and yellow, the other, thick and black. “If you were a map, which would you choose?” she thought, eyebrows furrowed on her whiskered face.

“The yellow one certainly seems more cheerful,” Silver Sky suggested.

“It does look like it’s been used a lot,” Rebecca said, pointing to the frayed and well worn spine.

Germaine squinted as she stared up towards Rebecca. “Hmm, I don’t remember,” she admitted. “Push it down here and we’ll have a look,” she instructed.

Rebecca went around to the back of the book. It looked an awfully big book to push, but she was determined to get it down so that she could find out where her Samantha had gone.

She pushed up against the book, pressing her hands to the pages. Muscling up to the book, she shoved with all her might. It moved a fraction of an inch before stopping.

“Ooh, it’s heavy,” Rebecca sighed, pausing to take a break.

“You’re doing fine, dearest,” Silver Sky called from below. He had stepped back from the bookshelf. He most certainly did *not* want that book to hit him when it fell. He

looked uncertainly up towards the book, now protruding over the edge of the shelf a little bit.

After catching her breath, Rebecca began to shove the tall book once more at. As it lurched forward, Rebecca became increasingly aware of its height. It towered over her. But again, the book ground to a halt shortly after she started.

She glared at the stubborn book in frustration. She stepped to the back of the bookshelf and got a running start at it. She hit the book with her shoulder and it sped forward faster than she expected. Before she knew it, both she and the book were arching over the edge of the shelf and plummeting towards the floor. With a loud “OOF” she hit the carpet, staring up into the bewildered eyes of Silver Sky and Germaine, who poked her in the ribs with her walking stick.

“Good thing you’re made of cloth and stuffing, missy,” said Germaine before heading over to the book.

Silver Sky stood there with his mouth and eyes wide open. After a moment he blinked, as though finally registering what had just happened. “That was cool,” he said, slowly.

Rebecca shot him a withering glance, stood up, brushed herself off, and headed over to the book without a word. Silver Sky followed in awe.

The book had fallen a few feet from the shelf, open in the middle. Germaine was muttering to herself as the other two approached.

“Nebraska, no. Montana, no,” she was saying softly. She used her walking stick to flip pages. “Not Missouri or Mississippi, either,” she said turning more pages. She continued to talk to herself and turn pages. After a few more moments a smile spread between her whiskers.

“Here we go,” she said. “Idaho!” She tapped the page with her walking stick.

Rebecca and Silver Sky gazed at the page. A bright yellow blotch criss-crossed with red and blue lines stared back at them from between a large pink, green and blue blotch. Here and there irregular blue patches and words were sprinkled about haphazardly.

Silver Sky looked at Germaine, a look of confusion on his face. “That’s Idaho?” he asked.

“Yes, yes!” the rodent replied. She looked closer at the map. “Poky-Tello,” she said matter-of-factly. “That’s where they are.” She tapped the yellow shape near its bottom right corner.

Rebecca, proud of the fact that she had gone to school with Samantha a lot, looked at Germaine. “I think it’s pronounced Poke-Ah-Tello,” she corrected. She then traced the borders of the yellow shape. “This is the state of Idaho,” she said to Silver Sky.

The model horse gave her a blank stare.

Samantha scratched her chin, trying to think of the best way to explain. “Do you remember Timothy’s adventure stories?” she asked.

Silver Sky did. He enjoyed the heroic tales of knights on brave horses fighting dragons and evil kings. “Yep!” he replied.

“Ok, then think of Idaho as the far away kingdom that the stories always talk about. We need to find some way of getting there!” She flipped through the book until she came to a page titled *North America*.

With one hand she pointed. "Alaska," she muttered. Her other hand traced down the page. "Idaho," she said.

Silver Sky clapped his front hooves together. "They're only a few inches away! We can see Samantha and Timothy soon!" He danced around excitedly.

"Hold your horses, silly, that's not what it means," Rebecca scolded.

Silver Sky glared back. "*I am a horse*," he grumped and sat next to Germaine, who was busy looking over the map.

Germaine laid her walking stick on the page, with one end on the small dot that had the name of the town they lived in. She then picked it up, moved it so that it was now exactly where it ended before. She did this a number of times, until it finally ended at the dot which said *Pocatello*.

"Two thousand miles, as Raven flies," she said. "Longer for the rest of us," she added.

Rebecca sat down next to the book, head in her hands. "That's a long ways. Why'd they have to go so far away?" She started to cry.

Silver Sky put his hoof on her shoulder, comforting her. "We'll make it, dearest. I'm sure we can do it. We just have to try."

"I know where some stuff that might be useful for you is," Germaine said, trying her best to comfort the sobbing doll. "I'll go grab it for you."

Rebecca looked up at Germaine. "You're not going with us?" she asked.

Germaine looked surprised. "Can't dear. I have to stay here in case any of the others return, or if a new colony arrives. But I'll help as best I can before you go." With that she sped off.

When she returned, she was dragging a small sack. She set it before Rebecca and Silver Sky.

"A compass," she said pointing her walking stick towards a small dial with an arrow in it. "The arrow always points north. You want to go south east." She put the compass back into the sack. "That's your most important thing! Don't lose it."

"Matches," she said next. "Dangerous. They make fire which can be both helpful and harmful. Careful how you use them."

Last, she pulled out the small pen knife Rebecca had used earlier to open the box. "These things are always handy, just be careful how you use it!" She put everything back in the sack. With Rebecca's help, and a spare bit of string, they tied it to Silver Sky's back.

"Hmph, always make the horse do the work," he grumped.

"Now out there, you should be able to get help from the voles and shrews and squirrels that you meet. We've got quite a network of friends out there," Germaine instructed.

Before they knew it, they were at the front door. Outside lay the journey they were about to embark on. Germaine gave them both a big hug and wished them well before scampering out of sight.