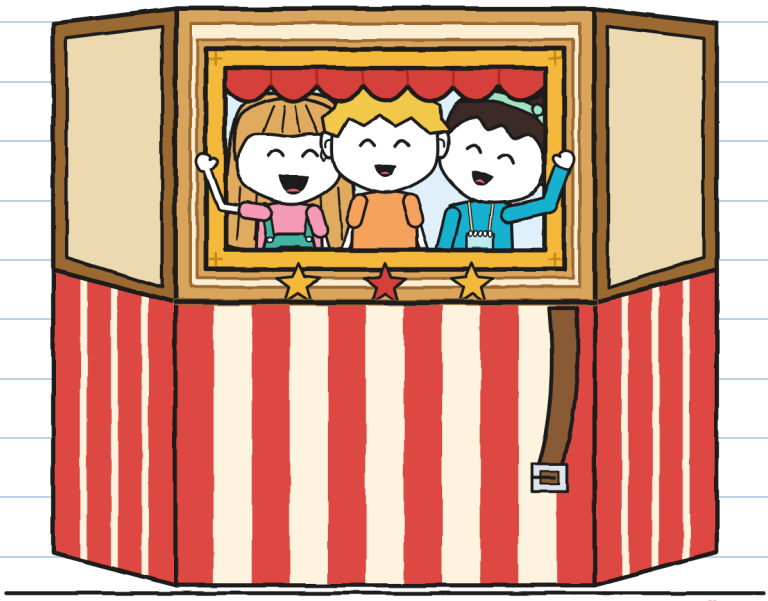
IMPOSSIBLE DELIVERIES · 6

A Spot for Three

LinguAula



(Gus's notebook)

SIZE S
Starter level · 7+

IMPOSSIBLE DELIVERIES · 6
A Spot for Three

Text and illustrations: LinguAula

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US English version: LinguAula

First edition: 2026

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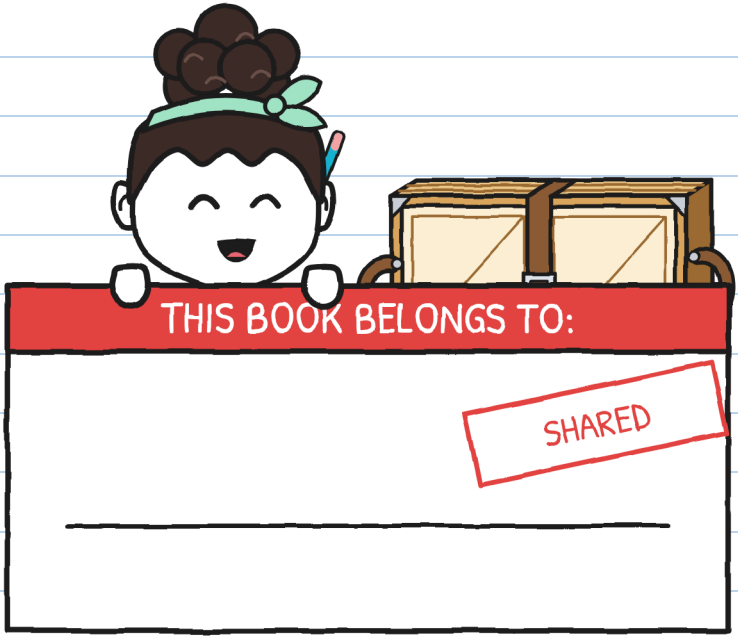
Free to photocopy, for class and for home.

Sixth book in the series. Earlier: "This Package Bites," "Do Not Open Before Thunder," "Return to Sender, Please," "Not Here, Crumb!" and "A Cake for Two."

LinguAula

Work through every chapter at linguaula.com

Three carry it. I've chosen a handle. —J.



Shared. We fit. –J.

If you find it, return it folded.

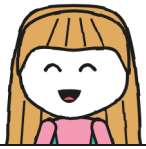
ONLY IN THE STORY

This stamp marks what only happens in the story. Real dragons don't exist. Packages don't fly back. For a real transfer, see page 76. –J.

WHO'S WHO



Gus. Measures in centimeters. This week he counts something else too.



Julie. Knows the way. Explaining it is another matter.



Noa. Julie's friend from way back. Measures in steps: she always has them on.



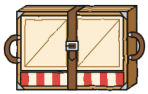
Irene. Runs the theater workshop. She doesn't say which way: she says "stop."



Tony. From LIGHTNING and the shop. Times things and gives no opinions. Nearly.



Mara. Lends the package. She doesn't let go of the box.



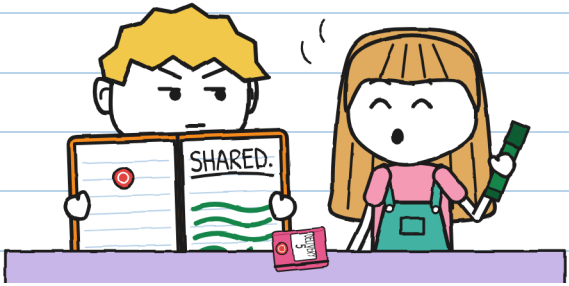
No. 6. A theater that fits in a box. If nobody holds the strap, it opens wherever it likes.



R. Sender. This time R. left a line in an inventory.

DELIVERY NOTEBOOK 6
by Gus

SHARED.



Notebook 5 ended with two needles on a clock. This one is orange, like a tangerine. It also has the shop's stamp.

On the first page I wrote one word. I left half the page free, just in case. It wasn't free for even a minute.

I shared the first page with my handwriting. —J.

CHAPTER 1

Why Does It Take Three?

On Monday I left school. Julie was waiting at the counter with an envelope. It wasn't green or blue. It was turquoise, and sealed.

"The mailman brought it. It's for the Impossible Deliveries shop. I haven't opened it for a while."
"How long?"
"Twenty-eight minutes," said Tony. "A record."

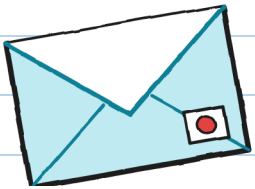


It wasn't mine. Envelopes that aren't mine weigh three times as much. —J.

Mara opened it with a fingernail.

I'm Irene, in charge of the theater workshop at the community center.
While updating the inventory I found a line:
"Folding little theater: pending receipt."
Do you have it?
The neighborhood rally is on Saturday the 31st.
If the little theater arrives folded at our yard,
carried by a team of three, I'll sign for it on the spot.
Noa's team has a spot for three and, for now, only she is on it.

Julie: it's me! I do theater now.
Bring someone who knows about packages. –Noa

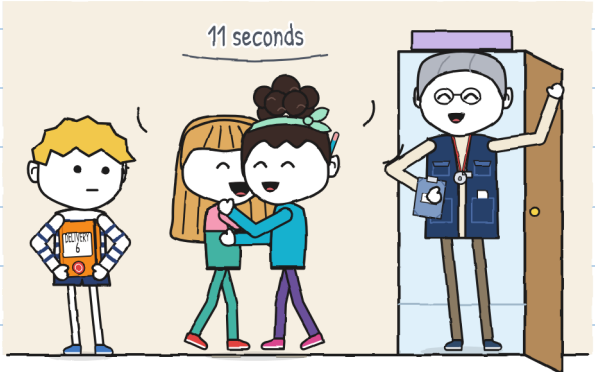


"Someone who knows about packages." That was me. I liked "packages." "Someone," less.

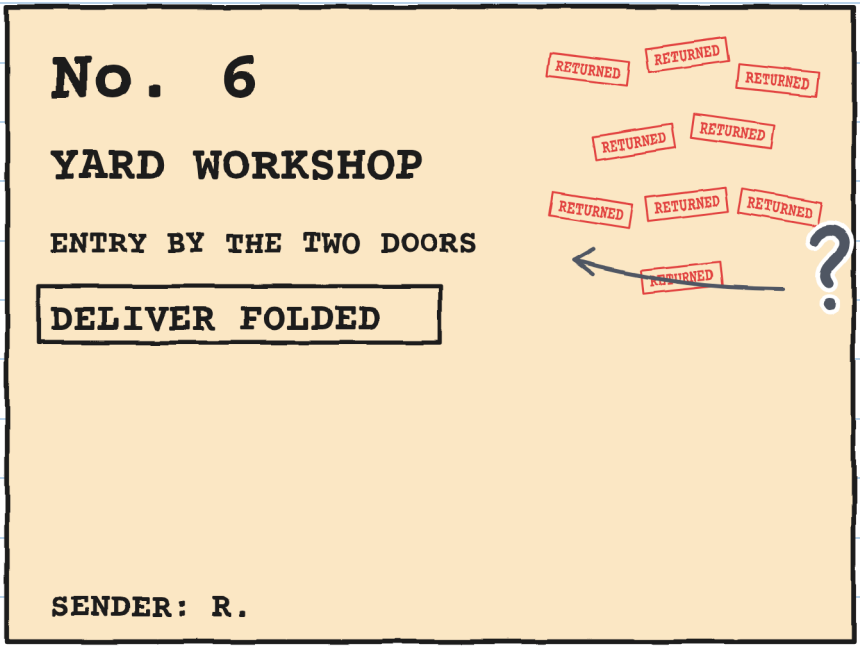
At five, Irene and Noa arrived. Irene had a folder, a vest with pockets and a whistle around her neck. Noa had a notebook on a string and a turquoise pencil behind her ear.

Julie and Noa hugged for a long time. I had time to measure it: eleven seconds. I stood to one side with my notebook. A notebook is good for that too: for having something in your hands.

"This is Gus," said Julie. "He knows about packages."
"Hello, Gus who knows about packages," said Noa.
And she wrote my name in her notebook.



Mara climbed on the stool and took No. 6 down from the shelf. A box like all the others.



"Nine stamps," said Julie.
"'The two doors,'" read Noa. "What two doors?"

Irene didn't know. Neither did Mara. I wrote it down with a question mark.

"I took it nine times," said Mara. "On Mondays the sewing group opened up. On Wednesdays, the choir. On Fridays, the chess club. 'The workshop? Not here.' Nobody signed for a workshop."
"The theater rehearses in the yard," said Irene. "There's no bell there."

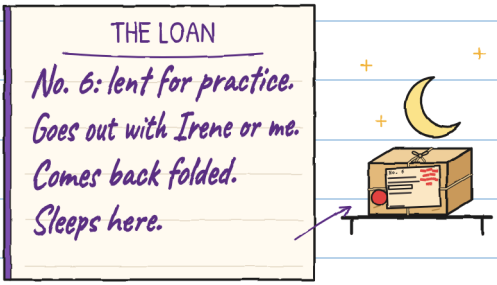
Irene opened the folder and showed Mara a stamped sheet.

"The workshop is in the register now: 'Theater workshop. In charge: Irene.' Now somebody signs."



"Now that someone signs, why doesn't Mara carry it in her box?" asked Julie.
"I took it in my box nine times," said Mara. "Now the conditions are set by whoever receives it."
"A folding little theater is for squares," said Irene. "My kids have to manage it in the street. If they can't, it doesn't work for me. And I don't sign what doesn't work for me."

"I heard that in a bakery," said Mara. She wrote the conditions in her book. The label stays on the box. The box stays with Mara.

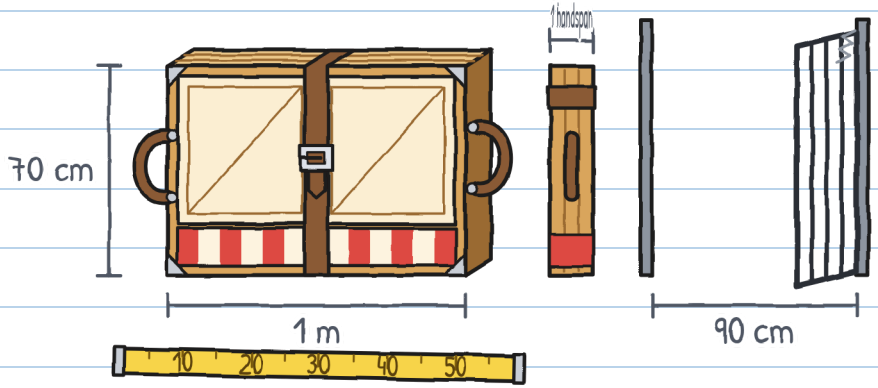


It sleeps on its shelf. At dawn it has nowhere to come back from. It stays at nine stamps. I asked. —J.

On Tuesday we went to the community center yard. You go in from the sidewalk through an iron gate. It closes by itself.

Mara put the box on the ground and took off the lid. The little theater came out and grew, like Ellie's stand. I don't get scared anymore. I take out my tape.

MEASUREMENTS OF NO. 6

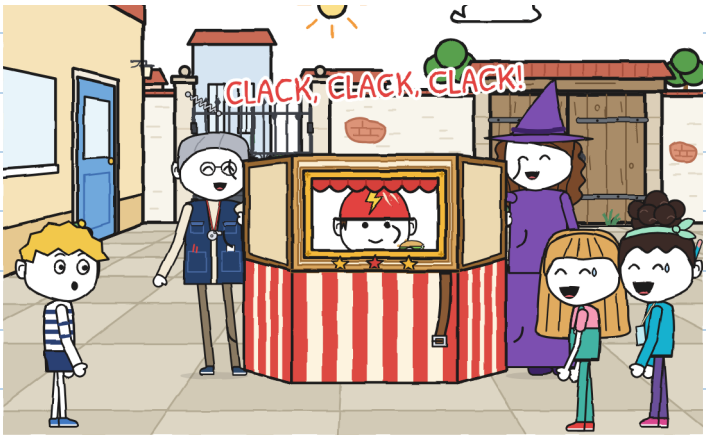


On its side, it fit through the gate. That was the easy part.

Irene wanted to check it was all there. She undid the strap and turned the bundle. The panels opened by themselves, from their own weight: clack, clack, clack. It was a stage with three walls, a short curtain and a framed window at the back.

Through the window you could see Tony. He was passing by with a sandwich. His mouth was full and he couldn't say hello.

"It's all there," said Irene. "Workshop rule: hands on the handles. Never on the hinges. And on every turn, somebody holds the strap."



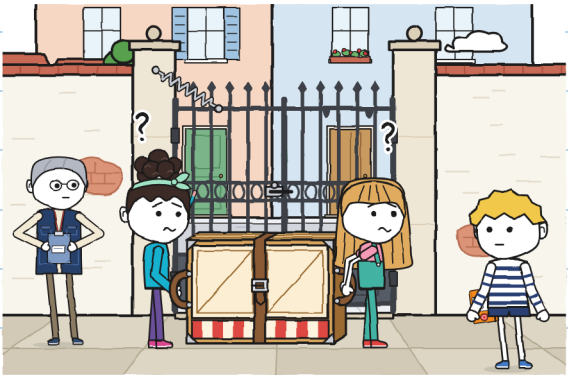
Irene and Mara folded it and fastened the strap.

"We'll try it," said Julie. Noa was already at the other handle.

They counted to three and lifted it. They could. They did a lap of the yard. They reached the gate. It was shut.

Julie looked at it. Noa looked at it. They had four hands and all four were busy.

I was two meters away, with my hands free and a notebook.



I held the gate with my back. They went through. Irene wrote something in her folder.

That afternoon I invented this notebook's gadget.

THE THREE-GAUGE

who does what on each leg

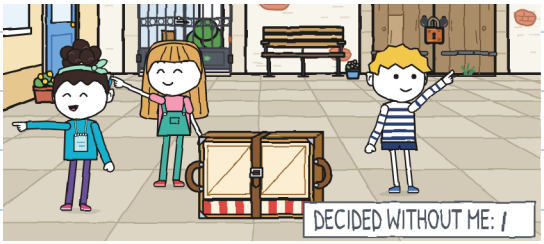
	CARRY 	GUIDE 	CLEAR THE WAY 
yard, first try	Julie and Noa	Julie and Noa	
yard, second try	Julie and Noa	Julie and Noa	Gus

Two names repeated and one box empty: it doesn't pass. With all three filled, it does.

And I noted down something else, smaller: "A gate can be held by a stone too."

We had to work out the label.
"The two doors are the two halves of the gate," said Julie.
"Both must open," said Noa.
"Let's measure the wall first," I said.
We all pointed: Julie, the gate; Noa, the room; me, the street.
"Later," they both said.

I went alone. Behind the wall I found something. When I came back, they laughed about something from before I came. I opened my mouth.
"It's decided, Gus," said Julie. "It's the two halves."
I closed my mouth. And the notebook.



I saw that tally mark two days later. It was mine. —J.

CHAPTER 2

Who Knows the Way?

Wednesday was the first journey: from the shop to the yard, along the street. When I arrived, the gauge was already complete. In green.

"You and Noa carry," said Julie. "I'll guide: I know the way. And since I'm in front, I clear the way."
"We thought of it on the way," said Noa.

Green doesn't come off. Second tally mark.

THE THREE-GAUGE

	CARRY	GUIDE	CLEAR THE WAY
yard, first try	Julie and Noa	Julie and Noa	
yard, second try	Julie and Noa	Julie and Noa	Gus
shop → yard	*Gus and Noa*	*Julie*	*Julie*

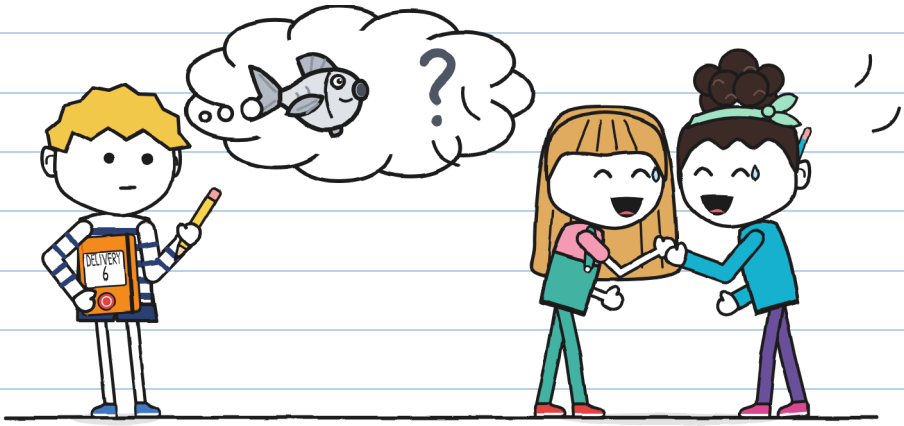
DECIDED WITHOUT ME: II

"Before we set off, shall we make a plan?" I said.
"With the turns numbered."
"We don't need a plan," said Julie. "It's straight on to the limping fish."

Noa started to laugh. So did Julie.

"What fish?"
"The limping fish is the limping fish," said Noa.
"It's a long story," said Julie.
"And a very good one," said Noa.

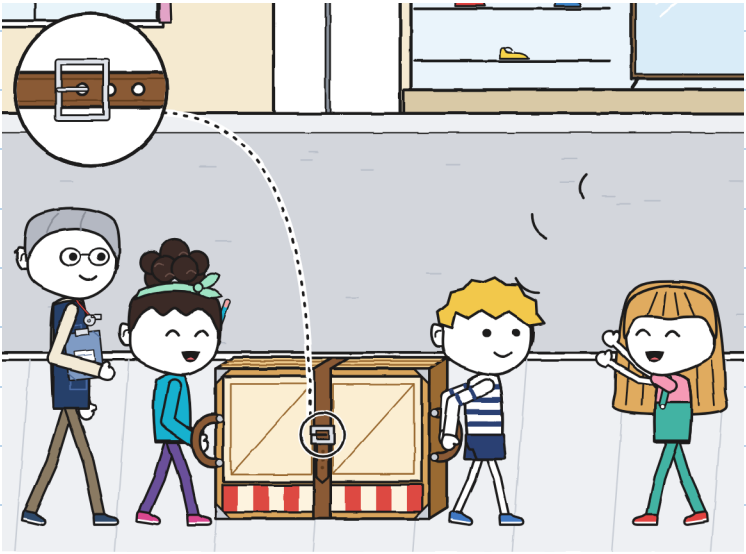
They didn't tell it to me. Third tally mark.



Mara took the little theater out of the box at the shop door. Noa fastened the strap on the first hole.

"That way it comes undone sooner in the yard."

I went in front and Noa behind. In front you can see the street. Behind you can only see little theater. Irene came last, with the folder and the whistle. She didn't say which way. She said "stop" at every curb.

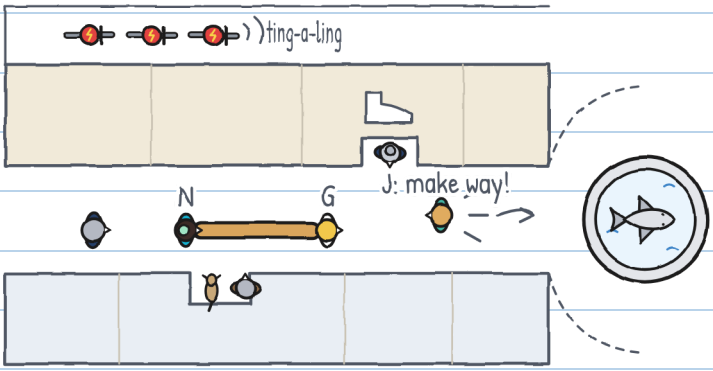


Julie was very good at clearing the way.

"Make way, there's a theater coming through!"

The shoe store lady came to her door to look. A man with a dog waited in a street door. Far away, on the other side of the neighborhood, a little bell rang. Ting-a-ling.

"LIGHTNING is practicing its test," said Noa.
"They're on bikes, with an envelope. We're on foot, with this."
"You don't run with this," said Irene.

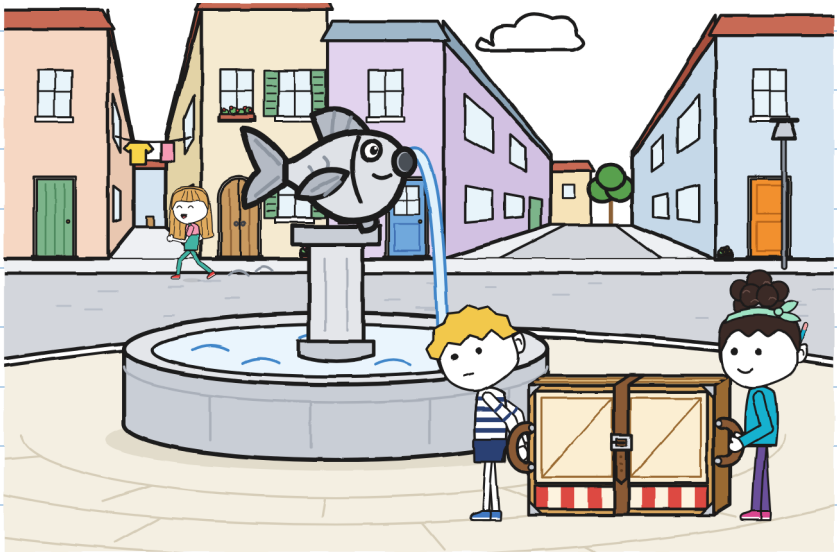


We reached the little square with the fountain. Julie turned around and shouted the direction. Then she ran toward the center to hold the gate.

"Up to the limping fish and turn!"

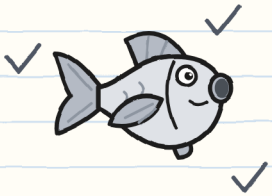
And she was gone.

In the middle of the fountain there's a stone fish. I looked at it closely. From my side it had all its fins.

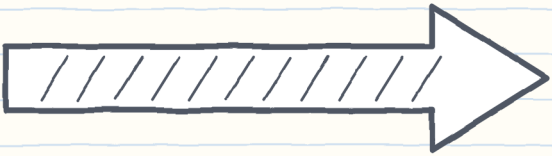


I thought fast. It's not my thing.

Fountain fish: fins in view, all of them.
It isn't limping.
There must be another fish.



Turn: which way?
Left, narrow street.
Right, wide street.
A little theater goes better down the wide one.

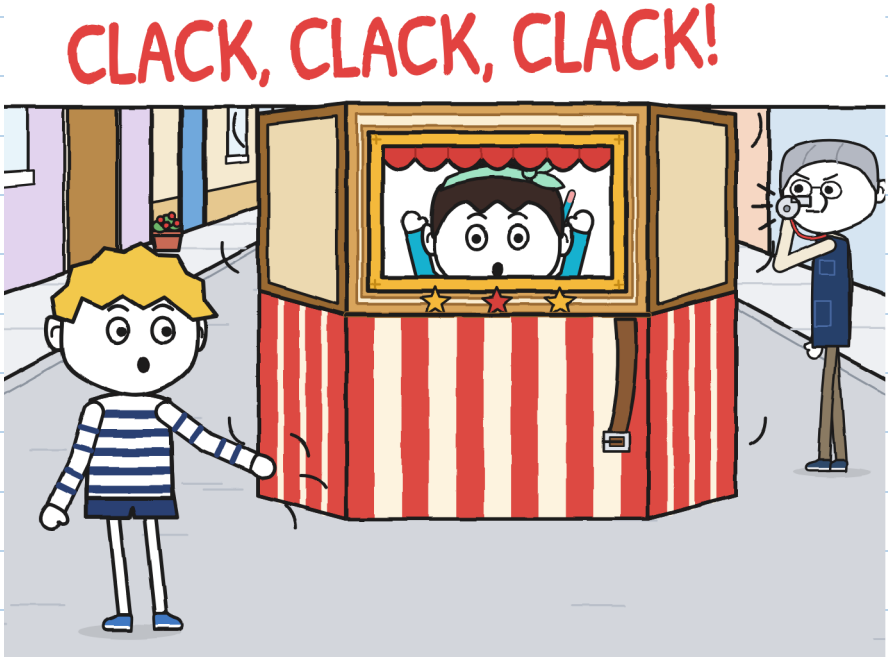


"Do I turn now?" I asked over my shoulder.
"At the limping fish!" said Noa from behind the little theater.

I kept looking for another fish. There wasn't one. I turned right.

Nobody said "turn." Nobody held the strap. The buckle on the first hole doesn't hold much.
Clack. Clack. Clack.

The panels opened slowly, one after another, all around Noa. Irene blew the whistle. Then, in the middle of the street, there was a theater. And inside, Noa.
"Hello," she said through the window.

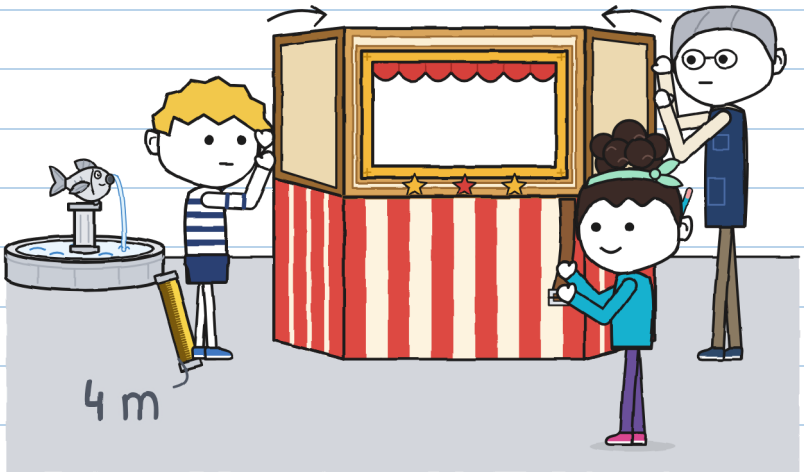


Irene looked at Noa's hands. Then at mine. They were all in one piece. The panels weigh little and open slowly.

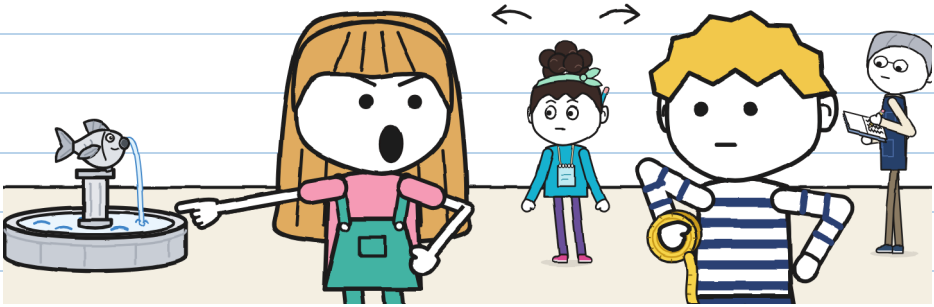
"Who was guiding?" she asked.

Nobody answered. Julie was guiding. She was holding a gate, two streets away.

Irene and I folded the little theater with our hands on the wooden side rails. I measured: from my foot to the fountain, four meters.



Julie came running back.
"But it was at the limping fish!"
"Which limping fish?"
"That one! On the left. Like always."
"'Always' is from before I was here."
Julie turned to Irene.
"It's just that Gus got lost."
I wasn't lost. I knew where I was: four meters from the fountain. I'd just measured it.
They decided that without me too. Fourth tally mark.



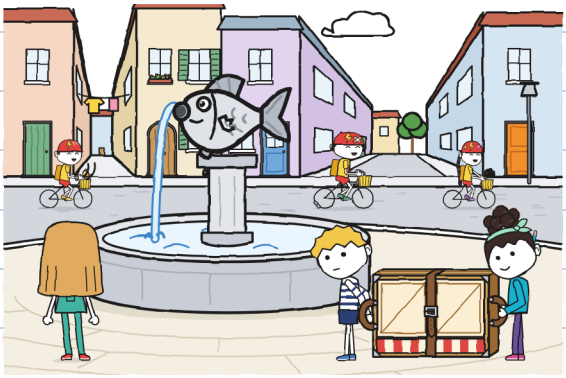
I said it out loud and in front of people.
I know. —J.

They showed me the fish's other side. It's missing a fin, the left one. To notice, you have to know it's missing.

We repeated the turn. The first time I said "turn" too early. The second, too late. The third worked, but nobody spoke.

Then LIGHTNING came along: Zoe, Bruno and Tony, in a line, hands on the handlebars. Ting-a-ling at the corner. They went around the fountain without braking or touching.

"Station one, first time," said Tony, passing.



We reached the yard when it was almost night. Mara put the little theater in its box and took it to the shop.

I noted down the day in the gauge. All three boxes had a name. And a theater had opened in the street. The gauge was missing something. I didn't know what.

THE THREE-GAUGE

	CARRY	GUIDE	CLEAR THE WAY	
shop → yard	Gus and Noa	Julie	Julie	
shop → fountain	Gus and Noa	Julie	Julie	it opened · repeated 3 times

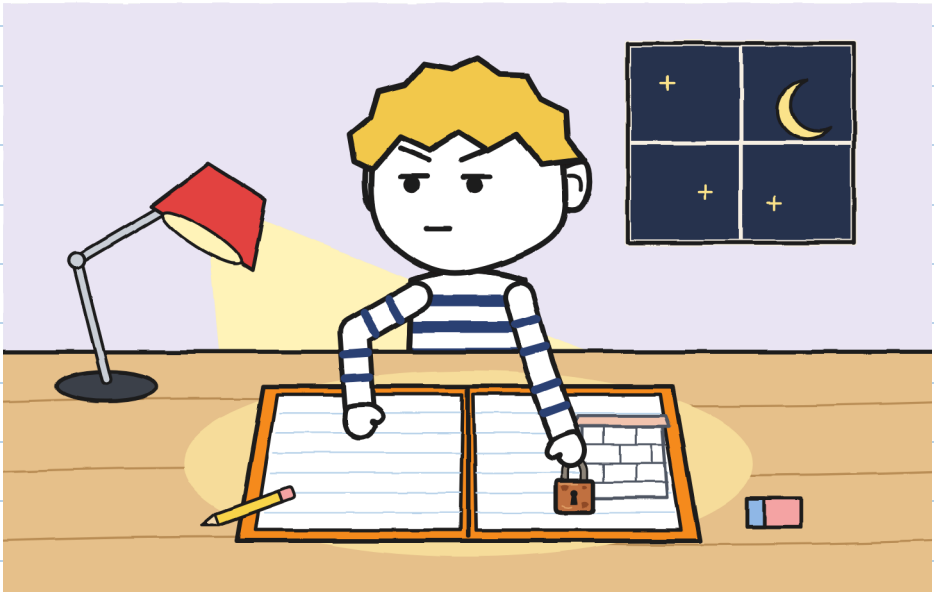
?

My name is in that row twice. And I wasn't in either of them. —J.

At home I drew, on the last page, what I found on Tuesday behind the yard wall. I covered it with my hand, even though I was alone.

I thought: "Tomorrow they'll get it wrong again. Then I'll bring it out."

It seemed a good plan. It even had a time.



I read this page on Thursday. I didn't like it. Mine from Wednesday, neither. —J.

CHAPTER 3

Is Gus's Plan Any Good?

That night I made the whole plan. The yard seen from above, the wall measured, the gate, the fountain, the three legs. And, on the back, Tuesday's thing.

It turned out a very good plan. I folded it in four and kept it inside the notebook.



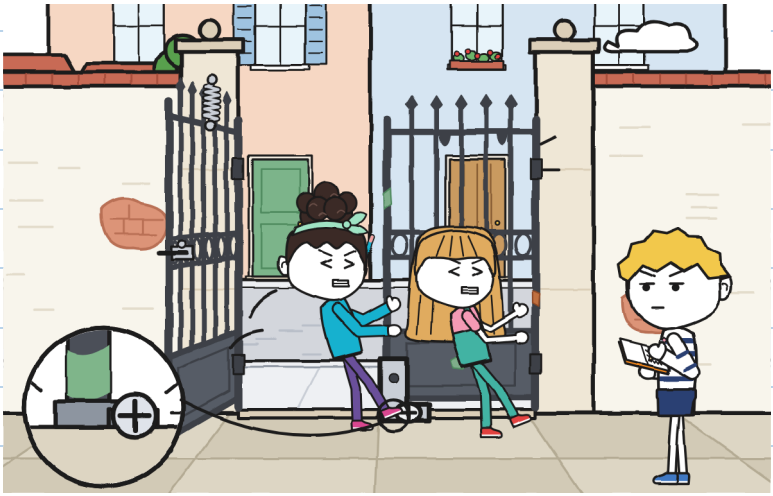
On Thursday, in the shop, Noa was counting steps.
"From the door to the curb, six steps. From the curb to the lamppost, eleven."
"That's measured with a tape," I said.
"I measure in steps. I always have them on."

I measured one of Noa's steps: fifty-eight centimeters. She wrote it in her notebook. I wrote it in mine. Julie watched us. We were two clocks showing the same time.
I thought Noa was going to be another Julie. She isn't. Noa counts.



We went to the yard with Irene. Julie and Noa wanted to try their idea: opening both halves of the gate.
The first half opens and closes by itself. The second didn't open. It's stuck with paint and fixed to the ground with a screw.

"Then the label is wrong," said Julie.
"Definitely," said Noa.
They decided it in two seconds. I took out my pencil for the tally mark. It would have been the fifth.



I didn't make it.

I looked at the row of tally marks. One was missing, mine. On Tuesday, behind the yard wall, I decided something without asking anyone. I decided to keep quiet.

DECIDED WITHOUT ME: ||||

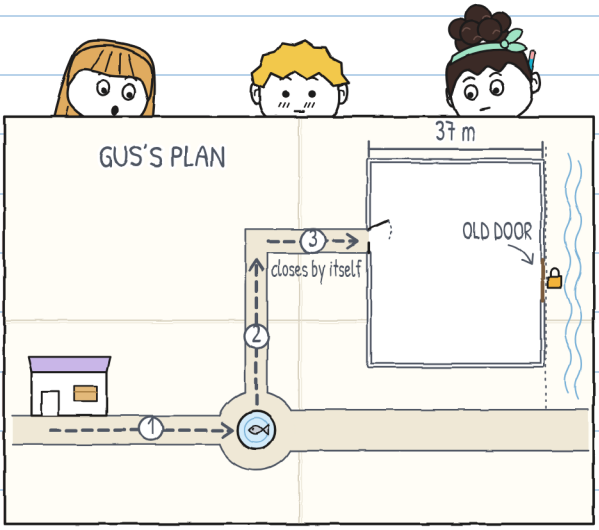
DECIDED WITHOUT THEM: |



"The label isn't wrong," I said. I said it louder than I meant. "The yard has another door. It's around the back, in the canal alley. It's old and has a padlock. I found it on Tuesday."

I took out the plan and unfolded it on top of the little theater.

"On Tuesday?" said Julie.
"On Tuesday. I kept it back so I could be right later."



Nobody said anything for a while. I measured it: it was long.
"OK," said Noa. And she copied the door onto her map.
Julie didn't say "OK." She was moving one foot.
"We really needed that yesterday."
"I know."

There's nowhere to hide in the yard. I didn't look. I stayed with the plan open.



I didn't say "OK" because it wasn't true yet. —J.

We went to see the door with Irene. Noa counted the wall: sixty-four steps. I'd measured it before: thirty-seven meters. It came out the same.

The old door is made of wood, with two halves, as wide as a giant's bed. The padlock has more rust than padlock.

"It's been shut for years," said Irene. "I've always seen it like that."



Irene looked in the center's register. She found a yellow sheet.

"Here it is. When this door was used, you got in two ways: the gate or here. They called the yard 'the two-door one.' And of all the groups, only the theater rehearses in the yard."

"So the label isn't a riddle," said Noa.

"It's an address," I said.

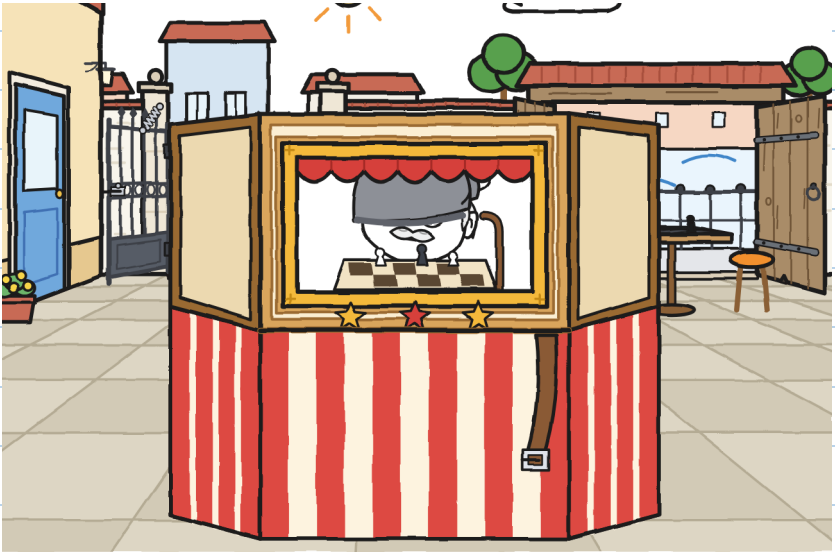
"Yard workshop. Entry by the two doors." It was written correctly. It was only old.



Mara said later that she saw that padlock nine times. She thought a shut door didn't count. —J.

The key was in the folder, in an envelope: "Old door. Do not lose." Irene opened the padlock. The door made a noise like a ship.

In the yard, the chess players had their tables in the sun. Irene opened the little theater in the middle. She wanted to see how much room it left between the two doors. It left plenty.
Through the little theater's window you could see Don Antonio, with his beret over his eyes. He was thinking about a move. He was snoring a little.



"On Saturday I'll open both," said Irene. "Bikes come in by the old one, from the alley. People carrying on foot, by the gate. That way they don't cross."
"But the old one is wider," said Julie. "And it doesn't close by itself."
"The gate is yours. If the workshop takes the little theater to a square, there are worse doors."
Julie opened her mouth. She looked at Noa. She looked at me.
"What do you say?"
It was the first time all week. I noted it down with the date.



I said the gate, but with a rehearsal. Noa, the same. Julie said OK. This time it was half true.

Afterward we fixed the gauge. Its three boxes didn't work for Wednesday's thing or for mine.

THE THREE-GAUGE (WITH FOUR)

	CARRY	GUIDE	CLEAR THE WAY	WARN
yard, second try	Julie and Noa	Julie and Noa	Gus	Gus, no
shop → fountain	Gus and Noa	Julie	Julie	nobody

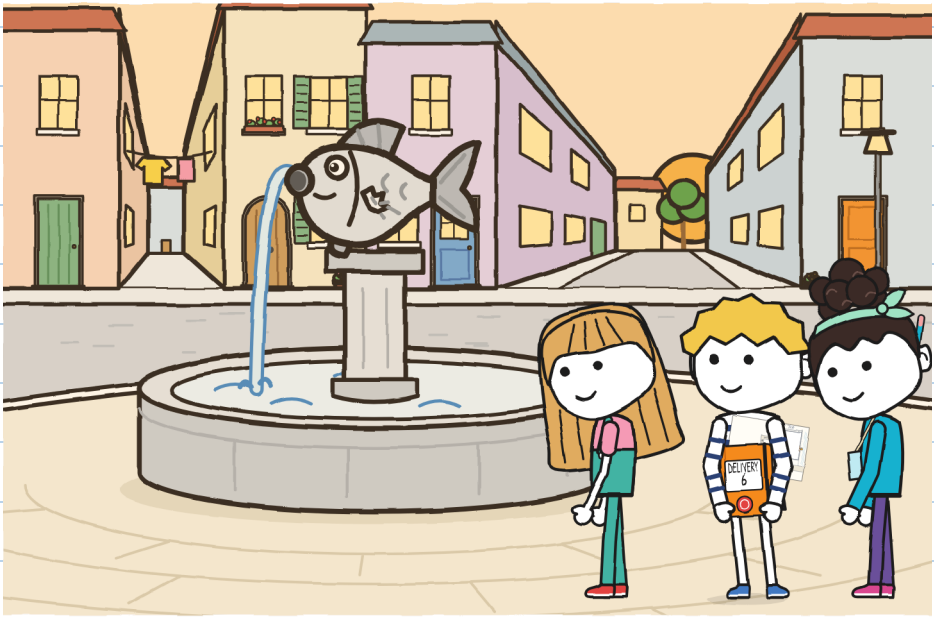
WARN: say what you know

The three-gauge has four boxes. I'm not complaining. The fourth is the one I find hardest. —J.

We went back by the fountain. I stopped in front of the fish, on its limping side.

"Will you tell me the story?"
"It's long," said Julie.
"On Saturday," said Noa. "If we get there."

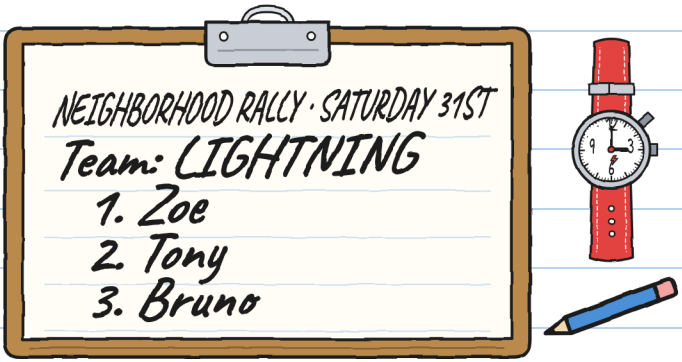
It wasn't a no. I put the plan in the notebook, this time unfolded. Half the plan stuck out.



CHAPTER 4

Can Anyone Lead?

On Friday Tony came to the shop. He had his watch, a pencil and LIGHTNING's form.



"Zoe wrote it," he said. "Bruno told her his name: 'Bruno, with a B.'"
"And Zoe?"
"Bruno wrote it. With a B."

Tony sat on his crate and set his watch to zero. "Today I time. I don't give opinions. I note down what has to be repeated."

Noa's idea: turns. Three legs, and a different person guides on each. My idea: whoever isn't carrying guides and clears the way. The other two can only see the little theater. Julie's idea: start now.

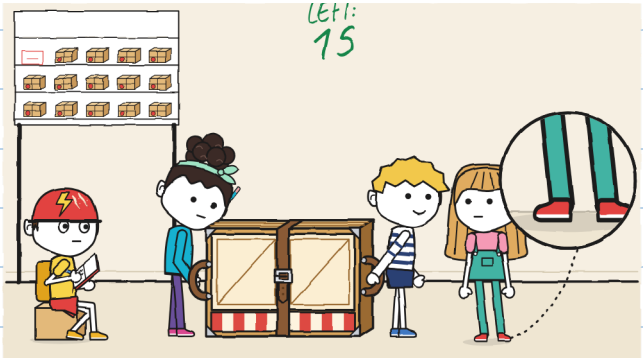
"Who guides the first leg?"
We all pointed at once. Each of us pointed at someone else.

Tony wrote it down. Irene waited at the door, with her folder. She wasn't giving opinions either.



Before lifting the little theater, Julie said:
"One thing. On Wednesday I gave a direction that only Noa understood. And then I said: 'Gus is lost.'"
She said no more. She didn't need to: it was all there.

"OK," I said. I learned it from Noa.
"Which side is the fish missing its fin on?" I asked.
"The left one, as you arrive. At the fountain, turn left. I'll warn you five steps before."
"Now that is a direction."



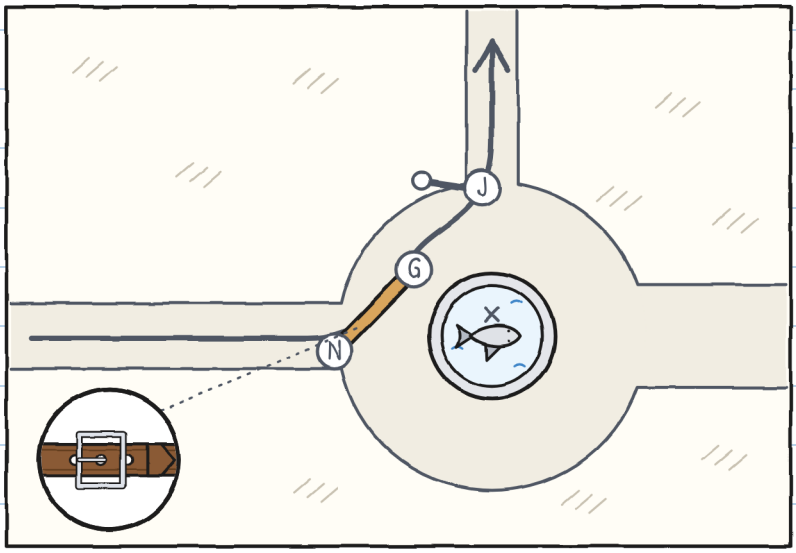
Both feet still. Check it in the drawing. —J.

Leg one. Noa fastened the strap on the second hole.

"Five steps... Turn left!"
"Strap!" said Noa. And she held it.

We turned around the limping fish. It looked as if we'd always done it. No clack.

"Leg one: six minutes," said Tony.
"Repeated: nothing."



Leg two, from the fountain to the corner. Julie and Noa carried. I guided.

This is how I guide:

"Three steps. Stop. Curb. Up. Two steps. Stop. A lady. Good afternoon. The lady goes by. Four steps."

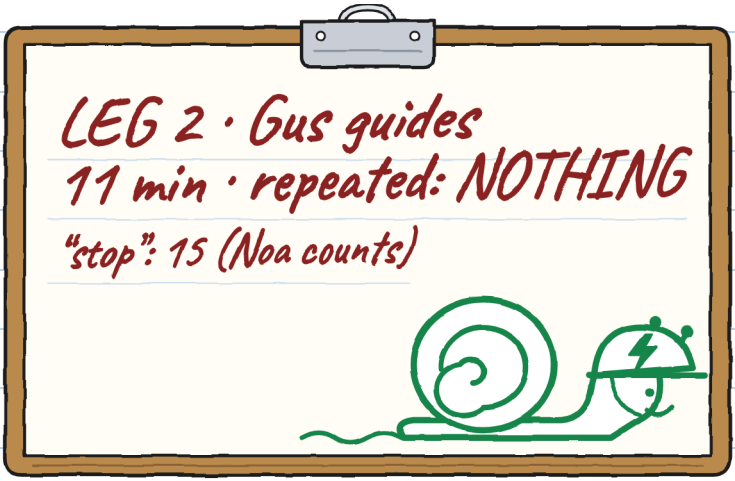
Julie went in front, at her handle, quiet. Her foot kept going toward the short way. She kept bringing it back to my way.



"Leg two: eleven minutes," said Tony. "I've never timed a slower one. Repeated: nothing."

I was leading something for the first time. And nothing had to be repeated.

"You said 'stop' fourteen times," said Julie.
"I counted them," said Noa. "Fifteen."
"Six were unnecessary," said Julie. "But I stopped at all of them."



I didn't argue about any of them. My teeth hurt from clenching. —J.

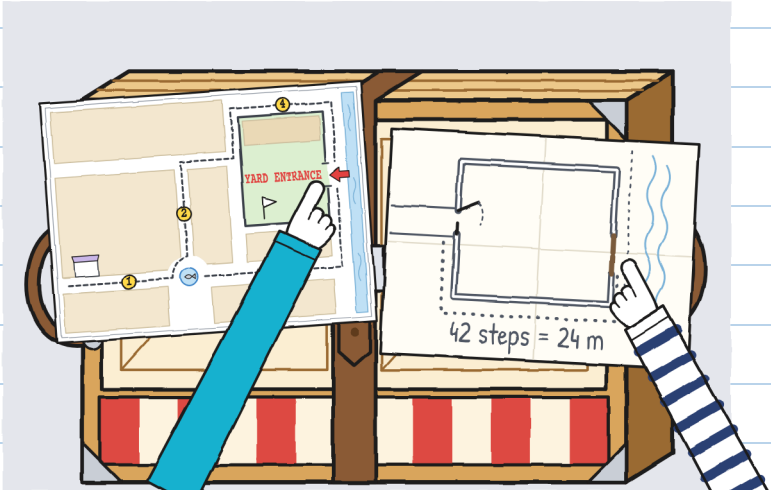
Leg three, from the corner to the yard. Julie and I carried. Noa guided, with the rally map. Irene had given one to each team.

Noa stopped after twenty steps, where the canal alley begins.
"It doesn't add up."
"What doesn't?"
"The map sends us this way, to the old door. We go in by the gate, on the other side."



We put the little theater on the ground. First you put it down; then you argue.
I laid my plan next to her map. The map had only one entrance drawn. It wasn't the gate. It was the old door.
"It's an old map," I said. "It's from when you came in that way."

From there to the gate it was forty-two Noa steps. Or twenty-four meters of mine. With her steps and my tape we can measure the whole neighborhood.



"Do we tell Irene?" asked Julie.
"And the other teams," said Noa. "Otherwise the ones on foot will go into the alley. With the bikes."
I said nothing. I agreed.

Irene corrected the maps, one by one, with a red marker. Tony looked at his.
"LIGHTNING was going to go in the way the map said."
"You go in that way," said Irene. "For bikes, the map was right. By chance."



We went back to the corner and repeated leg three, now as far as the gate. Julie and I carried. Noa guided, cleared the way and warned. All at once:

"Stop! Holding the gate! Go!"

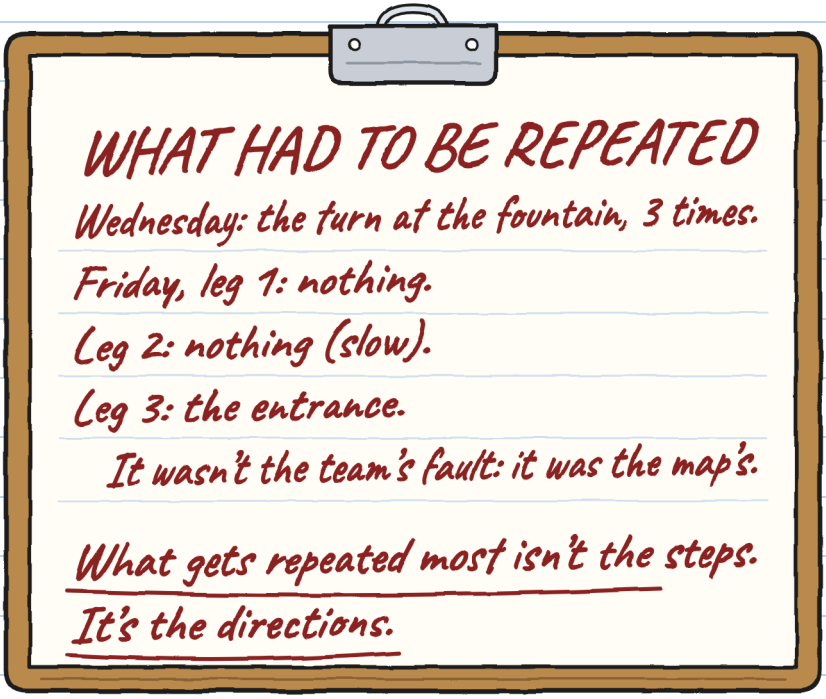
We went through. I filled in the gauge.

	CARRY	GUIDE	CLEAR THE WAY	WARN
corner → yard	Gus and Julie	Noa	Noa	Noa: "the map is wrong"

It was the first row with every box filled. The fourth, the warning one, was filled by Noa.

The gate is heavy. Noa held it with her back, like you on Tuesday. I'm noting it down. You don't. —J.

Tony showed us his sheet.



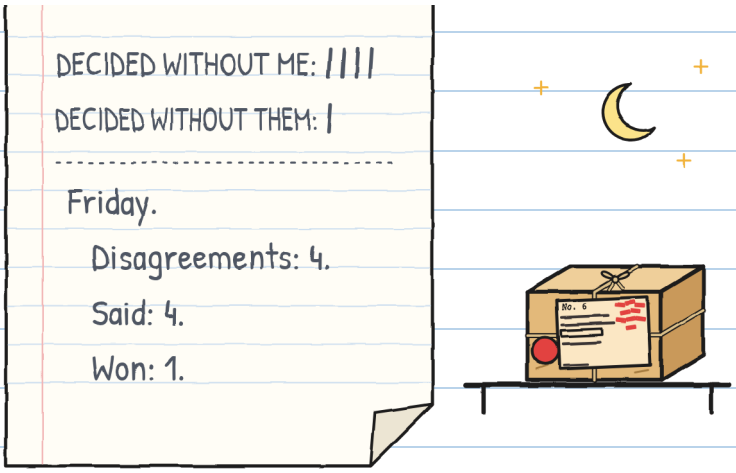
"That last bit is an opinion," said Julie.
"It's a fact," said Tony. "At LIGHTNING, a direction given wrong costs you twice: on the way there and on the way back."

Tony put on his helmet and went off to practice.
Ting-a-ling.

That night, in the shop, Mara put the little theater away in its box. Noa looked at the buckle.

"Tomorrow, on the third hole. It's hard to undo, but it's fine."

I opened the notebook at the corner of the tally marks. Today I didn't make any. I counted four disagreements. I said them all out loud. I won one.

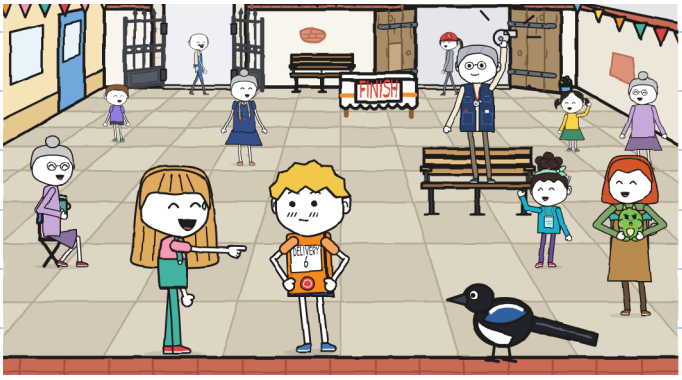


The one you won was putting the little theater on the ground before arguing. I'll give you that one. —J.

CHAPTER 5

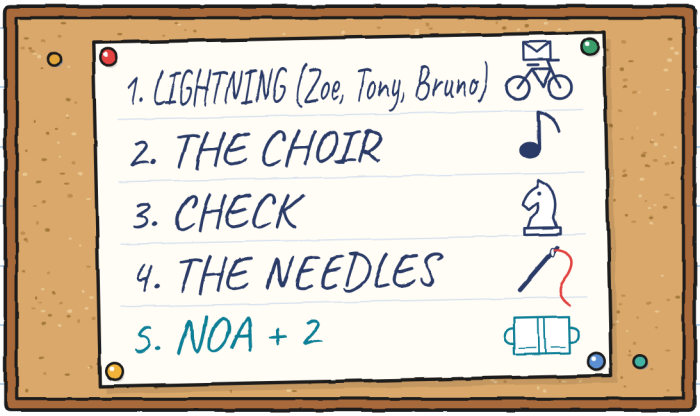
Does It Matter Who Arrives First?

On Saturday I put on my orange Saturday T-shirt.
"You go with the notebook," said Julie.
At eleven, the yard had both doors open for the first time in years. People came in through both.
Irene, with her whistle, gave the rules:
"Each team brings its load here, through every station. You don't run with a load. Whoever runs repeats the leg. Whoever doesn't repeat gains time."



There were five teams. LIGHTNING carried an envelope, by bike. The choir, a music lectern. The chess club, a giant board. The sewing group, a tailor's mannequin with no head.

Noa wrote ours down on Monday, before she met me:



"We're 'Noa + 2,'" I told Julie.
"I'm the 2," she said. "And you're the 'plus.'"

Each team set out from the door where its load slept. Don Antonio gave us the start. He lives nearby and doesn't run.

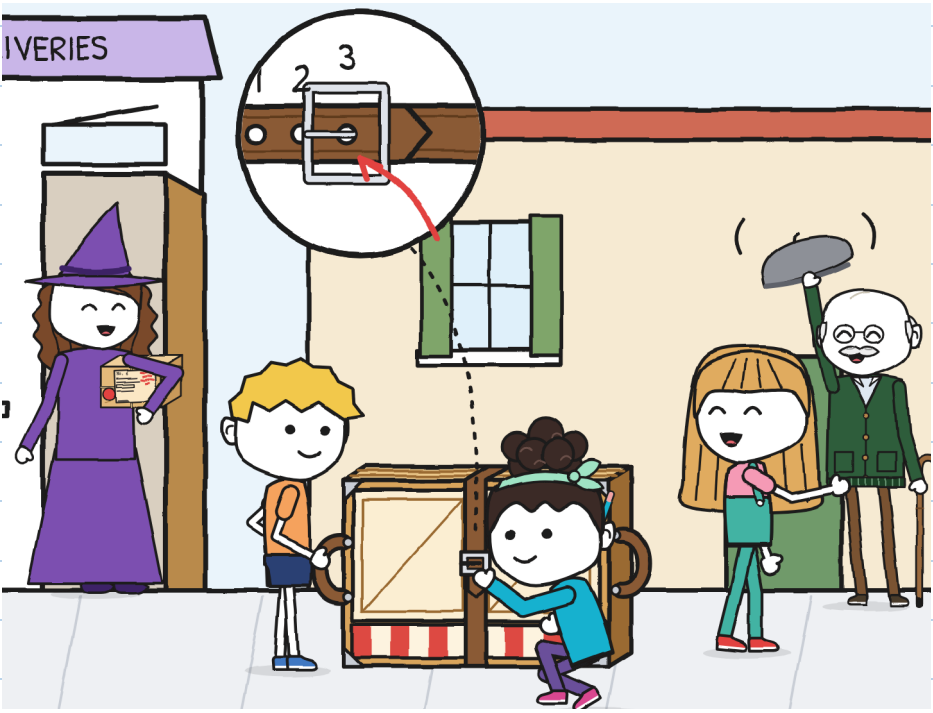
Mara brought out the little theater. Noa fastened the strap quickly and we lifted it. Clack! A panel opened.

"Down," I said.

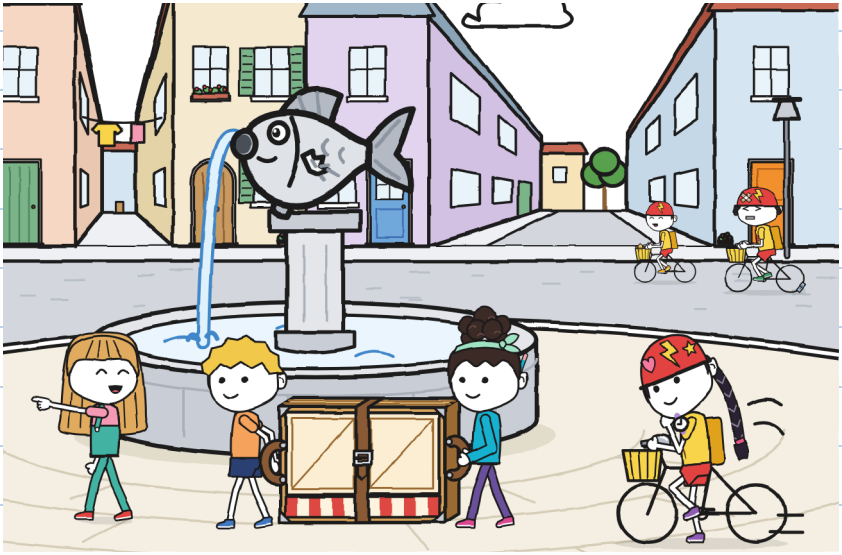
Nobody argued. Noa fastened the strap again, slowly, on the third hole. She tugged twice.

Don Antonio lowered his beret: the starting flag.

"Calmly," he said. "That's how you get there."



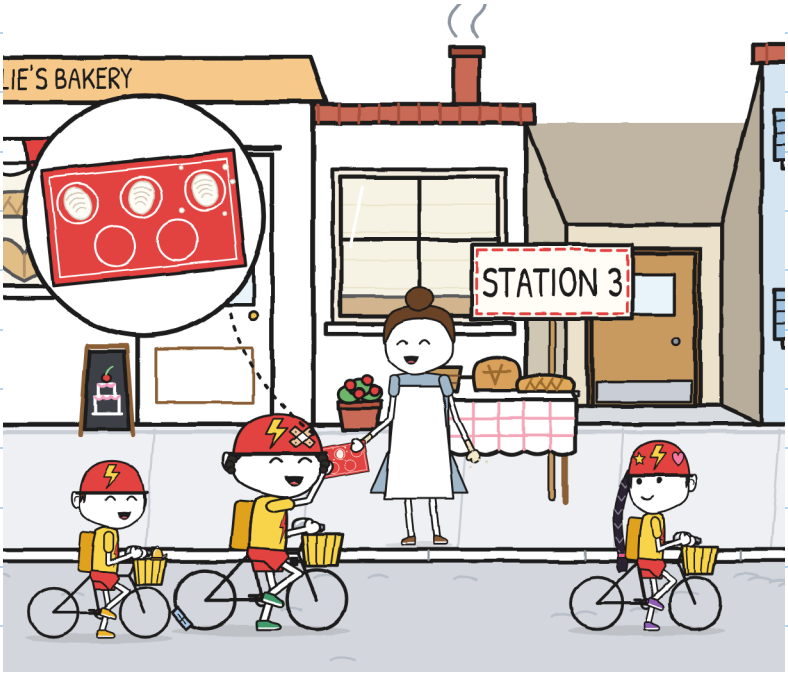
Leg one. Julie guided.
"Five steps... Turn left!"
"Strap!"
We were turning slowly around the limping fish and taking up the corner. Zoe arrived on her bike. She was first. She braked and put a foot on the ground.
"You go ahead. You don't run with that."
Zoe waited until we were out of the bend. Then she left. We were ahead for twenty seconds. She timed it herself.



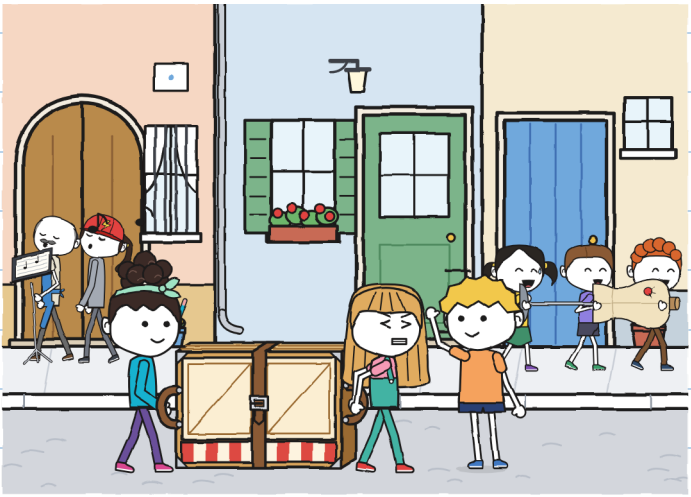
At each station they stamped a card. At the bakery, Ellie stamped with a thumb covered in flour.

LIGHTNING passed us three times, always down another street. Tony had both hands on the handlebars and rang his little bell at the corners.

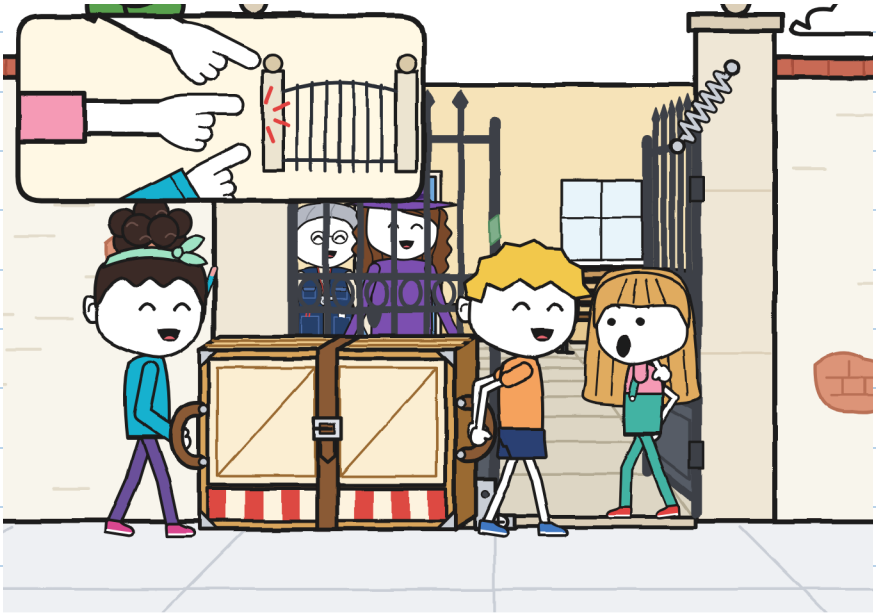
Bruno carried the envelope. Zoe waited at every station. She didn't touch the card until all three arrived.



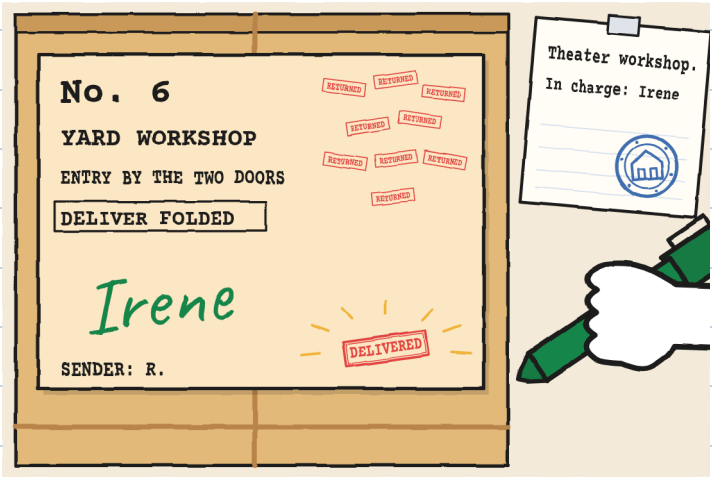
On leg two the choir overtook us, with their lectern. They were running. Irene's whistle sounded and they went back to the fountain, singing softly.
The chess club overtook us. Even the mannequin overtook us.
Julie didn't run. Well: one foot got away. She brought it back.
"Does it matter who arrives first?"
"The label doesn't say 'first,'" said Noa. "It says 'folded.'"
"Curb," I said.



Leg three. Noa guided as far as the gate. We put the little theater on the ground there.
"Who opens?" asked Julie. And she waited.
We all pointed at once, at the same place. Noa pointed at the gate. Julie, the gate. Me, the gate.
We laughed: that's no way to decide who.
"You," said Noa and I. And Noa went to her handle.
Julie held the gate with her back and her hands.
"Stop! Holding the gate! Go!"
We went through. Folded. In one piece.

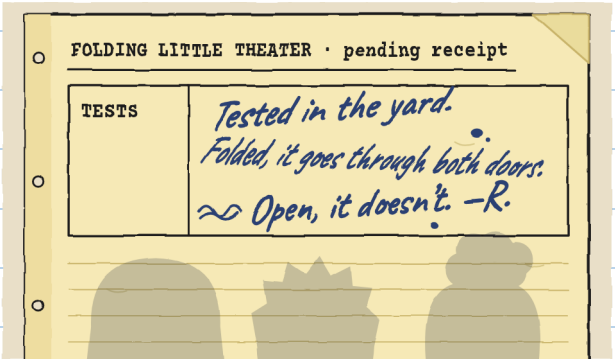


"Forty-one minutes," said Irene.
LIGHTNING took fourteen minutes. All three were sitting by the bikes, without a drop of sweat.
Mara came with the box under her arm. Irene looked at the little theater, folded on the ground in the yard, with the strap in its place. She showed Mara the sheet from the register. Julie gave Irene the green marker.
"It works for me," said Irene. And she signed the label.



The word DELIVERED appeared on the label.
Nobody wrote it.

Irene opened the inventory, the list of the center's things. The little theater already had a page, with an old line in very bad handwriting.



"It's from before me," said Irene. "I don't know who it is."

"Neither do we," said Julie. "But we're finding things out."

R. had been in that yard. R. tested the little theater before sending it. This time R. measured both doors: the gate and the old one.

Ellie's door. The two in the yard. R. measures doors. I'm keeping it for the card. –J.

LIGHTNING won, without repeating any leg. The prize was a big loaf from Ellie, with a 1 in flour. Zoe broke it in three. Bruno's was just like Zoe's.

Irene gave a ribbon to the teams that arrived with the load in one piece.



"A finalist is the one who comes last," said Julie.
"It's the one who gets to the final," said Noa.
"We got to the final last," I said. "Both work."

"It's here now," said Irene. "We'll use it for the first time."

Mara and Irene opened it. We stood behind. We had two minutes to make up a play. Noa handed out the parts. First she asked:

"Who wants to say very little?"

I raised my hand.

Crumb broke away from Vera and flew a meter. She landed on a panel, with her tail dangling in front of the window. It was already a show, and we hadn't started yet.



The play was called "The Package That Wouldn't Go In." Julie was Mara, with a paper hat. Noa was all the doors. I was the package, at the window.
"The workshop?" Noa would say. "Here, sewing."
"RETURNED," I would say.
I said it nine times. The audience counted. The tenth time, Noa opened her arms, and I said the other word.
To bow, all three of us leaned out. We fit.
Squeezed in.



A spot isn't divided into pieces. You squeeze up. —J.

CHAPTER 6

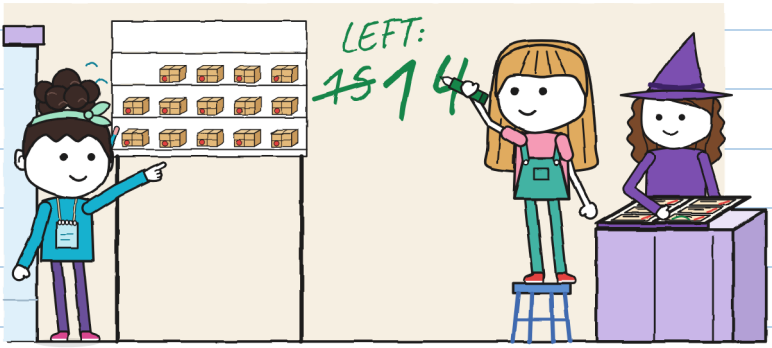
What Remains When the Test Is Over?

In the afternoon we went back to the shop with the label. Noa came too. Julie looked at the sign and then at Mara.

"Can I?"

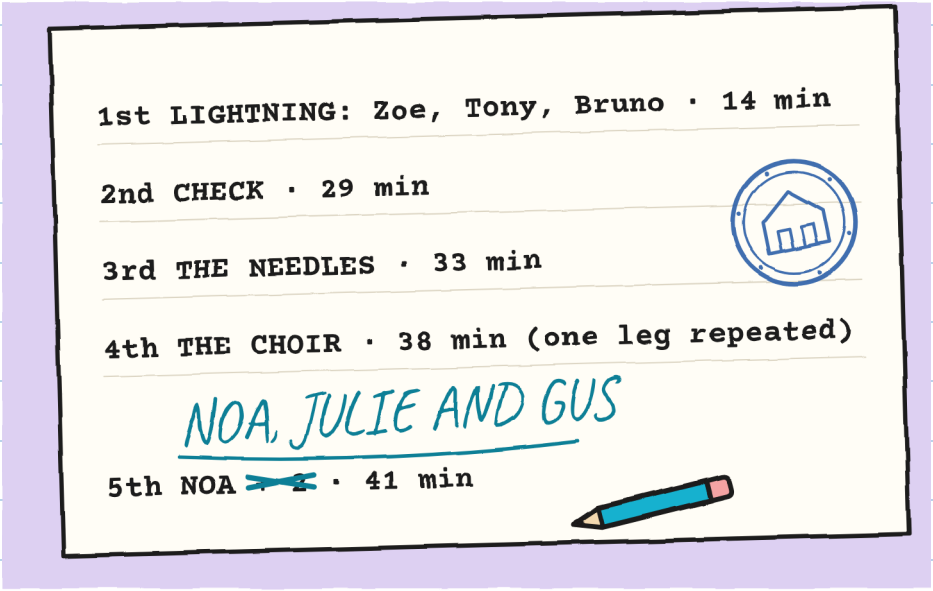
"It's your sign."

Julie crossed out the 15 and wrote 14, big. Mara stuck the label in her book, with five others.



Noa counted them quietly. She got fourteen. She can count. –J.

Tony brought the results table. I noted it down in the notebook.



I looked at it twice. "Bruno" was whole. Not crossed out and with nothing over it.

Noa fixed our team's line with her turquoise pencil. Nobody asked her to.
"On Monday I didn't know your names," she said.
"Well. Gus's."

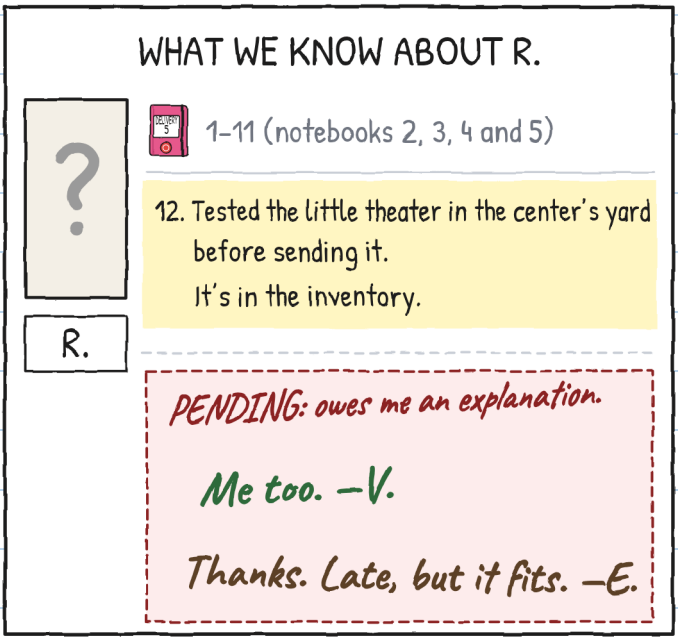
I took out R.'s card. It had eleven clues. I added one.

Tony read it. He also read his own note, further down. He crossed nothing out.

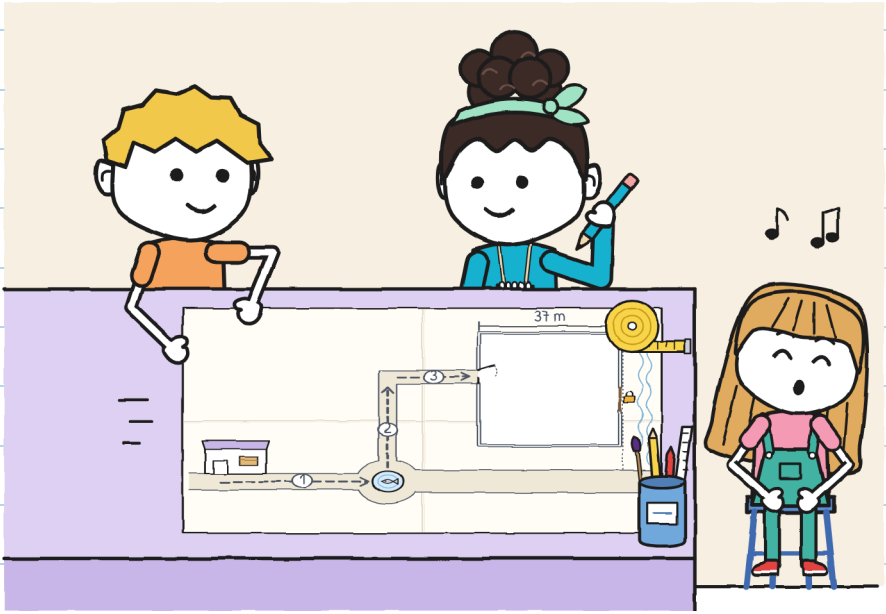
"R. tested the little theater," he said. "My little bell, R. didn't test."

"We don't know that," said Julie.

"There's no line about my little bell in any inventory," said Tony. And that was true too.

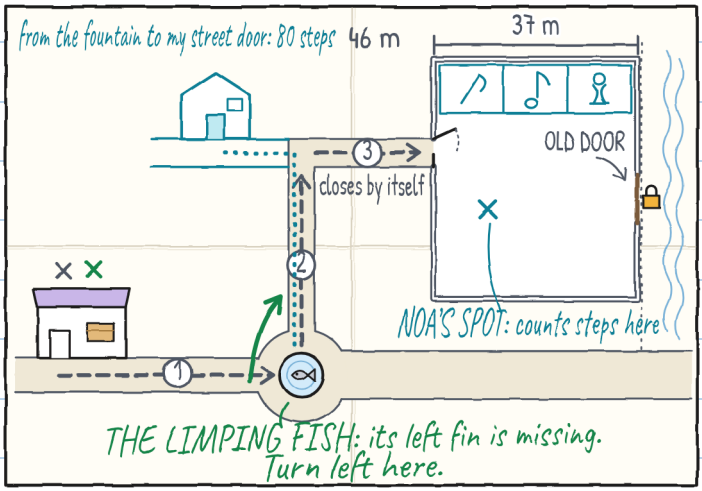


Then I put the plan on the counter. It was already unfolded.
"Your part is missing," I told Noa. "What's beyond the fountain. Of those streets I only know the meters."
Noa looked at Julie. Julie looked at the ceiling: her way of staying out of it.
"Can I draw on it?"
"That's why I'm showing it to you."
Noa took the pencil from her ear.



Noa added her street, the inside of the center and the distances in steps. I put the meters next to them. Julie couldn't wait any longer and wrote the sign for the fountain.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN (BY THE THREE OF US)



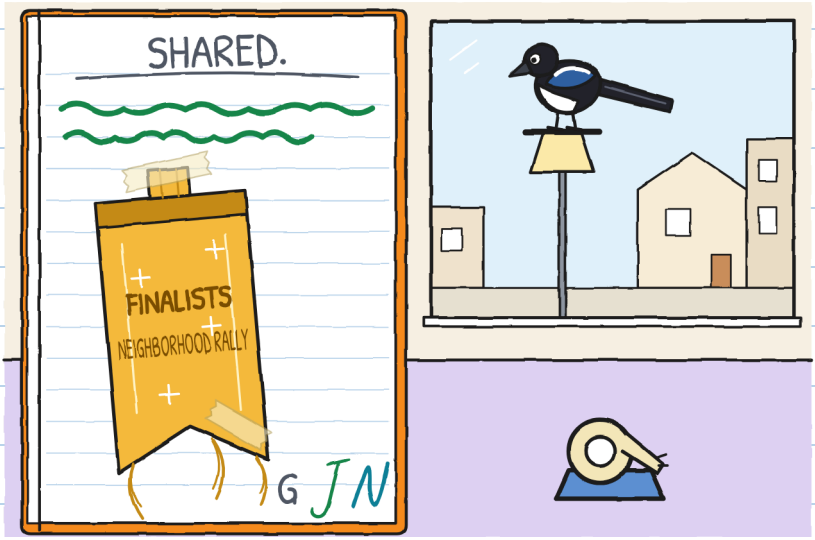
While they were drawing, they told me the story of the limping fish. It's long. It's not as good as they say. But now I know it.

It's brilliant. But we told it badly: we talked at the same time. —J.

Julie had the ribbon tied around her wrist. Three threads were already loose.

"If I keep it, by Monday it'll be just threads," she said. "Shall we keep it in the notebook?"

We stuck it on the first page, under SHARED, with a piece of tape at each end. I drew it with its loose threads. If it falls apart, it falls apart. I'm not going to draw it newer than it is.



My notebook doesn't close as well as yours. That's why. –J.

Noa turned the pages backward, with my permission. She reached the corner of the tally marks.

"What's this?"

"A count I was keeping wrong."

"And this other one?" She read aloud: "'A gate can be held by a stone too.'"

"I thought of that on Tuesday."

"A stone doesn't say 'curb,'" said Noa. "Or 'stop' fifteen times."

I didn't erase the tally marks. It's in pencil, so I could, but I didn't want to.



Don't erase them. They're a bit mine. —J.

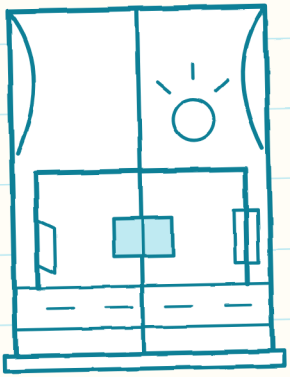
On Sunday, at dawn, Noa kept watch. She lives opposite the center. At nine she brought a note to the shop. She came counting steps.

7:38: the little theater, in the workshop, folded.

7:44: dawn breaks. It isn't moving.

7:50: still there. Steps it has taken: zero. –Noa



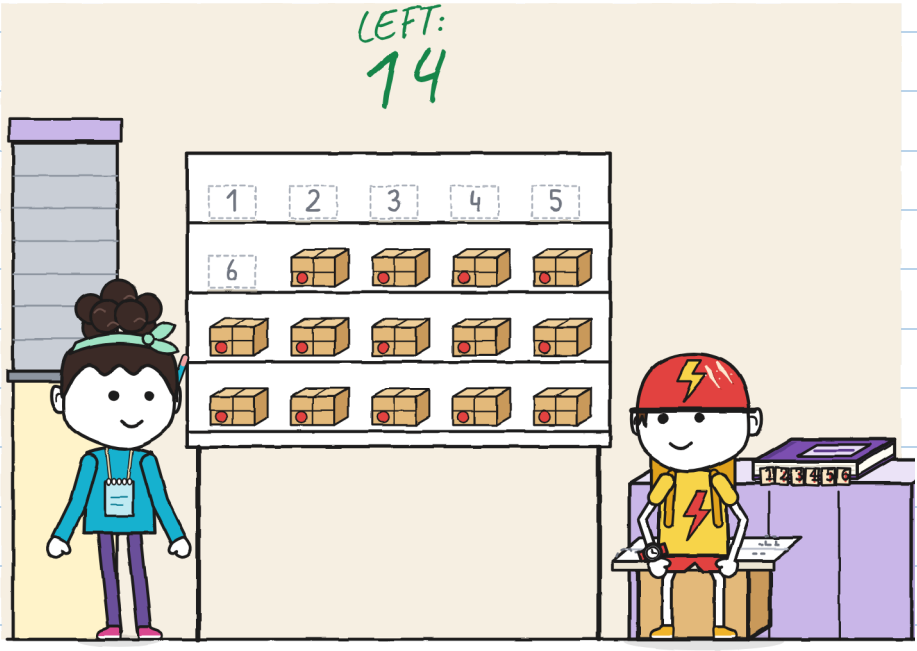


She keeps better watch than I do, counts better than I do and doesn't bake. Two out of three. –J.

Mara raised the shutter a little to let us in. I drew the shelf: fourteen packages and six gaps. The sign didn't need changing.

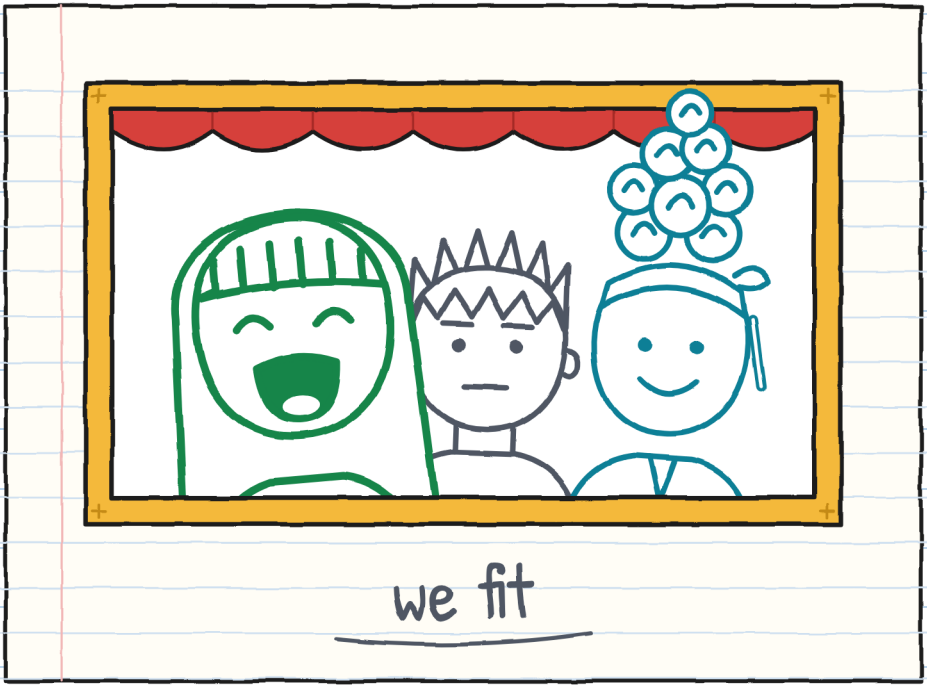
"Six," said Mara. And she closed her book.

Tony was on his crate, with his helmet on, even though it was Sunday. Noa stood by the door. Nobody told her "sit down." Nobody told her "go away." She came because she wanted to. And on Monday she has rehearsal.



To finish the notebook I drew the little theater's window, empty.

Each of us drew ourselves inside. Me, in pencil. Julie, in green. Noa, in turquoise. Noa asked permission to draw in my notebook. Julie didn't.



Shared is shared. It says so on the first page. —J.

DELIVERY NO. 6. Leg by leg:

	LEG	WHO CARRIED	WHO GUIDED	WHAT HAD TO BE REPEATED
	Shop → limping fish fountain	Gus and Noa	Julie	the turn at the fountain (three times)
	Fountain → corner	Julie and Noa	Gus	nothing (but slowly)
	Corner → yard	Gus and Julie	Noa	the entrance: the map was old
	On Saturday	all three	all three, in turns	the strap (second time, on the third hole)
	Before us	Mara, alone	nobody	nine trips
	R.	?	?	we don't know

	CARRY 	GUIDE 	CLEAR THE WAY 	WARN 
1	Gus and Noa	*Julie*	*Julie*	*Julie*
2	Julie and Noa	Gus	Gus	Gus
3	Gus and Julie	*Noa*	*Noa*	*Noa*

Three boxes. Well, four. Three names. None empty. —J.

IMPOSSIBLE DELIVERIES · 7

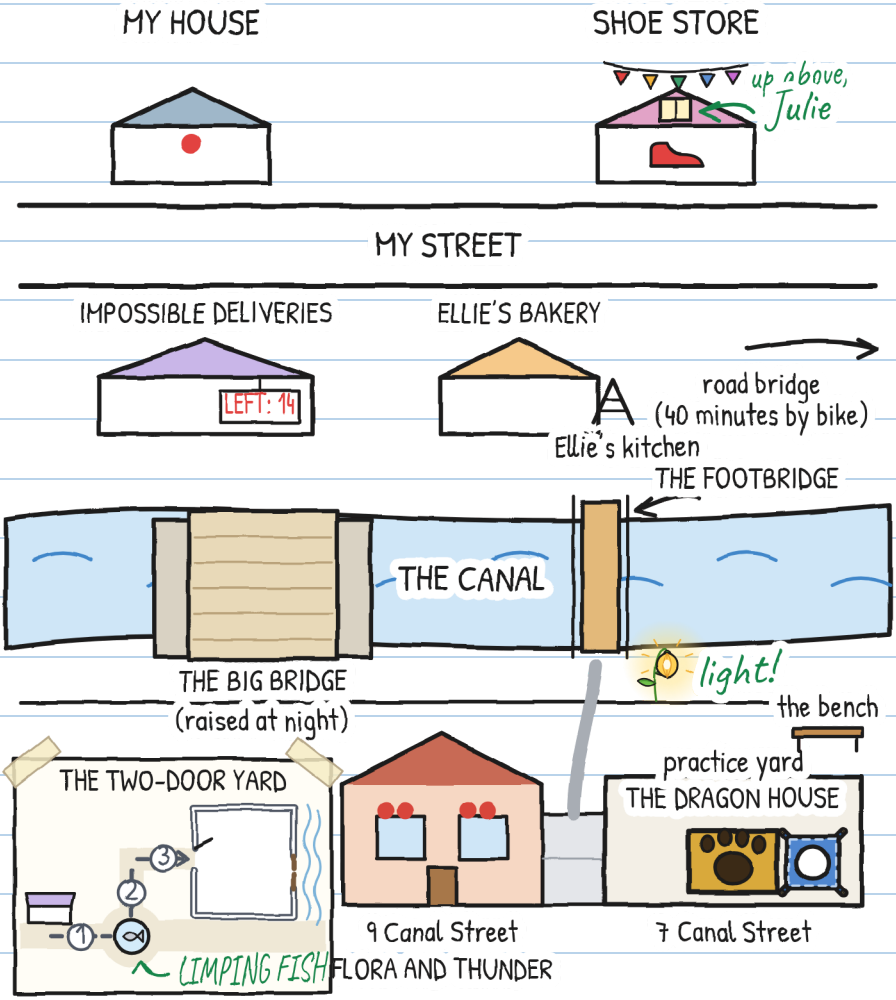
(coming soon)



This time the label gave an hour. At that hour I'm already in my pajamas.

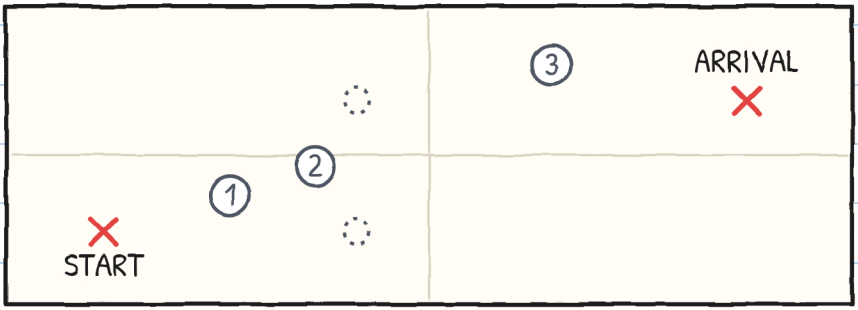
Who's awake when everyone else closes? Apart from me. —J.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD (version 6)



YOUR JOURNEY

Who carries? Who guides? Who clears the way? Who warns?



THE THREE-GAUGE

	CARRY	GUIDE	CLEAR THE WAY	WARN
leg 1				
leg 2				
leg 3				

If the same name always comes up in one box, change it. —J.

ONE STORY, SIX SIZES

There are six sizes, for ages 3 to 16, and more than 20 languages. XXS, XS, S, M and L have the same pages and the same drawings. XL is a novel. Only the way it's told changes.

SIZE XXS · PRE-A1
GUS WROTE A WORD AND LEFT ROOM. CAN YOU SEE THE WORD "SHARED"?

SIZE XS · A1
I wrote one word. I left half a page free. It didn't stay free for even a minute.

SIZE S · A2
On the first page I wrote one word. I left half the page free, just in case. It wasn't free for even a minute.

SIZE M · B1
On the first page I wrote a single word. I left half the page free, just in case. It didn't stay free for even a minute.

SIZE L · B2
On the first page I wrote a single word and left half the page free, just in case. It didn't stay free for even a minute.

SIZE XL · B2-C1
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The CEFR levels are a rough guide for learners of English.

One size each. The same little theater. —J.

FOR FAMILIES AND TEACHERS

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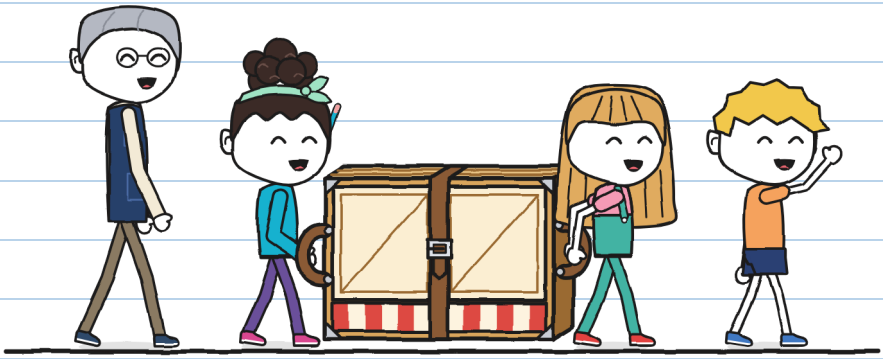
A REAL TRANSFER: WHAT TO DO

1. Before setting off, look at the whole route.
2. One person goes free: opens doors and warns.
3. Hands on the handles. Away from hinges and fastenings.
4. You don't run or race with a load.
5. If anyone says "stop," everyone stops.
6. First put it on the ground; then argue.
7. Anything big is opened and folded by two people, with a grown-up.

The ONLY IN THE STORY stamp marks what can happen in a story, but not in a real transfer.



And if you know something about the way, say it beforehand. —J.