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Chapter 1. Meet the Gamsters

One summer day someone's cute black nose stuck out of the bushes on the edge of the forest, where a lazy river Smelly was flowing.

The nose sniffed cautiously. Then the entire face of a forest dweller appeared. The beastie frowned his brows. He looked like a hamster, a prairie dog, a squirrel and all the rodents together at the same time. If a human saw him, he would exclaim in surprise! Because he was a representative of those rare species gamsters that are not well known to anyone really.

The gamster adjusted his glasses with his paw. Why, the real glasses, that's right! The beastie found them under an old oak tree and since then he has considered himself the smartest in the gamsters' village, even though that was not true. Besides the glasses, he had a yellow shirt and orange shorts with a hole for his big fluffy tail. This cutie's name was Fooksik.

The beastie moved his brows again and climbed to the pine stump.

"That's something! Look, Chuppoks!" He breathed out in awe, looking at the meadow. In an instant the other gamster rushed to Fooksik - he was also wearing bright clothes and had a fluffy tail.

Fooksik and Chuppoks were watching the people resting on the meadow with excitement. To be more exact, they were staring at the plastic toy truck in the little boy's hands.

"That truck is a beast!" Chuppoks jumped up.

"I wish we had one! We wouldn't have to carry the treasures on our backs. What do you say?" Fooksik said wishfully.

At that very moment, crushing flowers and shading the sun, a girl rushed by the gamsters making them hide immediately.

Altogether there were four people on the meadow: Dad, Mom, a boy, Victor, and a girl, Sophie as their parents called them.

Dad was fishing, Mom was reading a book, and the children were doing what children of their age usually like to do in nature – they were playing with toys scattering them around, running around the forest and making a lot of noise.

Sophie was a friendly girl, very fond of nature and animals. For this reason she often asked her parents to buy her a large dog, better more than one. At least two or maybe six. Since the family lived in a small apartment, they would have to walk the dogs at least twice a day, feed them a ton, clean up their hair and not only that but also wash their paws and vaccinate them. Sophie would tell her parents that she would do it all by herself, but her Dad and Mom knew perfectly well who would be actually doing this, and, without doubt, it would not be Sophie. Therefore, they found a way out – meantime they gave the girl a fish, a hamster, and a parrot.

“If you can look after them, then we may think about having a dog,” said Mom handing the pets over to the happy girl.

Today, they only had the hamster with them, and the parrot was left at home. Sophie put the cage with the pet near the water.

“Look, Hamsty, it’s so beautiful here!” exclaimed the girl, talking to the hamster.

“Yeah, it is incredible,” the hamster thought without much enthusiasm, “if only we went back already.”

Hamsty was a pet, and unknown, unpredictable wildlife did not cause much delight but rather inexplicable and slight anxiety.

“Stay here and admire the view, and I shall play,” Sophie cheered the pet and ran away bouncing joyfully. Hamsty was completely alone as he watched her go.

“I want some white cheese,” the animal thought to himself. However, there was no white cheese. Having gotten comfortable with the idea that not all animal dreams are feasible, the hamster looked at the water for some time and then got bored, so he lay on his back and began to spin the cage wheel idly with his hind limbs. Yet, he could not stop thinking about the white cheese.

Soon after noon, having checked the bait on the fishing rods once again Dad looked up and noticed that there was a small cloud coming up, and they had better start packing up to leave for the city before the rain got them. Also fish weren't biting. But what kind of Dad would leave because of such minor issue? The cloud, on the other hand, is something quite serious. The children reluctantly agreed that the cloud was serious, and everyone began to pack. Victor and Sophie were picking up their toys, and the parents were packing up and loading everything into the car.

"Dad, I can't find my truck!" The boy said perplexedly and began to search through the grass and the bush once again.

"You are always losing things!" his sister laughed merrily and continued to pick up her dolls and plush toys.

"No, I'm not. I remember exactly that I had put it somewhere here!" Victor answered scowling and knelt down to see the grass better.

"It must be the cubbricks who hid it!" Mom joked holding the tablecloth, and winked at Dad.

- ...or the gamsters!" Dad caught up cheerfully, playing along with Mom. Dad was in a hurry to leave before the rain, and participated in the game willingly.

"What gamsters are you talking about?" the boy muttered, crawling on his knees and moving the grass with his hands.

"Mom, what are these cubbricks?" asked the girl, brushing off sticky grass from the doll.

"Gamsters are small forest dwellers, a little bigger than ordinary hamsters. Thus, the name is gam-sters!" Dad said dividing the word into syllables.

"And what do the gamsters do and where do they live? What do they look like?" the boy got interested and stopped looking for the truck for a moment.

"Gamsters live in the forest, only few people saw them, but they say that they are fluffy animals with a tail like a squirrel and ears with tufts," answered Dad.

"Furthermore, gamsters feed on what they steal when things aren't being watched properly, or when people leave things behind," Mom added.

“An ordinary gamster looks like a hamster or a prairie dog wearing pants and a shirt, speaks both human and animal languages. Generally speaking, it is a fabulous creature,” Dad put the basket with the remaining food in the car and slammed the trunk.

“And what is a cubbrick?” the girl reminded of her question.

“A cubbrick is the same gamster but from a different cub-bricks tribe,” Mom added dividing the word into syllables. “Cubbricks also steal people's things and pick up all the abandoned and forgotten belongings.”

“And where can I see gamsters and cubbricks?” Victor was no longer looking for his truck but was carefully listening to the story his parents were telling.

“Actually nowhere!” Dad answered.

“What do you mean nowhere?” the boy held out disappointedly and headed to the car having looked around in search of his toy truck one more time.

“Nowhere,” Mom explained, shaking and folding the tablecloth, “this means that gamsters and cubbricks are just made-up fairy-tale characters that do not exist in reality.”

“It's just when someone loses something and cannot find it, they say “the cubbricks stole it or the gamsters took it” so as not to take responsibility,” Dad laughed.

The gamsters who were sitting in the grass nearby and heard everything were shocked to the core.

“What? Stole? Dragged away? Eeek!” Chuppoks even had hiccups because of bewilderment.

The thick fur on his back became brownish-grey, dark-brown at some places, and white on the belly.

A black stripe passed along the back of the gamster, and he had ear tufts and a tail tuft. The creature was wearing red shorts with suspenders going crosswise and a blue shirt. Having listened to people's arguments, one little gamster covered his face with a paw and shook his head helplessly.

“I am speechless,” he muttered through his paw and sighed sadly. Removing the paw from his face, he noticed a cage out of the corner of his eye, standing near the water. The creature, very similar to a gamster, was lying in the cage on its back and looking rather miserable.

The gamster reached the cage in short bursts, hiding in the leaves and the grass, and blending into surroundings.

“Pssst!” he called the hamster, touching the cage with his paws.

“Eh? Who’s here?!” the hamster returned from the fantasy world to reality, having heard a strange sound. The hamster saw a wild animal in shorts staring at him from the outside of the cage.

“Who are you?” the gamster asked.

“My name is Hamsty,” the hamster answered quietly with his mouth getting dry, and he felt another bout of incomprehensible anxiety from wildlife encounter. “I should have stayed home,” the hamster thought, “I should have hidden under Sophie’s bed and kept silent. That’s it, now I’m done for... they’ll eat me ... Rosy, I want you to know that I have always loved you, even though I didn’t always show it.”

“And I’m Chuppoks,” the creature replied amiably and extended its paw into the cage. “Let’s shake our paws!”

“Now he will seize me and drag me away! Oh no, oh no, what should I do?” the frozen hamster thought.

“Come on!” the gamster said impatiently shaking his paw.

“Thpt!” Hamsty answered sticking his tongue out, then he closed his eyes, jerked his paws and, as it seemed to him, pretended to be dead very realistically.

Chuppoks froze while still holding his paw out, and stared at the hamster in surprise.

“Are you alright?” the gamster asked.

Hamsty could play his role for a few more moments, but then he snapped.

“Don’t eat me!” he groaned, opening his eyes.

“Hmm, I wasn’t going to,” Chuppoks answered perplexedly.

“Really? You weren’t, were you?”

“Of course not!” the gamster nodded.

“Oh, you should have said it right away instead of starting off with intimidation and using scare tactic.”

“Indeed,” Chuppoks nodded in confusion.

“I’m Hamsty, a hamster!” the hamster introduced himself with pride, still lying with his belly up.

“And I'm Chuppoks, a gamster. What are you doing here?”

“I am dreaming of white cheese and longing for my true home,” the hamster answered smartly and meaningfully.

“Oh, and I ...”

Chuppoks did not have time to finish, because the boy came very close to the cage while searching for his toy.

“I live and work here for the most part, but I have to go! See you later!” Chuppoks waved good-bye and disappeared into the nearest bushes.

“I hope that would be under different circumstances,” the hamster replied, massaging his pounding heart with his paw. “You had better come visit me!”

Meanwhile, the boy in the meadow was still looking for his toy truck.

“Son,” Mom called Victor. “If you can't find your toy, it is no big deal. Next time, be more careful! Children, get in the car before it starts raining!”

Dad opened the doors and motioned for the family to get in. Then he took to the wheel and started the engine. The children and Mom took their seats and shut the doors. Releasing a cloud of smoke, the car speeded away towards the town.

As soon as the engine noise died away and the car disappeared from sight, the tall grass parted, and the little gamster climbed onto the nearest stump, put a paw on his forehead and stared into the distance – first, one way and then the other way. The gamster didn't have to use his paw in order to see better, he had excellent eyesight, but he knew about this human gesture and often did this, imitating people.

Making sure that the car and the people in it had left and nobody could see him, the gamster whistled, and the second gamster got out of the grass – similar to the first one, wearing orange pants and a yellow shirt. The second gamster approached the stump and looked up with a questioning look.

Chapter 2. Fooksik and Chuppoks

Chuppoks jumped off the stump, and the second beastie took his place, and looked around wisely in the same manner.

“Fooksik! People have already driven off on their motor wagon, haven’t they?” Chuppoks asked looking up at his friend.

“Uh-huh! And I wonder how ungrateful and heartless people are! We always help them, and yet they do not like us!” Fooksik yelled and began to peek into the grass and shrub from the stump. And the gamster’s tail was wiggling with indignation.

“We, the Great Seekers of Lost Treasures and the Returners of Valuables, the Mighty Tribe of Gamsters, have co-existed with people for many, many years and thus give back their lost valuables. However, people still blame everyone else, including us, for their losses and troubles,” Fooksik stated pompously. Fooksik was an educated and well-read gamster, his vocabulary was rich. He even had glasses that he had found a long time ago, and everyone knows that glasses are a sign of intelligence.

"Once people lose something," Fooksik continued, "they claim that someone else has stolen it."

“The fact is, people just tend to lose things all the time!” Chuppoks nodded, folding his paws on his chest.

“Exactly!” Fooksik agreed.

“Get off the stump and let's look for the lost things!” Chuppoks reminded his friend of the purpose of visiting the meadow. “And who are those cubbricks people were talking about?” He recalled suddenly.

“I don't know, I have never heard of them!” shrugged Fooksik. He approached big, dense shrubs and pushed out the car the boy had been looking for with an effort. Chuppoks looked at his friend in surprise.

“Fooksik, this is incredible! How did you know the vehicle was in these bushes?” asked Chuppoks.

“...I did not... uh ...” Fooksik hesitated, "I just knew it was right there in the bushes.”

“Was it you who had pushed it there?” Chuppoks guessed, opening his eyes wide, and being horrified he pressed his paw to his mouth.

“Well, yes! Yes, I pushed it into the bushes quietly when the boy turned away!” Fooksik said firmly.” I just did not want to drag all the found things to the village by myself since it is quite far! And there we had such a beautiful vehicle!” And Fooksik stroked the toy car lovingly, which was so tall that it almost reached his chest. He was

already anticipating how he'd roll into the village by this truck, and how the gamster-girls would admire him, sigh and wag their tails. And in the evening, he could give some beauties a ride to the creek and admire the sunset... He would put on his blue faded pants and look so handsome.

“I will be irresistible,” Fooksik whispered dreamily.

“But you have stolen it!” Chuppoks’s voice broke into his fantasy. “The elders of the tribe can suspend us from searching for the lost things!” his friend gasped.

“Well ... uh ... we just won't tell them about it!” Fooksik sighed feeling guilty.

“He won't tell! What a great plan!” Chuppoks grunted, turned away and headed for the meadow where people had been resting before.

Lowering his head and tail, Fooksik trudged along after him. However, just a few minutes later, having forgotten about the incident, the friends were inspecting the meadow enthusiastically and loading the toy truck with the things they had found. They found three coins of different value, one brooch, a handkerchief, and a candy. All these things were loaded into the truck, they ate the whole candy, and put the wrapper inside the truck.

Then the gamsters pushed the truck onto the forest path and rolled it towards their village.

“Vroom-vroom,” Fooksik said, mimicking the sounds of the running engine. They set the truck on the hill, pushed it down chanting “vroom-vroom”, jumped inside the truck, and rushed down laughing and screeching joyfully. Several times the truck drove into the ditch and bushes, and even turned over once scaring the old crow that was dozing while sitting on a branch. Having survived a road accident without injuries, the friends, giggling joyfully, put the truck back on its wheels and continued on their way to the village. An hour later, they were there.

Chapter 3. The Gamsters' Village

The village where the forest creatures resided was in a small creek, and it was protected from all sides – from uninvited guests by boulders, and from winds – by hills. The settlement consisted of about fifty small dugouts, and only about two hundred gamsters resided there. The narrow passage to the village was guarded by two or three

guards on duty. However it was not required – people could not find the village, and forest animals lived in unity or simply preferred not to contact warrior and loud gamsters.

“Vroom-vroom...” Chuppoks and Fooksik were exhausted. They were dragging the truck into the village with effort. They had been pushing the toy truck for the last half hour since the road near the village was winding and very bumpy, and that wore them out.

“Do you still want to be a motorist?” Chuppoks asked his friend sarcastically.

“Vroom-vroom...” Fooksik replied stubbornly, pushing the truck with sweaty paws.

“Well, you can take it from here!” Chuppoks patted his friend on the back and collapsed onto the grass.

“Vroom-vroom,” Fooksik groaned, pushing the truck toward the central meadow.

“Keep going, the lord of the roads!” the gamster, lying on the grass, waved at him.

Fooksik continued his way on his shaking paws. Everyone was looking at him with sympathy, but Fooksik was so tired that he didn't even notice it. Finally, having dragged the truck into the center of the meadow with incredible effort, he crawled inside, spread his paws out forming a star, and froze in this position.

“What have you brought?” asked a gamster who was wearing a black top hat and passing by.

“Valuables,” Fooksik mumbled. He was dozing off.

“I see. And where did you get the truck?”

“Why are you asking?” Fooksik replied indifferently. He was so tired that he didn't even understand what he was talking about.

“There you go, I knew it, that your conscience would get you,” said Chuppoks as he was just passing by on his way to his home.

“Yeah!” Fooksik agreed drowsily and immediately fell asleep in his star pose, snoring and sniffing.

When Chuppoks came out of his house in the morning, preparations were under way for the gamsters' meeting in the central meadow.

“Mom, Mom, what will happen at the meeting?” some kiddo, walking to the meadow next to his Mom, was wondering with curiosity.

“Fooksik stole the truck, and they will shame him!” Mom shook her head.

“Wow, why so strict?” Chuppoks scratched his head and headed for the meadow.

It's been an hour since the elders and all non-working residents of the village started discussing Fooksik's bad behavior in the central meadow of the village, which served as a meeting place. In the middle of the meadow there was the cursed toy truck, and the defendant – Fooksik – was sitting in the back of the truck with a sullen look and sadness in his eyes.

“Fooksik, shame on you!” the gamster in a black robe, a long white wig and with a wooden hammer in his paw accented sternly, playing the role of the chairman of the meeting. He knocked on a small stump with the hammer.

“Jumbo volunteered to be Fooksik’s defender! He has known him all his life and assures that Fooksik can reform and be forgiven. But,” the chairman continued, “it must be noted that this is not his first offence and demonstration of thoughtless behavior!”

“Yeah!” someone shouted from the crowd, “it's time to discipline him!”

“Using occupational therapy!” another voice added.

“Throw him in the wood tar and pine needles,” a gamster with black moustache suggested. “And then wash him and send him to the northern forest for two weeks to gather wood!”

“Calm down! Order!” the chairman knocked on the stump. “Thus, I shall continue. Today, Squelcher, the honorable king of gamsters and the supreme elder, shall be the prosecutor!”

Some cheers rang out.

King Squelcher was the head of the gamster’s tribe. Gamsters were thought to make decisions in the tribe collectively, that is, the most vociferous, screaming and loud gamsters always had the last word, but the Glorious Tribe of Gamsters, as they called themselves, remained a forest kingdom: formally, King Squelcher was the leader. Squelcher was so old that his management included feeding pigeons, solemn waving at parades and toasting at celebrations where, after a few glasses of honey pops, he’d fall asleep, resting his head on a gamster's shoulder or clamping down to a warm and fluffy gamster. The old king was not mean and he was fair in his own way, so he was loved in the settlement and kept as an ancient and sweet tradition.

Today, old Squelcher suddenly felt a surge of energy. Apparently, the morning exercises, which he had been doing for a week now, and quitting drinking his morning

coffee have had the effect. Feeling the youthful energy and passion, Squelcher wanted to talk and have a discussion, so when he learned about Fooksik's outrageous behavior, he volunteered to be the prosecutor and promised everyone to show justice and teach some local laws today. There he stood, surrounded by gamsters, and moved around with excitement from time to time while resting on a stick.

“The floor is given to the prosecutor!” the chairman proclaimed, knocking with the hammer.

“I will not let people think that gamsters are thieves!” Squelcher declared solemnly, shaking his stick, which he called the staff.

“Yes! You're right, Squelcher! You're right!” some of the animals agreed.

“We have been serving people for many centuries: we find and return valuables and treasures, we do not steal them!” the King continued. Fooksik, already feeling down and sitting in the back of the truck, felt even sadder hearing these words.

“In summary, my proposal is to suspend Fooksik as a major troublemaker from searching for valuables for a month!”

The crowd buzzed, discussing the King's proposal.

“The floor is given to the defense!” the chairman of the meeting announced and knocked with the hammer.

“Fooksik is certainly guilty,” Jumbo started subtly. Jumbo was a charming little gamster and an old friend of Fooksik's. “And he deserved to be punished, but not so strictly! After all, Fooksik confessed to his misconduct, was remorseful and promises not to do this ever again! Right, Fooksik?” Jumbo asked.

The guilty gamster nodded seriously and continued to nod all the while the gamsters community was loudly and unyieldingly discussing which sentence to pronounce. Someone supported Squelcher, and many sided with Jumbo.

“Stop nodding, your head will fall off soon,” the chairman finally made Fooksik stop. “Well, what sentence has the Glorious Tribe of Gamsters passed?”

“Roll him in wood tar and...” the gamster with moustache proceeded.

“You really have to calm down!” the neighbors heckled him.

A chubby and well-fed little gamster with a chubby face came out of the crowd, moved his cheeks, getting air, and loudly announced:

“The Glorious Tribe of Gamsters has decided to suspend Fooksik from searching for valuables for a week and two days!”

“And roll him in wood tar!” the gamster with moustache added again.

“Would you shup up at last!” the gamsters around him murmured.

“Now, a week and two more days of suspension,” the chairman summed up. “The ruling has been made. The meeting is over! Thank you all, adjourn now,” the little gamster in the black robe knocked with the hammer, put it down and shook his paw tiredly – the hammer was quite heavy.

The residents began to break up, discussing the verdict. Fooksik, feeling ashamed, jumped down to the ground from the back of the truck.

The friends patted Fooksik on the shoulder with sympathy, but oh well – he obviously deserved it. Feeling down, the gamster wandered off keeping his head down and pressing back his ears. A little later, he and Chuppoks handed over the found valuables to the elders and, just like the whole tribe, they were allowed to rest until the next morning. Fooksik went to his house, sighing heavily along the road and recalling how not so long ago he had already been reprimanded for the misconduct, which resulted in King Squelcher being injured and Fooksik nicknamed Schulbert.

Chapter 4. Music and Schulbert

The story with Schulbert was as follows. One day Fooksik and his friends, Jumbo and Chuppoks, were travelling through the woods in search of lost treasures. It was a fine day – probably it was a day off or even a holiday for the humans, so it was very likely that lots of treasures would be found. The friends did not have to wander for a long time. Soon enough they saw, or rather even heard, a large group of campers. The gamsters followed the sound and hid in the bushes on the outskirts of the meadow, where circus performers from the travelling circus were having fun. They were joking, laughing, dancing and roasting something over on the wood-fire. Fascinating and melodious sounds were emerging from an extraordinary device, placed on the trunk of the car, and the folks were jamming out to the music.

The friends made themselves comfortable, they were listening to music and watching people with interest. And there was a lot to look at! A magician was entertaining his colleagues using a large magnet and ignited the flame with a thick magnifying glass, concentrating the sunlight on some surface. The clown was experimenting with chemicals, clapping loudly, making small explosions and blowing colorful smokes. The announcer was reciting poems from the books with vivacity, and the equilibrist was releasing the foam from the fire extinguisher to throw a foam party.

The campers was having fun and enjoying their time, and they didn't start packing up until late at night. The campers were very tired. They were rushing and packing things up in a hurry. Finally, a few crowded cars left the meadow, leaving exhaust gases, and headed towards the town.

When the smoke and dust from the cars dissipated and the noise of their engines faded away, the gamster friends saw that the campers had left behind the turn-table with records and the box with magnets, chemicals, books and the fire extinguisher in the meadow. The gamsters had a brief discussion and made the decision to take the turn-table and all other things to the village, though they were quite heavy. After long and painful preparations, including warm-up, building a stretcher, loading of things that took a long time, and a long and difficult trip, the heavy load was finally delivered to the village (by the way, it was then that Fooksik started considering getting a truck, and we know already how it ended for him). The treasures were proudly placed in the middle of the central meadow. The entire tribe of gasmasters gathered around to look at the marvel of engineering! The last to show up was old limping Squelcher.

Squelcher was wearing an old crown, cut out from a tin can and tightly pulled over the top of his head. Long time ago Squelcher was crowned, and since then he could not remove the crown – it was firmly sitting on his head, like a wedding ring on a swollen finger. At first Squelcher didn't want to take off the crown, and then he simply forgot that he had been wearing it.

Since Squelcher always had his crown on, many gamsters forgot what he looked like without it. The unkind claimed that Squelcher would be buried in the crown, and a new king would have a new one cut out. Others, especially cruel ones, claimed that Squelcher didn't take the crown off even when taking a bath or going to bed. And one

gamster swore that he had seen Squelcher take off the crown once, look in the mirror and.... not recognize himself.

“Eh! Ugh! Heh!” Squelcher cleared his throat, pointing his stick toward the music device. “What kind of apparatus is this? Is this ... uh ... a tractor? Or, hmm ... a light bulb?”

Though King Squelcher was old, he liked to show off with his knowledge in science and technology, and he took every opportunity to demonstrate his knowledge, but oftentimes it was at a bad time and irrelevant.

Fooksik, Jumbo and Chuppoks were fussing around the turn-table.

“Now we will put on an amazing show! It is an exceptional show!” Fooksik announced speaking in a voice of an experienced announcer. Distant crimson clouds appeared behind his back, and a frightened bird shouted anxiously somewhere. Squelcher's heart skipped a beat, but curiosity was stronger than the self-preservation instinct, and the old king decided to stay. Cautiously looking at the equipment and timidly smiling in anticipation of the miracle, the tribe started to applaud slowly.

“Here we go!” Fooksik shouted and hit the button.

The turn-table began to spin the record, at first the hiss and then crackle came from the loudspeaker. The tribe members, stretching their necks and holding their breath, were examining the miracle apparatus. The littlest gamsters climbed small trees growing nearby and were hanging from the branches like exotic fruit.

“I cannot see or hear anything!” deaf Squelcher came closer to the device and raised his paw to his ear trying to listen in.

He probably came too close to the magnet lying next to the turn-table, and the powerful magnetic field suddenly pulled the crown and Squelcher's head as well, at the same time when upbeat music emerged from the loudspeakers.

It looked rather strange: there had just been Squelcher – and then there was no Squelcher, to be more specific – no head, which was irresistibly drawn to the magnet with the crown somewhere down and to the side. Unable to cope with the mighty power, under the bewildered glances of the subjects, Squelcher was desperately fighting back, trying to straighten himself up. Rolling his eyes in panic and sweating, the old King was trying to free himself from the magnet. But the force was strong, and the tribe was mesmerized and everyone was watching Squelcher jerk his paws in order to free himself. The music went

on loudly, and it seemed from the sidelines as if Squelcher was dancing, waving his stick, moving his body every now and then, tapping his tail, and shoveling up the dirt with his paws to the beat.

“Apparently, the old man decided to dance the heel-and-toe dance!” commented someone, and applauded.

“Spin, old man! Kings are always young!” the young gamsters shouted to Squelcher, feeling proud of their elder's agility. At some point Squelcher's muscles failed, and the old King was drawn to the magnet with force.

Some of the animals began to realize that something was wrong with Squelcher, and the boldest gamsters rushed to the King. They used a rope to free the elder from the magnet to the sounds of a merry love song.

Jumbo and Chuppoks jumped on the turn-table to stop it, but they got caught up and started spinning on top of the record. In order to avoid crashing into the pickup lever, Jumbo and Chuppoks began jumping over it, like racehorses jumping over the barrier. Finally, Chuppoks managed to shut the device down and the record, releasing the last chords, froze.

Squelcher groaned and stood up, he stuck his tongue out in exhaustion, and pointed his finger at Fooksik.

“You ... hey-ah-ah ... what's your name ... ah-ah-ah ... Schulbert!” Squelcher could not catch his breath and feeling irritated called Fooksik a word, similar to the last name of the famous composer. “No more shows, Schulbert!” Squelcher finally gasped, shook his stick and feeling tired took off to his house.

The tribe felt sorry for Squelcher and watched him disappear. From then on, the gamsters would always remember the wild dance, performed by the elder, and the funny nickname “Schulbert” stuck to Fooksik forever.

Chapter 5. Rescuing Hamsty

Thus, Fooksik's week of being removed from the treasure search began. The gamster was very sad and bored. In order to cheer his friend up Chuppoks and Jumbo often visited

him. One day (on the first day of suspension) during such meetings, the friends started a conversation about Hamsty, Sofia's pet hamster.

“He was very friendly,” Chuppoks said, “but a little weird. He also invited me to visit him and said he was longing for his true home. I wonder what he meant by that.”

“The woods of course!” Fooksik declared categorically. “He is a beast, isn’t he?”

“A beast,” Chuppoks and Jumbo nodded consistently.

“Where do the beasts live?” Fooksik continued his line of reasoning.

“What do you mean?” the friends asked.

“In the woods!”

“Right you are, Fooksik!” agreed the other gamsters. “You are so smart as always!”

“And you’re saying that they’re keeping him in a cage?” Fooksik asked being pleased with Chuppoks’s praise.

“That's right. And they are forcing him to run in a circle in a wheel. It’s humiliating!”

“So, he is a hostage and he is being abused! We need to free the hamster! He deserved being free!” Fooksik said with excitement.

“Freedom!” his friends supported him with loud cries and started getting ready to go on a liberation campaign. Having gathered the necessary equipment, the friends returned to the meadow, where their meeting with Hamsty took place the day before. They stood by the river for a moment, on the spot where the cage had been standing before. Sniffing with his sensitive nose, Chuppoks caught the subtle scent of the hamster still present in the air and, following it, they ran toward the city. Several times the trail was lost, but Chuppoks always found it again, and by the time the first stars lit up in the sky, the friends had reached the city. Many new and unfamiliar scents appeared in the air, but Hamsty’s trail was more distinct.

“Follow me!” Chuppoks was leading his friends confidently. They put on black shorts and put gutalin strips on their snouts to blend in with the darkness of the night. They were moving in the darkness comfortably and silently, hiding in the drainage ditches and choosing deserted lanes. Finally the gamsters reached a lovely two-storey house.

“Here!” Chuppoks pointed to the open window on the second floor with his paw.

“Freedom!” Jumbo began to yell, but Fooksik shut him up in time.

“What is wrong with you?! We are in ambush, and this is a secret liberation mission!”

“Oh, I'm sorry,” Jumbo replied confusedly.

The secretive trio approached the two-story building.

The gamsters unwound the ropes with hooks tied to them, and hooked on the windowsill of the second floor. Skillfully and quickly they climbed the ropes and climbed through the window. Once inside, the friends saw a large cage in the bright moonlight where, among other things, there was a bed where the hamster was sleeping soundly. There was another cage with a parrot inside on the other side of the room, and a large fish tank with fish was standing by the wall. The parrot stared at the guests in amazement. Jumbo put his finger to his mouth.

“Quiet, bird! Fear not, we will free you too!”

The two gamsters descended on the rope from the window sill to the floor, Fooksik and Chuppoks opened Hamsty's cage and quietly put the hamster on the blanket they had brought with them. As the friends started lifting him on the ropes to the open window, someone turned on the light outside the door and they could hear footsteps.

The friends began to hurry. Quickly climbing the rope, Jumbo picked up the load on the window sill and quite roughly dropped the bundle with the hamster next to him.

“White cheese,” Hamsty murmured in his dream, yawned sweetly, and turned over to the other side.

Fooksik and Chuppoks had already climbed onto the windowsill, and the steps behind the door were louder.

“We will come back for you, bird! You too, captivated fish!” Jumbo encouraged ‘the prisoners’ and, collecting his paw in a fist, yelled out “Freedom!”

With these words, the gamsters threw Hamsty bound with the ropes out of the window and jumped down following him.

“Freedom,” Rosy the parrot said, nodding in doubt. The fish in the tank did not have anything to say and kept silent.

The falling bundle with the hamster inside it stopped literally within an inch of the ground, hanging on the ropes and swinging. The gamsters descended quickly, put away the ropes and started pulling the blanket. They did not want to wake Hamsty up too early and

planned to bring him to senses once in the forest, thus, surprising the animal – he fell asleep in captivity and would wake up in his true home.

In the moonlight they reached the forest edge. After waking the hamster up, the friends got ready to inform him about the long-awaited freedom.

“Wake up, friend!” Fooksik tapped the hamster on his shoulder.

“You're free!” Chuppoks said, feeling proud of himself and his actions.

“Freedom!” Jumbo cried out and jumped up with joy.

“Huh?” the hamster asked sleepily, wiping his eyes with his paws, “What?”

Hamsty stretched, yawned, saw the gamsters, looked around, and stared in astonishment.

“Where am I?! Who are you?! Where is my cage?!” the hamster yelled.

“Don't worry, we got you out of trouble!” Fooksik began to reassure him.

“You're safe now!” Chuppoks said.

“Run, buddy! You are free like the wind in the field!” Jumbo said in triumph, pointing his paw to the darkness of the forest. In the distance, a wailing howl of a wolf was heard.

“Run?!” Hamsty asked. “Run where, why run?!”

“They will take me into the woods and eat me,” Hamsty thought. “Goodbye, Rosy! But, I will not give up without a fight. You will not take me with bare paws!” the hamster thought heroically.

“Run to the woods, to your true home!” Chuppoks repeated graciously. “You said it yourself that you were longing for your home. Remember the meadow by the river? I'm Chuppoks, the gamster, do you remember now?”

“Oh, oh, oh,” Hamsty moaned, burying his face in his paws, “my true home is in the apartment! That's what I ached for back then!”

“And we thought you were a prisoner!” Fooksik was surprised. “We decided that you would be safe in the forest.”

“Safe?! At night in the middle of the forest?! Hey, some predators will eat me up in no time! Leaving nothing at all, not even a strap from my shorts!!!” The hamster squealed desperately.

Hamsty started what people often call hysterics or panic attacks. The gamsters began to calm him down in any possible way, and, believe it or not, it took a lot of effort.

At last the friends managed to calm Hamsty down, and he told them the story of his life.

When he was little Hamsty was tamed by people, and all his life he'd been living in a cage. Sophie, the girl who was taking care of Hamsty, was kind and often spoiled him with different goodies. There was also parrot Rosy sharing the room with Hamsty, whom he loved very much, and silent fish in the fish tank also lived there. Hamsty was very happy and did not want to change his life or become a wild and harsh forest beast.

“Friends, I really appreciate your concern for me, but please take me back home! My masters are still asleep, and if I get to the cage by morning, no one will notice my absence!” Hamsty asked his newly acquired friends.

Sighing heavily, his friends swarmed with Hamsty back into town and were back in place by midnight.

Metal hooks clinked on the window sill one more time, Fooksik and Chuppoks climbed to the second floor again, and Jumbo stayed on the ground to tie the rope around the hamster's thick waist, so that the gamsters could lift him up to the top. As a result of a super comfortable life with no exercise whatsoever, the hamster was unable to climb up by himself. Hamsty was dragged to the top, and his friends took him to the cage.

Parrot Rosy greeted them with a calm look – nothing could surprise her that night anymore.

“We are so sorry, Hamsty! Accept our apologies, bird!” Chuppoks said sadly, feeling upset because of the failed rescue.

“Well, Hamsty, we were too quick to jump to conclusions. We thought you were miserable here!” Fooksik agreed grimly.

“We thought you were in captivity and wanted to give you freedom!” Jumbo added.

“Friends! Take a look at my living conditions! How could one not be happy about all of this?” Hamsty exclaimed and lit a small lamp in the cage.

Fooksik, Jumbo and Chuppoks were all stunned seeing the unprecedented luxury - Hamsty had the most comfortable home one could only dream of.

Besides the carpeted floor, inside the cage there was a small couch, an armchair, a dresser, a mirror, a sink, a treadmill, and even flowers in small pots. There were pictures with landscapes on the walls, and the whole cage resembled a small cozy apartment. Fooksik, Jumbo and Chuppoks gasped in delight – there was no way Hamsty would want to change such a life into life in a wild forest.

“I have everything in my life!” Hamsty said. He kept silent for a moment and sighed, “Except for my first love, Busia.”

Hamsty sighed one more time and showed his friends a photo of a pretty hamster in a skirt with homemade wings behind her back.

“One day Busia saw an airplane with the sign ‘Airbus’ and decided that she was also AirBusia, she made herself wings, and we have not seen her since then...”, Hamsty finished sadly and pointed to a large poster on the wall with a beautiful white airplane and a bright red sign ‘Airbus’.

They sat on the couch for a while, taking a break, but it was time to go back to the forest. The gamsters said goodbye and were about to jump out of the window again, as Hamsty stopped them.

“I am forever grateful to you for worrying about me, and I do not want you to be sad. My forest friends! I have decided to put on a farewell circus show for you!” said Hamsty.

“A show?” Fooksik asked cautiously.

“Yeah, the show!” the hamster nodded happily, shaking his cheeks.

“The last show we saw ended ... quite ambiguously!” Jumbo doubted.

“Oh, don't worry, everything will be just fine!” Hamsty assured them.

Hamsty pulled out a sharp-pointed cap and a cape with stars from the dresser, put them on and then turned on a small gramophone. And there was the sound of music.

“Oop!” Hamsty exclaimed loudly, like the best circus tamer.

With these words, Rosy put her paw out of the cage, opened the lock on the door, flew out and sat on a pole near the hamster.

“Oop!” Hamsty ordered once again. And the parrot flew to another pole.

“Oop!” and Rosy made a somersault.

The hamster shouted ‘Oop’ again and the fish jumped out of the tank, turning over in the air and plunging back into the water.

It was so cool that Fooksik, Jumbo and Chuppoks started laughing and cheering loudly, forgetting about their failed attempt to rescue the hamster.

The friends laughed the most when Hamsty showed them the trick when he was putting a small ball in his pocket, and removing this ball from his mouth after a light slap upside the head. Hamsty had been showing different tricks for quite a while, entertaining the gamsters, and when it was time to say goodbye, the forest dwellers did not want to leave—they liked it so much. However, there was nothing they could do, and it was time to go home. Hamsty hugged his new friends and wished them all the best. Fooksik, Jumbo and Chuppoks invited the hamster once more to visit them and drew a map of the path to their village. After saying goodbye and finding themselves on the edge of the forest again, the gamsters agreed that the failed rescue attempt was worth the circus show. Long after this adventure the gamsters would entertain their friends from the tribe with various circus tricks they had seen at Hamsty's. Once during the trick, Chuppoks swallowed the ball, and everyone was terribly scared. After that the gamsters learned their lessons and they do their best now to not put any foreign objects in their mouths unless absolutely necessary.

Chapter 6. Gamsters' Treasures

It was a difficult, long, but successful day for the gamsters-explorers. Chuppoks, Fooksik and Jumbo got up at dawn and were wandering through the forest, collecting people's lost treasures, until the sky turned orange and the sun looking like a giant ball slowly began to descend behind the tall trees in the west.

Chuppoks's, Fooksik's and Jumbo's backpacks were filled up to the brim with stuff they had found.

“To the village?” Jumbo asked, wiping his damp hair on the head with a sweaty paw.

“Yep,” Chuppoks answered, “to dry the shorts.”

The trio of friends turned towards the village and marched in the direction of the right path, leaving their paw prints in the thick grass. They arrived in a quarter of an hour. Passing the guards at the entrance to the village and walking down the central street, the friends reached Squelcher's house. The chief was sitting on the porch wrapped in a throw,

with a thermometer under his armpit, and drinking something steaming from the cup. The elder didn't look good.

“To whom should I hand over the treasures, chief?” Chuppoks asked, walking up to the porch and dropping the bag from his shoulder.

“Oh, please handle it yourselves today, guys. Carry all the treasures to the pawnshop, I am not feel good today,” Squelcher replied in a hoarse voice. “The elderly treasurers will be expecting you, they have been working since morning”.

The gamsters called the storage with gamsters' findings a strange word “a pawnshop”. The gamsters knew that people in cities often take their valuables to a pawnshop, and thought that it was the most secure storage. It is to imitate humans that the forest animals gave such a name to a large cave under the ground. Everyone knew the local treasurers in the storage by their nicknames – Funny Money and Jewel Crewel, because they liked to repeat these words in season and out of season. They were as old and wise as Squelcher, and very responsible regarding their work, as we will see soon.

The gamsters left Squelcher' porch, wishing him speedy recovery, and went to the cave where the gamsters kept their Treasury. The entrance to the cave was in a high hill protecting the gamster's village from the north winds. The friends greeted the gamsters-guards at the entrance and started walking down a long, winding corridor going underground. The corridor led into a tall and wide hall.

In the hall, there was a table by the wall, all covered with thick books, behind which two elderly gamsters were sitting. One was short and chubby, and the other was tall and lean, with beautiful sideburns. Both gamsters were wearing glasses.

“Greetings, elders!” the gamsters greeted.

“Hello, young getters, have you brought funny-money, rings-fings, and earrings-shmearings?” the tall Funny Money greeted them in a friendly manner.

“Hello,” the chubby Jewel Crewel nodded without looking away from the books, “What have you brought?”

“A lot of things,” Fooksik replied happily, and the friends began to pour the treasures out to the floor of the cave.

“Well, let’s have a look, count, estimate, and organize on the shelves,” Jewel Crewel picked up the magnifying glass from the table and started examining the valuables very carefully.

“One cardboard box, one torn silver necklace, one crumpled *Railway Reporter*, one metal brooch, one chocolate bar in a wrap with two bites taken out of it from different sides!” Jewel Crewel listed the found valuables.

“Two bites taken out, how come?!” Jumbo and Chuppoks cried out.

“Well, just like that! Bites taken out, and, judging by the print of teeth, one tooth is damaged!” Jewel Crewel said calmly.

Jumbo and Chuppoks looked at Fooksik, because he had a damaged tooth, to be more precise, a chipped tooth.

“Well, it’s just that the chocolate bar is with nuts and raisins, it’s so good...” Fooksik began to whine.

Jumbo and Chuppoks were approaching Fooksik with the intention of giving him a thick ear, but Fooksik noticed a small secret door and started backing up towards it, trying to get away from punishment. The door was old, abandoned and looked mysterious.

The elders noticed this Fooksik’s movement too late.

“Stop right there!” Jewel Crewel cried out.

And Funny Money just froze, having dropped the magnifying glass.

“What did you say?” Fooksik turned to the sound, and at that moment Jumbo and Chuppoks, who had caught up with their friend, stumbled, fell down on Fooksik, and the trio fell into the passage. The door slammed shut behind them, and they found themselves in complete darkness.

“There's an abandoned maze!” Funny Money went on shouting, but it was already pointless, as the door cut off the friends from the outside world.

In the darkness, the gamsters made several steps forward, then backward, but they could not find the door, even after examining the walls of the dungeon thoroughly.

“What are we going to do?” Chuppoks asked quietly. He was clearly scared.

“There is something glowing, let’s walk towards the light. And we'll find out then”, Fooksik replied.

The friends started walking through the maze in the dark, bumping into a web that was hanging everywhere in abundance. Spitting it out and waving away of the web, the gamsters were screaming and moaning every now and then.

“And imagine,” Jumbo said thoughtfully, “what if there are huge spiders, snakes and bats here. Poisonous...”

“Bats cannot be poisonous,” Fooksik said.

“It will jump on your head and then we'll find out”, Jumbo replied ominously.

“Noooooo!” the gamsters shouted together and rushed through the maze.

They were rushing like a hurricane, diving into endless turns and moving away farther from the door. Finally the gamsters reached the dead end, and stopped to take a breath.

“There was a monster, I'm telling you!” Jumbo hissed, breathing heavily.

“Yes, I saw it too!” Chuppoks agreed.

“There is nothing there!”

“Oh, well,” Chuppoks shrugged. “Let's get out of here. By the way, where are we?”

“I think it's an old system of mazes running under our village,” Jumbo replied. “There must be several exits. Soon we will find one...”

“I am thirsty,” Chuppoks complained, “I want some lemonade”.

“And I am hungry!” Jumbo added.

The friends started running again as fast as they could. There were tons of turns and corridors. And when it seemed to Fooksik that he'd been running all day, he suddenly slammed into Jumbo's back, and Chuppoks came up behind him. The gamsters fell down.

“Why have you stopped?” Fooksik asked Jumbo who was under him.

But then he lifted his head and saw a sunbeam break out of the gap in the ceiling.

“Lift me up, I'll widen the passage”, Jumbo suggested. The gamsters got up, Jumbo climbed up on Chuppoks's shoulders and began to wiggle his paws into the cracks. A clump of land flew down, and then a closed chest fell with a crashing sound, opening the passage to the gamsters.

“Look, treasure chest,” Chuppoks was somewhat surprised.

“Where did it come from?” Fooksik thought. “Our ancestors cleaned out the entire area two centuries ago.”

“It doesn't matter, we'll take it with us,” Jumbo said. “Chuppoks, throw me up.”

Chuppoks threw the little gamster up, and Jumbo flew into that newly formed tunnel. He clutched at a ledge with clingy claws, pulled himself up, and climbed into the passage that opened before him. So, there he was, in Chief Squelcher's kitchen. Squelcher's grandson was sitting on the floor and playing with pine cones next to the fireplace from which Jumbo had just got out somehow all dirty.

“Hey, kid, where's your grandfather?” Jumbo asked.

“Well, everyone is gone. They are looking for some gamsters lost in the maze. There is noone in the village at all.”

“Has anyone else got lost in the maze?” Jumbo was surprised. “Poor things. Kid, give me the rope, please.”

Squelcher's grandson brought the rope, and Jumbo lowered it into the passage. First, the provident gamsters pulled up the chest to the surface, and then they climbed out themselves.

They were standing in the middle of the kitchen, sneezing and shaking off dirt as the front door slammed and Squelcher came into the room a moment later. His nose was red, and a compress was barely holding on his head.

“Oh!” the chief was surprised. “And we are still looking for you all over the dungeon!”

“You know what, we've managed to save ourselves,” the gamsters answered confusedly.

“Grandpa, we have found the treasure!” grandson boasted.

“Oh, it's a chest with my first treasures. I lost it somewhere twenty-five years ago, and now you have found it here.”

Squelcher gently stroked the chest, lifted up the lid, and sat down on the floor together with his grandson to look at the old treasures. Fooksik, Chuppoks and Jumbo wiped the sweat from their foreheads, drank water and went to look for all the other residents of the village to tell them that they had been found and that they did not have to look for them anymore.

“Hey, guys!” Squelcher called the gamsters out. “When will you finally start listening to the elders? Didn't you have enough last week?”

The gamsters sighed in unison and dragged themselves towards the exit – they remembered quite well how the story had ended when they had not listened to the elders.

Chapter 7. When Fooksik, Chuppoks and Jumbo Disobeyed the Elders

One day Fooksik, Chuppoks and Jumbo met in the main square of the village. Chuppoks was crunching an apple with enthusiasm, Jumbo was biting a grass-blade thoughtfully, and Fooksik was just standing with his paws in the pockets of his shorts and wondering where to get a lollipop.

Suddenly, Fooksik was struck up by a very interesting thought.

“Friends! I don’t understand why we should deliver the treasures to our ‘pawnshop’ treasury instead of taking them directly to people so that they could see who brought them?”

Chuppoks stopped crunching for a moment, and Jumbo said, “Because the elders ordered so, and so it shall be done!”

“But then we would receive a lot of treats from people, and also they would praise us!” Fooksik would not stop.

“Let’s go to King Squelcher, he will clarify everything!” Chuppoks finished his apple finally.

“Come on, he will lecture us, you know, till the evening!” Fooksik began to whine.

“Indeed, why don’t we go the King?! He will definitely tell us!” Jumbo supported his friend.

The friends started walking towards King Squelcher’s house, ignoring Fooksik’s grunting and whining.

The gamsters stopped in front of King Squelcher's house and straightened themselves up, because the King did not like messy gamsters and could hit them gently with a staff for wearing untidy clothes or messy hairstyle.

Chuppoks knocked on the door with the knocker and then, a minute later one could hear scuffling and cough in the house. The door swung open and King Squelcher appeared on the threshold. He was wearing an old shabby mantle, short shorts, a tin ruffled crown on his head, and Squelcher was holding a staff (a curved long stick) in his paws.

“What brings you here?” the King smiled affectionately at the little gamsters. “Is it possible that your Moms sent me a piece of sweet cheese or a jar of strawberry jam?”

“No, Your Majesty!” Chuppoks stepped forward. “We need your advice!”

“Well then, advice it is!” the King immediately got bored and coughed, shaking his head poky, making his crown ring. “Just please keep it short, and I'd rather sit near the fireplace!”

“Tell us, King! Can we take the found treasures to people out in the open in order to get treats from them and become their friends?” Jumbo blurted it out in one breath, as if he had prepared his speech in advance.

King Squelcher shook his head, sighed and replied, “We have been carrying treasures to people for many, many years. We do not let people see us and do not boast that it was us who had found the treasures. We do not expect being praised, gifts or gratitude, because then our devotion to people will be self-serving. In addition, if they praise you, it will only do harm, because then every little gamster will begin to think that he is the best, and it always ends badly!” King Squelcher looked expressively at the gamsters, waved his paw and slammed the door shut.

Fooksik, Chuppoks and Jumbo looked at each other.

“But, King!..” Chuppoks tried to object, but the door was closed and there was no answer.

Fooksik stuck his tongue out and turned to his friends:

“I have an idea. Let's see if the King's words were true, maybe it's worth changing the old rules? If the King is wrong, then the whole tribe will thank us and praise us!

“Haven't you heard that expecting and especially begging for praise from adults is only going to do harm!” Jumbo frowned.

“Well, it is a complete nonsense!” Fooksik grimaced. “Follow me. I can see that you just got scared!”

The gamsters shrugged, looked at each other, and ran to catch up with Fooksik.

“Here's the deal!” Fooksik looked like a conspirator and turned to Chuppoks. “We will tell your parents that we are going to Jumbo's to play tag, okay?”

Turning to Jumbo, Fooksik continued:

“And to your parents – that we are hanging at Chuppoks’s! Parents will think that we are under the supervision of adults, and we will check the old rules in the meantime!”

The gamsters fled in different directions and soon gathered in the same place.

Fooksik was holding a fiddlestick in his paws, a drum with sticks, an old brooch, as well as a crooked stick and a black scarf – a bandana. Chuppoks looked at all these things and asked:

“Hey, what are you going to do with all this stuff?”

Fooksik explained condescendingly:

“We will carry this brooch to the forester and his wife – I found it near the lodge! You, Chuppoks, will be playing your fiddlestick, and you, Jumbo, will be playing the drum, so it will be more fun! And I will carry this stick with the black bandana as a banner! I think that people will be delighted!”

Jumbo looked doubtfully at the black bandana with a skull and bones embroidered in white, and asked,

“Are you sure this is a beautiful banner?”

Fooksik looked at his friend scornfully and answered:

“Of course I’m sure! I have seen many times in different pictures how people carry such banners! Let’s go to the lodge!”

A minute later, Fooksik, Chuppoks and Jumbo were already walking through the thicket along the path. Chuppoks was playing the fiddlestick producing high-pitched sounds, Jumbo was drumming, and Fooksik was carrying a black banner and an old brooch. A crow sitting on a Christmas tree with a piece of cheese in its beak, having seen the gamsters, first dropped the cheese, and then almost fell off the branch in surprise.

It was right at that moment, when the friends appeared close to the lodge, the mistress came out onto the porch to hang up the laundry. Hearing the high-pitched sounds produced by the fiddlestick and the deafening drum roll, the forester's wife gasped in surprise and dropped the wash basin with laundry.

After looking closely at the strange company, the woman saw the black banner with the skull and bones, and ran to the lodge screaming. A second later, a huge bearded forester with a gun rushed out onto the porch and roared like an elk. Pointing his gun, the forester shot and hit the black banner. The shaft broke, and the fabric fell on Fooksik's

head. The gamsters got scared and started rushing away, but Fooksik, entangled in the fabric, fell into the dust, and Chuppoks and Jumbo fell on top of him. The forester yelled wildly again, fired another shot but got the old spruce causing the needles and cones to fall on the gamsters. Squealing and screaming, the gamsters jumped to their feet and, outracing each other, rushed home.

Closer to the village the gamsters slowed down and started to walk, and only then did they begin to discuss what had happened. While still catching his breath, Fooksik poked Chuppoks with his paw and exhaled,

“It's all your fault, Chuppoks! You were playing the fiddlestick making this crazy high-pitched noise!!! That is why people treated us so badly!”

“MY FAULT?! What do I have to do with it?!” Chuppoks yelled. “It was a bad idea from the very beginning!”

“Really? Well, then it is Jumbo's fault! He was playing the drum too loudly, he should have played it quietly and gently!” Fooksik continued without losing courage.

“What?! Shame on you!” Jumbo was indignant.

Arguing and blaming each other the gamsters almost reached the village, when suddenly the croaking of an old crow was heard from above.

“Stop arguing! You shall be reconciled now!” grinning, she pointed towards the village. “You have to listen to what the elders are saying! Look at them, your firing was heard all over the forest. There's no hiding from you, little stinkers. Why not get busy instead of scaring all the animals and birds. Just you wait, your parents will give it to you...”

The crow continued to grumble and complain, but the gamsters stopped listening to it at this point. Fooksik, Chuppoks and Jumbo were looking in the direction of the village, where the whole tribe of gamsters was expecting the naughty friends in complete silence. Their parents came out to meet Fooksik, Chuppoks and Jumbo. King Squelcher sighed and smiled sadly, shaking his head.

Chapter 8. Meet the Cubbricks

One fine summer day, when Fooksik's latest punishment was over, he together with Jumbo and Chuppoks, set out on a search for treasures. The friends left the village at the crack of dawn. They were walking along a path and humming a search song, which the gamsters often sang while looking for treasures. As soon as they stepped off the trail and plunged into the forest, the friends suddenly stopped, facing three animals toe-to-toe. They were very similar to gamsters and they were dragging a cart full of grass.

Judging by the clothes and pigtails, the three animals were girls, and their only difference from the gamsters was darker fur and fluffier tails.

Although the gamsters were cute creatures at first sight, they were still forest animals. Therefore, whenever they met strangers near their village, their animal instinct for protecting their boundaries took over. After a few seconds of silence Fooksik decided to take the lead and stepped forward a little.

"Who are you?" He asked frowning, looking back at his friends and seeking their support. Jumbo and Chuppoks were alert, too, they frowned and made serious faces.

"We are the cubbricks! We belong to the Glorious Tribe of Cubbricks, Lords of the Fields, Rivers and Mountains!" the tallest of the cubbricks said with confidence. "My name is Kvasulya, she is Cookwimba, and that one is Mabasiya. And who are you?"

"We are the gamsters! The Great Seekers of Lost Treasures and the Returners of Jewels, the Mighty Tribe of Gamsters! Where are you going? And what are you carrying on a cart?" Jumbo gave voice, peeking over Fooksik's shoulder.

"And why should we answer you?" Mabasiya remarked reasonably.

"You were going somewhere, weren't you? So just keep going!" added Cookwimba threateningly.

"This is our land, and we must know who walks here and why!" Chuppoks stated.

"And do you have any document confirming that this is your land?" Kvasulya asked viciously and giggled. The tricky question took the gamsters by surprise.

The rest of the cubbricks burst out laughing at Kvasulya's joke, which made the gamsters mad.

Fooksik approached Kvasulya and tried to get her out of the way. Kvasulya only swayed while continuing to stand firmly and resolutely on the path, not giving way to Fooksik.

“Hey, buddy, you'd better keep your paws to yourself!” Kvasulya warned, arching her eyebrow and grinning revealing sharp teeth.

Things on the forest path were heating up more and more.

Kvasulya felt quite confident, believing that she knew all about hand-to-hand fight since she had read something in a book that she had found one day in the meadow. It was a ‘Self-Defense without Weapon’ guide and Kvasulya remembered the pictures of people wearing kimonos well. Self-confident Kvasulya was smiling in anticipation of the fight, and Mabasya and Cookwimba yawned dramatically, covering their mouths with their paws to show them that they had seen even more spectacular battles.

Fooksik pushed Kvasulya away even more firmly and was immediately punched in his nose. His eyes filled with tears, and he immediately bit the paw that had hit him. Kvasulya began to squeak and lunged at Fooksik with bulging eyes, biting and scratching him. All years of intense training, exceptional techniques and technical preparations went down the drain, and the forest residents started a typical animal fight with screaming, squeaking, torn fur and scratched skin.

Fooksik, Jumbo, and Chuppoks returned to their village in about an hour — they were depressed, their clothes were torn, and they had multiple bruises and scratches.

The tribe of gamsters was already accustomed to frequent incidents involving our unlucky heroes, but after hearing their inconsistent story, everyone was feeling sympathetic for the victims and startled. No wonder, mysterious animals, resembling gamsters and looking like two of a kind, were roaming around their settlement and behaving quite rudely! The tribe turned to the elders for advice. The wise heads of the village were confused, they did not know anything about any cubbricks, only old Squelcher grunted significantly, shook his legs, recalling the dance invented in a magnetic field, and leaning on a cane said,

“I know who they are.”

The intrigued tribe gathered near the old man in a circle holding their breath and pricking up their ears.

“Once upon a time, in the age of my granddad’s granddad, the tribe of gamsters and cubbricks was one. There were no gamsters or cubbricks...”

“And who was there? Making themselves comfortable, the tribe was settling around their beloved king.

“There were Earfluffies, Squelcher said sadly. There were sweet and kind Earfluffies”.

“Earfluffies?” An astonished sigh rustled through the rows of gamsters.

“FloppyEars and Fluffies”, whispered gamsters to each other.

“Well, yeah”, Squelcher nodded. “This glorious tribe used to find and return treasures to people since the times bygone. It was their goal, aim and purpose”.

“No one now remembers why Earfluffies had to return valuables to people but everyone understood that it was the right thing to do. It just had to be done that way!”. Squelcher’s voice was breaking from excitement. “Those Earfluffies were the conscience and hope of the forest. In freezing cold or the times of hunger that friendly tribe was able to host, make comfortable and feed any beast...”

“Even an elephant?” someone asked in a thin voice in complete silence.

“Quiet! What elephant?? This is not Africa! First think, then speak!” Indignation could be heard among the rows of gamsters.

“Please, Your Majesty, will you continue”, Jumbo begged.

“So once came a bitter hour for Earfluffies”, continued Squelcher with a sigh. “It was a terrible year: with no rain but with frequent hurricanes, tsunami and storms”.

Hearing a heap of unknown words the tribe was taken aback, but no one dared to interrupt the king. The king could easily get up and leave, and then no stories would be told.

“That year no food was left in the forest, not a single grass blade, not a mushroom, not a berry. Tilting from side to side the king continued chanting. “Everyone was starving: wolves and boars, elks and hares...”

“And elephants, too?” Someone replied again in the same thin voice.

Squelcher frowned, gave the tribe a stern look and went silent.

“Will somebody make him stop? Look at him! Elephants! What a smartie!” The people around started to complain.

“That year Earfluffies were hungry as well. All the stores were empty: not a single grain in a grain store, not a single valuable in a pawnshop”, continued the king calmly. “The Earfluffies were doomed to starve”.

Having heard the last words, the tribe literally froze and held their breath. Even the woodpecker in the tree stopped knocking and stared blankly.

“It was then that some Cube Brick stepped in and declared that Earfluffies were not going to starve. So he was going to leave the tribe and wouldn’t return treasures to people anymore. And everyone was welcome to join him!” King Squelcher sighed and looked somewhere far above the gamsters’ heads.

All the gamsters followed the king’ sight but not seeing anything there they altogether turned back to the storyteller.

“About a third of the tribe followed Cube Brick, while others stayed with the old gamsters’ king, my great-great-great grandfather”, continued Squelcher. “Since then, those who left with Cube Brick, have been called Cubbricks. Those who stayed with Gamster were named Gamsters. And that’s when the beasts were no longer friends, and the tribe divided into two parts. Those named cubbricks went away, somewhere very far, and nobody has heard from them ever since. Since then no one has seen them: neither foxes, nor eagles, nor raccoons”.

“Nor elephants?” Someone interrupted the king in the same thin voice.

“Who’s that Mr. Know-All? Would you please stop already?!” The indignation of the tribe was at its peak.

King Squelcher was looking at the gamsters and searching for the elephant-lover to throw his stick at him. However, not finding him, he calmed down.

“And now it looks like cubbricks have appeared and judging by Fooksik’s bruises they have remained aggressive, just like on the day of our division”, finished his speech Squelcher.

Having heard Squelcher, the gamsters stared making noise, discussing the news. Many of them, especially those aggressively disposed, offered to go in search of the offenders and take immediate revenge. However Squelcher, suddenly raising his voice and banging the ground with the stick, showed why he had once been elected the leader.

“I suggest that we do not jump to conclusions. Young beasties often fight to set foot and gain reputation, and I think it is unnecessary to remind about Fooksik’s ability to create all the fuss, confusion and fires out of nothing. Next time, I believe, it is better for everyone to behave more friendly and try to get across to our relatives. I do still wonder where they have been all these years, and why they have returned

Chapter 9. Hamsty and Rosy Visit the Village of Gamsters

A few weeks after the incident with the cubbricks, another interesting story happened to the gamsters.

That morning, once the sun threw some light on the village, Fooksik woke up and began to dress. He made the bed and jumped out of the house. Knocking on the window, Fooksik called his friends Jumbo and Chuppoks to join him for a workout. Jumbo and Chuppoks were brothers, and Fooksik once also had a brother and a sister – Peach and Peachy – but many years ago they disobeyed their mother, went into the forest all by themselves to gather mushrooms and disappeared. Adults searched and searched for them, but never found them.

“Waaaake-up! Line up for the workout!” Fooksik commanded. He was met by crumpled socks and screams flying through the window, “Leave us alone!” and “Let us sleep!”

But Fooksik was persistent and, having escaped a couple of objects flying at him, he was able to wake his friends up and have them come outside. Fooksik picked up his favorite dumbbells and began to lift up his paws and do lunges. At that time Jumbo and Chuppoks preferred to warm up without additional weights. Fooksik was very fond of his dumbbells, and Jumbo avoided them and was scared of Fooksik’s dumbbells. One winter, the dumbbells were covered with beautiful hoarfrost, and Jumbo decided to try this candy-like tasty treat. However, the frost turned out to be rather mediocre in taste, and Jumbo's tongue instantly stuck to the metal. So, to save the poor little thing, the friends first had to pull him by the head, and then pour boiling water from the kettle onto the dumbbell and the frozen tongue. This resulted in Jumbo being unable to speak for a week and walking

with his puffy tongue out, and the other gamsters remembered this story and sometimes even made fun of him. However, if you think about it, it was not that funny.

The moment the friends started working out, some kind of fuzz was on at the entrance to the village of gamsters. Jumbo and Chuppoks stopped exercising and ran there, and Fooksik followed them still hoping to bring the brothers back to training. As they came closer, the friends saw that the crowd had surrounded two old friends – Hamsty and Rosy!

The animals were in tattered clothes and looked tired, and Hamsty even lost weight.

“Hamsty! Rosy! What’s happened? How did you get here?” Fooksik asked in surprise.

“Water ...” Hamsty moaned and his request was immediately satisfied.

“...and food...” the hamster groaned after drinking. A gamster from the crowd gave him an apple, someone else – a cracker. All that instantly disappeared in Hamsty's mouth.

“Cheese...” the hamster groaned again.

“Tell us what’s happened!” Chuppoks interrupted.

“Oh, this is horrifying!” the hamster whimpered, fell on the grass and began to massage the heart with his paw. Realizing that Hamsty was going to play this tragic role for a long time, Rosy the parrot, having drunk some water, took on the role of a storyteller.

“We have been searching for your village all night, making our way through the thickets...”

“What made you leave the house?” asked Elder Squelcher.

“This is heartbreaking...” the hamster groaned, without going into details, and asked for cheese again. Thus, Rosy began to explain:

“We accidentally heard how Sophie was asking her Dad for a dog and she was saying that we, the hamster and the parrot who she was fed up with, should be placed somewhere else – sold or given as a present. At first, Dad tried to explain that the animals are living beings and even her friends, therefore, they should stay in the house, but the daughter continued to insist and then burst into tears.

“I can’t handle it...” Hamsty commented, chewing on the cheese someone had brought.

“That night, after some discussions, we decided to just leave since the owners were so over us. And the fish remained in the tank – they could not come with us,” Rosy summed up sadly. “Will you let us stay in your village?” she asked being full of hope.

“Well, of course! You can stay in the village as long as you like!” Fooksik, Jumbo and Chuppoks screamed joyfully and took the animals to Fooksik’s house.

Hamsty took off his collar with a small handwritten message on the reverse side that read “Hello, my name is Hamsty! If you are reading this, then I am lost. Since I don’t know how to speak your language and I do not remember my address, please contact my owner Sophie at the following address: 7 Mira Boulevard, Volny Gorod, and return me to her. You will definitely be rewarded, and I will get some delicious cookies!” Hamsty looked at the collar, sighed and threw it into the bushes.

“Goodbye old life. The bridges are burnt and there is no turning back...” the hamster proclaimed dramatically.

“Freedom!” Jumbo patted him on the shoulder with encouragement.

From that moment, Hamsty and Rosy settled at Fooksik’s and became like a brother and a sister to him. That’s how pets turned into forest dwellers.

Chapter 10. Fooksik and His Friends Plow the Field

A few days later, quite early in the morning, awakened by Hamsty's snoring and Rosy’s whistling, the sound she was making while asleep, Fooksik opened his eyes and stared at the ceiling.

“We’ve got to do something good today,” a thought ran through his mind. “And there should be a lot of good done,” he continued thinking. It looked like the day would be full of excitement.

The gamster was lying in bed and thinking what to do.

“Crackers,” Hamsty squeaked in his sleep, and rolled from side to side. Fooksik had an idea. He got dressed, made his bed and prepared for his workout. He decided not to make the parrot and the hamster join him in his workouts yet, because Hamsty said that he was extremely exhausted, and Rosy did a lot of flying, so she was fit and had strong wings.

Once again dodging the socks, slippers and a pot, but still waking his friends up, Fooksik began training and told Jumbo and Chuppoks about his desire to be useful.

“Well, of course, I need your help,” Fooksik added.

“Ah,” Chuppoks nodded again without much enthusiasm.

“And what are we expected to do?” Jumbo asked.

“At the edge of the forest, near the creek, there is some land, and several farmers plow the land there using a horse and a plow,” Fooksik began to explain. “Let's help the farmers: when they leave for lunch, we will finish plowing. People will come back and feel happy!” the gamster finished enthusiastically.

“Did you talk to Hamsty about it?” Chuppoks asked.

“He says that he is still too weak after traveling through the forest, but I could try...”

“I am a performer, not a farmer!” having heard the offer, Hamsty declared in a weak voice from under the covers, hiding with his head. “These paws were meant for the stage,” he said and stuck out a tiny limb from under the covers.

“There is no stage in the forest – there is only harsh survival of wild animals. And in order to survive, you must be prepared for difficulties,” Jumbo objected. “Put on your shorts and come with us. This adventure will benefit you and strengthen your paws.”

“Life is so hard!” Hamsty answered, stretching out slowly. “Well then, we will adapt to the environment.”

The hamster put on his shorts that were already too big for him and followed his friends.

Around noon the friends went to the edge of the forest. They were escorted by Ms Scrubby, Fooksik's mother. She was called Scrubby because she scrubbed Fooksik, Peach and Peachy with very hard washcloths and brushes, and the children always screamed on top of their lungs during bath time, and the whole village could hear them. Now, when Peach and Peachy disappeared into the forest, Fooksik was the only one to suffer from hard washcloths.

Having reached the edge of the forest, the friends hid behind a small tree and began watching the plowmen – there were two of them. The farmers worked hard and got tired, so they decided to take a break for lunch. Leaving the horse harnessed, the plowmen put a bucket of water in front of it and some hay, and they themselves went to the shade to relax

under an oak tree with wide branches. After lunch the farmers decided to take a nap and, sliding their straw hats over their foreheads, settled comfortably for a short nap.

The gamsters and Hamsty slowly approached the horse that was peacefully chewing hay. It was an old skinny gray horse specked with brown. The gamsters climbed onto the animal, pulling Hamsty up, and thought about the mechanism for controlling the horse. The horse, sensing some crawling of the animals, startled, pressed its ears and stopped eating hay.

“Fooksik, what’s next?” Jumbo asked.

“Uhhhh... this is the first time I have been driving this plowing tool”, Fooksik confessed not knowing what to do next.

“Maybe we should give the horse a command?” Chuppoks suggested timidly.

“Right! After all, somehow it is told what to do – go or stand!” Jumbo added.

“As far as I understand, you need to give a command in the ear,” Fooksik suggested, scratching the back of his head. “But since this horse has two ears,” Fooksik added, having examined the horse, “two operators are needed: one operator for the left ear, and the second for the right”.

“Thus, the horse, having received the command in the left ear, will turn left, in the right - to the right,” Jumbo caught the thought, climbed over the horse’s neck to its head and sat down at the left ear.

“It seems to me that all this could end with a fatal tragedy,” Hamsty said. “Mainly for us”.

“Don’t be scared, now you will see how forest dwellers cope with difficulties!” Chuppoks reassured him.

The horse was alert and its body was shaking like a steam engine at the start, and the steam from its nostrils would definitely complete the picture.

“Well! I will be the operator of the right ear, you, Jumbo – of the left, one and you, Chuppoks, will be the forward operator!” Fooksik yelled out and sat at the horse’s right ear.

“And where are the brakes of this horse and how do we make it stop?” Chuppoks yelled out anxiously.

But no one heard him, because Fooksik and Jumbo shouted ‘Go!!!’ simultaneously on count ‘one-two-three’ in both ears of the horse, which, although it was ready for various surprises, could not cope with such a shock. From surprise, the old horse suddenly reared up, neighed and rushed forward. The plow attached to the horse crashed deep into the ground and, plowing about ten meters, again jumped out of the ground like a dolphin out of the water. The horse, mad with fear, rushed down the slope of the creek, and the gamsters were blown away by such quick plowing. Bouncing on the horse like riders, they soon came to their senses and started screaming to make the horse stop.

“Horsie, stop!!!” Fooksik shouted in the right ear of the horse.

“I said stop! Whoa! Sto-o-o-p !!! frightened Jumbo shouted in the left ear.

“Friends! Stop this horse!” Chuppoks squealed with his eyes wide with horror. Hamsty was silent, grabbing with his paws onto the horse’s hair and expressing his skepticism with all his appearance on the ability of forest dwellers to overcome difficulties.

The horse was racing down the slope of the creek gaining more speed. The plow was jumping behind the horse like a useless piece of iron, and like a living creature, mowed grass, shrubs and young trees clean, leaving a curved meadow behind. Suddenly, catching on a mighty tree, the plow broke off and hung on one of the branches. Therewith, the horse made an even bigger jerk and the gamsters fell down like overripe fruits from a tree. Having run a few more meters, the horse stopped, breathing heavily and trembling in every joint. Lying in the grass, the gamsters and Hamsty saw the plowmen running down the slope of the creek towards the horse, they examined it and took it back saying that the horse must have been bitten by a gadfly, and it had made it run from unexpected pain. The farmers took no more than five steps when they noticed that the plow had left something yellow and gleaming in the uneven deep trench among the clumps of black and greasy earth. The plowmen bent over and were amazed to find a cracked clay pot full of gold and silver coins. The farmers were overjoyed! They started bouncing happily and hugging each other, they were throwing hats up in the air and kissing the horse in its sweaty, frightened face. The horse was shaking its head and could not understand why the plowmen rejoiced instead of scolding it for this self-initiated plowing of the creek slope.

Fooksik, Jumbo, Chuppoks and Hamsty stayed in the shelter for a few more minutes, watching the plowmen rejoice and, moaning in pain, checking their bruises and bumps, waddled away to the village. On their way Fooksik was trying to prove it to his friends that it was Chuppoks who had chosen the “wrong gear” for the horse, causing a storm of rage among his friends, and they even wanted to beat him, but they were able to make it up quickly and a few minutes later they were laughing merrily at each other, calling themselves ‘lucky riders’ as plowing was definitely a success in the end. Fooksik’s only regret was that the farmers would never learn who had helped them find the treasure.

Chapter 11. Hamsty and Rosy Return Home

A few weeks have passed since Hamsty and Rosy settled in the village, and the gamsters were very pleased with the new residents. Hamsty, having a natural gift for entertaining everyone, constantly put up shows and knew an incredible number of tricks, and Rosy patrolled the village flying over it and reported back to the elders what was happening in the neighborhood. But that did not last long. One morning, one of the gamsters reported that he had seen a girl who had been walking through the woods, crying and calling for her lost friends – Hamsty and Rosy. Dad and Mom were with her, and they were looking for the hamster and the parrot, too.

“Ohhh,” Hamsty groaned, sat down on the grass and began massaging his heart. “The old soul wounds have yet to heal. Rosy, my friend, what shall we do?”

Rosy shook her wings.

The tribe gathered for a meeting. Squelcher took the floor. He stood in a world of his own for a long time, leaning on his stick, and his legs involuntarily performed the magnetic field dance. Recently, Squelcher had been practicing a lot and got in good physical shape, and even planned to hold a dance festival in mid-summer.

“Since Rosy and Hamsty have become family for us and true members of the tribe, it is up to them to decide whether to stay or go back to the people,” Squelcher finally said. “I personally will miss you very much!” added the leader with tears in his eyes. Hearing the speech, Hamsty shed some tears, too. The whole tribe of gamsters began to grumble, “Stay with us!” and “Our home is your home!” they yelled out.

Hamsty waved a blue handkerchief, which, as if by magic, appeared in his paw, and asked everyone to listen to him.

“Thank you, thank you friends! It is not an easy decision for us to make, so Rosy and I will discuss it, and we will decide in the morning.”

The next day, having given it a lot of thought, the parrot and the hamster decided to return. They took time to say good-bye and hugged each member of the tribe.

“Hamsty, now you will be our spy, our connection,” Squelcher expressed hope, hugging his chubby friend.

“I will be the best spy-hamster in history!” Hamsty assured. “Well, the most witty and stylish one, that’s for sure.”

“Rosy, take care of Hamsty,” Squelcher said to the parrot. Rosy nodded modestly.

Accompanied by gamsters, they went to the edge of the forest. People weren’t there anymore but they had left a great number of tracks. Expecting the people to return, the animals spent the night at the edge of the forest. They had spent quite some time sitting around a small fire and recalling their joint adventures. The next morning people came again and started calling Rosy and Hamsty.

“I am sure this is not our final goodbye!” the hamster exclaimed, hugging the friends one by one. Then Rosy hugged everyone, too.

“Now you are a real forest animal, so do not forget about it and do not be afraid of the forest!” Jumbo told the hamster as he was leaving.

“Say hello to the fish!” Fooksik shouted.

The hamster turned around at parting and raised his paw up, and Rosy waved her wing. A few moments later, people noticed them. The girl rushed to her favorites, shrieking joyfully, picked them up, babbling an apology, and hugged them. The gamsters spent a few minutes watching the reunion, and then retired happily into the depths of the forest.

Chapter 12. A New Encounter with the Cubbricks

Everybody in the tribe of gamsters gradually forgot about the encounter with the cubbricks. The gamsters were not vindictive or aggressive so they lived in peace with the

rest of the forest dwellers. If any conflicts did take place, that could not be settled, then the whole tribe stood together and was a powerful force. They weren't particularly big, fast or skillful, so the gamsters won battles thanks to collaboration, discipline and team spirit. They were like an unstoppable combat vehicle hitting the enemy and making them withdraw. After a couple of good whips, even the largest and most dangerous animals preferred not to mess with the gamsters again. Now, another tribe appeared in the forest, which was just as great as or maybe even better than the gamsters in terms of team spirit.

The cubbricks reminded of their existence again, when a little gamster Sharpy came into the village, covered in bruises and in tears. Sharpy has always been especially cocky and extremely proud of himself, and he divided all the gamsters into smart ones, or 'sharpies', and the dull ones or 'dullies.' It was obvious that Sharpy considered himself to be one of the 'sharpies.' Once he made a bicycle and called himself nothing more than 'lightning on wheels', but after he crashed into a tree, the tribe began to call him "a dully-biker".

Now, Sharpy, sobbing and smearing tears on his cheeks, said that the cubbricks had run into him, taken away all the innumerable treasures that he had been carrying to the village, slapped him on the head and sent him away with a laugh.

The tribe had serious doubts that Sharpy could bring something of value, and did not believe that Sharpy was able to build a constructive dialogue not only with the cubbricks, but with anyone in general. But the gamsters could not ignore this situation involving another tribe. The question was how to find the offenders?

Fooksik, Jumbo and Chuppoks volunteered to act as spies. Sobbing Sharpy led them to the meadow, where, according to him, he was beaten up by the cubbricks for no good reason. Almost reaching the scene, Sharpy showed some place in the thicket of tall shrubs with his paw and hastily retreated to the village claiming that he had a deep mental trauma and he could not be there anymore. As soon as the cloud of dust, lifted by Sharpy's paws who was running home, subsided and the rest of the gamsters stopped sneezing and rubbed their eyes, the inspection of the combat zone began.

"There are many traces, like ours!" Chuppoks said, pointing to clearly visible prints in the crushed grass and comparing with his paw.

"One chain leads to our village, the others into the thicket," Chuppoks added.

“We never wandered so far in that direction,” Fooksik said slowly.

The brave gamsters, having covered themselves with branches and sprinkled with leaves to become invisible, set off on the trail. Sometimes the paw prints were lost, but the friends found the direction again along the broken branches and a subtle smell in the air. Finally, having got out of the thicket and crossed the deep-water stream, the friends found themselves at the descent to the valley. Climbing to a nearby hill, they crawled cautiously to the top and saw a village below. It was in a cozy place, surrounded by hills and dense forest. The village was very much like the gamsters’ village with a similar layout of the houses and the general outline of the buildings.

“It is crowded in here!” Chuppoks whistled admiringly. The valley was really full of animals that looked exactly like gamsters.

“I saw this village through the telescope from a hot-air balloon, and I know all the ways in,” said Jumbo, whose adventurous spirit was already eager for battle.

“Or maybe we should just go down to them and talk?” suggested Fooksik.

“No, that's not exciting!” Jumbo objected.

“Freeze, you, the talking bushes!” suddenly a voice came from behind them. “Lift the branches up and hold them so that we can see them!”

The prisoners were led into the meadow which was just like the central meadow in the gamsters’ village. There they were finally allowed to turn around and move.

“Oh, old friends!” Jumbo exclaimed, taking off the branches. Their escorts were Kvasulya, Mabasya and Cookwimba.

Kvasulya, flashing a suspicious look at the gamsters, immediately ran away somewhere, but soon returned with an elderly noble cubbrick. His head was decked with noble gray hair and a crown, very similar to that of Squelcher’s.

“Hello, aliens!” the cubbrick said in a loud voice. “I am Chief Yums – the head of this tribe!”

“And he's in better shape than Squelcher,” Jumbo said.

“Hello, Chief!” the gamsters greeted.

“I like your name,” Chuppoks praised the leader.

“Thank you,” Yums nodded. “My daughter, Kvasulya, says that you have already met before, and the meeting turned out to be not that pleasant.”

“Well, it's hard to argue with that,” Fooksik nodded.

“Why did you follow us?” the leader asked.

“This morning you attacked our fellow tribesman and took away his jewels,” Fooksik answered.

“It is not true,” a voice from the crowd was heard. “He started it first!”

“Yes, he was carrying a trinket of some kind, and then he saw that two cubbricks were pulling a ring and a shiny coin into the settlement, and tried to take those away. Therefore, the jewel will remain with us. You are free to return to your cocky tribesmen, and if you decide to fight, then so be it!”

The gamsters were released, and they reached their village before sunset. In the light of torches and candles, the tribe of gamsters gathered to discuss what had happened and decide what to do next.

As always, their opinions were divided. Someone shouted that revenge was necessary and it was time to teach cubbricks a lesson; someone demanded negotiations with a neighboring tribe; and someone didn't want anything at all and offered to live as they had before – ignoring strangers. That evening, nevertheless, the supporters of the fight turned out to be the noisiest company – many were outraged by the audacity of the cubbricks, and others simply wanted adventures. Under pressure from the majority, Squelcher, who was for peaceful negotiations with the cubbricks, was forced to yield.

“Do you want to fight?” He shouted, trying to shout louder than the crowd. “Ok, but you will do it as I say if you want to win! And no injuries, bruises and scratches! We will only scare the cubbricks!”

Chapter 13. Rocket-Soda Attack and the Air-Sausage Forces

The gamsters' gear consisted of combat red shorts, a red jacket, a straw and a stock of berries. The berries were placed in a straw; a gamster pumped air in his cheeks, blew it with might and main, and shot the berries as far and hard as possible. Great self-control was required in order to put the berry deeper into the straw and pump as much air as possible, while facing the enemy. Therefore, the gamsters trained this skill regularly. Such gamsters were called 'berries shooters' by their tribesmen.

The gamsters also had big slingshots which they charged with pine cones, and shot these cones at the enemy. Two to three gamsters were needed to pull the rubber band of the slingshot. These gamsters were called “cone-shooters”.

Thus, the army of gamsters marched off, playing the pipes and drums loudly. The army split up before entering the thicket, and one group went around the valley on the right side.

“We will win!” the gamsters were chanting and singing combat songs.

The main forces moved on under Squelcher’s leadership. On top of the hill, he deployed part of his subjects who began to make loud noises and call out the cubbricks. It did not take long and Yums' army, wearing blue shorts and jackets, marched out from the village with their straws and slingshots on their shoulders. The cubbricks quickly climbed the hill to find themselves within the berry reach, and began throwing berry shells at the group of gamsters quite successfully. But then Squelcher arrived with the main forces, and a serious battle ensued with berries and pine cones. Both armies made faces at each other, squealed, made noise and shouted.

Although Squelcher was not young, he remained an excellent commander. This was recognized by all members of the tribe. Having passed through many hassles, Squelcher was experienced, smart and cold-blooded.

“So,” the King began, drawing a map of the cubbricks’ village and surrounding territories with a twig on the ground, which Fooksik, Jumbo and Chuppoks had previously seen. “We will not attack the village, because it is well guarded and it is easy to defend in it. We will force their army to meet us by placing a small part of our army on the hill opposite the village. When the cubbricks, deceived by our small numbers, begin to climb the hill, we will start the battle with three-fourth of our forces and divert their attention. Meanwhile, a small group will go down the ropes from the hills away from the battlefield and attack the enemy line from the side.”

“Who is ready to be a scout?” the King looked around everyone.

At this time, Fooksik was waving off a bee flying around him. King Squelcher interpreted Fooksik's waving with his paws as a desire to become a scout hero.

“Fooksik,” the King solemnly announced, “I appoint you a rocket pilot and give you the opportunity to conduct high-speed aerial spying! Do not let us down!”

“Yes Sir! And how will we conduct spying?” Fooksik asked, not understanding anything from the leader’s speech because of the bee.

After thinking for a while, King Squelcher sighed and uttered:

“I remember the legend of our ancestors, they said, “If you take a bottle of sweet soda and put a mint tablet in it, then in two seconds a powerful jet of soda will burst from the bottle. If we tie a scout pilot to a bottle, this jet of soda can lift both a pilot and a rocket into the air.

“Me, on top of a bottle?!” Fooksik turned pale and fell down to his knees in front of the King. “I’m scared, what if the bottle explodes?!”

“Everything will be fine!” the King encouraged him. “You will be a hero!”

Fooksik shuffled off dismally to collect gear with Jumbo, Chuppoks and other gamsters giggling.

Five minutes later, everything was ready: a large bottle of soda was installed on a platform; Fooksik was tied to the bottle and everything was ready for the mint pill to go in.

“Look, the cubbricks launched a hot-air balloon!” suddenly one of the gamsters screamed, pointing to the sky.

The whole tribe looked up: a basket with a cubbrick was slowly flying in the sky, it was tied to a sausage skin filled with air. Due to the fact that the skin was taken from a long sausage, it seemed that an ordinary sausage was floating in the sky.

“Bhahaha!!!” the gamsters burst out laughing. “Just look: the cubbricks have BASF – the Best Air Sausage Force! Now the cubbricks will definitely defeat us with their sausage-wiener-air-balloons!

The sight of the sausage balloon was so funny and fascinating that a crow flying by got carried away and crashed into a pine tree with such force that the needles and cones fell down.

Kvasulya emerged from the sausage balloon basket, looked down at the location of the gamster troops and began transmitting observations to her brothers, waving two red signal flags.

“She’s a scout!!!” one of the gamsters yelled out. “That’s foul play! She is looking down at our troops!!!”

“Come on, hurry up! Tie up Fooksik and launch our scout!!!” some other gamster screamed in response.

Fooksik turned even more pale, but he was holding up. The gamsters threw the mint tablet into the neck of the bottle and quickly twisted the cork.

“When shall we take the cork out, King?” they asked Squelcher.

Squelcher pulled out his sand glass from under his royal cloak and stared at it thoughtfully, moving his lips.

“Open on my count ‘three’!” Squelcher commanded. “One!.. Two!”

The whole tribe went silent, and Fooksik groaned quietly from fear and suddenly realized...

“Wait, how will I return to the ground from the sky? Have you thought about thaaa...”

“Three!!!” Squelcher yelled out and waved his paw.

The gamsters pulled out the cork, Fooksik screamed at the top of his lungs, and a powerful jet launched the soda rocket up in the sky splashing the gamsters standing nearby with the sweet foam.

“For real, how is Fooksik going to come down to the ground?” Jumbo asked. But no one heard him.

Meanwhile, the soda rocket with Fooksik on it headed in the spiral curve directly onto Kvasulya’s balloon.

The cubbricks saw the soda rocket with Fooksik, got agitated, started screaming, waving their paws and attracting Kvasulya's attention. But Kvasulya was too busy transmitting the intelligence data and noticed the danger only when the rocket with Fooksik came up close.

Kvasulya dropped the flags, covering her face in horror, the soda rocket crashed into the sausage balloon with rumbling, the straps holding Fooksik on the soda bottle burst, and the gamster flew into the basket and fell right at Kvasulya's feet. Kvasulya barely had time to make a snarky comment regarding appearance of the uninvited guest in the basket of her airship, and then the sausage balloon, having formed a hole from the blow, started to release the air, the basket tilted suddenly, which almost made Kvasulya fall out of it, but she managed to grab the outer edge with her two paws.

“A-ah-ah! Good gracious! Save me!” Kvasulya screamed heartbreakingly.

The tribes of gamsters and cubbricks froze in horror and, holding their breath, watched Kvasulya fight for her life while holding on to the side of the damaged hot air balloon high up in the sky. She was screaming on top of her lungs, wiggling her whole body and trying to get back in.

It was Kvasulya's cry that brought Fooksik back to senses so quickly. Otherwise, he would take a long time to come round after such a blow. Running instantly to the edge of the basket, Fooksik bent over, but when he saw the ground so far below, he sprang back in horror and grabbed his chest. However, Kvasulya continued to scream desperately, and Fooksik finally coped with his fear. He bent over again, reached for Kvasulya and used all his strength to drag her into the basket.

The gamsters and the cubbricks clapped their hands and screamed with joy at the sight of Kvasulya's rescue. She waved her paw flirtatiously, causing a storm of delight from fellow tribesmen. And Fooksik was sitting on the floor of the basket and shaking from the fright he had just experienced.

“What a brave guy! A hero!” the gamsters were discussing Fooksik’s move, nodding their heads with approval and clicking their tongues in delight.

All this time, the shell of the sausage airship kept losing air, the balloon was descending, and after a few minutes the basket touched the ground. Kvasulya jumped out and gracefully bowed to the spectators who were speechless with admiration, and Fooksik was still sitting inside and shaking with fear. But his fellow tribesmen understood this as the exceptional modesty of Fooksik.

“He is so modest! Well done, Fooksik!” the gamsters were whispering and winking.

Chapter 14. The Battle that Never Happened

Watching Kvasulya’s rescue by the brave hero Fooksik, the gamsters and the cubbricks lost their war lust and didn’t want to fight anymore. Nevertheless, they had to keep on fighting – many balloons had already launched from the cubbricks’ village, with cubbricks-bombers in the baskets. These were the cubbricks trained to pour some sweet syrup and throw cones at the enemy, but the very appearance of the balloons astounded the

gamsters even more than the first time – they were all made up of shells of sausages, wieners and brawn.

The gamsters opened their mouths at the sight of such ridiculous military equipment and the next second began to laugh uncontrollably, holding on to their sides. However, after a moment they were no longer laughing – the sweet syrup was pouring onto their heads from the buckets, and pine cones and needles were falling on them.

“Oh wow!!! So, that’s what you are doing?!” the gamsters were furious and rushed to set up bottles with sweet soda. Within a minute, several dozens of bottles soared into the sky, fizzing and sprinkling sweet foam. They flew past the air-sausage balloons, and sweet soda dew spilled plentifully on the gamsters and the cubbricks. The variety of sweet moisture in the sky created two remarkably beautiful rainbows, and both tribes opened their mouths in admiration.

Mabasya and Cookwimba, sitting in the baskets of sausage balloons, were also unable to take their eyes off the rainbows, and threw sweet syrup and cones by mistake onto their fellow cubbrick tribesmen, which made them angry.

“Where are you pouring the syrup at, you muff?!” some of them were shouting.

“Open your eyes!” others were screaming and shaking their fists.

“Just come down, I’ll pull your ears!” others yelled out being mad.

Mabasya and Cookwimba did not hear the screams and threw down a pile of confetti and glitter that were meant for the winners. However, confetti and glitter were obviously too much – they got on the cubbricks and the gamsters which were already smeared with sweet syrup and needles.

“It looks more like some freak show...” grumbled King Yums, standing on a hill and looking at his warrior-cubbricks through binoculars. “Clowns versus comedians...”

“This is not a battle, but a traveling circus...” King Squelcher said dejectedly. “They should perform in the circus instead of fighting. Warriors...”

Finally, the gamsters and the cubbricks saw that the battle was pointless, and both sides sent parliamentarians with white handkerchiefs on long sticks.

After having a discussion, the negotiators came to the conclusion that both armies fought well today and that it was appropriate to call it even, and they also agreed upon making peace. Both gamsters and cubbricks kept squeaking with laughter, looking at each

other: the sight of animals smeared in syrup with confetti and glitter caused laughter and kind jokes. The cubbricks began to tidy up their settlement, and the gamsters went back to theirs, and each tribe was absolutely sure that they were the ones who had won and their opponents were just military newcomers and cowards. A long way home was ahead of Fooksik, Jumbo and Chuppoks, as well as tons of laundry as their clothes were all dirty and covered with sweet syrup.

Chapter 15. The Flood

After summer, came autumn. Heavy rains were more frequent, and the gamsters spent a lot of time sitting at home by the warm heaters. Once, when the rain stopped for half a day, the scouting gamsters returned to the village and reported on the difficult situation that emerged in the valley, not far from the cubbricks' settlement. The scouts said that heavy rains made the tiny river in the valley overflow and threatened to flood the cubbricks' village. All the more so as there is a path, dug out during the recent battle, leading to the settlement. The exhausted cubbricks were building dams and digging a canal to divert water. However, it was all in vain – there was not enough strength or time. The tribe of gamsters buzzed from the news. Several meaners, including Sharpy, made fun of the misfortunes of recent opponents, but most of the beasts sympathized with their fellows. Flood is a serious disaster.

Old Squelcher was silent. He was walking along the central clearing, shaking his head and pondering the solution. Suddenly, Fooksik wanted to speak to the tribe. He waited until all the inhabitants gathered, cleared his throat, fidgeted and, fixing up his shirt, decided to speak.

“The elder does remember that we were a single tribe once. Indeed, many years have passed since the gamsters and the cubbricks separated, our and their fur changed the color slightly, they live far away, we fought more than we got along, and their shorts are fastened differently from ours... However, we are all forest dwellers and, therefore, must help our forest brothers! If we do not help them, the water will wash off the village and the cubbricks will have no home: winter is coming, and they will not have time to rebuild new

dwelling for themselves. The cubbricks will simply be doomed. We have no right to abandon them!” Fooksik concluded his touching speech.

“And the girls in their settlement are also pretty!” added Jumbo from the crowd.

“And their king has a cool name!” Chuppoks added.

The tribe began to grumble agreeably, and the old Squelcher looked approvingly at Fooksik. The gamsters went off once again, but this time they wanted to help.

Meanwhile, near the village of cubbricks, work had been in full swing for several days - the whole tribe was digging a ditch along which the water from the overflowed river was supposed to leave. Although the cubbricks were doing the digging non-stop, they obviously didn't have time, and the village could be flooded any minute. Just in case, all their valuables were loaded onto rafts made from twigs, and inflatable boats were ready for evacuation of the population. Many beasties have already fallen from tiredness. Their faces, fur and clothes were all stained with liquid and sticky mud. Cookwimba, digging the ditch with her friends and wielding a shovel perkily, suddenly noticed someone on the hill. She wiped her paws on the shorts and then rubbed her eyes. Looking closer, Cookwimba realized that those were the gamsters.

“Mabasya, Kvasulya! Look who is on the hill! What do they want?”

“Ah, these bullies! They came to laugh at us! Come on, dig...” Mabasya muttered, sat down on the ground and sobbed, wiping her nose with her paw, and then cried.

Kvasulya didn't say anything – she only sighed pitifully and wearily went on meddling with the shovel in the moist, squelching ground.

Now the whole tribe of cubbricks was paying attention to the movement on the hill and suspended their work.

“The gamsters are spying on us,” someone grumbled.

“Now is not the right time...to laugh at us,” the other voice added sadly.

King Yums, who now did not look royal at all, stopped digging, wiped dirt and sweat from his face, and stared suspiciously at the intruders, leaning on his shovel. With a sigh, he stuck the tool into the ground tiredly, straightened his shoulders and started watching the gamsters. Kvasulya was standing next to him.

The guests, led by Squelcher, had already come down the hill and approached the village.

“Hello, brothers!” Squelcher spoke in sonorous voice. “Chief Yums, my respect! I would take off the crown to greet you, but I have not been able to do this for a long time. Frankly speaking, my head itches from time to time. I see, your village is going on a sea voyage, isn’t it?”

“Indeed it is!” answered Yums.

“In that case, we can help solve the problem. Actually, that is the reason we are here.”

“We will owe you, thank you!” Yums answered emotionally.

“No, you won’t, we are one family despite some misunderstanding that happened in our past. Let’s do some work, guys!” Squelcher shouted and, having rolled up the sleeves of his royal shirt, went to the village. The gamsters followed him with shovels and bags.

Full of strength, the tribe of gamsters joined the work. The inspired cubbricks began to dig with renewed power and managed to make a detour ditch before the evening before water gushed out of the river. The rain stopped.

The sunset rays of the descending sun were illuminating both tribes standing on a hummock, they were exhausted. They were watching the muddy streams of rushing water sweep away everything in its path and yet bypassing the settlement. The cubbricks’ houses were saved. In the growing dusk, the gamsters and the cubbricks were congratulating each other, hugging and patting each other on the shoulders. Some cubbricks were crying with happiness.

“Now we will throw a party that the forest has not seen before, or I will resign!” announced Yums to the whole valley, feeling terribly tired but happy and peaceful.

The cubbricks invited the gamsters to their feast in their village, lit bonfires and began to lay long tables. Fires and lamps made it look like it was daytime.

“I have to admit, you are not bad guys!” Mabasya said to Jumbo, who was sitting next to her.

“Thanks!” Jumbo squealed with joy.

“Well ...you are...good, too...” Mabasya supported Fooksik.

There were several empty seats nearby, and two cubbricks were sitting there –a brother and a sister, apparently.

“My children!” someone shrieked joyfully, drowning out the noise of the crowd. It was Aunt Scrubby screaming.

“Mom, what’s happened?” Fooksik asked perplexedly.

“Peach!!! Peachy!!!” Aunt Scrubby screamed and rushed to hug the brother and sister. As it turned out later, Peach and Peachy, who had been lost as children many years ago, were found in the forest by the tribe of cubbricks and invited to live with them. Fooksik joined his brother and sister, and soon the whole village was hugging and singing in chorus. It was the second miracle in one day. The feast and celebrations in the village lasted until morning, till the tired gamsters and cubbricks fell asleep.

Chapter 16. Helping People

The celebration of the rescue of the cubbricks’ village lasted for several days. The tribes celebrated this event with non-stop visiting to each other. First, the cubbricks went to the gamsters, then the gamsters visited the cubbricks, then everyone visited each other absolutely randomly, and after a week and a half it was difficult to say who lived in the village: the gamsters or the visiting cubbricks.

At that point Hamsty and Rosy appeared again. Like forest spirits, they came from the morning mist, knocking off dew on the grass with their paws. At first, the gamsters decided that they thought it was all the consequences of a prolonged celebration (a week and a half, to be exact). But the hamster and the parrot were persistently walking up to the village, proving that they were real.

“What's happened?!” Chuppoks asked, as he coped with astonishment faster than others.

“No, my friend, we have come by ourselves, of our own free will!” Hamsty said theatrically. “Can I have a sip of water for a tired traveler?” asked the hamster and stretched his paws towards a cup of coffee. Chuppoks sighed, gave the guest the coffee and went to brew some more.

“Something bad happened to people,” said Hamsty, taking a sip from the cup. “Many houses in the town were damaged after the flood, including a high castle with towers,

which people call the Museum of Fairytales. This castle is visited by nearly all the population of the town, especially children and tourists.

“We heard the masters talk. This is a very important building for all people, but the flood caused part of the building to collapse and it is in a bad shape. If they don’t fix it as soon as possible, the whole building will collapse,” Rosy added.

“Now people are raising money all over the town for urgent repairs, but the owners say that the town residents don’t have that much money and thus the building is doomed to be demolished,” Hamsty continued.

“Then I remembered that you, the Great Seekers of Lost Treasures and Returners of Jewels, the Mighty Tribe of Gamsters, have been coexisting and helping people for many, many years. Will you help this time too?” Rosy caught up again.

“Do you have enough treasures to save the building that is so important to the people in town that it is the only thing that they can talk about?” Hamsty asked full of hope.

The tribe looked silently at Squelcher, and the old King stepped forward.

“For many years, we have collected jewels and put them in our vaults, and I think there are enough treasures there. And even if not, then we have new friends – cubbricks who serve the same purposes to help people. And they will help us,” Squelcher said confidently and leaned on his stick. Yums nodded with approval.

The tribe of gamsters rustled approvingly. One could hear “Sure!” “Let’s help people!” No one actually knew, however, where the building to be repaired was and where the treasures had to be brought. Certainly, our old friends, Fooksik, Jumbo and Chuppoks, volunteered to check out the location. They were so eager to show their boldness and skills in intelligence that the tribe unconditionally agreed to provide them with such an opportunity. After a long discussion, they agreed to go on the scout in the afternoon.

Chapter 17. Town Scouting and the Delivery of Treasures to the Museum of Fairytales

“The main thing in scouting is disguise!” Fooksik said thoughtfully, raising his index finger up.

Fooksik, Jumbo and Chuppoks were standing and looking at the heap of clothes that all the inhabitants of the tribe of gamsters had brought. Having rummaged in it for several minutes, the friends chose a children's brown coat, down-at-heel blue shoes, a super bright yellow checkered scarf, green gloves and a large black top hat. But even the children's coat was way too big for the gamsters. Someone suggested that Fooksik stood on Chuppoks's shoulders, and Jumbo climbed to the top. The friends did just that, and the little coat fit. The scarf was tied on top of this pyramid and the dusty hat was put on, but Jumbo was completely hidden in it, so it was decided to cut two holes for the eyes in the hat.

"I was in a hurry to visit you here in your town, wearing a black top hat and old clothes," Hamsty sang the lines overheard somewhere, and approved the outfit.

The tribe of gamsters giggled amicably over the funny pyramid, looking more like a garden scarecrow than a man, but there were no other options.

"Be careful! The disguise leaves much to be desired," Squelcher said.

The gamsters, accompanied by Hamsty and Rosy, reached the outskirts of the city, where they got into this fancy costume.

"Well, you have to go home!" Jumbo was about to say goodbye.

"Well, no, I won't miss such an adventure," Hamsty said.

"The adventurer has been found," Rosy muttered, looking at the hamster but she stayed with the friends, too.

"Then go ahead!" Fooksik spoke up from inside the coat.

"Go ahead," Chuppoks added and having braced up started dragging the coat-and-gamsters structure on his mighty shoulders into the city.

In order to keep balance, Chuppoks picked up two sticks. The end of the old rope found in the coat pocket was tied to Hamsty's collar, the other end was wound to a stick – it looked like a pet was taken for a walk, and there was nothing weird about the hamster on a leash – well, all owners have their own quirks. Rosy was sitting on the shoulder of the creature in the coat. It was quite a sight! The pyramid stood for a moment and moved forward. In a few minutes, the friends were walking along the cobblestone roads of the town in the morning sun. There were few of those passing by, and no one was particularly interested in the ridiculous creature wearing a coat, a scarf, and an old-fashioned top hat.

Although some of the passers-by were gazing after the old suit in surprise, the others even crossed the street.

The creature in the coat jerked from time to time, either skewing back or forth, or swaying from side to side. However, the sticks in Chuppoks's hands allowed them to go relatively smoothly.

"One, two, three! Do you copy?" Jumbo tried to establish communication within the pyramid.

"Three, two, one!" Yes, we do! Hello! Chuppoks, engine room, do you copy?" Fooksik was in a good mood, although he did not see anything and, in fact, was not doing much.

Chuppoks was carrying the two friends and a pile of clothes on him, and he was not in the mood for jokes, but he had to answer.

"I can hear just fine. What do you see? Where do I go?" Chuppoks was walking at a moderate speed.

"The engine room is asking where to go?" Fooksik asked the question to the other end.

Jumbo clung to the holes cut in the hat, twisted it to the left, to the right, and whispered loudly down:

"We go straight ahead, there's the main square of the town!"

"Is there ice-cream in the square?" Chuppoks was sweating and he was hungry, so he would appreciate a treat.

"Well, I would stop for a snack – I feel a little tired," said Hamsty.

The group entered the square, and Jumbo turned the hat in search of an ice-cream stand. Noticing the ice-cream man, Chuppoks shook his hat politely.

"One ... caramel creme!" Rosy asked when they reached the stand.

"Do you agree with your bird?" asked the ice-cream man perplexedly, a stout man with mustache, wearing an apron. The pyramid in the coat nodded silently. A coin fell out of the sleeve. The ice-cream man held out a large cone with a white topping. Still keeping silent, the weird coat with the hat took the ice-cream with an empty sleeve, stepped aside, and the caramel crème cone first mysteriously disappeared somewhere in the folds of clothes, then emerged back looking much shorter, and after a minute disappeared

completely: all three internal parts of the pyramid ate it, remembering to share it with the cover group – ‘the hamster on a leash’ and ‘the your bird’.

“Well, where do we find this Castle with towers, which is called the Museum of Fairytales?” Chuppoks asked.

“Hey, here it is!” Rosy answered and pointed her wing to the big beautiful building looking like an ancient castle.

The friends looked at this huge elegant castle with big and small towers, a bunch of colorful flags, small flags and streamers.

“Well, the goal has been found, we must return to the forest,” Fooksik said. “And you,” he turned to Hamsty with Rosy, “you should go home before Sofia finds out you’re gone.”

“Yeah, right. Enough adventures for today,” Hamsty agreed.

Having returned to the village, the gamsters shared what they had seen.

Within an hour, all the treasures in the vaults were sorted, stacked in chests and counted. Rings, chains, bracelets, brooches, earrings and other gold and silver jewelry lost and forgotten by people were plenty and blinding. A messenger was sent to the village of cubbricks with the message that it was time to deliver their valuables, too.

The cubbricks arrived immediately, and it took both tribes the whole night to carry the jewels from the forest to the town, where all the treasures were put in chests with great care, right in the middle of the huge hall of the high beautiful castle with towers which needed repair.

After that, the gamsters and the cubbricks left the town quickly and imperceptibly, they said goodbye at the edge of the forest and headed towards their villages.

Chapter 18. People Would Rather Believe in Miracles than Help Coming from Forest Residents

It was Indian summer, and the same family was having a great time on the edge of the forest again: Dad, Mom, brother and sister – Victor and Sophie. Everyone was having fun, and Dad told the children about the recent miracle: out of nowhere, some means for

repair – namely, jewels thrown by unknown benefactors –were found in the Museum of Fairytales damaged by the flood. It was so strange and mysterious that newspapers wrote about this case.

“Dad, couldn’t the gamsters have thrown these little treasures?” the boy asked.

“Or cubbricks? his sister added.

“Well, of course not, my dear!” Mom answered, hugging the children.

“This is probably one of the people!” caught up Dad.

The children started running around the meadow again and, suddenly, the boy cried out joyfully:

“Mom! Dad! I found my truck! You know, the one I had lost in the summer!” the boy picked up the toy and showed it to his parents.

“Well, you see, it means that it wasn’t the gamsters who had taken it!” Dad joked, and Mom laughed.

Closer to the evening, happy children and their parents got into the car and drove to the town.

As soon as the noise of the engine and the car disappeared from sight, Fooksik, Jumbo and Chuppoks appeared from the tall yellowing shrubs. Fooksik looked after the car and straightened his pants.

“It is a pity that no one will know about what we have done,” Fooksik said and looked at his friends.

“We are secret heroes hidden in the thick of the forest!” Jumbo said proudly.

“And we do not need fame – there are so many problems that come with it...” Chuppoks added, “newspaper interviews, autographs, fans...”

“Yes, it is better for the gamsters to remain unknown to people. At least not yet,” Fooksik agreed. “Well, brothers, shall we begin our search for the lost treasures?”

Jumbo and Chuppoks nodded in agreement and began to inspect the place where the people had had their picnic, as they had been doing for many years. And Fooksik found a lollipop in the grass and, quietly taking it out of the wrapper, began to lick it secretly from his friends, narrowing his eyes with pleasure.

THE END