

CLAW CASTLES



EVAN JACOBS



MEET THE



KING NOJRA

Age: 35

Family: a mean older sister who rules a neighboring castle

Secret Wish: to live in the world outside his video game

Favorite Hobby: cake decorating

Best Quality: great hair

CHARACTERS



JAKE

Age: 11

Favorite Food: Hot Pockets ham & cheese

Second Favorite Hobby: enjoys taking photographs of funny-looking bugs

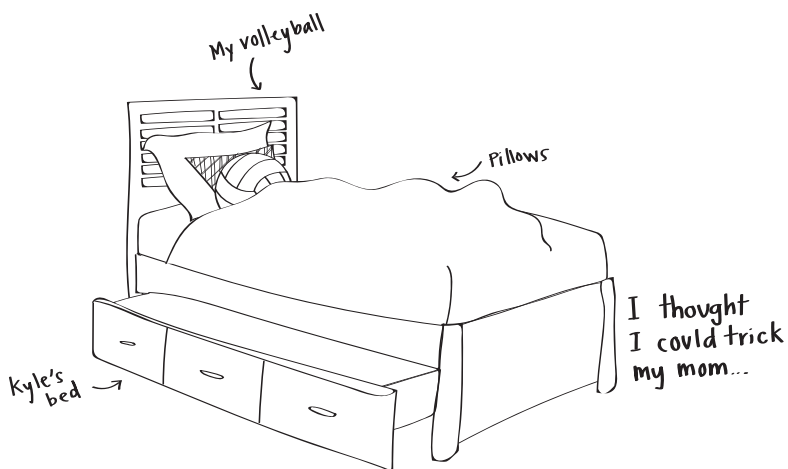
Secret He's Keeping: has a crush on Olivia, the girl who sits behind him in art class

Best Quality: persistence

1 UNLOCKED

“You boys better get in bed. Right now!”

Jake’s mother was mad. She already told them to go to sleep. That was two hours ago. But Jake and his best friend, Kyle, kept playing.



“Three more minutes, Mom. I promise,” Jake said. “We’re almost done. We’re at level ninety-eight!”



“Three more minutes. You boys are lucky it’s Friday.” She shut to the door to the living room.

Jake lived in a one-story house. It was small. The living room was next to his parents’ bedroom. Jake’s brother, Mike, was down the hall. Jake had his own bedroom. And it was full of stuff. You name



it. He had it. Games. Comic books. DVDs. Electronics.

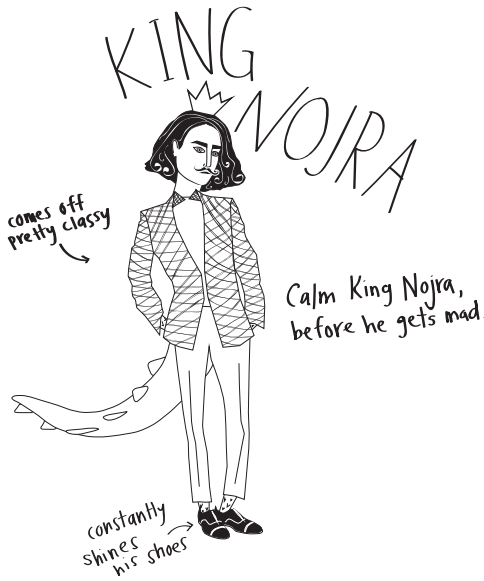


Jake and Kyle had been on the Xbox all night. They always played when Kyle slept over. They were seconds away from clearing Level 99 of their favorite game. It was called *Clan Castles*.

They battled a king at each level. Winning meant they won the king's castle. The final battle was against King Nojra. That king was the fiercest. The bravest. And the scariest.



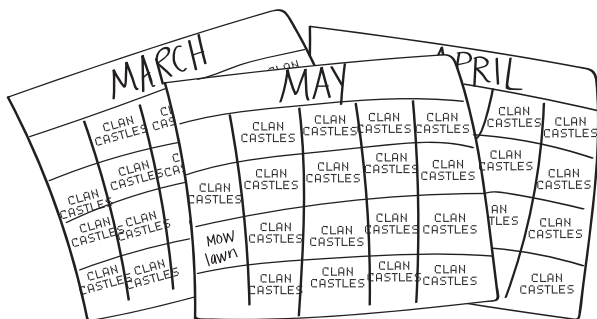
King Nojra was half-man, half-dragon. He ruled the biggest kingdom. If you lost to him, you lost it all. And you were bumped back to Level 1.



Jake's avatar and King Nojra were fighting. Nojra was throwing fireballs. Giant creatures were on the attack. The king's great hall was a war zone. The other



kings were watching. The ones Jake and Kyle had beaten. It had taken the boys months to get to this level.



“If you die, it’s over,” Kyle said.

“Don’t remind me,” Jake moaned.

King Nojra was using all his skills. Jake had to be fast. He had to move and fire at the same time. The king kept at it. Faster. And faster. If Jake blinked, he lost.

Then, the game made a sound.

“What’s going on?” Kyle asked.

At that moment, the Mirror of Reflection appeared. It sat off to the side. A counter

appeared on the screen. It was counting down from five.

“I only have five seconds to get it!” Jake was so tense. He was sweating.

If he did not get the mirror, it would disappear. Forever.

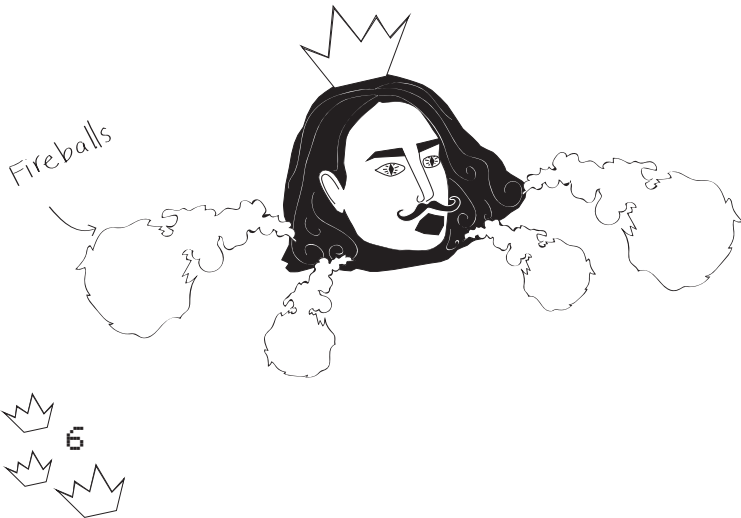
Too much was coming at him. Jake was stuck.

Suddenly, he got a break. For a split second. There was an opening. Jake took it.

Two seconds left.

Jake grabbed the mirror.

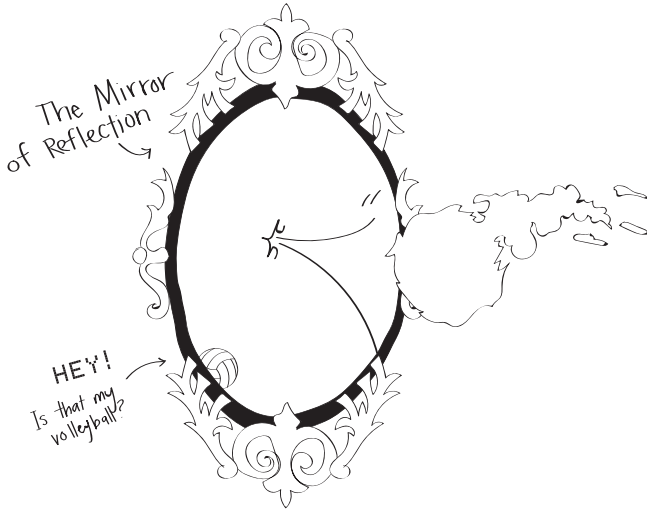
Nojra spit out a fireball.



“Lift it!” Kyle yelled.

Jake did.

The fireball bounced off the mirror. It shot back into Nojra’s body.



Direct hit!

King Nojra vanished. There was a white light.

The screen went black.

“Whoa! You beat ninety-nine.” Kyle put his arm around Jake.



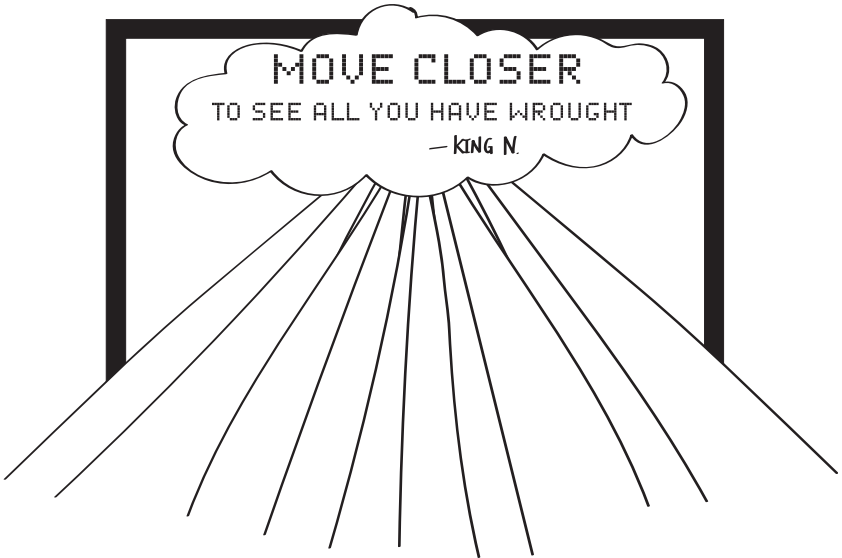
“Now what?” Jake asked.

The screen was still black. The boys waited. It was dead quiet.

Then many colors filled the TV screen. Every king Jake had battled and defeated appeared.

“Cool,” Jake said.

The screen read:



The boys did.

A white light shot out of the TV! The same light as when King Nojra vanished.

Jake and Kyle looked at each other.

“We’re moving!” Jake yelled.

They were.

In seconds, colors surrounded them.

The TV had sucked them in!



Please Don't Tell



Jeff Gottesfeld





MEET THE



Piper

Age: 12

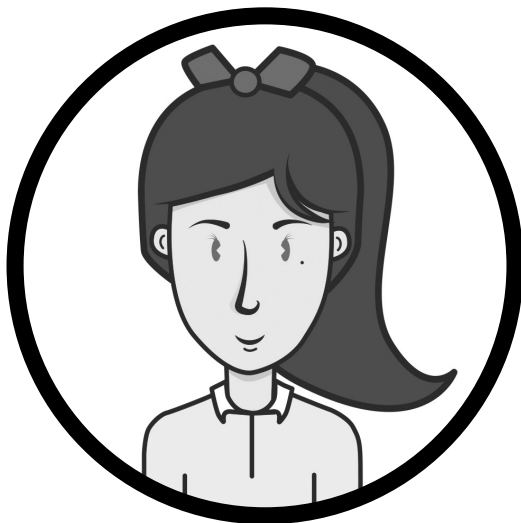
Allergic To: paper

Hobby: collecting marbles

Favorite Sport: volleyball

Best Quality: honesty

CHARACTERS



Sandy

Age: 12

Favorite Emoji: smiley face with tears of joy

Hidden Talent: clog dancing

Big Secret: still watches cartoons

Best Quality: confidence

1

THE STRANGER

Piper Lewis looked around the room. It was just like last year. And the year before that. All the same kids were there. They wanted a part in the school play.



May Park



Ava Woods

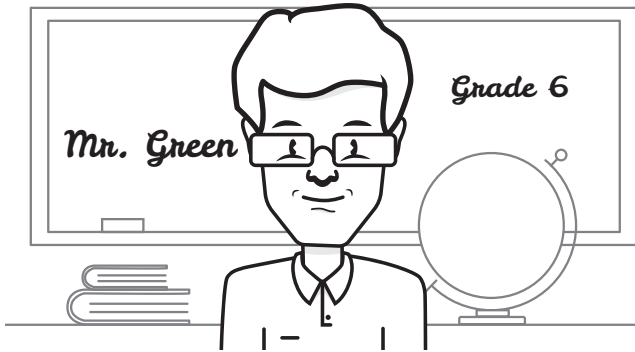


Mark Fisher

Piper knew all the faces. There was her best friend, May Park. Ava Woods was cute

but mean. Mark Fisher was nice but geeky. There were a few others too.

About ten kids liked plays. They always tried out. Mr. Green wrote the plays. The teacher liked the theater. He taught sixth grade.

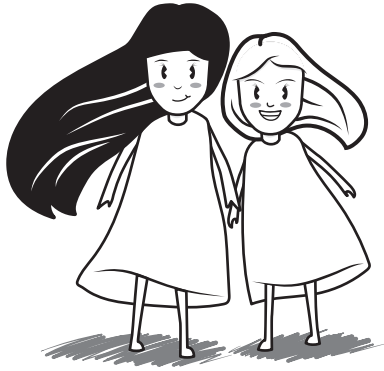


“This place never changes,” Piper said to May.

May smiled. She shook out her hair. It was long and dark. May liked to have fun. She didn’t care much about grades. But her dad did.

Piper loved school. She loved to learn. Knowing fun facts was her specialty.

Piper and May met when they were little. Their parents were friends first. They moved to the town at the same time. Then the girls became friends. They were close, like sisters. They did everything together. The two liked the same things.



One thing they did not like? A girl in their class. Ava Woods. Ava was mean. Not just mean. She was *evil*. But she was good at acting. Ava always got the best part.

“What is the play about?” May asked.

The door opened. Piper turned to look. It was Mr. Green. He came into the room. “We’re about to find out,” Piper said.

Mr. Green called to the kids. “Line up! It’s time to try out.”

The kids lined up. Mr. Green gave them scripts. “My play is about a rabbit. It wants to be a fox. The play is called *The Rabbit and the Fox*.”



“Clever,” May joked.

“Are there any songs?” Ava asked.

“No,” Mr. Green said. “But there is a sword fight.”

“I want to sing,” Ava said.

“I’ll add a song. But only if you get the lead,” Mr. Green said.

Ava laughed. “You better write it now. What is the main part? Bugs Bunny?”



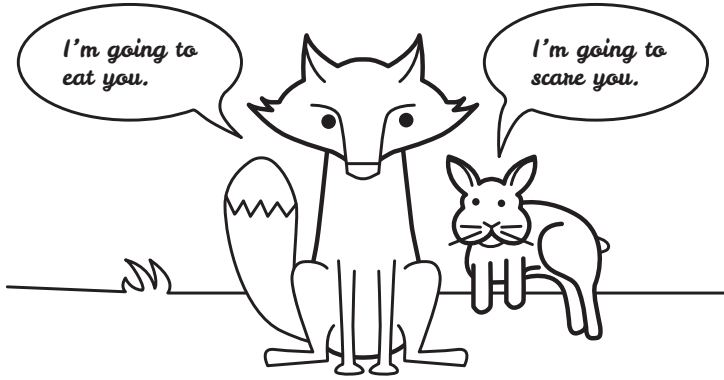
Mr. Green sighed. “The name is not Bugs. It’s Twitch. But yes. The rabbit is the main part.”

“Well, I’m getting it,” Ava said.

“Turn to page nine,” Mr. Green said.

Piper looked at the lines. The story was simple. The fox wanted to eat the rabbit.

The rabbit tried to scare the fox. The hunter wanted to catch the fox. It was a comedy.



“Piper and Mark. You’re first,” Mr. Green said.

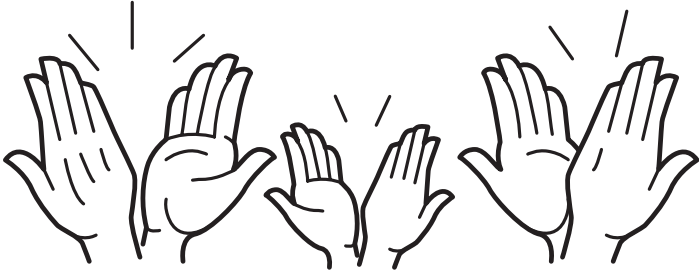
Piper was the rabbit. Mark was the fox.

Piper: You don’t look foxy.

Mark: And you don’t look like lunch. You look like dinner.

Piper: You can’t eat me. I’m sick. I have rabbit fever. One bite and down you go.

Mark: Only one thing is going down.
That's you. Down into my belly. Run,
rabbit!



The scene was over. The kids clapped.
Piper went back to sit with May. “How
did I do?”

“Okay,” May said. “But Ava will get the
part. Mr. Green loves her.”

Ava did get the main part. Piper got
a part too. She was the fox. May was the
hunter.

“This is not Broadway,” Piper joked.

Piper and May left the school. They saw a car pull up. A girl got out.

“Redhead alert,” May called out.

“She has great hair,” Piper said. She thought the girl was pretty. Even prettier than Ava. “I wonder if she’s new.” Maybe this girl could act. Ava might have to compete. That would be a first.

Two adults got out of the car. They walked the girl into the school.