

THE FORGOTTEN WORLDS  
BOOK 2

THE NAVEL  
OF THE WORLD

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CHILDREN'S BRAINS ARE YUMMY BOOKS  
AUSTIN, TEXAS

## CHAPTER 1

# THE INCONVENIENT GIANT SQUID

As soon as the elevator passed by, Benjamin Holt jumped; and then he started falling—straight down the shaft. Sure, he'd planned to levitate himself, but seeing as how he was out of practice, he dropped a good two hundred floors before he finally got the whole levitation thing under control. Outside the world looked like thick black soup, with glowing sea creatures hitting up against the elevator shaft, staring in at Benjamin. Half of them looked like they'd survived the fall of the dinosaurs and never planned to chance extinction again. He reached out toward them, and they flitted away, back to wherever they'd lived for the last million years. So Benjamin turned back around. And here the day had started out so boring.

At first Benjamin thought working in his dad's office over spring break would be cool—spending the week hanging out in Wondersky City with Andy Grow. And to be honest, at first it had been—being back in Lemuria; skyscrapers so tall they poked out of the top of the underwater dome and into the ocean above. But things had gone downhill—fast.

For starters, the last person in the world he'd wanted to see had shown up—Ryan Jordan. Apparently Ryan's parents thought working in an office all vacation was a good idea, too. Then when Nathan Nyx, their boss for the week,



had shown them the Records Room, the real torture began: hours upon hours of mind-numbingly torturous, pointless filing. The problem with the records was that they never stopped. Before one could be filed, five more pumped in through the feed.

Ryan had been the smart one. He left the room a nano-second after Nathan teleported away and only came back during breaks. And it hadn't taken Andy long either. He decided spying around the office was way more fun than filing records, so he left, too. Some best friend. Which left Benjamin alone most of the time playing mental games to keep himself from going crazy.

But Wednesday mid-morning when Benjamin found the record with his name on it, everything changed. It must've come through the shoot months ago. Maybe even years. It only caught Benjamin's eye when, by sheer luck, one of the stacks toppled over and almost killed him.

"Look at this." Benjamin handed the record over to Andy when he walked into the room. It looked like all the others: thinner than a piece of paper; stripes on the side to distinguish which boring category to put it in; yellow graphical screen with data crammed everywhere. After looking at millions and billions of records, Benjamin needed a second opinion. The words and pictures on them shifted each time he read one; by now, his eyes hurt so bad, he'd started filing with them closed—which resulted in sometimes the records going in the right places, sometimes them not. Benjamin didn't really care.

"What?" Andy reached out and took it. "Another record on garbage disposal in Lemuria?"

Benjamin shook his head. "I don't think so."



“But it has the funny purple stripes on it.” Andy pointed at the colored stripes running up the left side which labeled it as waste management.

“I know,” Benjamin said. “But I don’t think it’s about getting rid of trash. Read it.”

Andy looked down at the page. “I can’t.”

Benjamin shrugged. Okay, so he couldn’t read it either. Most of it looked like it was written in Ancient Lemurian—the language of the hidden continent at the bottom of the Pacific Ocean, which Benjamin hadn’t bothered to learn. “We’ll have to get Gary to translate it. But what can you read?”

Andy looked again, then met Benjamin’s gaze. “Your name.”

Benjamin nodded.

“And what’s this weird symbol at the top of the page?” Andy asked.

Benjamin shook his head. “I don’t know. I’ve seen it before, but I can’t remember where.”

Actually, Benjamin remembered exactly where he’d seen the three intertwined hearts. He’d seen them above the door to the secret chamber where he’d left the three keys of Shambhala. The three keys he’d spent all last summer looking for.

Andy handed it back over. “Maybe Gary will recognize it.” Which might actually be possible. Their friend Gary Goodweather recognized constellations in other galaxies. And if he ran into something he didn’t know, he went to the library to find out.

Before Benjamin could reach out and take it back, the door opened, and Ryan Jordan walked in. Benjamin



caught the flash in Ryan's mind before his mind block went up. He'd been eavesdropping. Ryan took one look at them, reached out and grabbed the record, and ran.

Which explained the elevator shaft thing—kind of. Benjamin took off after Ryan, bumping into the boss man Nathan Nyx as soon as he ran out of the room. Nathan flew backwards and landed flat on his butt.

“What's the rush?” Nathan stood up and rubbed his back side.

Benjamin saw Ryan run for the elevators and enter something on the keypad. He forced himself to take a deep breath and look at Nathan.

“No rush,” Benjamin said.

Just then Andy ran out of the horrible record room and stopped.

Nathan laughed. “Are you guys having too much fun filing?”

Benjamin cringed. Nathan gave him the willies. It wasn't that Nathan looked gross or creepy or anything. It was just that after three days of taking orders from the over-energetic brown-noser, Benjamin couldn't stand the sight of him—not to mention the sound of his voice. What his dad saw in this guy was nothing short of a mystery.

“Yeah,” Andy said. “We're having way too much fun.”

“Which is why we need to get some fresh air,” Benjamin said. And then he started walking for the elevator. Whatever the record had said, Benjamin needed to get it back. With both his name and the strange heart symbol on it, it was probably the closest thing he'd found to a lead since the end of last summer—back when everything had changed, back when Helios Deimos, one of the rulers



of Lemuria, had told him he was actually one of triplets, separated at birth and hidden away. And that Benjamin's most important task in life was to find his two missing brothers.

Yeah, and that was all Helios had said. No other hints. Or clues. Or anything that might give Benjamin some idea where his brothers might be. For all the luck Benjamin had finding them so far, they may as well have teleported to Saturn.

Nathan Nyx stepped out of the way, letting Benjamin and Andy pass. "Just don't be gone long; we have lots of records to file."

If by 'we' he meant Benjamin, then Nathan was right.

"And the elevator on the left is only going up," Nathan added. "Giant squid stuck on the lower floors again."

Great. As long as these elevators took, it would take another hour before he could follow Ryan. An hour Benjamin did not plan to wait. So when the elevator on the left lifted, Benjamin looked down the shaft, took a deep breath, and jumped.

It's not that Benjamin couldn't levitate himself. After all he was a telegen—not a human, and if anything, he was one of the better students in telekinesis. Once he got the fall under control, he slowed at each floor and peeked out. No Ryan so far. Sure, the giant squid hanging on the outside of the shaft was pretty cool. But after three days of having elevator delays because of tentacles wrapped around the lifting components, he kind of wished squid-rights activists didn't care so much, and the squids could just be zapped or something.

Around floor 314, Benjamin finally spotted Ryan. He



slowed his descent, jumped from the elevator shaft, and chased Ryan down a hallway. But then Ryan ran into a room and slid the door closed behind him. It was only once Andy managed to join Benjamin that they were able to pry the door open. Ryan stood there amid ten record copying machines, holding the purple striped record in his hand and smiling.

“Oh, was this yours?” Ryan held up the record with his thumb and two fingers.

Benjamin reached out to grab it. “Seriously, why are you such a pain?” But before he could get the record, Ryan yanked it away.

“Me?” Ryan feigned a pathetic innocent look. “I’m only filing things.”

“Just hand it over,” Andy said, and Benjamin noticed the record come loose from Ryan’s fingers. Andy was using telekinesis to get it. So Benjamin joined in. After all, two of them working against Ryan would be a sure win.

But Ryan grabbed it back. “It’s a trash record. Nothing else.” And before Benjamin or Andy could do anything, Ryan flung it across the room with telekinesis and pitched it in the record recycler. Then he smirked at Benjamin and walked out of the room.

Benjamin ran over to the recycler even though he knew it would be useless. He’d recycled enough records this week to know there was no coming back. Once a record had gone to the great big graveyard under the ocean, it was gone. And with it so was any clue as to the location of Benjamin’s brothers.

“What now?” Andy walked over to join him.

Benjamin turned around. “Now we kill Ryan Jordan?”



Andy laughed. "Fine with me, but Nathan Nyx may have a problem. He'd have to tell Ryan's parents."

"They'd probably thank us," Benjamin said. "When we get back to summer school, I swear I'm going to teleport Ryan's teeth out of his mouth."

"You guys have a problem?"

Benjamin and Andy turned at the sound of the voice.

"Joey!" Sure, Benjamin had known Joey Duncan worked with his dad, but it was already Wednesday, and they hadn't seen him yet.

"What are you doing here?" Andy asked.

Joey laughed. "Shouldn't I be asking you that? You guys work two hundred stories up."

"There's a squid on the shaft," Benjamin said. "We can't get back up."

Joey smiled. "You'd think with all the technology this place has, they'd be able to figure out how to solve the squid problem." He narrowed his eyes. "What are you guys doing down here anyway? This is a restricted area."

Benjamin thought fast, glad he'd been working on his mind blocks. He could keep his parents out. He could keep Joey Duncan out. And he could definitely keep Andy out. Probably the only person he'd never be able to keep out of his mind was Heidi Dylan, but then, when it came to telepathy, she was nothing short of an enigma.

"We were trying to make a copy of a record, but then it accidentally got recycled," Benjamin said. Which wasn't all together untrue.

Joey walked over to the nearest machine. "So you made the copy then?"

"No," Benjamin said.



Joey pushed a couple holographic buttons. “But the machine says it just made a copy.”

Benjamin looked at Andy. “*Ryan*,” he said to Andy telepathically. “*He copied the record.*”

Andy’s eyes lit up. “Can it make us another copy?” he asked Joey. “We must’ve recycled the other one.”

So the good news was at least they now had a copy of the record. The bad news was Ryan Jordan almost certainly did, too. And the even worse news was that once Joey took them back up to the five hundred and whatever-eth floor, they had to explain to Nathan Nyx why they’d been down there anyway.

Luckily, Joey was way cool and covered their butts. “We were just hanging out watching the squid intervention team,” he said.

Nathan narrowed his eyes. “Mr. Holt won’t be happy. He wanted Benjamin and Andy to work over spring break. Not watch the sea life.”

Like Benjamin’s dad would really care. Benjamin had hardly seen his dad all week aside from the commute.

Joey smiled. “I’ll talk to Mr. Holt myself.”

Nathan frowned, but given that he was really nothing more than a glorified mail boy, and Joey was...well, Benjamin wasn’t really sure what Joey was, but then again he wasn’t sure what his own dad did either, Nathan didn’t say anything. All he knew was neither Joey nor his dad were responsible for spring break interns, and Nathan Nyx was, which had to say something about the pecking order.

Nathan placed a hand each on Benjamin and Andy’s shoulders. “Time for more filing.”

