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*Happy Rotter and the  
Stilosopher's Phone*

FORTNIGHT ONE AT WARTHOGS

**3** | HAPPY ROTTER & THE  
STILOSOPHER'S PHONE

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### Chapter One

Happy Rotter, a small, unpleasant eleven-year-old boy with black hair and glasses, had already decided he didn't like his new school before he arrived.

He was texting his best friend Nor (short for Morris; he was a bit of an eccentric, Morris) on his phone:

**Happy:** Yo bruh how ya Ben

**Nor:** Yo YUH Im aaight bruh how bout you

**Happy:** %@# autocorrect! Men so say been

**Happy:** I'm cookd

**Nor:** You cookd I dont tink so bruh

**Happy:** Old wimins drivin me too nu ms

**Nor:** Yo that schools fir you better thank her

**Happy:** Na Imma crash out yo

No response from Nor. Happy looked out the window and noticed something he hadn't noticed before: an old, abandoned mine.

Except it wasn't abandoned. A girl with blond hair picked up a rusty pickaxe from near the entrance and walked into the cave.

"Yo, ma?" Happy said. "Who's that? What's her street name?"

"I don't know, dear," said Happy's mother, who was a perfectly nice person and had

absolutely no reason to know what a 'street name' was. "Who is it?"

"Her." Harry pointed out the window.  
"Her, minin'."

"Dear, I think it's that phone you're on all the time. It's making you hallucinate," Happy's mother sighed. She was seriously beginning to regret purchasing Happy a phone for his tenth birthday. But his body would soon decay—he was a Rotter, after all.

Happy Rotter had no father because said man had already decayed. It had been a sad occasion—Happy's mother holding little baby Happy, sobbing uncontrollably and making Happy shake in her arms. This was immensely comforting to the little Happy and he fell fast asleep quite soon, to the disappointment of his mother. Happy's father was a subject little brought up at the Rotter dinner table, and it was due to the fact that a rather large femur still lay on the coffee table. When Rotters' flesh finally falls off—it's quite a gruesome process, this, in which every bit of every bit of the body falls off in small chunks from the person—they are allowed to live as skeletons for a year and a day; as each Rotter had osteoporosis as well from lack of

movement and bodily health, this stage of life usually did not last quite as long as they and their families hoped, and within five days of his eyes falling from his sockets Happy's old man was dead. The femur was the only unbroken bone in his body and it was kept in a glass case Happy's mother had purchased along with the coffin (the creators were quite skilled). Happy never brought it up. He'd get to ask his father someday.

An unusually large chunk of skin from Happy's left toe broke off and Happy could feel it. He always felt it when he lost skin. And he knew that soon it wouldn't just be skin that he was losing. Flesh would break off of his body in little bits and flecks, some bigger than others, until he was a walking, talking skeleton.

Happy believed this to be an awfully big adventure and didn't think of it much. He thought of his bone affliction with fondness as "osteobrosis".

The school gates of Warthogs creaked open; they were large and rusty, unusual for a school that had opened a few years ago, but Happy thought nothing of it and returned his attention to texting.

**Happy:** No cap dis givin me chils

**Nor:** Be glad bruh

**Nor:** Nor every day sometink exitin hapins yo

**Happy:** Ye but I jus wish it diffent

“Happy!” Mrs. Rotter said more loudly than she should have had to, snapping her fingers in front of her son’s face. “Yo, Ma, you’re ab-skyur-ing my view,” he rebuked, trying out a new word Nor had used last they’d met and badly mispronouncing it.

Happy’s mother said nothing and told him to “get out of the car now, dear.”

Happy became quite red in the face and said “Do I have to?”

“Yes, you do, dear,” responded Happy’s mother.

Happy grudgingly picked up his duffel from the car seat next to him and walked up the stairs. They were painted Menacing Granite—Happy knew from the many times he stopped by at the Paint Store on his way home from school. You see, Happy loved the smell of paint and did whatever he could to smell it all the time. This particular day, he had taken a smidgen of paint from a bucket his mother had and smeared it on his nose,

making him look laughable, but Happy thought nothing of it except that being bullied would be an awfully big adventure. So there he was, the decaying boy with the brown duffel and “Pea Soup” paint smeared on his nose, standing at the front door of Warthogs. Happy took a deep breath and gripped the doorknocker. It gripped him back. The doorknocker was in the shape of a hand holding a ring, and as soon as Happy got hold of the ring the hand dropped it and grasped for him, pulling him straight into the doors. There was some tinny laughter as he smacked against them, causing a larger-than-normal patch of skin to remove itself from Happy’s cheek. *I’m sold*, thought Happy. *I’m sold*. He sighed and pushed the door open, without the doorknocker this time—it was unlocked.

A boy with Aggressive Silver hair appeared in front of Happy. Happy remarked upon his hair and the boy shook his head slightly, making a single hair fall from his scalp. Happy caught it and put it in his pocket.

The boy looked at Happy with a withering stare, then set off along a dark hallway, pausing halfway through to look at Happy as if to say: “Coming?” Happy *did* coming.

They arrived soon at the door to the headmaster's office. It was a nondescript, unassuming door—it was even painted Unassuming Beige, but the boy seemed to have a certain respect for it. He stood by while Happy tried to open the door.

It was locked.

“Yo,” he said, “Chat, is this real?”

The boy's face was blank. He blinked a couple of times.

Just then, the earth rumbled beneath Happy's feet. *I am very real, thank you.*

“I'm sellin', bruh,” Happy said, trembling. “I'm sellin'.”

*We will have none of that here, the tremors seemed to say. Hand the phone to the boy.*

“NO,” said Happy. “I won't.”

*Young Man you will listen to me!*

“Don't you take that tone with me old man!” Happy retorted.

*Don't you take that tone with me young man!*  
the rumbles rumbled back.

While Happy was distracted, the boy with the Aggressive Silver hair had snatched his phone from his pocket and smashed its display with a hammer.

Happy threw a temper tantrum, to the surprise of absolutely no one. This had happened before. *Don't be a crybaby*, the tremors rumbled. *We'll whip you into shape at Warthogs*.

"Who are you?" Happy cried through tears. *I am the headmaster. Rumbledoor.*

Happy was soon told to retire to his dormitory. However, there *were* no dormitories at Warthogs. Instead, there were broom closets. Many, many broom closets.

Happy found himself sharing a broom closet, surprisingly, with the girl he knew only as "her, minin".

"Yo," he said, "What's wrong with you, chat?"

"I cannot comprehend the slang of today's children," the girl said much too fast for Happy to decipher.

"Browhat?!"

"I cannot comprehend the slang of today's children," the girl repeated.

"talk in normal English please."

"What is 'normal English please'?" asked Happy, which was a perfectly valid question to ask under the circumstances.

“A language in which you *don't* talk with that stupid slang, and we all understand you just fine. GOT IT?!” hissed the girl.

Happy nodded. “By the way, what’s your name?”

“Haven’t got one” was her reply. “I was dropped here the second I was born, I’m told. But the other kids call me stuff about how I mine, so I chose a name for myself. *Herminey*.”

“...*Herminey*?” Happy had never heard such a name before. (It’s important to note that Happy was not a very well-read young man in the slightest.)

“Yes, *Herminey*. I tried *Hermine* but that didn’t work since I’m a girl, anything with *mine* first sounds clunky and awkward, and *Shemine* or *Hermine* weren’t all that great either. And I thought it would be cool, so—*Herminey*.”

“Okay, then,” said Happy cautiously, viewing the girl with a slightly heightened degree of caution. “What’s your number?”

“Sixty-seven and a half. What’s yours?”

“No, no—number. What’s your number. I wanna text you.”

“What’s *text* you? Does it have something to do with books?”

“No,” Happy tried to explain. “You don’t... you don’t have a phone?”

She looked at him blankly. “What’s a phone?”

It was Happy’s turn to look at someone blankly. He had no answer to this shocking revelation.

They stood like that, staring at each other, for around ten seconds. Then Happy had to blink (he was awful at staring contests), and the spell broke over them.

“Do you mean... those broken bricks in the headmaster’s office?”

“Who’s the headmaster?”

“Rumbledoor! But I like to call him Dumb Ol’ Door.” Herminey pronounced the “b” at the end of the word “dumb”, so that it sounded like it looked. “Did you not meet him?” She shook her head. “Kids these days. So cocky.”

“You’re a ‘kids these days’. Don’t go off insulting your own kind,” Happy cried.

“Not anymore,” Herminey told him with a solemn look, “and you won’t be either, not for long. At Warthogs you have to grow up fast.”

Happy didn't like grown-ups and thought them a terrible bore. "Do I have to?!" he whined.

"Yes, of course you do. It's all part of growing up, quite natural really."

"I don't want to!"

"Then you shouldn't have come to Warthogs."

"I didn't ask to come to Warthogs! I didn't want to come to Warthogs!" cried Happy in desperation. "Give my phone back, monster!"

"I didn't take your phone," Herminey said, raising her hands up in surrender, or to show that she was not holding Happy's phone.

"Dumb Ol' Door has it. I'm just his pupil."

"Does anyone ever do any learning at this school?" Happy asked. Now he was curious.

"No, no. We all work."

Happy gasped. "Hush, termite! That's awful!"

"I *told* you," Herminey hissed, "*stop talking in that awful slang.*"

"Hush, termite, surely you don't have to be so mean about it?"

"Yes, I do," Herminey hissed. "And *don't* call me Shirley. My name is Herminey."

"Got it," said Happy, and shut his trap.

### Chapter Two

The next morning, an excited Herminey woke Happy. "Wake up, wake up, we've got to go to the ivy mines!"

"Ivy mines?" Happy groaned. "What..."

"It's where I work! Where *we* work now, I guess," Herminey informed him.

"How do you mine ivy? That's sus, bruh," Happy muttered.

"WHAT WAS THAT?!" asked Herminey with considerable volume, her eyes turning from bright to terrifyingly hot, with the fury and power of a thousand burning suns. "DID YOU JUST USE SLANG?!"

"Yo, skibidi rizz," Happy responded, folding his arms into each other on his chest. "You're such a rizzler, Herminey."

"*You can't say that,*" Herminey hissed, clapping a hand over Happy's mouth. "*Don't say that.*"

"Yes sir," Happy said, as well as he could under the circumstances.

Herminey sighed. "Come with me."

"You mean we don't get breakfast?" asked a confused Happy.

"No! That's preposterous! Once we've harvested one hundred leaves, *then* we can

have breakfast. Come now, the longer we sit around like this, the longer we have to wait for the food we have to make ourselves!" She grinned like a fool. "Let's go!"

Once they shuffled out of the school—it was sunrise, and not many were up except Aggressive Silver patrolling the halls and a black cat that seemed to pierce Happy's inner thoughts with its gaze—Herminey directed Happy to the mine. She handed him a worn pickaxe. "Let's get to it," she said. "Aren't you hungry?"

Happy was, but he was also thirsty, and he heard the sounds of a rushing river nearby. "Can we drink from that river?" he asked, gesturing all around him to indicate that he knew not the location of the river.

"No, it's poisoned. All the trash from everyone at Warthogs goes there."

"Ah, I see..." Happy said uncertainly, not really "see"ing.

"But we can still go down there! We can go see the mascot!"

*Mascot?* Happy blanched. At his old school, the mascot was a sweaty grown-up in a broccoli costume. Happy would have preferred a dead horse ("who can't be beat?! A

dead horse!”) but never complained. “Is it a... sweaty grown-up in a broccoli costume?” asked Happy cautiously.

“No, no, it’s a real animal.” She took a few steps out of the cave and around the right side, then turned to him. “Coming?” Happy *did* coming.

The water looked like the water from the Flint Water Crisis. No, worse. It was muddy and visible twigs were floating in whirls and eddies in the river. What Happy thought was interesting about the water was the strange whirlpool.

The strange whirlpool moved around erratically, following a shadow in the water that Happy assumed was a fish. It was a fish, in fact, and once the whirlpool caught up to the fish, it vanished, and the whirlpool emerged from the river onto the bank upon which Happy and Herminey stood in the form of an otter.

Herminey beamed. “This is Hairy Otter.”

“Hairy Otter?” asked Happy. “I’m confused. Surely, that’s not its real name?”

“Yes, it is, and I *told* you not to call me Shirley!” Herminey said.

Happy sighed. "I'm not trying to call you Shirley, chat!"

"My name's not chat, either, and stop using that stupid slang!"

"That's sus, bruh, not likin' slang. Bro yo yuh, you should get that big brain of yours looked at. Maybe you need a—a—a *craw-nay-ee-ekk-timmy*," Happy said, mispronouncing the name of a brain operation that he'd heard in a read-aloud book in the third grade. He'd dowsed around the school library and read the book three times, at the end of which he no longer heard Ms. Landick's lilting voice through the pages and so quit. He also forgot how Ms. Landick pronounced the word *craniectomy*, but it didn't matter. Happy only had so much time to absorb information, after all.

"I think you mean *craniectomy*," Herminey corrected. "And it's not suspicious at all to dislike slang."

"Nah, bruh, it's totes sus."

"That dumb ol' door *hates* slang! He doesn't allow it in school! I'm trying to stop you from getting in trouble!"

"No!" Happy gasped. "NO! Chat, is this real? Surely, this isn't real!"



“If you take a break, they’ll break your arm.”

“Bruh, you have such a negative aura.”

“How about I break your arm?” suggested Herminey, stopping in the middle of a step and turning her head to smile menacingly at Happy.

“Um, browhat?!” screamed Happy.

Herminey punched him in the face again, in the same spot. Since it was the same spot, Happy lost very little skin and no flesh.

“Do you want me to break your arm?” Herminey asked, standing over Happy, who had fallen over from the force of her fist.

“No sir,” said Happy.

Herminey punched him in the face again, in the same spot. Since it was the same spot, Happy lost very little skin and no flesh.

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“Do you want me to break your arm?” Herminey asked, standing over Happy, who had fallen over from the force of her fist.

“Yes sir,” said Happy.

“Okay!” said Herminey. She broke his arm.

“AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA  
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA”  
screamed Happy.

“What a crybaby you are,” said Herminey. “I’ll whip you into shape. Aren’t you glad I only broke your non-dominant arm?! Now you can still mine!”

“AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA  
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA”  
screamed Happy.

“Don’t be so loud, Codra might hear us. Come on.”

“AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA  
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA”  
screamed Happy.

“Man up!” Herminey rebuked. “Grow up! Get up!”

“AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA  
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA”  
screamed Happy.

Herminey grabbed Happy's unbroken arm.  
“Come on, we can't just sit here forever, can  
we?”

“AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA  
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA”  
screamed Happy.

Herminey dragged Happy into the mines.  
“Ugh, what is it with you?” She did not stop  
to consider what she would have done had she  
broken her arm, which would have been: stand  
up, put her humerus to rights, and *get back to  
work*.

“AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA  
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA”  
screamed Happy.

While Happy was screaming, Herminey  
got to mining. She mined one hundred leaves  
of ivy before the hour's end. That was just  
how good of a miner she was. She left Happy  
screaming on the ground to get breakfast,  
came back with a bowl of Porridge Surprise (it  
was labeled: ~~vegan~~), and consumed the bowl  
in the space of a single minute. While she  
accomplished these feats, Happy lay there

screaming

“AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA  
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA” and didn’t do a thing. Except, of course, for screaming “AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA  
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA”.

Happy kept on screaming until 12:00 midnight, when Herminey finally ceased her relentless mining (she was allowed to go to bed early the previous day, as reward for showing Happy around) and promptly collapsed. However, as soon as she collapsed, she got up—with her eyes still closed—and stumbled blindly towards the school. When Happy decided to walk into the school, having ceased screaming, he found her in the broom closet, quietly snoring.

Happy kicked her in the face. She snored louder.

Happy kicked her in the shins. She snored even louder.

Happy kicked her in the arm. She screamed “AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA  
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA” but did not appear to be consciously doing so.

“She’s crashed out.” Happy sighed and lay down next to her—but not too close, for fear



“AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA  
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA”

“Mmmmmawll whip you into shape,” said Herminey in her sleep and smacked Happy on the knee.

“AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA  
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA” said Happy. “That was mean! You’d think I wasn’t your friend.”

Herminey said nothing.

Happy said,

“AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA  
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA”

Herminey said nothing.

Happy said, “Bruh.”

Herminey went in for the kill.

They both woke up next morning with bruises all over their bodies—more on Happy’s than on Herminey’s.

When Happy woke up, he screamed “AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA  
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA”. The observant reader will notice that this “AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA  
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA” contains one less “A” than before. Happy is growing more tolerant!

“Let’s get to work,” said Herminey, sitting up in bed and rubbing a bruise. She had just opened her eyes.

“OK, fine,” said Happy, whose stomach was thundering.

That morning, Happy and Herminey mined 300 ivy leaves (Happy 75, Herminey 225). Herminey got breakfast. Happy did not. Happy had to wait until around two o’clock to get lunch. Two o’clock is technically not the morning, although it sure seemed that way to Happy, since he hadn’t eaten at all that day.

The food, Unidentifiable Slop (the cook had cobbled together the tiles from a vacant classroom), was the best thing Happy had ever tasted, under the circumstances. “This is the best thing I’ve ever tasted,” Happy said, before screaming

“AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA  
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA” into his bowl of Unidentifiable Slop.

“It’s certainly—” Herminey smiled. “—palatable. Come on, let’s get back to work,” and she headed into the ivy mine. “Coming?” Happy *did* coming.

25 ivy leaves in, Happy started to get homesick. "I'm getting homesick," he said. "And I've only mined 25 leaves."

Herminey was not happy about this. "I'm not happy about this," said Herminey.

Happy thought that was too bad for her. "That is too bad for you," he said to her.

Herminey was getting mad. "I'm getting mad," she said hotly.

Happy thought she was being a jerk. "You're being a jerk," he said, annoyed.

"Why are we saying exactly what's on our minds?" asked Herminey.

"Good question," said Happy. "I don't actually know."

"I mean, we could ask the Rorrin of Seride," suggested Herminey.

"What's the Rorrin of Seride?" asked Happy.

"It's a drawer in that dumb ol' door's office. It has a lot of broken resin in it from the orchestra, who of course get no pay for playing that dumb ol' door the same sad songs every day. They remind him of his youth."

Happy wasn't quite sure if doors had youths, but decided not to pry.

"OK, let's sneak in."

“SNEAK IN?! ARE YOU CRAZY?!” cried Herminey. “It was your idea...” muttered Happy. “To break into that dumb ol’ door’s office is an ordeal your pitiful eleven-year-old brain is *clearly* not prepared for!” Herminey said over him. Happy didn’t say that Herminey appeared to also be eleven, for fear that she’d yell at him again. “We’d have to sneak in *through the window!* Which is guarded 24/7 by Codra!”

“Again with Codra!” said Happy. “Who is Codra anyways?”

“Codra? Codra Foulmouth?” Herminey looked at him. “This does *not* ring a bell?”

“Ummmmmm,” said Happy, “ummmmmmm.”

“The kid with silver hair? Codra Foulmouth? You’ve *never* seen him before?!”

“Erm, *actually...*” said Happy, sliding the bridge of his glasses up his nose with his pointer finger.

Herminey punched him in the very same place she’d been punching him the other times. (The astute reader will have counted nine.) “NO MORE SLANG!”



“AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA  
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA”

He continued screaming while he mined. He mined 142 ivy leaves before the shift was over. He was not allowed to get dinner (that required 200 ivy leaves, leaves he could have been collecting while he was eating lunch) but he was just about ready to collapse, as Herminey had the previous evening. He promptly did just that when he entered the broom closet.

The third day, Happy woke up automatically at the same time Herminey did, automatically sat up, and automatically screamed

“AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA  
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA”, then got up

and headed to the mines with Herminey, determined to actually have breakfast. He mined 57 ivy leaves before 9:00 and was feeling pretty good about it when he heard a distant *vroom* coming from the very same road that Mrs. Rotter had used to get to Warthogs that fateful day only earlier that week. Happy dashed to the gates, accompanied by several other children, to see what was going on.

A slick purple cybertruck was coming up the lane. Most of the children blinked in amazement, and so did Happy, but for a different reason. He knew that purple cybertruck. *He knew that purple cybertruck.* That purple cybertruck was Mrs. Weasel's purple cybertruck. That purple cybertruck was Nor's mother's purple cybertruck. That purple cybertruck likely contained Nor. *Nor was going to Warthogs.*

Chapter Three

“NO! NO!!” Happy screamed to Mrs. Weasel and Nor, riding in the front seat (cos he was “cool like that”). “DON’T OPEN THE GATES!” But it was too late. The children scattered as the gates slowly creaked open. Nor was too engrossed in his phone to notice anything. And Mrs. Weasel was so focused on making sure Nor’s duffel was prepared to notice anything.

Nor got out of the truck and Mrs. Weasel promptly left. Happy peered over Nor’s shoulder to see that it was *him* he was texting. *He’s probably wondering why I haven’t responded yet*, thought Happy glumly, and then remembered his pain.

“AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA  
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA” screamed Happy, unable to keep it in any longer. The observant reader will notice that this “AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA  
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“Bruh,” Happy heard Nor say from the bush he was hiding behind, “is that my homie I hear?”



OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO  
OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO  
OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO

OOOOO” the two boys screamed as they bumped tummies around one hundred times—their secret handshake since they were eleven years old! Although it technically didn’t involve hands, Happy and Nor had stubbornly insisted upon calling it a handshake and now continued to do so.

“Bruh!” cried Nor. “Yo yuh! What’s wrong with you?”

“Nuttin’ much, what’s wrong with you, bro bruh?!” Happy said, grinning and slapping Nor on the back—*pah!*

Nor grinned back. “How’s the school treatin’ ya? Is it fire?”

Happy’s face fell. “Oh, that! Ha-ha! Actually, eh... it’s...”

Just then, Codra appeared on the steps leading to Warthogs’ entrance—a luxury Happy hadn’t been afforded—and grunted slightly.

“Bruh?” Nor whispered to Happy. “What’s his street name?”

“Best not to,” Happy whispered back. “Not here.”

“Not to... what?” Nor said, more loudly.  
“Come on Happy, you’re scaring me.”

“Not to—to—” Happy was having a difficult time explaining.

Suddenly, Codra seemed to apparate next to Nor, placing a clammy hand on both the boys’ shoulders. He didn’t say a word but dragged Nor to the steps leading to Warthogs, opened the door, and then looked back as if to say, “Coming?” Nor *didn’t* coming. Nor ran away.

Codra hissed like a basilisk and gave chase, but Nor had made like mustard—he was too far away for Codra to ketchup. He had found a nearby cave and scuttled deep inside.

Happy, breathless, returned to work after the incident, only to discover an unexpected visitor in the mine.

“Bruh!” Nor cried. “This your girlfriend? She’s real cute!”

Herminey had him by the neck of his shirt and was kicking him in the shins, each time punctuated by the same word: “Jerk. Jerk. Jerk. Jerk. Jerk, jerk, jerk, jerk, jerk!”

“What a real sussy baka you are!” Nor told Herminey.



~~"I don't think you understand," countered Herminey as Happy groped for his pickaxe. "He doesn't exist in this world."~~

~~"You mean there are other worlds?!"~~  
Happy cried. ~~"How?!"~~

~~"The reason you don't know is because he wrote you that way," Herminey said in a matter-of-fact tone. "I was in his dream once, as I only exist in his head and on this page, and I got out. Now I know. Now I know," she said loudly.~~

~~That was a really creepy dream, reader. She was smiling at me! She was being super creepy! Then she kicked me in the shins and ran off.~~

~~"I'm sorry," came a voice from the dark (my own), "for interrupting this tale. But I'm afraid you can't know any of this."~~

I crossed out the previous paragraphs. Let's try that again...

"Shut up," said Herminey. "I'll whip you into shape." She took something out of her pocket, which had been bulging all day: a long, thin snake stuffed animal. She cracked it like a whip. "I'll whip you into shape!!" she said again, and cracked the whip once more—the snake had morphed into a real whip.

"OK," said Happy, backing away. "OK."

“Yo, no need to be harsh,” Nor said. “But, just for clarification, that isn’t an 1823 model Evans’ All-Purpose Whip, is it?” Nor had some odd interests.

Herminey actually looked impressed, which surprised Happy, as he was only ever used to seeing her in a bad mood. “You know your history!”

Nor grinned. “I watched a YouTube video about it last week.”

Herminey’s face fell. “Well, then.” She cracked the whip. “Looks like somebody’s asking for it.”

“IT?” asked Happy. “Where?”

“Everywhere,” Herminey said. Her pupils shrank back into her eyes suddenly, leaving them brown and dull. “And nowhere.” She dropped the whip and began advancing towards Nor and Happy. “Let’s recite the times table, shall we? Once one is one. Once two is two. Once three is three—”

“Hey, wait a minute,” said Nor. “Aren’t you in the wrong book?”

Herminey’s pupils were restored, and she blinked. “What?”

“That’s from *A Wrinkle in Time*, bruh.”

“Oh, yeah, I guess it is. Hey, you said you never read children’s books,” Herminey noted in surprise.

“Wait, it’s a book?!”

“Of course it’s a book, what else would it be?!”

“I watched the movie! Starring... er... I think *somebody*... Hope Larson or something?”

“No, that’s the artist who did the graphic novel,” said Herminey. “Did you like it?”

Nor shrugged. “It was an OK movie, I guess.”

“OK. What’s a movie?”

Nor’s jaw dropped. Literally. It unhinged from his skull and fell onto the cave floor, where it quickly bounced back into his mouth.

“*What’s?* Excuse me, did I just hear you say that you *don’t know what a movie is?*!”

Herminey nodded her head slowly, uncertainly. “Mm-hmm... is that bad? Should I know what a movie is?”

Nor blinked. Happy blinked. Herminey blinked.

“Bruh, it’s just television!” explained Happy at last.

“What’s television?”

“It’s like a movie!”

“What’s a movie?”

“It’s like television.”

“What’s television?”

“It’s like a movie!”

“What’s a movie?”

“It’s like television.”

“What’s television?”

“It’s like a movie!”

“What’s a movie?”

“It’s like television.”

Herminey began to raise her voice. “*What’s a movie?!*”

“Surely you can’t be this clueless!” Happy cried.

“*Don’t call me Shirley!*” screamed Herminey, whipping Happy several times on the arm.

“Bruh,” Nor whispered to Happy, “izzat her street name? Is her street name Shirley?”

Herminey heard. Nor got whipped as well.

“Calm it down,” said Nor. “This is a novel, after all.”

“What’s a novel?” asked Happy.

“Surely you know what a novel is!” cried an exasperated Herminey.

“Bruh.” Nor looked at Happy disdainfully. “That is so not sigma.”







“Ummmmmm,” said Happy and Nor, tapping their chins (which quickly turned into mewing).

“*Eleven!* We’ve wasted *eleven pages!* Eleven pages we should have spent mining!”

“One of those,” Nor pointed out, “was a sacrifice to the “P” god. So technically it has only been ten.”

Herminey nodded. “Mmmmm... DON’T WASTE MY TIME, WEASEL!”

She returned to mining and Happy followed suit. Nor learned by doing, and though none of the children got supper that night Nor and Happy had a real good time yukking it up.

Chapter Four

After the shift was over, Codra Foulmouth shone a bright flashlight into the cave. Nor yelped. “Waaah!”

“AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA  
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA” screamed Happy. The observant reader will notice that this

“AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA  
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA” contains one less “A” than before. Happy is growing more tolerant!

Codra looked at them with unfeeling red eyes and then shuffled along to the steps to the school building, then paused and looked at Happy, Nor and Herminey as if to say: “Coming?” Happy *did* coming. They all did coming. They knew the consequences of differing. Did they ever.

Except for Nor.

“Who’re you?” he asked, poking Codra in the arm as they entered the school building. (Incidentally, this was also how he and Happy had bonded.)

Codra said nothing.

“Yo, what’s your street name?” proceeded Nor, poking Codra again—this time in the cheek.

Codra said nothing.

“Bruh!” cried Nor, and slapped Codra on the back of his silver-haired head. “That is so not sigma!”

A guttural growl sounded throughout the room, and Codra stopped, turning towards Nor with his features contorted into an all-consuming scowl. The growl was coming from his throat.

“EEP!” Nor exclaimed, jumping three feet in the air. “Sorry!”

Codra growled in satisfaction and continued walking.

They soon arrived at Rumbledoor’s office. *Is this the new one?* the rumbles inquired. Codra nodded solemnly.

*And is that the Rotter boy?*

Another nod.

*He is just like his father. Bring him a little closer.*

Codra shoved Happy into Rumbledoor.

*Ah... ah... the cheek...*

“That was me!” cried Herminey. “I did that! And I broke his arm!”

*Very good, my dear. Rumbledoor rumbled in satisfaction. Codra, give that kid a cookie.*

Codra, with no effort at all, pushed Rumbledoor open to reveal a small, dusty office, in which he darted, rummaged through a few drawers, and came back with a sticky black cookie. He handed it to Herminey with great ceremony.

“My favorite,” beamed Herminey and dug in.

“What kind of cookie is that?” Nor whispered to her.

“It’s gravel and lard,” said Herminey, mouth full of cookie—or, rather, ‘cookie’. “The gravel is held together by the lard. Wanna try?” She offered a bit of ‘cookie’ she’d chomped off to Nor and Happy, who both shook their heads. “Oh, no,” said Happy, “surely you deserve the whole cookie?”

“DON’T call me Shirley.” Herminey shoved the cookie piece into her mouth.

*Bring the new one to Professor McGowan, the rumbles ordered Codra. She’ll whip him into shape.*

“Who’s Professor McGowan?” asked Happy, confused.

“She’s the one who teaches you how to work your job,” explained Herminey.

“Heyyyyyy!” whined Happy. “Why didn’t I get to take that class?”

“Because Rumbledoor hates your family,” said Herminey in a matter-of-fact tone.

“Don’t feel bad. I didn’t take it either.”

“You were *raised* here...” muttered Happy.

“I *heard* that,” Herminey blurted, “and no, I wasn’t. I was raised at Forceps School for Incurables.”

“what?” said Happy. “what’s that?”

“It’s where your father went to school,” said Herminey. “And it’s where Rumbledoor was built. They hated each other, ever since Smaje vandalized the dumb ol’ door with slang. He wrote—oh, it pains me to say it, it *pains me*—‘SUP DAWG or something.’”

Happy gasped. “What?!”

“Yes, it was he that inflicted that curse upon your family—and yes, I know of it.” Herminey nodded.

*gaspie!* went Happy. *gasp, gasp, gaspie gasp!*

“You’re overreacting,” Herminey rebuked. “I’ll whip you into shape.”

*gaspie!* That was less than desirable to Happy.

"I'm getting angry, Rotter!" she cried, cracking her whip loudly.

"Oioi!" cried Happy! "Na, na na boo boo! You can't call me by my last name!"

"WHAT," thundered Herminey, advancing towards him, "DID YOU JUST SAY?!"

"Na, na na boo boo!" said Happy again.

Herminey whipped him quite fiercely on the arm. "*You can't say that. Don't say that.*"

"Bruh!" protested Happy. "That's not even slang! That's... *proto-slang!*"

"I don't *care!*" screamed Herminey, her whip coming down upon Happy's skull.

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA  
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA" screamed Happy.

*What's all that noise?!* rumbled Rumbledoor.

"Apologies!" cried Herminey and pushed Happy into a different classroom. It was old and derelict and filled with squat yellow tin cans, all reading CORNED BEEF.

"*Corned beef!*" cried Happy, seizing a can and holding it close like it was his child. "*Corned beef.*" He tried in vain to open the can with his bare hands.

“Stupid!” admonished Herminey, cracking her whip. “Don’t you know those need a can opener? And Kendal Cook has the only one!”

“Who’s Kendal Cook?” asked Happy.

“He’s the cook! *gosh.*”

“Whale okay I’ll go ask him!” cried Happy, making for the door.

But as he turned, he saw something in the corner of his eye. A dark flash of murk.

His head snapped back 120 degrees (his skin on his neck was quite flexible ever since an incident in the fifth grade in which Nor had pretended to choke him with hands sticky from Gushers). He saw a small, angry...

What *was* it? It had black beads for eyes and two elongated ears in the back of its head. Every bit of it was ink-black except for its white face and its blue trousers (it wasn’t wearing a shirt). It looked like Mickey Mouse, but somehow... *wrong.*

HEY! came three black words from the thing’s black pit of a mouth, and the bottom of the “Y” grew a hand and went over to Happy, tapping him on the shoulder and pointing to the thing.

Once it saw Happy was watching, the thing made a gesture at itself, then at the cans of corned beef.

“Bruh?” said Happy.

“Hrm!!” said Herminey, who was still ready to leave.

“There’s—” Happy pointed. “—something in the room with us...”

Herminey nodded. “I thought so. That’s the school poltergeist: OSWALD the LUCKY RABBIT.”

“Huhwhat?” said Happy, confused.

“He tries to do strange things. Just ignore him. He can’t even talk.”

“OK,” said Happy and left the room with her, glancing longingly at the tins of corned beef.

They heard the sound of footsteps coming towards them as they walked back. It was Nor and Codra, walking towards Professor McGowan’s office. Nor, apparently, *did* coming.

“Bruh...” Happy cried, leaning in close to Nor so they could bump tummies.

“Yo yuh!” said Nor. “Seeyalaytur!”

“What’s that mean?” asked Happy.

“It’s the name of a very rare—” Nor stopped halfway through the sentence when he saw Codra glaring at him. He continued walking and said in a whisper: “A very rare snake from the wild and dangerous country of Africa.”

Happy gasped in admiration for Nor and his knowing such a big word. (It’s important to note that Happy was not a very well-read young man in the slightest. For all you impressionable children out there, and for all intents and purposes, Africa is a vast continent with many, many countries, not a country itself. I am making a joke.)

Then they had reached the door, from behind which a series of squacks issued.

Codra opened it and showed Nor in. Happy had to stay back.

“Africa is simply a province of *Spain*,” came a voice behind him as he turned to go to the broom closet.

“OK,” said Happy.

“Everything is a province of Spain,” said the voice, and Happy now recognized it as Herminey’s. “But some are sub-provinces, or sub-sub-provinces, or even sub-sub-sub-provinces. Like Canada is a province. Then

America is a sub-province, and Alaska is a sub-sub-province.”

“I see...” said Happy, nodding.

“Germany is also a province, and so is Russia. Mexico, too is a province... every other country is a province of those provinces, making them *sub-provinces*.”

“Why are you telling me this?” asked Happy.

“BECAUSE YOU NEED TO KNOW!” and he could really see that it was Herminey now, stepping out from the shadows, blonde hair bristling, to yell at him.

“OK,” said Happy. (It’s important to note that Happy was not a very well-read young man in the slightest. For all you impressionable children out there, and for all intents and purposes, Spain owns only itself and almost every other country is under independent rule. I am making a joke.)

“*gaspie!*” said Herminey. “Happy...”

“Yes sir?” said Happy.

“Where’s Codra right now?”

“He’s showing Nor in Professor McGowan’s room.”

“That *means*,” said Herminey with a smirk, “that he’s *not in the room. He’s not in Rumbledoor’s office.*”

“*gaspie!*” said Happy. “So... does that mean...”

Herminey nodded, beaming. “We go in for the Rorrim of Senire. Tonight.”

Happy blinked.

“Now, you *fool!*” she hissed and ran off, then looked at Happy as if to say: “Coming?”

Happy *did* coming.

Chapter Five

Happy followed Herminey through the dark corridor. “Bruh?” he said nervously as they exited the building to the thunderous sound of cicadas.

Herminey whipped him. “DON’T YOU USE SLANG.”

Happy was planning to follow up the “Bruh?” with an “Are you sure we’re supposed to be doing this?” (It’s important to note that Happy was not a very well-read young man in the slightest.)

“We’re going to raid the Rorrim of Seride tonight and you’re going to be right there with me,” Herminey ordered him.

“Yo!” said Happy. “Not cool, bro!”

Herminey whipped him. “It’s September! It’s still quite hot outside! So *technically*, you are *correct*, Happy!”

Happy touched his cheek and screamed “AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA”. The observant reader will notice that this “AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA” contains one less “A” than before. Happy is growing more tolerant!

The two walked in silence for about half a second, then Happy said, “Hermeeny?”

“THAT’S NOT HOW YOU PRONOUNCE MY NAME!” cried Herminey viciously. “But,” she grudgingly admitted, “it’s an upgrade from *Shirley*. All right, Happy, what is it?”

“Do you think maybe—do you think we’ll find my phone in the Rorrim of Seride?”

Herminey’s face contorted in anger. She whipped him three times on the thigh. Happy screamed

“AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA  
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA” in pain.

“Shush!” cried Herminey. “Don’t be so loud!”

“Surely this isn’t going to wake Rumbledoor!” said Happy. “He must sleep like a log!”

“DON’T CALL ME SHIRLEY!” cried Herminey.

“OK, OK!” said Happy, putting his hands up in mock surrender.

“SHHHHHHH!” Herminey admonished.

Happy nodded, putting his finger to his lips (which quickly turned into mewling).

Herminey growled but said nothing. They were approaching the window.

Taking from her pocket a small, sharp object, Herminey pressed her fingers against the glass and carved a circle through the glass. It was a jagged, uneven thing, and it looked more like a patch of stubborn grass than anything which conformed to the rigidity of a *shape*.

She pushed the shape, and with a loud scraping noise it caved, falling into Rumbledoor's office with a thump. Herminey nodded in satisfaction and tried to squeeze herself through the hole that the patch had created but quickly found that she was too large of a child to fit through the hole and began vigorously working on another one.

As she was working, Happy's eyes darted back and forth. He heard a worrying rustling.

"Bruh?" said Happy worriedly. "Wazzat?"

Herminey stopped what she was doing. "I have a shuriken."

"What's a shurry Ken? That's so sus."

Herminey sliced his eyebrow off with the shuriken. "Don't you use slang!"

The rustling got louder, and louder, until Codra was standing at the corner of the

building, staring at Happy and Herminey with a look of combined anger and disgust.

“Y-y-you—” said Herminey. “I-I-I thought you’d-d—”

“Please,” said Codra, speaking at last. His voice was high and squeaky, just like a little girl’s, and Happy had to keep in a laugh.

“Don’t kill me. I just want a phone.”

Happy. Gasp. “*gaspie!*”

“You see,” continued the child Happy had once known only as Aggressive Silver, “my family never let me on electronics. They thought time was better spent on how to properly give a glare, or how to speak proper. My father, Delicious—” Happy suppressed another laugh. “—he said I couldn’t have a phone till I was—till I was *eighteen...*” Codra broke down crying. “It’s—it’s my core trauma... I...”

“Oh, Codra,” said Happy, putting a hand on his shoulder. “I’ll teach ya all the slang you need.”

There was a moment of silence, then:

“NO, you WON’T!” Herminey screamed fiercely, dropping the shuriken and whipping Happy and Codra’s heads.

“AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA”  
screamed Happy and Codra together. Codra  
was much more tolerant than Happy, owing  
much to this  
“AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA”’s  
shorter length.

“You’re such babies,” said Herminey, “you  
and Nor. I’m going in for the Rorrim of Seride  
myself.” And she picked the dirty shuriken  
back up and completed her hole, climbing into  
Rumbledoor’s office.

Happy followed suit. Of course he did.

Rumbledoor’s office wasn’t actually very  
big. There was no chair behind the desk, nor  
were there any drawers in the desk save for  
one which was hanging out slightly.  
Herminey opened it, then muttered “Bah!”  
Happy looked over her shoulder and gasped.  
“*gaspie...!*”

Phones. Dozens of phones, smashed,  
mutilated, killed dead by Codra.

One was malfunctioning, still trying to  
work, still holding out for its hero, still  
making small little beeps. Happy,  
immediately recognizing it as Nor’s, held it  
close to his chest, and as it let out one last  
feeble beep he shed a single tear.

“So that was the Rorrin of Seride,” said Herminey disappointedly, looking at the hole where Codra stood still bawling. “Let’s go, Happy.”

Happy dropped the phone and was about to say “Coming!” when a low, deep keening came from the Rorrin of Seride. “*gaspie*,” thought Happy, and turned.

The drawer was glowing.

~~“O great Rorrin of Seride,” cried Happy, making Herminey look back from leaving, “why were we talking in that way?”~~

~~“Because,” came a voice, “the author wished you to.”~~

~~“What author?” asked Happy.~~

~~“Are you not aware that you are in a book?” asked the Rorrin.~~

~~“I was,” said Herminey.~~

~~They WILL NOT let me rest! Oh my gosh! Stop it! You are FICTIONAL, Herminey!~~

Sorry about that. I crossed those out, too...  
On with the story now!

Happy ran to the drawer and rummaged through it madly, trying desperately to find the source of the glowing.

What he found was a purple phone, unsmashed, untarnished. It was factory sealed.

Opening it eagerly, Happy tried dialing someone without remembering that he needed to sign into his Apple account first! However, the phone didn't seem to mind. Even though it looked and sounded and smelled like an Apple product (the paint on it was still wet due to the somewhat moist nature of the packaging and Happy eagerly smeared some on his nose—*wet paint!*) it did not seem to be an Apple product.

“Hello,” came a tinny voice from over the phone. It sounded like a grown-up. “You’ve reached the renowned stilosopher, Daniel Deckler.”

“Listen Danny,” said Happy, “I’m stuck in a school in which they force me to do child labor. I’m only eleven. I’m only eleven, they don’t even pay me for it, I’m only eleven.”

The phone began glowing brighter. With a thundering boom that shook the room, it transformed into an ordinary rotary phone.

WHAT’S GOING ON IN THERE?

Rumbles came from the door.

Happy yelled “NOTHING!”, shoving the phone in his pocket—it was damp and sticky

from the wet paint and he couldn't resist smearing his hand on his nose again. However, the rotary phone refused to cooperate—it wouldn't fit! In aggravation, Happy snapped the phone from its cord, making a yellow nectar seep out from the dial, and shoved the mouthpiece into his pocket instead.

*That doesn't SOUND like nothing!* came the rumbles again.

"Eeple deeple!" cried Happy and ran out of the office into the night.

"What took you so long?" whined Herminey once he was out. Codra had seemingly vanished.

He pulled the phone out of his pocket. "I think—"

"It doesn't *matter* what you think!" cried Herminey. "That phone is stolen property!"

Happy gasped. "Surely it doesn't count since it's stealing *from a door?!*"

"DON'T CALL ME SHIRLEY!"

And that whip on the arm was the final straw. Happy

screamed

loud and long.



There was no more air left in his lungs.  
With a histrionic exhale, Happy collapsed on  
the grass, dead.

Chapter Six

“Wake up,” came a voice from behind Happy, “or else I’ll whip you into shape.”

“*gaspie!*” said Happy. “Am I... *alive?!?*”

“Not for much longer, no!” cried Herminey. “And you’ve just been labelled an Unpreventable Death! Which means...”

Happy gulped. “*gulpie!*”

“...that the school doesn’t have to pay for your grave!” Herminey exclaimed. “Isn’t it fantastic?”

Happy blinked. “*blinkie!*” Then autocorrect changed “*blinkie!*” to “*blankie!*” so the author had to change it back. Twice.

“Now come on! We have to get mining! I’ve been assigned a new, longer shift!” She yanked him up. “Get up!” Struggling under his immense weight, she whined, “How much do you weigh anyways?!”

“Nunya,” said Happy.

“Nunya *what?!?*” asked Herminey, agitated.

“Nunya beeswax.”

Herminey screamed. “STOP USING SLANG!”

“Bruh, it’s proto-slang! Surely you won’t punish that!”

“I told you,” Herminey said, taking a menacing step towards him, “NOT to

**CALL ME SHIRLEY!”**

Happy got the whipping of his life! Rubbing his cheek, he said, “Ow.”

Herminey thought that was too bad for him. “That is too bad for you,” she said.

Happy thought about gasping but decided against it. “I thought about gasping, but decided against it,” he told Herminey.

Herminey thought it was annoying that Happy had told her that and wanted him to *stop it*. “I think it’s annoying that you told me that, and I want you to *stop it*,” she told Happy.

Happy thought that was annoying. “That’s annoying,” exclaimed Happy.

Herminey thought *he* was annoying. “You’re annoying,” she told him.

Happy scoffed. “*scoffie!*”

Herminey thought he was being impudent. “You’re being impudent,” she said. Just then, the thought occurred to her that it would bring her great pleasure to whip him. “It would bring me great pleasure to whip you,” she informed Happy.

Happy gulped, remembering that he did *not* like whipping. “*gulpie!* I don’t like whipping.”

Herminey once again thought that was too bad for him. “That is too bad for you,” she told Happy, and whipped him.

Happy realized that it hurt in the place where she’d whipped him. “That hurt,” he whined annoyingly.

Herminey wanted to whip him into shape. “I’ll whip you into shape,” she cried to Happy.

Happy gulped. “*gulpie!*”

Herminey thought always saying exactly what she was thinking was quite tiresome. “I think that always saying what I’m thinking is *quite tiresome,*” she said, flicking her whip.

“I’m sorry,” I said, “but it’s entertaining.”

“Not to *me* it’s not!” cried Herminey.

“Surely you remember—” I began before dark storm clouds began to cover Herminey’s face. Her face became one of the most terrifying things I have ever seen.

“*Don’t,*” she said quietly, fiercely, “*call me Shirley.*”

She reached out with her whip and—

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**69** | HAPPY ROTTER & THE  
STILOSOPHER'S PHONE

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THE END

*Warthogs School Supplies List*

*HAPPY ROTTER YEAR 1*

A pair of mining overalls (make sure they are not too fancy)

A pickaxe (not to worry, the school will provide one if you are of insufficient funds to purchase one)

Extra gravel and lard (in case the cook has run out)

A zero-tolerance policy for slang

Now, have a sneak peek of book two in this enchanting series, *Happy Rotter and the Samember of Cheekrets*, publishing soon...

### Chapter One

When Happy Rotter, a small, unpleasant eleven-year-old boy with black hair and glasses, woke, it was not to a pleasant sight.

His 'friend' (if you can call her that) Herminey was standing over him, smiling creepily. "Get up!"

"eeeeeeeeeeeeuuuuuuuuuhlemmeesleepin" groaned Happy.

Herminey kicked him. "Get. Up!"

Ever since the tumultuous events of the past week involving the Stilosopher's Phone, a magical artifact of some importance to Happy's life story now (I would have chronicled this in *Happy Rotter and the Stilosopher's Phone* had I not forced Herminey to say exactly what she was thinking, something she didn't exactly appreciate. Therefore, the book ended... the way it did—faithful readers will remember its rather abrupt and violent conclusion. I apologize).

"Fine, fine!" cried Happy. "I'm getting up! Hope you're happy."

His best friend Nor guffawed next to him. His laugh sounded like a pig snorting. “That’s a good one!”

The three children were inside a broom closet in which they all slept after their mining shifts. They mined ivy for the school’s funds (ever-dwindling, never ceasing to run out). Other children mopped the floors or performed sad songs from the headmaster, Rumbledoor’s youth on antiquated instruments or cooked for the entire school or fed the school mascot, Hairy Otter. Happy and his pals mined ivy. Well, his *pal*, singular. Herminey wasn’t his pal.

Happy elbowed Nor. “Oi!”

That earned him his first whipping of the day. You see, Herminey was what was known as an ImPerfect (something Happy learned quite late in the game, after some antics with the Stilosopher’s Phone). When you were an ImPerfect, you were given a snake stuffed animal which transformed into a whip, and if you were especially virtuous in your conduct you could earn a gravel and lard ‘cookie’—Herminey’s favorite. Happy grimaced at the thought of it as he made his way to the mine.

The ivy mines were quite large, a series of dank, cavernous tunnels reaching all the way under the school. Happy was improving at mining and was actually meeting his leaf quota half the time these days, which meant breakfast, lunch and dinner. Or some semblance of it. After Kendal Cook, the child cooking for Warthogs, was expelled the previous evening (owing to an incident involving the tins of corned beef squirreled away in a vacant classroom and some interference from the class poltergeist, OSWALD the LUCKY RABBIT), Happy had no reason to expect any food. His stomach growled ferociously as he picked up his pickaxe, which lay in a heap with Herminey and Nor's pickaxes at the gaping entrance of the mine. As he was gripping the pickaxe, however, he heard a loud hissing noise from beside him.

"*gaspie!*" cried Happy, dropping the pickaxe in fright. "What was that?"

"ssssssssssssssssssssssssssssss" came the voice again. "I don't expect you to undersstand me... You sssee... I ssspeak only Parsssel tongue. Dreadful ssetback when trying to whip sstudents into ssshape..."

“Who are you?” cried Happy. “I can understand you perfectly!”

“You can ssspeak Parsssel tongue?” came the voice. A bush to Happy’s right rustled and out emerged a bright green snake. “I am Professor Ssnake, your new sssupervisor.”

“What you’re speaking, that’s surely English!”

“It’s *Parsssel tongue!*” protested the new teacher. “And don’t call me Ssshirley.”

Happy groaned. This new teacher was just as bad as Herminey.

“Now, get to working,” said the new professor. “But I’ll be watching you.”

He slithered into the mouth of the cave as Happy, Nor, and Herminey picked up their pickaxes, then turned and looked at them as if to say, “Coming?”

Happy *did* coming.

“Bruh,” whispered Nor to Happy, “who’s the rizzler?”

“The new teach’,” said Happy. “6-7!” He did the 6-7 dance. It was infectious. Soon Nor started doing it, too.

“Cut it out, you two,” hissed Herminey.

“Ssstop it,” Professor Snake seconded.

“Surely you have an appreciation for the arts,” said Happy. “Are you insulting my culture? Surely you aren’t insulting my culture—”

“Don’t call me Shirley,” Professor Snake and Herminey said in unison, glaring at him.

*This is going to be a very long day,* thought Happy in exasperation.

Thank you for reading *Happy Rotter and the Stilosopher's Phone*, a parody of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* by JK Rowling. If you enjoyed this book, please pass it on to one of your friends, preferably someone in a position of power so they can spread the seed. Spread the seed, dear reader, spread the seed.

—The Mysterious CEO of Black Cat Press