



Chapter 1

I remember seeing my first human like it happened just yesterday. I was seven years old, and it was a pretty big deal.

First, Dad made waffles with maple syrup for breakfast. We ate outside our cabin in the sunshine, and he gave me his ‘get ready to see a human’ talk again.

‘Remember humans can’t see us, or hurt us,’ he said.

‘I know,’ I said.

‘Even if they stamp on you, it’s like a breeze...’

‘Going through leaves,’ I said.

‘Don’t be nervous,’ Dad said.

‘I’m not,’ I said. More like terrified. ‘Humans are just like us, right?’



‘Well, they look like us,’ Dad said carefully, ‘if they’re far away.’

‘They’re bigger,’ I said.

‘They *are* bigger,’ Dad said. ‘But that’s not what’s interesting about them. You know that humans don’t even know we’re working for them, because...’

‘They can’t see us,’ I said. ‘How big are they?’

‘And you know 75% of fidders work for humans?’

‘Yep. Big as a door? Big as a truck?’

‘The thing is,’ Dad said, ‘being big doesn’t mean you’re scary. Like...’ he looked around. ‘That tree is not scary, right?’

I looked at the tree, reaching out of sight to the sky.

‘A human is as big as a *tree*?’ I said.

‘No, no,’ Dad said. ‘A human would think that tree was big too.’

‘So, are they as big as our cabin?’ I said.

‘I never measured a human,’ Dad said, and took a huge bite of waffle. He had said all he was going to say.

Me and Dad lived together in a cabin outside Linbradan. This human we were going to see lived right in Linbradan, so we would travel by locator.

An adult human can walk four miles in an hour, but it would take a fiddler days. We use locators to travel long distances.

Locators look quite like the mobile phones that humans use, with silver buttons and a little screen. You type in where you want to go, press the ‘locate’ button, and *whirr* **FIZZ**... there you are, located. My dad had his own locator, given to him by his department. They relied on him to be in the right



place at the right time, and he never let them down.

Now Dad took his locator out of his pocket, and keyed in the human's location.

'Will we be right beside the human?' I said.

'About five metres away,' Dad said. 'A two-minute walk. Okay?'

I nodded. I was nervous. Here I was, going to see a human, and what's more, travelling by locator. Locators almost always work, but you have to be careful with them.

I clamped my hand onto Dad's and he pressed the locate button.

It's hard to describe how locating feels. Your skin tingles like you're standing in a sparkling shower, and you get this thrilling, whirring feeling. The whirring gets faster, and you feel tickly, like there's a sparkler fizzing inside you. Then you open your eyes, and you've located.

I felt that *whirr FIZZ* now, and when it stopped I opened my eyes. Me and Dad were in a

vast plain of waving green grass. Dad lifted me up, so I could see over the top of the grass. A few metres away was a blanket the size of our garden, and on the blanket lay the human.

I could see why folks said humans looked like fidders. This one had two legs and two arms, and one head with ears at the side and eyes at the front and so on. But it was pasty, and bald, and had no teeth, and kind of wobbled on its back, like an upturned beetle.

And it was big as a truck.

‘Are they all this pale?’ I asked.

‘Nah, they got lots of colours, same as us,’ Dad said. ‘Come on, let’s go closer.’ He put me down, and I held his hand and hiked after him until we reached the edge of the giant blanket.

‘Wait here, Stevie. I’m going right up,’ Dad said. He clambered onto the thick blanket and made his way over its rumpled waves. I stayed put. Dad reached the giant human, and next thing, he leapt right onto the creature’s hill of a belly.

‘Be careful, Dad!’ I yelled.

‘It’s asleep,’ he shouted back.

Then the human’s eyes opened, and it trembled like an earthquake. Dad jumped onto one arm, just as the other arm lifted like a great tree bough trying to snag a wisp of cloud from the sky. The raised arm dropped, and Dad toppled into the path of the falling hand.



‘DAD!’ I yelled — too late. The hand collapsed right on top of him, like a chest of drawers landing from space.

But... there was Dad. He made a ‘ta-da!’ movement with his arms. The human’s eyes flicked towards him, then looked back to a twirl of cloud in the summer sky. Dad huffed and puffed his way back to me.

‘See?’ he said. ‘They can’t hurt you! No human can!’

‘Except they could give me a heart attack,’ I said.

‘Aw, Stevie, did I scare you? I’m so used to humans, I forget what it’s like, seeing them the first time.’

We watched



the human for a bit. It wiggled and wibbled and roared like a jungle bird.

When my breath had steadied, we located home, and Dad started washing fruit. Preparing excellent food was, in my opinion, Dad's most outstanding hobby.

'Let's have us some mambo smoothies,' he said.

'You mean mango?' I said. Ever since I was little, Dad sometimes mixed words up. 'Yes, please.'

Dad hummed and chopped fruit. 'So,' he said. 'Your first human.' He took out the blender. 'Will I put in banana?'

'I wonder what they think of us,' I said.

'But they don't know we exist,' Dad said. 'They can't see us. I'll put in banana.'

'I thought that human saw you,' I said. 'Just for a second.'

'You know what, Stevie,' Dad said. 'I've thought that too.' He sounded pleased. 'Sometimes I think the baby ones can see us.' He pressed the blender button and it started to roar. 'How about I put a peach in?'

he yelled.

I didn't answer.

Dad shared the smoothie mix into two glasses. When he offered me mine, he saw my face, and his eyebrows popped high. 'You okay, Stevie?'

'That human?' I said. I can still hear my voice wobbling. 'That was a *baby*?'

Dad put the smoothies on the worktop and crouched down to look me straight in the eye.

'Yes, that was a baby,' he said. 'I know humans seem very big, Stevie, but you'll get used to them. I promise. You'll even get to like them.'

'I won't,' I said. 'I'm going to steer clear of them. They scare me.'

'Some things you do, even if you're scared,' Dad said.

