

SCRAP

ESCAPE From SOMEWHERE 513

To the Band
And the families we choose
~ GB

To all the people who are part of my life and have
inspired me and filled me with determination
throughout this journey.
~ AT



LITTLE TIGER

An imprint of Little Tiger Press Limited
1 Coda Studios, 189 Munster Road, London SW6 6AW
www.littletiger.co.uk

Imported into the EEA by Penguin Random House Ireland,
Morrison Chambers, 32 Nassau Street, Dublin D02 YH68
www.littletigerpress.com

A paperback original
First published in Great Britain in 2025
Text copyright © Guy Bass, 2025
Illustrations copyright © Alessia Trunfio, 2025

ISBN: 978-1-78895-765-6
e-ISBN: 978-1-78895-851-6

The right of Guy Bass and Alessia Trunfio to be identified as the author and illustrator of this work respectively has been asserted by them in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988.

All rights reserved.

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, resold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition, being imposed upon the subsequent purchaser.

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Printed and bound in the UK.
STP/3400/0652/0325



The Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) is a global, not-for-profit organization dedicated to the promotion of responsible forest management worldwide. FSC® defines standards based on agreed principles for responsible forest stewardship that are supported by environmental, social, and economic stakeholders. To learn more, visit www.fsc.org

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

SCRAP

ESCAPE From SOMEWHERE 513



GUY BASS

ILLUSTRATED BY ALESSIA TRUNFIO

LITTLE TIGER

LONDON

FreeWill™ is given, freedom is won.

From Memoir of a Mechanical Mayor by Harmony Highshine





ALL THE THINGS THAT WILL NEVER CHANGE

By Natalie 'Gnat' Brightside, Aged 11 ½



I thought me and my sister would be together forever. Those first five years on Somewhere 513, it was just me and Mum and Paige in the Foxhole. It didn't seem weird at the time – growing up in an underground bunker, not even seeing the Outside except for pictures in books. To be clear, we didn't stay in the Foxhole all that time because being there was so great (it mostly was but I don't miss the smell). We stayed in the Foxhole because we had to.

We stayed cos of the robots.

You're probably like, *yeah, we know. You grew up on a faraway planet where the robots were supposed to look after the humans but the robots decided to keep the planet for themselves and they made all the humans leave and so in the end there were no humans left on Somewhere 513,*

except there actually were – your mum and dad. They hid in a Foxhole and they had your sister and you, but then they died and then you had to leave the Foxhole in search of the King of the Robots so he would help you get off-world.

And you'd be right. That's exactly what happened.

But that was a long time ago.

When I was five, if I'd have made a list of all the things about my life that I didn't think would ever change, I'm pretty sure that list would look like this:

Mum

Paige

Foxhole

Turns out that's everything that *did* change.

Maybe that's what growing up is. Maybe it's when all the things you thought would always stay the same start to change. They change and there's not one thing you can do about it and that's that.

Well, this is that. This is when everything changes.

Not that things hadn't changed a lot already. From the moment me and Paige met the King of the Robots, it was pretty much *all* change. We found him living on a pile of junk and he wasn't pleased to see us. K1-NG didn't think he was King of the Robots any more – he thought he was just *Scrap*, partly cos he wasn't very shiny

or strong and bits fell off him. And partly cos I called him Scrap and he liked it.

And then his house blew up and we all had to leave. The three of us, together.

We've been through a lot since then.

Me and Paige and Scrap got hunted by robots. We ended up in the robot city, New Hull, and the whole place was run by Mayor Harmony Highshine. She turned out to be the robot who made all the other robots rebel against the humans but the weird thing was Harmony Highshine didn't want to be a robot at all. Harmony Highshine wanted to actually *become* human. The only way she could do that was by putting her robot core inside a human body ... and the only ones left were me and Paige.

Even after all these years, I don't like Harmony Highshine the most.

Anyway, as soon as we got to New Hull, we were trying to get out of there. We ran and we kept running. We headed west to the Elsewhere, looking for this rocket ship, the *Pink-Footed Goose*, so we could get off-world.

Instead, we found Mooch.

Mooch was a town that sort of wandered around. It was full of robots but they were the first ones we'd

ever met who were nice to us. There was Wired Bill and Cybil and my best friend for a bit, Punkie. For about ten minutes it was *great*. We should have known then it was bound to go wrong. Turns out they were working for Harmony Highshine ... turns out they led her right to us. We *really* nearly didn't make it that time, but when we were with Scrap, somehow, we always managed to get away.

Then it was just the three of us again.

Oh, and a *bit* of someone else. His name was Newman, and all we had was his core. You'll find out more about him. Sorry about that.

And all the while, we were looking for a way to escape – a way to get off-world. We looked for the ship that brought the robots to Somewhere 513, but it turned out that ship didn't exist at *all*. Then we found out about this *other* ship, and we didn't know whether that ship existed either, but we still had to go looking. We just sort of hoped. Hoped the ship was there ... hoped it would fly ... hoped it had stasis pods that would keep me and Paige alive ... hoped it would take us Somewhere ... Somewhere else. That's a whole lot of hopes. But what else could we do? Just stay here? Stay on Somewhere 513? We couldn't.

We couldn't stay.

This isn't my story, not really. This is the story of my sister and her best friend, and of what they gave up to save me.

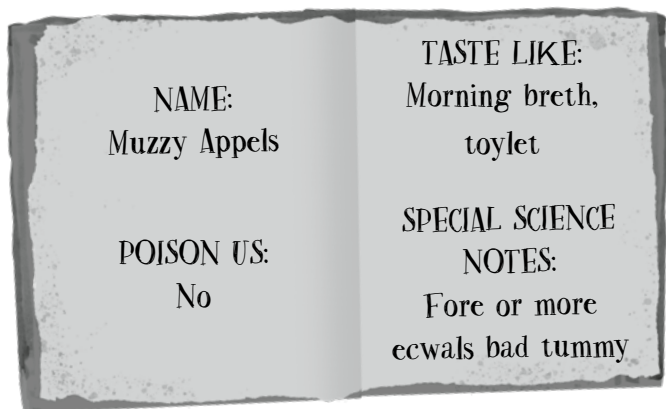
Everything changes. Like I said, I guess that's what growing up is.

It's what you gain ... it's what you lose...

It's what you leave behind.

EPISODE 01

HOME, SOUR HOME



“It tastes like fart.”

Gnat grimaced, staring down at the shrivelled fruit gripped between her finger and thumb.

“...Like if fart was food, is what it tastes like,” she added with disgust, and just a touch of glee.

“Don’t eat it, then,” tutted Paige. She snatched the fruit from her sister’s hand and threw it over her shoulder. It disappeared into the cloud of dust left in the trail of their transportation, a muscular, armoured bike known as a ‘brawler’. Its pilot, Scrap, bemoaned his

missing left arm as he struggled to steady the bike, its makeshift saddlebags rattling with the few possessions the trio had to their name as they sped across the desert.

"I'm still hungry," Gnat said, jabbing Paige in the back.

"That's why I gave you the muzzy apple," Paige replied, scratching at the patch that covered her left eye. "Now you're going to starve to death."

"Good," said Gnat cheerily. "I'll come back as a ghost and haunt you."

"If you're a ghost I'll just drive through you," said Paige.

"I'll use my ghost powers and make you crash."

"I'll—"

"Would you two give it a -zk- rest?" grunted Scrap, glancing round at the sisters. "It's hard enough to drive this thing as it is, without the pair of you chewing each other's ears off."

"Sorry, Scrap," Gnat said, pointedly adding, "*Paige didn't say she was sorry.*"

"Shut *up*, you gub," Paige said, rolling her eye. After a moment she leaned towards Scrap and said, "Do you want me to take over for a while?"

"I'm OK," Scrap answered. "I mean, I wouldn't say

-zk- no to another arm...”

Scrap waved his left arm, which ended abruptly at the elbow.

“Well, if we’re going to find you a new arm anywhere...” Paige noted, pointing ahead, “it’s there.”

Far on the horizon, low, wide mountains loomed. They glinted in the bright light of the planet’s one and a half suns.

“Home, *sour* home,” Scrap muttered. “Never thought I’d see -zk- the Piles again...”

It had been less than a month since Scrap had been forced to leave his home on the Piles. This bizarre mountain range was formed entirely of robot parts – unwanted limbs, heads and bodies from robots who had upgraded to finer cases. In the robot metropolis of New Hull, upgrading was a citywide preoccupation. All any of the robots there seemed to care about was replacing old with new and, as soon as they had done so, new suddenly became old and they hungered to upgrade again. It had, for a time, become Scrap’s obsession too. Trapped for years in a lowly ‘junk case’, Scrap had longed to be the mighty mechanoid he once was – the so-called King of the Robots. But in the short time he had spent with the last two humans on Somewhere 513, he had

learned to accept who he now was.

Since they were happy for him to be ‘Scrap’, he thought, why shouldn’t he?

“Are we going to go back to your old house?” Gnat asked from the back of the brawler.

“My house that got -zk- blown up? No, Gnat, we’re not goin’ to do that,” Scrap replied. “You *do* remember the -zk- plan, right?”

Gnat’s sigh was more than loud enough to be heard over the rumble of the brawler’s engine. “Ye-e-es, I remember the plan, because you said it one million times over.” She reached for a scruffy-looking toy bear that was looped to her belt and held it up. “Even Mr Steven Kirby knows the plan.”

“So what is it?” Scrap pushed her.

Gnat held the bear in front of her face, and in the deepest voice she could muster, said: “Find case. Get case. Go.”

“Ex-zk-actly,” Scrap said.

“Well done, Mr Steven Kirby,” Gnat whispered to her bear.

“We find a case, we get a case, and we get out of there faster than a snackrabbit in the midday -zk- sun,” Scrap continued. “We do not, under any -zk- circumstances

want to involve ourselves with any 'bots that might be -zk- lurkin' around."

"I wasn't going to..." Gnat said, drawing out her words.

"So no stops, no diversions and no sightseeing," Paige added, turning back to glower at her sister.

"I wasn't going to," Gnat repeated, taking even more time to say it.

"This is serious, Gnat," Paige went on. "Either Harmony Highshine is dead or she isn't, but Scrap still stabbed her. There's every likelihood we're public enemy number one..."

"And two and three," Gnat corrected her.

"So no messing around," said Paige. "No trying to make friends or pretending to be a robot or—"

"You think I'm stupid," Gnat interrupted, folding her arms. "You think I can't do anything and I always mess up, but I don't, and you think you're my mum and dad but you're not."

Paige shook her head, and decided not to entertain the idea that her sister had a point. She opened the satchel slung across her chest – a sickly green glow emanated from inside.

"How's our -zk- patient doin'?" asked Scrap.

The hexagonal object Paige took from her satchel fitted comfortably in the palm of her hand. It flickered faintly.

“Not good,” Paige replied. She pulled up her sleeve to reveal a rust-red armguard mounted on her wrist, her core tracer. On its small screen, Scrap’s core showed up as a bright, insistent dot of light. “Newman’s core barely shows up on the tracer any more,” she added. “Do you really think it can power a case?”

“It has to – *Newman* is the only -zk- hope you have of gettin’ off-world,” Scrap said firmly. He checked the display on the brawler’s control panel and sped up. “Keep your heads down, we’re comin’ up to the -zk- edge of the Piles...”

Paige returned the core to her satchel. “The Outskirts?” she said, tensing up as ridges rose up on either side of them. “Last time we were here, we nearly got *caught*. Shouldn’t we go around?”

“Avoid the whole valley? That’ll take -zk- forever,” Scrap explained as they reached the Outskirts. The ‘town’ was little more than a long street of ramshackle buildings, as unimpressive as Scrap remembered. Even Bad Knees Outpost, the only building that looked like it might survive a storm, seemed more

neglected than ever. “Anyway, that was back when the -zk- hovertrain passed through – these days, I’ll bet there’s nothin’ left in this one-cog town except a few rust buckets on bad -zk- charge,” Scrap said. “No one will even ... know we’re ... here...”

As Scrap trailed off, he was forced to bring the brawler to a standstill. Their path was blocked.

By robots.

Hundreds of robots.