

“I got an idea, you stay on this rock here, and you can point to anything you see that I miss, and I’ll go grab it.” Mr. Whiskers checked the breaks on Kitty’s wheelchair before slowly wading into the large stream. He held a garbage bag in one hand and a trash picker in the other. Kitty sat with her bare feet in the water, enjoying the cool liquid gliding through her toes.

“It’s sad how much junk gets swept through here.” The girl said with a frown on her face.

“I know. Unfortunately when we have those heavy rains, rubbish flows from houses and streets, and it ends up in lakes and rivers and streams like this one.” The cat-like Grem paused to look at his companion. He could tell she resented the fact her legs were useless, that she wanted to wade through the muck and help clean up alongside him.

“We’re here!” Firefly called from above them as they picked their way down the ditch towards them. Cricket followed suit, carrying a recycling bag and trash picker.

“Glad you could make it!” Mr. Whiskers grinned at his friends. **“Horizon didn’t come with you?”** He looked at Cricket who shook his head, though he was smiling like he knew something secret.

“Would you believe me if I told you that they wanted to keep working on the garden?” Cricket finally said when they reached the bottom.

“Wow really?” Kitty turned to look up at the orange-colored Grem with shock. **“I know they seemed to enjoy it, but I thought they would be too shy to go back there without us.”**

“That’s what I thought too.” Mr. Whiskers said as he turned to start grabbing junk wedged between the rocks.

“They said that they really enjoyed planting and that they would meet us when we decide on a time to set up the bat and bird houses.”

“I’m just glad they are coming out of their shell more.” Firefly said as they moved into the stream. They held a mesh bag in their hands as opposed to a garbage or recycling bag.

“What are you going to do with that?” Mr. Whiskers asked as the little Grem came up next to them.

“It’s like the saying goes, ‘one man’s trash is another man’s treasure’, hehe!” Firefly grinned brightly.

“It’s not a terrible idea. If we find something useful like hooks or weights or-”

“Sunglasses!” Firefly announced cheerfully, a pair of mud-covered and scratched up tinted spectacles in their hand.

“How the heck did you find those so fast!” Mr. Whiskers asked with an exasperated laugh as Firefly placed their find in their bag.

“I’m just that good I guess.” Kitty laughed at the smug look on the small Grem’s face, which made Mr. Whiskers roll his eyes with a smile.

“AHH! Look out!”

A shout from upstream had the group looking up to see what the problem was. A small pink and orange Grem was running towards them, looking flustered. Mr. Whiskers looking to the water where a garbage bag was floating towards them rapidly. Some of the items that had been inside spilled out and rushed along the current. They bobbed about with the threat that they would go back underwater to be lost once more.

“Kitty, grab and hold out that net behind you!” Mr. Whiskers pointed to the girl's wheelchair that rested behind her, an unused net leaning against it. She reached back and grabbed the handle before she threw the head of the net into the water. Mr. Whiskers, Cricket and Firefly worked to grab everything they could with their arms while they directed the bag in Kitty’s direction. In just a few short moments, what could have been a disaster was quickly averted.

“Wow, thank you so much.” The new little Grem huffed and puffed from her run, and it was at that moment the group noticed she was soaking wet. **“I slipped on a rock and fell in a deeper part of the stream. I unfortunately lost my grip on the bag...”** She grumbled, shaking herself off and sending a spray of water around her. **“Sorry about that.”**

“It’s all good, happy to help!” Firefly grinned at her.

“Here’s your bag.” Kitty commented as she brought the net to the shore. The small pink and orange Grem walked over to the net and retrieved her bag from inside.

“I really appreciate it. I’m Lottie by the way.” She stood up and smiled brightly. Kitty thought she was quite the adorable Grem, not unlike Firefly.

“Nice to meet you, Lottie! I’m Kitty and this is Mr. Whiskers, Firefly and Cricket.” The young girl gestured to each individual in turn.

“Would you like to join us? I noticed you don’t have a picker, we have an extra one in the basket behind the wheelchair you can borrow.” Mr. Whiskers said as he pointed towards Kitty.

“Thank you so much! I wish I had thought to bring one in the first place. That’s why I even fell in, because I was trying to reach something I really shouldn’t have.” Lottie sighed in relief before she retrieved the trash picker in question.

“They do make things easier.” Cricket noted as he held out his recycling bag for anything that could be reused later. Mr. Whiskers and Firefly worked to sort through the things that had fallen out of Lottie’s bag while she did the same with her own.

For the rest of the day, the group worked together to clean the stream. It was from that moment on that the group grew ever larger with Lottie as their new friend.