

Flurry the Bear

The Assassin's Pact



J.S. Skye

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CHAPTER 1

THE ADVENTURER

The leaves rustled as numerous footsteps trampled the vibrantly-colored, fallen beauties. Furry figures rushed through the foliage. Blades of grass and large fern leaves parted every which way as the caravan's white-furred leader weaved between the trees.

Shouts could be heard in the distance. "Flurry! Stop! Flurry! Wait for us!"

The snow-colored cub ran with all of his might out ahead of the others. He was a bear

on a mission. Flurry frantically charged on through the warm-hued forest until he reached a clearing with a small settlement that sat next to a set of railway tracks up ahead. “They have to be here somewhere. They couldn’t have gone far,” Flurry softly spoke to himself.

In the middle of his thought, screams were heard from the settlement. “Help! Somebody, please help! They’re here!” came shouts from the multitude of residents.

“Ah ha!” Flurry exclaimed and ran toward the commotion.

Boaz, Noah, Caboose, and Honja ran out of the woods, just a few paces behind their teddy bear brother. “Flurry, wait!” shouted Boaz, but he did not receive a reply.

Flurry rushed through the brick-laid streets of the tiny town. He looked to and

fro. “Where are they?” he shouted at the bystanders. The fear stricken occupants of the community pointed Flurry in the correct direction.

The cub took off like a flash of lightning. He dodged farm animals and onlookers alike as he rushed after his quarry. Boaz and the other cubs desperately tried to keep up.

Boaz had a moment of relief when he and the others caught up with their brother while he stood still for an abbreviated moment to scout the alleyways. “Flurry, please stop! We’re out of our league here! We need to wait for the others,” came the desperate plea of the little lion cub as he adjusted his thick-framed glasses.

“No time!” Flurry shouted and darted down an alley. He leapt up onto a carriage drawn by miniature horses, to Boaz’s

dismay.

“What in the world are you doing?” Boaz shouted and chased after the bear cub. “That doesn’t belong to you!”

“I’m just borrowing it! Okay, goodbye!” came Flurry’s reply.

“Hey!” came the bellow of the owner, a middle-aged groundhog.

Boaz ran up to the fierce-looking rodent whom Flurry left in the dust. The lion cub handed him some gold coins. “I’m terribly sorry about this, sir. He’ll return your horses to you, I promise! He’s just borrowing them.” After he received a paw full of money, the groundhog was pleased enough to concede his horses and carriage for the time being.

A loud crash caught Noah’s attention. The tall, slender lion tapped on Boaz’s shoulder

and pointed down the street. “Oh no!” came the little lion cub’s reply. Boaz looked on toward the chaos. Out ahead, he saw that Flurry had crashed into all manner of things as he sped off on the carriage. “Quickly!” Boaz shouted and ran in the direction of the mess. Noah, Caboose, and Honja followed close behind.

Boaz ran over to the vendors in the marketplace and found many of them with food knocked down and strewn all over the ground.* “What a mess!” Caboose commented. “Mommy would cry if she saw sis.”

Boaz groaned at Flurry’s behavior, and gave money to each of the vendors to pay for the havoc that Flurry made. “I’m terribly sorry about all of this. Please forgive the mess.” Boaz seemed to have his paws full as

he played the role of Flurry's public relations lion.

Meanwhile, Flurry rode the miniature horses hard. The small carriage bounced with each bump, hole, and rock in the path. Flurry made a beeline for the railway that had a steam powered engine of some kind prepared for departure.

The cars were being loaded full of goods and riches stolen from the town Flurry had trashed with his commandeered carriage. In addition to the stolen goods, there were prisoners that had been tied up with ropes. These captives were also being taken aboard.

The captors were ominous in appearance. They seemed to be similar to goats with long fur under their jaw that made their heads look rectangular. Their fur was midnight

blue, and they had very large horns that curled toward the back of their heads. Their eyes looked hollow and empty, as if they were without souls.

A majority of them were dressed in shiny armor with swords and spears, but their leader was different. The one in charge was named Naphal. Flurry had learned of his identity a few days prior to this sunny morning. Naphal was larger than the others of his kind, and he was hunched over as though he were elderly. His chin hair was long and woven together in a braid that hung down below his knees. He wore a hooded robe and carried a large staff instead of a weapon.

Flurry learned that nobody had a rightful name for these beasts. They were simply known as the Gatemakers, and they lived in

a hidden dimension. They traveled to and from their world through a gateway only they knew how to open or close.

Their leader, Naphal, had terrorized the inhabitants of various lands for many generations. Without warning, Naphal and his fellow Gatemakers would appear and kidnap a multitude of victims to be taken back to their world for whatever dark purposes they had in store. Nobody ever returned.

Flurry swiftly approached. He quickly deduced that these Gatemakers were so numerous that he stood no chance against them. *If only I had some help*, Flurry thought to himself.

However, Flurry did not have time to think about his odds of success. He had a mission at hand, and he was not about to

fail. Ever since Flurry's pirate adventure, something had changed inside of him. He no longer glorified pirates or the act of piracy, as he once had. Flurry now held to a vow he had purposed in his heart to keep. Flurry had found something new to be dedicated to, something more than himself. His new purpose was to help anyone and everyone he could. So, Flurry was quite motivated to catch up with Naphal and the Gatemakers, stop them, and save the day. In addition to that, his friend was one of the captives, and Flurry could not let anything happen to him.

Flurry hollered at the horses to press them for more speed. He leaned forward and whipped the reins harder. He was gaining on the steam engine that now coasted away from him along the tracks. He continued to near his target when a large shadow was cast

across the ground and Flurry's carriage.

Suddenly, there was a loud thump on top of the carriage. Startled, Flurry spun around and looked back. He let out a sigh of relief at the sight of Chingu. The red panda stood heroically on the carriage roof. Flurry returned to guiding his carriage. Faith, his trusty reeyu, glided on past.

"You scared me!" the cub shouted back at the red panda warrior. Chingu's reply was nothing more than extending his paw to point at the getaway train. Flurry knew that he had Chingu's approval for his hasty actions, and it motivated him to push on.

Flurry neared the last car. Chingu leapt from the carriage and onto the train. The warrior stood up and pulled his elegant blade from its scabbard. A bright, shining hue of blue radiated from the metal to

indicate pure evil was near. It could mean none other than the presence of Naphal. The Gatemakers prepared for battle. Chingu made his way across the train cars and cut down his enemies one-by-one. The red panda was greatly outnumbered, but he was not anywhere close to being outmatched. Chingu's skill with the blade was unparalleled by the enemies he now met head-on.

Chingu fought his way to the front of the train. There were only a few of them left. From the lead car, Naphal turned to glare at Chingu – his horns were exceptionally large to denote his authority. He showed no concern for the red panda samurai, turned his back, and continued to prepare for the opening of a dimensional gateway. A brief moment later, a black hole opened up ahead

of the train. Purple light spun and swirled around its dark center.

It was now or never. Chingu knew that once they passed through the gateway, nothing would return. Chingu separated his sword and fought with a blade in each paw. Left and right, his enemies dropped by his swords.

The noble warrior approached the prisoners and cut their ropes. “Quickly! We have to get off before it’s too late.”

“How?” asked another red panda. This red panda was not just another prisoner, but was none other than Chingu’s brother, Shinyuu.

“I don’t know yet, but we have to think fast,” Chingu replied.

Naphal glanced over momentarily, but was unconcerned. He turned his back and

looked toward his exit which fast approached.

“Here! Over here!” came a shout. Chingu, Shinyuu, and the other prisoners looked up and saw the reeyu glide back down from above. Drizzle rode on Faith’s back. She drifted close beside the train. “Jump, now!” Drizzle shouted.

Chingu looked at his brother and nodded. Shinyuu and the other prisoners jumped onto the reeyu’s back.

The extra weight made the reeyu lose altitude. Before long, the reeyu fell to the ground and slid across the dirt on her belly. Everyone was flung from her back and hurtled to the ground. The runaway train sped into the glowing gateway and vanished.

It was over. The sound of horses approached. “Guys! Guys! Are you okay?”

came Flurry's inquiry as he rode up and brought the carriage to a halt.

The cub jumped down and rushed over to Drizzle's side. "Driz! Driz! Are you okay?" Flurry had given Drizzle a nickname, because he thought it was easier to say.

"Huh?" asked the black-furred bear. "Oh, hi, Flurry. Yes, I'm fine. Thank you."

"No problem, pal," Flurry replied before he rushed off to check on Chingu and Shinyuu.

Everyone seemed to be okay, prisoners and all. Shinyuu stood up and brushed the dirt off his clothes. He stood up and was taken off guard when Chingu's paw smacked him across the back of the head.

"Ouch!" Shinyuu bellowed. "What was that for?"

"Do you really have to ask?" Chingu

replied. “How many times have you been captured now? I’ve lost count.” Shinyuu giggled nervously and blushed.

Flurry rushed over to Faith, his fallen reeyu. “Faith! Are you okay, girl?” he asked as he patted her on the head. She replied by licking Flurry on the face.

Drizzle and Chingu helped the prisoners into the carriage while Shinyuu took the driver’s seat in preparation to bring everyone back to the neighboring town.

Flurry mounted the reeyu, and Drizzle rushed up and jumped on Faith’s back, too. Chingu sat next to his brother on the carriage, and off they all went.

When they entered the town, the groundhog, prairie dog, and mole inhabitants of the small mining settlement rushed out to greet them. Everyone cheered.

The freed captives disembarked from the carriage and hugged their loved ones. Some of the groundhogs grabbed Flurry, lifted him up on their shoulders, and paraded him around the streets as their hero.

“Of course! He steals a carriage, wrecks the town, and then gets treated like a hero! How typical!” grunted Boaz while he and the other cubs stood by and watched.

“Sat looks fun!” Caboose chimed in.

* Noah and Honja stood by and observed the merriment.

Before long a Savannah cat, dressed like the Savanis medjay of legend, came out from the forest, followed by a crowd of more freed captives. He had a decorative gold neck plate with a blue gemstone laid in its center. His head was adorned with a gray and gold striped headdress, and he wore a

blue and red loin cloth with a gold hem. The heavily decorated Savannah cat led his party to the cheerful crowd gathered on the street. The prairie dogs, groundhogs, and moles all reunited with their loved ones as they kissed and hugged.

The cat approached Chingu and Shinyuu. “Well done!” said the yellow-furred feline.

“You weren’t so bad yourself,” Chingu replied.

“Thank you so much for your help!” exclaimed the town’s leader. He smiled at Chingu and the others that stood nearby. “Without all of you, my daughter would’ve been lost to me forever. This won’t be forgotten.”

“It was nothing,” Chingu replied. “It’s what we do.”

The town officials tried to offer money,

but Chingu refused. Boaz could not believe it, so he rushed up quickly to intervene. “Chingu’s just being modest, a little for food and supplies would be appreciated,” said the lion cub.

The groundhog handed Boaz some money just as Flurry approached. “Well, it looks like somebody’s having a good time,” came Boaz’s sarcastic comment.

“Yeah, I am,” Flurry replied with a giggle. Boaz huffed with frustration. Flurry grabbed the reins of the horses and led them down the street to their proper owner. “Thank you Mr. ... Groundhog.”

“No problem. Thank you for being such a fine, noble fellow,” came the reply of the carriage owner.

Boaz threw a fit when he saw such a gracious response to whom Boaz thought of

as a horse thief. “Ah! I see what this is all about,” he chimed in while he trailed behind Flurry.

“What?” Flurry replied.

“I thought it was suspicious that you’d be so motivated to help everyone over the past couple of months. Now it’s clear to me. This is about getting all of the attention, isn’t it?”

“What?” the cub exclaimed. “Don’t be silly! I just want to help others.”

*“Sure you do!” came the sarcastic, disbelieving reply. Flurry walked off to join Chingu and Shinyuu as Drizzle approached Boaz.

“What’s going on?” asked Drizzle.

“I think Flurry’s doing all of this to get attention. What do you think?” Boaz asked.

“No. I think he genuinely cares,” Drizzle replied.

“What?” exclaimed the lion. “How can you say that? You, more than anyone, know what he’s like.”

“Yes, but you’ve seen how well we’ve gotten along over the past two months. What does he have to gain from that?”

“Yeah, you have a point ... I guess.”

“A friend!” Caboose replied. “Did I win? Was it suh right answer?”

Drizzle giggled. Boaz groaned. “Sure! It’s good enough for me,” Drizzle replied and then patted Caboose on the head.

The evening sun came quickly and was close to vanishing below the horizon. Chingu wanted to continue on their journey back to Ursus right away, but the town’s inhabitants insisted they stay the night. Flurry and his friends found themselves being given nice rooms, warm meals, and

comfy beds for the night.

Flurry and the rest of his friends sat on the floor to play a game, Shinyuu napped, the Savannah cat stood watch, and Chingu sharpened his sword while he conversed with Honja privately.

Honja typically kept to himself, but Chingu spoke the same language as Honja. After a considerable amount of time on the road, since the day that Flurry and the others found themselves floating at sea, Honja warmed up to the red panda.

However, things were not so cozy between Honja and Boaz. The two used to be the closest of friends. It seemed that nothing would ever stand between them, until a couple of weeks ago.

Boaz was now giving Honja the silent treatment. He felt justified in cutting Honja

out of his life when he learned that Honja could actually speak his language, but Honja had been hiding this fact from everyone.

Nobody ever thought to question how Honja could always understand them, despite portraying himself as being unable to speak.

Honja, being small and defenseless, was often frightened and insecure. Sadly, this led to his lack of courage to come out of his shell and interact with others. He had many fears, and the fear of rejection or being laughed at kept him from speaking. He was afraid of saying the wrong thing or making a mistake. His act kept him safe and at a distance from the others, which was the way he liked it.

Now, things had changed. Honja learned the importance of his friends, and the

interdependency they all had on one another. He falsely believed that if he kept everyone at arm's length, he would not be wounded by any of them as easily.

Though Honja's logic made sense to him, he had deeply wounded and alienated Boaz. The others quickly forgave the little rabbit and moved on, but Boaz held a grudge. The lion kept thinking about how hard he worked to teach himself how to speak Honja's language and had often stood in as a translator or mediator between Honja and the others. So Honja's secret felt much more like a personal betrayal to Boaz.

Chingu observed how much Honja and the others changed since their adventure with White Cloud. They weren't as innocent as they had been before. They had been on many adventures since then, and each of

them had grown into their new roles as a team.

Noah now had a beautiful metal staff to use in self-defense. He carried it on his back attached to a leather belt. Chingu had been spending a great deal of time teaching Noah how to use it properly. The lanky lion also carried a leather backpack over his staff weapon to carry other belongings.

Boaz had his own backpack and a belt with a money pouch. He was in charge of their finances and directions. He carried a number of maps, books, and navigational tools. He had been given a dagger for self-defense, but he often kept it stuffed in his pouch with everything else.

Caboose was outfitted in light armor that covered his entire body. It was designed in such a way that he could roll up into a ball

and be protected from all sides. It made sense, considering that Caboose had a bad habit of wandering off into dangerous situations.

Honja was very small and virtually defenseless, so he was happy to get a piece of armor for his head. The helmet had a small, pointy horn at the end of his nose so he could head-butt enemies as a form of defense.

*The cubs each cherished the unique and special *items they had been given in exchange for their service to the anointed King of Leonne. Flurry and the others certainly had many stories to tell – if and when they ever got back home.

Flurry looked the same, with his blue scarf and side pouch. Drizzle still had his sword strapped to his side, but he now had a

pair of boots, and he no longer wore his red scarf. He never explained to anyone why he had removed it. Secretly, Drizzle had purposed in his heart to never return to Ursus. He considered Chingu to be his family, now.

They had all changed a lot! Boaz had a lot more responsibility, Caboose™ paid better attention, Honja was more social, and Noah was well trained to defend them. Most importantly, Flurry had become more selfless* and even treated Drizzle with kindness and friendship. Being together for so long in dangerous situations knit the group together in a way they had never been before.

Granted, Boaz still found Flurry to be infuriatingly annoying, but overall they each improved a lot.

The cubs were excited to be on their way back home, but travel took a lot longer in a region that was devoid of cars and airplanes for transportation. The nations with faster travel methods were well beyond the borders of animal kingdoms.

Traveling on foot was slow and tedious. Chingu had to take them on a route that was not a straight shot to Ursus, due to some regions being full of dangers that were too much for them to handle. As great of a warrior that Chingu was, he was not invulnerable, and he could not take on entire armies. Some territory was safer to circumnavigate. The Meowari from the land of Meowaritanga had a fearsome reputation, and were only one of several examples of places and things Chingu liked to avoid if possible.

The night drew late, and they all decided to get some shut-eye. They each lay in bed and waited for their much needed sleep to come upon them, which did not take long. However, Caboose could not sleep. He tossed and turned before he stated out loud, “I miss Mommy!”

The other cubs sat up from their beds. “I do, too, Caboose. I do, too,” Boaz replied.

“*Nah doh!*” answered Honja.

* Noah nodded his head as he looked to Flurry. *

While he lay in bed, Flurry asked, “Guys, do you think Mommy is thinking about us?”

“I’d like to think so,” came Boaz’s reply.

“I mean, we’ve been gone for so long. What if she thinks that we’re gone forever?” Flurry continued.

“What if she doesn’t remember us?”

asked Caboose.

“Don’t be silly,” Flurry replied. “Of course she’ll remember us.” Then feeling a bit unsure of his statement, Flurry turned to Boaz for affirmation. “I mean, she’ll totally remember us, right? Right, Boaz?”

“I’m sure she will,” the lion cub replied. “What I wonder about is if she ever learned what happened to us, or if she’s been wondering this whole time.”

“If only I had that door thingy, then I could get us home,” Flurry chimed back in.

“The what?” Boaz asked.

“You know! The door thingy that I use to get us places. It was under my bed.”

“Maybe you should sleep with it from now on,” came Drizzle’s voice from across the room.

“Good idea!” Flurry exclaimed. “I’ll be

sure to do that, when we get back.” After a moment’s pause, Flurry added with a hint of grief in his tone, “If ... we get back.”

“Don’t say that,” was Boaz’s concerned reply.

“Yeah!” Caboose chimed in.

“Just sayin’” answered Flurry.

“Guys! Let’s just get some sleep! You can discuss it tomorrow,” came Chingu’s plea.

The cubs conversed a little longer, but eventually they all dozed off to sleep.