

Monday 4<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Choose a word from the Word Box to replace each underlined word or phrase that has a similar meaning. Write the word that you choose beside the number of the sentence you feel it fits.

e.g. 1. = *kiosks*

2. = .....

1. People were selling goods from small structures open at one or more sides.
2. The message coming from the loudspeaker was not able to be understood.
3. Knocking down the vase was an accidental result of playing ball in the house.
4. Ahmed received his ant's stamp collection with nothing missing or damaged.
5. The police will make sure that the crowd does not get rowdy.
6. That model was no longer manufactured because it was not very popular.
7. Your handwriting is impossible to read.
8. The dry leaves were set alight by a spark from the campfire.

WORD BOX			
discontinued	ignited	incomprehensible	kiosks
disorderly	illegible	intact	unintended

**NOW ENJOY READING THE ENXT CHAPTER OF The City of Ember AND BE READY TO ANSWER QUESTIONS LATER IN THE WEEK.**

## CHAPTER 6

### *The Box in the Closet*

It was strange how people didn't talk much about the blackout. Power failures usually aroused lively discussion, with clumps of people collecting on corners and saying to each other, "Where were you when it happened?" and "What's the matter with the electricians, we should kick them out and get new ones," and that sort of thing. This time, it was just the opposite. When Lina went to work the next morning, the street was oddly silent. People walked quickly, their eyes on the ground. Those who did stop to talk spoke in low voices, then hurried on their way.

That day, Lina carried the same message twelve times. All the messengers were carrying it. It was simply this, being passed from one person to another: Seven minutes. The power failure had been more than twice as long as any other so far.

Fear had settled over the city. Lina felt it like a cold chill. She understood now that Doon had been speaking the truth on Assignment Day. Ember was in grave danger.

The next day a notice appeared on all the city's kiosks:

TOWN MEETING

ALL CITIZENS ARE REQUESTED TO  
ASSEMBLE  
IN HARKEN SQUARE AT 6 P.M.  
TOMORROW  
TO RECEIVE IMPORTANT  
INFORMATION.  
MAYOR LEMANDER COLE

What kind of important information? Lina wondered. Good news or bad? She was impatient to hear it.

The next day, people streamed into Harken Square from all four directions, crowding together so close that each person hardly had room to move. Children sat on the shoulders of fathers. Short people tried to push toward the front. Lina spotted Lizzie and called a greeting to her. She saw Vindie Chance, too, who had brought her little brother. Lina had decided to leave Poppy at home with Granny. There was too much danger of losing her in a crowd like this.

The town clock began to strike. Six vibrating bongs rang out, and a murmur of anticipation swept through the crowd. People stood on tiptoe, craning to see. The door of the Gathering Hall opened, and the mayor came out, flanked by two guards. One of the guards handed the mayor a megaphone, and the mayor began to speak. His voice came through the megaphone both blurry and crackly.

"People of Ember," he said. He waited. The crowd fell silent, straining to hear.

"People of Ember," the mayor said again. He looked from side to side. The light glinted off his bald head. "Our city has experienced some slight difficushlaylie. Times like this require gresh peshn frush all."

"What did he say?" people whispered urgently. "What did he say? I couldn't hear him."

"Slight difficulties," someone said.

"Requires great patience from us all."

"But I stand here today," the mayor went on, "to reassure you. Difficult times will pass. We are mayg effn effuff."

"What?" came the sharp whisper. "What did he say?"

Those near the front passed word back. "Making every effort," they said. "Every effort."

"Louder!" someone shouted.

The mayor's voice blared through the megaphone louder but even less clear. "Wursh poshuling!" he said. "Pank. Mushen pank. No rrrshen pank."

"We can't hear you!" someone else yelled. Lina felt a stirring around her, a muttering. Someone pushed against her back, forcing her forward.

"He said we mustn't panic," someone said. "He said panic is the worst possible thing. No reason to panic, he said."

On the steps of the Gathering Hall, the two guards moved a little closer to the mayor. He raised the megaphone and spoke again.

*"Slooshns!"* he bellowed.

*"Arbingfoun!"*

"Solutions," the people in front called to the people in back. "Solutions are being found, he said."

*"What solutions?"* called a woman standing near Lina. People elsewhere in the crowd echoed what the woman had said. "What solutions? What solutions?" Their cry became a chorus, louder and louder.

Again Lina felt the pressure from behind as people moved forward toward the Gathering Hall. Jostling arms poked her, bulky bodies bumped her and crushed her. Her heart began to pound. *I have to get out of here!* she thought.

She started ducking beneath arms and darting into whatever space she could find, making her way toward the rear of the crowd. Noise was rising everywhere. The mayor's voice kept coming in blasts of incomprehensible sound, and the people in the crowd were either shouting angrily or yelping in fear of being squashed. Someone stepped on Lina's foot, and her scarf was half yanked off. For a few seconds she was afraid she was going to be trampled. But at last she struggled free and ran up onto the steps of the school. From there she saw that the two guards were hustling the mayor back through the door of the Gathering Hall. The crowd roared, and a few people started hurling whatever they could find—pebbles, garbage, crumpled paper, even their own hats.

At the other side of the square, Doon and his father battled their way down Gilly Street. "Move fast," his father said. "We don't want to be caught up in this crowd." They crossed Broad Street and took the long way home, through the narrow lanes behind the school.

“Father,” said Doon as they hurried along, “the mayor is a fool, don’t you think?”

For a moment his father didn’t answer. Then he said, “He’s in a tough spot, son. What would you have him do?”

“Not lie, at least,” Doon said. “If he really has a solution, he should have told us. He shouldn’t pretend he has solutions when he doesn’t.”

Doon’s father smiled. “That would be a good start,” he agreed.

“It makes me so angry, the way he talks to us,” said Doon.

Doon’s father put a hand on Doon’s back and steered him toward the corner. “A great many things make you angry lately,” he said.

“For good reason,” said Doon.

“Maybe. The trouble with anger is, it gets hold of you. And then you aren’t the master of yourself any-more. Anger is.”

Doon walked on silently. Inwardly, he groaned. He knew what his father was going to say, and he didn’t feel like hearing it.

“And when anger is the boss, you get —”

“I know,” said Doon. “Unintended consequences.”

“That’s right. Like hitting your father in the ear with a shoe heel.”

“I didn’t mean to.”

“That’s exactly my point.”

They walked on down Pibb Street. Doon shoved his hands into the pockets of his jacket and scowled at the sidewalk. Father doesn’t even *have* a temper, he thought. He’s as mild as a glass of water. He can’t possibly understand.

Lina was running. She’d already dismissed the mayor’s speech from her mind. She sped by people on Otterwill Street going back to open their stores and overheard snatches of conversation as she passed. “Expects us to believe . . .,” said one voice. “He’s just trying to keep us quiet,” said another. “. . . Heading for disaster . . .,” said a third. All the voices shook with anger and fear.

Lina didn’t want to think about it. Her feet slapped the stones of the street, her hair flew out behind her. She would go home, she would make hot potato soup for

the three of them, and then she would take out her new pencils and draw.

She climbed the stairs next to the yarn shop two at a time and burst through the door of the apartment. Something was on the floor just in front of her feet, and she tripped and fell down hard on her hands and knees. She stared. By the open closet door was a great pile of coats and boots and bags and boxes, their contents all spilled out and tangled up. A thumping and rattling came from inside the closet.

“Granny?”

More thumps. Granny’s head poked around the edge of the closet door. “I should have looked in here a long time ago,” she said. “This is where it would be, of course. You should *see* what’s in here!”

Lina gazed around at the incredible mess. Into this closet had been packed the junk of decades, jammed into cardboard boxes, stuffed into old pillowcases and laundry bags, and heaped up in a pile so dense that you couldn’t pull one thing out without pulling all the rest with it. The shelf above the coatrack was just as crammed as the space below, mostly with old clothes that were full of moth holes and eaten away by mildew. When she was younger, Lina had tried exploring in this closet, but she never got far. She’d pull out an old scarf that would fall to pieces in her hands, or open a box that proved to be full of bent carpet tacks. Soon she would shove everything back in and give up.

But Granny was really doing the job right. She grunted and panted as she wrenched free the closet’s packed-in stuff and tossed it behind her. It was clear that she was having fun. As Lina watched, a bag of rags came tumbling out the door, and then an old brown shoe with no laces.

“Granny,” said Lina, suddenly uneasy. “Where’s the baby?”

“Oh, she’s here!” came Granny’s voice from the depths of the closet. “She’s been helping me.”

Lina got up from the floor and looked around. She soon spotted Poppy. She was sitting behind the couch, in the midst of the clutter. In front of her was a small box made of something dark and shiny. It had a hinged lid, and the lid was open, hanging backward.

“Poppy,” said Lina, “let me see that.” She stooped down. There was some sort of mechanism on the edge of the lid—a kind of lock, Lina thought. The box was beautifully made, but it had been damaged.

There were dents and scratches in its hard, smooth surface. It looked as if it had been a container for something valuable. But the box was empty now. Lina picked it up and felt around in it to be sure. There was nothing inside at all.

“Was there something in this box, Poppy? Did you find something in here?” But Poppy only chortled happily. She was chewing on some crumpled paper. She had paper in her

hands, too, and was tearing it. Shreds of paper were strewn around her. Lina picked one up. It was covered with small, perfect printing.