

Meeting Me

ACT 1 [Pages 1-89]

MUP MACHADO (6), submerged in a mucky creek, bursts out of the muddy water and asks a deer if he's seen a dinosaur. The deer darts away but Mup sees a large twisted oak tree. She climbs to its tippy top, surveying the land and early morning sky, determined to find a dinosaur.

At home DADDY MACHADO (36) walks into Mup's bedroom, "Morning Mup! Are you ready for school?" only to find Mup missing and her window ajar.

Up in the oak tree Mup spots a shooting star, just as Daddy rings a giant bell, signaling her to come home. With her back turned, the shooting star flares past her, knocking her dinosaur toy GERTIE out of her hand.

Recovering her toy, Mup runs home only to leave behind a small crater from which the meteorite starts to ooze a suspicious black goop.

Daddy drops Mup off at school and she catches up with her friends DREW (6) and LUCAS (6) on the playground for a game of monster catcher. They're discovered by ERIC (6), a bully who turns to Mup, "Girls are stupid, go play with other girls."

Mup finds a group of girls playing with their Piggly Puff Princess dolls. IZZY (6), their ringleader, tells Mup that in order to play with them she has to earn one of their special necklaces, 'the heart of true friendship'.

Suddenly interrupted by the arrival of the high school bus, the first graders run to the fence to watch the high schoolers. Izzy says, "I want be kissed on my 16th birthday." Then a trio of teenage girls walk by. Izzy declares that she is going to be like the teenage girls: popular and beautiful. Mup says that she will never be like that, only to be informed that she will, in fact, grow up.

Back home and sulking, Mup crawls out of her bedroom window into her jungle-like backyard, passes her dad, and goes into the forest. Daddy follows her and stops to inspect a black oozing puddle. He notices Mup crying in the large oak tree above him. Daddy joins her in the tree and Mup confesses sadly, "I don't want to get 'the puberty'. I don't want to be popular, or beautiful, I just want to be... me."

“Then be you. What do you want to do when you grow up?” Daddy asks. “I want to go to the wild places,” Mup responds. So, Daddy promises her that when she is older, he will take her to the wild places. With the sun setting Daddy calls for Mup to come home with him, but Mup is distracted by the oozing spread of the Black Dread which has begun to consume the oak tree. Upon further investigation Mup magically creates a large hole in the tree and decides to crawl through it.

Crawling out the same way she went in, Mup turns around to find the forest is now completely overtaken by the Black Dread. She crosses her barren backyard and climbs through the window into the safety of her bedroom, collapsing onto her bed.

But Mup is not alone. She hears someone talking on the phone about a party, a boy named Eric, and a pink shirt.

Mup quickly hides under a pile of clothes but the intruder, searching for her shirt, uncovers Mup.

Mup stares at ARIANNA MACHADO (16) until both yell, “WHO ARE YOU?” A fight erupts and Mup ends up destroying the bedroom that has been transformed with pink girly-girl teenage decor. Arianna tackles and pins down Mup but lets her go at the sight of the familiar scar that runs across Mup’s palm.

Both girls compare scars and realize they are the same person.
“You’re me?” Mup asks, stunned.

Arianna’s phone rings; she is going to be late for Izzy’s sweet 16 birthday party. But first, she has to get rid of Mup, so angrily, Arianna drags Mup back through the dead forest to the tree stump and explains that a disease known as the Black Dread has spread across the globe.

Arianna then pushes Mup into the tree hole, “GO! Get out of my life!” But the hole seals up, preventing Mup from leaving.

Arianna is late for the party, so she leaves Mup standing at the foot of the tree. Arianna rides her bike to Izzy’s mansion where the party is in full swing.

Mup, having followed Arianna, spies on her and watches as Drew and Lucas, now 16, try to enter the party. The bouncer asks Arianna if she knows them. Lucas chips in, “we always played together! We were best friends!” “Yeah, in like the first grade,” Arianna says. The geeky boys don’t gain entry, but Mup manages to sneak past the bouncer.

Mup comes across Izzy’s magnificent birthday cake and starts eating it. Meanwhile, Izzy (16) proclaims to Arianna that “this is the best birthday party EVER!” Suddenly they are interrupted by the now handsome Eric (16), who disses the birthday girl Izzy, but asks Arianna if she wants to dance. Arianna happily agrees, much to Mup’s disgust.

On the dance floor Mup sabotages Arianna's first kiss by biting Eric's butt. Eric then tumbles into the birthday cake, creating quite a scene. Eric blames Arianna. Meanwhile, a cake-covered Izzy accidentally catches a birthday banner on fire. Soon the mansion is in flames and partygoers flee in chaos. Furious, Izzy confronts Arianna, "you ruined my sixteenth birthday! You're not my friend anymore!" and rips the heart of true friendship necklace from Arianna's neck. Both teenagers are whisked away by firemen. Mup grabs the necklace off the ground and hops out an open window.

Meanwhile, back at home DAD MACHADO (46) surveys satellite images on a computer screen. He zooms in on a green valley amid the vast black and disease-ridden earth on the African continent. "I must go there to find a cure. I'll take Arianna just like I promised."

Answering a knock at the door, Dad opens it to reveal Arianna, looking sheepish, and accompanied by two police officers.

ACT 2 [Pages 90-202]

The next morning Mup crawls through Arianna's window and studies the photographs on Arianna's wall. "What happened to me?"

Arianna pounces on Mup, "you ruined my life." "You let me go" says Mup.

Just then Dad walks in. Arianna hides Mup behind her back. Dad announces that, in response to Arianna's recent delinquent behavior, she will accompany him "to the wild place. To find a cure for the Black Dread." Angry and sad, Arianna begins packing. Mup is nowhere to be seen. "Well that solves that problem," she says. Arianna walks out her door unaware that Mup is stowing away in her backpack.

On board their plane to Africa Arianna compares a rainforest travel brochure to the decimated wasteland out her window. Dad excitedly hugs her, "are you excited Muppy? It's our chance to bring the world back to life." Arianna demands that she never be called 'Muppy' and says she doesn't care about the wild places anymore.

Arianna and Dad arrive in a busy marketplace filled with locals. Dad asks passersby if they know how to get to the green valley. However, everyone appears frightened at the mere sight of Dad's map.

Also at the marketplace is MR. LEOPOLD (70) with his two guards LEON and ROM. They're searching for a storyteller, a girl who has seen the beast.

Mup unzips the backpack and wiggles out. She spots a dinosaur shadow and leaps after it. Arianna, stunned at the appearance of Mup, chases after her, splashing mud all over Mr. Leopold's white suit.

Mup finds herself at a puppet booth and listens in, "I came across a river hidden in the mist..." The narrator describes an encounter with a beast.

Arianna snatches Mup who hollers, "I want to find the beast!" Arianna retorts, "what beast?" "Mokele-mbembe, of course!" interrupts WAASI (12). The girls look up and see Waasi standing in front of her puppet booth accompanied by a scrappy pelican DIRTYBIRD. "The legendary beast that guards the forgotten forest," Waasi explains.

Arianna carries Mup away. Waasi follows them, "I've seen the beast, you know!" Arianna stuffs Mup back into her backpack and tells Waasi to go away. Dad, who has just purchased a jeep from an old man at the market, admonishes Arianna for her bad manners before asking Waasi if she knows the valley. "The 'Forgotten Forest'" Waasi corrects him.

Leopold and his men spot her. Waasi jumps into their jeep "YEAH! I can take you to the Forgotten Forest!" They speed off, spraying even more mud on Leopold.

Arianna, who is surprised to have been handed the keys, drives rashly through the wasteland. Waasi crawls onto the roof with Dirtybird. Waasi, who is a budding engineer, tethers the pelican to the car to test her new mechanical wing design. Dirtybird launches successfully and sails along with the car.

Meanwhile, Mup pops her head out of the backpack and looks around, "The jungle's dead." Waasi explains that the wasteland is her ancestral homeland and used to be a rainforest.

Meanwhile, Arianna continues to drive recklessly and careens into a ravine. The gang leaves behind the smoking jeep and heads out on foot.

Arianna sulks off to eat her lunch in peace. She is about to take a bite of her PB & J when a large Congolese toad, FROG, swallows it up. Mup chases after Frog, and Arianna chases after Mup. "I spent my whole life forgetting you! And for what?" Mup asks Waasi how she can find Mokele-mbembe, but Arianna stops Waasi, preventing her from retelling the tale.

Dad, seeing the rather glum Arianna decides to cheer up his daughter with their singalong song. His singing leaves Arianna embarrassed and infuriated.

As the sun sets Leopold sees the group's footprints leading off into the horizon. He is on to them.

"Who's ready to set up camp?" Dad asks. The group sets up camp and Arianna asks Waasi what she's running from. Waasi, adamant that she is not a runaway asks Arianna, "what do YOU want? For your future?"

"I want my friends to like me. I want to have my first kiss," Arianna says, slumping into her sleeping bag. "Oh, I want to fly," Waasi says.

Dad pulls out his plant books, showing the girls a picture of a cycad. Mup slips out of the backpack and runs off, following Frog into the dark, searching for her dinosaur. She finds an oil rig instead, and spooked, runs back to the campsite. Slipping back into the backpack, she hears Waasi telling the story of "a mysterious valley that time has forgotten. Guarding the forest is Mokele-mbembe. Mokele-mbembe, however will only reveal herself to those who have the hearts of true courage."

Stargazing, Dad asks Arianna "what would you tell your younger self?"

Arianna turns over in her sleeping bag with Mup in the backpack beside her and says, "Don't even bother trying to be popular, you'll always be a weirdo."

Arianna wakes up at spear-point. Leopold and his men have arrived. The group is captured and stuffed into the back of a cage truck. Arianna spots her confiscated backpack containing Mup.

Driving through the wasteland Arianna turns on Waasi "You ARE a runaway! What did you do?" Waasi confesses that when the Black Dread came and killed the rainforest her people had no choice but to go work for Leopold, building oil rigs. She explains that Leopold threw her out because she wasted her time trying to create flying machines.

They arrive at Leopold's massive oil factory and drive past Waasi's parents who are helping construct an enormous tree-chopping, oil-extracting vehicle.

Leopold begins to integrate his captives about the whereabouts of the Forgotten Forest, because underneath "lies the largest oil deposit in the world." He demands Waasi tell him "facts, coordinates, landmarks" because he does not believe in the story of Mokele-mbembe.

Just then Mup makes a grand appearance (much to the surprise of Dad) yelling at Leopold, "You're a big old bully!" Leopold's soldiers try and capture Mup. She quickly tosses Frog (who has swallowed the key to jail cell) into Arianna's cell. Arianna retrieves the key from the toad's throat (yuck!) and manages to escape. Free now, Arianna and Mup have no choice but make a run for it, leaving the others behind. They escape the factory on a dirt bike, unaware that their location is being tracked.

Out of fuel and lost in the wasteland in a tropical downpour, Mup and Arianna are fed up with each other. "You just had to come back... to haunt me... so you could... RUIN MY LIFE!" Mup sadly responds, "You... forgot me. You let me go."

Thunder booms. Mup tosses the heart of true friendship neckless at Arianna, "I'm never going to be you." Mup saunters off in search of a dinosaur. Separated, Arianna stumbles through the rain

and mud until collapsing, confessing that, “all I ever wanted was to be normal! That way... people wouldn’t think.... I was... so weird.”

ACT 3 [Pages 203-278]

Suddenly Mup is hit by a flash flood, Arianna hears Mup scream and races to her aid as she is getting swept down a torrential river. Arianna manages to catch her right before she descends over a waterfall into a cloudy abyss.

“I’ve got you. I’m not letting you go.”

“I don’t believe you,” Mup says.

Mup lets go of Arianna’s hand and plunges into the river below. Stunned, Arianna loses her grip and falls over the edge too, hitting the river below.

Arianna recovers Mup’s unconscious body and pulls her out of the water onto a giant lily pad. Arianna confesses, “I spent the last ten years trying so hard to be like everyone else, that... I forgot who I am.”

Recovering, Mup opens her eyes and the girls hug just as a large shadow looms over them. Looking up they see Mokele-mbembe happily chewing on a pink cycad flower. Mokele-mbembe then submerges her head into the river and the girls take a look below the surface. The river bottom is blooming with pink cycad flowers, making the clear water glow with iridescence.

Together, the girls conclude that the cycad flowers are keeping the plants alive and as the mist clears, they see that they are indeed in the Forgotten Forest. Diving down into the river, the girls retrieve one of the flowers to show Dad. Climbing ashore however, they are met by none other than Mr. Leopold and his soldiers who have tracked the girls to the valley. He confiscates the flower and locks them up in his massive destructive rig that is slicing away at the rainforest.

Locked up once more with Dad, Waasi, Dirtybird and Waasi’s family, Waasi hatches a plan to escape and stop the machine: Mup is cleaned up and made cute- hair brushed and wearing a pink dress- and politely asks Leon and Rom, the guards, if she can use the bathroom. Suddenly the shadow of Mokele-mbembe appears, scaring the guards away, but not before Mup has swiped the keys off them.

Waasi’s puppet shadow idea has worked and the captives make their escape. BABA, Waasi’s father, tells her that, “there’s a power switch and you’re the only one that will fit inside the hatch.”

Waging war, everyone helps battle the soldiers, Mup and Arianna split up to search for the cycad flower while Dad angrily beats up Leopold’s men. “How dare you destroy all the plants!”

Waasi turns off the power just as Arianna asks Leopold “where’s the cycad flower?” Leopold snatches the pink cone, summons his helicopter and climbs to the top of his oil rig machine, only to be followed by Arianna. They fight for possession of the cycad. “You definitely underestimate me!” says Arianna as she snatches the flower back from him. But Arianna slips and loses the cycad flower to a fire raging below her.

Just then Mup appears and tosses Frog onto Leopold to distract him with toad slobber. She manages to catch Arianna’s hand before she drops into the fire below. Mup, however, struggles to hold the larger Arianna, so Arianna volunteers to let go and falls into the smoke.

Leopold grabs Mup, holding her over the edge where Mup confesses, “It’s ok... to grow up... and change.” A shadow falls over them and Leopold’s eyes go wide as Arianna appears triumphantly standing on Mokele-mbembe’s muzzle, much to the amazement of Mup. Mokele-mbembe sneezes pink cycad snot all over Leopold and Mup. Leopold freaks out and Mup leaps into Arianna’s arms.

The two girls embrace, laughing at being covered in dinosaur cycad snot. They slide down the dinosaur’s back to safety.

Meanwhile, Leopold turns his prospects to Mokele-mbembe, “Forget oil! I’ve discovered a living fortune!” He makes his escape on a helicopter only to realize he is being piloted by none other than Waasi. Grappling for the controls, Leopold yells, “I’d rather die than let you fly me!”

Suddenly, Dirtybird attacks him, sending both Dirtybird and Leopold out of the helicopter. Miraculously, Dirtybird unfurls his mechanical wings and catches Leopold by the tail of his suit and deposits him into a cage as onlookers cheer.

Mokele-mbembe lumbers past the crowd and disappears amid the trees. Arianna and Mup watch her go, holding hands only to turn around and discover that their cycad flower has been burnt to a crisp. But they are covered in cycad snot which Dad bottles up, overjoyed to have found a potential cure.

Departing Africa, Arianna gives Waasi the heart of true friendship necklace, for being a true friend, “but even more than that, for having a heart of true courage.” Mup hands over Frog to Waasi. Arianna says “it looks like all of our dreams came true. YOU got to see a dinosaur; YOU got to fly; and I get to have my first kiss with someone really special. She bends over and kisses Frog. Frog sneezes and coughs up a dinosaur scale which Mup takes as a souvenir.

They say their goodbyes and as Mup, Arianna and Dad’s plane flies off, Waasi stands on the runway where Baba asks her “what are you going to create next?”

“I’m going to make planes with renewable energy, not fossil fuels,” she responds.

Back home, Arianna, Dad and Mup trudge through the dead forest to the tree stump, cure in hand. Dad pours the cure onto the ground at the base of the stump - but it doesn't work! "You're supposed to save the world Dad," Arianna points out.

"Well what if... YOU are supposed to save the world?" Dad asks. "By going back in time," Mup concludes.

Together they magically reopen the tree hole but before crawling inside Dad hugs them and says "you will always be my little girl. And I'm so proud of who you will become."

Crawling out of the hole to Mup's time where the Black Dread is just beginning to spread, the girls drop the last of the cycad snot onto the ground. It works!

But it's closing up the hole in the tree. "Ok I have to go now," Arianna says. They hug a heartwarming goodbye and Arianna gives Mup a necklace fashioned out of the dinosaur scale.

Arianna then crawls through the hole right before it seals shut, back to her own time. She emerges to a magnificent meadow of flowers and an incredible sunset over a green forest.

Arianna then notices that she is wearing the dinosaur scale necklace. She says, "Well it looks like everything changes after all. And that's ok."