

Chapter 27

In Chapter 27, Gregor is reunited with his younger sister, Boots, who arrives in the Underland accompanied by cockroaches but without their friend Temp or Queen Luxa and her bat, Aurora. Boots recounts fragments of her adventure, mentioning a "flutterfly" ride and swimming, but her scattered descriptions leave Gregor confused. The cockroach Pend explains that Temp, weakened and unable to travel, had urged a moth to take Boots to safety while he remained behind. Vikus, desperate for news of Luxa, questions Pend but learns little beyond that Luxa and Aurora faced a rat attack. Gregor clings to hope, but the uncertainty weighs heavily on them both.

Gregor pieces together clues from Boots's vague recollections, theorizing that Luxa and Temp might have escaped the Tankard through a submerged tunnel. Boots mentions a "baby pool" and bumping her head, hinting at a narrow, water-filled passage. She also references Twitchtip, the rat with a bandaged nose, suggesting the group encountered her before being separated. Gregor speculates that Luxa may have stayed behind to fight the rats or was captured, though the latter possibility is grim. Vikus, though visibly distressed, acknowledges the lack of certainty but clings to Gregor's reminder of hope.

Vikus insists Gregor and Boots return home, recognizing the dangers of staying in the Underland. He provides Gregor with medicine for his father, a gesture of gratitude and goodwill. As they prepare to leave, Gregor exchanges farewells with Howard, Andromeda, and Nerissa, who gives him a scroll of the prophecy. Vikus's gifts—a flashlight, a package, and the medicine—underscore the bond between them. Despite his worries for Luxa and the others, Gregor accepts the necessity of departing, though he promises to return if needed.

The chapter ends with Gregor and Boots boarding Ares for their journey home, leaving the fate of Luxa, Aurora, and Temp unresolved. Gregor's internal conflict mirrors

Vikus's grief, but both choose to hold onto hope. Boots's innocence contrasts with the gravity of their situation, as her cheerful excitement about returning home provides a bittersweet counterpoint. The chapter underscores themes of loyalty, loss, and the resilience of hope amid uncertainty.

