



## Chapter 1

Young Carl Fredricksen sat in the darkened movie theater, wearing his leather flight helmet. He straightened in his seat as a newsreel flickered onto the screen. The newsreels were Carl's favorite part of going to the movies. They were full of information about people, places, and exciting events going on in the world.

"Movietown News presents . . . 'Spotlight on the Rich!'" came the voice of the announcer. "Our subject today: Charles Muntz."

Carl leaned forward. Charles Muntz was a famous adventurer—and Carl's hero.

"The beloved aviation pioneer lands his dirigible, the Spirit of Adventure, in New Hampshire this week, completing a yearlong expedition into the lost world! This lighter-than-air craft was designed by Muntz himself. And what has Muntz brought back this time?"

The black-and-white film showed an enormous blimp landing in an open field. Then Muntz appeared on the screen. He looked tall and hand-some in a leather jacket and a flight helmet just like Carl's.

"Adventure is out there!" Muntz exclaimed into the camera. He lowered his goggles over his eyes and gave a thumbs-up.

Carl lowered his goggles, too, wishing he were a grown-up. Then he could go have some adventures, just like Charles Muntz, traveling all over the world, discovering new things, and bringing back priceless treasures.

"Gentlemen, I give you the Monster of Paradise Falls!" Muntz exclaimed on the movie screen. A curtain next to him dropped, revealing the skeleton of a giant bird. It was Muntz's latest discovery.

"But what's this?" the announcer said. "The National Explorers Society accuses Muntz of fabricating the skeleton!"

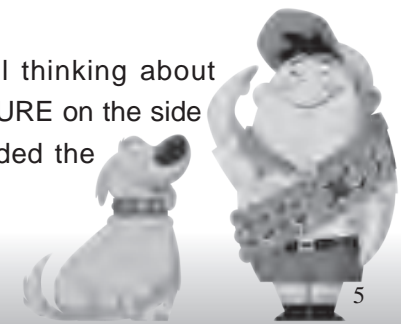
Carl watched, horrified, as the Explorers Society removed Muntz's photo from its Wall of Fame. How can the Explorers Society doubt Muntz? Carl thought. He's the greatest explorer of all!

But Muntz didn't give up. "I promise to capture the beast . . . alive!" he cried on the flickering screen. "And I will not come back until I do."

Carl smiled as the crowd around him cheered. Adventure is out there, all right, Carl thought. He just knew it.



Later that afternoon, Carl was still thinking about Muntz. He'd written SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE on the side of a balloon, and as he ran, he pretended the





balloon was his airship. He buzzed and zoomed, making the kinds of noises he thought a blimp might make.

“Adventure is out there!” said a voice, seemingly from nowhere.

Carl stopped in his tracks. Who said that? he wondered. When he looked up, he realized that he was standing in front of an abandoned house.

Something creaked. Carl looked up and saw that someone had attached a rope to the weather vane on top of the house. The rope tugged at the weather vane, turning it.

“Look out!” cried the voice from inside the house. “Mount Rushmore. Must get Spirit of Adventure over Mount Rushmore. Hard to star-board. Hold together, old girl. Whew! How’re my dogs doing? Ruff, ruff . . . ruff! Good boy!”

Carl crept toward the porch. SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE was written across the front door. He squeezed past the door. When he saw what was inside, his eyes widened in surprise. Pictures of Charles Muntz were tacked to the wall. Adventure gear was everywhere—ropes, a compass, even an old bicycle. A girl stood near the front window, “steering” with the wheel of the upside-down bike. She was wearing a leather helmet like Carl’s and looking out the window. “All engines ahead full!” she commanded. “Let’s take her up twenty-six thousand feet!”

There was no doubt about it—this girl was playing adventurer, too. Carl turned to get a better look at her collection of Charles Muntz photos and newspaper clippings.

“What are you doing?” the girl asked, suddenly appearing at his side.

Carl let out a yelp. He was so surprised that he let go of his balloon.

“Don’t you know that this is an exclusive club?” the girl demanded. “Only explorers get in here. Not just any kid off the street with a helmet and a pair of goggles. Do you think you got what it takes? Well, do you?”

Carl stammered.

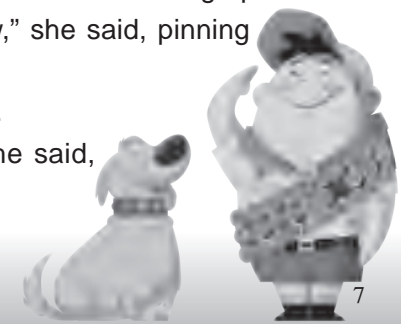
“All right, you’re in,” said the girl. “Welcome aboard.” She held out her hand, but Carl didn’t take it. He found the girl a bit intimidating.

“What’s wrong?” she asked, more gently. “Can’t you talk? Hey, I don’t bite.”

The girl took off her helmet and shook out her messy red hair. Buttons and badges were pinned to the front of her shirt. She unfastened one made out of the cap from a bottle of grape soda. “You and me, we’re in a club now,” she said, pinning the cap onto Carl’s shirt.

Carl smiled, and the girl grinned back.

“I saw where your balloon went,” she said,





looking up toward the second story. "Come on, let's go get it."

The girl quickly walked out of the room, heading for the creaky old staircase in the hallway. Carl didn't move. He was still feeling stunned.

Half a second passed. Then the girl popped back in with a quizzical look on her face. Clearly, she was wondering why Carl hadn't followed. Then she grinned, realizing what the problem must be. She had forgotten to introduce herself!

"My name's Ellie," she said cheerfully. Carl's face turned bright red as she grabbed his hand and pulled him into the hall.

Together the two picked their way up the stairs. Carl followed Ellie, careful to tread in her exact footsteps. He didn't want to fall through the rotten wood.

At the top, Ellie took Carl's hand and helped him over the last step. Carl blushed, but Ellie didn't notice. "There it is," she said, pointing to the balloon. Unfortunately, it was floating in a room that didn't have a floor. A single beam stretched across the empty space.

Carl gulped. It was a twelve-foot drop to the floor below.

"Well, go ahead," Ellie urged.

Carl screwed up his courage and stepped onto the beam.

He took another step, inching forward.

He was halfway across when he felt the beam splinter.

He had just enough time to see the shocked look on Ellie's face before he fell.



Carl propped up the flashlight with his good arm. He was trying to read in bed, but it wasn't too comfortable. He'd broken his arm when he had fallen off the beam in Ellie's clubhouse.

The curtains fluttered like ghosts as a breeze blew gently across the room. A blue balloon with a stick tied to the end floated in through Carl's window. Carl let out a shriek and jumped, banging his arm against the side table. "Ow!"

A head of messy red hair popped in through the window. "Hey, kid!"

Carl shrieked again and hit himself in the face with his cast. "Ow!"

"Thought you might need a little cheerin' up," Ellie said as she climbed through the window. She joined Carl under the tent he had made with his blankets. "I got something to show you. I am about to let you see something I have never shown to another human being. Ever. In my life." She added, "You'll have to swear you will not tell anyone."

Carl nodded, wide-eyed.

"Cross your heart. Do it."

Carl crossed his heart, and Ellie nodded, satisfied.

"My adventure book," Ellie said, pulling out her homemade scrapbook. She turned to the first



page—a photo of Charles Muntz. “You know him. Charles Muntz . . . explorer. When I get big, I’m going where he’s going—South America.” She pointed to a map that was pasted into the book. “It’s like America, but south. Wanna know where I’m gonna live? Paradise Falls. ‘A land lost in time.’” She pointed to a beautiful photo of a tepui, a steep, rugged mountain with a flat top. She had drawn a picture of her clubhouse sitting on the tepui, next to the falls. “I ripped this right out of a library book. I’m gonna move my club-house there and park it right next to the falls. Who knows what lives up there! And once I get there . . .”

She flipped through the book until she came to a page marked STUFF I’M GOING TO DO. After that, all the pages were blank. “Well, I’m saving these pages for all the adventures I’m gonna have,” Ellie explained. “Only, I just don’t know how I’m gonna get to Paradise Falls.”

Carl glanced up at the shelf that held his collection of toy blimps. His blue balloon floated beside them. Ellie followed his gaze.

“That’s it!” she cried. “You can take us there in a blimp! Swear you’ll take us. Cross your heart! Cross it! Cross your heart.”

Carl crossed his heart.

Ellie heaved a sigh of relief. “Good. You promised. No

backing out.”

Carl shook his head. No way would he back out. This girl was a real adventurer. Look at what had happened today! Carl had spent ten minutes with her, and he’d already had the biggest adventure of his life. If she said she was going to South America, then Carl wanted to go along.

“Well, see you tomorrow, kid!” Ellie chirped happily as she headed toward the window and climbed out. “Bye. Adventure is out there!” She poked her head back in. “You know, you don’t talk very much. I like you!” With those parting words, Ellie disappeared into the night.

Carl stared at the empty window for a moment. “Wow,” he said, resting his cheek against the top of the balloon.

His balloon popped, as if it completely agreed with him.

