

Flurry the Bear

The Land of the Sourpie



J.S. Skye

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The Land of the Sourpie
(Flurry the Bear – Book 2)
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CHAPTER 5

THE SOURPIE

After the long journey, one which took a number of days, the wolves, along with Flurry, Fall, and Caboose, arrived at the edge of a tree line. “This is where we part ways,” Isangrim said to Flurry and the others. “Good luck with your mission.”

“Thanks!” Yet, Flurry was uncertain what he was expected to do next. “What am I supposed to do again?” he asked.

“We’re at the border of Sourpie territory. We don’t venture into their land. You may

go in, but we shall stay out. When you retrieve the necklace from the nation city of Tikalico, come to the edge of this forest and call my name. One of us shall be nearby at all times.”

“Okay!” Flurry answered and waved goodbye to his wolf friends, as he, Fall, and Caboose entered the jungle together.

Now that Flurry was out of sight, Isangrim turned back to the others. “This is our moment! All of you, be ready! If he succeeds in getting that necklace, their defenses will be down and we’ll have a feast. Be flexible. If he isn’t successful in retrieving the necklace, his presence alone may still open a window of opportunity for us to exploit.”

“Sir, if you don’t mind me asking ...”
One of the subordinate wolves spoke up.

“Why can’t we just make a meal out of the Sourpie now? They’re quite exposed. These cats don’t have a protected city like they do in Tikalico.”

“Do you not know of the curse? Do you really want to partake in that curse with them? If so, then by all means, go make a meal out of them. I, however, have my sights set on greater things that don’t involve coming under a curse.” Isangrim snarled as he walked away from the other wolf. ❄️ ❄️

Back in the jungle, Flurry struggled to push through the dense vegetation. This jungle was vastly different than the other forests they had been in before. Everything was damp, and the air felt moist and heavy. The vegetation was very thick, and Flurry could barely see beyond only a few feet

ahead of him. The trees looked very different, with many of them not having branches low enough that he could grab ahold of and climb. At the tops of some of the trees were large brown spheres and in other trees were different types of fruits. Caboose spotted a number of banana trees along their path. The polar bear found every bit of their adventure fascinating.

The climate was very hot, and the water bubbled and steamed. They made certain to steer clear of the geysers they happened upon from time-to-time. Flurry had never been in such scorching heat before, and it was not a pleasant experience for him either. In fact, Flurry was quite astounded at how high the temperature was since he had not experienced geothermal activity before. The mountains that enclosed the region created a

natural barrier from the outside world, which kept the cold out and trapped the heat in.

Darkness approached, and Flurry knew that they would soon need a light source. This time they were more prepared than before. The morning after their stay in the foreboding woods, Wolfhroc™ had given Flurry flint stones in order to make a fire. Little did Flurry realize how valuable of a skill she had imparted to him. “We should make a torch,” Flurry informed the others. “It’s getting dark, and we don’t want to get lost.”

Fall did not show any sign of having heard him. She was still immensely upset with her brother. During their time traveling with the wolves, Flurry spent most of the trip with Isangrim and ignored his sister.

Fall chose to remain silent and watch as her brother pulled out his flint stones and struck them over the branch he had fashioned into a torch. Within moments, the branch was ablaze with radiant, orange light. Flurry was quite pleased with his first torch. He lifted it above his head and continued to lead his party through the thick jungle as the darkness settled in all around them.

While they traversed the foliage, Flurry noticed stone structures in the distance. Some of the structures were very tall and towered above the trees while others were only slightly larger than Flurry himself. The further they traveled, the more the jungle opened up, and a path became clear to them.

When they drew near to the monolithic structures, they discovered statues and stone carvings in the rock face. Everything had a

feline aesthetic to it. “Look!” Fall exclaimed, as she pointed to a magnificently large stone head with its mouth open. This rock structure was at least four times their height. If they had wanted to, they easily could have crawled up and into the open mouth of this decorative stone head. “It kind of looks like a cat, don’t you think?” Fall asked.

Flurry did not have time to answer her because the rustling of leaves in the distance grabbed his attention. “Did you hear that?” Flurry asked.

“Yes, I did. I think something’s coming,” Fall answered.

Caboose quickly took cover behind Fall’s legs. After all, he was sure that whatever rustled through the leaves would never find him behind Fall.

“I wonder what it is,” Flurry commented to the other two. “Maybe the wolves came back?” Suddenly Flurry spun around and waved his torch back and forth.

“What’s wrong?” Fall exclaimed with concern.

“Nothing. I just thought I heard a whisper.”

“A whisper?”

“Yeah! Didn’t you hear it?”

*“No ...” Fall’s reply was cut short when she *too* heard whispers come from the branches above them. “On second thought, yes. I did hear something that time.”

“See! I’m not crazy! It sounds like whispering.”

“Flurry, we’re not alone anymore. I think I see something in the branches.”

Flurry looked around and tried to adjust

his eyes to see if there was anything in the brush or on the branches. Flurry was about to shrug it off when he saw something move. “There!” Flurry shouted. “I saw something move. There it is again! There! There’s another!” Flurry pointed to various trees. Caboose dropped lower to the ground and tried to hide himself under Fall’s dress.

Suddenly, Flurry became speechless when the flame of his torch illuminated numerous sets of eyes that peered out at them from the flora. The bear cub could not find the words to articulate his thoughts, so his sister spoke on their behalf. “Uh, Flurry ... I think we have company ... and lots of it.”

Fall grabbed Flurry’s arm while Caboose cowered at her leg. The three of them were very frightened and huddled together for support. As they grasped tightly to each

other, two dark figures came toward them. These two figures were about the same height as Flurry, which meant that they were far too small to be wolves.

The silhouetted forms continued to draw nearer and nearer from the jungle brush. The light from Flurry's torch revealed that they were cats, but they walked on their hind legs and held spears with their front paws. It was apparent to Fall that these cats were not ordinary house cats.

Each cat had stripes painted on their faces, and they wore jewelry that looked very similar to the necklace Isangrim wore. As Fall watched, many more cats emerged from the foliage. They, too, were covered in paint and jewelry. Many of them wore headdresses of some sort. Some of them carried bows while others carried spears. A

few of them had knives and hatchets. All of the feline inhabitants looked grumpy and downright mean. Each cat had a different color of fur. Some of them were black while others were white, gray, brown, and even orange. A number of them had spots while others bore stripes. They were quite a diverse bunch of cats.

It became clear, very quickly, that these cats posed a danger to the young bear cubs. It was unknown if these felines were hostile or not, but Flurry had a hunch that they were. Flurry tried to muster up enough courage to speak with them, despite his fear of being attacked. “Hello. I’m Flurry. What’s your name?”

The cats looked at each other and whispered amongst themselves. Then one of the cats took a few steps toward Flurry. This

one had a red cape, a skull for his headpiece, and solid black fur which made his green eyes stand out more. “No! It is I who asks the questions! What are you doing here? This land is forbidden!” The cat crossed his arms and scowled.

“We’re looking for the land of sour pies,” Flurry replied.

“There’s no such land!” the cat replied to him in a rude tone of voice.

*“Uh huh! I have a map! See!” Flurry quickly brought forth the map. Two cats, that appeared to be the black cat’s guards, crossed their spears in front of the bear cub. The black cat made a motion with his paw, which allowed Flurry to proceed. Without any hesitation, Flurry handed over the map.

“Flurry!” Fall called out. “You need to stop doing that! You’re far too trusting of

strangers!”

“Your map says land of the Sourpie.”

“Yeah, that!”

“We are the Sourpie!”

“You may look sour, but you don’t look like pies,” Flurry answered.

The cat hissed at Flurry and his comrades and then went on. “Sourpie is the plural form of ‘sourpuss’. We were given that name, along with the curse many ages ago.”

*“Curse? What curse?”

“You *came all of the way here, from wherever you’re from, and you don’t know of the curse?”

“Uhm ... No. I just came looking for pies. Do you have any? I’m starving!”

The cat which conversed with Flurry had the biggest headpiece on, which indicated that he was the leader. He stood there with a

large ax in one paw. The black cat looked to the others, spoke something in an unknown language, and instantly a couple of the cats ran off. Only a short moment later, the cats returned with large plates containing various items of food.

“I hope these are satisfactory to you, for it’s all that we have meow,” the leader replied.

Flurry examined the edible offerings, but noticed they were not his first choice of food. One of the plates contained lemons, tamarinds, limes, and grapefruit. The other plate had an arrangement of bowls containing pickles and other fermented vegetables. To drink, the cats had sour milk.

“Yuck! Do you have anything else? I saw bananas in the trees earlier,” Flurry inquired.

“Yes, we’re aware of that, but we cannot

touch them. Any foods other than what you see here instantly become rotten when we touch them. We've been unable to eat anything else for many ages meow."

"Oh my! Don't touch me!" Fall's interruption was met with a disgusted look on the cat's face.

Not understanding, Flurry went on. "But! But! What about the pie? Where's the pie?"

Fall could not help but interrupt. "Flurry, there aren't any pies. Don't you see? You misunderstood. I tried to tell you! These cats ARE the Sourpie, and this is their land. There aren't any sweets."

"Oh! What about the cats in Tikalico? Do they have pie?" Flurry just could not let the matter rest.

Flurry's statement hit a nerve with the jungle's inhabitants. The cats hissed, and the

fur on their backs stood up. “How do you know about them? It’s against our laws to speak of them!” The king hastily turned and sent his order. “Quickly! Bind these intruders and bring them with us! They must be spies, sent by the others!”

The cats had them surrounded. They were too numerous for Flurry to count. They bound the arms and paws of the bear cubs with ropes made from vines, and led them through the jungle by the tip of their spears.

“Well, this is just great!” Fall shouted in Flurry’s direction. “Thanks a lot, Flurry! You managed to get us in an even bigger mess now, didn’t you?” Flurry grinned an uneasy, embarrassed grin. On the inside, he felt really ashamed, but his pride did not want him to look wrong, so he continued to pretend that he had everything under

control.

Flurry and the others were marched into a courtyard and tied up to large stone pillars. All of the stone structures looked old, worn, and colorless. Some of it had been leveled to nothing but rubble. The king approached Flurry and his partners again. “Which of our siblings sent you?”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about. I don’t even know your name,” Flurry answered.

“My name is King Sourpuss, and I don’t have time to play these games! I know you were sent from Tikalico to spy on us. Meow, tell me! What do they want? They’ve already taken everything from us. Are they here to make our lives even worse?” The king’s voice was filled with rage.

Flurry kept silent. He did not know how

he should respond, and he did not want to make matters worse. However, things got worse without Flurry having needed to say or do anything.

“Not speaking, huh? Very well! If you won’t tell me what I want to know, we shall hurt one of your friends. Which one shall it be? I think the female will go first.” The king motioned with his paw, and some of the other cats cut Fall’s ropes to free her from the pillar. They seized her and brought her to the king. Sourpuss leaned her over the flames.

Fall cried out, “Flurry! Help me!”

Flurry heart was pierced by his sister’s grief. Despite his conflict with having a sister, even he could not allow something bad happen to her. Tears flowed down Flurry’s face. “There has been a mistake.

We don't know those cats. We came here for pie. Please, let us go!"

Flurry's pleading fell on deaf ears. In fact, it only angered the king. Sourpuss pulled Fall back, clapped his paws, and two other cats came up and cut Flurry's ropes. Flurry thought that maybe they had decided to free him and his friends, but he was wrong. "You're to deliver a message to King Ja'gwar for me. Tell him that if he wants any of you to live, that he must lift the curse from my clowder."

Flurry was not sure what a clowder was, but Fall was well read. She knew that "clowder" was a term used to describe a group or a cluster of cats. However, considering that she was a captive, she would not be with Flurry when he had to deliver the message.

As he pointed to the east, King Sourpuss looked at Flurry and ordered him to go, saying, “He has until midnight tomorrow night to make his decision. Meow, go!”

Flurry quickly ran off in the direction the king pointed. Tears rolled down his cheeks. He felt horrible for what had transpired. The cub did not mean for any of it to happen. Flurry just wanted to go on an exciting adventure and to eat pie. Little did he know the kind of trouble he would get himself and his friends into.

Flurry ran through the brush, over the rocks, and under branches. The darkness made it hard for him to see where he was going, but thanks to the full moon, he had some light to help illuminate his path. However, his excessive crying made it even more difficult for him to see where he was

running. Flurry's foot got snagged on a tree root, and he tripped. Before he knew it, he found himself tumbling down a hill. Head over heels he went. Dirt and rocks flew over his head as he slid to the bottom of the slope. This turn of events only upset Flurry further, and he bewailed even more.

“Why is this happening to me?” Flurry cried out loud. “Maybe I'm being punished for being so mean to my sister? I'm sorry!” Flurry shouted toward the sky. “I didn't mean to! I was sad, because I thought Mama and Papa didn't love me anymore.” Flurry cried so loud that he could be heard for miles. He had never been so sad before. Flurry felt like a bad friend to Caboose and a terrible brother to Fall. On top of it all, his snowy fur was messed up, and he was covered in dirt. This had to be the worst day

of Flurry's life. In fact, Flurry now agreed with Fall in that he, too, missed Mama and Papa and wanted to go home.

In the midst of his tears, Flurry looked up and saw an island in the distance. There was a long, stone bridge that led to the island, and which had a community that lived there. The city was lit up with the orange glow of open flames. Flurry wiped his tears away, straightened his scarf, brushed off the dirt, and said, "Pull yourself together, Flurry! You have to save your sister!" After a short pause, he added, "And find pie."

Flurry had mustered the courage he needed to press on and was now more determined than ever to right the wrongs of the previous few days. Flurry marched down through the jungle, out to the beach, and strode across the stone bridge to the island

community of Tikalico.

Flurry approached the entrance to the city. There he was met by guards. These city guards greatly resembled the cats he had met in the land of the Sourpie. Even the architecture was essentially the same, only the buildings here well taken care of with vibrant hues of red, green, blue, yellow, and orange. Something very peculiar was taking place between the two feline communities, but Flurry could not quite figure out what the root of it was yet.

“Halt!” the guards exclaimed. “Who are you? State your business here!”

“It’s just me, Flurry.” His voice quivered as he spoke. He was still deeply saddened by the events that had transpired, and he worried for his sister. “I was sent here by King Grumpy Cat. He wants me to give a

message to your king.”

“Sorry! Nobody enters here! Return to where you came from!” the guards ordered.

Flurry would not take no for an answer. “You have to let me see the king! My sister’s in danger. They’re going to hurt her, if I don’t talk to the king.”

“That’s not our problem! No means no! Meow leave!” the guards answered and then crossed their spears, which blocked the way to the entrance. “This is your final warning. Leave meow, or we’ll consider your presence an act of hostility toward our clowder, and we’ll have you arrested.”

Flurry was unwilling to budge. He crossed his arms and sat down on the stone floor outside the entrance to Tikalico. He was determined to save his sister and Caboose.

“Fine! Have it your way!” The guards approached Flurry with their spears pointed right at him. They seized him and dragged him along as they entered the city.

While Flurry was escorted into the city, he had plenty of chances to look at everything they passed by. The city was magnificent and beautiful. The stone structures were built with such mastery and precision. In addition to this, Flurry could smell food. The warm, delicious aromas saturated the air. Flurry’s tummy grumbled which reminded him that he had not eaten since he left the company of the wolves. He was certain that this group of cats definitely had tasty treats such as pies – after all, that is why he came all that way.

Flurry found himself being led into a courtyard, much like the one he had just

been in, back in the land of the Sourpie. The difference being that this courtyard had such majestic beauty to behold while the Sourpie's courtyard looked to be neglected and in ruins.

Before long, an important-looking cat with a large headdress came to meet him. His fur was yellow with black spots all over, and he had a big belly covered in white fur. "Who's this?" the cat asked the guards.

*"Sire! We don't know. He says his name is Flurry. He insisted on speaking to you, and when we refused, he just sat at the entrance to our city and wouldn't leave," the guards answered.

The leader then turned to Flurry to address him. "Is this true?"

"Yes," Flurry replied.

"Then why are you here?"

Tears filled Flurry's eyes. "It's all my fault! I found this map to the land of the Sourpie. I thought it was a place to get pie and other tasty treats. But then they got my sister and my friend. They told me that if I don't give a message to you, they'll hurt them. I can't let that happen."

"What are their demands?" asked the black-spotted, yellow cat with the red and green headdress.

*"They told me that they want King Ja'gwar to lift some kind of a curse."

The cat's eyes widened, and Flurry now had his full attention. "Really? That's what they said?"

"Uh huh," Flurry nodded his head and attempted to wipe away some of his tears.

"Well, I'm King Ja'gwar, and this is a very clever ploy they've crafted. This only

goes to show that they haven't changed. After all of these years, they're the same savages they used to be!" The king turned his back and walked away.

Flurry was still uncertain what was going on. "Excuse me! Excuse me!" Flurry addressed the guards that stood next to him.

"Keep silent! The king has yet to decide what to do with you," the guards snapped back at Flurry.

* "But I have a question."

* "So what? Keep silent! We don't care what you have to say!"

"But ..." Flurry's sentence stopped short when one of the guards pointed a spear at his face.

"Wait a minute! We could at least hear his question. It doesn't mean we have to answer it," the second guard told the first

one, who still stood there with his spear tip nearly touching Flurry's nose.

"Fine! What do you want?" the spear-wielder asked as he pulled his weapon away from the bear cub.

"Why don't you and the Sourpie get along?"

"How could you not know this story? It's ages old," the guard replied.

"I'm not from around here. I'm from Ursus."

"Really? You're from the north? So you must know of Christopher Kringle!" the guards answered in unison.

The demeanor of the guards quickly changed. The two relaxed their posture, and they now seemed more friendly and cooperative toward Flurry. "Why didn't you tell us this before?" the spear-holder asked.

He turned to the other guard and said, “Quickly, run and tell the king that this bear comes from Christopher Kringle’s land.”

The other cat ran off on all fours, instead of only his hind legs. The cat guard was very quick. He was out of sight before the remaining guard was able to turn back to face Flurry.

“Since you aren’t from around here, I’ll tell you the story. Once, both of our clowders were one. In fact, we all lived here in Tikalico together. It was a prosperous time, and we had the protection of the twin necklaces.”

“Necklaces?” Flurry asked.

“Yes, but one of them is now lost to us. The king and his brother once ruled together. Things were good, but the king’s brother was secretly jealous of him. His

jealousy grew to the point of hatred. One day, the traitorous brother led a rebellion against our king and tried to overthrow him so he could have this kingdom for himself. King Ja'gwar was victorious in the battle, but his brother wouldn't hand over the necklace after his defeat. Instead, he made a pact with a pack of wolves to help him defeat us in a second battle.

“The wolves agreed to help him, but for a price. The wolves demanded his necklace in exchange for their help. When Sourpuss agreed to this, the wolves betrayed him and took the necklace for themselves without keeping their end of the bargain. I guess it's only fitting since Sourpuss betrayed us. I suppose he got a taste of his own medicine.”

“What's so great about these necklaces, anyway?”

“The two necklaces have special powers. We don’t fully understand how they work. Our king’s necklace protects our community, and the second necklace provides long life and strength to its wearer. However, when both necklaces are brought together, they spread long life and protection to everyone in the city. If someone had both necklaces and kept them for themselves, they could essentially be immortal.”

*Curious to know more, Flurry inquired further. * “So why do the Sourpie not live here anymore? Oh! And why are they called Sourpie? They don’t look like pies, though they do have the ‘sour’ part down pretty well.”

“Because of their bad attitudes and their poisonous nature, our leader gave his brother the name ‘Sourpuss’ and crowned

him as King of the Sourpie. They eventually embraced that name and meow act proud of it. Sourpie is simply the plural form of sourpuss.”

“Ohhh ... I see.”

“They were banished to the ruined city of Agrio in the wildest part of the jungle with a curse placed upon them. The curse won’t allow them to taste anything sweet ever again. They may only eat or drink that which is sour or rotten, as a punishment for their evil.”

“Is there any way to break the curse?”
Flurry sounded deeply concerned.

“Only our king has the power to do that, and he won’t do so. He cannot allow their crimes to go unpunished.”

“But you said this happened a long time ago. Shouldn’t they forgive each other and

forget?”

“They are of the same litter. Sometimes, it can be very hard for siblings to get along. It is said that the more you love someone, the deeper the pain can be when you feel betrayed by them. I don’t foresee our two clowders becoming one ever again. At least not in my lifetime.”

Flurry looked down at the ground. He now felt even guiltier for how he had treated his sister. He saw how his own jealousy had made him a sourpuss, too. Flurry felt it should be him being held captive by the Sourpie, not his sister. Flurry wept as remorse consumed his thoughts.

“What’s wrong?” asked the guard.

“Everything’s my fault!” Flurry replied. “If I hadn’t been jealous of my sister, none of this would’ve happened.”

“Don’t fret, poor Flurry, for I’ll help you,” came a voice in the distance. Flurry looked up and saw the guard return with the king. Flurry had not noticed before, but around the king’s neck was the other necklace. It appeared much like that which Isangrim wore, but it had a purple gemstone instead of red. The king continued. “I don’t believe the Sourpie are worthy to have the curse lifted, as demonstrated by their actions. However, I won’t allow our rivalry with the Sourpie to doom innocent lives. First thing tomorrow morning, we shall travel to the camp of the Sourpie and rescue your friend and your sister from their clutches.”