



## 1. Summary

### **An ancient legend, and a great mystery**

“Nettlewooz: Fragments of the Moon” is the first volume of a mystery-filled and highly entertaining series of novels aimed at all age groups.

The story details the adventures of Primus – a somewhat unusual character – and the beautiful young witch, Miss Plim. After a game of cat-and-mouse the two of them become a team. They re-discover a long-forgotten legend and try to solve the mystery of Primus’ nebulous past.



## 2. Contents

For as long as he can remember, Primus has lived in an isolated tower in the heart of the Mizzle Meadows. He has no memory of where he came from, or of anything that happened to him in the past. He happily takes each day as it comes. He's not entirely devoid of company: there's the greedy pumpkin Snigg, who lives on the compost heap next to the tower, and the pernickety bureaucrat Bucklewhee, the rooster skeleton who lives in Primus' longcase clock. Not to mention the talking mirror which commands his respect.

For some inexplicable reason, Primus is able to turn himself into a bat. This skill is extremely useful when he fancies paying a nocturnal visit to the Burdock Village Patisserie to satisfy his longing for fresh baking. For although Primus neither ages nor feels hungry, he loves the patisserie's tasty treats. As an extra treat to himself, he also takes the opportunity to annoy the inhabitants of Burdock Village by play-acting the role of "grisly vampire from the tower". However, that's just a bit of fun. What he's more interested in is finding the entrance to the Hobgoblins' tunnel system and exploring their subterranean world.

Things take a sudden and unexpected turn when Primus retreats to the tower's cool wine cellar one hot summer's day. Here, he discovers a curious symbol carved into the flagstones of the cellar floor. Primus is mystified. He spends the evening reading in bed, using a strange stone as a reading light. This stone has taken to glowing once a month.

Shortly after this, Primus turns himself into a bat and sets off to find the hidden Hobgoblin tunnels. However, he encounters a young witch on a rattly motorised broomstick. Armed with a fly-swatter, she is soon hot on his heels. Primus finally manages to shake her off after an epic chase around the Burdock Village church steeple – during which he also happens to notice a strange figure in a rowing boat. It looks as if this figure is looking for something in the depths of the Lunar Lake.



The next morning, Primus has a peculiar dream. It's a dream he has had several times before, about a summer's night and an old man waving to him from the front door of the tower.

When he wakes up, Primus leaves the tower. He flies through the forest and chances upon a toy shop owned by a certain Miss Plim. He quickly realises that this is the same feisty witch who chased him the previous night. But this discovery has consequences. Miss Plim swats Primus with the fly-swatter and traps him in a preserving jar. Her nice, tidy toy shop is, it turns out, in fact a cover for a boiling witch's kitchen. Here, Miss Plim brews up endless new potions in her attempt to make herself look more beautiful – for she is firmly and entirely wrongly convinced that she is spectacularly ugly. This is thanks to her deceitful mirror which thinks up new insults for her on a daily basis. Plim, however, is completely unaware that the mirror is untruthful; all she needs, so far as she's concerned, is a fresh bat to add to her latest potion.



While Primus is trying to work out how to escape from the witch's kitchen, he spots some kind of mysterious plan pinned to the wall. It depicts a crescent moon which is identical to the symbol he found in his cellar. The glowing stone which Primus uses once a month as his reading light is evidently a fragment of this moon. When Plim learns this, she is desperate to get hold of the stone. Primus uses her keenness to outsmart her and to get her to free him from his jar. He then lures her to his house.

Plim finally tells him the story of the Crescent Moon. This was an ancient construction made up of five alluring elements: beauty, immortality, happiness, power, and wealth. The peculiar moon hung above the Dark Forest around 12,000 years ago until it fell from the sky and was smashed to pieces. Nobody knows any more than that. Primus' curiosity is piqued. He simply has to find out more about the Crescent Moon. The obvious place to do some research is the library at Wiseville, the capital city of Nettlewooz. Miss Plim agrees to accompany him – not least because she's hoping to snaffle a piece of the *beauty* element.



On the way to Wiseville, they chance upon Snigg the pumpkin, who has become trapped in the Dark Forest while out foraging. Together they rescue him. He tells them about something peculiar he stumbled across in the forest: a chasm with metal rungs set into it.

Once in Wiseville, Primus and Plim are given the first clue as to the whereabouts of the Crescent Moon. This is courtesy of a mysterious Riddleroot given to them by an old Hobgoblin woman. The Riddleroot mutters something about a place where the earth and the sky are the wrong way round. However, this is all very vague – and remains so even after Primus and Plim have waded through endless tomes in the enormous library. Finally, though, the librarian hands them a book which looks more promising. Primus immediately notices that its cover bears the same symbol that he found in his cellar. A proper clue at last!

Before Primus and Plim can examine the book more closely, their path is blocked by a sinister scholar named Ravenstone. Primus realises that this is the same strange figure whom he had seen out on the Lunar Lake a couple of nights previously. The man seems to recognise Primus, though Primus can't recall ever having met him before. Primus and Plim quickly leave the library.

After their visit to Wiseville, Primus decides to look for the mysterious chasm which Snigg told him about. He finds it, along with a long tunnel which goes straight under the ground. This tunnel is evidently not the Hobgoblins' work. As Primus scrutinises its entrance, he spots a curious gold amulet which triggers a very dim memory within him. It seems, somehow, that he has been here once before.

The next day, he and Miss Plim return to his cellar to inspect the weird symbol. There, they discover a secret study hidden behind the wine barrels. It quickly transpires that this study once belonged to a scientist named Magnus Ulma. Ulma was a professor of countless magical arts and was evidently involved in the research of the Crescent Moon. Plim's wall-plan must have originally been his.





Primus and Plim find a whole host of useful things, in particular a map of the Hobgoblins' tunnel system. Another discovery gives them pause for thought. This is an ancient photo of Professor Ulma and his two pupils. One of them is Primus and the other is Ravenstone – the sinister figure from the library. Primus realises that Magnus Ulma is the old man in his recurrent dream – but can't remember anything more than this. He shows the photo to the talking mirror; the mirror expresses its contempt for Ravenstone.

The following night, Primus and Plim decide to return to the library and find the book again. Armed with a variety of potions from the witch's kitchen, they make their way through the building until they reach a door with a speaking stone face instead of a handle. This face demands a key from them – which they don't have. However, Primus remembers the gold amulet and something the talking mirror said: gold opens all locks. And it's true: when Primus inserts the amulet into the stone mouth, the door swings open. Behind it is Ravenstone's study.

They find the book, which turns out to be by Magnus Ulma. It contains an old legend about the mythical Mist Fairy. This miraculously beautiful fairy loved the moon although she found its light unbearably painful. A mysterious figure with a crown made of ice used the magical Crescent Moon to lure her out, planning then to take possession of her. However, the Crescent Moon fell from the sky and smashed to pieces. Ravenstone's notes suggest that he is seeking the fragments of the Crescent Moon, in particular the central piece which contains the *power* element. Whilst they are rifling through the study, they are surprised by Ravenstone. They manage to grab the book and escape.

Thus far, Primus, Plim and Ravenstone, too, have always assumed the remaining fragments of the Crescent Moon to be at the bottom of the Lunar Lake. But when Primus finds an old invoice from the Hobgoblins in Magnus Ulma's book, he realises that there must be a subterranean lake accessible only via the Hobgoblins' tunnel system.

Primus, Plim and Snigg race to one of the hills where they believe a tunnel entrance to be found. As they have discovered from Magnus Ulma's notes, the entrance can be seen only by someone who has something that belongs to the Hobgoblins. Primus owns a button from one of the Hobgoblins' jackets, which Chuck the scarecrow gave him. It works: the door appears, and the three of them enter.

They insinuate themselves among the guests at a Hobgoblin banquet. However, Miss Plim can't resist her light-fingered urges, and she swipes the silver cutlery belonging to the Hobgoblin next to her. She and Primus try to flee. But they are captured by the Hobgoblins and locked in a dungeon. To make matters even worse, Ravenstone appears. He has been spying on them. He speaks to Primus through the locked cell door, and it becomes clear that the two of them were once Magnus Ulma's pupils.



Back then, Ravenstone and Primus wanted to find the remaining fragments of the Crescent Moon. To this end, Primus climbed down into the chasm. There, he found a small fragment (which belonged to the element of *immortality*) and passed it up to Ravenstone. The latter, overwhelmed by avarice, pushed Primus back into the chasm. Primus fell to the bottom and landed squarely on the piece of the Crescent Moon which he still has at home.

Primus, however, didn't die. Quite the opposite. When he hit the element, it transferred itself to him and he became immortal. Ravenstone, by contrast, wears only a small fragment of the element around his neck. This is why Ravenstone looks so much older than Primus. Thanks to the power of magic, the numerous bats which were disturbed by his fall also conferred upon Primus the ability to change form. Ravenstone can't do this, either.



Fortunately, Snigg the pumpkin manages to release Primus and Plim from captivity. The latter pair race to the Glowing Lake, and discover that Ravenstone has already fished out a large piece of the Crescent Moon. When Plim tries to snatch it from him, Ravenstone knocks her unconscious. Primus launches an attack on Ravenstone. He turns himself into a bat and starts to antagonise Ravenstone. Ravenstone loses his temper and lashes out at Primus with a shovel. Primus resorts to a trick. Still in the form of a bat, he lands on the fragment of the Crescent Moon and flies off at the very last moment. With full force, Ravenstone smashes his shovel down on the fragment. The resulting explosion is so violent that the whole cavern collapses, burying Ravenstone beneath the rubble. Primus and Plim manage to escape, but they have to leave the fragment of the Crescent Moon behind.

Plim is unhurt, but she is completely despairing. Her dream of beauty has been shattered. Weeping, she confides in Primus, and he finally understands the aetiology of her obsession with physical beauty. He then has an idea.



The following day, a trembling glazier named Plundersack knocks on Plim's door. He is suffering from the after-effects of a nocturnal visit from Primus. Plundersack tells Plim that there was a manufacturing defect in her mirror, and he needs to give her a replacement. By way of apology, he also gives Plim a free beauty product. Never one to turn down a beauty product, Plim accepts. She is delighted when she then looks in the mirror and sees her real, spectacularly beautiful reflection. Primus is immensely pleased. He had realised that the glazier had sold Miss Plim a cursed mirror – in return for a failed spell. And as Miss Plim had always trusted the mirror implicitly, a replacement mirror wouldn't suffice: it would also take an apparent "beauty product" to restore her belief in her own attractiveness.

The final chapter finds Primus and Plim sitting in front of the witch's cottage, wondering what became of the Mist Fairy. Primus thinks she must still exist. Readers, however, will need to read the second and third volumes of "Nettlewooz" to find out whether he is right...

### 3. The Denizens of Nettlewooz



**Primus**

Primus has no idea where he came from or how old he is. Neither can he explain why he can turn himself into a bat. He must be at least 215 years old, as he has lived in an isolated tower in the heart of the Mizzle Meadows for at least 200 years. He has no memory of anything that happened prior to this.

Primus, however, isn't in the slightest bit worried by any of this. He is happy to do his own thing without being bothered by anyone else. He is courteous and inquisitive. He most enjoys spending his time among his dusty books or trying to work out how to gain entry to the Hobgoblins' secret tunnel system. He is desperate to explore its hidden depths.

Primus gradually discovers that he was once a pupil of Magnus Ulma. Together with Reuben Ravenstone, he studied the art of Alchemy. The two of them chanced upon Ulma's secret research, and Ravenstone tried to kill Primus. But he didn't succeed. Primus somehow survived – though he has no idea how or why. Changed, and with no memory of what had happened, he returned to Ulma's old tower years later.



**Miss Plim**

Bold, feisty Miss Plim is an independent young witch whose particular expertise lies in brewing up magical potions. As she doesn't have a degree in witchcraft, however, she uses her toy shop as a 'front' for her boiling, broiling witch's kitchen. Here, she also makes toys, as she is particularly fond of children.

She is otherwise a hard-nosed businesswoman who manages to convince even the most enterprising Hobgoblin to knock something off his prices. Plim is obsessed with beauty products and tries out every lotion and potion and recipe she can find. For, although she is extremely pretty, she believes herself to be desperately ugly. This is thanks to her deceitful mirror.

Plim's second-favourite thing is her racing broomstick, on which she performs the most daring manoeuvres. However, she's not one for rules and regulations. She's as light-fingered as they come; can break into any locked door; and carts an entire arsenal of magical potions around in her beloved handbag with her.

#### **Snigg**

Warm and happy and greedy, Snigg lives on the compost heap at the side of Primus' tower. Despite his girth, he is remarkably agile. He propels himself along in leaps and bounds – sometimes so skilfully that even the Hobgoblin guards don't notice him. He's always looking for tasty treats to eat, particularly windfalls. He becomes firm friends with Chuck the scarecrow.





## Bucklewheel

The intellectual rooster skeleton Sir Bucklewheel is a punctual and punctilious wake-up bird. Certified, no less – to his immense pride. Therefore, he can't begin to understand how he ended up in a longcase clock in the semi-derelict tower. He is quite certain that he must have been mis-delivered there. Bucklewheel is cultivated, pedantic and always expresses himself most precisely. He is a great stickler for rules and regulations. He would never knowingly fail in his duty to tell the correct time. He therefore regularly practises his wake-up call, and ensures that his clock is always in perfect working order.



## Chuck

Garrulous scarecrow Chuck guards Miss Plim's lettuce patch. Or, at any rate, that's what he's supposed to do. Chuck is in fact far more interested in fashion, group therapy and stress management. He is cheerful and outgoing and sets great store by friendliness – apart from when it comes to slugs. He can't bear them.

He can't stand rain, either. Nor does he enjoy being used by Plim as a clothes horse (the damp is sooo bad for his complexion). He would most like to live indoors with Plim. However, Plim is firmly convinced that scarecrows belong in the garden, not in the sitting room. Chuck's favourite thing is a visit from Snigg. When this happens, he helps himself to Plim's secret herbs and makes a banquet for his guest.



## The Mirror

The big, black wall mirror takes the form of a person with a frame made of ebony, topped off by what appears to be a horned head. It has lived in the topmost room of the tower since more or less forever. It can speak and is evidently well educated, but is also rather arrogant. It often pipes up with a mocking commentary, which makes Primus rather inclined to avoid it. The mirror seems to know everything about Primus and his past, but doesn't divulge anything. Only when Primus is genuinely puzzled does the mirror try to help him by giving him a few clues. When, however, Primus is in real danger, the mirror is always willing to help him out.

## The Riddleroot

The sleepy Riddleroot apparently has the gift of second sight. Unfortunately, it speaks in incomprehensible riddles so that the meaning of its remarks often remains a mystery. It lives in a rather fine wooden casket, likes flute music, and worries that it might end up in Miss Plim's cauldron.



## Reuben Ravenstone

Once upon a time, the power-hungry scholar Ravenstone was, along with Primus, a pupil of Magnus Ulma. The two boys stumbled across some of Ulma's secret research and went on to seek out the fragments of the Crescent Moon. Their search took them to a chasm in the depths of the Dark Forest. Primus plunged to his doom when Ravenstone pushed him into the chasm. Prior to this, though, Primus had retrieved a small piece of the *immortality* element. Ravenstone still wears this fragment around his neck. True: it doesn't guarantee him immortality, but it does guarantee him an unusually long life. He went on to have a successful career in Wiseville and, clad in all the trappings of high office, remains an implacable opponent of Primus.

## Taddel and Mills

The two fat toads live in a preserving jar on the shelf in Plim's witch's kitchen. As Miss Plim can't use them for anything, they have been there so long that they have forgotten even to think of escaping. Taddel and Mills are lazy, cheerful, and have no respect for anything or anyone. They sleep by day and have fun by night. Their favourite occupation is spending time with Chuck.

## Magnus Ulma

Professor Dr. Magnus Ulma is an expert in the areas of mythology, astrology and alchemy. He has spent time researching the Crescent Moon and has gathered together all the results into one volume. Magnus Ulma once lived in the old tower in which Primus now lives, and trained Primus and Ravenstone up to become apprentices. He has a paternal-type interest in Primus and was devastated when Ravenstone told him that Primus had fallen into the chasm and was dead. All the same, though, Ulma was suspicious. He duly kitted out a secret study where he could hide his files from Ravenstone.

Nobody knows what became of Magnus Ulma.



## 4. The World of Nettlewooz

Nettlewooz is the magical world of Primus and Miss Plim - a world of myths and legends. Its capital is Wiseville, an old and venerable city with fine arcades, squares and towers. The houses are decorated with gargoyles, between which the wide streets are in their turn notable for their elegant bridges and the university students who scurry around them. Wiseville is the centre of cultural life. The university science departments specialise in the occult: everything is taught there, from alchemy to astrology to mythology.

One of the most famous buildings is the huge library. This houses a veritable sea of books; visitors to the library use travelling platforms to zigzag their way around the endless shelves. This part of town also houses Cauldron Publishers, who produce the "Magic Circle", the most important magazine in Nettlewooz. Then there is a large market square and numerous shops selling a plethora of



magical items. The whole city is enclosed by a high, impenetrable wall. Outside this wall are the suburbs with their crooked houses and twisty alleyways.



The remaining areas of Nettlewooz are mostly agricultural. To the south are the inhospitable Plumbum Peaks with their icy Brimstone Pinnacles. Their foothills lie close to the Mizzle Meadows, home of Primus' tower. Slightly further to the north lies sleepy Burdock Village. Between them is the Dark Forest, a huge, dark wood traversable only via either the half-overgrown Thistleway or Weedy Way. Pine needles rain down ceaselessly onto the forest floor; pine cones the size of bottles hurtle downwards; sticky resin drips down, too. The forest is also home to the feared puffball mushrooms which burst and emit a revolting smell if something even just brushes against them. Thorny tendrils knot themselves together to become dangerous nets which ensnare anything that comes their way. Mysterious streams, veils of mist, peculiar plants and willo-the-wisps complete the picture.

To the far west lies a largely uncharted swampy area known as the Western Swamps. It is said that there is a black hut here in which the Devil lives.

The Lunar Lake lies to the east, and the Snail Creek snakes its way across the whole of Nettlewooz.

Beneath Nettlewooz is the Hobgoblins' tunnel empire. At the behest of the local Council and in return for a large amount of money, they set up a pneumatic tube system for delivering the post right across the land.

Alongside the Hobgoblins, there are normal people, but also witches, running tufts of grass, talking vegetables and a whole host of other bizarre creatures living in Nettlewooz.