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FOR MOM AND DAD

The Boys of Fire and Ash

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# ONE

“Damn it, Cubby! I said go back!” My voice cut right through the rumbling thunder of the Ikkuma The Boys of Fire and Ash Fire Mountains.

The brat just stared at me, his blond scraggly hair covered with ash, his cheeks streaked black from the sweat mixed with soot. His little face was wearing that annoying scowl he saved just for me.

He'd been following us since the A-Frame, all the way to the Hotpots. I looked back towards our triangular dwelling, now just a brown-colored dot in the distance against the charred black earth.

The Ikkuma Pit, our home, is just a giant hole filled with black rock. Black rock and the discarded The Boys of Fire and Ash junk of people living on the outside: metal scraps, soiled clothes, and us, the Ikkuma Brothers. Normally, the blanket of ash that covers the place cushions your foot, but as I stomped away from Cubby, shards of black crystal and stone hiding beneath the soft, squishy layer stabbed The Boys of Fire and Ash at my bare feet.

I knew my job, knew I The Boys of Fire and Ash was supposed to love my Little Brother no matter what, but right then I wanted to punch his stupid scowling face.

“I want to go hunting!” Cubby screeched for the eightieth time that day.

The mountains groaned, just as sick of hearing his incessant The Boys of Fire and Ash whining as I was. Hunting for Slag Cavies with Av was supposed to be my time, my break, a The Boys of Fire and Ash chance to get away from him and just practice. And Cubby knew it.

“Forget it, Urtle. Just let him come,” said Av. Av was my best friend, a great hunter, and the best shot in the whole Ikkuma Pit. He'd never had much patience for arguing, though I guess he never had to worry about it—

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