

Academy

SOME ASSEMBLY REQUIRED

BRIAN LYNCH

ILLUSTRATED BY EDWARDIAN TAYLOR

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**For Henry, my best buddy, my greatest [co]creation –B.L.
To Jamey and my mini wolf pack: Samurai, Hansel, and Jinx. –E.T.**



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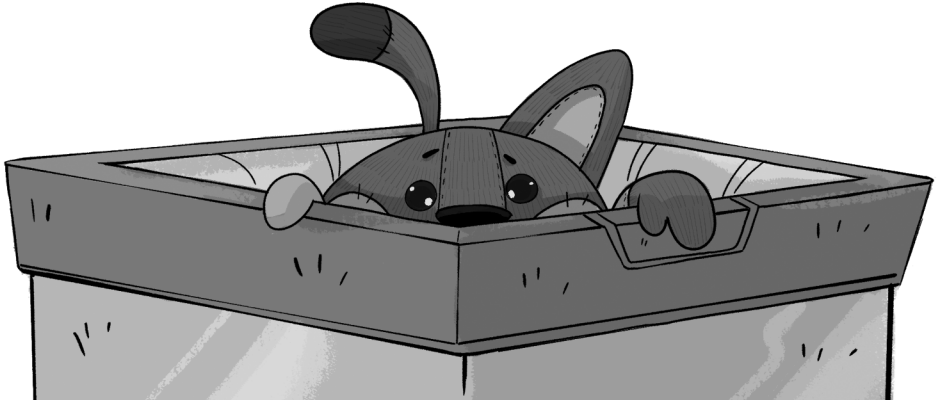
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CHAPTER ONE

TOY MEETS WORLD



The small toy sat up in the garbage can and smiled. He had been alive a whole minute so far, and things were going great. He already had a place to stay and half a waffle if he got hungry.

Under the waffle, there was a used doll pattern from the **U CAN SEW** company. And under *that* was the first attempt at a very angry letter.



Dear U CAN SEW,

My name is Gertrude Konikoff. I am eight years old and I am fantastic at sewing. I have ~~pre~~ ~~previsually~~ previously made a scarf and quilt and part of a sweater. So when I saw that your stuffed

animal pattern was for "advanced sewers," I said great, that's what I am. Well, let me tell you, this was too hard and it

came out all weird. I gave him a name (Grumbolt) and tried playing with him and everything. But he is simply unplayable.

His arms are different lengths, his head is too big for his body, and he has a

~~tudieriss~~ ~~ridic~~ goofy look on his face. I demand my money back and an apology.

I mean business.

Wow, did he feel bad for whatever doll that girl was insulting.

But the note had given him an idea. He should find a kid to call his own.

Figuring that kid was *not* going to be in the garbage can, he reached up to the rim to pull himself out—and saw that his arms were two different lengths.

No, it couldn't be.

Just to be sure, he felt his head. Sure enough, it was oversized.

He was the stuffed animal in the letter!

He didn't appreciate his face being called "goofy," but at least he now knew his name: **GRUMBOLT**. It was the best name he had ever heard. (That said, he had only heard two names his whole life, and the other belonged to the girl who threw him in the garbage can.)

Grumbolt climbed out and slid down the side into a nice, quiet kitchen. As soon as his feet hit the tile floor, Grumbolt noticed something on the refrigerator: his reflection. He had never seen himself before and wanted to take a look.



That's definitely a rabbit ear

That's definitely not a rabbit ear

Not a goofy face at all

A dog nose
Maybe a mouse nose
Quite possibly a koala nose

This arm is going to be so great for waving

Arms are two different lengths, these things happen

Nubby tail, maybe she ran out of fabric?

Grumbolt heard a steady hum from behind, and a shadow fell over him. He turned around and found himself face-to-giant-face with Gertrude's cat. Grumbolt waved excitedly. "Hello! Do you want to play?"

The large beast studied the little doll. Grumbolt was small, and he was moving. First law of cat logic:

**SMALL
+
MOVING
=
WANT TO EAT IT**

The cat reeled back, hissed at her prey, and pounced.