

SCOTT MEBUS



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GODS
OF
MANHATTAN

SPIRITS
IN THE
PARK

DUTTON CHILDREN'S BOOKS

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

Rory Hennessy—*A thirteen-year-old boy; the last Light in New York City*

Bridget Hennessy—*Younger sister to Rory Hennessy*

Lillian Hennessy—*Mother to Rory and Bridget Hennessy*

Peter Hennessy—*Rory and Bridget's father; missing for past ten years*

Tucket—*A spirit dog*

Toy—*A papier-mâché boy*

Olathe—*Owner of mysterious wampum necklace*

Harry Meester—*A murderer*

• THE RATTLE WATCH •

Nicholas Stuyvesant—*Son of Peter Stuyvesant*

Alexa van der Donck—*Daughter of Adriaen van der Donck*

Simon Astor—*Son of John Jacob Astor*

Lincoln Douglass—*Son of Frederick Douglass*

• THE M'GAROTH CLAN •

Fritz M'Garoth—*Lieutenant-Captain and Rat Rider of M'Garoth Clan*

Hans—*Member of M'Garoth Patrol*

Sergeant Kiffer—*Member of M'Garoth Patrol*

• GODS OF MANHATTAN •

Mayor Alexander Hamilton—*God of Finance; Mayor of the Gods of Manhattan*

Willem Kieft—*First Adviser to Mayor*

Peter Stuyvesant—*God of Things Were Better in the Old Days*

Caesar Prince—*God of Under the Streets*

T. R. Tobias—*God of Banking*

Walt Whitman—*God of Optimism*

Boss Tweed—*God of Rabble Politics and Back Alley Deals*

Captain Kidd—*God of Pirates*

Alfred Beach—*God of Subway Trains*

Giovanni da Verrazano—*God of Unappreciated Explorers*

Mrs. Astor—*Goddess of Society*

Jimmy Walker—*God of Leaders Who Look the Other Way*

Washington Irving—*God of Tall Tales*

Langston Hughes—*God of Poetry*
Billie Holiday—*Goddess of the Blues*
George Gershwin—*God of Snappy Tunes*
Aaron Burr—*A fallen god*

• MUNSEES •

Wampage—*Only Munsee to escape the Trap*
Penhawitz—*Sachem of the Munsees*
Tackapausha—*Son of Penhawitz*
Sooleawa—*Daughter of Penhawitz; sister of Tackapausha; Medicine Woman*
Sokanen (Soka for short)—*Daughter of Sooleawa; Sister of Tammand*
Tammand—*Son of Sooleawa; Brother of Soka*
Askook—*A magician*
Chogan—*A tanner*
Buckongahelas—*Murdered son of Tackapausha*

• IN THE PARK •

Pierre Duchamp—*A trapper*
Finn Lee—*Grandson of Pierre Duchamp*

• OTHER SPIRITS OF NOTE •

William “Bill the Butcher” Poole—*A convict*
Mary “Typhoid Mary” Mallon—*A convict*
The Abbess—*Founder of the convent on Swinburne Island*
Sly Jimmy—*Member of the B’wry Boys*

IMPORTANT TERMS

Blood (Bronx, Manhattan, Brooklyn, etc.)—*The restriction of a divine being to the boroughs where his or her mortal self was known to dwell. For example, a god whose mortal self lived on a farm in the Bronx possesses “Bronx blood.”*
Sachem—*Munsee word meaning “chief”*
Shell Pit—*Place of power for the Munsees*
The Sachem’s Belt—*Belt of powerful wampum*
The Trap—*Barrier erected around Central Park to keep the Munsees in, and New York spirits and gods out*
Wampum—*Jewelry made from seashells; common source of Munsee magic*

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GODS of MANHATTAN

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The boy walked slowly down the city sidewalk bouncing a dusty basketball. Sweat sent dirty streaks down his forehead; he wiped his face with the back of his free hand, blinking furiously when he missed a drop before it could dive-bomb his eyes with its saltwater sting.

The city was hot, too hot, and had been for weeks now. 101, 102, 103: the city was running a fever and no one seemed to know when it would break. The asphalt sizzled under the burning sun, causing the thick, heavy air to shimmer above the sidewalks as if all of Manhattan were one huge mirage. The trees that lined the city blocks wilted under the assault. Those with the pocketbooks fled to the countryside, desperately seeking the sandy beaches of Long Island or the Jersey Shore. Those without hid inside their cool apartments, huddled around overworked, sputtering air conditioners.

The streets of Manhattan were eerily quiet, and so the *thwack* of the basketball hitting the sidewalk rang much louder

than it should have, breaking a silence usually unknown in the great city. Except for the tawny dog trotting gamely at his side, the boy could have been all alone in an empty metropolis. But he was most definitely not alone.

The jerm kept its distance, gliding along the hot sidewalk a couple of car lengths behind its prey. It knew it would have to strike quickly when the time came, for the dog at the boy's side would not be affected by the jerm's poison, and the golden beast would have the would-be attacker in its jaws in a moment if alerted to its presence. The jerm was not a bright creature, but it knew how to adapt to the situation. Just yesterday it had been going about its usual business—the business of all jerms, running its sluglike, mucus-covered body over public phones and doorknobs, leaving behind a film of sickness for the mortals who touched it to contract. Nothing too deadly, just a summer flu. But enough to put whoever caught the bug out of commission for a while. Then it had felt the call, sending it on this mission that ultimately led to the boy walking just ahead.

The boy stopped for a second to tie his shoe and the jerm held back. Most mortals could never have seen the creature. But this boy was different. He was a Light. He could see Manhatta, the spirit city that overlapped Manhattan. If the boy glanced in the jerm's direction, he would be able to see the glistening slug the size of a football pulsating on the sidewalk, a long line of green slime extending into the distance, marking its trail. If that happened, then the jerm would have to move fast. It had been saving up its secretions, the excess mucus puffing it up to twice its normal size. When the mucus found

its way into the boy's skin, he would contract a flu so powerful he should be dead within hours.

The boy fiddled with his shoelace without looking in the jerm's direction, but the dog was sniffing the air. The longer the jerm waited, the more likely it became that the dog would pick up its scent. It would never have a better chance than now, it decided, with the boy distracted by his shoe and unable to move quickly. Seizing the moment, the jerm slid forward, picking up speed, ready to launch itself past the dog and onto its quarry to finish the job.

A searing pain suddenly exploded in the jerm's side and it found itself yanked sideways under a parked car. It struggled to move forward, but something was holding it back, tearing at its insides every time it tried to escape. From under the front of the car, the jerm watched helplessly as the boy straightened up and proceeded to stroll on down the street, getting farther and farther away as the *thwack* of the basketball echoed through the still air, the sound growing fainter with each bounce. Then something stepped in front of its eyes to obscure its vision, something much smaller than itself. The jerm gave a last desperate heave and felt something tear free, sending its hard-saved mucus squirting out in every direction. It rushed forward, blinded by pain, intent on covering its attacker with sickness before it died. But the small creature in front of it calmly lifted its arms, a long knife jutting out from each wrist. The jerm tried to pull up, but its own slime slid it helplessly forward until it impaled itself on the long knives. Mucus exploded everywhere, covering its dispatcher. The jerm could only hope that the sickness would take down its attacker and serve as its

revenge. With that last wish still echoing through its fading brain, the jerm shuddered, once, and then knew no more . . .

“This is so disgusting!”

Fritz M’Garoth, battle roach and rat-rider for the M’Garoth clan, stood stiffly, covered in green goo. He flicked his arms, sending waves of mucus out in each direction. He would scrub and scrub, but something told him he might never get the smell off his poor knives.

He turned to his companion, a battle roach four times his size.

“Are you okay, Sergeant Kiffer?” he asked the roach.

“This is worse than the time I got swallowed by the German shepherd,” Sergeant Kiffer complained sourly, and Fritz had to stifle a laugh. The huge roach had definitely received the worst of it; not one inch of his armor had escaped the rain of goo. Sergeant Kiffer dropped the wire he was holding, the other end of which led to the hook that had dragged the jerm under the car, and reached up to take off his helmet.

“Wait! Don’t do that!” A third battle roach, this one smaller than the other two, ran up, narrowly missing skidding into the dead slug. “You’re covered in liquid flu!”

“I see you somehow managed to stay clean, Hans,” Sergeant Kiffer muttered as he dropped his hands down to his side. It was true; Hans’s armor was almost spotless. He shrugged.

“The wheel of the car took most of the slime sent in my direction,” Hans said breezily. Sergeant Kiffer took an irritated step forward as if to say something and Fritz decided to cut in.

“It doesn’t matter,” he said. “Everyone did a good job.

Hans, you're going to have to run after Rory. You're the only one who's still clean."

"That's easily remedied!" Hans said brightly. He lifted an arm and sent a strong stream of water toward Fritz, dousing the roach's slimy armor with its cool spray. A moment later, Fritz was clean.

"Where did that come from?" Fritz asked, astonished.

"Just something I was working on," Hans replied. "You never know when you need to wash!" He sent a spray out to Sergeant Kiffer, scouring the slime from the large roach's armor in a matter of seconds.

"Well done!" Fritz was impressed. "I guess we can all go after Rory."

"They're getting closer to the kid, boss," Sergeant Kiffer said as he carefully gathered up his wire. Fritz sighed, his heart heavy.

"This is more than closer, Kiffer," he said. "This time, Kieft almost got him. Next time . . ." He trailed off, unwilling to finish the sentence.

"Why don't we just tell Rory what's been going on for the past month?" Hans asked. "We can't protect him forever."

"I know," Fritz said, staring down the sidewalk where Rory had disappeared. "It's just . . . he had a rough time for a while there and I wanted to give him—I don't know—some peace. Just for a little while."

"You do him no favors coddlin' him like that," Sergeant Kiffer muttered.

"You're probably right," Fritz said. "Looks like we're out of time, anyway. The days of hiding are almost over."

"*Ew!*" Hans jumped back suddenly, clutching at his helmet.
"*Ew, ew, ew, ew, ew, EW!*"

He ripped off his insect head, exposing the pink humanoid face underneath.

"What's wrong with you, Private!" Kiffer roared.

"It's *on* me!" Hans shouted, shuddering. Sure enough, a small drop of goo was sliding down his cheek.

"You never attach your helmet right!" Kiffer scolded him.
"You're a horrible soldier!"

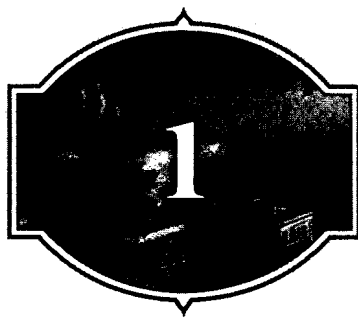
Hans didn't answer; he was too busy shooting water up onto his own face.

"Is it gone?" he asked finally, his eyes wide with fear.

"You're not a human," Kiffer said scornfully. "It won't kill you like it would one of them. It'll just be pretty darn unpleasant for a few days. So roach up, soldier!"

"But . . . I hate getting sick!"

"Come on." Fritz took Hans's shoulder. "I'll take you up to the village. You'll be fine. Kiffer, look after Rory, would you?" The large roach nodded, saluting sharply before setting out down the sidewalk after Rory. Fritz watched him go before glancing down at the dead jerm. That was too close. It looked like the days of Rory's safe hiding were just about over . . .



THE NECKLACE

Rory Hennessy stepped across the threshold into Central Park, half hoping that this time he would feel something as he passed through the barrier that kept the gods and spirits of Mannahatta out, and the Munsee Indians in. He sighed. *Nothing*. He'd been sneaking away to the park almost every other day for the past month, but he never felt so much as a tingle as he crossed over. For something so monumental, so overwhelmingly evil, he should at least get a zap or a shock or a tickle or *something*. It just didn't seem right to feel nothing at all.

He glanced back to the other side, spying Tucket lying forlornly by the break in the wall. Rory felt a flash of guilt. Though Wampage had told him that Tucket could follow his new master anywhere, he had quickly discovered that the tawny dog refused to enter the park. Wampage explained that because of the nature of the Trap, Tucket couldn't feel the island, the *land*, while inside the park, which was why he would not go in. Wampage warned Rory not to leave the dog, his protector, behind for any reason. But though Rory had grown fond of

the fun-loving pooch, Tucket had never protected him from anything, as far as he could tell. So the lure of the park won out in the end.

Rory breathed deeply. The shady trees and soft grass calmed him, helping him forget that he lived under the constant fear of discovery and death. They couldn't get to him here, he told himself. He was safe.

Dribbling his basketball, Rory set off down the path toward the courts. Above him, a flock of unfamiliar birds filled the sky, heading north. He wondered if anyone else could see them; he had a hunch they were extinct. It seemed like he couldn't walk five feet anymore without stumbling across the impossible. One afternoon he'd almost been run over by a huge herd of pigs stampeding down East 4th Street—pigs invisible to everyone but him. He must have looked like a crazy person, jumping around to keep from getting trampled by the hogs only he could see. Another evening, as he walked toward the subway station, a smoky locomotive had roared over his head, flying through the air along Ninth Avenue. It was the memory of the old El train, Fritz later told him, still running along elevated tracks that had long since been taken down. Rory came across these impossibilities everywhere: little farms where everyone else saw apartment buildings; horse-drawn carts trotting unseen beside the taxis and buses; costumed people long dead, gathered on street corners for reasons he never discovered; old, forgotten buildings peeking out from inside the doorways and side alleys of newer skyscrapers; not to mention a whole slew of strange creatures the likes of which he hoped never to see again. Sure, it all sounded like a never-ending adventure, or so his younger

sister, Bridget, argued. But, in truth, these wonders only made him feel more alone.

For Rory was a Light, and a Light didn't just see the hidden city of Mannahatta. A Light could also reveal that world to others. But opening people's eyes was dangerous, as he discovered when Bridget had her mortal body stolen by the evil magician Hex—all because Rory opened her eyes to Mannahatta. Rory would never expose a mortal to that danger again, if he could help it. So as he walked the streets of New York, he refused to acknowledge the wonders around him for fear of dragging someone else into a world they never asked to see, holding him forever apart from the people around him.

His mind elsewhere as he dribbled, Rory accidentally hit the side of his shoe with the ball. It bounced away, disappearing into the trees.

"Crap!" he cursed to himself. Annoyed, he ran after the ball, diving into the brush. The greenery grew particularly dense along the path, and at first Rory couldn't even see his basketball for all the branches and leaves in his way. Finally, he spied orange through the green; there was his basketball, resting against the trunk of a huge elm tree. He reached down to pick it up when suddenly his wrist blazed fire.

"Ow!" he cried, falling back. What was that? He checked his wrist to see if he'd been stung by something. It looked perfectly fine; the skin was unbroken and the small bracelet of purple beads he always wore appeared unharmed . . . *Wait a minute.* The *bracelet*. How could he have forgotten?

These were no ordinary beads, of course. The bracelet was made of pure wampum: the Native American mystic shells