

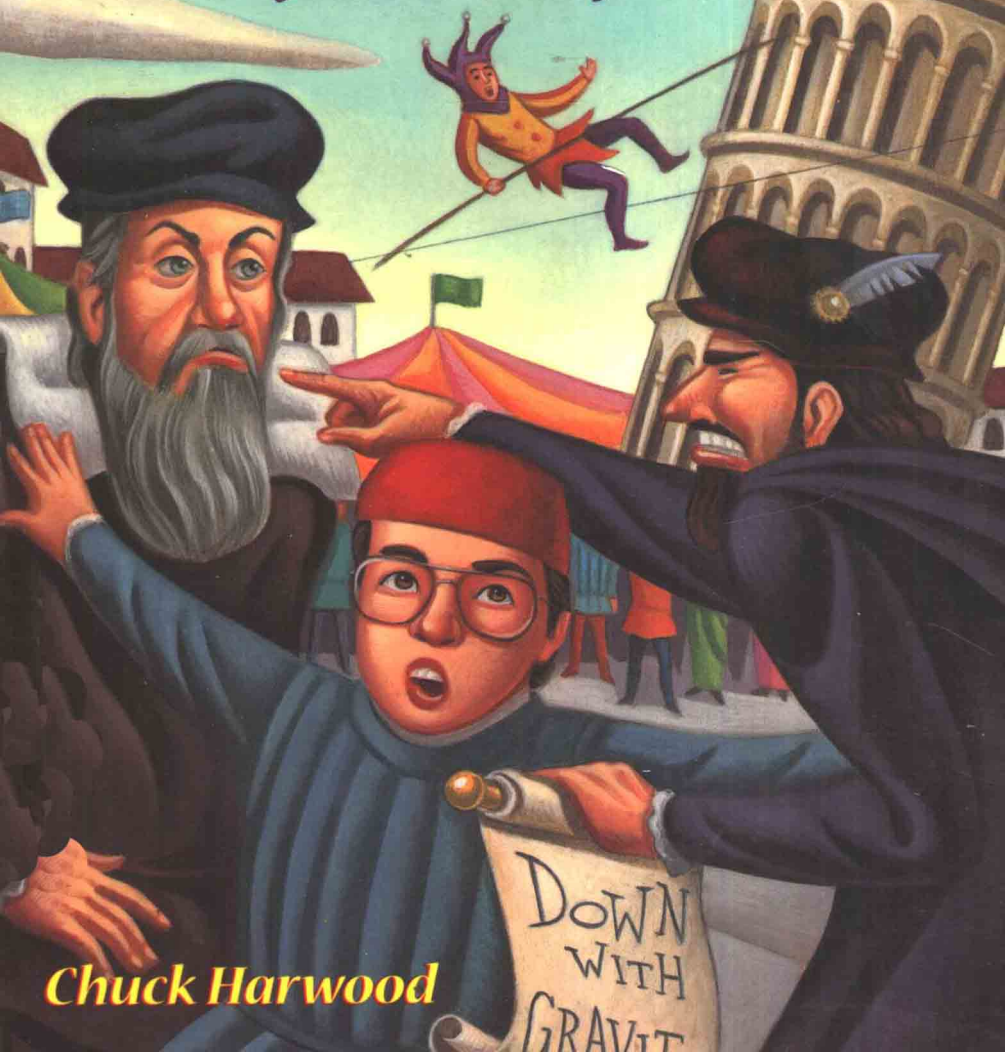
BOWLED OVER

THE CASE OF THE

Gravity Goof-Up



KINETIC
CITY #13
super crew



Chuck Harwood

Bowled Over

The Case of the Gravity Goof-Up

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About the Crew

It is the near future. Peace has broken out all over the world, and the President of the United States has decided to donate the world's most sophisticated military vehicle, the X-100 Advanced Tactical Vehicle, to "the youth of America, that they might use this powerful tool to learn, to explore, and to help others."

Since the X-100 was designed in a top-secret factory in Kinetic City, the vehicle was renamed **The Kinetic City Express** and the first young crew was dubbed the **Kinetic City Super Crew**.

But who would be the members of the Crew? Kinetic City's mayor, Richard M. Schwindle, puts out a call to the young people of the city. Many answer the call, and seven are chosen: Keisha, Derek, Megan, Curtis, Fernando, PJ, and Max.

Now the Crew travel the world, along with their talkative supercomputer, ALEC, in a tireless quest for truth, justice, and the perfect deep-dish pizza. Their quest may never end.

About the Train

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Originally designed to carry military intelligence teams to trouble spots throughout the world, the X-100 is capable of ultra-high-speed travel, under the control of the Advanced Logic Electronic Computer (ALEC) Series 9000. The vehicle can travel over land on existing train tracks and on tank-style treads. For crossing bodies of water, the X-100 can seal its waterproof bulkheads and travel underwater, using an advanced form of Magneto-Hydrodynamic Drive propulsion. The X-100 has several small vehicles within it which can travel with or without human passengers, including a small submarine and a jet copter. Finally, the X-100 has sophisticated information-gathering capabilities, using 'round-the-clock, high-speed access to the internet, an extensive CD-ROM library, and the ability to generate realistic science simulations in its "Cyber Car."

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The Phone Call

“Kinetic City Super Crew, when you want the facts, we hit the tracks, Max dreaming.”

“*Ciao*, Maximilian! Galileo here!”

“Galileo? The famous scientist? But I wanted to dream about food.”

“Instead you dream about fools, those who want to silence science! Come quickly before it’s too late!

CHAPTER ONE

Wormhole!

Kinetic City Express Journal: Bowled Over: The Case of the Gravity Goof-Up. Max reporting.

Okay. I guess I'd better start off by admitting Keisha was right. Two anchovy pizza supremes was one too many. Especially when I was trying to get a last-minute school report done. Keisha warned me that so much food could make me sleepy. She said it might even cause weird dreams. Wow, she didn't know the half of it.

Like I said, I'm Max, the youngest member of the Super Crew and still just in eighth grade. I'm famous for two things. Number one, I can cook like you wouldn't believe. Think of me basically as a famous chef no one's heard of yet. Number two, I sort of exaggerate

stuff. At least that's what millions of people have told me. Okay, well maybe not millions, but still a whole bunch. Anyway, it's not my fault. My imagination was born with a mind of its own.

Which brings me back to those two pizzas and my weird dream. It was all about Galileo, the famous scientist who lived in Italy four hundred years ago. He was the guy I was doing my report on in the first place. As it turned out, I was about to report for duty to help him out of a jam. Keisha would be there, too. And so would Curtis and Megan. For that matter, there'd also be time travel through a wormhole, a caveman named Bruno, and a dungeon full of spiders and rats. But I'm getting ahead of myself. The important point is that this would be no ordinary case. It got off to its bizarre start when the hotline rang deep inside my sleeping brain. Galileo's desperate cry for help jolted me into action ...

“Don’t worry, Galileo!” I shouted into the hot-line. “You’ve called the right place. We’ll come to Pisa right away!”

“*Molto grazie*, Maximilian!” he shouted back. His voice was distant and the static made it hard to hear. “I knew I could count on the Super . . .”

The line went dead. It’s tough to get a good connection to someone who lived four centuries ago. I didn’t have time to worry about it, though. I needed to find the others and tell them what was up. As it turned out, I didn’t have to. Keisha found me. The Kitchen Car doors *whooshed* open and she came running in.

“Max! You’ve got to get to the Control Car! Something really strange is going on!”

I’d never seen Keisha look so scared. Ever. Normally she’s the cool, leader-of-the-pack type.

“What’s up?” I asked. I was sure it couldn’t be stranger than Galileo’s phone call.

“The train’s been sucked into another dimension! I think it’s a wormhole!”

Of course, I could always be wrong.

“C’mon! Curtis and Megan need our help!”

I joined Keisha and we ran toward the Control Car. It didn’t take long to realize the word ‘strange’ didn’t quite cut it. The entire train was spinning through what looked like an endless tunnel of pure energy. Freaky, multicolored lights wrapped around the train’s windows like a tube. It was hard to describe. Try to imagine a bunch of Christmas tree lights spinning around in a dryer. Now imagine that you’re stuffed inside the dryer, too. See what I mean? Weird.

As we ran inside the Control Car, Megan and Curtis were already there. Neither of them looked very happy.

“Anything to report, Crew?” Keisha asked, trying to sound brave.

Megan stood at the control panel. Her eyes were wide and the weird light coming through the windows made her face look strange. She had been hunched over the keyboards and switches, desperately trying to bring ALEC the computer to life.

“Megan,” Keisha repeated louder. “Is there anything new to report?”

“Huh?” Megan glanced up and noticed us. “This wormhole thinga-ma-jiggys messing up ALEC! The last report I got from him said we were about to go backwards in time.”

Keisha tried to stay cool. “Anything else?”

“Yeah,” Megan said, wiping some sweat off her forehead. “We’re doomed.”

“Can’t anybody be optimistic around here?” Keisha was starting to sound a little nervous herself. “Curtis? How ’bout you?”

Curtis sat on the floor with his back to the wall. He looked totally depressed. “And the worst thing about it all,” he said as if the question had caught him in mid-thought, “is that I just finished the Boom-Bot, my coolest invention ever.”

He pointed glumly to the thing sitting beside him. It looked like a miniature portable stereo mounted on little tank treads.

“What’s that?” I asked.

“It’s a miniature portable stereo mounted on little tank treads.”

“Oh . . . neat,” I said, not sure if I sounded all that convincing.

“I pieced it together from spare parts lying around the Lab Car,” Curtis continued, half talking to himself. “It was going to be my breakthrough invention.”

“What’s it do?” I asked.

“Lets you cruise through life with your own movie soundtrack. Here, I’ll show you.”

He stood up, pulled a remote control from his jacket pocket and punched in some numbers. The Boom-Bot spun on its little treads as it followed him across the floor, cranking out music. *Yesterday, all my troubles seemed so far away. Now it looks as though they’re here to stay. Oh, I believe, in yesterday.*

“Hey, the Beatles,” Keisha said with a grin. “We must be passing back through the 1960s about now.”

“I think my mom left one of her CDs in the boom box,” Curtis said.

“Curtis, would you please turn that thing off?” Megan pleaded. “We’re in the middle of a

life or death situation here.”

Curtis punched another button on the remote.

Help! I need somebody! Help! Not just anybody! Heeeelllppp!

Megan put her hands on her hips, tapped her foot and glared. Curtis turned the Boom-Bot off. “Sorry, Megan,” he said sadly. “But we might as well face the music. We’re goners.”

“What do you mean, we’re goners?” I shouted, losing my cool for a second. “We can’t be goners! I’ve got a school report due tomorrow and I still haven’t fed the dog, or taken out the trash, or cleaned my room, or . . . or . . .” I stopped when I realized the others were just shaking their heads and staring at me.

“Okay, everybody,” Keisha said, trying to keep calm. “Let’s not lose our grip here. How did the KC Express get into this mess in the first place?”

Megan stopped her useless typing at ALEC’s keyboard. “It all started when I hit a

switch on the control panel for automatic pizza delivery.”

Keisha looked confused. “What switch for automatic pizza delivery?”

Megan pointed at a little silver knob poking up from the middle of the control panel. Funny. None of us had ever noticed it there before. Keisha walked over and took a look.

“Megan,” she said, “this doesn’t say ‘Automatic Pizza Delivery.’ It says ‘Automatic *Pisa* Delivery.’ “

The word ‘Pisa’ triggered my memory of Galileo’s phone call.

“Uh oh . . .” I said. The Crew turned and looked at me again.

“What do you mean by, ‘uh oh’, Max?” Keisha asked slowly.

“This whole wormhole thing is part of our next case,” I answered. “We just got a call from Galileo on the hotline.”

Curtis slowly raised his hand. “Um, Max . . . you don’t mean Galileo the famous scientist, do you?”