

Shared. We fit. –J.

If you find it, return it folded.

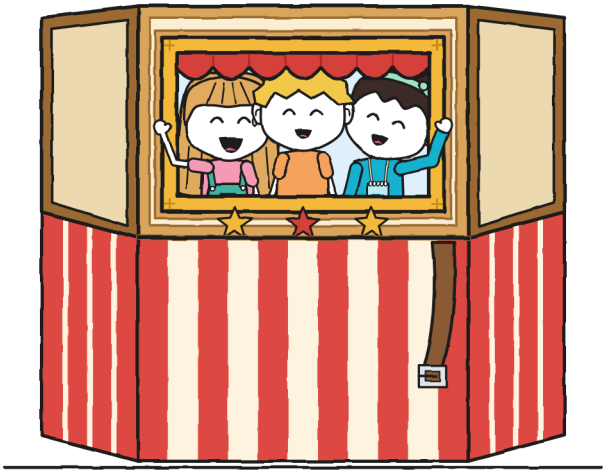
ONLY IN THE STORY

This stamp marks what only happens in the story: real dragons don't exist and packages don't fly back. For a real transfer, see the last page. –J.

IMPOSSIBLE DELIVERIES · 6

A Spot for Three

LinguAula



(Gus's notebook)

SIZE XL · Illustrated novel · 13+

IMPOSSIBLE DELIVERIES · 6

A Spot for Three

Sixth book in the series. Earlier: “This Package Bites”, “Do Not Open Before Thunder”, “Return to Sender, Please”, “Not Here, Crumb!” and “A Cake for Two”.

Text and illustrations: LinguAula

English version: LinguAula

SIZE XL · Illustrated novel · 13+

First edition: 2026

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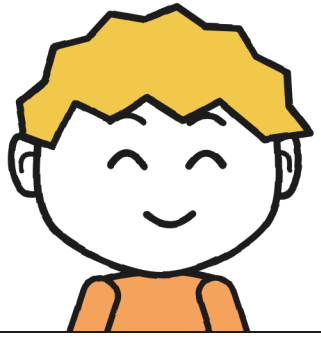
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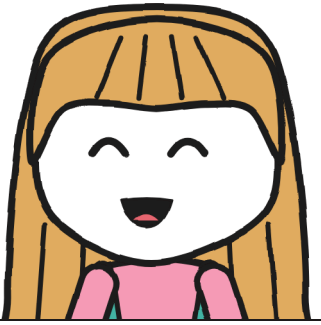
Work through every chapter at linguaula.com

Three carry it. I've chosen a handle. —J.

WHO'S WHO



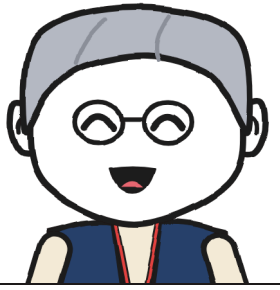
Gus. Measures in centimetres. This week he counts something else too.



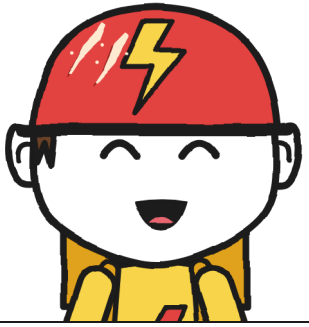
Julie. Knows the way. Explaining it is another matter.



Noa. Julie's friend from way back. Measures in steps: she always has them on.



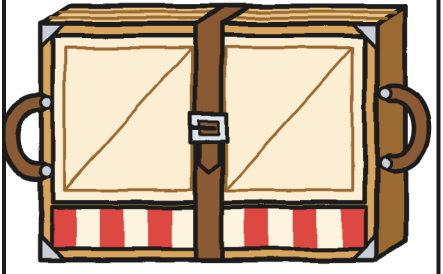
Irene. Runs the theatre workshop. She doesn't say which way: she says "stop".



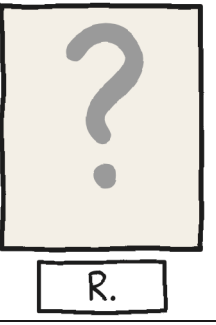
Tony. From LIGHTNING and the shop. Times things and gives no opinions. Nearly.



Mara. Lends the package. She doesn't let go of the box.



No. 6. A theatre that fits in a box. If nobody holds the strap, it opens wherever it likes.



R. Sender. This time R. left a line in an inventory.



CHAPTER 1

Why Does It Take Three?

Notebook 5 ended with two needles on a dial, and I closed it like that, without asking either of them to go away. A finished notebook stays the way you leave it. That's the good thing about them: nobody can argue with them any more.

Number 6 is orange. Tangerine orange, the kind you can peel in one go if you're not in a hurry, and it has the shop's stamp in one corner as well. Mara left it on the counter, next to the pink one, and went off to the back room to tidy some boxes that were already tidy. Mara doesn't give out notebooks: she leaves them where you're going to look.

For the first page I have a tradition. Number 2 I titled OFFICIAL; number 3, SECRET; number 4, FINAL; number 5, CALM. Four words with locks, and Julie read all four before anyone, myself included. This time I looked for a word that already took that into account.

At the top I wrote DELIVERY NOTEBOOK 6 · by Gus, which is what you write. Underneath, a single word:

SHARED.

And I left half a page free, just in case. I didn't know in case of what. I found out at once: it didn't stay free for a minute.

Julie was on the other side of the counter. She didn't ask me for the notebook; she pulled it over with one finger, uncapped the green marker and wrote on the half page in letters so big that they reached the margin, thought about it and carried on down the margin. Then she capped the marker with an "it wasn't me" face, which in that shop is a face that already belongs to everybody.

I shared the first page with my handwriting. —J.

I measured what it took up: the bottom half, all of it. My word, with all the air I had left around it, took up the top one. Two halves. It struck me as a very reasonable division.



The usual, for anyone who gets to this notebook without having been through the others. The shop is called Impossible Deliveries and it belongs to Mara, who is a witch, wears a purple hat and has a stamp that throws off sparks, smelling of a candle just blown out, whenever it comes down. On the shelf on the left she keeps the returns: packages nobody has managed to deliver, all of them sent by R. If whoever receives one doesn't sign the label in ink that doesn't come off, at dawn the package flies back to its shelf. There were twenty. Julie and I have delivered five: a dragon egg, some seeds that ran, a little bell, an arrival kit and a

stand for Ellie's bakery. On the wall, in green, it says LEFT: 15. Tony, the LIGHTNING one, has his place on an upturned crate by the stools. For now.

On Monday, the day after Ellie's note, I came out of school and went straight to the shop. Julie was waiting for me at the counter with an envelope in her hand. It wasn't green or blue, the envelope colours I know. It was turquoise, and it was closed. She was holding it with two fingers, by one corner, as if it burned.

"The postman brought it. It says 'To the Impossible Deliveries shop'. I've been not opening it for a while."

"How long?"

"Twenty-eight minutes," said Tony from his crate, looking at his watch. "Neighbourhood record."

He had his helmet on inside the shop, with its two claw scratches, and his watch outside his sleeve, so as not to lose time rolling it up.

I know Julie. A closed envelope in her hands lasts as long as it takes her to find the flap. Twenty-eight minutes wasn't patience. It was something else, and I couldn't tell what.

It wasn't mine. Envelopes that aren't mine weigh three times as much. —J.

Mara opened it with a fingernail, tearing no more paper than she had to. The letter was in clear, grown-up handwriting, the kind that doesn't slope at the end of the line:

"I'm Irene, in charge of the theatre workshop at the community centre. While updating the inventory I found a line: 'Folding little theatre: pending receipt.' Do you have it? Saturday the 31st is the neighbourhood rally. If the little theatre reaches our yard folded, carried by a team of three, I'll sign for it on the spot. Noa's team has a spot for three and, for now, only she is on it."

Underneath, in different handwriting, small and upright, in turquoise:

"Julie: it's me! I do theatre now. Bring someone who knows about packages. —Noa"

Julie read the signature and her mouth went up on one side, only one, the way it does when she remembers something she doesn't plan to tell. She said "Noa" very softly, the way you say the name of a street you've walked down a thousand times.

"Someone who knows about packages." That was me. I liked the "packages" part. The "someone" part, less.



At five the two of them arrived.

Irene carried a folder, a navy-blue gilet full of pockets and a whistle round her neck. Her hair was short and grey and she

wore round glasses, and with them she went along the shop shelf by shelf, like someone taking an inventory nobody has asked for. Noa had a notepad hanging from a string and a turquoise pencil behind her ear. Her hair was in a high bun of curls, held with a mint-green scarf; her jumper was turquoise, like the envelope. Everything about her seemed put in its place so that she wouldn't have to look for it.

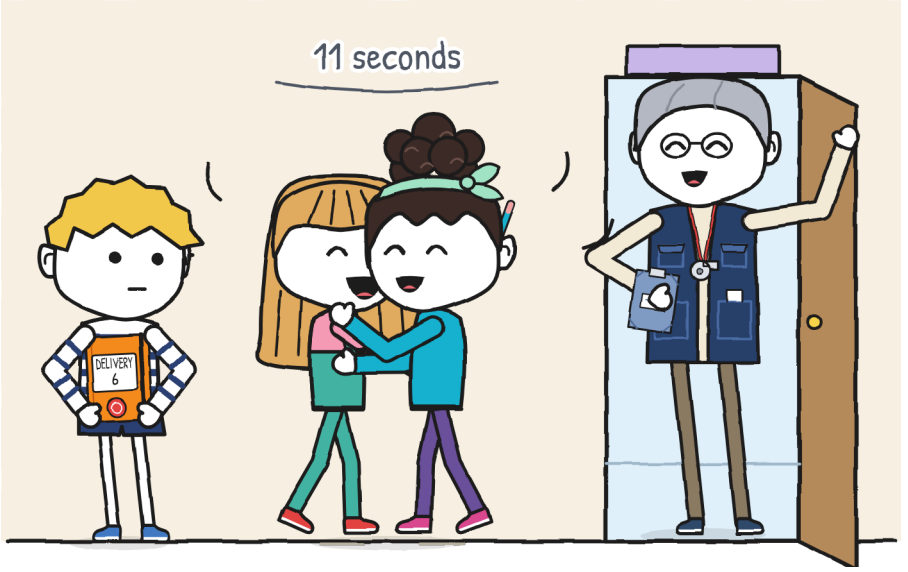
Julie came out from behind the counter without lifting the flap, by going under it, and they hugged. They hugged for so long that I had time to measure it: eleven seconds. I stood to one side, with the notebook. A notebook is good for that too: for having something in your hands.

"This is Gus," said Julie. "He knows about packages."

"Hello, Gus-who-knows-about-packages," said Noa. And she wrote my name in her notepad.

She wrote it in full, with the surname she had just given me. From where I stood I saw that I was the second line on the page. The first said "Julie", and had a line under it, like things that are already done.

Mara climbed onto the blue stool and brought No. 6 down from her shelf. A box like all the others, neither bigger nor smaller. The label had five typed lines: NO. 6. YARD WORKSHOP. ENTRY BY THE TWO DOORS. DELIVER FOLDED. And below, as always, SENDER: R. Around it, nine RETURNED stamps.



“Nine stamps,” said Julie.

“‘The two doors,’” Noa read out. “Which two doors?”

Irene didn’t know. Neither did Mara. I wrote it down with a question mark, which is what I write when I don’t know something and want it on record that I’ve noticed.

“I took it nine times,” said Mara. “On Mondays the sewing group opened up for me. On Wednesdays, the choir. On Fridays, the chess club. ‘The workshop? Not here.’ Nobody would sign for a workshop.”

I drew it while she talked, in three panels: Mara, with the box under her arm, in front of the same door, and in the doorway, by turns, a needle and thread, a musical note and a chess knight,

which said nothing because in chess you keep quiet. Underneath, the box coming in through the shop window at dawn. Nine times.

"The theatre group rehearses in the yard," said Irene. "And the yard has no doorbell."

She opened the folder and showed Mara a sheet with the centre's stamp on it. Mara read it with her nose very close, which is how she reads what she means to take seriously.

"It's in the register now: 'Theatre workshop. In charge: Irene.' Somebody does sign for a workshop."

"Now that there's somebody to sign, why doesn't Mara carry it over in her box, like Ellie's stand?" asked Julie.

"In its box I took it nine times," said Mara. "Now the conditions are set by whoever receives it."

"A folding little theatre is for taking out to the squares," said Irene. "I need to see that the kids in my group can manage it in the street. If they can't, it doesn't work for me. And I don't sign what doesn't work for me."

"I've heard that before in a bakery," said Mara.

I had had a question since I read the letter, and I asked it before it wore off.

"And why does it take three?"

I asked it for real. A bundle with two handles; two people, one on each handle. I had counted on my fingers and got two.

Nobody laughed. Irene looked at me over her glasses, the way you look at a piece that fits better than it seemed to.

"Good question. On Tuesday, in the yard, you can answer it for me."

Mara opened her book and wrote down her conditions. Mara's always fit in one hand; I counted them on mine and had a thumb to spare:

- No. 6: lent for practice.
- Goes out with Irene or me.
- Comes back folded.
- Sleeps here.

The label stays in the box, and the box stays with Mara.

If it sleeps on its shelf, at dawn it has nowhere to go back to. It stays at nine stamps. I asked. —J.



On Tuesday we went to the yard of the community centre. You go in from the pavement through an iron gate with many layers of paint, which closes by itself: you let go and it comes back, slowly, until it clicks, like a dog that sits down without being told.

Mara put the box on the ground and lifted off the lid. As it came out, the little theatre grew, like Ellie's stand. I don't get scared any more: I take out my tape.

Closed, it was a flat bundle of wooden and cloth panels, with a handle on each side and a strap that went through a buckle with three holes. A metre by seventy centimetres and, edge-on, a handspan. The gate, with one half open: ninety centimetres. Edge-on, it fitted through the gate. That was the easy part.

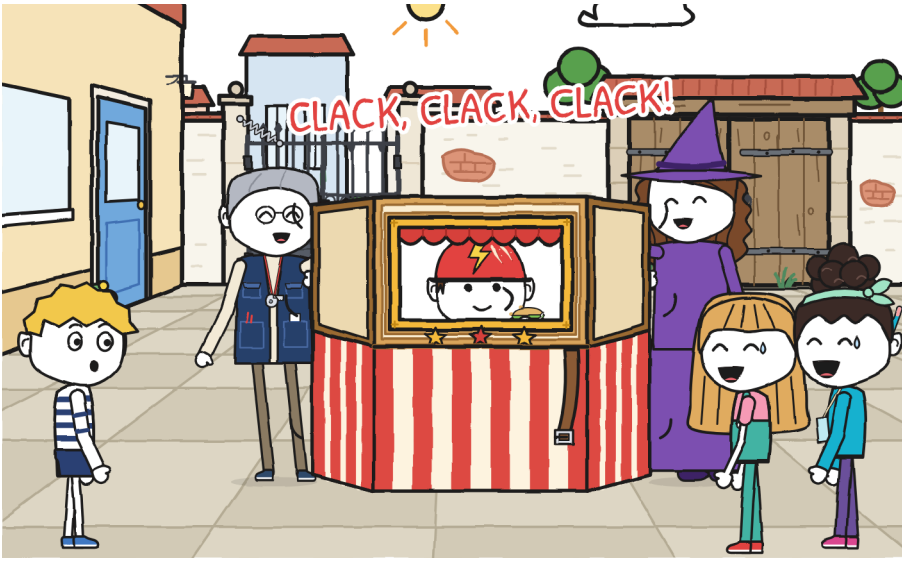
Before anything else, Irene wanted to see whether it was all there. She undid the strap and turned the bundle. The panels opened by themselves, under their own weight, one after another: clack, clack, clack. A stage with three walls, a short curtain and a framed window in the back panel.

Through the window you could see Tony, who was going along the pavement with a sandwich. His mouth was full. He couldn't say hello. He stopped for a moment, framed, with his helmet on and one cheek fatter than the other, like the portrait of someone important painted at lunchtime.

"It's all there," said Irene. "Workshop rule: hands on the handles. Never on the hinges. And on turns, someone holds the strap."

I wrote it down exactly as she said it.

Irene and Mara folded it up and fastened the strap.



“We’ll try it,” said Julie. Noa was already at the other handle.

They didn’t look at each other to decide. They didn’t even say it: each went to her own side the way you go to your usual chair.

They counted to three and lifted it. They could. They walked once round the yard, slowly, with their elbows slightly out, and the little theatre went between them without swaying, like a tray well carried. They reached the gate. The gate was closed.

Julie looked at it. Noa looked at it. They had four hands and all four were busy.

I was two metres away, with my two free and a notebook.

Irene, at the back, with the folder against her chest, said nothing. Neither “help them” nor “you”.

I held the gate with my back. They went through. Irene wrote something in the folder.



That afternoon I invented this notebook's gadget. It's the fifth of my career, after the shakeometer, the redometer, the hereometer and the noiseometer, and the first one that doesn't measure one person but several at once. I called it THE THREE-GAUGE, "who does what on each leg". One row per leg and three boxes, each with its little picture:

- CARRY: two hands on two handles.
- GUIDE: say which way and when.
- CLEAR THE WAY: doors, kerbs, people.

In the first row, "yard, first attempt", I put "Julie and Noa", "Julie and Noa" and an empty box. In the second, "yard, second attempt", the same, but in the third box I put "Gus".

Two names repeated and an empty box: it doesn't get through. With the box filled, it does. I now had the answer for Irene, and it was mine.

And I wrote down something else, smaller: "A gate can be held by a stone too."

I wrote it with the pencil hardly pressing.

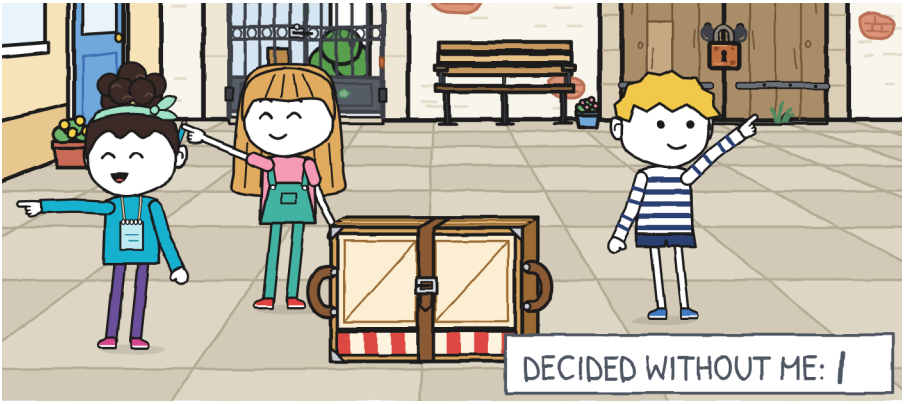
What was left was to understand the label.

"The two doors are the two halves of the gate," said Julie.

"We have to open both," said Noa.

"We could measure the wall from the outside first," I said.

We all three pointed at once. Julie, at the gate. Noa, at the workshop room. Me, at the street.



"Later," said the two of them.

They said it at the same time and to the same tune, as if they had rehearsed it. They had rehearsed it, I suppose. For years.

I went alone. I went out through the gate, which closed behind me with its click, and walked round the wall measuring with the tape, leg by leg, writing each number in the notebook propped on my knee. The wall was long and backed onto an alley that smelt of still water. And there, round the back, I found something.

I hurried back, with the thing in my head and the tape still not rolled up, dragging a metre of yellow along the pavement. When I came in, Julie and Noa were laughing about something that had

happened before I came to the neighbourhood. They laughed with their shoulders, without a sound, and Noa kept touching Julie's arm so that she would stop, and Julie didn't stop.

I opened my mouth.

"It's decided, Gus," said Julie. "It's the two halves."

In the bottom corner of the page, small and in pencil, I wrote: DECIDED WITHOUT ME. And beside it, a little tally mark. I wrote it with my mouth still open.

I shut my mouth. And the notebook.

I saw that tally mark two days later. It was mine. —J.

ONE STORY, SIX SIZES

This book comes in six sizes, for ages 3 to 16, and in more than 20 languages. XXS, XS, S, M and L tell the story page by page, with the same drawings and more and more nuance. XL is the novel: the same story, with room for everything Gus thinks and doesn't say.

CEFR levels as a rough guide: XXS, pre-A1 · XS, A1 · S, A2 · M, B1 · L, B2 · XL, B2–C1.

Each in their own size. The same little theatre. —J.

FOR FAMILIES AND TEACHERS

Work through every chapter at linguaula.com (with the size L activities)