

Valiamondo was as bewitching as a real-life fairy tale. Pax hastened George along. They were entering a deeper section now. Giant gaping mouths of ferocious stone wild cats heralded the entrance to functional caverns: Masterkind, Musclebound, Quartersplash, Take Ten, Dreamzone and Nutriwize. Scores of Porry Animos swiftly darted in and out of the cave mouths in systematic order. Above, towers of crystals oscillated like chandelier curtains masking passageways to mystery chambers reached by stone steps that glowed with each footprint. Several Porry Animos were scooting up and down the stairs, activating flashes of lucidity beneath their tiny paws. Ahead, magnificent glass haulage cases were being leveraged down from an opening high in the cavern wall. Like a colony of bees to a nest, the area was buzzing a mass of golden white. George gulped in awe, Pax's chat only just audible above the humming of the fairies

“The Trinkets are drilling!” presented Pax proudly. “This is Operation Four: Fear, Freedom, Focus and Fortune. The Trinkets tap into global fear with their special two-way guns and extract it from human thought-waves in order to make room for freedom. The fear is then encapsulated in these seal-proof carriers and recycled into trust over on Trust Mountain. This is then re-injected back into the energetic Universe as positive thought form. Humans never feel a thing except a much balanced sense of well-being *and* gratitude. This in turn evolves into more focus on inner desires resulting in... that's right! Fortune! Haha! It's a no-brainer. Basically we're trying to make the whole world happier! Now

then.” Pax scratched his mohican examining George. “We would take the scenic route but seeing as you've wasted precious time tinkering with the Trinkets, I'm afraid it's gonna have to be Bertrude. Haho!”

And whistling with his whole paw, Pax blew like a fathomless fiend to produce a soundless pipsqueak of nothingness. “Haho!” he beamed, slapping his thigh. “That should do it. Bless the old beast. Been out of action for a week with a broken whenkle. Not to worry. It'll be able to take us over to Trust Mountain without breaking down.”

Pax cupped a paw to his ear. A distant rumble slowly filled the air. The music stopped. As if on cue, the fairies magically melted into the walls and all the little orange folk stopped working and disappeared through darkened gateways that seemed to silently swallow them up. George felt the ground shudder as the trembling grew. Above, organs of crystal pipes began to gravely toll booming louder with each vehement strike. The colourful floor switched to a dirty black and for a moment it was though a devilish spirit had landed in Valiamondo. A chill ran through George's bones and not understanding why, he turned round to seek comfort from Pax who was motioning for him to follow.

“Quickly! Over here! It's a big one. Keep your head down!” he called out.
"And block your ears!"

The clamour was deafening. Pax was yelling out and thrust George deeper into their shelter as spirals of glass detached themselves from a circle of ceiling chimes and came plummeting to the ground. Then it all became clear.

All at once thundered in the most formidable creature-car George had ever seen. Half-stallion, half sports-mobile, Bertrude charged forwards in a blaze of smoke, emanating power and supremacy as it careered to a halt in a frenzy of neighing and brakes. Shaking a gigantic head, it pawed the ground with a shaggy hoof revving up a hardy v12 engine.

“Haho, Bertrude. You splendid beast. On cue! Whenkle seems to be rotating well! Pony a-go-go I say!” Pax leapt up, brushing down his dungarees and criss-crossed a floor of broken glass to gallantly open the passenger door. “George, your carriage awaits. Oh, do come along now. What are you waiting for? Bertrude doesn't like to be kept hanging around.”

“On that?” yelled George stubbornly. “No way!” He stood up forgetting the low ceiling and bashed his head wound against the rock. A familiar satisfying grump took hold. “I’m not going anywhere in that horse thing!”

Bertrude whinnied in response, pulsating with power.

"Look, dear boy" coaxed Pax not unkindly, "This isn't about you nor the transport.'

"Well? What *is* it about then?"

"It's about getting to where we need to go ...for you, for the sake of The Zobeasts." An imperceptible nod to his left. "This may not be altogether fair but if you refuse to board then I'm forced to consider alternative options."

In an instant, a dozen or so Porry Animos had appeared out of nowhere, scooped George up and had slung him like a disused beanbag into Bertrude's back seat.

"Sorry old chap," consoled Pax. "Needs must. And do try not to argue. It simply does not work and we simply do not have the time."

Without further ado, Pax jumped inside, strapped a belt across a furious George and with a tiny paw thrust commanded, "To Trust Mountain, Bertrude my friend!"

Bertrude pawed her hooves in delight and in an explosive blast of expensive engineering blazed into gear and tore off through swathes of silk and into a tunnel of darkness.