Gina looks around her new bedroom. Her family bought this old hotel last week. She’s still getting used to living here. The sun is rising, and Gina pulls the covers over her head.

On her dresser, there’s a porcelain doll in the shape of a fox. It’s musical. It plays “Peter and the Wolf” when you wind a key in the back. It came with the hotel.

Gina dresses herself in jeans and her favorite sweatshirt. The hotel is quiet. Father is already out back. He’s working on fixing the hotel so that guests can stay there soon. It’s time to head to school.

As she leaves, she notices an old bicycle she’s never seen before lying in the driveway. Gina shrugs and figures she’ll get to school quicker this way. She puts her schoolbooks in the basket and hops on.

The hill is steep and rocky. Her bicycle quickly starts wavering. The front tire is moving back and forth. Suddenly, the bike veers off the road. It’s as if someone else is steering the bike. And then, a tumble! Back tire over front tire, her books fly up in the air. Everything goes flying.

Thud! Her English book hits her right on top of the head. Thud! Thud! Down comes Math and then Biology. (Thankfully, those last two are softcover books!)

“Wooooahhh ohhhhh,” she cries, her eyes rolling back up into her head. Everything gets dark and dizzy and feels like she’s spinning around on a carousel. Perhaps she is.

Gina lies down in the grass and falls asleep for a while. It’s starting to get dark when she lifts her head. The book that hit her on the temple is now lying below her like a pillow. She reads the title: The Curious Situation of Foxes.

That’s funny, Gina thinks. I don’t remember taking this book out of the library.

She’s surely missed school now, and the bicycle is nowhere to be seen. Must be lying in a heap in the brambles. She stands and looks around, dusting off her jeans. There’s a big hole in the sleeve of her favorite sweatshirt!

She’s far behind the hotel, surrounded by blackberry bushes. There’s a stone wall covered in moss and a heavy green door with a copper handle in the shape of a fox. She touches the fox head, and the door opens.

She walks through the door and sees the front of the hotel. And there’s the bicycle! But this can’t be the entrance to the hotel, can it?

She peers down a long hallway. It’s longer than she remembers. Her head still hurts from being hit so hard. In her hand, she carries the book that attacked her from the air. She touches her forehead and winces.

“Ugh, I’ve got a lump on my head like a horn!”

At the end of the hallway is a room she has never seen before. She hears laughter and clinking glasses, and sees the flicker of a roaring fireplace.

In a strange room with oak walls and tapestries, three people are playing a board game. One man is wearing a tweed jacket and a monocle. One woman has a feather in her hair. The other woman wears a long string of pearls around her neck. They look like ghosts. They drink champagne and white tea, and pass around cherries on a silver platter.

“Hello, my dear,” says the woman in the necklace of pearls. “Join our party. Don’t look so scared.”

“Who are you, and how did you get into the hotel?” Gina asks.

“I am Marilyn,” she says. “And the young woman with the feather in her hair is Melinda. We have always lived here.”

"Festive outfit!" Melinda quips.

Marilyn takes Gina by the hand and leads her to a chair. Now, Gina sees that her clothes have changed. She is no longer wearing the jeans and sweatshirt she put on earlier. She is wearing a red and green party dress with a black velvet bow in her hair.

"And finally, our guest is in matching holiday attire!" jokes Melinda.

The man stands and introduces himself. He places one hand in front of his stomach and bows. “Madame Gina, allow me to introduce myself. I am the fox hunter known as Gerard.”

"Look here, Mr. Fox Hunter," Gina says. “We do not hunt or hurt foxes in my family!”

“I don’t hurt them! I stuff them and hang them on my wall as art!” he bellows. “The foxes are ripe for the picking!"

Before Gina can scold him for this terrible comment, the old, oak library shelf begins to stir.

"What moves behind the leather-bound almanac?" asks the Fox Hunter.

The almanac begins to quiver. Gina moves closer to the bookcase to inspect the fluttering. At this moment, the book pops out of the shelf like a toy on a spring! And what appears in its place? None other than a fox!

The fox will not remain still, however. He is wriggling himself free. Frantic movements: a hard bearing-down on his front paws, and an occasional grunting.

Suddenly, the fox comes flying out of the hole and shoots like an arrow across the room. He lands on a bearskin rug and falls into a deep sleep.

Another fox appears! The animals plug the round hole perfectly, like a soft, red cork!

“But how can this be?” Gina rubs her eyes with her fist. “From a library shelf?”

When that fox jumps out, yet another fox appears. And again. Faster and faster. The hole becomes a momentous blur of orange and brown. Foxes are bubbling forth in a stream, like a faucet that won’t turn off. All of them landing on the rug in a pile.

"The hole,” Marilyn gasps. “It’s a portal! A portal to foxes!"

Although you may imagine our group to be in the midst of a commotion, the foxes are actually quite docile. First, they jump from the hole and run around the room. Quickly, though, their eyes close gently, and they settle down as if for a long winter’s nap.

The floor, however, is now nowhere to be seen. Foxes are sleeping and snoring everywhere, without any regard for manners.

"Help! Help!" cries Melinda. She is trapped beneath a fuzzy pile of small, baby foxes sleeping all around her shoulders and head.

“Tragedy! What can we do?” they cry.

Just now, Gina remembers the book in her hand: The Curious Situation of Foxes. She opens to the first page and begins to read: “Chapter One: In Case Of Emergency. What to do when a fox portal is opened.”

Melinda throws her arms in the air. “MRRPHN!” She pulls a sleeping baby fox out of her mouth. “Read it!”

“Well, it says here,” Gina reads, “that the un-foxing spell must be chanted in unison. Now, everyone, try your best to grab each other’s hand!”

“I can’t reach!” Marilyn cries.

“Yes, you can!” says the Fox Hunter. He begins swimming around the room. He does the backstroke through foxes, gathering Marilyn and Melinda in each arm.

Marilyn's dainty fingers wrap around Gina’s hand. They chant.

“Foxes of Nature, we beg for your forgiveness and beseech thee to return to the forest. This hotel is not where you should hibernate!”

Gina pauses for a second, and then says: “FOXEN BEGONEN BENEDICTEN FOXNOMORE!”

There is a lightning crash outside and all the windows rattle. And then, backwards, the way they came, the foxes are sucked back into the portal. One by one, tails first and heads last. They are sucked back into the hole, still sleeping soundly, to return to only the devil knows where.

When the last fox disappears, the book in Gina’s hand begins to flutter. It’s being pulled uncontrollably toward the portal now. She cannot control her arm, if she doesn’t let go, she’ll go flying across the room. And she does!

“AHHHH!” Gina screams, being pulled toward the hole. It feels like her arm will tear right off.

“Let go of the book!” Gina hears a voice cry. And she does that, too. The force pulling her is released and her body stops mid-air. She falls to the floor with a thud. Just like the foxes, she falls asleep.

“Gina, let go of the book,” she hears. She opens her eyes, and her mother and father are standing above her. She’s back in the bramble, the bicycle a twisted mess beside her. “Let go of the book, Gina. We’re going to take you inside and clean up all these scrapes and bruises.

“What happened?”

“You’ve fallen off this bike, dear. And it’s no wonder; it had a completely rusted chain! Now, let go of the book.”

She is clutching a book to her chest. The cover reads: The Curious Situation of Boxes: How to Build a Box for Any Occasion.

“What are you doing with this strange book, anyway? Planning to make a box?”

“I… don’t really remember,” Gina says, rubbing a painful lump on her forehead.

“Oh, will you look at that!” her mother says, pointing at the woods. “How sweet!”

On the dirt path behind her, a family of foxes is making their way into the woods. Gina squints and swears she sees Marilyn and Melinda, dressed in feathers and fineries, leading them home.

ˈʤinə lʊks əˈraʊnd hɜr nu ˈbɛˌdrum. hɜr ˈfæməli bɑt ðɪs oʊld hoʊˈtɛl læst wik. ʃiz stɪl ˈgɛtɪŋ juzd tu ˈlɪvɪŋ hir. ðə sʌn ɪz ˈraɪzɪŋ, ænd ˈʤinə pʊlz ðə ˈkʌvərz ˈoʊvər hɜr hɛd.

ɑn hɜr ˈdrɛsər, ðɛrz ə ˈpɔrsələn dɑl ɪn ðə ʃeɪp ʌv ə fɑks. ɪts ˈmjuzɪkəl. ɪt pleɪz “ˈpitər ænd ðə wʊlf” wɛn ju wɪnd ə ki ɪn ðə bæk. ɪt keɪm wɪð ðə hoʊˈtɛl.

ˈʤinə ˈdrɛsəz hərˈsɛlf ɪn ʤinz ænd hɜr ˈfeɪvərɪt ˈswɛtˌʃɜrt. ðə hoʊˈtɛl ɪz ˈkwaɪət. ˈfɑðər ɪz ɔlˈrɛdi aʊt bæk. hiz ˈwɜrkɪŋ ɑn ˈfɪksɪŋ ðə hoʊˈtɛl soʊ ðæt gɛsts kæn steɪ ðɛr sun. ɪts taɪm tu hɛd tu skul.

æz ʃi livz, ʃi ˈnoʊtəsəz ən oʊld ˈbaɪsɪkəl ʃiz ˈnɛvər sin bɪˈfɔr ˈlaɪɪŋ ɪn ðə ˈdraɪˌvweɪ. ˈʤinə ʃrʌgz ænd ˈfɪgjərz ʃil gɛt tu skul ˈkwɪkər ðɪs weɪ. ʃi pʊts hɜr ˈskulˌbʊks ɪn ðə ˈbæskət ænd hɑps ɑn.

ðə hɪl ɪz stip ænd ˈrɑki. hɜr ˈbaɪsɪkəl ˈkwɪkli stɑrts ˈweɪvərɪŋ. ðə frʌnt ˈtaɪər ɪz ˈmuvɪŋ bæk ænd fɔrθ. ˈsʌdənli, ðə baɪk vɪrz ɔf ðə roʊd. ɪts æz ɪf ˈsʌmˌwʌn ɛls ɪz ˈstɪrɪŋ ðə baɪk. ænd ðɛn, ə ˈtʌmbəl! bæk ˈtaɪər ˈoʊvər frʌnt ˈtaɪər, hɜr bʊks flaɪ ʌp ɪn ði ɛr. ˈɛvriˌθɪŋ goʊz ˈflaɪɪŋ.

θʌd! hɜr ˈɪŋglɪʃ bʊk hɪts hɜr raɪt ɑn tɑp ʌv ðə hɛd. θʌd! θʌd! daʊn kʌmz mæθ ænd ðɛn baɪˈɑləʤi. (ˈθæŋkfəli, ðoʊz læst tu ɑr sɑftˈkʌvər bʊks!)

“woooʊʊʊ oʊʊ,” ʃi kraɪz, hɜr aɪz ˈroʊlɪŋ bæk ʌp ˈɪntu hɜr hɛd. ˈɛvriˌθɪŋ gɛts dɑrk ænd ˈdɪzi ænd filz laɪk ʃiz ˈspɪnɪŋ əˈraʊnd ɑn ə ˈkɛrəˌsɛl. pərˈhæps ʃi ɪz.

ˈʤinə laɪz daʊn ɪn ðə græs ænd fɔlz əˈslip fɔr ə waɪl. ɪts ˈstɑrtɪŋ tu gɛt dɑrk wɛn ʃi lɪfts hɜr hɛd. ðə bʊk ðæt hɪt hɜr ɑn ðə ˈtɛmpəl ɪz naʊ ˈlaɪɪŋ bɪˈloʊ hɜr laɪk ə ˈpɪloʊ. ʃi ridz ðə ˈtaɪtəl: ðə ˈkjʊriəs ˌsɪʧuˈeɪʃən ʌv ˈfɑksəz.

ðæts ˈfʌni, ˈʤinə θɪŋks. aɪ doʊnt rɪˈmɛmbər ˈteɪkɪŋ ðɪs bʊk aʊt ʌv ðə ˈlaɪˌbrɛri.

ʃiz ˈʃʊrli mɪst skul naʊ, ænd ðə ˈbaɪsɪkəl ɪz ˈnoʊˌwɛr tu bi sin. mʌst bi ˈlaɪɪŋ ɪn ə hip ɪn ðə ˈbræmbəlz. ʃi stændz ænd lʊks əˈraʊnd, ˈdʌstɪŋ ɔf hɜr ʤinz. ðɛrz ə bɪg hoʊl ɪn ðə sliv ʌv hɜr ˈfeɪvərɪt ˈswɛtˌʃɜrt!

ʃiz fɑr bɪˈhaɪnd ðə hoʊˈtɛl, səˈraʊndəd baɪ ˈblækˌbɛri ˈbʊʃəz. ðɛrz ə stoʊn wɔl ˈkʌvərd ɪn mɔs ænd ə ˈhɛvi grin dɔr wɪð ə ˈkɑpər ˈhændəl ɪn ðə ʃeɪp ʌv ə fɑks. ʃi ˈtʌʧəz ðə fɑks hɛd, ænd ðə dɔr ˈoʊpənz.

ʃi wɔks θru ðə dɔr ænd siz ðə frʌnt ʌv ðə hoʊˈtɛl. ænd ðɛrz ðə ˈbaɪsɪkəl! bʌt ðɪs kænt bi ði ˈɛntrəns tu ðə hoʊˈtɛl, kæn ɪt?

ʃi pɪrz daʊn ə lɔŋ ˈhɔlˌweɪ. ɪts ˈlɔŋgər ðæn ʃi rɪˈmɛmbərz. hɜr hɛd stɪl hɜrts frʌm ˈbiɪŋ hɪt soʊ hɑrd. ɪn hɜr hænd, ʃi ˈkæriz ðə bʊk ðæt əˈtækt hɜr frʌm ði ɛr. ʃi ˈtʌʧəz hɜr ˈfɔrhɛd ænd ˈwɪnsɪz.

“ʌg, aɪv gɑt ə lʌmp ɑn maɪ hɛd laɪk ə hɔrn!”

æt ði ɛnd ʌv ðə ˈhɔlˌweɪ ɪz ə rum ʃi hæz ˈnɛvər sin bɪˈfɔr. ʃi hirz ˈlæftər ænd ˈklɪŋkɪŋ ˈglæsəz, ænd siz ðə ˈflɪkər ʌv ə ˈrɔrɪŋ ˈfaɪərˌpleɪs.

ɪn ə streɪnʤ rum wɪð oʊk wɔlz ænd ˈtæpəstriz, θri ˈpipəl ɑr ˈpleɪɪŋ ə bɔrd geɪm. wʌn mən ɪz ˈwɛrɪŋ ə twid ˈʤækət ænd ə ˈmɑnəkəl. wʌn ˈwʊmən hæz ə ˈfɛðər ɪn hɜr hɛr. ði ˈʌðər ˈwʊmən wɛrz ə lɔŋ strɪŋ ʌv pɜrlz əˈraʊnd hɜr nɛk. ðeɪ lʊk laɪk goʊsts. ðeɪ drɪŋk ʃæmˈpeɪn ænd waɪt ti, ænd pæs əˈraʊnd ˈʧɛriz ɑn ə ˈsɪlvər ˈplætər.

“həˈloʊ, maɪ dɪr,” sɛz ðə ˈwʊmən ɪn ðə ˈnɛkləs ʌv pɜrlz. “ʤɔɪn ˈaʊər ˈpɑrti. doʊnt lʊk soʊ skɛrd.”

“hu ɑr ju, ænd haʊ dɪd ju gɛt ˈɪntu ðə hoʊˈtɛl?” ˈʤinə æsks.

“aɪ æm ˈmɛrələn,” ʃi sɛz. “ænd ðə jʌŋ ˈwʊmən wɪð ðə ˈfɛðər ɪn hɜr hɛr ɪz məˈlɪndə. wi hæv ˈɔlˌweɪz laɪvd hir.”

"ˈfɛstɪv ˈaʊtˌfɪt!" məˈlɪndə kwɪps.

ˈmɛrələn teɪks ˈʤinə baɪ ðə hænd ænd lidz hɜr tu ə ʧɛr. naʊ, ˈʤinə siz ðæt hɜr kloʊðz hæv ʧeɪnʤd. ʃi ɪz noʊ ˈlɔŋgər ˈwɛrɪŋ ðə ʤinz ænd ˈswɛtˌʃɜrt ʃi pʊt ɑn ˈɜrliər. ʃi ɪz ˈwɛrɪŋ ə rɛd ænd grin ˈpɑrti drɛs wɪð ə blæk ˈvɛlvət baʊ ɪn hɜr hɛr.

"ænd ˈfaɪnəli, ˈaʊər gɛst ɪz ɪn ˈmæʧɪŋ ˈhɑləˌdeɪ əˈtaɪər!" ʤoʊks məˈlɪndə.

ðə mən stændz ænd ˌɪntrəˈdusɪz hɪmˈsɛlf. hi ˈpleɪsəz wʌn hænd ɪn frʌnt ʌv hɪz ˈstʌmək ænd baʊz. “ˈmædəm ˈʤinə, əˈlaʊ mi tu ˌɪntrəˈdus ˌmaɪˈsɛlf. aɪ æm ðə fɑks ˈhʌntər noʊn æz ʤəˈrɑrd.”

"lʊk hir, ˈmɪstər. fɑks ˈhʌntər," ˈʤinə sɛz. “wi du nɑt hʌnt ɔr hɜrt ˈfɑksəz ɪn maɪ ˈfæməli!”

“aɪ doʊnt hɜrt ðɛm! aɪ stʌf ðɛm ænd hæŋ ðɛm ɑn maɪ wɔl æz ɑrt!” hi ˈbɛloʊz. “ðə ˈfɑksəz ɑr raɪp fɔr ðə ˈpɪkɪŋ!"

bɪˈfɔr ˈʤinə kæn skoʊld hɪm fɔr ðɪs ˈtɛrəbəl ˈkɑmɛnt, ði oʊld, oʊk ˈlaɪˌbrɛri ʃɛlf bɪˈgɪnz tu stɜr.

"wʌt muvz bɪˈhaɪnd ðə ˈlɛðər-baʊnd ˈɑlməˌnæk?" æsks ðə fɑks ˈhʌntər.

ði ˈɑlməˌnæk bɪˈgɪnz tu ˈkwɪvər. ˈʤinə muvz ˈkloʊsər tu ðə ˈbʊkˌkeɪs tu ɪnˈspɛkt ðə ˈflʌtərɪŋ. æt ðɪs ˈmoʊmənt, ðə bʊk pɑps aʊt ʌv ðə ʃɛlf laɪk ə tɔɪ ɑn ə sprɪŋ! ænd wʌt əˈpɪrz ɪn ɪts pleɪs? nʌn ˈʌðər ðæn ə fɑks!

ðə fɑks wɪl nɑt rɪˈmeɪn stɪl, ˌhaʊˈɛvər. hi ɪz ˈrɪgəlɪŋ hɪmˈsɛlf fri. ˈfræntɪk ˈmuvmənts: ə hɑrd ˈbɛrɪŋ-daʊn ɑn hɪz frʌnt pɔz, ænd ən əˈkeɪʒənəl ˈgrʌntɪŋ.

ˈsʌdənli, ðə fɑks kʌmz ˈflaɪɪŋ aʊt ʌv ðə hoʊl ænd ʃuts laɪk ən ˈæroʊ əˈkrɔs ðə rum. hi lændz ɑn ə bɛr skɪn rʌg ænd fɔlz ˈɪntu ə dip slip.

əˈnʌðər fɑks əˈpɪrz! ði ˈænəməlz plʌg ðə raʊnd hoʊl ˈpɜrfəktli, laɪk ə sɑft, rɛd kɔrk!

“bʌt haʊ kæn ðɪs bi?” ˈʤinə rʌbz hɜr aɪz wɪð hɜr fɪst. “frʌm ə ˈlaɪˌbrɛri ʃɛlf?”

wɛn ðæt fɑks ʤʌmps aʊt, jɛt əˈnʌðər fɑks əˈpɪrz. ænd əˈgɛn. ˈfæstər ænd ˈfæstər. ðə hoʊl bɪˈkʌmz ə moʊˈmɛntəs blɜr ʌv ˈɔrənʤ ænd braʊn. ˈfɑksəz ɑr ˈbʌbəlɪŋ fɔrθ ɪn ə strim, laɪk ə ˈfɔsət ðæt woʊnt tɜrn ɔf. ɔl ʌv ðɛm ˈlændɪŋ ɑn ðə rʌg ɪn ə paɪl.

"ðə hoʊl,” ˈmɛrələn gæsps. “ɪts ə ˈpɔrtəl! ə ˈpɔrtəl tu ˈfɑksəz!"

ˌɔlˈðoʊ ju meɪ ɪˈmæʤən ˈaʊər grup tu bi ɪn ðə mɪdst ʌv ə kəˈmoʊʃən, ðə ˈfɑksəz ɑr ˈækʧuəli kwaɪt ˈdɑsəl. fɜrst, ðeɪ ʤʌmp frʌm ðə hoʊl ænd rʌn əˈraʊnd ðə rum. ˈkwɪkli, ðoʊ, ðɛr aɪz kloʊs ˈʤɛntli, ænd ðeɪ ˈsɛtəl daʊn æz ɪf fɔr ə lɔŋ ˈwɪntərz næp.

ðə flɔr, ˌhaʊˈɛvər, ɪz naʊ ˈnoʊˌwɛr tu bi sin. ˈfɑksəz ɑr ˈslipɪŋ ænd ˈsnɔrɪŋ ˈɛvriˌwɛr, wɪˈθaʊt ˈɛni rəˈgɑrd fɔr ˈmænərz.

"hɛlp! hɛlp!" kraɪz məˈlɪndə. ʃi ɪz træpt bɪˈniθ ə ˈfʌzi paɪl ʌv smɔl, ˈbeɪbi ˈfɑksəz ˈslipɪŋ ɔl əˈraʊnd hɜr ˈʃoʊldərz ænd hɛd.

“ˈtræʤədi! wʌt kæn wi du?” ðeɪ kraɪ.

ʤʌst naʊ, ˈʤinə rɪˈmɛmbərz ðə bʊk ɪn hɜr hænd: ðə ˈkjʊriəs ˌsɪʧuˈeɪʃən ʌv ˈfɑksəz. ʃi ˈoʊpənz tu ðə fɜrst peɪʤ ænd bɪˈgɪnz tu rid: “ˈʧæptər wʌn: ɪn keɪs ʌv ɪˈmɜrʤənsi. wʌt tu du wɛn ə fɑks ˈpɔrtəl ɪz ˈoʊpənd.”

məˈlɪndə θroʊz hɜr ɑrmz ɪn ði ɛr. “mrfn!” ʃi pʊlz ə ˈslipɪŋ ˈbeɪbi fɑks aʊt ʌv hɜr maʊθ. “rid ɪt!”

“wɛl, ɪt sɛz hir,” ˈʤinə ridz, “ðæt ði ʌn-ˈfɑksɪŋ spɛl mʌst bi ˈʧæntɪd ɪn ˈjunəsən. naʊ, ˈɛvriˌwʌn, traɪ jʊər bɛst tu græb iʧ ˈʌðərz hænd!”

“aɪ kænt riʧ!” ˈmɛrələn kraɪz.

“jɛs, ju kæn!” sɛz ðə fɑks ˈhʌntər. hi bɪˈgɪnz ˈswɪmɪŋ əˈraʊnd ðə rum. hi dʌz ðə ˈbækˌstroʊk θru ˈfɑksəz, ˈgæðərɪŋ ˈmɛrələn ænd məˈlɪndə ɪn iʧ ɑrm.

ˈmɛrələnz ˈdeɪnti ˈfɪŋgərz ræp əˈraʊnd ˈʤinəz hænd. ðeɪ ʧænt.

“ˈfɑksəz ʌv ˈneɪʧər, wi bɛg fɔr jʊər fərˈgɪvnəs ænd biˈsiʧ ði tu rɪˈtɜrn tu ðə ˈfɔrəst. ðɪs hoʊˈtɛl ɪz nɑt wɛr ju ʃʊd ˈhaɪbərˌneɪt!”

ˈʤinə ˈpɔzəz fɔr ə ˈsɛkənd, ænd ðɛn sɛz: “fɑksɛn bigɔnɛn ˈbɛnəˌdɪktɛn fɑksnoʊmɔr!”

ðɛr ɪz ə ˈlaɪtnɪŋ kræʃ ˈaʊtˈsaɪd ænd ɔl ðə ˈwɪndoʊz ˈrætəl. ænd ðɛn, ˈbækwərdz, ðə weɪ ðeɪ keɪm, ðə ˈfɑksəz ɑr sʌkt bæk ˈɪntu ðə ˈpɔrtəl. wʌn baɪ wʌn, teɪlz fɜrst ænd hɛdz læst. ðeɪ ɑr sʌkt bæk ˈɪntu ðə hoʊl, stɪl ˈslipɪŋ ˈsaʊndli, tu rɪˈtɜrn tu ˈoʊnli ðə ˈdɛvəl noʊz wɛr.

wɛn ðə læst fɑks ˌdɪsəˈpɪrz, ðə bʊk ɪn ˈʤinəz hænd bɪˈgɪnz tu ˈflʌtər. ɪts ˈbiɪŋ pʊld ˌʌnkənˈtroʊləbli təˈwɔrd ðə ˈpɔrtəl naʊ. ʃi ˈkænɑt kənˈtroʊl hɜr ɑrm, ɪf ʃi ˈdʌzənt lɛt goʊ, ʃil goʊ ˈflaɪɪŋ əˈkrɔs ðə rum. ænd ʃi dʌz!

“ˈɔɔɔɔɔɔ!” ˈʤinə skrimz, ˈbiɪŋ pʊld təˈwɔrd ðə hoʊl. ɪt filz laɪk hɜr ɑrm wɪl tɛr raɪt ɔf.

“lɛt goʊ ʌv ðə bʊk!” ˈʤinə hirz ə vɔɪs kraɪ. ænd ʃi dʌz ðæt, tu. ðə fɔrs ˈpʊlɪŋ hɜr ɪz riˈlist ænd hɜr ˈbɑdi stɑps mɪd-ɛr. ʃi fɔlz tu ðə flɔr wɪð ə θʌd. ʤʌst laɪk ðə ˈfɑksəz, ʃi fɔlz əˈslip.

“ˈʤinə, lɛt goʊ ʌv ðə bʊk,” ʃi hirz. ʃi ˈoʊpənz hɜr aɪz, ænd hɜr ˈmʌðər ænd ˈfɑðər ɑr ˈstændɪŋ əˈbʌv hɜr. ʃiz bæk ɪn ðə ˈbræmbəl, ðə ˈbaɪsɪkəl ə ˈtwɪstəd mɛs bɪˈsaɪd hɜr. “lɛt goʊ ʌv ðə bʊk, ˈʤinə. wir ˈgoʊɪŋ tu teɪk ju ɪnˈsaɪd ænd klin ʌp ɔl ðiz skreɪps ænd ˈbruzəz.

“wʌt ˈhæpənd?”

“juv ˈfɑlən ɔf ðɪs baɪk, dɪr. ænd ɪts noʊ ˈwʌndər; ɪt hæd ə kəmˈplitli ˈrʌstəd ʧeɪn! naʊ, lɛt goʊ ʌv ðə bʊk.”

ʃi ɪz ˈklʌʧɪŋ ə bʊk tu hɜr ʧɛst. ðə ˈkʌvər ridz: ðə ˈkjʊriəs ˌsɪʧuˈeɪʃən ʌv ˈbɑksəz: haʊ tu bɪld ə bɑks fɔr ˈɛni əˈkeɪʒən.

“wʌt ɑr ju ˈduɪŋ wɪð ðɪs streɪnʤ bʊk, ˈɛniˌweɪ? ˈplænɪŋ tu meɪk ə bɑks?”

“aɪ… doʊnt ˈrɪli rɪˈmɛmbər,” ˈʤinə sɛz, ˈrʌbɪŋ ə ˈpeɪnfəl lʌmp ɑn hɜr ˈfɔrhɛd.

“oʊ, wɪl ju lʊk æt ðæt!” hɜr ˈmʌðər sɛz, ˈpɔɪntɪŋ æt ðə wʊdz. “haʊ swit!”

ɑn ðə dɜrt pæθ bɪˈhaɪnd hɜr, ə ˈfæməli ʌv ˈfɑksəz ɪz ˈmeɪkɪŋ ðɛr weɪ ˈɪntu ðə wʊdz. ˈʤinə skwɪnts ænd swɛrz ʃi siz ˈmɛrələn ænd məˈlɪndə, drɛst ɪn ˈfɛðərz ænd ˈfaɪnəriz, ˈlidɪŋ ðɛm hoʊm.

Comprehension Questions

**1.** Where does Gina’s family live?

1. in the forest
2. **in an old hotel**
3. in an old school
4. in a fox den

**2.** How does Gina deal with the problem of the fox portal?

1. swimming through the foxes
2. running out of the hotel
3. **chanting a spell from a book**
4. calling her parents for help

**3.** The hotel that Gina visits after falling off her bike is magical. What evidence from the story supports this conclusion?

1. **Foxes appear from a hole in the bookcase.**
2. The hallway is longer than Gina remembers.
3. Gina walks through a door with a fox-shaped handle.
4. Marilyn and Melinda drink champagne and white tea.

**4.** What can be inferred about Gina’s experience with Marilyn, Melinda, and the Fox Hunter?

1. Gina’s experience with Marilyn, Melinda, and the Fox Hunter taught her to be careful around strangers.
2. Gina does not want to see Marilyn, Melinda, and the Fox Hunter again.
3. Gina experience with Marilyn, Melinda, and the Fox Hunter took place in reality.
4. **Gina imagined or dreamt her experience with Marilyn, Melinda, and the Fox Hunter.**

**5.** What is this story mostly about?

1. **a mysterious hotel with a portal to foxes**
2. a family that moves to an old hotel
3. a girl who crashes her bike and is late to school
4. a book called *The Curious Situation of Foxes*