

# SCAVENGERS



*Scavengers* tells the tale of Landfill, a wild boy raised by a man called Babagoo in Hinterland — an industrial wasteland that protects them both from the dangerous Outsiders beyond Hinterland's walls. In the sample below we see Landfill's first visit with Babagoo to the "Spit Pit" — a vast dump used by Babagoo to forage for supplies for Hinterland. Landfill has just broken one of Babagoo's rules by making himself visible to Outsiders by climbing too high in the dump.

**Extract from *Scavengers*, pages 146–151**

Landfill could soon see the hill that lifted Hinterland to that endless plateau of purples and browns. He spent a moment trying to comprehend what he saw, then twisted suddenly into the bank, pushing his body against its slope and gripping so hard that it hurt. His eyes were clenched shut, and it took a while for the dizziness to pass.

When he opened his eyes again he looked up and gasped. His own slope's summit was just above his head.

After checking the bend below, Landfill closed his eyes and took some deep breaths. Making his decision, he opened his eyes and moved cautiously upwards. While approaching the summit, he adjusted the hood of his dross cape. Then, as gradually as he could, he raised his head until his nose was just above the crest.

His eyes widened, his mouth hung open and his knuckles turned white. After that, only his golden hair moved, flicked by a rancid breeze that sent wrappers whistling past his head. He struggled to take it all in — the Outsiders made small by vast distance; the motley hues of the landscape and faraway buildings; the rolling, grinding machines with their huge spiked wheels...

"Landfill." A gruff but restrained call from below. Landfill twisted his neck and puffed with relief to see that Babagoo hadn't turned the ravine's bend.

But it wouldn't be long before he did.

Doing his best to ignore the junk that scraped his skin, Landfill whirled around and scrabbled down the slope. His eye caught a dull flash to the right. When he recognized it as a metal tray, he leaped sideways onto it and, speeding down the hill, released a frightened cry that was almost a giddy laugh. With his cape flapping behind him, he leaned back and held tight, and caught sight of Babagoo as the tray soared over the edge where the bluff suddenly steepened.

A howl escaped Landfill's throat just before he crashed into a heap of broken chairs. The tray protected him from spikes of rotten wood, but made a metallic clatter that had Babagoo searching the slopes with eyes as full of terror as of rage.

"What..." he began. "What...?"

Landfill rolled and cried out when flames of agony exploded in his wrist and shot up his arm. Babagoo was stomping towards him, glaring back and forth between the boy and the slope from which he'd come.

"How high did you go?" He spat the words through gritted teeth. "How high did you go?"

Landfill could barely hear him over the roaring in his ears. The pain from his wrist seemed to spread to his stomach, and he could taste bile rising beneath his tongue.

Babagoo raised his voice. His cheeks bristled and writhed with a life of their own. "How. High. Did. You—"

“To the top!”

Babagoo stopped abruptly. His arms shot out, dirty fingers pinching frantically at the air.

“Have to move.”

Landfill cradled his arm and licked his wrist, and bleated in agony when Babagoo hauled him to his feet.

“Move or die,” quaked Babagoo. “You went too high. They’ll have seen you. They’ll be coming.”

Landfill did his best to stay upright while the scavenger dragged him along. They were soon scrambling through a network of grooves in the rubbish — a winding labyrinth with close, reeking walls lined by shrieking gulls.

Babagoo stopped and cursed. His foot had sunk into some loose rubbish, and something was making him wince with pain.

Landfill clutched the scavenger’s arm. “What is it?”

Babagoo was trying to pull his leg up with both hands. “Stuck! It’s stuck!”

Landfill crouched and reached for Babagoo’s ankle, but was sent reeling by a violent shove.

“Don’t meddle with it,” gasped Babagoo. “Something heavy on my foot. You’ll make things worse. Been in this fix before.”

Landfill’s pupils darted in every direction, frantically checking crests and corners for any sign of pursuers. “What did you do?”

“Leverage. Used a curtain rail to lift the weight away.”

The scavenger’s head swivelled back and forth. “But there’s nothing like that here. You’ll need to find something — anything long and strong. We can use that crate over there as a fulcrum.”

Landfill’s hand rose to his mouth. “Can’t leave you. The Outsiders...”

“Exactly! They’ll have us if you keep pottering. So get searching! Go, boy, go!”

While Babagoo wrestled with his bags, Landfill turned away and — doing his best to ignore the pain from his wrist and the cuts on his feet — ran as quickly as he could. He scanned the ground and walls as he moved, but after turning several corners still hadn’t found anything of use. He glanced over his shoulder and — realizing he wasn’t sure of the way back to Babagoo — wheeled on himself and dropped to all fours. He tried to retrace his route, but the rubbish surrounding him looked unnervingly unfamiliar.

He couldn’t help calling out for Babagoo, but his voice was snatched by the breeze and lost to the gulls. He got back to his feet and tried moving more carefully through the maze, scrutinizing the waste for anything he’d seen before. Upon approaching a bend he stopped. Something had appeared at the bottom of the corner ahead...

It was a thick black boot, attached to a leg covered in coarse, flapping trousers.

Landfill’s head twitched to and fro in search of somewhere to hide. There was nothing. He was surrounded by tight, looming walls, and the corridor of crud extended far behind him, with the cover of its nearest bend painfully beyond reach. Taking the blade from his pocket, Landfill crouched into a pouncing stance, and watched the Outsider step into view.

## Task

Write a story about Landfill fleeing and escaping from the Outsider.

### Darren Simpson's Top Tips for writing an exciting story

- You can write from the first-, second- or third-person perspective, in the past or present tense. Use whatever feels most exciting to you.
- Use the internet to look up images of landfill sites, and also of children who live on them in developing countries. Focus on the sorts of things people throw away and waste. Use the images to inspire you when describing the landfill setting in your story.
- How does Landfill's body react physically when he's chased by the Outsider? How does he feel? Think about his senses while you write — what he can see, smell, feel, even taste in the air. Try to make the reader experience these things too.
- What can Landfill use to hide from the Outsider? Can he maybe outsmart or trick him to get away? Readers enjoy clever solutions and crafty escapes.
- How does Landfill feel when he know he's safe? What might happen next? Maybe you can leave the reader wanting more of your story.

We'd love to read some of your stories and know that Darren Simpson would too. Why not ask your parent or guardian to share them on social media and tag Usborne and Darren Simpson in them!