

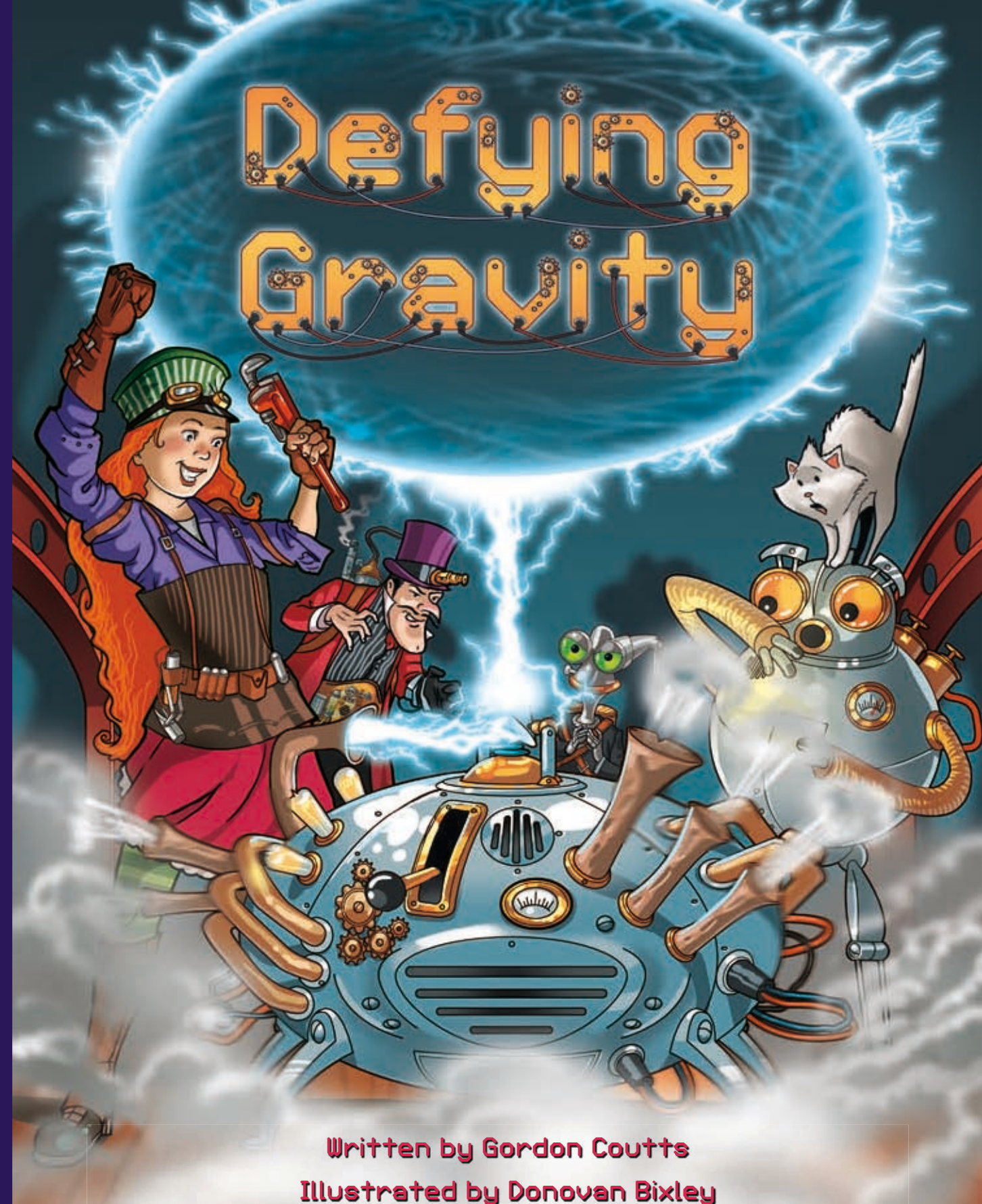
Springboard^{into} Comprehension 5

Main Idea	Plagues Coral Reefs
Compare and Contrast	Air, Land, and Water Transport – Then and Now Olympic Game Technology
Fact and Opinion	Defying Gravity The Cackleberry Creek Foghorn
Cause and Effect	Animal Adaptations Severe Weather
Bias and Prejudice	Prejudice on the Goldfields Houdini – Man of Magic or Deceit?
Figurative Language	The Big Campaign The Loaded Dog

RA 11.5–12.5



Narrative





Defying Gravity

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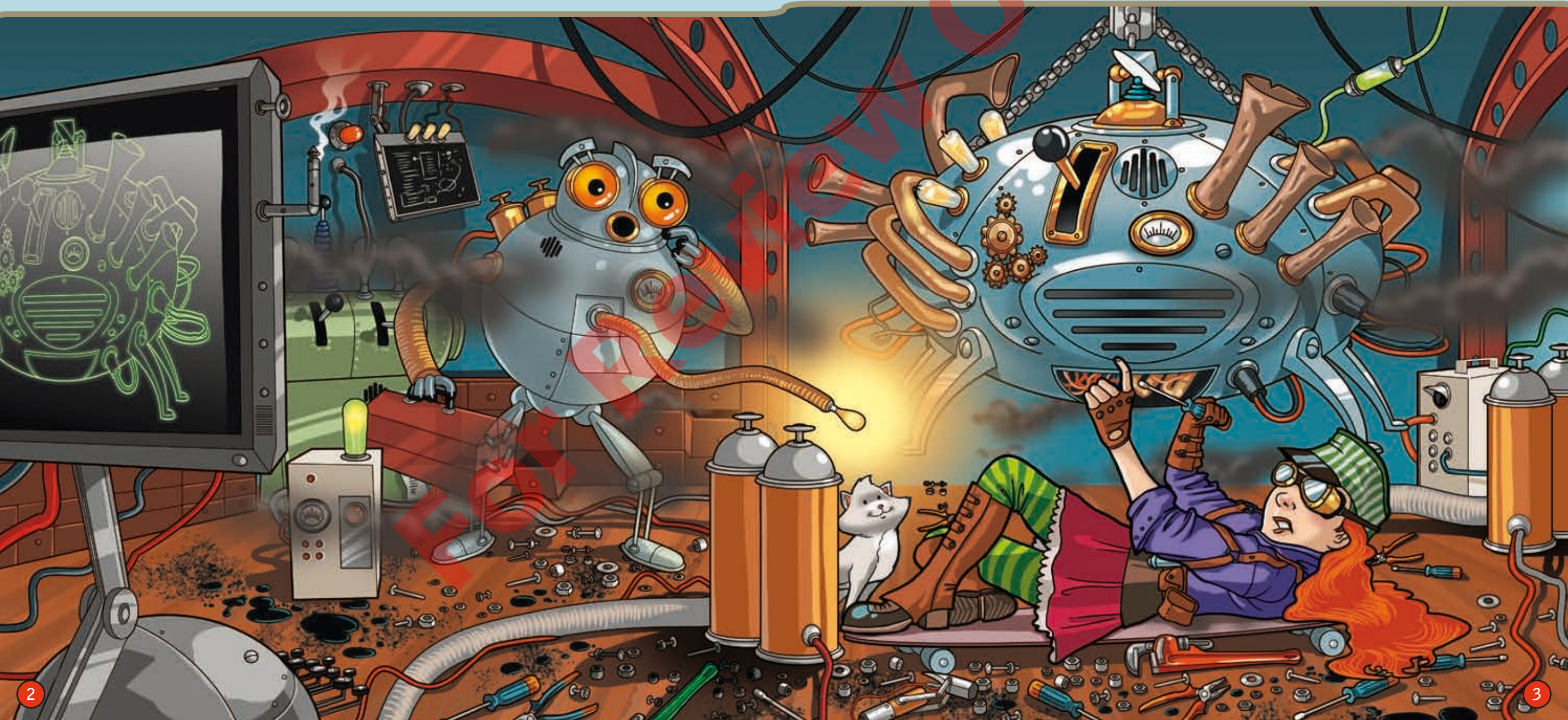
Test-Subject Klang

“Come on, Klang, you lazy can of rusted tin!” Professor Jemima Rooster shouted at her sleeping robot pal. “I’ve got it this time – nothing can go wrong now! The first prize at the Hambley Hill Inventors’ Competition will be ours!” She grabbed Klang by his coiled metal arms and shook him so hard he thought he felt a screw come loose inside his head.

Here we go again, Klang thought wearily, with a wheezy, metallic sigh.

Yet again, Klang spent the day in Jemima’s invention lab, holding her toolbox while she lay beneath a hulking metal contraption, hammering and spannering away. Klang’s boxy, metal feet were surrounded by bolts, tools, and odd-looking bits of equipment. Around him were worktops covered in lots of gadgets and gizmos with knobs, levers, and buttons.

By the evening, the air was thick with smoke – the result of a day spent dodging exploding machinery, as Jemima’s terrifying experiments ended in disaster after disaster.

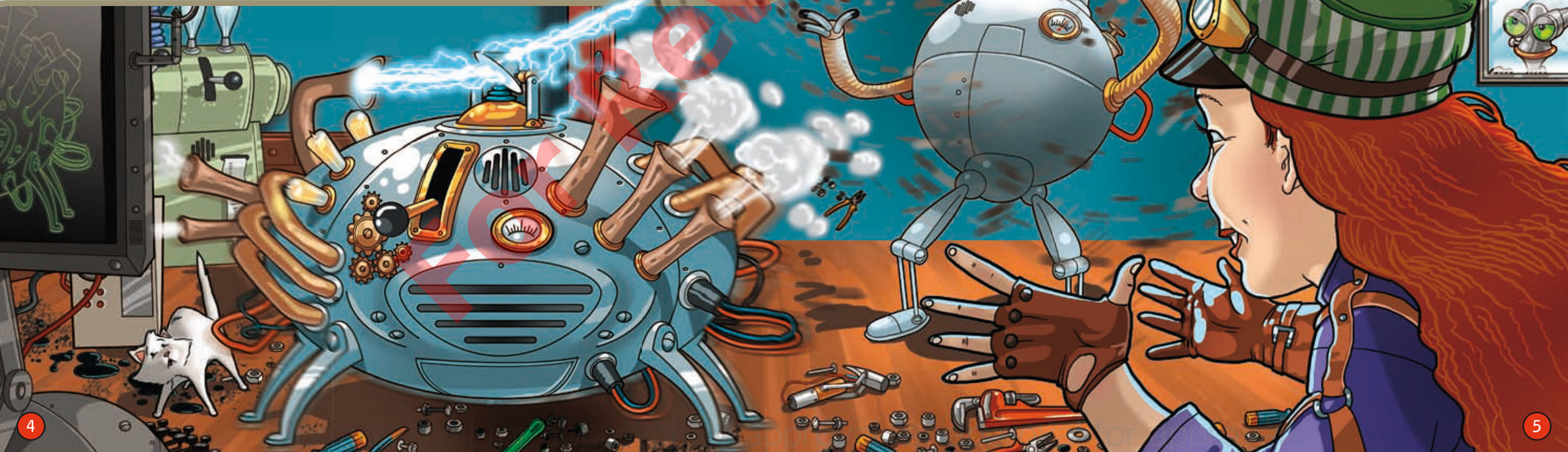


“OK, Klang,” beamed Jemima. “Forget everything that’s happened today – I believe I’ve finally figured out what was wrong. It was a problem with the recombobulator, but I’ve ratcheted the swivelflugels and it should work now. My anti-gravity machine will wipe the floor with that sneak Professor Pilchard’s invention! Let’s give it another try!”

“All right, Jemima,” said Klang, rolling his round, yellow eyes with a groan. “One more try, and then can we please take a break?” Klang’s metallic voice was raspy and dry – he hadn’t had a drink of oil in hours.

“Stop grumbling and prepare to be amazed!” said Jemima.

Klang backed away from Jemima’s machine, which she had rebuilt so many times it was now a mess of pipes, wires, cogs, and flashing lights. Jemima threw a huge lever on the machine and Klang gulped as it immediately began to rumble and clatter. Soon, the machine started to shake, and the scattered workshop debris skittered around the floor. Then, from one of a row of smoke-stained, rusty pipes on the top of the machine, a blue, glowing sphere of light appeared. Jemima gasped with delight – her machine was working! Klang stared in disbelief. *Maybe the lunatic has actually done it this time*, he thought.



Jemima prodded at her remote-control handset and the machine made a terrible screeching noise as the rumbling engine shifted into a higher gear. Then, suddenly, the ball of light bulged and shot out a thick, shimmering beam, straight at Klang!

“Waaah!” Klang shouted as the beam hit him and covered his entire body in a shell of blue light. “What’s happening, Jemima?”

“It’s working!” Jemima yelled above the roar. She bobbed up and down with excitement, her curly hair bouncing furiously.

Then she stopped, and Klang saw the look on her face turn from delight to astonishment. Her mouth fell open, her eyes bulged wide, and her hands fell limply to her sides. “You’re...you’re...you’re....floating,” Jemima said. She leaped into the air. “It’s amazing, Klang – you’re floating!”

Klang looked down at his feet and saw that he *was* floating – and it felt great. “I *am* floating! Jemima, I think you’re a genius!” he shouted.

Jemima danced on the spot as Klang hovered happily in the middle of the room, spinning around and around. All of a sudden, however, there was an enormous bang and smoke spilled into the air from the insides of the machine. It lurched from side to side, and Klang wobbled dangerously in the air.

“Uh-oh,” whispered Klang as the blue light crackled and fizzed.

As soon as the words had left his silvery lips, the blue beam zapped him through the open window and out into the garden, where he landed in a crumpled heap. Jemima covered her eyes as her robotic friend sailed through the air, and then she turned to her rocking, spluttering machine. There was a final bang, and the machine was dead. Jemima ran outside to find Klang groaning, his arms and legs trapped in the garden fence.

“Klang, old pal, are you OK?” asked Jemima anxiously.

“I suppose so, but I thought you’d fixed it this time,” replied Klang.

“I thought so, too, but there must have been a problem with the light *degrabifier*,” said Jemima. “Don’t worry – next time it’ll work. I’ve got it figured out now for sure!”

