THE RAT CREATURES have destroyed much of Barrel-haven and are securing their positions throughout the Valley. A group of them surround Fone Bone and Smiley in the forest. Thorn steps in and tosses Kingdok’s war club to Fone Bone, and the Rat Creatures run away.

Briar visits Lucius in her human form in order to distract him from setting up defenses at Old Man’s Cave so the Rat Creatures can sneak in and attack.

Thorn, Fone Bone, and Smiley return to the farmhouse, where Thorn prepares for battle. Rock Jaw, who has made a deal with the Hooded One, shows up, sniffing around for Thorn and the Bones.
The Rat Creatures slaughter many townspeople and Veni Yan warriors, and the Dragons have retired underground, unwilling to fight despite Gran’ma Ben’s pleas.

Gran’ma Ben finds Phoney, who has run away, on a mountain trail. Rock Jaw attacks them, and Phoney escapes and runs smack into Fone Bone, Thorn, and Smiley. There’s a fight, and Rock Jaw catches Phoney and Thorn.

Fone Bone, Smiley, and Gran’ma Ben follow Rock Jaw to the temple ruins, where Phoney is tied to a ritual altar. Phoney won’t join the Hooded One in the ritual, so she threatens to sacrifice him instead. A massive earthquake strikes before the ritual can be completed, and the Bones, Gran’ma Ben, and Thorn rush to escape the crumbling ruins.