Elixer of life

“Do you think they are gone?”, she whispered. Sweat was running down her back as she tried to lie as still as possible. “Be quiet! I can still hear them looking for us upstairs”, he said and tried to locate where their enemies were .It was extremely hot in the cupboard they were hiding , but if they were found it would mean another bashing by the school bullies.  
Ever since they met on that first school day last August they had immediately felt a bond, as if they had known they would meet one day. They were only thirteen at the time. He, a wiry, but skinny little lad with the odd combination of snow white hair and the blackest of eyes. She just as thin, but towering over all the other children and looking even more odd with her flaming red hair and mismatched eyes, one blue and one green. They were the daily victims of the taunts and abuses of the other pupils, Fat Basil being their ringleader.

“ Hey, Mutants, come out, come out where ever you are”, they heard his hard voice bellowing from a very short distance away. Just when they thought he and his cronies would discover their hiding place, they both leaned back into the cupboard and suddenly were swept through a trapdoor into a large room.  
“I guess they must have had a secret way out. Let’s go, boys, if we hurry we might still see where they have gone to. Or else there is always tomorrow. I always knew they were freaks. Maybe they turned into bats and flew away”.  
They heard them trampling out of the old derelict cottage, which had been their hide-out until today.  
“Phew, that was close”, she said wiping her face with her sleeve, ”where are we?”  
“I don’t know”, he said looking around while his eyes were adjusting to the gloom of the chamber they had unexpectedly landed in.  
“I told you it would be a bad idea to throw that cow dung in their face.”  
“Well, I have had enough of being bullied and chased around. We have to stand up for ourselves or we will be forever frightened to go where we want to go.”  
“That is easy for you to say. You’re tall enough to outrun them and they are scared of your father. My grandmother is too old to frighten anybody. Hey don’t touch that!”  
Ivana, who had immediately started to shake and sniff the bottles that were standing around on practically every surface covered in dust, unscrewed one of the vials.  
“Don’t be such a baby, John. Didn’t your grandma tell us that a crazy old man used to live in this cottage? Maybe he was a mad scientist looking for the elixir of Life. Or a warlock making love potions” , she said opening one of the bottles.  
“Mmmm, this smells good, like blackberry juice. I think I will try it. Just a little sip won’t kill me.”  
“Are you mad, you might get poisoned and die! This stuff must have been here for years, it probably has gone off by now”, John nearly shouted.  
But Ivana already had taken a little sip, “See? I am still alive. Let’s see what else there is here. “  
She set about deciphering the labels on the vials, but they were all in a foreign language as were all the other books they found in a trunk in the corner of the room except for one small notebook that was written by hand in English.  
“Let’s take it home and try to read it, it might explain what all these potions are for,” she said.  
“Yes, we can come back tomorrow with some torches and see what the old man was hiding in here. I have to go now, because my grandmother needs me to prepare the food. This will make a good hiding place, especially since they could not find us here this time and will not come back soon”, he said.  
“OK I will take the book first and try to read it this evening and we will see each other tomorrow at school”, Ivana said in her usual bossy way.  
“We better make sure no one sees us leaving this place, or it will all be for nothing”, he said. “How do we actually get out of here?”  
“I just saw a door right at the end of the room. Let’s try and see where that leads to. The old man must have been able to get out of this place as well” .  
They found a dark tunnel leading away into pitch black darkness behind the door.  
“What now,” John said, starting to sound a bit worried.  
“Well as we have no light we just have to feel our way out. Hold my hand! “, Ivana said as she determinedly started out into the tunnel.