

SUSAN COOPER

— THE DARK IS RISING SEQUENCE —

OVER SEA, UNDER
STONE



"Beautifully told . . . superbly written." —*New York Times* on The Dark Is Rising Sequence

“I DID NOT KNOW THAT YOU CHILDREN WOULD BE THE ONES TO FIND IT. OR WHAT DANGER YOU WOULD BE PUTTING YOURSELVES IN.”

Throughout time, the forces of good and evil have battled continuously, maintaining the *balance*. Whenever evil forces grow too powerful, a champion of good is called to drive them back. Now, with evil’s power rising and a champion yet to be found, three siblings find themselves at the center of a mystical war.

Jane, Simon, and Barney Drew have discovered an ancient text that reads of a legendary grail lost centuries ago. The grail is an object of great power, buried with a vital secret. As the Drews race against the forces of evil, they must piece together the text’s clues to find the grail—and keep its secret safe until a new champion rises.

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— THE DARK IS RISING SEQUENCE —

OVER SEA, UNDER
STONE

The Dark Is Rising Sequence

The Dark Is Rising

Greenwitch

The Grey King

Silver on the Tree

Boggart

Boggart and the Monster

Green Boy

King of Shadows

Magician's Boy

Victory

— THE DARK IS RISING SEQUENCE —
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STONE

SUSAN COOPER

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For my mother and father, with love

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• Chapter One •

“Where is he?”

Barney hopped from one foot to the other as he clambered down from the train, peering in vain through the white-faced crowds flooding eagerly to the St Austell ticket barrier. “Oh, I can’t see him. Is he there?”

“Of course he’s there,” Simon said, struggling to clutch the long canvas bundle of his father’s fishing rod. “He said he’d meet us. With a car.”

Behind them, the big diesel locomotive hooted like a giant owl, and the train began to move out.

“Stay where you are a minute,” Father said, from a barricade of suitcases. “Merry won’t vanish. Let the people get clear.”

Jane sniffed ecstatically. “I can smell the sea!”

“We’re miles from the sea,” Simon said loftily.

“I don’t care. I can smell it.”

“Trewissick’s five miles from St Austell, Great-Uncle Merry said.”

“Oh, where *is* he?” Barney still jiggled impatiently on the dusty grey platform, glaring at the disappearing backs that masked his view. Then suddenly he stood still, gazing downwards. “Hey—look.”

They looked. He was staring at a large black suitcase among the forest of shuffling legs.

“What’s so marvellous about that?” Jane said.

Then they saw that the suitcase had two brown pricked ears and a long waving brown tail. Its own wheels picked it up and moved away, and the dog which had been behind it was left standing there alone, looking up and down the platform. He was a long, rangy, lean dog, and where the sunlight shafted down on his coat it gleamed dark red.

Barney whistled, and held out his hand.

“Darling, no,” said his mother plaintively, clutching at the bunch of paint-brushes that sprouted from her pocket like a tuft of celery.

But even before Barney whistled, the dog had begun trotting in their direction, swift and determined, as if he were recognizing old friends. He loped round them in a circle, raising his long red muzzle to each in turn, then stopped beside Jane, and licked her hand.

“Isn’t he gorgeous?” Jane crouched beside him, and ruffled the long silky fur of his neck.

“Darling, be careful,” Mother said. “He’ll get left behind. He must belong to someone over there.”

“I wish he belonged to us.”

“So does he,” Barney said. “Look.”

He scratched the red head, and the dog gave a throaty half-bark of pleasure.

“No,” Father said.

The crowds were thinning now, and through the barrier they could see clear blue sky out over the station yard.

“His name’s on his collar,” Jane said, still down beside the dog’s neck. She fumbled with the silver tab on the heavy strap. “It says Rufus. And something else . . . Trewissick. Hey, he comes from the village!”

But as she looked up, suddenly the others were not there. She jumped to her feet and ran after them into the sunshine, seeing in an instant what they had seen: the towering familiar figure of Great-Uncle Merry, out in the yard, waiting for them.

They clustered round him, chattering like squirrels round the base of a tree. "Ah, there you are," he said casually, looking down at them from beneath his bristling white eyebrows with a slight smile.

"Cornwall's wonderful," Barney said, bubbling.

"You haven't seen it yet," said Great-Uncle Merry. "How are you, Ellen, my dear?" He bent and aimed a brief peck at Mother's cheek. He treated her always as though he had forgotten that she had grown up. Although he was not her real uncle, but only a friend of her father, he had been close to the family for many years that it never occurred to them to wonder where he had come from in the first place.

Nobody knew very much about Great-Uncle Merry, and nobody ever quite dared to ask. He did not look in the least like his name. He was tall, and straight, with a lot of very thick, wild, white hair. In his gri brown face the nose curved fiercely, like a bent bow, and the eyes were deep-set and dark.

How old he was, nobody knew. "Old as the hills," Father said, and they felt, deep down, that this was probably right. There was something about Great-Uncle Merry that was like the hills, or the sea, or the sky—something ancient, but without age or end.

Always, wherever he was, unusual things seemed to happen. He would often disappear for a long time and then suddenly come through the Drews' front door as if he had never been away, announcing that he had found a lost valley in South America, a Roman fortress in France, or a burned Viking ship buried on the English coast. The newspapers would publish enthusiastic stories of what he had done. But by the time the reporters came knocking at the door, Great-Uncle Merry would be gone, back to the dusty peace of the university where he taught. They would wake up one morning, go to call him for breakfast, and find that he was not there. And then they would hear no more of him until the next time, perhaps months later, that he appeared at the door. It hardly seemed possible that this summer, in the house he had rented for them in Trewissick, they would be with him in one place for four whole weeks.

The sunlight glinting on his white hair, Great-Uncle Merry scooped up their two biggest suitcases, one under each arm, and strode across the yard to a car.

"What d'you think of that?" he demanded proudly.

Following, they looked. It was a vast, battered estate car, with rusting mudguards and peeling paint, and mud caked on the hubs of the wheels. A wisp of steam curled up from the radiator.

"Smashing!" said Simon.

"Hm m m m m m," Mother said.

"Well, Merry," Father said cheerfully, "I hope you're well insured."

Great-Uncle Merry snorted. "Nonsense. Splendid vehicle. I hired her from a farmer. She'll hold us all right anyway. In you get."

Jane glanced regretfully back at the station entrance as she clambered in after the rest. The red-haired dog was standing on the pavement watching them, long pink tongue dangling over white teeth.

Great-Uncle Merry called: "Come on, Rufus."

"Oh!" Barney said in delight, as a flurry of long legs and wet muzzle shot through the door and knocked him sideways. "Does he belong to you?"

"Heaven forbid," Great-Uncle Merry said. "But I suppose he'll belong to you three for the next month. The captain couldn't take him abroad, so Rufus goes with the Grey House." He folded himself into the driving seat.

"The Grey House?" Simon said. "Is that what it's called? Why?"

"Wait and see."

The engine gave a hiccup and a roar, and then they were away. Through the streets and out of the town they thundered in the lurching car, until hedges took the place of houses; thick, wild hedges growing high and green as the road wound uphill, and behind them the grass sweeping up to the sky. And against the sky

they saw nothing but lonely trees, stunted and bowed by the wind that blew from the sea, and yellow-green outcrops of rock.

“There you are,” Great-Uncle Merry shouted, over the noise. He turned his head and waved one arm away from the steering-wheel, so that Father moaned softly and hid his eyes. “Now you’re in Cornwall. The real Cornwall. Logres is before you.”

The clatter was too loud for anyone to call back.

“What’s he mean, Logres?” demanded Jane.

Simon shook his head, and the dog licked his ear.

“He means the land of the West,” Barney said unexpectedly, pushing back the forelock of fair hair that always tumbled over his eyes. “It’s the old name for Cornwall. King Arthur’s name.”

Simon groaned. “I might have known.”

Ever since he had learned to read, Barney’s greatest heroes had been King Arthur and his knights. In his dreams he fought imaginary battles as a member of the Round Table, rescuing fair ladies and slaying fallen knights. He had been longing to come to the West Country; it gave him a strange feeling that he would some way be coming home. He said, resentfully: “You wait. Great-Uncle Merry knows.”

And then, after what seemed a long time, the hills gave way to the long blue line of the sea, and the village was before them.

Trewissick seemed to be sleeping beneath its grey, slate-tiled roofs, along the narrow winding streets down the hill. Silent behind their lace-curtained windows, the little square houses let the roar of the car bounce back from their whitewashed walls. Then Great-Uncle Merry swung the wheel round, and suddenly they were driving along the edge of the harbour, past water rippling and flashing golden in the afternoon sun. Sailing-dinghies bobbed at their moorings along the quay, and a whole row of the Cornish fishing boats that they had seen only in pictures painted by their mother years before: stocky workmanlike boats, each with a stubby mast and a small square engine-house in the stern.

Nets hung dark over the harbour walls, and a few fishermen, hefty, brown-faced men in long boots that reached their thighs, glanced up idly as the car passed. Two or three grinned at Great-Uncle Merry, and one waved.

“Do they know you?” Simon said curiously.

But Great-Uncle Merry, who could become very deaf when he chose not to answer a question, only roared on along the road that curved up the hill, high over the other side of the harbour, and suddenly stopped. “Here we are,” he said.

In the abrupt silence, their ears still numb from the thundering engine, they all turned from the sea to look at the other side of the road.

They saw a terrace of houses sloping sideways up the steep hill; and in the middle of them, rising up like a tower, one tall narrow house with three rows of windows and a gabled roof. A sombre house, painted dark grey, with the door and windowframes shining white. The roof was slate-tiled, a high blue-grey arch facing out across the harbour to the sea.

“The Grey House,” Great-Uncle Merry said.

They could smell a strangeness in the breeze that blew faintly on their faces down the hill; a beckoning smell of salt and seaweed and excitement.

As they unloaded suitcases from the car, with Rufus darting in excited frenzy through everyone’s legs, Simon suddenly clutched Jane by the arm. “Gosh—*look!*”

He was looking out to sea, beyond the harbour mouth. Along his pointed finger, Jane saw the tall, graceful triangle of a yacht under full sail, moving lazily in towards Trewissick.

“Pretty,” she said, with only mild enthusiasm. She did not share Simon’s passion for boats.

"She's a beauty. I wonder whose she is?" Simon stood watching, entranced. The yacht crept nearer, her sails beginning to flap; and then the tall white mainsail crumpled and dropped. They heard the rattle of the rigging, very faint across the water, and the throaty cough of an engine.

"Mother says we can go down and look at the harbour before supper," Barney said, behind them. "Coming?"

"Course. Will Great-Uncle Merry come?"

"He's going to put the car away."

They set off down the road leading to the quay, beside a low grey wall with tufts of grass and purple valerian growing between its stones. In a few paces Jane found she had forgotten her handkerchief, and she ran back to retrieve it from the car. Scrabbling on the floor by the back seat, she glanced up and stared for a moment through the windscreen, surprised.

Great-Uncle Merry, coming back towards the car from the Grey House, had suddenly stopped in his tracks in the middle of the road. He was gazing down at the sea; and she realised that he had caught sight of the yacht. What startled her was the expression on his face. Standing there like a craggy towering statue, he was frowning, fierce and intense, almost as if he were looking and listening with senses other than his eyes and ears. He could never look frightened, she thought, but this was the nearest thing to it that she had ever seen. Cautious, startled, alarmed . . . what was the matter with him? Was there something strange about the yacht?

Then he turned and went quickly back into the house, and Jane emerged thoughtfully from the car to follow the boys down the hill.

The harbour was almost deserted. The sun was hot on their faces, and they felt the warmth of the stone quayside strike at their feet through their sandal soles. In the center, in front of tall wooden warehouse doors, the quay jutted out square into the water, and a great heap of empty boxes towered above their heads. Three sea-gulls walked tolerantly to the edge, out of their way. Before them, a small forest of spars and ropes swayed; the tide was only half high, and the decks of the moored boats were down below the quayside, out of sight.

"Hey," Simon said, pointing through the harbour entrance. "That yacht's come in, look. Isn't she marvellous?"

The slim white boat sat at anchor beyond the harbour wall, protected from the open sea by the headland on which the Grey House stood.

Jane said: "Do you think there is anything odd about her?"

"Odd? Why should there be?"

"Oh—I don't know."

"Perhaps she belongs to the harbour-master," Barney said.

"Places this size don't have harbour-masters, you little fathead, only ports like Father went to in the navy."

"Oh yes they do, cleversticks, there's a little black door on the corner over there, marked Harbour Master's Office." Barney hopped triumphantly up and down, and frightened a sea-gull away. It ran a few steps and then flew off, flapping low over the water and bleating into the distance.

"Oh well," Simon said amiably, shoving his hands in his pockets and standing with his legs apart, rocking on his heels, in his captain-on-the-bridge stance. "One up. Still, that boat must belong to someone pretty rich. You could cross the Channel in her, or even the Atlantic."

"Ugh," said Jane. She swam as well as anybody, but she was the only member of the Drew family who disliked the open sea. "Fancy crossing the Atlantic in a thing that size."

Simon grinned wickedly. "Smashing. Great big waves picking you up and bringing you down swooshing everything falling about, pots and pans upsetting in the galley, and the deck going up and down, up and down—"

"You'll make her sick," Barney said calmly.

"Rubbish. On dry land, out here in the sun?"

"Yes, you will, she looks a bit green already. Look."

"I don't."

"Oh yes you do. I can't think why you weren't ill in the train like you usually are. Just think of those waves in the Atlantic, and the mast swaying about, and nobody with an appetite for their breakfast except me. . . ."

"Oh shut up, I'm not going to listen"—and poor Jane turned and ran round the side of the mountain of fishy-smelling boxes, which had probably been having more effect on her imagination than the thought of the sea.

"Girls!" said Simon cheerfully.

There was suddenly an ear-splitting crash from the other side of the boxes, a scream, and a noise of metal jingling on concrete. Simon and Barney gazed horrified at one another for a moment, and rushed round to the other side.

Jane was lying on the ground with a bicycle on top of her, its front wheel still spinning round. A tall dark-haired boy lay sprawled across the quay not far away. A box of tins and packets of food had spilled from the bicycle carrier, and milk was trickling in a white puddle from a broken bottle splintered glittering in the sun.

The boy scrambled to his feet, glaring at Jane. He was all in navy-blue, his trousers tucked into Wellington boots; he had a short, thick neck and a strangely flat face, twisted now with ill temper.

"Look where 'ee's goin', can't 'ee?" he snarled, the Cornish accent made ugly by anger. "Git outa my way."

He jerked the bicycle upright, taking no heed of Jane; the pedal caught her ankle and she winced with pain.

"It wasn't my fault," she said, with some spirit, "You came rushing up without looking where you were going."

Barney crossed to her in silence and helped her to her feet. The boy sullenly began picking up his spilled tins and slamming them back into the box. Jane picked one up to help. But as she reached it towards the boy the boy knocked her hand away, sending the tin spinning across the quay.

"Leave 'n alone," he growled.

"Look here," Simon said indignantly, "there's no need for that."

"Shut y' mouth," said the boy shortly, without even looking up.

"Shut your own," Simon said belligerently.

"Oh Simon, don't," Jane said unhappily. "If he wants to be beastly let him." Her leg was stinging viciously, and blood trickled down from a graze on her knee. Simon looked at her flushed face, hearing the strain in her voice. He bit his lip.

The boy pushed his bicycle to lean against the pile of boxes, scowling at Barney as he jumped nervously out of the way; then rage suddenly snarled out of him again. "—off, the lot of 'ee," he snapped; they had never heard the word he used, but the tone was unmistakable, and Simon went hot with resentment and clenched his fists to lunge forward. But Jane clutched him back, and the boy moved quickly to the edge of the quay and climbed down over the edge, facing them, the box of groceries in his arms. They heard a thumping, clattering noise, and looking over the edge they saw him lurching about in a rowing-dinghy. He untied its mooring-rope from a ring in the wall and began edging out through the other boats into the open

harbour, standing up with one oar thrust down over the stern. Moving hastily and angrily, he clouted the dinghy hard against the side of one of the big fishing-boats, but took no notice. Soon he was out in open water, sculling rapidly, one-handed, and glaring back at them in sneering contempt.

As he did so they heard a clatter of feet moving rapidly over hollow wood from inside the injured fishing boat. A small, wizened figure popped up suddenly from a hatch in the deck and waved its arms about in fury, shouting over the water towards the boy in a surprisingly deep voice.

The boy deliberately turned his back, still sculling, and the dinghy disappeared outside the harbour entrance, round the jutting wall.

The little man shook his fist, then turned towards the quay, leaping neatly from the deck of one boat to another, until he reached the ladder in the wall and climbed up by the children's feet. He wore the inevitable navy-blue jersey and trousers, with long boots reaching up his legs.

"Clumsy young limb, that Bill 'Oover," he said crossly. "Wait'll I catch 'n, that's all, just wait,"

Then he seemed to realize that the children were more than just part of the quay. He grunted, flashing a quick glance at their tense faces, and the blood on Jane's knee. "Thought I heard voices from below," he said, more gently. "You been 'avin' trouble with 'n?" He jerked his head out to sea.

"He knocked my sister over with his bike," Simon said indignantly. "It was my fault really, I made her run into him, but he was beastly rude and he bashed Jane's hand away and—and then he went off before I could hit him," he ended lamely.

The old fisherman smiled at them. "Ah well, don't 'ee take no count of 'n. He'm a bad lot, that lad, evil-tempered as they come and evil-minded with ut. You keep away from 'n."

"We shall," Jane said with feeling, rubbing her leg gingerly.

The fisherman clicked his tongue. "That's a nasty old cut you got there, midear, you want to go and get 'n washed up. You'm on holiday here, I dessay."

"We're staying in the Grey House," Simon said. "Up there on the hill,"

The fisherman glanced at him quickly, a flicker of interest passing over the impassive brown wrinkled face. "Are 'ee, then? I wonder maybe"—then he stopped short, strangely, as if he were quickly changing his mind about what he had been going to say. Simon, puzzled, waited for him to go on. But Barney, who had not been listening, turned round from where he had been peering over the edge of the quay.

"Is that your boat out there?"

The fisherman looked at him, half taken aback and half amused, as he would have looked at some small, unexpected animal that barked. "That's right, me 'andsome. The one I just come off."

"Don't the other fishermen mind you jumping over their boats?"

The old man laughed, a cheerful rusty noise. "I'd'n no other way to get ashore from there. Noboderminds you comin' across their boat, so long's you don't mark 'er."

"Are you going out fishing?"

"Not for a while, midear," said the fisherman amiably, pulling a piece of dirty rag from his pocket and scrubbing at the oil-marks on his hands. "Go out with sundown, we do, and come back with the dawn."

Barney beamed. "I shall get up early and watch you come in."

"Believe that when I see 'n," said the fisherman with a twinkle. "Now look, you run and take your little sister home and wash that leg, don't know what scales and muck have got into it off here." He scuffed at the quay with his glistening boot.

"Yes, come on, Jane," Simon said. He took one more look out at the quiet line of boats; then put up his hand to peer into the sun. "I say, that oaf with the bicycle, he's going on board the yacht!"

Jane and Barney looked.

Out beyond the far harbour wall, a dark shape was bobbing against the long white hull of the silent yacht.

They could just see the boy climbing up the side, and two figures meeting him on the deck. Then all three disappeared, and the boat lay deserted again.

“Ah,” said the fisherman. “So that’s it. Young Bill were buying stores and petrol and all, yesterday enough for a navy, but nobody couldn’t get it out of him who they was for. Tidy old boat, that’n—cruisin’ I suppose. Can’t see what he made all the mystery about.”

He began to walk along the quay: a rolling small figure with the folded tops of his boots slapping his legs at every step. Barney trotted beside him, talking earnestly, and rejoined the others at the corner as the old man, waving to them, turned off towards the village.

“His name’s Mr. Penhallow, and his boat’s called the *White Heather*. He says they got a hundred stone of pilchard last night, and they’ll get more tomorrow because it’s going to rain.”

“One day you’ll ask too many questions,” said Jane.

“Rain?” said Simon incredulously, looking up at the blue sky.

“That’s what he said.”

“Rubbish. He must be nuts.”

“I bet he’s right. Fishermen always know things, specially Cornish fishermen. You ask Great-Uncle Merry.”

But Great-Uncle Merry, when they sat down to their first supper in the Grey House, was not there; only their parents, and the beaming red-cheeked village woman, Mrs Palk, who was to come in every day to help with the cooking and cleaning. Great-Uncle Merry had gone away.

“He must have said *something*,” Jane said.

Father shrugged. “Not really. He just muttered about having to go and look for something and roaring off in the car like a thunderbolt.”

“But we’ve only just got here,” Simon said, hurt.

“Never mind,” Mother said comfortably. “You know what he is. He’ll be back in his own good time.”

Barney gazed dreamily at the Cornish pasties Mrs Palk had made for their supper. “He’s gone on a quest. He might take years and years. You can search and search, on a quest, and in the end you may never get there at all.”

“Quest my foot,” Simon said irritably. “He’s just gone chasing after some stupid old tomb in a church, or something. Why couldn’t he have told us?”

“I expect he’ll be back in the morning,” Jane said. She looked out of the window, across the low grey wall edging the road. The light was beginning to die, and as the sun sank behind their headland the sea was turning to a dark grey-green, and slow mist creeping into the harbour. Through the growing haze she saw a dim shape move, down on the water, and above it a brief flash of light; first a red pinprick in the gloom, and then a green, and white points of light above both. And she sat up suddenly as she realized that what she could see was the mysterious white yacht, moving out of Trewissick harbour as silently and strangely as if it had come.

• Chapter Two •

Next day, as they sat eating breakfast, Great-Uncle Merry came back. He loomed in the doorway, tall and hollow-eyed under the thatch of white hair, and beamed at their surprised faces.

“Good morning,” he said cheerfully. “Any coffee left?” The ornaments seemed to rattle on the mantelpiece as he spoke; Great-Uncle Merry always gave the impression of being far too big for any room he was in.

Father reached out imperturbably to pull up another chair. “What’s it like out this morning, Merry? Doesn’t look so good to me.”

Great-Uncle Merry sat down and helped himself to toast, holding the slice in one large palm while he spread butter on it with Father’s knife. “Cloud. Thick, coming in from the sea. We’re going to have rain.”

Barney was fidgeting with unbearable curiosity. Suddenly, forgetting the family rule that they should never ask their mysterious great-uncle questions about himself, he burst out: “Gumerry, where have you *been?*” In the heat of the moment he used the pet name which he had invented when he was very small. The others all used it sometimes still, but not for everyday.

Jane hissed quietly between her teeth, and Simon glared at him across the table. But Great-Uncle Merry seemed not to have heard. “It may not last,” he went on conversationally to Father, through a mouthful of toast. “But I think we shall have it for most of the day.”

“Will there be thunder?” Jane said.

Simon added hopefully, “Shall we have a storm at sea?”

Barney sat silent while their voices eddied round the table. The weather, he said to himself in exasperation, all of them talking about the weather, when Great-Uncle Merry’s just come back from his quest.

Then over their voices there came a low rumble of thunder, and the first spattering sounds of rain. At once everyone rushed to the window to look out at the heavy grey sky, Barney crossed unnoticed to his great-uncle and slipped his hand into his for a moment.

“Gumerry,” he said softly, “did you find it, what you were looking for?”

He expected Great-Uncle Merry to look past him with the familiar amiable-obstinate expression that greeted any question. But the big man looked down at him almost absently. The eyebrows were drawn forbiddingly together on the craggy, secret face, and there was the old fierceness in the dark hollows around his eyes. He said gently, “No, Barnabas, I didn’t find it this time.” Then it was as if a blanket came down again over his face. “I must go and put the car away,” he called to Father, and went out.

The thunder rolled quietly, far out over the sea, but the rain fell with grey insistence, blurring the windows as it washed down outside. The children wandered aimlessly about the house. Before lunch they tried going for a walk in the rain, but came back damp and depressed.

Half-way through the afternoon Mother put her head round the door. “I’m going upstairs to work until supper. Now look, you three—you can go where you like in the house but you must promise not to touch anything that’s obviously been put away. Everything valuable is all locked up, but I don’t want you poking at anyone’s private papers or belongings. All right?”

“We promise,” Jane said, and Simon nodded.

In a little while Father muffled himself in a big black oilskin and went off through the rain to see the

harbour-master. Jane wandered round the bookshelves, but all the books within reach seemed to have titles like *Round the Horn*, or *Log-Book of the Virtue, 1886*, and she thought them very dull.

Simon, who had been sitting making darts out of the morning paper, suddenly crumpled them all up irritably. "I'm fed up with this. What shall we do?"

Barney stared gloomily out of the window. "It's raining like anything. The water in the harbour's all flowing. And on our first proper day. Oh I hate the rain, I hate it, I hate it, I hate the rain. . . ." He began to chatter morosely.

Simon prowled restlessly around the room, looking at the pictures on the dark wallpaper. "It's a very dreary house when you're shut up inside. He doesn't seem to think about anything but the sea, does he, the captain?"

"This time last year you were going to be a sailor too."

"Well, I changed my mind. Oh well, I don't know. Anyway, I should go on a destroyer, not a potty little sailing-ship like that one. What is it?" He peered up at the inscription under an engraving. "*The Golden Hind*."

"That was Drake's ship. When he sailed to America and discovered potatoes."

"That was Raleigh."

"Oh well," said Barney, who didn't really care.

"What useless things they discovered," Simon said critically. "I shouldn't have bothered about vegetables. I should have come back loaded with doubloons and diamonds and pearls."

"And apes and peacocks," said Jane, harking vaguely back to a poetry lesson at school.

"And I should have gone exploring into the interior and the rude natives would have turned me into a god and tried to offer me their wives."

"Why would the natives be rude?" said Barney.

"Not that sort of rude, you idiot, it means—it means—well, it's the sort of thing natives *are*. It's what all the explorers call them."

"Let's be explorers," Jane said. "We can explore the house. We haven't yet, not properly. It's like a strange land. We can work from the bottom all the way up to the top."

"And we should have to take provisions with us, so we can have a picnic when we get there," said Barney, brightening.

"We haven't got any."

"We can ask Mrs Palk," said Jane. "She's making cakes for Mother in the kitchen. Come on."

Mrs Palk, in the kitchen, laughed all over her red face and said, "What will 'ee think of next, I wonder. But she gave them, neatly wrapped, a stack of freshly-baked scones cut in half, thickly buttered and piled together again; a packet of squashed-fly biscuits, three apples and a great slab of dark yellowy-orange cake thick and crumbling with fruit.

"And something to drink," said Simon commandingly, already captain of the expedition. So Mrs Palk good-humouredly added a big bottle of home-made lemonade "to finish 'n off."

"There," she said, "that'll take 'ee to St Ives and back, I reckon."

"My rucksack's upstairs," said Simon, "I'll get it."

"Oh really," said Jane, who was beginning to feel a little foolish. "We aren't even going outdoors."

"All explorers have rucksacks," Simon said severely, making for the door. "I won't be a minute."

Barney nibbled at some yellow cake-crumbs from the table. "This is smashing."

"Saffron cake," Mrs Palk said proudly. "You won't get that in London."

"Mrs Palk, where's Rufus?"

"Gone out, and a good job too, though I dare say we shall have his great wet feet all over the floor afore

long. Professor took'n for a walk. Now stop pickin' at that cake, midear, or you'll spoil that picnic o' yours."

Simon came back with his rucksack. They filled it, and went out into the little dark passage away from the kitchen, Mrs Palk waving them farewell as solemnly as if they were off to the North Pole.

"Who did she say had taken Rufus for a walk?" said Jane.

"Great-Uncle Merry," Barney said. "They all call him the Professor, didn't you know? Mr. Penhallow did as well. They talk as if they've known him for years."

They were on the first-floor landing, long and dark, lit only from one small window. Jane waved her hand at a big wooden chest half hidden in one corner. "What's that?"

"It's locked," said Simon, trying the lid. "One of the things we mustn't touch, I suppose. Actually it's full of native gold and ornaments, we'll collect it on the way back and stow it in the hold."

"Who's going to carry it?" demanded Barney practically.

"Easy, we've got a string of native porters. All walking behind in a row and calling me Boss."

"Catch me calling you Boss."

"Actually you ought to be the cabin-boy, and call me Sir. Aye, aye, Sir!" Simon bellowed suddenly.

"Shut up," said Jane. "Mother's working at the other end of the landing, you'll make her do a smudge."

"What's in here?" said Barney. There was a dark door in the shadows at the far end of the landing. "I haven't noticed it before." He turned the handle, and the door opened outward with a slow creak. "I saw there's another little corridor down some steps, and a door at the end of it. Come on."

They went down over the worn carpet, beneath rows of old maps hanging on the walls.

The little corridor, like all the house, had a smell of furniture polish and age and the sea; and yet nothing like these things really but just the smell of strangeness.

"Hey," said Simon as Barney reached for the door. "I'm the captain, I go first. There might be cannibals."

"Cannibals!" said Barney with scorn, but he let Simon open the door.

It was an odd little room, very small and bare, with one round leaded window looking out inland across the grey slate roofs and fields. There was a bed, with a red-and-white gingham coverlet, and a wooden chair, a wardrobe, and a wash-stand with an outsize willow-pattern bowl and ewer. And that was all.

"Well, that's not very interesting," said Jane, disappointed. She looked about, feeling something was missing. "Look, there isn't even a carpet, just a bare floor."

Barney pattered across to the window. "What's this?" He picked something up from the window-sill, long and dark with the glint of brass. "It's a sort of tube."

Simon took it from him and turned it about curiously. "It's a telescope in a case." He unscrewed the cap so that it came apart in two halves. "No it's not, what a swizz, it's just the case with nothing inside."

"Now I know what this room reminds me of," Jane said suddenly. "It's like a cabin in a ship. That window looks just like a porthole. I think it must be the captain's bedroom."

"We ought to take the telescope with us in case we lose our way," said Simon. Holding it made him feel pleasantly important.

"Don't be silly, it's just an empty case," Jane said. "Anyway, it's not ours, put it back."

Simon scowled at her.

"I mean," Jane said hastily, "we're in the jungle, not at sea, so there are landmarks."

"Oh all right." Simon put the case down reluctantly.

They emerged from the little dark corridor, its door, as they closed it behind them, vanishing once more into the shadows so that they could hardly see where it had been.

"Not much else here. That one's Great-Uncle Merry's bedroom, there's the bathroom this side of it and

Mother's studio room the other."

"What an odd way this house is built," Simon said, as they turned into another narrow corridor toward the stairs leading up to the next floor. "All little bits joined together by funny little passages. As if each bit were meant to be kept secret from the next."

Barney looked round him in the dim light, tapping at the half-panelled walls. "It's all very solid. There ought to be secret panels and things, secret entrances into native treasure-caves."

"Well, we haven't finished yet." Simon led the way up the stairs to the familiar top landing, where the bedrooms were. "Isn't it getting dark? I suppose it's the low clouds."

Barney squatted on the top stair. "We ought to have torches, burning brands to light the path and keep the wild animals off. Only we couldn't because there are hostile natives all round, and they'd see."

Simon took over. Somehow imagination worked easily in the friendly silence of the Grey House. "Actually they're already after us, creeping along our tracks up the hill. We'll be able to hear their feet rustling soon."

"We ought to hide."

"Make camp somewhere that they can't get at."

"In one of the bedrooms, they're all caves."

"I can hear them *breathing*," Barney said, gazing down the dark stairs into the shadow. He was hardly beginning to believe it.

"The obvious caves wouldn't do," Simon said, remembering he was in command. "They'd look there first of all." He crossed the landing and began thoughtfully opening and shutting doors. "Mother's and Father's room—no good, very ordinary cave. Jane's—just the same. Bathroom, our room, no escape route anywhere. We shall all be turned into sacrifices and eaten."

"Boiled," said Barney sepulchrally. "In a great big pot."

"Perhaps there's another door, I mean cave, that we haven't noticed. Like the one downstairs." Jane peered round the darkest end of the landing, beside her brothers' door. But the passage came to a dead end at the wall running unbroken round all three sides. "There ought to be one. After all the house goes straight up it doesn't it, and there's a door directly underneath there"—she pointed at the blank wall—"and a room behind it. So there ought to be a room the same size behind this wall."

Simon became interested. "You're quite right. But there isn't any door."

"Perhaps there's a secret panel," Barney said hopefully.

"You read too many books. Have you ever seen a real secret panel in a real house? Anyway there isn't any panelling on this wall, just wallpaper."

"Your room's on the other side," Jane said. "Is there a door in there?"

Simon shook his head.

Barney opened the door into their bedroom and went in, kicking his slippers under the bed as he went past. Then he stopped suddenly.

"Hey, come in here."

"What's the matter?"

"That bit between our beds, where the wall makes a sort of alcove for the wardrobe. What's on the other side?"

"Well, the landing, of course."

"It can't be. There's too much wall in here. You stand in the doorway and look on both sides—the landing stops before it gets that far."

"I'll bang on the wall where it does stop, and you listen in here," said Jane. She went outside, pulling the door shut, and they heard a faint tapping on the wall just over the head of Barney's bed.

“There you are!” Barney said, hopping with excitement. “The landing only reaches to there, but the wall in here goes on for yards, right over your bed to the window. So there *must* be a room on the other side.”

Jane came back into the bedroom. “The wall doesn’t look nearly as long out there as it does in here.”

“It isn’t. And I think that means,” Simon said slowly, “that there must be a door behind the wardrobe.”

“Well that finishes it, then,” Jane said, disappointed. “That wardrobe’s enormous, we shall never be able to move it.”

“I don’t see why not.” Simon looked thoughtfully at the wardrobe. “We shall have to pull it from down low, so the top doesn’t overbalance. If we all pull at one end perhaps it’ll swing round.”

“Come on then,” Jane said. “You and I pull, and Barney hold the top and shout if he feels overbalancing.”

They both bent and heaved at the nearest leg of the wardrobe. Nothing happened.

“I think the stupid thing’s nailed to the floor,” said Jane in disgust.

“No it’s not. Come on, once more. One, two, three—*heave!*”

The great wooden tower squeaked unwillingly a few inches across the floor.

“Go on, go on, it’s coming!” Barney could hardly stand still.

Simon and Jane tugged and puffed and blew, their sneakers slithering on the linoleum; and gradually the wardrobe moved out at an angle from the wall. Barney, peering into the gloom behind, suddenly shrieked.

“There it is! There *is* a door! Ouf—” He staggered backwards, gasped, and sneezed. “It’s all covered with dust and cobwebs, it can’t have been opened for years.”

“Well go on, try it,” panted Simon, pink with breathlessness and success.

“I hope it doesn’t open towards us,” Jane said, sitting weakly on the floor. “I can’t pull this thing another inch.”

“It doesn’t,” Barney said, muffled from behind the wardrobe. They heard the door creak protestingly open. Then he reappeared, with a large dark smudge down one cheek. “There isn’t a room. It’s a staircase. More like a ladder really. It goes up to a sort of hatchway and there’s light up there.” He looked at Simon with a crooked grin. “You can go first, Boss.”

One by one they slipped behind the wardrobe and through the little hidden door. Inside, it was at first very dark, and Simon, blinking, saw before him a wide-stepped ladder, steeply slanting, rising towards a dimly-lit square beyond which he could see nothing. The steps were thick with dust, and for a moment he felt nervous about disturbing the stillness.

Then very faintly, he heard above his head the low familiar murmur of the sea outside. At once the comfortable noise made him more cheerful, and he even remembered what they were supposed to be. “Let one up shut the door,” he called down over his shoulder. “Keep the natives at bay.” And he began to climb the ladder.

• Chapter Three •

As Simon's head emerged through the hatch at the top he caught his breath just as Barney had: "Aah—aa—" and sneezed enormously. Clouds of dust rose, and the ladder shook.

"Hey," said Barney protestingly from below, drawing his face back from his brother's twitching heels.

Simon opened his watering eyes and blinked. Before him and all round was one vast attic, the length and breadth of the whole house, with two grubby windows in its sloping roof. It was piled higgledy-piggledy with the most fantastic collection of objects he had ever seen.

Boxes, chests and trunks lay everywhere, with mounds of dirty grey canvas and rough-coiled rope between them; stacks of newspapers and magazines, yellow-brown with age; a brass bedstead and grandfather clock without a face. As he stared, he saw smaller things: a broken fishing-rod, a straw hat perched on the corner of an oil-painting darkened by age into one great black blur; an empty mousetrap, a ship in a bottle, a glass-fronted case full of chunks of rock, a pair of old thigh-boots flopped over sideways as if they were tired, a cluster of battered pewter mugs.

"Gosh!" said Simon.

Muffled noises of protest came from below, and he hauled himself out through the opening and rolled sideways out of their way on the floor. Barney and Jane came through after him.

"Simon!" said Jane, gazing at him in horror. "You're filthy!"

"Well, isn't that just like a girl. All this round you, and you only see a bit of dust. It'll brush off." He patted ineffectually at his piebald shirt. "But isn't it marvellous? Look!"

Barney, cooing with delight, was picking his way across the littered floor. "There's an old ship's wheel. . . and a rocking-chair . . . and a saddle. I wonder if the captain ever had a horse?"

Jane had been trying to look insulted, but failed. "This is something *like* exploring. We might find anything up here."

"It's a treasure-cave. This is what the natives were after. Hear them howling with frustrated rage down there."

"Dancing round in a circle, with the witch-doctor cursing us all."

"Well, he can curse away," Barney said cheerfully. "We've got enough provisions for ages. I'm hungry."

"Oh not yet, you can't be. It's only four o'clock."

"Well, that's tea-time. Anyway, when you're on the run you eat little and often, because you daren't even stop for long. If we were Eskimos we'd be chewing an old shoelace. My book says—"

"Never mind your book," Simon said. He fished inside the rucksack. "Here, have an apple and keep quiet. I want to look at everything properly, before we have our picnic, and if I can wait so can you."

"I don't see why," Barney said, but he bit into his apple cheerfully and wandered across the floor, disappearing between the high brass skeleton of the old bed and an empty cupboard.

For half an hour they poked about in a happy dusty dream, through the junk and broken furniture and ornaments. It was like reading the story of somebody's life, Jane thought, as she gazed at the tiny matchstick masts of the ship sailing motionless for ever in the green glass bottle. All these things had been used once, had been part of every day in the house below. Someone had slept on the bed, anxiously watched the minutes on the clock, pounced joyfully on each magazine as it arrived. But all those people were long dead, or gone away, and now the oddments of their lives were piled up here, forgotten. She found herself feeling rather

sad.

"I'm ravenous," Barney said plaintively.

"I'm thirsty. It's all that dust. Come on, let's unload Mrs Palk's tea."

"This attic's rather a swizz," Simon said, squatting on a crackling edge of canvas and undoing the rucksack. "All the really interesting boxes are locked. Look at that one, for instance." He nodded towards a black metal chest with two rusting padlocks on its lid. "I bet it's full of the family jewels."

"Well," Jane said regretfully, "we aren't supposed to touch anything locked, are we?"

"There's a lot not locked," Simon said, handing her the bottle of lemonade. "Here. You'll have to swizz from the bottle, we forgot to bring any cups. Don't worry, we won't pinch anything. Though I shouldn't think anyone's been up here for years."

"Food," Barney said.

"The scones are in that bag there. Help yourself. Four each, I've counted."

Barney reached out an extremely dirty hand.

"Barney!" Jane squeaked. "Wipe your hand. You'll eat all sorts of germs and get typhoid or—or rabies or something. Here, have my handkerchief."

"Rabies is mad dogs," Barney said, looking with interest at the black finger-prints on his scone. "Anyways, Father says people make too much fuss about germs. Oh all *right*, Jane, stop waving that silly thing at me. I've got a proper handkerchief of my own. I don't know how girls ever blow their noses."

Scowling, he thrust his free hand into his pocket, and then his expression changed to disgust. "Ugh," he said, and brought out a brown, squashed apple core. "I'd forgotten that. All cold and horrible." He flung the core away from him into the far corner of the attic. It bounced, slithered, and rolled into the shadows.

Simon grinned. "Now you'll bring the rats out. All attics have rats. We shall hear greedy little squeaking and see twin green points of fire and there'll be rats all over the floor. First they'll eat the apple core, and then they'll come after us."

Jane turned pale. "Oh no. There wouldn't be rats up here, would there?"

"If there were they'd have eaten all the newspaper," Barney said hopefully. "Wouldn't they?"

"I expect they don't like ink. All old houses have rats. We've got them at school, you can hear them scuttling about in the roof sometimes. Come to think of it their eyes are red, not green." Simon's voice began to lose its brightness. He was beginning to feel slightly unhappy about the rats himself now. "I think maybe you'd better pick that apple core up, you know, just in case."

Barney gave an exaggerated sigh and got to his feet, swallowing his scone in two gigantic bites. "Where did it go, then? Over there somewhere. I wonder why they didn't put anything in this corner."

He crawled about on his hands and knees, aimlessly. "Come and help, I can't find it." Then he noticed a triangular gap in the sloping wall of the attic where its planks joined the floor. He peered through, and saw daylight gleaming dimly through the tiles. Just inside the gap the floorboards ended and he could feel wide spaced beams.

"I think it must have gone through this hole," he called. "I'm going to look."

Jane dived across the floor towards him. "Oh do be careful, there might be a rat."

"Couldn't be," Barney said, half-way through the gap. "There's light coming through the tiles and I can see, more or less. Can't see any core, though. I wonder if it fell between the floorboards and the underneath part. Ow!"

His rear half jerked suddenly.

"What is it? Oh do come out!" Jane tugged at his shorts.

"I touched something. But it can't be a rat, it didn't move. Where's it gone . . . here it is. Feels like cardboard. Blah—here's that disgusting core next to it as well."

His voice grew suddenly louder as he backed out of the hole, flushed and blinking. "Well, there it is," he said, triumphantly, flourishing the apple core. "Now the rats'll have to come and get it. I still don't believe there are any."

"What's that other thing you've got?" Simon looked curiously at a tattered, scroll-like object in Barney's other hand.

"Piece of wallpaper, I think. I bet you've eaten all the scones, you pigs." Barney bounded back across the floor, making the floorboards rattle. He sat down, pulled out his handkerchief, waved it ostentatiously at Jane, wiped his hands, and began to munch another scone. As they ate, he reached over and idly unrolled the scroll he had found, holding one end down on the floor with his toe and pushing the other back with a piece of wood until it lay stretched open before them.

And then, as they saw what it was, they all suddenly forgot their eating and stared.

The paper Barney had unrolled was not paper at all, but a kind of thick brownish parchment, springy and stiff as steel, with long raised cracks crossing it where it had been rolled. Inside it, another sheet was stuck down, darker, looking much older, ragged at the edges, and covered with small writing in strange squashed-looking dark brown letters.

Below the writing it dwindled, as if it had been singed by some great heat long ago, into half-detached pieces carefully laid back together and stuck to the outer sheet. But there was enough of it left for them to see at the bottom a rough drawing that looked like the uncertain outline of a map.

For a moment they were all very quiet. Barney said nothing, but he could feel a strange excitement bubbling up inside him. He leant forward in silence and carefully stretched the manuscript flat, pushing the piece of wood aside.

"Here," Simon said, "I'll get something to weight the edges down."

They put an old paper-weight, a pewter mug and two carefully dusted chunks of wood on the corners and sat back on their heels to look.

"It's terribly old," Jane said. "Centuries, thousands of years."

"Like those papers in glass cases in museums, with little curtains to keep the light out."

"Where did it come from? How did it get up here?"

"Somebody must have hidden it."

"But it's older than the house. I mean look at it, it must be, some of the writing's nearly faded away."

"It wasn't hidden," Barney said, with absolute conviction, though he had no clear idea why. "Someone just threw it down where I found it."

Simon whooped suddenly, making them jump. "This is terrific! Do you realize, we've got a real live treasure map? It could lead us to anything, anywhere, secret passages, real hidden caves—the treasure of Trewissick"—he rolled the words lovingly round his tongue.

"There isn't much map, it's all writing."

"Well then, that's instructions. Look in ye little room on ye second floor, I expect it says, ye second floorboard on the, I mean ye, left—"

"When this was written there weren't such things as floorboards."

"Oh come off it, it's not that old."

"I bet it is," Barney said, quietly. "Anyway, you look at this writing. You can't read it, it's all in some funny language."

"Course you can read it if you look properly," Simon said impatiently. In his mind he was already halfway through a sliding panel, throwing back the lid of a chest to reveal hoards of untold wealth. He could almost hear the chink of doubloons.

"Let's have a look." He leant forward, the floorboards hard and rough under his knees, and peered at the

manuscript. There was a long pause. "Oh," he said at last, reluctantly.

Barney said nothing, but looked at him very expressively indeed.

"Well all right," said Simon. "There's no need to look so cocky. It isn't in English. But that doesn't mean we shan't be able to find out what it says."

"Why isn't it in English?"

"How on earth should I know?"

"I mean," Barney said patiently, "that we're in England, so what other language could it possibly be in?"

"Latin," Jane said unexpectedly. She had been looking quietly at the manuscript over Simon's shoulder.

"Latin?"

"Yes. All old manuscripts are written in Latin. The monks used to write them down with a goose-feather for a pen, and put flowers and birds and things all squiggling round the capital letters."

"There isn't anything squiggling here. It looks as if it's been written in rather a hurry. I can't even see any capital letters at all."

"But why *Latin*?" demanded Barney.

"I don't know, the monks just always used it, that's all, it was one of their things. I suppose it's a religious-sounding kind of language."

"Well, Simon does Latin."

"Yes, come on, Simon, translate it," Jane said maliciously. At school she had not yet begun Latin, but she had been learning it for two years, and was rather superior about the fact.

"I don't think it's Latin at all," Simon said rebelliously. He peered at the manuscript again. "The writing's so odd, the letters all look the same. Like a lot of little straight lines all in a row. The light in here isn't very good either."

"You're just making excuses."

"No, I'm not. It's jolly difficult."

"Well, if you can't even recognize Latin when you see it you can't be nearly as good as you make out."

"Have another look," said Barney hopefully.

"I think it's in two parts," Simon said slowly. "One little paragraph on top, and then a lot more all together after a gap. The second bit I can't make out at all, but the first paragraph does look as if it might be Latin. The first word looks like *cum*, that means with, but I can't see what comes after it. Then later on there's *post multos annos*, that's after many years. But the writing's all so small and squashy I can't—wait a minute, there's some names in the last line. It says *Mar*—no, *Marco Arturoque*."

"Like Marco Polo," Jane said doubtfully. "What a funny name."

"Not one name, it's two. *Que* means and, only they put it on the end instead of in the middle. And *o* at the end is the ablative of *us*, so this means by with or from Marcus and Arturus."

"By with or from? What a—Barney! Whatever's the matter?"

Barney, red in the face and spluttering, had suddenly thumped his fist on the floor, caught his breath trying to say something, and collapsed into a thunderous fit of coughing. They patted him on the back and gave him a drink of lemonade.

"Marcus and Arturus," he said hoarsely, gulping his breath back. "Don't you see, it's Mark and Arthur. It's about King Arthur and his knights. Mark was one of them, and he was King of Cornwall. It must be about them."

"Gosh," Simon said. "I think he's right."

"It *must* be that. I bet old King Mark left some treasure behind somewhere and that's why there's a map."

"Suppose we find it."

"We'd be rich."

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