



twelve

Dooby grabbed Molly, and shook her.

“Nonsense! Get a grip on yourself. What do you mean?”

“It’s true, Dooby,” cried Molly. “There’s Horses. There’s lots of them!”

“Where are the Horses? Are you sure?”

Zoe looked at Dooby. For the first time, she saw him begin to panic.

“They’ve landed on rafts to the east of the island,” Molly said. She was wild with fear. Sarah ran up behind her.

“They’re coming!” she yelled. “We’re done for, Dooby. There’s hundreds of them!”

“Get as many men as you can find and go and meet them! Now!” yelled Dooby. Molly and Sarah ran off.

Zoe didn’t think they were going to find anyone.

“Damn!” Dooby said quietly.

“So you didn’t get everything out of the Cat then?” said Zoe.

She felt pleased by this. Dooby was angry.

“We’ll have to put our plan into action a bit sooner than I’d hoped. Come on. We’re leaving!”

“What?”

“We’re finished if we don’t! This is completely different; the Horses

are strong, and with the Cats as well we don’t stand a chance. Do you want to die? Well come on then! To the boat!”

He shoved the point of his sword at her throat. She nodded. She could feel a little blood trickling down her neck.

Then Dooby ran, tugging Zoe along behind him.

They hurtled down the ruins of passages and streets, ducking under and over collapsed buildings. Rounding a corner they met two unarmed men. Without pausing Dooby charged them, swinging his sword in front of him.

“Eels!” he yelled, and the speed of his attack gave the men no chance. They dropped to the ground in a single heap. Dooby ran on. Zoe didn’t dare look at the men as she ran round them.

“Horses!” shouted Dooby as he ran. “Who’d have thought they’d team up with Cats? I should have guessed!”

They were at the west side of the island now. Zoe had never made it this far. There, right at the water’s edge, was a low wooden shed.

“Right. Here it is,” said Dooby.

He fumbled with a chain round his neck. At last he pulled a key out and unlocked the doors.

“Get that engine started!” he shouted, pulling the doors open.

Zoe ran inside the shed, all the time thinking of how to get away from Dooby.

“Lyca!” she said. She looked her boat over quickly. Everything seemed okay. There were the oars she’d pulled from the wall of The Six Swans, ages ago now, it seemed. And there was something new; a small outboard motor fixed to the stern.

They dragged the boat into the water, wading up to their knees. Zoe looked at the engine.

She had never used one, but Dad had told her about them. He had even shown her a broken one once. This one looked okay.

“So how does it work?” she said to Dooby.

“What?” he screamed. “Don’t you know?”

“It’s your engine!” she yelled back, “I thought you . . .”

“NO!” shouted Dooby. Zoe could see he was beginning to panic.

“I think you pull this cord . . .” Zoe said.

She pulled the starter. Nothing. She pulled again. Nothing.

“It has got petrol in it, hasn’t it?” but as Zoe asked the question, she knew the answer. She had never used petrol herself, but Dad had said that it was what made engines work. The blank look on Dooby’s face said it all.

“What’s petrol?” he asked.

“Oh great,” said Zoe. “Well, we’ll just have to row for it then.”

Zoe fumbled with the crude clamps that were holding the motor to *Lyca’s* stern.

“What are you doing?” Dooby shouted at her.

“It’s no use without petrol! It won’t go. I’m taking it off. It’ll only slow us down.”

The useless engine splashed into the water behind the boat.

“Dooby!” A voice yelled at them from the island. “What’s going on?”

They turned to see Spat and Munchkin coming after them.

“You were going to go without us! You . . .!” screamed Spat.

“So what?” said Dooby, and turned to meet them with his sword. His usual calm had returned.

Spat and Dooby fought, Munchkin hung back, hesitating. Seeing the fight, Zoe took her chance and put out to sea in the boat. Dooby was having more trouble with Spat than he’d had with the two Horses. Spat was armed with a sword very similar to Dooby’s. They splashed wildly in the shallows, thrashing about with their weapons. Munchkin stood nervously at the water’s edge, as if trying to decide what to do. Rowing away from the awful fight, Zoe had a perfect view of it all. Suddenly Munchkin jumped into the sea, and started to swim for Zoe’s boat.

“Wait,” he spluttered. “Take me with you!”

Distracted by this, Spat and Dooby paused in their struggle for a second. Then Dooby snapped out of it. He shoved his sword into Spat. Spat slid into the shallows, which reddened around him.

By now Munchkin was well out to sea, about halfway from the shore to the boat.

“Come back here!” yelled Dooby from the shore. “Come back. You traitor! You’re supposed to be taking me!”

Dooby looked stupid, jumping up and down in the water, yelling his head off.

“Munchkin! I order you to come back! Now!”

Munchkin kept on splashing through the water.

Zoe stopped.

“Oh, William,” she said. “Should I come back for you, just in case?”

She shipped her oars, and waited for Munchkin to reach her.

After a minute more of splashing, Munchkin grabbed the gunwale of the boat. Zoe wondered why Dooby hadn’t tried to follow. They weren’t that far off shore yet.

“Come round to the stern. Give me your hand!” said Zoe, and she helped Munchkin over the back of the boat.

Munchkin fell spluttering into the bottom of the boat.

“Take the other oar,” said Zoe. “Let’s get out of here, before Dooby comes after us.”

Munchkin climbed beside Zoe and started to row.

“He won’t do that.”

“How can you be sure?” asked Zoe.

“He can’t swim,” said Munchkin, grinning.

“I think he’s going to have to learn.”

As they rowed away, they could vaguely hear the sounds of the fighting outside the cathedral coming to an end. Dooby was by now a tiny

figure standing motionless on the shore.

“Why did you wait for me?” asked Munchkin.

“I don’t know . . . I didn’t think you stood much chance if I left you to Dooby. And you didn’t tell him about what I said. About where my boat was.”

“No,” said Munchkin, simply. “But what about him? Who do you think won the battle?”

“Who knows? But I think Dooby will be all right. People like him always are. It’s William I’m worried about. I wanted to take him with me. I saw him go down in the fight. But maybe he’s okay.”

Munchkin shrugged.

“Don’t be sad,” he said. “He would never have left, anyway.”

They rowed in silence for a while. Zoe realized they ought to take stock of their direction before they went too much further. She fished in her pocket for her compass.

“Oh no,” she said.

“What?” asked Munchkin.

“My compass. I’ve lost it. It must have fallen out of my pocket when we ran out to the boat.”

“So how do we know where we’re going?” asked Munchkin.

“We don’t. Not exactly. We’ll head for where the sun’s going to set. That’s west, roughly.”

“West?” asked Munchkin. “That’s what William used to say. Salvation is to the west of the sea. There’s a city called Golgonooza. That’s what William said, anyway. He was always saying it. It was in one of his stories.”

Something clicked in Zoe’s mind. She made the connection, and at last understood what William had been trying to say. She felt her heart lift as she thought of him, and of how his story was helping them.

“I didn’t think you took any notice of William.”

Munchkin shrugged.

“I liked his stories, that’s all. Made everything seem better.”

Zoe smiled.

“Well,” she said, “that’s where we’re going then.”