

Where Friendship Meets Mystery and Courage

The
Isle
of
Adventure

Medhansh M



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Stories Matter

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1

The beginning of things

It all started really well. There was Hugo Hemmings, doing his best to solve algebraic problems, lying under a tree with nobody nearby—yet he could hear a voice speaking most clearly.

“Why can’t you shut the door, idiot?” said the voice in the most impatient way. “And, how many times have I told you to wash your hands?”

Hugo sat up straight and took a good look around for the third time—but the hillside ran down, empty of any boy, girl, man, or woman.

“It’s so silly,” said Hugo to himself. “There’s no door to open and no water to wash my hands with. Whoever is speaking is totally mad. Anyway, I don’t like it. A voice without a body is too odd.”

While Hugo was talking, a brown snout popped out of Hugo’s jersey, which belonged to a mouse, one of the boy’s many pets.

Hugo rubbed the tiny creature's snout which twitched in delight.

"Shut the door, idiot!" Roared the voice from nowhere. "And don't sniff. Where's your handkerchief?" Echoed in continuity.

This was too much for Hugo. He roared back, "Shut up! I'm not sniffing. Are you blind and deaf like a mule? Who are you, anyway?"

There was no answer. Hugo felt very puzzled. Where had that extraordinary voice with its rude commands come from? He yelled against the voice again.

"I'm working. If you want to talk, come out and show yourself."

"Alright, Uncle," said the voice in the most apologetic way.

"Gosh! What place is this? I'd better run from here," cried Hugo.

He grabbed his book and pencil and fled down the hill. He stopped under a tree for a stop. This time, he heard a cackle of laughter just above his head.

Hugo stood beneath the tree listening cautiously. His heart beat fast. He wished he were back at the house with the others.

Then came the most unearthly screech above, making Hugo drop his books in terror. Looking up, he saw a beautiful white parrot with a yellow crest on its head that it worked up and down.

It gazed at Hugo with bright black eyes, its head titled to one side, while its curved beak made a grating sound. Hugo stared at the parrot, and the parrot stared back.

Then the bird lifted a clawed foot and thoughtfully scratched its head, still raising and lowering its crest. Finally, it spoke.

“Don’t sniff,” it said as conversationally as it could. “Can’t you shut the door, idiot? Where are your manners?”

“Golly!” said Hugo, in amazement. “So it was you talking, shouting, and laughing! Well, you gave me an awful fright.”

The parrot gave the most realistic sneeze.

“Where is your handkerchief? And don’t sniff.”

Hugo laughed.

“You really are the most extraordinary bird,” he said. “The cleverest creature I have ever seen. Which scientist made you?”

“Wipe your feet,” answered the parrot sternly.

Hugo laughed again. Then he heard the sound of a boy’s voice, calling loudly from the bottom of the hill.

“Kiku, Kiku, Kiku! Where in the world have you got to?” The parrot spread out its wings and sailed down to the boy’s shoulder.

Hugo watched it go. “Was that a boy calling it?” Hugo thought. “And he was in the garden of Hill Base House, where I am staying. I wonder if he has come here to be crammed, too. I jolly well hope he has. I would be fine with a parrot like that living with us.”

Hugo had measles the term before and dengue immediately afterwards, so that he missed most of his schoolwork. His headmaster had written to his uncle and aunt, suggesting that he stay at the teachers’ home for a few weeks to make up for what he had missed.

Much to Hugo's disgust, his uncle had at once agreed, so there was Hugo, spending the summer holidays working on algebra, history, and geography, instead of having a gala with his sister Olivia at his home, Hilly Tops, by the sea.

He liked the master, Mr. Roy, but he was bored with the other two boys there, who were also being coached by Mr. Roy after missing school because of illness. One was older than Hugo, and the other was a poor, whining creature, always terrified of the various insects and animals Hugo always seemed to collect. The boy was intensely fond of animals and had a knack for earning their trust.

Now Hugo was hurrying down the hillside, eager to see if another student had joined the little holiday group of boys being coached. If the new boy owned the parrot, he would be something more interesting than the big lout of a Sam and the poor whining Oliver.

Hugo opened the garden gate and then stared in surprise. A girl was in the garden, not very big —perhaps about 10 years old. She had brown hair, blue eyes, and hundreds of freckles. She stared back at Hugo.

"Hallo," said Hugo, liking the look of the girl, who was wearing jeans and a sweater. "Have you come here?"

"Looks like it," said the girl, with a grin. "But I haven't come to work. Only to be with Noah."

"Who's Noah?" asked Hugo.

"My brother," said the girl. "He has got to be coached. You should have seen his report last term. He says he wants to be

an ornithologist, so what's the use of learning dates, algebra, history, and all that?"

"What's an-an-whatever you just said?" Asked Hugo, wondering how there could be so many freckles on the nose.

"Ornithologist? Well, it's someone who loves and studies birds," said the girl. "Didn't you know? Noah's mad about birds."

"He might like to live where I live, near a beach with heaps of rare birds," said Hugo at once. "I say—does that parrot belong to Noah?"

"Yes," said the girl. "He's had her for 2 years, 11 months, and 25 days. Her name is Kiku."

"Did he teach it to say all those things?" Asked Hugo, thinking that though he might be bad at school, he would certainly ace at teaching a parrot to talk!

"Oh no," said the girl, giggling, her blue eyes twinkled and crinkled. "Kiku just picked up those sayings from our old uncle, who is the crossdest person in the world, I should think. Our parents are no more, so Uncle Samuel has us in the hols, and doesn't he just hate it! His housekeeper wants us out of the house all the time, even though we don't make noise. But so long as I have Noah, and so long as Noah has his beloved birds, we are happy enough." "Wait a sec. What does hols mean?" Asked Hugo. "Oh, it means holidays," answered the girl.

"I suppose Noah got sent to learn a few things, like me," said Hugo. "You'll be lucky—you'll be able to play around or have a

stroll down the hill and live your life while we are stewing the lessons.”

“No, that is impossible,” said the girl. “I shall be with Noah. I don’t like it without him during the school term. This is the time we get to have fun, so I’m jolly well going to have him in the hols.”

“Well, that’s more than my sister, Olivia, thinks of me,” said Hugo. “We’re always quarrelling. Hallo—is this Noah?”

A boy came up the path towards Hugo. On his left shoulder sat the parrot, Kiku, rubbing her beak softly against Noah’s ear, and saying something in a low voice. The boy scratched the parrot’s head and gazed at Hugo with the same blue eyes as his sister. His hair was even browner, and his face was so freckled that it would have been impossible to find a clear patch of skin, for there seemed to be freckles on top of freckles.

“Hallo, Freckles,” said Hugo, and grinned.

“Hallo, Tufty,” said Noah, and grinned too. Hugo put up his hand and felt the front bit of his hair, which always rose in a sort of tuft. No amount of water, oil, or gel would make it lie down for long.

“Wipe your feet,” said Kiku severely.

“I’m glad you found Kiku all right,” said the girl. “She didn’t like coming to a strange place.”

“She wasn’t far away, Lily,” said Noah. “I bet old Tufty here got a fright if he heard her up from the hillside.”

“I did,” said Hugo, and began telling the two what had happened. They laughed loudly, and Kiku also joined in, cackling most humanly.

“Golly, I’m glad you and Lily have come here,” said Hugo, feeling much happier than he felt for the past few days. He liked the look of the brown-haired and blue-eyed brother and sister very much. It would stem into a beautiful camaraderie. He would show them the animals he had as pets. They would go on walks together. Noah was a few years older than Lily, about twelve. It was a pity Olivia wasn’t there too, then there would have been the four of them. Olivia was eleven. She would fit in nicely—the only hitch will be her temper.

“How different Lily and Noah are from Olivia and me,” thought Hugo.

It was quite plain that Lily adored Noah, and Hugo could not imagine Olivia hanging on to his words, eager to do his bidding, fetching and carrying for him, as Lily did for Noah.

“Oh, well—people are different,” thought the boy. “Olivia’s a good sort, even if we quarrel and fight. She must be having a pretty awful time at Hilty-Top without me. I bet Aunt Polly is working her hard.”

It was pleasant at tea-time that day to sit and watch Noah’s parrot on his shoulder, commenting from time to time. It was good to see the glint in Lily’s blue eyes as she teased big, slow Sam and ticked off the smaller, peevish Oliver. Things would liven up a bit now.

They certainly did. Holiday coaching was much more fun with Noah and Lily there, too.



2

Two letters – and a plan

Mr. Roy, the holiday master, worked the children hard because that was literally his job. He coached them the whole morning, going over and over everything patiently, making sure it was understood, demanding, and usually getting closer attention.

He got it from everybody else except Noah. Noah only gave close attention to the things that had feathers.

That day, Hugo had a letter from Olivia. He showed it to the others. “Old Olivia’s having a rough time,” he said. “It’s a good thing I leave here soon. It’ll be better for her once I’m there.”

Dear Hugs[said by Olivia in her letter],

Aren’t you ever coming back? Not that you’re any good for anything except for quarrelling with, but it’s pretty lonely with only Uncle and Aunt and the caretaker, who’s now acting even more strange. He told me yesterday not to go outside at night

down the cliff, because there are ‘things’ wandering around. Whence nothing except sea birds wander here.

And don’t, for goodness’ sake, bring any creatures these holidays. You know how much I hate them. Aunt Polly is making me work awfully hard. We wash and scrub and clean all day. When do you come back? I wish we could earn some money somehow, cause Aunt Polly and Uncle are worrying themselves to death since they can’t pay the remaining bills. Please do come early for goodness’ sake. Tell me about Freckles and Lily. I like the sound of them.

Your loving sister,

Olivia

Olivia sounded rather funny, Noah thought, as he read through the letter and gave it back to Hugo. “Here you are, Tufty,” he said. “Olivia sounds lonely. Hallo – there’s Mr. Roy beckoning me. I’ll see what he wants. More work, of course. Or, so I suppose.”

The same post came bearing a letter for Mr. Roy, from the housekeeper who looked after Noah’s Uncle Samuel. It was short and to the point.

Mr. Roy had read it with dismay and then called Noah in to show him the letter. Noah read it, who was also filled with dismay.

Dear Mr. Roy [said the letter],

Mr. Jefferson has broken his leg, and he doesn’t want the children back these holidays. He wants to know if you could keep them with you, and he sends a cheque to cover the rest of

the time. They can come a day before their school begins, to help me sort out their accessories.

Yours faithfully,

Jessy Maple

Noah moaned on reading the letter as he disliked his home, disliking the thought of staying on with Mr. Roy and studying the things he never liked. "I don't see why Lily and I can't go back – we shan't go near uncle." Mr. Roy did not want Noah more than he did because of his mischievous parrot and his lack of focus and interest.

"Well," said Mr. Roy, pursing his lips and looking at Kiku and Noah, "well – I'm sure I don't want to keep you longer, because it's a pure waste of your time to be here – you haven't learned anything – but I don't see what else to do." Just then, Hugo and Lily, abruptly came beside Noah, and Hugo gave a suggestion, "What if Noah and Lily come with me to Hilly Tops, and we can go to school together? What do you think about it, Mr. Roy, since you don't want Noah and Kiku? The two siblings looked confused.

They pulled him away towards a corner, and Noah questioned him, "Are you sure about what you are saying? What if Mr. Roy and my uncle said no, and even worse, what if your uncle and aunt said no?" Hugo calmed him down and answered him, "Well, Olivia will be thrilled. That's obvious. And, there are a lot of sea birds near Hilly Tops, and since Noah wants to be a... what was that again?" Lily replied, "An ornithologist."

Hugo continued, "Yeah, that thing, so Noah could develop an interest in the birds, and there is an island with very rare birds, so we can learn to ride a boat from Joe, our caretaker, and later

we can borrow his boat. But now the only problem is your uncle and Mr. Roy. Now, since you both know our plans, Noah, convince both Mr. Roy and your uncle, and Lily, to come with me outside.”

Noah walked towards Mr. Roy and Hugo and Lily went out, saying a greeting or so to Mr. Roy. After a long discussion, Noah came out to the two and said, “It is no good. He won’t budge. He thinks it is his responsibility. But I had a brainwave in there. What if we tell Mr. Roy to hand over the cheque to us and then scoot off in the night to Hilly Tops in a train? So, I asked him to give the cheque, and here it is.” There was a cheque in Noah’s right hand.

“Mr. Roy would be glad to see us gone,” laughed Lily. “All right,” said Noah, giving way suddenly. “We’ll all go off together. When is the train, Tufty? We’ll go down to the train station, saying that we’ll see you off – and we’ll hop into the carriage at the last minute and leave with you.”

So, they made their plan. They first gathered all their money for two more tickets. The day before Hugo was due to leave, his trunk was taken from the loft, and Noah managed to get his down unobserved, too. He pushed it into a big cupboard and called Lily to help him pack when no one was about.

“I’ll wheel my trunk down to the station on the barrow,” Hugo said to Mr. Roy. It was customary to do this, and the master nodded, not taking much notice. He wished Noah and that parrot, were going too (which would be true).

The boys managed to get both the trunks onto the barrow without being seen, and set off to the station in great spirits. Escape seemed quite easy, after all. Sam and Oliver did not

seem to notice anything. Sam was too excited at leaving for home himself, and Oliver was too miserable at the idea of being left behind to bother about anything else.

The next morning, Hugo bid a polite goodbye to Mr. Roy. "Thank you for your coaching, sir," he said. "I think I shall get on well next term. Goodbye, sir."

"Goodbye, Hugo. You've not done badly," said Mr. Roy

"Could I go down to the railway station with Lily and see Hugo off?" Asked Noah. Kiku gave a squawk of laughter, and Noah gave her a little slap. "Be Quiet! There is nothing to laugh at." "Naughty boy!" said Kiku, just as if she knew what mischief was in Noah's mind.

"Yes, you can go down and see Hugo off," said Mr. Roy, thinking that it would be nice to get rid of Noah and his parrot for a little while. After some time, Noah, Lily, and Hugo arrived at the station on time. They found their luggage and gave it to the porter to put it on the train. When the engine steamed, they found an empty carriage and got in. No one stopped them. No one guessed the two children were running away. They all were thrilled and nervous at the same time.

At last, the train departed, with many snorts that caused the excited parrot to tell it to use its handkerchief, much to the children's amusement. It steamed out of the station and, in the distance, the children saw the house where they had lived for the past few weeks.

"Well - we're off," said Hugo, pleased. "It was quite easy, wasn't it? Golly, what fun it will be to have you and Lily at Hilly Tops! Olivia will be thrilled when we arrive." "Off to

Hilly-Tops!" Sang Lily. "Off to the wind and the sea and the waves! Off to Hilly-Tops!"

Yes - off to Hilly-Tops - and to a wild and astonishing time that no one of the children could possibly have imagined. Off to Hilly-Tops - and off to Adventure.



3 Hilly-Tops

The Express train sped on through the countryside, passing many stations, and stopping at very few. It went on towards the coast, through high mountains that towered up, over silver rivers, through big, staggering towns.

And then it came to the wilder country. The sea-wind came in through the windows. "I can smell the sea already," said Noah, who had only once before been to the sea, and scarcely remembered it.

The train stopped at last at a very lonely little station. "Here we are," said Hugo. "Tumble out. Hi Joe! Here I am. Have you got the old car in handy?"

Noah and Lily saw a strange man coming towards them. His shin was lined, his teeth were very white, and his eyes darted from side to side as he looked at them. Running behind him was a girl a little older than Lily, but tall for her age. She had

the same blonde, wavy hair as Hugo, and the same tuft in front.

“Another Tufty,” thought Noah, “but a fiercer one. It must be Olivia.”

It *was* Olivia. She had come with Joe to meet Hugo in the ramshackle car. She stopped short in the greatest surprise when she saw Lily and Noah. Noah grinned, but Lily, suddenly feeling shy of this strapping, confident-looking girl, hid behind her brother. Olivia stared in even greater amazement at Kiku, who was telling Joe to wipe his feet.

“You mind your manners,” said Joe roughly, talking to the bird as if it was a human being. Kiku put up her crest and growled angrily, like a dog. Joe looked startled.

“That a bird?” he enquired of Hugo.

“Yes,” said Hugo. “Joe, that trunk over there should go in the car, too. They belong to my two friends.”

“Are they coming to Hilly-Tops?” said Joe in the greatest surprise. “Miss Polly, she didn’t say anything about any friends, no, she didn’t.”

“Hugo, who are they?” asked Olivia, coming up and joining the little group.

“Two friends from Mr. Roy’s,” said Philip. “I’ll tell you all about it afterwards.” He winked at Olivia to make her understand that he would tell her in the absence of Joe. “This is Freckles – I told you about him, you know – and Lily too,”

The three shook hands and they all got in the jerky, jumpy old car, with the two trunks in the back, and Joe drove off in a

manner that seemed most dangerous to Lily. She clutched the side of the car, almost frightened.

After a while, Olivia pointed to a hill and said, "That's the cliff behind where Hilly-Tops is built."

"Is Miss Polly expecting you all?" Asked Joe suddenly. He was plainly puzzled by the two extra children. "She didn't say nothing to me about them."

"She didn't! How strange!" Said Hugo. Kiku screeched with laughter, and Joe wrinkled up his nose in dislike. He certainly wasn't going to fall in love with Kiku.

Olivia suddenly gave a shriek and pushed Hugo away and said, "Beast! I wish you hadn't come back. Take your two horrid friends and go off again to Mr. Roy."

"They are not horrid," said Hugo. "They're fun." He put his mouth to Olivia's ear, after seeing that Joe was not paying any attention, and whispered: "They've escaped from Mr. Roy. I asked them to. Noah has the cheque which was given to Mr. Roy for their extension, but now Aunt Polly can use it to pay the bills." Olivia's temper just vanished into thin air.

"This is going to be exciting," she thought.

Joe drove headlong over the bumpy, stony road. Noah wondered if any car could stand such driving. They drove up to the cliff, then down a hidden way that sloped round to Hilly-Tops.

A woman came to the door and looked down at the four children in surprise. She was thin, and her hair was sandy-coloured and wispy. She looked tired and faded.

“Hallo, Aunt Polly!” Cried Hugo, running up the stone steps.
“I’m back!”

“So, I see,” said his aunt, giving him a peck of a kiss on his cheek. “But who are these?”

“Aunt Polly, they’re friends of mine,” said Hugo, earnestly. “They couldn’t go home because their uncle broke his leg. So I brought them here. Their uncle will pay you for having them.”

“Hugo! How can you do a thing like this? Springing people on me without telling me!” said Aunt Polly sharply. “Where will they sleep? You know we have no room.”

“They can sleep in the tower-room,” said Hugo. The tower-room! How lovely! Noah and Lily were thrilled.

“There are no beds there,” said Aunt Polly, in a disagreeing tone. “They’ll have to go back. They can stay the night and then go back.”

Lily looked ready to cry. There was a harshness in Aunt Polly’s tone that she could not bear. She felt unwelcome and miserable. Noah put his arm around and gave her a squeeze.

He was determined that he would not go back. The sight of the sea and twirling birds had filled his heart with joy. Oh, to lie on the cliff and watch them! He would *not* go back!

They all went in, Joe was carrying the trunks. Aunt Polly looked at Kiku with much disfavour .

“A parrot too!” She said, “Nasty, squawking, screeching bird! I never liked parrots. It’s bad enough to have all the creatures you collect, Hugo, without a parrot coming too.”

“Poor Polly, poor old Polly,” said Kiku unexpectedly. Aunt Polly looked at the bird, startled.

“How does it know my name?” she asked in astonishment.

Kiku didn’t. It was a name she herself was often called, and she often said “Poor old Polly!” or “Poor old Kiku!” She saw that she made an impression on this sharp-voiced woman, and she repeated the words softly, as if she was just about to burst into tears.

“Poor Polly! Dear Polly! Poor, dear old Polly!”

“Well, I never!” said Aunt Polly, and looked more kindly at the parrot. Aunt Polly felt ill, tired and harassed but no one ever said they were sorry, or seemed to notice it. Now here was a bird pitying her and speaking to her more kindly than anyone had for years! Aunt Polly felt strange about it, but quite pleased.

“You can take a mattress up to the tower room, and sleep there tonight with the boy – what’s his name?” Said Aunt Polly. “The girl can sleep with Olivia. It’s a small bed, but I can’t help it. If you bring people here without telling me, I can’t prepare.”

The children sat down for a good meal. Aunt Polly was a good cook. It was a mixture of tea and supper, and the children tucked into it well. All they had had that day since their breakfast were the sandwiches that Mr. Roy had packed for Hugo, and one packet of sandwiches didn’t go far between three hungry children.

Olivia sneezed, and the parrot spoke to her sternly. “Where’s your handkerchief?”

Aunt Polly looked at the bird in a surprised admiration. "Well, I'm always saying that to Olivia," she said. "That bird seems to be the most sensible creature."

"Aunt Polly likes your parrot more than you," whispered Hugo to Noah, with a grin.

After the meal, Aunt Polly took Hugo to his uncle's study. He knocked and went in. His Uncle Jocelyn was bent over a sheaf of yellow papers, examining them with his magnifying glass. He grunted at Hugo.

"So, you're back again. Behave yourself and keep out of my way. I shall be very busy these holidays."

"Jocelyn, Hugo has brought two children back with him – and a parrot," said Aunt Polly.

"A parrot?" said Uncle Jocelyn. "Why a parrot?"

"Jocelyn, the parrot belongs to one of the children that Hugo brought home," said Aunt Polly. "Hugo wants these children to stay at home."

"Can't have them. Don't mind the parrot," said Uncle Jocelyn. "Keep the parrot if you want. Send it away if you don't. I'm busy."

He bent over his papers again. Aunt Polly sighed and shut the door. "He's so interested in the past that he forgets all about the present," she said, half to herself. "Well – I suppose I must ring up Mr. Roy myself. He'll be wondering about those children."

She went to the telephone. Hugo followed close behind her, longing to know what Mr. Roy would say. Olivia peeped out of

the sitting-room, and Hugo nodded towards the telephone. If only Mr. Roy was cross and said he would not have Noah and Lily back! If only Aunt Polly would think the cheque was big enough to make letting them stay worthwhile!



4

Settling at Hilly-Tops

It seemed ages before Aunt Polly got through Mr. Roy. The master was worried and puzzled. Noah and Lily had not returned, of course, and at first he had thought they had gone off for one of their long walks, and that Noah had found some unusual bird and had forgotten all about time.

But as the hours went by and still the children had not come back, he became seriously worried. It did not occur to him that they might have gone with Hugo, or he would have telephoned the boy's aunt at once.

He was the most relieved to hear Mrs. Sullivan, Hugo's aunt, speaking, giving him the news that the children were safe.

"They arrived here with Hugo," she said with some sharpness. "I cannot think how it was that they were allowed to do this. I cannot possibly keep them."

Mr. Roy's heart sank. He had hoped for one wild moment that his problem concerning Noah and Lily, and that tiresome parrot, was solved. Now it seemed as if it wasn't.

“Well, Mrs. Sullivan,” said Mr. Roy politely, though he was not the most civil about it, “I’m sorry about it. The children went down to see off Hugo, and I suppose the boy persuaded them to go with him. It’s a pity you could not keep them for the rest of the holidays, as they would probably be happier with Hugo and you. No doubt they told you that their uncle cannot have them back for these holidays. He sent me a cheque for a large sum of money, hoping that I could have them. But since the children had asked for it, I just gave it, never even dreaming of this incident. Now you can have the cheque instead of me.”

There was a pause. “How much did the cheque quote?” Asked Mrs. Sullivan.

There was another pause after Mr. Roy told her the amount that the children had. It certainly was a generous offer. Mrs. Sullivan thought quickly. The children would not cost much to keep. She could see that they kept out of Jocelyn’s way. That girl Lily could help Olivia with the housework. And she would be able to pay off a few bills, which would be a great relief to her.

Mr. Roy waited hopefully at the other end. He could not bear the thought of having the parrot back again. Noah was bearable, Lily was nice, but Kiku was impossible.

“Well,” said Mrs. Sullivan, in the sort of voice that meant she was prepared to give in. “Well – let me think now. It’s going to be difficult because we’ve so little room here, but perhaps we could manage. If I use the tower room again...”

Hugo and the others, who could hear everything that was being said by Mrs. Sullivan, looked at one another in delight.

“Aunt Polly is giving in!” Whispered Hugo. “And oh, Noah – I bet we’ll have the old tower room of our own. I’ve always wanted to sleep there and have it for my room, but Aunt Polly would never let me.”

“Okay! That’s a deal, but be careful with the parrot Noah has. It’s intolerable,” said Mr. Roy. “Oh, I am fine with the parrot,” said Mrs. Sullivan.

Not much more was said. In the meantime, she undertook the duty to look after the children for the rest of the holidays.

The phone clicked as she cut the call. The children heaved a sigh of relief. Hugo went up to his aunt and gave her the cheque that they had secretly brought.

“Oh, thanks, Aunt Polly,” he said while giving the cheque. “It’ll be fine for me and Olivia to have friends with us. We’ll try and keep out of Uncle’s way, and help you the best I can.

“God save the queen,” said Kiku unexpectedly, and everyone laughed.

“Hugo, you and Noah can have the tower room yourselves. Come with me, I’ll see what to arrange. Olivia, go to your room and see if you would rather share it with Lily, or if she would like to have Hugo’s old room instead. They open out of one another, so I expect you would like to have two separate rooms.”

Olivia went off happily with Lily to examine the room. Lily wished she was sleeping near Noah. The tower room was a good way from where she would sleep. Noah took Kiku and

went to a high window, settling on the window seat to watch the sea birds in their restless soaring and gliding outside.

Hugo went with his aunt to the tower room. He felt very happy. He had become fond of Noah and Lily, and it was almost too good to be true to think they had come to stay with him for some weeks.

The two of them went down to the cold stone passage. They came to a narrow, winding stone stairway and climbed up the steps. The stairway wound round and round, and at last came out to the tower-room. This was a perfect round room whose walls were very thick. It had three narrow windows, one facing the sea. There was no glass in it at all, and the room was draughty and full of the sound of the cries of birds and the roaring of the waves.

"I'm afraid this room will be too cold for you two boys," said Aunt Polly, but Hugo shook his head.

"We shan't mind that. We should have the windows wide open if there was any glass over there, Aunt Polly. We will be all right. We shall love it up here. Look, there is an old oak chest to put our things in, a wooden stool and we can bring up a rug from downstairs. We only need a mattress."

"Well, we can't bring up a bed here, so the only option is to use a mattress," said Aunt Polly. "I have got a double one that I must do for you in the store room. I will send Olivia up with a broom and a cloth to clean the room a bit."

"Oh, Aunt Polly, it's so gracious of you for arranging all this," said Hugo, half shyly, for he was afraid of his hard-working aunt, and although he spent all his holidays with her, he felt that he did not really know her well. "I hope Mr. Jefferson's

cheque will cover all your expenses but I'm sure Noah and Lily won't cost much."

"Well Hugo," said Aunt Polly. "The truth is that your mother is terribly sick and is not able to work and provide us with money. And, Uncle Jocelyn doesn't do that much, so the thought of having a great amount to take care of the children struck me to pay the bills."

"What happened to mother?" Asked Hugo in surprise.

"Well - she's very feeble and has a terrible cough. The doctor says she must have a protracted rest - but near the sea if possible. But how can she give up on her job?"

"Then I will not go to school and find a job myself," thought Hugo, and went down the spiral stairway to get the old mattress.

He called Noah, and the two boys pulled the old mattress up the stairway to the tower room. Kiku encouraged them with shrieks and squawks. Joe, the handyman, frowned at the noise. He seemed to think Kiku was directing her screeches at him, and, when she found that her noises were annoying him, she did her best to make him jump by unexpected squawks in his ear.

Joe was taking up a small table and Noah's trunk. He set them down in the tower room and looked out of the window facing the sea. He seemed to be very ill-tempered, Hugo thought. Not that he was good-tempered at any time - but he looked even sulkier than usual.

"What's up, Joe?" Asked Hugo, who was not in the least afraid of the sullen man. "Seeing things?"

The children had laughed over Joe's idea that there were 'things' wandering about at night. Joe frowned.

"Miss Polly shouldn't use this room," he said. "No, she shouldn't, and I've told her so. It's a bad room. And you can see *the Isle of Aventa* from it too, when the mists lift and it's bad to look at *the Isle of Aventa*."

"Don't be silly, Joe," said Hugo laughingly. "Are you sure you are not included in any dangerous activities on the island that are making you say this?" But he didn't know that a very big mystery would be opened up in a couple of days about what he was saying.



5

An odd discovery and a secret

The girls decided to have the two rooms. They were such small rooms, and it would be easier to tidy two small rooms than one, if two people were to have them.

“There would never be room for anything if we tried to keep things in one room,” said Olivia, and Lily agreed. She had been up to the tower room and liked it very much. She would have liked a room without glass panes, too. It was almost as good as sleeping outdoors, thought the little girl.

The girls’ rooms looked out facing the sea, but in a different direction than the boys’. *The Isle of Aventa* could never be seen from there. Noah told Lily what Joe had said, and Lily looked rather alarmed.

“You needn’t worry. Joe’s full of strange beliefs and strange stories,” said Hugo with a laugh. “There’s nothing in his stories, really – I believe he just likes frightening people.”

It was strange to sleep for the first time at Hilly-Tops. Lily lay awake for a long time, listening to the muffling roar of the waves breaking on the rocks below. How different it was from the small village they lived in with Uncle Jocelyn!

Noah lay awake in the tower room, too. Hugo was asleep on the mattress beside him. Noah got up and went to the window. The room was filled with wind, sweeping in at the sea-windows. Noah put his head out and looked down.

Suddenly, he jumped violently, for something touched his shoulder. His heart thumped, and then he laughed. It was only Kiku.

Kiku always slept with Noah, wherever he was. Usually, she sat on the rail of his bed's head, her big head tucked under her wing, but there was no rail this time, only a flat mattress laid on the floor. So Kiku had found an uncomfortable perch on the edge of the chest.

He went back to bed, cold and shivering. But he soon got warm, cuddled up against Hugo's back, and fell asleep, dreaming of thousands of sea-birds walking tamely up to be photographed.

The days ahead went very well and were fun indeed. One afternoon, while the children were playing football, Hugo kicked the ball a bit too hard, and it flew straight into the house, shattering a window that led into the study. The sudden crash left the four standing still in surprise, but luckily, Uncle Jocelyn wasn't there; he had gone outside to buy some stationery for his research.

Hugo slipped quietly into the study to retrieve the ball and noticed it had struck an old chest near the couch, knocking its

lock open. Inside lay a single small map marked with strange paths beneath *The Isle of Aventa*; intrigued, he tucked it into his pocket, grabbed the ball, and hurried out just before Uncle Jocelyn returned home.

Noah, Olivia, and Lily immediately surrounded Hugo, demanding to know why he had taken so long. After hearing his hurried explanation, they quickly agreed to copy the strange map onto a sheet of paper and return the original safely to the chest. They played football for some time, ate tea, and sat at the edge of the cliff.

The wind was blowing strongly. The sound of the sea below rose and fell in a steady roar, and now and then a gull cried sharply as it swept past.

Hugo lay flat on his stomach, the piece of paper spread out before him. Noah knelt beside him, elbows on the floor, while Olivia and Lily sat cross-legged nearby. Between them lay the carefully copied map—the one Hugo had traced from the chest in Uncle Jocelyn’s study.

For a while, no one spoke.

It was not an ordinary map.

At first glance, it showed the familiar outline of the Isle of Aventa, rising like a jagged shadow from the sea. But the longer they looked, the stranger it became. Thin lines crisscrossed beneath the island—lines that did not belong to paths above ground.

“These aren’t roads,” said Noah at last, frowning. “They go under the island.”

“Like tunnels?” Lily asked, her voice quiet.

Hugo tapped one of the markings with his finger. “Not just tunnels. Look—these lead deep inside. And here—this looks like a chamber of some sort.”

Olivia leaned closer. “Why would anyone make a map like this and hide it in a locked chest?”

No one answered immediately. The question hung in the air, as uneasy as the wind that swept through the room.

At last, Noah said slowly, “Because whatever is there... isn’t meant to be found.”

That made Lily shiver.

“Oh, don’t be silly,” said Olivia quickly, though she glanced once at the dark opening of the staircase as if half-expecting someone to be listening. “It could be anything. Old ruins. Storage tunnels. Maybe even just a trick.”

Hugo shook his head. “No. This was hidden for a reason. And Joe said something odd too, remember?”

“The island is bad,” said Lily at once.

“And that we shouldn’t look at it,” added Noah.

Olivia gave a small snort. “Joe says a lot of strange things.”

“Yes,” said Hugo, “but this time... it matches.”

They all fell silent again.

The map lay between them, fluttering slightly in the wind, as if it were alive.

After a while, Hugo got up and went to the window that faced the sea. He leaned out, squinting against the bright light. The

water stretched endlessly, glittering under the afternoon sun. For a moment, he saw nothing.

Then—

“There!” he said suddenly.

The others rushed to the window and crowded around him.

Far out in the distance, half-hidden in a faint blue mist, rose the Isle of Aventa. It looked small from here, but there was something about it that made it seem larger—lonelier—than it really was.

“It doesn’t look frightening,” said Lily softly.

“No,” said Noah, his eyes fixed on it. “But it doesn’t look friendly either.”

Hugo turned back to the map. “Those tunnels are there,” he said firmly. “Whatever they lead to... it’s on that island.”

Olivia crossed her arms. “Even if that’s true, how do you expect us to get there? Swim?”

Hugo grinned. “No. We use a boat.”

That made Lily’s eyes widen. “But none of us know how to sail!”

“No,” said Hugo thoughtfully. “But someone here must.”

They all thought at once of Joe—but just as quickly dismissed the idea. Joe would never help them. In fact, he would probably do everything he could to stop them.

“No,” said Noah slowly. “Not Joe. Someone else.”

“Who?” asked Olivia.

Before he could answer, a loud voice drifted up from below, carried clearly by the wind.

“Oi! Anyone about?”

The children froze.

They looked at one another.

“That’s not Joe,” said Hugo.

They hurried up the cliff, their footsteps echoing faintly on the stone. As they reached the top, they saw a man standing near Hilly-Tops.

He was tall and lean, with a bright, cheerful face and quick, lively eyes. His clothes looked worn from travel, and there was something about the way he stood—balanced, steady—that made it clear he was used to the sea.

“Afternoon!” he called. “Fine place you’ve got here.”

Hugo stepped forward. “Who are you?”

The man grinned. “Name’s Bob. Bob Lightspeed.”

Olivia raised an eyebrow. “Lightspeed? That’s a strange name.”

“Fits me well enough,” said Bob lightly. “I move fast, think fast, and sail faster than most.”

At that, Noah’s interest sharpened instantly.

“You sail?” he asked eagerly.

“Since I was younger than you,” said Bob. “Know these waters like the back of my hand.”

Hugo and Noah exchanged a quick glance.

The same thought had come to both of them at once.

The map.

The island.

The tunnels.

And now—someone who knew the sea.

Hugo turned back to Bob, trying to sound casual. “Do you... ever go out to that island?” he asked, pointing toward the distant Isle of Aventa.

For just a moment—only a moment—Bob’s expression changed.

But then he smiled again.

“Ah,” he said. “That island.”

And somehow, the way he said it made everything feel even more mysterious than before.



6

Lessons on the Water

Bob Lightspeed did not agree at once. He stood with his hands in his pockets, looking out toward the sea as if measuring something only he could see. The wind tugged at his coat, and the gulls wheeled noisily overhead.

“An island like that,” he said at last, “isn’t for children.”

“We’re not children,” said Hugo quickly.

Bob turned and gave him a sharp look and laughed.

“Aren’t you? Well, you’ve got the spirit at least.”

Noah stepped forward. “We don’t want to go now,” he said carefully. “We just... want to learn. About boats.”

Bob studied him for a moment longer. Then he gave a small nod.

“That’s different,” he said. “Sea’s a good teacher—if you respect it.”

“When do we start?” asked Hugo eagerly.

Bob grinned. “Right now, if you’re brave enough.”

Unfortunately, they had to keep Kiku every time they went for lessons. Noah was really sad about it, but the island’s beauty cheered him up.

That very evening, they found themselves standing on the narrow strip of the shore below Hilly-Tops. Bob’s boat lay pulled up on the sand—a sturdy little vessel with oars and a small sail.

Lily hesitated as the waves lapped around her feet.

“It looks... wobbly,” she said.

“It is,” said Bob cheerfully. “Everything at sea is. That’s the point.”

Noah stepped in first, steady and calm. Hugo followed, though he nearly slipped and had to grab the side.

“Balance,” said Bob. “First lesson. The sea doesn’t like careless people.”

Olivia climbed in last, trying to look as if she did this sort of thing every day.

Bob pushed the boat out, jumped in lightly, and took the oars.

“Watch,” he said.

The boat glided forward, cutting through the water smoothly. Bob’s movements were quick and precise, as if he and the boat understood each other perfectly.

“Your turn,” he said suddenly, handing the oars to Hugo.

Hugo blinked. “Already?”

“Best way to learn,” said Bob.

Hugo tried. The oars dipped awkwardly at first, splashing more water than they moved, but after a few attempts, the boat began to respond.

“Not bad,” said Bob. “You’ve got strength. Now use your head with it.”

Noah took his turn next. He was slower, more careful—but somehow steadier.

“Good,” said Bob quietly. “You feel the rhythm.”

And so it went on.

Day after day, they returned to the shore. They learned how to row against the current, how to steer with the wind, how to tie knots, and how to read the changing sky.

“The sea tells you everything,” Bob said one evening. “But only if you’re paying attention.”

Lily learned to keep her balance and watch the waves. Olivia became surprisingly good at steering.

And all the while, the Isle of Aventa sat on the horizon—silent, waiting.



7 The Plan

It was nearly a week later when the idea finally took shape.

The four of them were back in the tower room, the wind louder than ever that night. The map lay open once more, weighed down by a small stone.

“We’re ready,” said Hugo suddenly.

Noah looked up. “For what?”

“For the island,” Hugo said.

Lily’s eyes widened. “Now?”

“Not now,” said Hugo. “Soon. We know how to handle a boat. We’ve got the map.”

Olivia leaned forward. “And what about Bob? He’ll never let us go.”

Hugo hesitated.

“That’s the problem,” he admitted.

Noah was quiet for a moment. Then he said, very slowly, “We don’t ask him.”

The others stared at him.

“You mean...” Lily began.

“We take the boat, but we have to keep Kiku home,” Noah finished.

For a second, no one spoke.

Then Olivia let out a low whistle. “That’s mad.”

“It’s the only way,” said Hugo. “If we tell anyone, they’ll stop us.”

Lily bit her lip. “What if something goes wrong?”

“It won’t,” said Hugo quickly—but he wasn’t entirely sure.

Noah looked at her. “We’ll be careful. We won’t go far at first. Just enough to reach the island and come back.”

“And if we don’t?” said Olivia quietly.

That made them all pause.

The wind howled through the tower windows, and somewhere below, a door slammed.

At last, Hugo said, “We stick together. That’s the rule.”

Noah nodded. “Always.”

Lily took a deep breath. “All right,” she said.

Olivia sighed. “Well, I suppose I’m not staying behind while you lot have all the adventure.”

Hugo grinned.

“Then it’s settled.”

They chose the night carefully.

It would have to be dark but not stormy. Quiet—but not too still. A night when no one would notice the small boat slipping away from the shore.

For the next two days, they said nothing to anyone. They went about as usual—helping Aunt Polly, exploring the cliffs, and practicing with Bob.

But every now and then, one of them would glance at the sea.

And each time, the island seemed a little closer.

On the third night, Hugo woke to a soft whisper.

“Time.”

It was Noah.

The room was dark, the only light coming from the faint glow of the moon through the open window.

Hugo sat up at once. His heart began to beat faster.

“It’s calm,” Noah said. “Perfect weather.”

They moved quietly, with stealth, not making a sound. Down the winding staircase, past the silent halls, and out into the cool night air.

Olivia and Lily were already waiting.

No one spoke.

Together, they made their way down to the shore.

The sea lay dark and smooth before them.

Bob’s boat was there.

Waiting.



8

The Midnight Escape

For a few moments, the four children stood in silence on the narrow strip of the shore. The sea stretched out before them like a sheet of black glass, faintly rippling under the pale moonlight. Far away, the Isle of Aventa rose like a shadow against the horizon.

Hugo was the first to move.

“Well,” he whispered, trying to sound braver than he felt, “we can’t stand here all night.”

Noah nodded and stepped forward. Together, they bent down and loosened the rope that held Bob’s boat to the post. The knot came free more easily than Hugo expected, and for a second, that made everything feel even more real.

Lily hugged her arms tightly around herself. “We can still go back,” she murmured.

Olivia glanced at her. “And spend the rest of our lives wondering what was on that map? No, thank you.”

That settled it.

“Push,” said Noah quietly.

The boys heaved the boat forward. It slid over the damp sand and into the shallow water, rocking gently as the waves caught it. One by one, they climbed in—Noah first, then Hugo, followed by Olivia helping Lily to steady herself.

The boat swayed.

“Careful,” whispered Noah. “Balance.”

Hugo picked up the oars. His hands felt strange—slightly cold, slightly shaky.

“Ready?” he asked.

No one answered, but they all nodded.

Hugo pushed the oars into the water and pulled.

The boat moved.

At first, only a little. Then more steadily.

They were leaving.

The shore of Hilly-Tops began to drift away behind them. The familiar cliff, the house, the narrow path—all grew smaller and smaller until they blended into darkness.

Only the sound of the sea remained.

For a while, no one spoke. Only the steady dip and pull of the oars filled the silence. Hugo rowed carefully, remembering Bob’s lessons. Noah watched the water, guiding him now and then.

“A little to the left,” he whispered. “Keep the rhythm.”

Olivia held the small lantern they had brought, shielding it with her hand so the light would not carry too far.

Lily sat very still, her eyes fixed on the dark shape ahead.

The Isle of Aventa.

It seemed much larger now.

After some time, Hugo's arms began to ache.

"Your turn," said Noah quietly.

They carefully switched places. The boat rocked, but did not tip. Noah took the oars and began to row—slowly, steadily, just as Bob had taught him.

"You're better at this," muttered Hugo.

Noah did not answer. He was watching the water, the wind, the faint movement of the waves.

"The current's changing," he said softly. "We need to keep straight."

Olivia leaned forward. "How far now?"

Noah looked ahead. "Not far."

But the island still seemed distant—silent and unmoving.

Then, suddenly, a cloud passed over the moon.

Everything went darker.

The sea lost its silver shine and became almost invisible. The boat felt smaller somehow, as if it had been swallowed by the night.

Lily gasped.. "I don't like this."

"It's just a cloud," said Hugo quickly. "It'll pass."

But even he felt uneasy.

The wind shifted slightly, and the boat rocked more sharply than before.

"Hold steady," said Noah. "Don't panic."

Olivia tightened her grip on the lantern. "We should have waited for daylight."

"No," said Hugo. "We'd be seen."

For a moment, the only sound was the creak of the oars and the soft slap of water against the boat.

Then—

"There!" said Noah suddenly.

The cloud moved.

Moonlight spilled across the sea again.

And now, the island was no longer far away.

It loomed before them—dark, steep, and silent. The rocks at its base rose sharply from the water, and narrow shadows marked places where the waves broke.

"We're here," whispered Lily.

"Careful now," said Noah. "We need to find a place to land."

They moved slowly along the edge of the island, keeping close but not too close to the rocks. The water here was rougher, swirling around the base of the cliffs.

Hugo leaned forward, peering into the shadows.

“There,” he said at last. “A gap.”

It was a small opening between the rocks, just wide enough for the boat to slip through.

Noah meticulously guided them. The oars dipped and turned, pushing them forward inch by inch.

The waves surged—but then, suddenly, the water grew calmer.

They had passed through.

Inside was a narrow stretch of shore, hidden from the open sea.

Noah let the boat drift the last few feet.

“We made it,” he said.

For a moment, none of them moved.

They simply sat there, listening.

The island was quiet.

Too quiet.

No birds. No wind through trees. Only the faint echo of the waves outside.

Hugo discreetly stood up and stepped out onto the sand. It felt cold and firm beneath his feet.

Olivia followed, then Lily, and finally Noah, who pulled the boat further ashore and secured it.

They stood together, looking around.

The island rose steeply behind them, its dark slopes disappearing into shadow.

Somewhere up there... were the paths marked on the map.

And somewhere below... the tunnels.

Hugo took a deep breath.

“Well,” he said, trying to sound steady, “we’re here.”

Noah nodded.

“Yes,” he said quietly.

“And now the real adventure begins.”



9

The Tunnels Below

For a few seconds after Hugo spoke, no one moved.

The island seemed to be watching them.

“Let’s not just stand here,” said Olivia at last, though her voice was quieter than usual. “Where does the map say we go?”

Hugo quickly pulled the folded paper from his pocket. By the dim light of the lantern, they glanced through it again. The entrance to the tunnels was marked just beyond the shore, up a narrow path that curved along the rocks.

“There,” said Noah, pointing. “That must be it.”

They began to climb.

The path was steep and uneven, and more than once Lily slipped, catching hold of Olivia’s arm. The air felt different here—still, heavy, as though it had been undisturbed for a long time.

At last, they saw it.

A dark opening in the rock.

“This is it,” whispered Hugo.

No one argued.

They stepped inside.

The tunnel was colder than they expected. Their footsteps echoed faintly as they moved forward, the lantern casting long, flickering shadows on the walls.

At first, the passage was narrow—but soon it widened into a network of tunnels, just as the map had shown.

“It’s real,” breathed Lily.

Noah ran his hand along the wall. “Look at this...”

Tiny veins of gold glimmered faintly in the rock.

Hugo’s eyes lit up. “That’s what this is about. Gold.”

But before anyone could say more—

Voices.

Faint. Distant.

Then closer.

The children froze.

“Someone’s here,” whispered Olivia.

“Quick,” said Noah. “Hide!”

They darted behind a bend in the tunnel just as a group of men appeared, carrying sacks and tools.

“Move faster,” one of them grumbled. “We don’t want anyone finding this place.”

Smugglers.

The children exchanged terrified glances.

Hugo leaned slightly to look—

—and that was his mistake.

A loose stone shifted under his foot.

The sound echoed.

The men stopped.

“Who’s there?” one of them shouted.

Before Hugo could react, rough hands grabbed him from behind.

“Got one!” a man barked.

“Hugo!” Lily cried, but Olivia clapped a hand over her mouth.

Noah pulled them both back into the shadows.

“Stay quiet,” he whispered urgently.

They watched helplessly as Hugo was dragged into the tunnel, struggling but unable to break free.

“We’ve got to do something!” Lily whispered, her eyes full of panic.

Noah’s face was pale—but determined.

“We will,” he said. “But not like this.”

He took a deep breath.

“We go back to the boat.”

“What?” Olivia whispered. “We can’t leave him!”

“We’re not leaving him,” said Noah firmly. “We’re getting help.”

The journey back felt longer than before.

They ran through the tunnels, stumbled down the rocky path, and pushed the boat into the water with shaking hands.

Noah grabbed the oars.

“I’ll row,” he said.

This time, there was no hesitation.

The boat cut through the water faster than before, driven by urgency and fear.

Lily clutched the side. “We’ll be too late...”

“No,” said Noah. “We won’t.”

When they reached the shore of Hilly-Tops, they didn’t stop.

They ran straight up the path—

—and nearly crashed into Bob.

He was standing there, arms crossed, his expression unreadable.

“I was wondering,” he said quietly, “when you’d come back.”

Noah stared at him. “Hugo—he’s been taken! On the island—there are smugglers—”

Bob didn’t waste a second.

“Show me,” he said.



10

The Truth About Bob

Everything happened very quickly after that. Bob led them down to the shore, where another boat—larger and faster—was already waiting.

“Stay here,” he said to the girls.

“No!” said Olivia at once. “We’re coming.”

Bob hesitated for only a moment, then nodded. “Stay close. And, do exactly as I say.”

Within minutes, they were speeding across the sea once more—but this time, the journey felt completely different.

Bob handled the boat with incredible skill. As if the waves obeyed him.

As they reached the island, another light appeared in the distance.

Then another.

“Police!” said Bob shortly.

The children stared.

“Police?” echoed Noah.

Bob didn’t answer.

They reached the hidden shore again and hurried up the path. This time, there were voices everywhere—orders being shouted, footsteps echoing.

Inside the tunnels, the smugglers had no chance.

They were surrounded.

Hugo, tied but unharmed, looked up in astonishment as Noah rushed to him.

“You came back!” he said.

“Of course we did,” said Noah, quickly untying him.

Nearby, Bob stood speaking to one of the officers, his tone calm and confident.

Within a short time, it was over.

The smugglers were caught.

The gold mine was secured.

And the mystery of the island was no longer a secret.

Back at Hilly-Tops, the children gathered in the tower room once more. The map lay between them again—but now, it no longer felt mysterious.

It felt... finished.

Bob stood near the window, looking out at the sea.

“There’s something I should tell you,” he said.

They all looked at him.

“My name isn’t really Bob Lightspeed,” he continued. “That’s just... a name I use sometimes.”

Olivia raised an eyebrow. “Then what is it?”

Bob turned to face them.

“Bob Konigsberg,” he said. “I work with the government. In the Crime Department.”

The room went silent.

“You mean...” Lily began.

“Yes,” said Bob. “I’ve been tracking those smugglers for some time. Your little adventure helped finish it.”

Hugo let out a slow breath. “So... you knew about the island?”

“I suspected,” said Bob. “But I needed proof.”

Noah gave a small smile. “I suppose we helped.”

“You did,” said Bob. “Though I wouldn’t recommend stealing boats again.”

That made them all laugh—just a little.

Later that evening, the four of them stood together on the cliff, looking out at the sea.

The Isle of Aventa was still there but it didn’t seem quite so mysterious anymore.

“Well,” said Olivia, folding her arms, “that was certainly more exciting than I expected.”

Lily smiled. “I was terrified.”

“But you still came,” said Hugo.

“Of course,” she said.

Noah looked out at the horizon.

“There will be more adventures,” he said quietly.

Hugo grinned.

“There always are.”

And as the wind rose and the waves crashed below, it felt as though the sea itself agreed.

What begins as an ordinary stay at Hilly-Tops soon turns into a thrilling adventure when Hugo and his friends uncover a mysterious map of the Isle of Aventa. Their daring journey leads them across the sea, into hidden tunnels, and face-to-face with danger—but also reveals courage, friendship, and an unexpected ally. Some discoveries change everything... and this is only the beginning.

Test your memory about The Isle of Adventure through a quiz!

1. Who was the last child to come into the story?
 - a. Noah
 - b. Joe
 - c. Hugo
 - d. Olivia
2. Who is Mr. Samuel?
 - a. Hugo's Uncle
 - b. Mrs. Polly's caretaker
 - c. Lily's Uncle
 - d. The Government Officer
3. Why was Hugo brought to the holiday teacher?
 - a. He was sick.
 - b. He bunked school.
 - c. He loved playing games.
 - d. He wanted to be something else.
4. What did Noah like to study the most?
 - a. Geology
 - b. Ornithology
 - c. Ophthalmology
 - d. Oceanography
5. What is Noah's parrot's name?
 - a. Kuku
 - b. Kiku
 - c. Kiki
 - d. Kuki

6. Whom was the cheque given to by Mr. Roy?
 - a. Joe
 - b. Mr. Samuel's Housekeeper
 - c. Noah
 - d. Hugo
7. Who is Mr. Jocelyn?
 - a. Noah's Uncle
 - b. Olivia's Uncle
 - c. Mr. Samuel's Housekeeper
 - d. The Government Officer
8. Who was driving the jumpy car?
 - a. The Government Officer
 - b. Mr. Samuel
 - c. Mr. Roy
 - d. Mr. Jocelyn's Caretaker
9. Who got trapped on the island?
 - a. Hugo
 - b. Bob
 - c. Noah
 - d. Lily
10. What was Bob's fake last name?
 - a. Konisberg
 - b. Lightspeed
 - c. Hemmings
 - d. Jefferson