

*Tom looked at his mother. She was smiling. Her voice was so calm and ordinary.*

*'Yes, that's the best thing,' she continued. 'I'll get my knife and kill her. She'll go to God. She'll be happy.'*

*Tom stood up. His legs felt weak. He had to get away from there — and he had to take Vicky and the boys with him.*

Tom and his family have come to Kirren Island for their holiday. They come to the quiet, lonely island every year. 'It's a good place to think about the important things in life,' Tom's father says. But this year is different.

First, the Rochester family arrive in their big yacht. When Tom sees pretty Vicky Rochester, he is happy and excited. But strange and terrible things begin to happen. A sheep's head in a pool of blood. A dark and empty farmhouse. And then his mother and father, and Vicky's parents . . . There is something wrong with all of them. Wrong and dangerous ...

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*September 1944*

The army officer watched the boat move out into the middle of the lake. He called an order to the soldiers on the boat, and they started to throw large tins into the water. The officer turned to the scientist next to him.

'This is all your fault,' he said. He was angry.

'We were using those chemicals to make the war shorter,' the scientist said. 'We wanted to change ordinary men into the bravest soldiers that the world ever saw.'

'Oh yes, brave!' the officer said. 'But they went crazy at the same time! Thirty of my men -*good* men - died because of your chemicals.' He watched the soldiers on the boat throw the last tin into the lake. 'I hope it's safe now,' he said.

'The lake's very deep,' the scientist said. 'There's no danger now.'

*Last week*

At the bottom of the lake, one of the old tins broke open. Chemicals began to pour into the water.

The next day, Ian Mackie was walking back to his farm, the only one on Kirren Island. He was hot and thirsty. He stopped at the lake to drink some water.

'It doesn't taste as sweet as usual,' he thought.

Two hours later, Ian Mackie started to feel ill. His head hurt and he said crazy things to his wife.

Suddenly, he got his gun, went outside and began to shoot his sheep. When his wife tried to stop him, he killed her. Then he went back into the house and shot his two children and his dog.

*Today*

Tom Sharp watched his ten-year-old brother, Bob, running along the beach. He looked happy and excited. When Tom was Bob's age, he loved coming here too. But now, at sixteen, he hated Kirren Island. It was boring.

Every year they walked on the same hills, and saw the same people. Ian Mackie and his family were the only people who lived here. Tom looked round. He didn't want to spend his holidays on this lonely island. He wanted bright lights, music, clubs and girls. All the things that his parents didn't want.

His parents. He looked at them coming to land from their small yacht. He loved them, of course, but ...

'Tommo! Bobsy!' his father called. 'Put your tent up.'

'Dad — don't call me Tommo,' Tom said. 'I'm sixteen — not a baby!'

'Don't speak to your father like that,' his mother said. 'We *know* you're sixteen. But that doesn't mean you can be rude. You were a nice polite boy when you were young.'

She was angry, so Tom didn't try to talk to her. He already knew her reply:

'Remember what it says in the Bible. Obey your father and mother!'

He turned round to pick up the tent. Then he saw something. His heart jumped with excitement.

A large yacht was coming towards the island.

## Chapter 2 The Rochester Family

A small boat left the yacht and came towards the beach. There were four people in the boat: a man and a woman, a boy of Bob's age, and a girl. A pretty girl, about the same age as Tom.

'Hi, my name's Gavin,' the man said, getting out of the boat.

The woman was wearing a very tight T-shirt and a very short skirt. 'Hello,' she said.

Tom watched his mother's face. She didn't like Danielle or her clothes.

'And this is my son, Sam,' Gavin Rochester said. The boy was thin and pale. He had a hearing aid in his ear. 'And my daughter, Vicky,' said Gavin.

The pretty girl looked straight at Tom and smiled. He smiled back at her. The holidays seemed better already.

Tom's father shook hands with Gavin. 'I'm Vincent Sharp,' he said. 'This is my wife, Margaret, and these are our sons, Tom and Bob.'

'Are you on holiday?' Gavin asked.

'Yes,' Tom's father replied. 'We come every year. It's a good place to think about the important things in life.'

'What important things? Money? Sex?' Gavin Rochester laughed. 'I can think about *them* anywhere! 'Tom's father didn't laugh, but Gavin didn't seem to notice. 'Hey, would you like to eat with us on our yacht this evening?' he continued.

'Oh no, we can't do that,' Tom's mother said. 'There are too many of us.'

'Don't worry about that, Margaret. My yacht has room for everybody,' Gavin said, laughing. 'I paid a lot of money for it. There's some very expensive equipment on it.'

'No, I -' Tom's mother began.

'We can cook the food here,' Tom suggested quickly. 'We can make a fire on the beach.'

He looked at Vicky. He wanted her to agree.

'Yes,' Vicky said, and smiled at him. 'We caught some fish today. Fish tastes great when it's cooked on a fire.'

'That's a good idea, isn't it?' Gavin Rochester agreed.

Tom knew what his mother and father thought. They thought it was a bad idea. They didn't want to be friends with these people. But they didn't want to be rude.

'That's very kind of you,' his mother said.

'Great!' Gavin said. 'I'll go back to the yacht for the fish. The children can find some wood for the fire.'

Tom was happy. The fire lit up the dark beach, and Vicky was right — the fish tasted great.

'Have another glass of wine, Margaret,' Gavin said.

'Oh no,' Tom's mother replied. 'I never drink more than one glass.'

'That's a pity. I only buy the best,' Gavin said. He laughed. 'Dani can drink a full bottle of this.'

'Don't tell everyone my secrets, Gavin,' Danielle said. 'But it *is* my favourite wine. I drank a lot of it when I was working on TV

'Dani was a TV star,' Gavin said. 'Do you remember her, Vincent?'

'No,' said Tom's father. 'I don't watch television.'

'I wasn't really a big star,' Danielle said. 'Nearly, but ... I had to stop when Vicky and Sam were born.'

Tom watched Vicky talking to Bob. When she laughed, she was so beautiful in the light from the fire. Tom wanted to talk to her, but he was suddenly shy.

'Tom!' Bob shouted. 'Vicky and Sam have got a tent. They're going to sleep here with us tonight.'

'Oh no - they can't,' Tom's mother said immediately.

'Why not?' Danielle asked.

Tom knew what his mother wanted to say: 'I don't want Tom to be here with Vicky all night'. But she couldn't say it. She looked at Tom's father.

'Er ...' he began. 'Perhaps it will be OK.'

'Yes!' Bob shouted happily.

Tom wanted to shout with excitement, too, but he didn't.

## Chapter 3 In the Night

They were all sitting outside a tent. Bob and Sam were playing cards. Tom and Vicky were listening to a cassette.

'Oh, "Lonely Tomorrow",' Vicky said. 'I love this song.'

'It's my favourite, too,' Tom said.

When the song finished, Vicky stood up. 'Do you want to go for a walk?' she asked.

'Yes, great,' Tom said, getting up.

They walked along the path to the top of the cliffs, and sat down. The moon was shining on the sea. Tom looked down at the two yachts on the water. There were no lights; their parents were probably asleep.

Tom laughed. 'I'm glad my parents can't see us.'

'Why?' Vicky asked.

'Because they ... oh, it's difficult to explain. They go to church a lot. And they read the Bible and talk about religion all the time.. There's nothing wrong with that, but. sometimes they're so ... *serious!* He looked at Vicky. 'Do you know what my mother said this evening?'

'No, what?' asked Vicky.

'She said, "God sees everything, Tom. He watches you every minute." Sometimes I feel —' Tom stopped.

'What?' said Vicky. 'You can tell me.'

Tom looked at her. He knew it was true. He could tell her anything. 'They're really good parents,' he said. 'But — I don't know. I think they loved me more when I was young. Sometimes I think they don't really like me now. What I am, now. Now I'm

'Sometimes I think my parents don't like Sam and me,' Vicky said.

'But your parents seem so nice,' Tom said.

'They are, but Mum thinks we stopped her becoming a TV star.' She threw a stone over the cliff into the sea. 'Dad's always working, and sometimes he's not very nice to Sam. You know that Sam has to wear a hearing aid. Dad hates that. He wants a son who's strong and good at sports.'

'What's your father's job?' Tom asked.

'He works for an international bank,' Vicky said. 'That's all that he's really interested in — money and sport. He wants me to earn a lot of money when I leave school. I tell him, "I want a job that I like. Money's not the most important thing." That makes him really angry'.

'My parents watch me all the time,' Tom said. 'They want to know everything. Where I'm going. What I'm doing. Who I'm meeting.'

'And you like to have some secrets,' Vicky said.

'Yes,' Tom agreed. 'Don't you?'

'Of course I do,' Vicky laughed.

Tom looked up at the sky. The stars were very bright. He was happy here with Vicky. She was easy to talk to. He could tell her things that he never told other people.

'I'm cold,' she said, suddenly.

He took off his jacket and put it round her shoulders.

'Here, you can have my jacket,' he said.

'Thanks.'

Vicky looked at him. He smiled at her, and then looked at the sea. When he turned to her again, she was still looking at him.

'What?' he laughed.

She didn't say anything. She just moved towards him and kissed him. It was a long kiss and he didn't want it to stop. But then Vicky moved away.

'Now you've got another secret,' she said, smiling. 'Or are you going to tell

your parents about this?'

'No! They'll kill me!' he said, laughing.

She kissed him again and he put his arms round her. He could feel his heart racing in his chest. He pulled her closer and closer.

Suddenly, there was a terrible scream. Then another. It was coming from the tents.

Tom and Vicky jumped up and ran down the hill. The sound of crying came from inside one of the tents.

*And the outside of the tent was covered with blood.*

## Chapter 4 Like a Wild Animal

Bob and Sam screamed when Tom opened the door to the tent.

'It's OK, it's OK,' Tom said. 'We're here. What happened?'

'There was a noise,' Bob said. 'It was dark. We couldn't see anything. We were frightened and we came in here.'

'What noise?' Vicky asked.

'It was like a ... a wild animal,' Sam said. 'Then blood started to come through the roof of the tent! I was frightened and ...'

'It's OK,' Vicky said. She put her arms round him.

Tom went outside. It was very dark. He stood and listened. Silence. He started to walk round the tent, and his foot touched something. Just then, the moon came out from behind a cloud. Tom looked down. *He saw a sheep's head lying in a pool of blood.*

Feeling sick, he picked up the head. The straight cut across the neck was made by a knife, not a wild animal. Tom threw the head into the long grass and went back into the tent.

'Did you see anything?' Vicky asked.

He didn't want to frighten Vicky or the boys, so he said, 'No, nothing.'

'What shall we do?' she said. 'The boys are afraid.'

'We can all go into the other tent,' Tom said.

It was crowded in the tent, but they all felt safe there. The two young boys slept between Tom and Vicky.

'Goodnight, Tom,' Vicky said softly.

'Goodnight,' Tom said. He closed his eyes and smiled.

Tom could hear a voice calling him. It sounded far away. He woke up. Then he remembered where he was.

His mother opened the tent, and light poured in. 'What are you doing?' she shouted. 'Where's Bob?'

Tom looked round. The boys weren't there.

'He was here,' Tom said. 'And Sam, too. Perhaps they've gone for a walk.'

'Get out of there, immediately,' his mother said.

Slowly, Tom and Vicky came out of the tent. The four adults were standing outside.

'Why were you in the tent with this girl?' Tom's mother shouted.

'Because -' Tom began.

'Where's Bob?' his father asked.

Tom looked towards the beach. Bob and Sam ran out from behind some rocks.

They were playing football.

'There he is,' Tom said.

'Why aren't you with him?' his mother shouted. 'Why are you here with this girl?'

'I'm trying to explain but you aren't listening,' Tom said. 'Somebody killed a sheep and —'

'Who killed a sheep? Is this true, Vicky?' Gavin asked.

'I —' Vicky stopped and looked at Tom.

'She didn't see it,' Tom said. 'I didn't want to frighten her or the boys.'

'I don't believe you,' Tom's mother said.

'It's true!' Tom shouted. 'You never believe me!' He pulled his mother to the other tent and pointed to the roof. 'What do you think this is? It's blood. And this!'

He walked into the long grass. He found the sheep's head and picked it up. His mother put her hand on her mouth and looked away. Danielle screamed.

'Who did that?' Gavin said.

'I don't know,' Tom said.

'Who lives on this island?' Gavin asked.

'The only people here are Mr Mackie and his family,' Tom's father said.

'I'm going to see this Mr Mackie,' Gavin said. 'Is he stupid, trying to frighten people like this?'

Tom's mother looked at Tom and Vicky. 'We can't leave the children alone. We'll all have to go.'

## Chapter 5 A Mystery

It was hot, walking up the hill.

'Is it very far? I'm tired,' Sam said.

'Oh, stop being a baby,' Gavin said to his son. 'You're too weak. You need some exercise.'

At the top of the hill, they looked down at the lake. It was beautiful with the sun shining on the blue water.

'I'm thirsty. Is that water clean?' Danielle asked. 'It's the best water that I've ever tasted,' said Tom's father. 'We always drink it when we're here.'

'Good,' Danielle said. 'Who's coming for a drink?'

'We'll all come,' Tom's mother said.

'I'm staying here,' Sam said. He sat down on the grass. Bob and Tom sat down next to him.

'I'll stay with the boys,' Vicky said.

The adults walked down towards the lake. Tom felt the hot sun on his back. He looked up at the blue sky. Then, quietly, Vicky started to sing 'Lonely Tomorrow'. She had a really good voice. After a minute, she stopped.

'Don't stop,' Tom said.

She smiled shyly. He smiled back. She was so lovely. He wanted to put his arm round her and kiss her. She began to sing again, and now Bob and Sam sang with her.

Tom felt so happy. He looked down at the lake. The adults were on their knees by the water. He saw them put their hands into it and lift some to their mouths. The water shone in the light of the sun. They put their hands into the lake again and drank some more water. Tom wanted them to stay at the lake for a long time. He just wanted to be here, listening to Vicky. He touched her hand and she smiled at him.

The adults finished drinking and walked back up the hill. Vicky stopped singing.

'Was the water good?' Tom asked.

'Very good,' his mother replied.

'It didn't taste the same,' his father said. 'It tasted strange. But it was good.'

'It was wonderful,' said Gavin. 'And you'll all be thirsty later. Now, let's go and see this Mr Mackie.'

At the top of the hill, Tom looked down at Mr Mackie's farm. The house seemed dark and lonely in the valley. He suddenly felt nervous. Something was wrong. There were no animals in the fields. No birds in the sky. Everything was quiet. Too quiet.

When they got to the house, the kitchen door was open.

'Hello!' Tom's father called. 'Mr Mackie?'

There was silence. A strange silence.

There were dirty plates and bits of food on the kitchen table. Chairs were lying on the floor. There was a bad smell in the air.

'I - I feel sick,' Tom's mother said.

'I do, too,' said Danielle.

They both went outside. The men went to look round the other rooms. Tom crossed the kitchen. There were lots of small holes in the wall.

'That's strange,' he said. 'I think someone's shot a gun at it.'

'And what's that?' Vicky said. She was pointing to a dark area on the floor.

Tom went to look. 'Is it ... dry blood?'

'Let's get out of here,' Bob said. 'I don't like it.'

The two women were standing outside with their backs against the wall. They were pale and shaking.

'I don't feel well,' Danielle said. 'My head hurts.'

'Mine does, too,' Tom's mother said. 'I want to go back to the yacht.'

A few minutes later, the men came out of the house.

'We'll go back to my yacht and send a message to the police,' Gavin said. 'There's something —' He stopped talking. Then he touched the side of his head and closed his eyes. He was very pale. 'There's a mystery here,' he said. 'Let's hurry'

Everybody followed Gavin. At first he walked fast, but then he began to run. Everybody started to run with him.

After a few minutes, Sam stopped. Vicky and Tom went back to him. 'I can't ... I can't run,' Sam said. 'Don't leave me here.'

'Of course we won't leave you,' Vicky said, and put her arm round him.

'We'll walk with you, Sam,' Tom said.

He and Vicky held Sam's hands. They walked through the valley and climbed the hill. The sky was covered with dark clouds now, and a cold wind was shaking the grass. When they passed the lake, the water looked black.

Tom felt more and more nervous. There was something wrong on this island. Three or four times, he looked back over his shoulder. Once he thought he saw someone on top of a hill. But when he looked again, it was just a small tree.

'Look Sam, there are Mum and Dad,' Vicky said, pointing down the path.

Bob was standing, but the four adults were sitting by the side of the path. Tom was pleased to see them. He felt safer with them. He wanted them to tell him that everything was all right.

But everything was not all right.

Tom saw that his mother was crying. His father was looking at his hands. Danielle was holding her head and making strange noises. Gavin was repeating the words, 'Red sky. Red sky'.

Bob ran to Tom and held his hand. 'I think Mum and Dad are ill, Tom,' he said quietly. Then tears started to run down his face. Tom felt his heart jump with fear.

'Mum? Dad? Are you all right?' he asked.

There was a sudden silence when he spoke. His mother stopped crying and Danielle stopped making noises. Gavin stopped speaking for about fifteen seconds. Then he began again. 'Red sky. Red sky. Red sky'.

'Dad, stop it!' Vicky said. 'Stop saying that!'

Gavin looked at her. 'What? Oh, I'm sorry,' he said. He touched his head. 'Everything was ... red. I'm better now.' He stood up and looked at the other adults. 'What are you doing?' he shouted. 'We've got to get back to the yachts.'

Yes, of course,' Tom's father said. He stood up. 'Let's go, Margaret.'

Tom's mother stood up. Tom noticed that the skin round her mouth was very red. Gavin helped Danielle to stand.

'We'll go back to my yacht and send a message to the police,' he said. 'Everything will be OK.' He began walking and then stopped. He lifted his arm and pointed. 'What's that?' he asked. Everybody looked. A cloud of black smoke was coming from the beach.

'My yacht!' Gavin screamed, and started to run.

## Chapter 6 Fire!

They ran down the beach to the sea.

The two yachts were burning. The Sharps' yacht was lying on its side. It was already starting to sink.

'My yacht!' Tom's father said, as it sank lower and lower in the water. 'Who did this?'

'And mine!' shouted Gavin. 'Look at that fire! It's destroying my yacht. All that money! We've got to do something!'

Gavin's small boat was on the beach. He ran to it and started to push it towards the sea. Then he stopped.

'Who did this?' he shouted, pointing at the boat.

There were two big holes in the side. Gavin looked round. Then he ran and picked something up. It was an axe.

'Whose is this?' he screamed. 'I'll kill them! I'll kill them!' He fell on his knees and watched his burning yacht. Then he threw the axe across the sand. 'I'll kill them! I'll kill them!'

'Dad, stop it, please,' Vicky said. She put her hand on his shoulder. 'What's the matter with you?'

'Don't touch me!' Gavin shouted. He jumped up and pointed at Vicky. 'You did this, didn't you? You used that axe to make holes in my boat. You started the fire on my yacht.'

'No, of course not!' Vicky said.

'Yes, you did!' shouted Gavin. 'You and your weak brother. I give you everything. I send you to good schools. I buy you clothes. And what do you do for me? Nothing! You just make my life difficult.'

Suddenly, he hit Vicky across the face.

Vicky didn't speak. Slowly, she lifted her hand to touch the side of her face. Then she turned and walked away.

Sam ran after his sister and took her hand. They walked for about fifty metres, then sat down on the sand. Vicky put her arm round her little brother's shoulders.

There was a loud shout from Tom's father. 'My yacht!'

The adults watched the yacht disappear under the water.

Tom pulled Bob along the beach towards Vicky and Sam. He saw that Vicky's eyes were filled with tears. 'Are you OK?' he asked.

She tried to smile, but she couldn't. She looked away, then looked back at him. 'He never hits me,' she said. 'He gets angry with me sometimes, but he never hits me.'

'It's because of the yacht,' Tom said. 'He -'

'No! There's something wrong — with all of them.'

Tom knew that she was right. But he didn't want to believe it. There *was* something wrong with them. They were all acting strangely. It was frightening.

'Maybe they're ill,' Bob suggested. 'Mum said she felt sick.'

'And my Mum did, too,' Sam said.

Bob looked at Tom with big, frightened eyes.

'Don't worry,' Tom said. 'They'll be better soon.'

He wanted the young boys to believe it. He looked at Vicky, and she understood.

'Yes, Tom's right,' she said. 'They'll all feel better soon. Let's go and sit near the tents.'

When they got to the tents, Tom saw Bob's football on the ground. 'Bob, you and Sam can go and play football while we're waiting,' he said.

The young boys ran off. They were kicking the ball and laughing together. Vicky and Tom sat down and watched. Then they turned to the adults, and the fear returned.

'I don't understand it,' Tom said. 'They're so ... angry!'

'They're more than angry. They're —' Vicky stopped.

But Tom knew what she was thinking. He was thinking it, too. Maybe the adults *were* ill. Really ill, inside their heads. It was a terrible, frightening idea.

'What do we do if they don't get better?' Vicky asked.

'We'll have to try and get help,' Tom said. 'There's a radio at the farm. Mr Mackie uses it to order farm equipment. Maybe we can go back there and send a message.'

'I don't want to go back to the farm,' Vicky said. 'I think something terrible happened there. Where are Mr Mackie and his family? Maybe they're ill, too. Maybe they started the fires on the yachts.'

'Maybe,' Tom agreed. 'Let's wait for an hour. If our parents don't get better, we'll go back to the farm.'

'OK,' Vicky said. 'We'll wait. Wait and hope.'

## Chapter 7 The Children's Fear

The boys were still kicking the football. The adults sat near the sea. They weren't moving and they weren't talking. They were just watching the fire burning on Gavin's yacht. Suddenly, there was an explosion. The adults stood up, and the boys stopped playing football. They all watched smoke

pour out of the yacht. Then the boat began to sink. After ten minutes, it disappeared.

Gavin picked up a stone and threw it into the sea. Then he ran along the beach, picked up another stone and threw it. Then all the adults started to throw stones into the sea. Each time, they shouted words — terrible words. Even Tom's mother. She was shouting bad, ugly words that she never used.

Tom's hope died. The adults weren't getting better; they were getting worse. He turned to Vicky. He saw that she knew it, too. Her eyes were full of fear.

'What's the matter with them, Tom?' she asked.

'I don't know,' he answered. 'We've got to radio for help.'

'It's too late,' she said. 'Look!'

Tom looked. The adults were running up the beach towards them. Gavin was waving the axe in the air.

'Bob! Sam! Come here - quickly!' Tom called.

The two little boys ran to him.

'Listen,' Tom said. 'Do what the adults tell you to do. Don't make them angry.'

'Why?' Bob asked.

'Just do it,' Tom said. 'It's a game - all right?'

'OK,' the boys said.

Then they all turned to face the adults. The adults stopped. The skin on their hands and round their mouths was very red. Their eyes were wide and empty. But they weren't shouting now. They seemed calm.

'It's time to eat,' Tom's father said. There was a big smile on his face. 'We're all hungry. Are you hungry?'

Nobody said anything, and he stopped smiling. He pointed his finger at Bob.

'I said, are you hungry, Bobsy?' he asked.

'I — I don't know, Dad,' the little boy said.

'You're stupid!' Gavin said.

He started to laugh, and the other adults laughed, too.

Bob's face went red and tears filled his eyes.

'*I'm* hungry,' Tom said quickly.

'So you're not as stupid as your brother,' Danielle said.

'Where's the food, Tommo?' Tom's father asked.

'What food?' Tom said.

'The food that we're going to eat, stupid,' Danielle said.

'Don't be a bad boy, Tommo,' his father said. 'Where is it? Tell me, or I'll have to punish you. You know what happens to bad boys ...'

Tom thought quickly. What food? He could see his father's eyes getting angrier and angrier. Suddenly, he remembered. They still had a box of food from the Rochesters' yacht.

'I know,' he said. 'It's in that box near the table.'

'That's right, Tommo. That's where it is,' his mother said. 'You're a good little

boy and your Mum loves you.'

She pulled him close and kissed the side of his face. Her breath smelled bad. He tried to move away, but she held him tightly. He could feel her wet mouth on his skin. Suddenly, she bit his face.

He wanted to push her away, but he didn't want to make her angry. 'Mum, that hurts,' he said.

'Don't be a silly boy. Mum was only giving her little boy a big kiss,' she said.

'Let's go, everybody,' Gavin said. 'Time to eat. Run, Vicky! Run, Sam! Move your lazy legs!'

He pushed his two children, and they began to run along the beach towards the table. The adults ran after them. Tom and Bob were left standing near the tents.

Tom wanted to take his brother and run the other way, to the farm. They had to use the radio. But then he looked at Vicky. She was helping Sam run, when she suddenly fell down. Gavin shouted at her. She stood up and looked back at Tom. Her eyes were frightened.

He couldn't leave her.

'Come with me, Bob,' he said.

He held his brother's hand, and they ran after the others.

## Chapter 8 Crazy and Dangerous

Tom's mother pulled the food box from under the table.

'What have we got?' she said, opening the box. 'Bread, butter, eggs, orange juice. God is kind to us. He's given us what we need for breakfast!'

'God's clock is wrong, Margaret! Gavin said, laughing. 'It's not breakfast time. It's lunchtime. But I'm so hungry. I could eat a horse. What about you, Sam? What would you like to eat?'

'I don't know,' Sam said in a quiet, frightened voice.

'You stupid little boy!' Gavin screamed. 'I send you to that expensive school, but you don't know anything. You're stupid. You can't run, you can't play football. You can't hear anything.' He hit Sam across the face. Then he reached out and pulled the hearing aid from Sam's ear. 'I hate this thing,' he said.

He put the hearing aid on the table and hit it hard with the axe. The hearing aid broke into small pieces.

There was silence. Then the adults began to laugh. Now Tom knew it was true. They were crazy - crazy and dangerous.

Sam's face was white. Vicky put her hand on his shoulder and held him tight.

'Let's get the food ready, Margaret,' Danielle said.

The two women put plates and knives and forks on the table. Then Tom's mother picked up a sharp knife and cut the bread. She put a piece of bread on each plate. Danielle put butter on the bread. She opened the bottle of orange juice and

poured it into a bowl.

'Mmm, that looks good, Dani,' Gavin said.

'Shall I cook the eggs?' Tom's mother asked.

'No, I can't wait. Let's eat them now,' Gavin said.

Tom's mother broke six eggs into the bowl of juice. Then she took a fork and mixed it all together. She went round the table and poured it on to the bread.

'Thank you, Margaret,' Tom's father said. He put his hands together and closed his eyes. 'Let's thank God for this wonderful food.'

'Be quiet, Vincent!' Gavin said. His voice was angry. 'That's all you talk about - God.'

'We must thank Him for His gifts to us,' Tom's father said.

No, I'm too hungry,' Gavin replied. He picked up his piece of bread and started to push it into his mouth. Orange juice and egg ran down his face and on to his clothes. The other adults began eating, too. They ate like animals, making terrible noises with their mouths.

'Tom, eat your food!' his mother said. She picked up the sharp knife and pointed it at him.

Tom saw Vicky and the two young boys looking at him. He lifted the wet bread and put some in his mouth. The juice and the cold egg ran on to his tongue and he felt very sick. But he continued eating.

'And you others,' his mother said. 'Eat!'

Vicky started eating, and the young boys did the same. The adults watched them until they finished.

'Tom and I will wash the dishes,' his mother said. She picked up the things from the table, and Tom followed her down the beach. She walked into the sea and dropped everything into the water. Then she came back to him.

'I want to talk to you, Tom,' she said. 'And I don't want that girl to hear. Tears began to run down her face.

'Mum, don't cry,' Tom said. 'What's the matter? What's happening? Why are you all acting so strangely?'

'My head hurts, Tom,' she said. 'And now we can't send a message because that girl burned the yachts.'

'Mum, she *didn't* burn the yachts!' Tom said. 'You know that's not true.'

'Yes, it is true,' his mother said. 'And now she's taking you away from me. She's a bad girl, Tom. I don't want you to see her. You're too young. Don't ... don't kiss her. Don't ... touch her body. Promise me. Stay with me. You love *me*, not her. Oh, my head hurts!'

His mother sat down on the sand and closed her eyes in pain. Tom didn't know what to do. Part of him was afraid of her, but another part of him still loved her.

He put his arm round her. 'Mum, don't cry. I'll get help. I'll go to Mr Mackie's

farm and use the radio. You can go to hospital. The doctors will make you better.'

His mother stopped crying. She took her hands away from her face and smiled. 'Yes, Tom, that's a good idea,' she said. 'You go to the farm. While you're doing that, I'll kill the girl. Then she won't be any more trouble.'

Tom looked at his mother. She was smiling. Her voice was so calm and ordinary.

'Yes, that's the best thing,' she continued. 'I'll get my knife and kill her. She'll go to God. She'll be happy'

Tom stood up. His legs felt weak. He had to get away from there — and he had to take Vicky and the boys with him.

His mother closed her eyes again. 'I've got this pain in my head!' she said. She tried to stand up, but she couldn't. She held out her hand to Tom. 'Help me!'

Tom turned and walked quickly towards the table.

'Tom!' she shouted.

But he didn't look back.

## Chapter 9 The Knife and the Axe

Tom's father was singing one of the songs that they sang at church. Danielle was lying on the sand with her hands over her ears. Vicky and the two boys sat at the table, watching Gavin. He was standing next to them, holding the axe. He moved his finger slowly along the metal edge.

'Feel that, Vicky,' Gavin said.

She reached out. Her fingers were shaking, but she touched the metal.

'Sharp, isn't it?' her father asked. 'Like Tom. He's sharp, isn't he? Tom Sharp.' Gavin laughed — a long, crazy laugh. Then he stopped suddenly. 'But he's not as sharp as my axe, is he? Is he, Vicky?'

'No,' she said.

Tom could see the fear in her eyes. What was the best thing to do?

Run away?

He could run faster than the adults, but could Vicky? Could Bob and Sam?

He looked at the little boys. They were sitting very quietly, too frightened to move. Their big eyes were filled with tears.

Danielle suddenly took her hands away from her ears. She turned towards Tom's father. 'Oh God! Stop singing that song!' she shouted.

'Danielle, please don't say, "Oh God". God will punish you for it,' Tom's father said.

'Don't be stupid, Vincent,' Gavin said. 'God's not going to punish anyone. But I am. Oh yes! I'm going to find out who destroyed my yacht. And then I'm going to punish them with my axe. My sharp axe.'

He pointed the axe at Vicky and the two boys. 'Did you destroy my yacht?' he

asked.

'No, Dad. I promise we didn't,' Vicky said.

He turned and pointed the axe at Tom. 'So it was you.'

'No!' Tom said.

Gavin looked at him. 'What do you think, Vincent? Did your son do it?'

'I don't know, Gavin,' Tom's father answered. 'He was a good boy when he was young. But now he thinks he knows everything. He doesn't listen to me.'

'That's just like Vicky,' Gavin said. 'I earn all the money. I pay all the bills. But she thinks she's so clever. She does what she likes.'

'I tell Tom, "Remember what it says in the Bible. Obey your parents." But Tom doesn't listen. God's going to punish him one day.'

'Stop talking about God,' Gavin said. 'He doesn't exist.'

'Don't say that, Gavin,' Tom's father said. 'You must never say that. God loves you and -'

'Stop! Stop! Stop!' Gavin screamed. He hit the table with the axe. 'Stop talking about God or I'll kill you!'

There was a long, long silence. The only sound was the noise of the waves on the beach. Then Tom heard his mother's voice.

'Tom! Tom!' she called. 'Come back here. You're my little boy. I don't want you to go with that girl.'

She was in the sea, searching for something in the water. Tom knew what she was looking for. The knife. She wanted to kill Vicky. He had to do something before it was too late. They had to get away from there. But where to? He looked along the beach. The cliffs?

Then he remembered the cave. It was at the end of the beach and went deep inside the cliffs. There were a lot of tunnels in the cave. It was a perfect place to hide.

He took a step towards Vicky.

'Don't move!' Gavin shouted, and he lifted the axe.

Tom stopped. They had to get to that cave. But how?

Tom's father started to sing again. Then he stopped and put his face in his hands. 'Oh, I feel so bad,' he said.

'I do, too,' Gavin said. He began to shake. 'My eyes! Everything's red. Red sky. Red sea.' He closed his eyes.

Tom got ready to attack him. He took a step towards him.

Then Gavin's eyes opened wide. They looked wild and crazy. 'Red sky!' Gavin screamed. 'Red sky. Blood sky. There's going to be blood!'

Tom's father took his hands away from his face. He turned and started walking towards the sea.

'That's right!' he shouted. 'Blood. There's going to be blood.'

It's written in the Bible. An eye for an eye. Blood for blood. It's all in the

Bible. It's the word of God!' He ran down the beach towards the sea. 'Blood! Blood!' he shouted. 'God's coming to punish the children!'

'Stop talking about God, Vincent!' Gavin shouted. He lifted the axe and began running down the beach.

Tom turned to Vicky. 'We've got to go,' he said. Vicky and the boys didn't move. 'Now!' he shouted.

Vicky and Bob ran to him, but Sam stayed at the table.

'Sam!' Tom shouted. Then he realized that the little boy couldn't hear. 'Bob, take Vicky to the cave at the end of the beach. I'll bring Sam.'

Vicky and Bob ran off, and Tom ran to Sam. Then Danielle stood up, took Sam's arm and held it tightly. The little boy tried to escape, but Danielle began to pull him towards the sea.

'Leave him alone!' Tom shouted.

He ran in front of her. And he hit her. He felt terrible. But he hit her hard on her face. He heard her nose break. She took her hands away from Sam and fell on her knees. Blood poured from her nose.

Tom took Sam's hand and began to run. Vicky and Bob were nearly at the end of the beach. Then Tom heard his mother scream. He stopped and turned. Sam continued running towards Vicky, but Tom couldn't move.

His father and Gavin were standing at the edge of the sea. His father was shouting. His mother was near them in the sea, holding the knife. Gavin lifted the axe. For a second nobody moved.

Then the axe fell.

It crashed through the top of Tom's father's head. Blood flew into the air and his father fell to the ground. Gavin hit Tom's father three more times. Then he stopped.

Tom's mother ran screaming towards Gavin. She lifted the knife. But before she could stab him, Gavin hit her with the axe. It went through her chest. Gavin pulled it out and hit her again. She fell back into the sea.

Tom couldn't move.

Gavin turned slowly and looked at him. He shouted something, but Tom was too far away to hear the words. Then Gavin lifted the axe and began to run towards him.

Tom turned and ran after Sam and the others.

## Chapter 10 In the Dark Cave

When Tom got to the entrance of the cave, the others were waiting.

'What's happened to Mum and Dad?' Bob asked.

Tears were running down his face. Tom wanted to tell him that everything was OK. But it wasn't OK. He looked back. Gavin and Danielle were running across

the beach towards them.

'We've got to go into the cave, Bob,' he said.

He took his brother's hand and pulled him inside. Vicky and Sam followed them. They ran along the main tunnel, but it got darker and darker. Soon they couldn't see, and they had to stop running.

Tom put one hand out in front of him. He felt the wall of the cave. 'Everybody hold hands,' he said. 'Then we'll all stay together.'

He moved forward slowly, following the wall.

'Where are we going?' Vicky asked.

'There's a ladder at the end of the cave,' Tom replied. 'If we can find it, we can climb up to the top of the cliff.'

They heard shouts from behind them. Gavin and Danielle were in the cave. They were a long way behind, but Tom still felt nervous. He wanted to run, but it was too dark.

'We're coming, Vicky!' Danielle screamed. 'You think you're so pretty. But you're not as pretty as me. I wanted to be a star but you stopped me. Do you hear me, Vicky?'

Tom felt his way along the wall. 'I think there's another tunnel here,' he said. 'There are a lot of different tunnels on each side. We've got to stay in the main tunnel. The ladder's at the end of it.'

'We won't get lost, will we?' Bob asked.

'No,' Tom said. 'Mr Mackie showed me the way last year.' It was true. But last year Mr Mackie had a light with him. Now, in the dark, it was easy to go the wrong way. But they couldn't stop.

They walked for about a minute, then Tom felt another tunnel on the left. As they passed that, there was a shout from behind them. It was Gavin. He sounded nearer.

'They're catching us!' Bob said.

Tom went more quickly. They were almost running.

Then Vicky fell. Tom stopped. 'Are you all right?' he asked.

'Yes,' she said. 'My knee hurts but I'm OK.' She got up. 'Sam? Where are you? Tom, have you got Sam? I dropped his hand when I fell. Where is he? Sam!'

Tom felt all round him, but Sam wasn't there. And then Sam's voice came from in front of them. 'Vicky?'

'Sam! Sam!' Vicky shouted.

'He can't hear you,' Tom said. 'We've got to follow his voice and try to find him.'

The three of them moved forward in the dark. They were moving quickly but Sam was moving faster. Every time he called, his voice sounded farther away.

And then, from behind them, came a laugh. It was Gavin. And he was very near. 'The stupid little boy is lost!'

Tom started to run. It was terrible running in the dark, but they had to find Sam.

They heard his voice again. 'Vicky!'

'Where is he?' Vicky asked.

'He's behind us. He's gone down one of the side tunnels,' Tom said.

'We've got to go back,' Vicky said. 'I can't leave him.'

Suddenly, they heard a scream. They stood and listened.

'Who's that?' they heard Sam shout.

Then came the sound of Gavin's crazy laugh.

'It's your father!' Gavin shouted. 'Are you pleased to see me?'

'Dad — please. No!' Sam said.

There was another scream, then a terrible noise. Tom felt sick. He knew what it was. It was the sound of Gavin's axe on Sam's body.

More screams. Then the noise again. It filled the cave. The screaming stopped, and they heard the noise of the axe again. Twice more. Then there was silence.

Tom heard Vicky start to cry. He put his hand out and touched her wet face. Then he put his arms round her.

'They've killed him,' she said quietly 'My parents have killed my brother. Oh God, Tom, what am I going to do?'

'We've got to get out of here,' he said.

'I can't,' Vicky cried.

He felt her fall to the floor. He tried to pull her up. 'Vicky, we can't stay here. Get up.'

He pulled hard, and at last she stood up. There was a shout from back in the darkness. It was Gavin and Danielle.

'Blood! Blood!' they were screaming.

'Let's go, Vicky,' Tom said. 'Help me, Bob.'

They half pulled and half carried her along the tunnel.

Then Tom felt a soft wind coming from the left. He reached out. It was a side tunnel.

'This way, Bob,' he said quietly.

They went twenty metres into the tunnel, then stopped. After a few minutes, they heard Gavin and Danielle go past the end of their tunnel. Then there was silence.

The three of them sat down on the floor. Vicky was crying quietly, then Bob started to cry, too. Tom was as frightened as they were. But he had to try to be brave.

'We'll get out of here - I promise,' he said. And he tried hard to believe it.

## Chapter 11 Blood! Blood!

They stayed in the dark tunnel for more than an hour. They could hear Gavin

and Danielle shouting. Then, at last, everything went quiet. Tom waited. No noise.

'I think they've gone,' he finally said.

He pulled Bob and Vicky to their feet, and they walked slowly and quietly back to the main tunnel.

'Are we going back to the beach?' Vicky asked.

'No,' Tom said. 'They're probably waiting for us out there. We'll go the other way and climb the ladder.'

They moved slowly along the dark tunnel. Tom tried not to be afraid, but every step felt dangerous. Perhaps Gavin was standing just a few metres away, waiting for them with his axe.

Tom was cold and frightened. He didn't want to die. He didn't want to feel Gavin's axe cut into him. He wanted to sit down and not move. But he continued walking into the darkness.

Then, far away down the tunnel, he saw a light.

'I think it's the exit,' he said. 'Can you see the ladder?'

'Yes!' Bob shouted. 'It's the way out! Let's run!'

'No! Sssh!' Tom said.

But it was too late. Bob was already running down the tunnel, and there was a shout from back down the cave.

'They're up there, Gavin!' Danielle shouted.

Tom took Vicky's hand and they ran after Bob. They heard Gavin and Danielle running after them.

'I'm going to cut your face, Vicky!' Danielle screamed. 'You won't be pretty then! I'll kill you!'

The light grew brighter and brighter. Tom could see the ladder. He could see Bob climbing it.

The ladder was built against the wall. Fifty metres up, Tom could see light. It was the top of the cliff. It was safe there. Bob was already halfway up.

'Start climbing,' Tom told Vicky.

She began to climb. Tom looked back down the tunnel — and saw Gavin and Danielle running towards him!

He climbed five steps, then missed the next step and fell back to the ground.

A pain went up his leg. Gavin and Danielle were almost at the ladder. He started to climb again.

Bob was nearly at the top. Vicky was halfway to the top.

Tom looked down. Gavin and Danielle were climbing after him. There was blood on Gavin's face and shirt. The axe was hanging from his belt.

Tom's leg hurt, but he climbed faster. He had to get away. He was almost halfway up. Bob was at the top of the ladder and climbing out on to the cliff top.

Then Tom felt Gavin's hand round his foot. He tried to pull away but he couldn't.

Gavin pulled, and Tom started to fall. He was hanging by one hand. He got his other hand on to the ladder and held tight.

'You're going to die!' Gavin shouted. 'Blood! Blood!'

'Kill him, Gavin!' Danielle screamed.

Tom had to do something. Could he get the axe? He moved down the ladder as Gavin pulled him.

'I've got him!' Gavin shouted.

Now Tom was looking into Gavin's crazy eyes. Gavin's mouth opened in a terrible smile. 'You're going to fall all the way to the ground,' Gavin said, laughing. 'Your blood will run all over the rock.'

'Blood! Blood!' Danielle screamed.

Gavin tried to push Tom off the ladder. Tom almost fell. Then he reached down and pulled the axe out of Gavin's belt. Gavin tried to stop him, but Tom was too quick. He hit Gavin in the face and climbed up the ladder.

Tom almost escaped. Then Gavin reached up and held on to Tom's leg. Tom couldn't move. But now he had the axe. He crashed it down on Gavin's shoulder. Gavin screamed in pain and almost fell. Blood poured out of his shoulder, but he held on to the ladder with his other hand.

Tom looked down at Gavin's fingers holding on to the ladder. He knew what he had to do.

He lifted the axe again. Then he stopped. He couldn't do it. But he looked at the blood on Gavin's face. It was Sam's blood. It was his parents' blood. He had to do it!

He brought the axe crashing down on to Gavin's fingers.

Gavin screamed and fell.

When he fell past Danielle, he tried to hold on to her. His arm went round her neck. But she lost her hold on the ladder, and they fell together.

The sound of their screams filled the air. There was a terrible noise when they hit the ground. Then silence.

Tom looked down at their broken bodies. He dropped the axe and continued climbing.

## Chapter 12 At the Farm

Tom, Vicky and Bob hurried towards the Mackies' farm. 'Where are we going?' Bob asked. 'To Mr Mackie's farm. We're going to radio for help.'

'I want Mum and Dad,' Bob said.

Tom looked at his little brother. He didn't know what to say. He put his arm round Bob's shoulder and continued walking.

Halfway down the hill, Tom stopped. A dead sheep was lying in the middle of the path. It had no head.

'This wasn't here before, was it?' Vicky said.

'No,' he answered.

And now they moved more slowly. With every step, Tom became more afraid. Who killed the sheep? Who put it there? They passed two more dead sheep. When they got to the farm, Tom stopped.

'Mr Mackie! There was silence. He pushed the door open. 'Is anybody there?' Silence.

They walked slowly into the kitchen. It was empty. They listened. There was no sound.

'The radio's upstairs,' Tom said.

They climbed the stairs slowly to the top. Slowly, one step at a time.

Tom pointed to the room, and they opened the door. The room was empty.

Tom ran across to the desk. He turned the radio on and picked up the microphone.

'Hello?' he shouted. 'Can anyone hear me? Please! Please! We need help! Can anyone hear me?'

Suddenly, there was a noise from below. Someone began running up the stairs.

Vicky ran to the door and closed it. She tried to lock it, but it crashed open.

Mr Mackie was standing there. He was covered in blood and he had a long knife in his hand.

Mackie lifted the knife and stabbed Vicky in the shoulder. She fell to the floor. He lifted the knife to stab her again. Tom ran forward and jumped on to his back. Mackie hit him. Tom felt the knife cut through his side. He tried to hold on to Mackie's back, but Mackie turned round too fast. He threw Tom to the ground.

Tom's head hit the desk. There was a terrible pain in his head and in his side. He closed his eyes. Then he opened them and saw the gun. Mr Mackie's gun. It was lying under the desk. He reached out and took it.

Mackie was moving towards Bob. The little boy was next to the wall, too frightened to move. Mackie lifted the knife into the air.

Tom lifted the gun to his shoulder and pulled the trigger.

Nothing happened.

Was the gun empty? Tom saw a second trigger. He pulled it.

There was an explosion. Blood flew from the back of Mackie's head. He stood for a second or two — then he fell to the floor.

It seemed to take hours, but at last someone answered their radio call. A man on a boat promised to send a message to the police.

Tom found a clean sheet in a cupboard. He tied a piece of it across the cut in Vicky's shoulder. Then she tied a piece round the cut in his side.

The three children went into the kitchen and waited for the police. They were

cold and they didn't want to talk. They just sat and waited.

Five hours later, the police arrived and carried them down to a boat. They put Bob into a bed and he fell asleep almost immediately. Tom looked at him. He and Bob were alone now. No parents.

He closed his eyes and started to cry. Vicky came and sat next to him.

'I want to die,' he said.

'No! Don't say that!' Vicky said. 'You've got to live. We've all got to live. I need you. Bob needs you. We can get through this terrible time. I know we can.'

She put her arms round him and held him tight.

And he knew she was right. Together, they could do it. There was still hope.