

One

An Exciting Arrival



‘You’ll *never* guess who’s just checked in at The Lighthouse!’ Emily shouted into her mobile phone, before Scott even had a chance to say hello.

‘Nelson Mandela?’ Scott suggested. ‘David Beckham? No, don’t tell me, The Queen . . .’

Emily laughed. The boys would never guess in a million years! She jumped up and grabbed her

binoculars from the box marked *Operations Kit* under her bed. There were three windows in the curved walls of her bedroom, all small and round like a ship's portholes. One looked out to a sky full of seagulls and a sparkling blue sea stretching to the horizon. The next framed Key Bay with its towering cliffs, topped by the jagged outline of the castle ruins. But it was the third window she ran to now, with its view of Castle Key far below, tiny as a model village. Tucked behind the church she could make out Stone Cottage, where her new friends Scott and Jack Carter were spending the summer with their Aunt Kate. Having your bedroom on the top floor of a lighthouse was a definite plus for all-round surveillance!

'Lady Gaga? Johnny Depp?' It was Jack's voice now. Emily pictured him wrestling the phone out of his older brother's hand. 'Winnie the Pooh?'

Winnie the Pooh? If Jack was moving onto *fictional* characters, they could be here for weeks! Emily couldn't bear it any longer – it was like giving someone an amazing Christmas present and then having to watch while they opened it in slow motion, trying not to tear the paper. 'It's an ex-SAS commando,' she blurted.

'Yeah, right!' Scott had grabbed his phone back from Jack. 'And I suppose James Bond will be popping in later for your Mum's buffet lunch!'

Emily was used to Scott teasing her. She did a

backwards dive onto her bed. 'His name's Max Fordham. He was in the Gulf War and he's done loads of secret operations.' Then she screamed as a blur of black and tan and white fur launched itself onto her stomach. 'Drift! It's not a game,' she giggled. A rescue dog of unknown origin, Drift was the perfect combination of the best bits of every breed – the brains of a collie, the bounce of a spaniel, the bravado of a Jack Russell – and he was Emily's constant companion.

In the sunny kitchen at Stone Cottage, Scott shook his head at his mobile and grinned at his brother. 'According to Em, a member of the SAS has just checked in at The Lighthouse.'

'SAS? As in Special Air Service?' Jack spluttered through a mouthful of bacon. It was still early and they were working their way through Aunt Kate's immense cooked breakfasts. 'As in *Who Dares Wins* and all that? Cool!'

Scott shrugged. Emily was always imagining secret agents, kidnappers and gangsters around every corner! If Winnie the Pooh turned up at her parents' Bed and Breakfast at The Lighthouse, Emily would suspect him of masterminding an international honey-smuggling ring. Her SAS commando was probably just a guy with muscles in camo-pattern trousers.

'How do you *know* he's SAS?' Scott asked, switching

his phone to speaker so that Jack could hear. ‘Did he storm in through the window brandishing a machine gun?’

‘When he was signing the register I noticed he had this little tattoo on his arm,’ Emily explained patiently. ‘A dagger with wings on it. That’s the SAS insignia.’

Scott had to admit he was impressed. Emily noticed things. She noticed things most people wouldn’t notice even if they were waving a red flag and doing a Mexican Wave.

‘So I asked him,’ Emily went on, ‘and he told me all about it. He’s really nice. Drift likes him too!’ As far as Emily was concerned Drift was never wrong about such things.

‘But what’s he doing in Castle Key?’ Scott asked. ‘They haven’t discovered a terrorist cell operating out of Dotty’s Tea Rooms have they?’

‘I told you, Max isn’t in the SAS any more. He’s a civilian now.’ Emily shook her head. Sometimes talking to the boys could be like walking up a down-escalator!

In the kitchen at Stone Cottage, Jack let a piece of bacon fall off his fork. ‘So he’s just here on *holiday*? Yawn!’

‘Ah, but I haven’t told you the Most Amazing Part of All yet!’ Emily said in a mysterious tone. ‘Meet me at the end of the harbour wall in ten minutes.’

Scott did a double take at his phone. Emily had rung off already. He raised his eyebrows in Jack's direction.

But Jack was already at the door. Bubbles of excitement were fizzing in his stomach. If Emily said something was *amazing*, it was *guaranteed* to be good! Then he ran back into the kitchen and snagged a piece of toast to eat on the way. 'What are we waiting for?' he asked, tugging Scott by the scruff of his t-shirt.

'Calm down!' Scott got up from his chair with all the speed of a sleep-walking snail. Scott liked to appear ice-cool and unruffled in all situations. It drove Jack crazy! Especially when he knew that beneath the laid-back pose, Scott was just as keen to find out Emily's news as he was.

The boys headed down Church Lane, along the high street, and through Fish Alley onto the seafront. The narrow streets of the old fishing village were familiar territory now, although Scott and Jack had only arrived in Castle Key a few weeks ago. They'd been packed off to stay with their Great-aunt Kate while Dad was spending the summer at an archaeological site in Africa digging up old pots. At first Jack had thought he'd die of boredom – a million miles from London and his friends – stuck in the middle of nowhere on an island he'd never even heard of off the coast of Cornwall.

But then the boys met Emily Wild, and the next thing they knew, they were swept up in Operation Treasure, tracking down a stolen Saxon sword, helmet and shield. OK, so getting trapped in a pitch black cave in a storm with the tide rising by the second was *not* an experience Jack wanted to repeat any time soon, but the rest of it had been awesome! Since then, things had been a little quiet. They'd been assisting Emily with her on-going investigation, Operation Spy Ring. Unfortunately, despite the exciting name, it hadn't turned out to have quite the thrill-factor Jack had hoped for, mainly involving staking out the Post Office and watching people buying stamps. It was high time for a new adventure.

The boys hurried along the pebble beach where they were met by Drift, springing around their ankles like a hyperactive grasshopper. Emily was waiting for them, perched on the wall, hugging her knees to her chest, her jumble of long brown curls curtaining her face.

'What's the Most Amazing Part of All?' Jack panted.

Emily grinned at the boys' eager faces. They were already looking less London and more Castle Key; the sun had brought out freckles on Jack's nose and streaked Scott's floppy brown hair with surfer-dude highlights. 'You've heard of the Agent Diamond films, right?'

'*Heard* of them!' Jack laughed, sitting down next to Emily on the limpet-encrusted wall. 'They're only my

all-time favourite movies! *The Diamond Mission* was the best. That's the one where Maya Diamond has to find Dr Zoltan's secret underwater lair . . .'

'No way!' Emily shoved Jack so he almost toppled backwards off the wall, '*The Diamond Code* was the classic. Where Maya has to go undercover as a double agent in Russia . . .'

Scott laughed and held up his hands. 'Cease fire! We *all* rate the Agent Diamond films, but what have they got to do with your SAS guy?'

Emily shaded her eyes and gazed out across the bay, pausing for maximum effect. 'They're going to film some scenes for the next movie on location here at the castle! Max Fordham is their stunt advisor.'

'*Agent Diamond? Filming here?*' Jack echoed. This was *officially* the single most exciting thing that had ever happened in the history of the universe.

'When?' Scott asked. He was trying to sound casual, but Jack could tell he was stoked too.

'They start filming in a couple of days.' Emily hopped down from the wall and started strolling casually away from the harbour. Drift trotted along behind, his velvety ears bobbing up and down in time with his paws.

'Where are you going?' Scott called.

Emily turned and spoke as she continued to walk backwards. 'Max said we could go up to the castle and watch him set up the stunts. That's if you're interested, of course . . .'

‘*If* we’re interested?’ Jack laughed. ‘*If?*’ He sprang down from the wall and rocketed after Emily. Scott was not far behind.

Watching an SAS commando rigging up impossibly dangerous stunts for a high-octane action thriller – Jack had never been more interested in anything in his entire life!