NOAH'S GOLD

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COTTRELL-BOYCE

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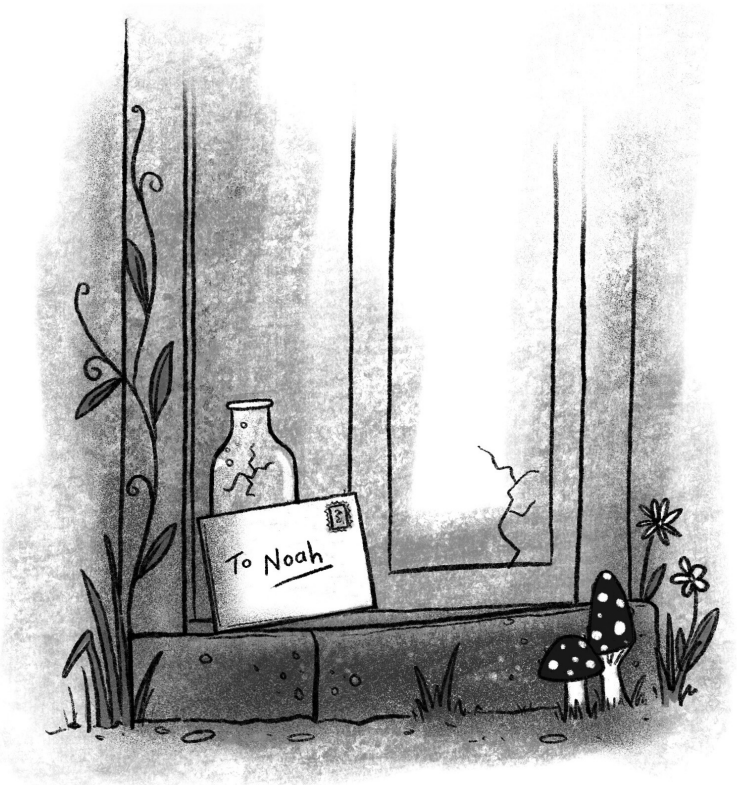
To Noah

Dear Noah,

Just to be clear, you cannot carry on living on that island eating nothing but rabbits and blackberries. You need to get on and fix the internet.

You broke it.

You fix it.

When it's fixed, then we can come and get you. Not before – because until then, there's no buses, no trains, no boats and no petrol. Although – in case you've forgotten – we don't have a car any more.

We can't save you until you've saved us all.

Regards,

Mum and Dad

Noah Moriarty created WeeWord group **NOAH'S GOLD**
Noah added Eve to the group

Eve
Why is this called Noah's Gold . . . ?

Noah
Just thinking about Our Island . . .

Eve
And??

Noah
All the letters from when we were bus-wrecked. I've tied them in bundles and put them under your duvet. Read them again. Don't let anyone else read them. Not yet. Because . . . Well, just read them.

Eve
And don't forget the map, plus the recipe and police stuff . . .

Noah
Trust me. There's something seriously rogue in there.

Eve
OK. Shall I read them now? I'll read them now.

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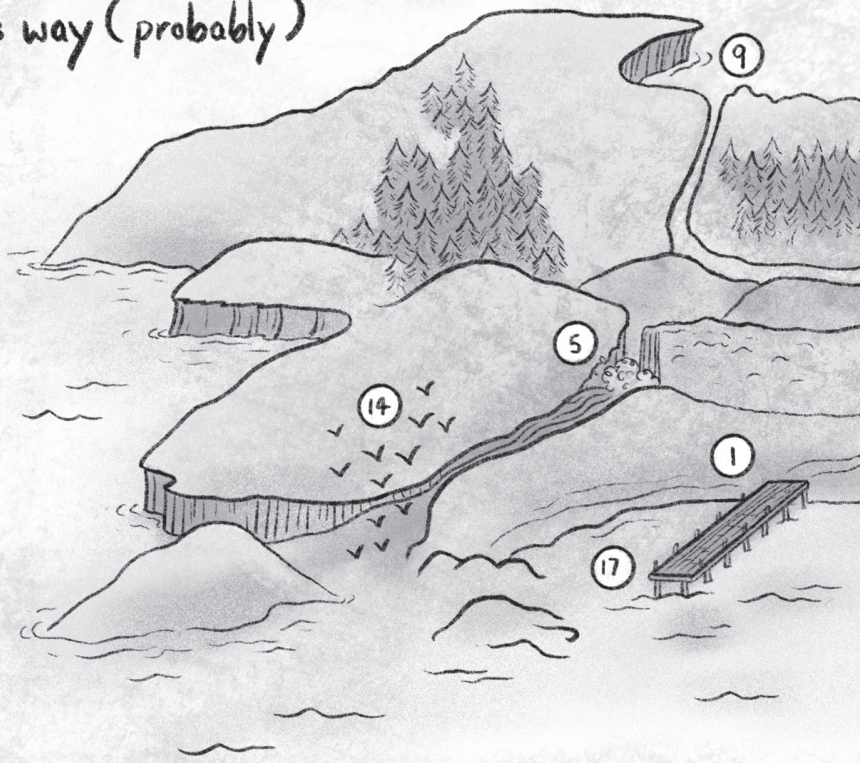
↑
America and Hy-Brasil
This way (probably)



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FRIDAY

BREAKFAST MENU

Choice of historic sandwiches:

Cheese & Rice Krispies

or

Peanut Butter & Grated Carrot

Letter 1

To: The Moriarty Family
35 Glenarm Terrace, Limavady

Dear Mum, Dad and Baby Isabella,

Good surprise finding that letter from you on the doorstep this morning! Thanks!

I didn't know they even had post on uninhabited islands! There is a postbox here, so I'll drop this letter in it when I've finished and see what happens. Not sure it'll work. Like everything else on the island, it looks like no one has used it for about a million years.

I've drawn you this map in case it comes in handy when you do come to rescue us, which I hope will be soon because, being honest, there's only so much Wild Food you can eat. Ryland Scally keeps mentioning that when people run out of food on uninhabited islands, they usually end up eating each other.

I'd like to avoid that if at all possible.

You sound upset about the internet being broken. I didn't break it on purpose! Being honest, I thought

you wouldn't even mind. Dad, you're always saying people spend too much time looking at their screens and not enough time looking at the actual World. You're right there.

People definitely rely on their screens too much. For example, Mr Merriman relied on his satnav to take his Year Nine geography group to the Orinoco Wonder Warehouse in Letterkenny. That satnav did not take him where he wanted to go. It took him here, to an uninhabited island, which is a very, very different packet of crisps from a super storage and delivery depot.

For instance, the Wonder Warehouse is located in the historic market town of Letterkenny (Tidiest Town in Ireland 2016), whereas this island is located in the sea.

Also the Wonder Warehouse is full of stuff – such as food, books, trampolines, sports equipment and everything you could wish for.

Whereas this island is full of rocks.

We were shipwrecked by satnav.

I'm not blaming Mr Merriman, by the way. This trip was not even his idea. He's a geography teacher. He wanted his geography field trip to go to somewhere Geographical – such as the Giant's Causeway or the Marble Arch Caves. Everything would be fine now if they had done that. But no. They voted for this.

And why did they vote for this? Because of our Eve, that's why. She campaigned, remember. She said that Giant's Causeway and Marble Arch Caves were nothing but rocks. Funny shaped rocks. But rocks.

To be fair, Dad, you did point out that rocks were central to the study of geography.

Eve said, 'So are the things that people build on top of the rocks. For instance, the Orinoco Wonder Warehouse. Do you want to know what's so good about a Super Storage and Delivery Depot? I'll tell you what's so good about it.'

(Have you noticed, by the way, that Eve is always asking questions and then answering them herself before you get a chance?)

'It's the biggest warehouse in the World. Probably in the solar system. It's the internet with a roof on. Anything you buy online – that's where they keep it. It's too big to walk around. The workers have little scooters to get around the shelves. It's a continent of desirable items. What could be more Geographical than that?! Also it's indoors, so it won't matter if it rains.'

This is how Eve gets people to do what she wants. She makes what she wants to do sound like the spiciest thing on the menu. She started a WeeWord group, which she called 'The Wonder Warehouse vs Some Rocks. You Decide'.

The Wonder Warehouse won.

*

It should take about an hour to drive to Letterkenny. There were two minibuses. Mr Merriman was driving the one we were in. Ms Gyngell was driving the one in front. She'd been to the Wonder Warehouse once already to do the Health and Safety.

Somewhere on the A2 Mr Merriman's minibus ended up in front. He said he didn't need to follow anyone because the satnav would tell him what to do. A few minutes later the satnav told him to turn off the A2 on to one of those lanes with hedges on either side.

Ms Gyngell's minibus did not turn off. It sailed past us with her waving and staring at us in surprise. Her brake lights went on as if she was going to wait for us. But Mr Merriman's satnav said, '*Continue straight ahead*' – so that's what we did. No one else seemed to have even noticed.

From where I was – in the luggage section behind the back seat – all you could see was arms wobbling about in the air, with phones glowing in their hands. All you could hear was the pop of lunchboxes as people broke into their snacks. All you could smell was sweet chilli, barbecue beef, and cheese and onion crisps.

I was tempted to open up Eve's lunchbox for a snack, but decided to take in the view through the

back window. I could see lots of clouds and hedges. I did not see a fleet of Orinoco Wonder Warehouse lorries driving up and down the lane. The lane got narrower – with grass growing up through the tarmac in the middle. There was no way you could even fit one lorry down it.

I know I'm not in the top set for geography – or anything – but I do know that if you build a Wonder Warehouse that sends goods and gifts all over the country, you put it somewhere with excellent road access and not at the end of a bumpy narrow lane. But Mr Merriman's satnav kept saying, '*Continue straight ahead*' – so we continued. Straight ahead.

I thought it was a worry, but nobody else seemed bothered to notice.

Do you know Lola Casement? She's on the school council, and if you didn't know that already, she'll tell you within ten seconds of meeting her. Anyway, she was reading out a leaflet about Orinoco Storage and Distribution. '*Our technology*,' she said, '*is here to help you find your heart's desire. On our shelves you will find everything you've ever wanted, from a microfibre hypoallergenic cleaning cloth to a motorboat. Our food aisle is one of the Wonders of the World . . .*' They all got so excited about food and motorboats that they started singing the school song:

Everywhere we goooooo
People wanna know-ooooo
Who we are
So we tell them
We are St Anthony of Padua
The mighty, mighty Anthony of Padua
And if they can't hear us
We tell them all again . . .

Which they do – do tell them again, I mean. And again. For about a million verses. They didn't stop singing until we came to the end of the lane, where we hit a little beach with a jetty. There was a ferry boat waiting at the jetty – one of those flat ones that look like a raft with railings. There was a van parked on its deck with 'SkyHooks Facilities' printed on the side.

Mr Merriman's satnav was still going, '*Continue straight ahead*.'

I thought, surely someone is going to shout, 'NO! Do not continue straight ahead! This is insane!' But no one did. I couldn't do it myself because I was hiding. I wasn't supposed to be there, but as things have turned out, it was a good job I was.

From, Noah

PS Please send a helicopter or a boat when you can.