Also by MARTIN STEWART

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SANDY FIN

Mystery of the Phantom Diver



MARTIN STEWART

Illustrated by Santy Gutiérrez

ZEPHYR

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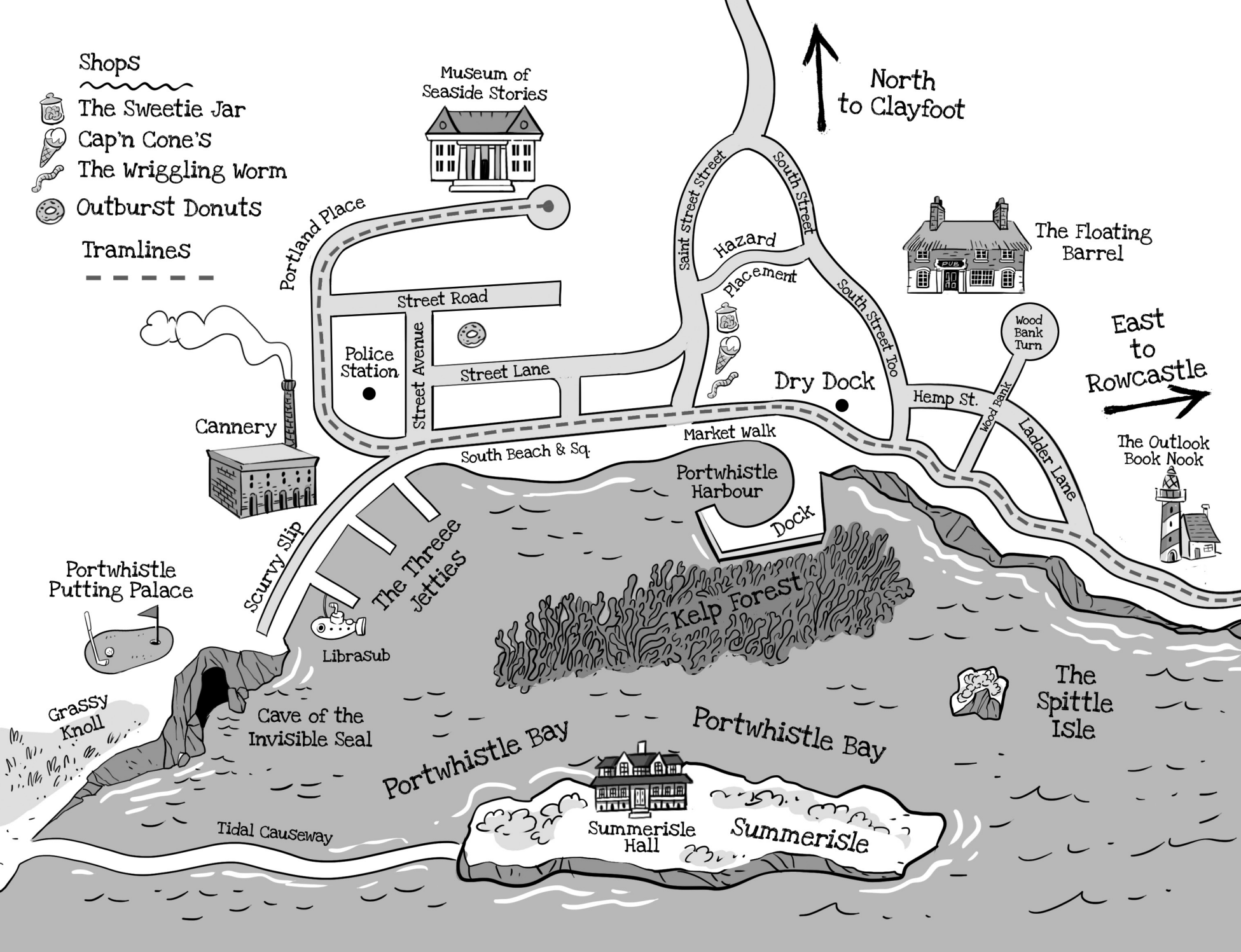
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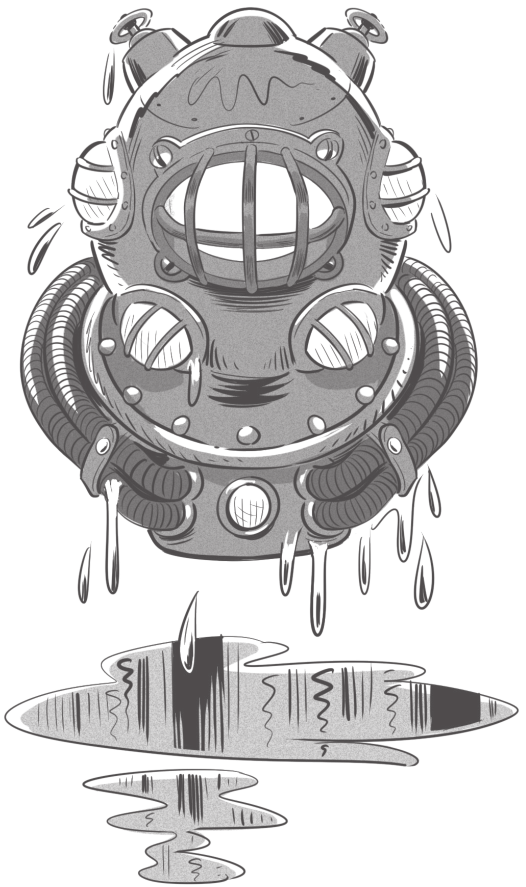
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For Molly,

MS




Shops
The Sweetie Jar
Cap'n Cone's
The Wriggling Worm
Outburst Donuts
Tramlines
Museum of Seaside Stories
North to Clayfoot
Portland Place
Saint Street Street
South Street
Hazard
Placement
The Floating Barrel
PUB
Street Road
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Street Avenue
Street Lane
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Portwhistle Putting Palace
Librasub
Kelp Forest
Grassy Knoll
Cave of the Invisible Seal
Portwhistle Bay
Portwhistle Bay
The Spittle Isle
Tidal Causeway
Summerisle Hall
Summerisle



The Phantom Diver has played a role in traditional Portwhistle parenting for generations.

‘Tidy your room,’ the parent will say, ‘or the Phantom Diver will carry you off into the deep…’

‘Eat your sea greens, or the Phantom Diver will carry you off into the deep…’

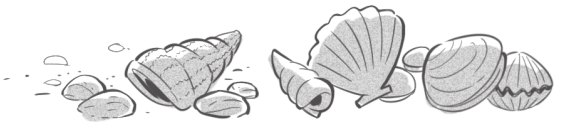
‘Stop brandishing that harpoon, or the Phantom Diver will carry you off into the deep…’

In this way, a harmless tale of a haunted diving suit emerging from the sea to snatch miscreant children keeps little Portwhistlers on their toes. Of course, the Phantom Diver is a fiction, a fable – a story!

But that doesn’t mean the story isn’t true.

Professor Emile Archambeau Du Pont
Spooks, Spectres and Spirits, Oh, My: Things That Go Squelch in the Night

1



Lily Spencer's little boat hopped over the waves.

She glanced around. The rocks to starboard were close, sharp, and spattered with bird poop. Clouds had gathered in a fist over Portwhistle Bay, and the water – black as slate and speckled with foam – had already filled her wellies.

'I'm not sure about this,' she whispered, pulling a duck-shaped armband towards her shoulder. 'Sandy? *Sandy?*'

She steered clear of the rocks – then smashed through another towering wave.

Water dripped from her hat.

'I'm *really* not sure about this!' she yelled, blinking through the rain.

'Ah, come on, Lil!' said Sandy Fin, his head appearing beside the boat. 'It's fun!'

'Aaargh!' Lily fell off her seat. 'Sandy,' she said, wriggling upright, 'this is the worst storm for a hundred years, and that prisoner's *still* on the run

from Barefoot Prison—'

'I heard it's Newe Ironstone,' said Sandy, eyes flashing.

Lily wrinkled her nose. 'Why do I know that name?'

'Only because it belongs to the legendary thief who burgled the Balearic Barnacles and pilfered the Peleset Pearls!' gasped Sandy. 'It was Ironstone who discovered the long-lost Stone of Storm – the *weather stone*. Apparently, it was lost by a whaler who used it to hunt sperm whales for their oil…' Sandy felt facts fizz in his brain. 'Did you know sperm whale oil was used to light lamps, and that stuff from their tummies – it's called ambergris, isn't that a lovely word? – was used to make perfumes and—'

'We shouldn't be out in this weather!' yelled Lily, cutting him off mid-fact.

Sandy shook his head clear.

'But Sheila the Shy Spry Sheep *needs* us!' he said, the silvery scales on his arms prickling as he swam through lightning. 'Water's lovely, if you fancy a paddle!' he called back, clambering on to the jagged rocks below the grassy knoll.

A shrill *baaaaaaa!* pierced the sky.

Lily rowed after him.

'Shouldn't we wait for the coastguard?' she yelled.

Sandy shook his head.

'The navy?'

'No.'

Lily's mouth hung open.

'Fire brigade?' she tried.

Sandy gave her a look.

'The tide is coming in – fast!' Sandy said, his usual blade of upright hair plastered to his forehead. 'It's up to us, Lil!'

Thunder rumbled overhead.

Lily looked back towards the village. Already the buildings were hidden behind a gauzy curtain of water.

She tightened her grip on the oars. 'It's up to us,' she repeated.

Sandy grinned.

'Come on – Coastal Rescue Team promise!'

Lily grabbed his hand, then dropped beside him into an ankle-deep pool.

They linked pinkies.

'For sea and sky,' said Sandy.

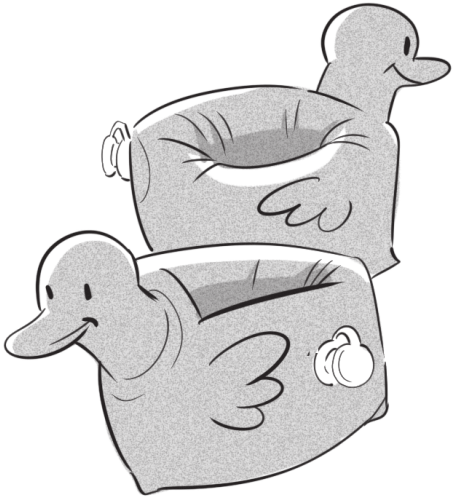
'For wind and wave,' replied Lily.

'And all the creatures we can save,' they finished, together.

Sandy angled his head.

'Did you have to wear the armbands?' he said.

'Yes.'



'All four of them?'

'I am *learning* to *swim*,' said Lily, tying the boat to the shore. 'What else am I supposed to wear?'

'It's just…' said Sandy, pulling a face, 'the *duck heads*.'

Baaaaaaaaaaa!

Sandy spun on his heels.

'Sheila needs us!' he said. 'She's spry, all right, but she's got herself in a pickle this time.'

Lily took binoculars from her backpack.

'Looks like a landslide,' she said, scanning the cliffs. 'She's lucky she wasn't washed out to sea!'

'Speaking of washed out to sea…' said Sandy, looking over Lily's shoulder.

Lily spun around.

Her little boat, oars flapping like broken wings, was bouncing into the distance.

'No!' she cried. 'How will I— What will my—'

'You probably shouldn't have missed Emile's knot-tying lesson last week,' said Sandy seriously.

Lily thinned her lips.

'*We* missed that lesson,' she said icily, 'because *you* wanted to show Captain Lufty a *rock* that looked like an *apple*.'

'It really did!' said Sandy. 'Did you know that it takes *thousands* of years for the sea to make pebbles so smooth? And that the big boulders on the Clayfoot Road were left there by a *glacier* during the last ice age? And that—'

Lily buried her face in her hands.

'Don't get distracted by facts!' she said, as a wave smashed over them. 'We're in the middle of rescuing a panicked sheep and *my boat's drifting out to sea*!'

'Don't worry, Lil – we'll get your boat back,' said Sandy, pulling the hair from his eyes. 'Can you see Sheila?'

Baaaaaaaaaaa!

Lily scanned with her binoculars.

'She's under that tree!'

Sandy followed her arm. There, under the jagged shadow of a fallen sycamore, huddled the yellowed fluffball that was Sheila the Shy Spry Sheep.

'*Baaaaaaaaa!*' screamed Sheila, the black slits of her eyes flashing in the shadows.

'Don't worry, Sheila!' yelled Sandy. 'The Coastal Rescue Team is on the case!' He looked up. 'These cliffs are thirty metres high – there's no way we can get her back by land!'

Lily gripped her hair.

'Then what *do* we do?'

'Something else!' said Sandy, breaking into a run.

Sheila was cowering on the other side of a deep, rain-tossed pool, its edges swirling with bright weeds. Anemones flicked their hungry tentacles, seeking prey.

Sandy took a step into the pool.

The sheep backed away.

'*It's all right, Sheila*,' said Sandy, in a sing-song voice. He took another step. '*Me and Lil are just going to help you off this beach so you can come home, and eat lots of…*' He turned to Lily. 'What do sheep eat?'

Lily shrugged.

'Sheep food?'

'*Sheep fooooood*,' sang Sandy, turning back to the terrified ewe. '*We'll get you as much sheep food as you like! That'll be nice, won't it?*'

He took another step, dislodging an oily burst of black, mineral sand – and tangling his leg in a frond of seaweed.

'I don't know how you can stand that,' said Lily, stepping behind him. 'I hate the way it feels.'

Sandy froze.

'Did you say,' he managed, '… *eels*?'

Lily rolled her eyes.

'*No* – I said I don't like the way seaweed *feels*.'

Sandy breathed out.

'I wasn't scared!' he said, untangling his leg.

'I know.'

'If an eel needed *rescuing*, I'd rescue it, obviously.'

'I know.'

'It's just,' Sandy shuddered, 'ever since the thing with the magpie eel…'

'There are no eels here,' said Lily. 'Keep going!'

They hopped from the pool.

'*Baaaa!*' said Sheila, blinking quickly.

Sandy wiped rain from his eyes.

'All right, Lil,' he said. 'Give me your armbands.'

Lily looked at him.

'What? Sandy, I *need* these – I can't swim yet, and I—'

'You won't have to swim,' said Sandy. 'I'll get you back to your boat, safe and sound. I promise.'

'My—' Lily turned to see her little dinghy spinning off into the storm. '*How?*'

Sandy squeezed one of Lily's inflatable duck heads, which squeaked.

'These might be called *arm*bands,' he said, 'but there's no reason we can't put them on *legs*!'

'Legs?' said Lily. 'But –' she looked at Sheila – 'hang on a minute—'

'*Baaa?*' wobbled Sheila.

Sandy held up the first armband overhead, its beak sparkling with the rain.

'Saddle up, Spencer!' he cried. 'We've got a sheep to save!'