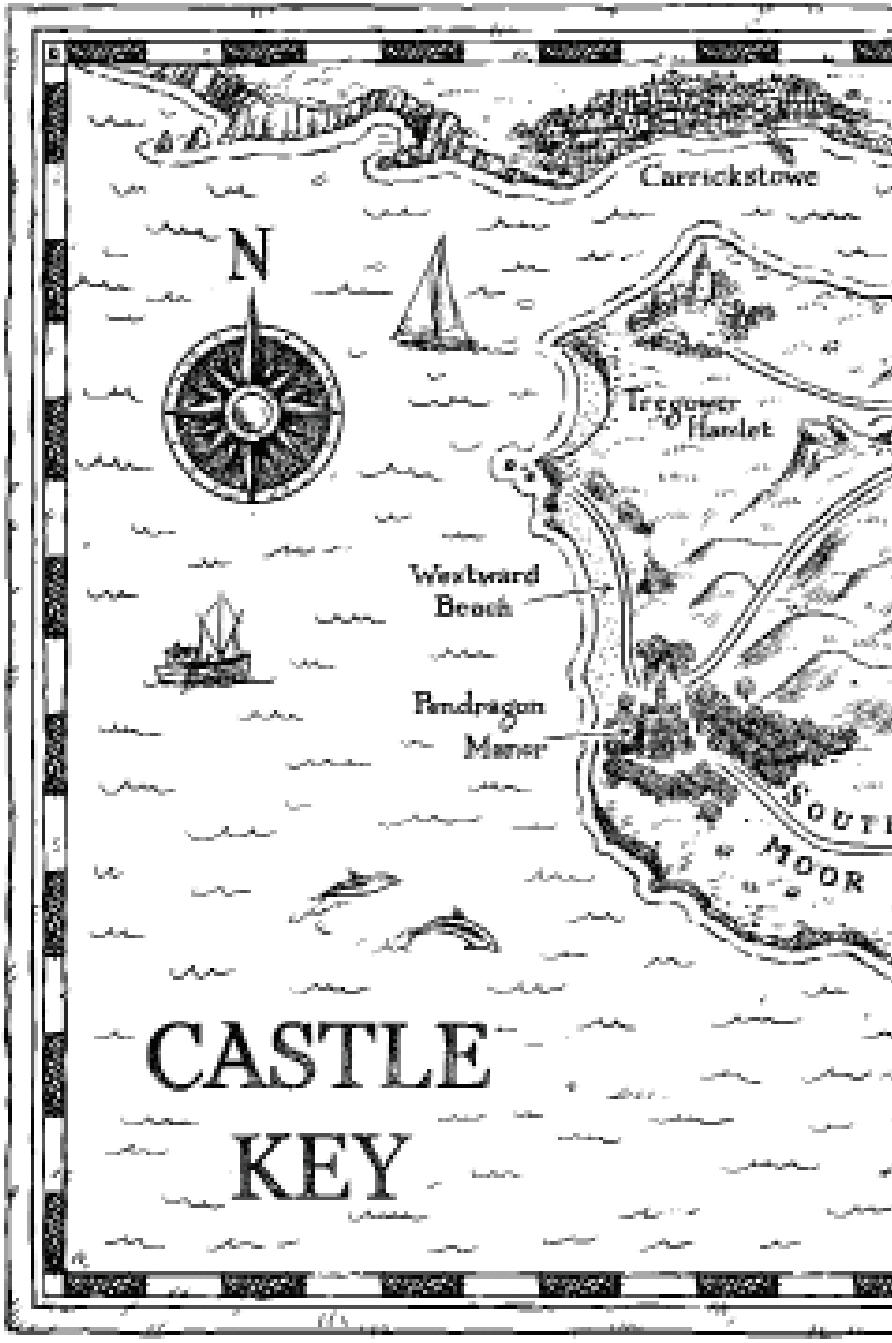
ADVENTURE ISLAND SERIES

THE MYSTERY OF THE WHISTLING CAVES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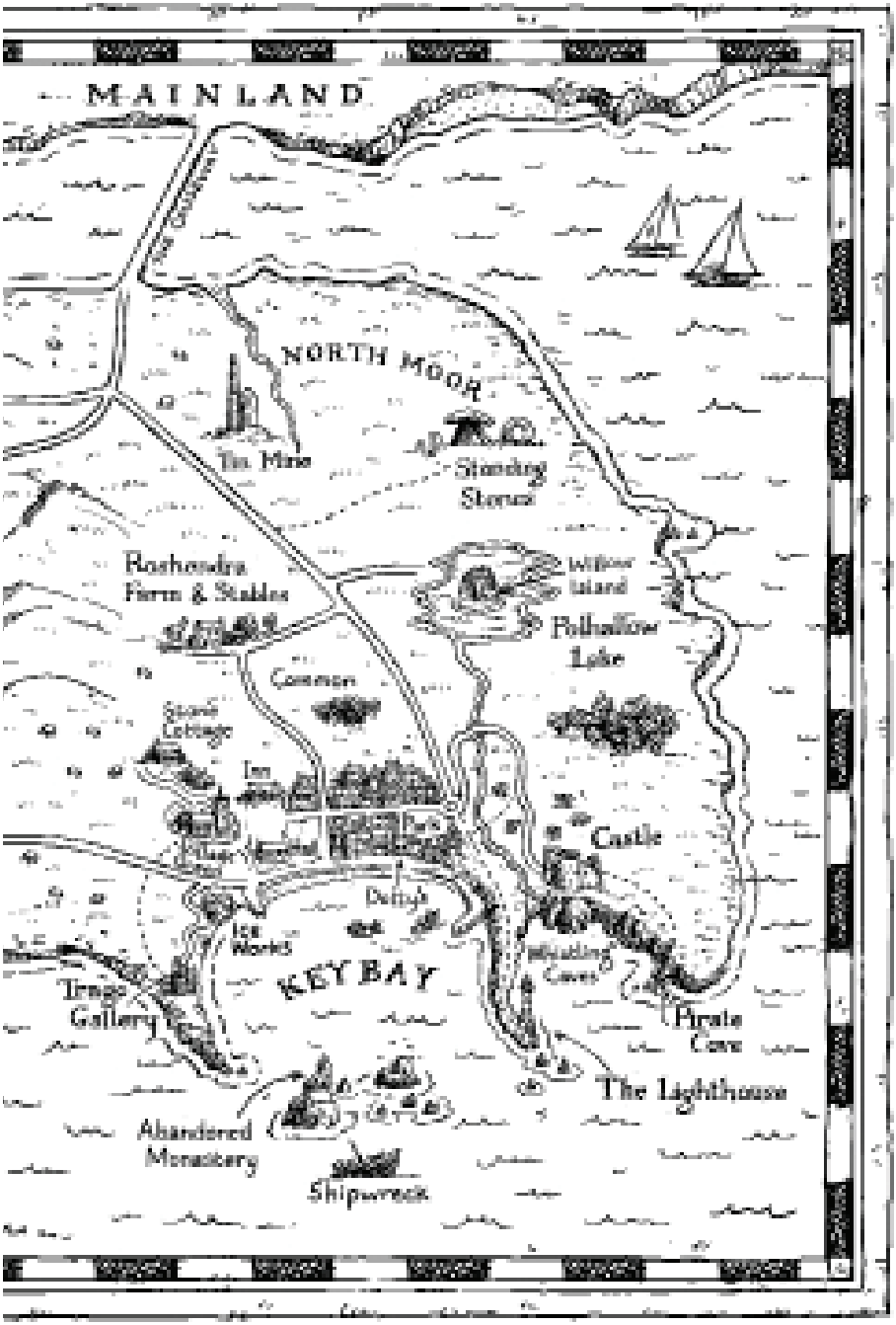
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For Mac

One

Welcome to Castle Key



Stone Cottage was quite possibly the most boring place Jack Carter had ever seen. The walls were grey, the roof was grey, grey rain was falling from a grey sky; even the pigeons huddling on the chimney were grey and sort of *fed-up* looking.

'You'll have the time of your lives in Castle Key,' Dad said in the car on the way from London to Cornwall. 'Your Uncle Tim and I used to spend summers with

Aunt Kate when we were your age. There're beaches and rock pools and moors and woods. And there's a smashing café on the seafront that does the best fish and chips . . . '

'Smashing'! What kind of word was that? Jack rolled his eyes at his older brother as they drove across the narrow causeway from the mainland to the small island of Castle Key. Scott rolled his back. At least Jack *guessed* he did. It was hard to actually *see* Scott's eyes these days; since turning thirteen, he'd been growing his hair long and it flopped over his face like a shabby brown curtain. Dad had been doing the hard sell on this whole super-summer-by-the-seaside experience ever since they left London. But why couldn't he and Scott go with Dad to the rainforests of Central Africa? That's what Jack wanted to know! They'd stay out of the way while Dad was working on his archeological dig, excavating an ancient settlement. OK, so it *was* a bit close to a war zone, and there were a few *minor* problems with malaria and venomous snakes, but, hey, at least they wouldn't drop dead from terminal boredom there.

Aunt Kate was waiting at the door. Her hair, as white and fluffy as a dandelion clock, bristled with an assortment of hairclips. 'Come on in out of the rain, you boys!' she said, bundling them inside, smiling and dipping her head to look over her glasses. 'Now, I've made some of those jam tarts you like so much.'

Jack had a feeling Aunt Kate hadn't *totally* caught on to the twenty-first century yet. She seemed to think Daw had gone out to play thirty years ago and brought a couple of friends home for tea.

'Super!' Dad rubbed his hands together, as if a jam tart was the most exciting thing that had happened to him all year.

Then again, in Castle Key it probably *would* be.

The cottage was stuffed full of marmite-brown beams and flowery cushions. Jack sighed and helped himself to a jam tart. He tried to not think about what he'd be doing if he was at home: *meeting up at the BMX park with Josh and Ali, catching the new Batman film, going out for a pizza . . .*

It was so unfair!

After they'd said goodbye to Dad and finished dinner, Scott was at a loose end. Usually, he spent the evening having a kick-about with his mates, rehearsing with his band, *The Banners*, or playing computer games. He'd been planning to bring his laptop with him to Stone Cottage, but it had blown up the day before they left; it clearly didn't fancy spending the summer in Castle Key any more than he did! There *was* a computer at Stone Cottage – a hulking brontosaurus of a machine on the desk in the living room – but even if it had enough

memory to load a game, which Scott doubted, it was strictly for Aunt Kate's work. She was an author, which wasn't as interesting as it sounded, since she only wrote *romantic* novels! There were games in the cupboard under the stairs, but a brief inspection revealed nothing more thrilling than Snakes and Ladders.

Scott switched on the TV. It was so small you practically needed a telescope, and there were only four channels. The most exciting programme all evening was a documentary about newts. He switched it off.

'Might as well go to bed!' Jack grumbled. Scott trudged after him. Every stair creaked. So did the floorboards and the door. Their bedroom was tucked under the sloping ceiling. Jack threw himself down on the nearest of the two high, narrow beds. 'I'm not staying here! We have *to* run away and get back to London! We can stay at Josh's house!'

Scott stood at the small window, picking out chords on his guitar while gazing out at the roses in the back garden, which were being pushed around by the wind and the rain. He turned to his brother and shook his head.

Jack sat up and thumped his pillow. His thick blond hair was sticking up like a cockatoo's crest and his eyes sparked with anger. 'Oh, so you're going to be all *mature* and Let's-Make-The-Best-Of-It, are you?'

Scott grabbed a rolled-up sock and aimed it at

his brother. He was only a year older than Jack, but sometimes it felt like decades. And it wasn't just that he was so much taller. Perhaps it was because he could still remember Mum, but Jack couldn't. She had died in a car crash when Scott was four. *A kiss goodnight, the smell of lemon soap, walking under the trees in a park somewhere;* as fragile as butterfly wings, Scott kept the memories locked up in a safe place. But just because he kept his cool and didn't rant and rave like Jack, didn't mean he *liked* having to spend his summer on The Isle of Nowhere. 'Dad made us promise we wouldn't cause Aunt Kate any trouble, remember?'

Jack snorted and fired the sock back at Scott. '*Trouble?* That's a joke! What kind of trouble could we get up to in this dump?'

Scott climbed into bed, under the geological layers of woollen blankets, and stared at the cracks in the ceiling. Jack was right. There was nothing to do here, no one to hang out with and nowhere to go.

This was going to be the worst summer ever!

Jack was woken by the smell of frying bacon. Sunlight was streaming in round the curtains. He hopped out of bed and gave Scott's comatose form a good shake. 'Come on, Sloth-features!' he shouted,' I'm starving!'

Aunt Kate smiled at them as she placed full cooked breakfasts on the kitchen table. *At least the food's good here,* Jack thought, tucking into bacon and scrambled eggs. Better than *good.* This was an *awesome breakfast!* At home, they just helped themselves to Coco Pops. Things were looking up. Maybe he wouldn't run away *just* yet.

Aunt Kate wiped her hands on her blue and white striped apron and lent back against the cooker – one of those big old-fashioned range-style things – nodding approvingly as she watched them eat. 'Dinner will be on the table at seven every day. I know you boys'll want to go off exploring, so I've made you packed lunches. I'm busy with my new book, but I'm sure you'll find plenty to do. Just try not to injure yourselves *too* badly. And don't get arrested!' Aunt Kate added with a smile. 'The hospital and the police station are both on the mainland in Carrickstowe, and I don't have a car.'

Arrested? Jack nearly choked on his fried bread. *That'd be a challenge in this place!*

Scott was obviously thinking the same thing, 'Arrested for what? Breathing in an Offensive Manner?' he whispered.

'Sneezing without Due Care and Attention?' Jack laughed.

Aunt Kate was too busy clattering about at the sink to hear them. 'Oh, and don't go wandering on the cliffs

near the ruined castle,' she warned, 'It's very dangerous where the ground is crumbling away.'

Dangerous cliffs? Ruined castles? At last it sounded as if there might be *something* worth checking out in Castle Key.

'We'll stay well away,' Jack said.

With his fingers crossed firmly behind his back, of course.