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Jed Cartwright and the Lighthouse Mystery

A novel
by Ed Dunlop

(Book Four in the Jed Cartwright adventure series)

The Lighthouse Mystery

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Chapter 1 – DESPERATE SEARCH

“Good news!” Nathan Cartwright shouted as he dashed into the barn to find his brother Jed. “Mr. Lincoln was elected President!” In his excitement he tripped over a bridle left carelessly on the floor and fell flat, nearly striking his head against an iron plow. He picked himself up from the barn floor, brushing bits of straw and dirt from his clothes. “Jed, honest Abe is our next President!”

Jed turned from the handsome black stallion he had been currying and then set the brush on a three-legged stool nearby. “Abe Lincoln?” he echoed. “The tall lawyer from Illinois?”

Nathan nodded happily. “Honest Abe!” he repeated. “It just came over the telegraph. Everyone in St. Louis is talking about it! Mr. Lincoln got one hundred-eighty electoral votes, while Breckinridge only got seventy-two. And Douglas came in last, with twelve.”

Jed threw the brush high into the air and then caught it deftly. He thumped the big horse on the shoulder. “Hear that, Midnight? Abraham Lincoln is our new President!”

“Pa says he’ll be a good one,” Nathan continued, his blue eyes shining with excitement. “He’s against slavery, but even more important than that, he’s gonna fight to keep the Union together. There’s talk of South Carolina and some other states pulling out, you know.”

Jed nodded as he turned back to resume work on his magnificent horse. “South Carolina— that’s where we’re going tomorrow, isn’t it?”

“Yep,” Nathan answered. “Grampa takes care of the lighthouse just outside of Charleston. It’ll take us three days to get there by railroad.” He stooped and picked up the bridle and then turned and hung it on a peg in the harness rack. “Wait till you meet Grampa.”

Jed frowned as he began brushing out the shiny black mane. “Tell me about him,” he urged.

The two boys had been brothers for just a few short months. The wealthy Cartwright family had adopted Jed and his sister Mandy, orphans who came to St. Louis in search of an uncle

The Lighthouse Mystery

who had died. The lonely boy and girl had found their new home to be one filled with love and happiness. Jake Cartwright had led Jed to receive Jesus as his Savior shortly after he came to live with them.

“Grampa was a sea captain for years and years,” Nathan answered, “and sometimes he still acts like one. Sometimes he’s not as . . . as gentle as Pa is, but I think you’ll like him. He’s been the lighthouse keeper on Barnacle Bay for almost twenty years now. Granny died the year they moved into the lighthouse, and he’s been alone ever since.”

“Do you think he’ll like me?” the older boy asked. “I mean, since I’m adopted and all. You’re his real grandson, but I’m not.”

Nathan shrugged. “You’re just as much a part of the Cartwright family as I am,” he declared loyally. “Grampa will like you, I promise. And I think you’ll like him— once you get to know him.”

“Of course he’ll like you, Jed!” a powerful voice boomed, and both boys jumped, startled. A huge man stood framed in the barn doorway, his short, blond hair nearly touching the top of the doorframe. Massive arms and shoulders told of the man’s

tremendous strength, while the laughing eyes and kind face gave evidence of his gentle nature.

“Pa!” Jed exclaimed. “We didn’t hear you come up.”

Jake Cartwright laughed. “Even a man my size can move quietly,” he answered, “when he wants to.” He stepped into the barn, giving each of the boys an affectionate thump on the shoulder with a huge fist.

Pa took the curry brush from Jed and began to brush Midnight’s glossy coat. “This horse is looking mighty fine, Jed. You’re doing a good job taking care of him.”

He glanced at Jed as he continued to work. “My Pa will accept you just like the rest of us,” he assured the boy. “You’re a Cartwright just as much as Nathan or me.”

“But I’m adopted,” Jed protested. “I wasn’t born into the family.”

Pa shook his head. “Doesn’t matter,” he answered. “We chose you. You’re a part of this family because we wanted you. Don’t ever forget it.”

“But Grampa may not see it that way,” Jed argued. “He may resent me because I wasn’t born into the family.”

The Lighthouse Mystery

Pa shook his head again, vigorously this time. “Grampa will have no problem accepting you as one of us,” he replied. “Trust me. I know my own Pa.”

Footsteps sounded outside the barn, and the three Cartwrights looked up to see Mr. Watkins, a neighbor. “Luke, it’s good to see you,” Pa greeted him. “Take a look at this horse you gave my boy. Jed has him shining like a jewel!”

The neighbor nodded without even glancing at Midnight and Jed noticed a worried look on the man’s face. “Have you seen our little Miriam?” Mr. Watkins asked anxiously. “She’s been missing all day! I’ve been in town most of the day, and Esther assumed that Miriam was with me.”

Jed sucked in his breath sharply. Miriam and Michael were the three-year-old Watkins twins, brother and sister to his best friend, Merle. The family lived on the farm next to Meadow Green, the Cartwright estate.

Mr. Cartwright shook his head. “She hasn’t been here today, Luke,” he answered soberly, “but we’ll help you search. She’s just a little tyke, isn’t she?”

He turned to the boys. “Nathan, run to the house and tell Silas to bring as many hands as he can round up in two minutes,

then head for the Watkins’ place. Be sure to grab warmer coats for yourself and Jed. It’s getting colder by the minute.

“Jed, saddle Champ and Midnight, then you and Nathan ride as quickly as you can to the Watkins’ house. I’ll go with Mr. Watkins, and we’ll all meet at the farmhouse in five minutes.”

“Yes, sir,” Nathan responded and then hurried to carry out his father’s instructions.

A huge gray dog entered the barn just then and bounded toward his young master. Jed rubbed his ears affectionately. “Sorry, Wolf, you can’t go,” he told his pet. “We have to find little Miriam before it gets dark.”

Pa waved a huge hand. “We’ll see you boys at the Watkins’ farm.” He and Mr. Watkins hurried from the barn, and Jed turned his attention to the horses.

A howling wind rattled the slate shingles on the barn roof as Jed led the two horses into the barnyard moments later. He glanced at the sky, and his heart sank. Charcoal-gray clouds were rolling in, and the cedars on the east side of the mansion were dancing in unison as the chilling wind whipped them back and forth. The temperature was dropping rapidly.

The Lighthouse Mystery

Jed's thoughts immediately turned to little Miriam Watkins. *What if she is out in the storm?* Clutching the reins in his left hand, he drew his thin jacket more tightly about him.

"Here, Jed." Nathan thrust a thick, wool coat and a warm hat toward his brother, then took the reins of both horses. Jed gratefully donned the garments and then swung into Midnight's saddle.

"It's getting colder," Nathan observed as they rode into the lane. "I hope we find Miriam quickly."

Jed nodded absently. "Maybe I should have brought Wolf," he sighed. "He could help find her."

"What if we don't find Miriam tonight?" Nathan worried. "She'll die! It's gonna be awfully cold tonight!"

"Don't even talk that way, Nathan. We'll find her. She's probably asleep in the hay loft, or playing in the cellar, or—well, anyway, we'll find her."

They reached the Watkins' house to find several men gathered on the porch. Mr. Cartwright addressed the group. "Men," he said solemnly, "I don't need to tell you that this could be a tragedy if little Miriam is not found quickly. Tonight's gonna be cold, and we only have two hours of daylight. We're

going to have to move fast. Let's ask God for His guidance and then assign search teams to cover different areas."

He bowed his head, and the men reverently removed their hats. "Father in heaven, we need your guidance," Pa prayed earnestly. "Little Miriam is gone, and we don't have much time. It's gonna be cold tonight, Father, and we all know the little tyke cannot survive the night without shelter. Watch over Miriam, we pray, and guide us as we search. In Jesus' name, Amen."

When Mr. Cartwright had finished praying, Mr. Watkins spoke up. "Miriam was wearing a blue dress and bonnet, and a red sweater," he said huskily. "We must find her, men! If we don't find her by nightfall, she—" His voice broke.

Pa stepped forward again. "We'll all meet back here in one hour, whether or not we've found her. Jed, you and Nathan stay mounted and ride toward the river. It's a long way for one so little, but check it just the same. Stop at the Brown's and the Littlejohn's on the way back.

"The rest of us will search on foot. Silas, why don't you follow the creek, and search the Ledbetter's farm? Isaiah, you and Charles head toward town...."

The Lighthouse Mystery

Jed and Nathan swung back into their saddles and hurried from the yard, riding hard. A cold, biting wind swept in from the north, and Jed thrust his left hand into a pocket in an attempt to warm his numb fingers. *We have to find Miriam!* he thought desperately. *We have to!*

Several minutes later the boys reined in on the banks of the mighty Mississippi River, sat gazing silently across the gray waters for a moment, and then turned their horses south. They both leaned low in the saddles as they rode, examining the ground intently for footprints, broken limbs, or anything else that would indicate that the little girl had passed that way. But their hurried search along the shore produced nothing.

“Let’s ride back and search at the Brown’s and the Littlejohn’s,” Nathan suggested, looking at his pocket watch. “We’re supposed to be back at the Watkins’ place in twenty minutes.” Jed nodded and turned Midnight westward.

Five minutes later both boys reined their mounts to a stop at the front porch of a small, white-washed farmhouse. Dismounting quickly, they hurried up the front steps, drawing the collars of their coats more tightly around their throats. The front door opened at their approach and a small, wiry farmer

waved them inside. “Come in, boys, come in,” the man urged. “Get inside out of this weather.”

The howling wind snatched the door from the farmer’s grasp and slammed it against the side of the house. Jed grabbed the door and wrestled it shut as he slipped into the house after Nathan.

“Cold out there, ain’t it, boys?” the man remarked. “I hope this ain’t an indication of what kind of winter we’re fixin’ to git. What brings you boys out in weather like this?”

“Mr. Brown, have you seen a little girl?” Jed asked urgently. “It’s Miriam Watkins. She’s missing, and we’re searching for her. She was wearing a blue dress and bonnet and a red sweater.”

Mr. Brown’s cheerful smile faded immediately. “She’s just a tyke, isn’t she? How long has she been missing?”

“Quite a while,” Nathan cut in. “Maybe several hours.”

“That’s not good. Not good at all. Weather this cold could...” The farmer stopped in mid-sentence. He looked from one boy to the other. “We need to get a search party up, start searching for this little tyke,” he said earnestly. “I’ll help.”

The Lighthouse Mystery

“We have a search party formed already,” Jed told him. “There are quite a few men searching. If you want to help, we’re meeting again at the Watkins’ farm in ten or fifteen minutes.”

“I’ll be right there,” the farmer promised. “Just let me get my coat and hat.”

“We’ll meet you there,” Jed replied, turning toward the door. “Thank you, Mr. Brown. We have to ride.” Opening the door and lowering their heads against the unrelenting wind, both boys dashed for their horses.

As Jed and Nathan rode onto the Littlejohn’s farm Jed saw a bundled figure slip into the barn. The boys rode to the barn, dismounted, and hurried inside. Mr. Littlejohn was forking down hay from the loft while his wife was taking off her coat in preparation for the evening milking. “We’re looking for little Miriam Watkins,” Jed said breathlessly. “Have you seen her anywhere?”

The elderly farmer came scrambling down from the loft, seemingly reaching their side before the words were out of Jed’s mouth. “Miriam Watkins? Isn’t she one of the little twins?”

The Cartwright boys nodded soberly.

The farm couple both shook their heads. “We haven’t seen her today,” Mr. Littlejohn replied. “Matter of fact, we haven’t seen any of the Watkins since last Sunday at church.”

“Wait,” his wife interrupted, holding up one hand. “I *did* see little Miriam today! Now, where was I...”

Nathan and Jed waited eagerly.

“Oh, yes, I was at the drygoods store.” She paused with a thoughtful look on her face. “Little Miriam was with, let me see... Yes, she was with Martha Stauffer.” The woman looked at Jed triumphantly. “Yes, that’s who she was with—Martha Stauffer.”

Jed frowned. “Are you sure, ma’am?”

“I’m quite certain, young man,” the old woman said emphatically. “I saw her with my own eyes, just an hour or two ago. They were just coming up the steps as I was leaving the store.”

“Mr. Stauffer is in the search party,” Nathan told Jed. “This doesn’t make sense.”

“I know,” Jed replied. “Let’s head back to the Watkins’ place and talk with Mr. Stauffer when he comes in. Maybe they’ve found Miriam by now.”

The Lighthouse Mystery

“Thank you for your help,” Jed told the couple as he and Nathan headed for the door. Heads down against the wind, they remounted and hurried back to the Watkins’ farm, riding hard to be on time for their meeting with the rest of the search party. As they rode into the yard, numbers of men were gathering on the front porch. But the discouraged faces and heavy silence told the newcomers the answer to their unvoiced question. The little girl had not been found.

“She was with Mrs. Stauffer,” Jed called to the men on the porch as he and Nathan rode into the yard. “Mrs. Littlejohn saw Miriam in town with Mrs. Stauffer.” A murmur swept across the group of searchers as the men reacted to this bit of news. “They were at the drygoods store together, less than two hours ago.”

“Here comes Jim Stauffer now,” one man said, pointing as two men rode into the yard. “Let’s ask him if the little girl is still with Martha.”

“If Jim would pay more attention to what’s happening,” one man joked, “we wouldn’t be here now. This search has been for nothing. I coulda stayed with my stock.”

“All’s well that ends well,” another replied.

As Jim Stauffer dismounted, the men gathered around him. “Is Miriam with your wife?” Mr. Cartwright asked.

“With my wife?”

“Did your wife take Miriam into town today? Liza Littlejohn says she saw Miriam with her.”

A look of astonishment swept across the man’s face. “Martha hasn’t been into town at all today, Jake,” he replied, frowning in bewilderment. “She’s been puttin’ up apple butter all day. I know, ‘cause I was helping for the last couple of hours until Clyde here stopped by and asked me to join in the search.”

The yard buzzed with excitement and confusion as the men discussed this startling information.

Pa Cartwright held up both huge hands and tried to quiet the men. “Gentlemen, gentlemen!” he called. “Give me your attention!”

The men grew quiet.

“There’s a bit of a mix-up here, but we’ll get it straightened out.” He looked at his two sons. “Boys, are you certain that Mrs. Littlejohn said it was Mrs. Stauffer she saw the little girl with? And was she sure it was Miriam?”

Jed nodded. “We asked her again just to be sure, Pa.”

The Lighthouse Mystery

“But Martha hasn’t been to town today,” Mr. Stauffer repeated.

Pa nodded. He turned to Mr. Watkins. “How long has Miriam been missing, Luke?”

“Since sometime this morning. I’ve been in town most of the day, and Esther thought that Miriam was with me.”

Pa thought it over. “I’m afraid this is just a mistake on Mrs. Littlejohn’s part,” he told the searchers, clapping his gloved hands together to warm them. “We have to keep searching.” The men nodded in agreement.

Pa assigned new areas to be searched and then sent the volunteers out again quickly. Jed noticed with gratitude that the number of searchers was growing. But the second hour proved just as futile as the first.

As the searchers regrouped again after the second search, a silent Mr. Watkins led each group of volunteers into the sitting room to warm numb hands and chilled bodies at the glowing Franklin stove. “Mighty cold for November,” one man remarked, but his comment went unanswered.

When the entire group was assembled again, Pa stepped forward. Jed noticed that Mr. and Mrs. Watkins stood weeping silently near the door, their arms around each other.

Merle was nowhere to be seen.

“Neighbors,” Pa said softly, “let me speak for the Watkins’ family and express our appreciation for your concern and help. Daylight is gone, and we’ve not yet found little Miriam. I understand that most of you have stock to attend to, and no one is going to fault you if you leave. But this little girl desperately needs our help, and we’ll be grateful for any man that can stay.”

He paused and looked around the room. “My boys and I will search all night if necessary. The night is still growing colder, and little Miriam will not survive unless she is found quickly. We all know that we don’t have much time.”

Chapter 2 – WOLF

Jed stomped his boots in an attempt to warm his numb feet and then paused to adjust the wick in his coal oil lantern. The flickering flame leaped higher and the yellow glow from the lantern brightened considerably. “That’s better,” he remarked, holding the lantern high as he pulled the latch on the sagging barn door.

“I hope old man Wiggins doesn’t mind us searching his barn,” Nathan said.

Jed shrugged. “Pa said to search every barn we came to,” he replied. “And we knocked four different times. Mr. Wiggins is nearly deaf, you know.”

The weather-beaten door groaned in protest as the boys swung it open. “Sure looks spooky,” Nathan worried, peering timidly inside.

Jed laughed. “Come on,” he urged as he stepped into the ancient barn. “There’s nothing to be afraid of. Shadows can’t hurt anybody.”

Both boys held their lanterns high as they entered. “Miriam!” Jed called softly. “Miriam, it’s Jed! Are you here, little one?” The brothers quickly searched the old building from top to bottom, and then stepped out into the cold wind again, shivering as they secured the door.

“I hope somebody finds her soon,” Nathan said. “It’s cold enough to freeze your ears off!”

Jed nodded. “She won’t survive the night without shelter,” he replied soberly. “We’ve got to find her soon.” He turned to Nathan. “Let’s pray again,” he suggested. The boys knelt beside the barn and prayed for the little lost girl, asking God to guide the searchers to her in time.

As they stood to their feet, Nathan grabbed Jed’s arm. “Don’t move!” he whispered urgently. “Look!”

Jed caught his breath as he caught sight of a large pair of yellow eyes reflecting the feeble light of the lanterns. The animal was just outside the pale circle of yellow light, and only the eyes were visible to the boys. “Looks like a wolf!” Jed whispered.

The Lighthouse Mystery

“What do we do?” Nathan quavered.

“Hold still!” Jed whispered. “Let’s see what he does.”

The eyes dropped lower to the ground and then moved to one side. “He’s coming closer!” Nathan whispered. “I wish we had a rifle!”

Inch by inch, the boys retreated until their backs were against the barn door. “Maybe we can slip back inside,” Nathan suggested.

Jed shook his head. “We’d never get the door open in time,” he whispered. “Stay still. He’s circling, trying to decide what he’s gonna do.” The animal moved closer, and the boys could now see that it was indeed a large gray wolf. Head held low, he stalked toward the frightened youths. Nathan squeezed between Jed and the barn door.

“Hi-Yee!” A bright arc of yellow light sliced through the darkness as Jed hurled the lantern at the approaching wolf. The lantern struck the startled animal in the shoulder. With a yelp of fear, the wolf turned and bolted into the darkness.

Nathan let out his breath in a long whistle. “Good thinking, Jed,” he said weakly. “I didn’t know what he was going to do!”

Jed laughed as he stepped forward to retrieve the broken lantern. “It was the only thing I could think to do,” he admitted. “I was scared stiff.”

Nathan pulled his watch from his pocket and examined it in the pale yellow light of his own lantern. “Let’s head for the Watkins’ farm,” he suggested. “It’s about time to check in with Pa.”

Minutes later, Mrs. Watkins ushered the tired boys into the sitting room. Her worried face answered their unspoken question. “Come in by the fire and warm up, boys,” she said quietly. “Yore Pa’s not back yet, but some of the men are. We sure appreciate yore help in searching for Miriam.”

Pa entered the room just then, and Jed hurried to him. “Any sign of her?”

But the big man shook his head. “Not a trace,” he replied soberly. “We’ll have to keep searching.”

“If we don’t find her soon,” Jed said, “she’ll die in this cold.”

Mr. Cartwright sighed, and he suddenly looked very tired. He lowered his voice as he said, “Don’t let Mr. or Mrs. Watkins hear you say that, son. It would only hurt.”

The Lighthouse Mystery

“Yes, sir.” Jed nodded and returned to the glowing stove to warm his hands.

The morning dawned cold and gray. Weary, cold, and hungry, the searchers hurried to their own farms to care for their livestock and eat breakfast before returning to resume the search. Jed and Nathan stumbled along behind Silas and the other Cartwright servants as they headed toward the Cartwright mansion, cold and discouraged.

“Pa, what if I bring Wolf to help look for Miriam?” Jed asked eagerly. “Maybe he could sniff out her trail and find her.”

Pa shook his head. “We’re bringing two bloodhounds in from Manchester this morning,” he replied. “Matter of fact, they should be there before we get back. They’ll find her.”

“But Wolf could find her,” Jed argued. “I know he could! All we have to do is—”

But Pa held up a huge hand to interrupt him. “No, Jed. This is a job for an expert tracker and bloodhounds, not just a boy and his dog. Bringing Wolf in might interfere with the hounds.”

After a quick breakfast, Pa and the other men hurried back to the Watkins’ farm, leaving Jed and Nathan to help Silas with the morning chores. As Nathan milked and Jed forked hay down for the cattle, Wolf came bounding into the barn. Jed hurried down the steep ladder to greet him.

“You could find little Miriam, couldn’t you, boy?” Jed told the giant dog as he affectionately stroked Wolf’s head. “I know you could!”

A sudden thought seized him, and he glanced up to note that Silas was nowhere in sight, and that Nathan was busy with the milking. “Come on, Wolf,” he whispered as he hurried from the barn, keenly aware that he was disobeying Pa’s instructions. “It’ll only take a few minutes.”

Jed raced across the fields with Wolf on his heels. As they neared the Watkins’ farmhouse, Jed spotted a wagon turning into the driveway. Two black-and-brown hounds with oversized ears and sad, doleful eyes sat in the back of the wagon. The hounds watched Jed and Wolf as they raced across the yard. “We’ll have to hurry, Wolf!” Jed said.

Wolf followed him to the back porch. “Wait here, boy,” Jed whispered. “I’ll be right back.” He slipped into the house and

The Lighthouse Mystery

then returned moments later with a small shoe, which he thrust toward the dog.

“Find Miriam,” he urged, holding the shoe so that Wolf could sniff it. “Find her, Wolf!” He led the dog out to the roadway.

Wolf sniffed the shoe eagerly and then dropped his nose to the ground. He scurried about in small circles as he cast about for the scent. Suddenly he gave a short bark and hurried across the road. Jed hurried to catch up. “Find something, Wolf?”

With his nose to the ground, the dog bounded up the gentle slope directly across from the Watkins’ farm. He whined as he ran, and Jed’s heart beat faster. Wolf was acting as though he had found the little girl’s scent! Jed hurried to catch up.

Less than eighty yards from the Watkins’ farmhouse, Wolf suddenly stopped, pawed at the ground, and gave one sharp bark. He was nosing the ground and whining as his young master came running up to him. “What’d ya find, Wolf?”

To Jed’s astonishment, Wolf had found a narrow opening in the earth, just over a foot wide and less than six feet long. His heart pounding with anticipation, Jed knelt and peered into the

darkness below. He could just make out the shadowy outlines of a narrow cave.

“Miriam?” Jed cupped his hands to his mouth and called softly. “Miriam? It’s Jed! Can you hear me? Answer me, Miriam.” But there was no answer. Jed looked up at Wolf in disappointment. “Good try, boy, but she’s not down there.” But the huge dog continued to whine and paw at the edge of the fissure as though he knew something his young master did not.

Jed leaned forward and called again. “Miriam?”

His heart leaped as he heard a sob from the darkness below. A tiny voice whimpered, “Jed? I hurted my leg. And I’m so hungry!”

Jed dropped to his belly in the frost-covered grass, cupped his hands to the side of his face, and peered into the cavern beneath him. As his eyes grew accustomed to the dim light, he spotted a tiny figure dressed in blue and red. The little girl was five or six feet below him, lying on her side, her knees tucked up under her chin. Her small face looked white as the big blue eyes studied him anxiously.

The Lighthouse Mystery

“Miriam!” Jed dropped one arm into the crevasse and waved at the little girl in an attempt to cheer her. “I’ll get you out in just a minute, little one!”

He knelt above the opening. Bracing his forearms on each side, he slowly lowered his legs into the crevasse. One probing boot found a foothold on a rocky ledge, and he released his hold on the ground above. In seconds, he was kneeling beside little Miriam Watkins. To his surprise, the cavern extended out of sight in both directions.

Jed touched the tiny figure. “Are you all right, Miriam? I’ll take you home.”

The little girl sat up and threw her arms around him. “I was naughty, Jed,” she whimpered. “Mama told me not to leave the porch.” A sob shook the little body.

Jed held her tightly, patting her gently on the back. “I think your Mama is ready to forgive you,” he assured her. “Come on, let’s get you home. Can you climb on my back?”

Mr. Watkins and another man were just riding into the farmyard below as Jed hurried down the hillside with Miriam cradled in his arms. “Mr. Watkins!” Jed shouted. “I found her! She’s alive!”

Jed would never forget the look on the neighbor’s face as the man scrambled from his horse and rushed up the slope toward them. “Miriam!” her father cried, with tears streaming down his face. “All you all right, baby?”

“She’s all right,” Jed assured the man as he handed the little girl to her father. “I found her in a little cave right up there,” he said, pointing. “She scraped her leg a bit, and she’s hungry, but she’s gonna be all right. The warmth of the cave kept her from freezing.”

“Thank you, God!” Mr. Watkins breathed, wrapping his arms around the little girl and holding her close. Tears streamed down his face as he looked heavenward. “Thank you, Lord!”

He looked at Jed. “Son, I can’t tell you how much—” A sob choked off his words.

Jed was in the Cartwright barn finishing the chores with Nathan when Pa came walking in. “I heard that little Miriam Watkins was found,” he said, striding over to the milking stalls where the boys were working.

The Lighthouse Mystery

“Jed found her,” Nathan replied, his eyes shining proudly. “And she was all right!”

“I understand that Wolf was the one that found her,” Pa answered, regarding Jed intently. “Am I right, son?”

Jed found that he could not meet Pa’s gaze. “Yes, sir,” he replied, dropping his head.

“And I believe I remember telling you that Wolf was to be left at home.”

“But Pa—”

“And you not only disobeyed me by taking Wolf,” Pa continued, “but you also ignored my orders to help Silas and Nathan with the chores. You took Wolf and went searching, when you were supposed to be working here in the barn.”

“But, Pa,” Jed protested, “Miriam might have died! No one even knew that the cave was there. Aren’t you glad we found her?”

The big man sighed deeply. “Jed, I’m very glad that we found Miriam. And I’m very thankful that she was alive and well. But I think you were most interested in showing that Wolf could find her before the hounds did. The point is, you deliberately disobeyed me, even though your interference might

have jeopardized the search. Son, I’m keenly disappointed in you.”

Jed blinked back hot tears. Pa’s words cut deeply. “What are you gonna do?” he asked.

Pa sighed again. “I’m not going to whip you this time. Somehow, that just doesn’t seem appropriate. But I want you to know that you let me down. I thought I could depend on you, Jed.”

Mr. Cartwright raised a huge hand to his face. He stroked his jaw as he studied Jed thoughtfully. Jed squirmed uncomfortably under his gaze. Finally, the man spoke again. “It’s never right to do wrong, son, even if you think it’s for a good reason. You disobeyed me because you thought it was the best thing to do. Right now, it may seem to you that everything came out all right— you found little Miriam Watkins because you disobeyed, and everything’s fine. But never forget, obedience is always the best course of action. Every time. Next time, your disobedience just might bring disaster. Try to remember that.”

Pa stepped toward the barn door and then turned again to face the two boys. “Finish your chores, then head to the house

The Lighthouse Mystery

and get some sleep. We missed the train today, so our trip to Grampa's will be delayed slightly. We'll catch the next train on Thursday."

Jed watched him walk from the barn. *He doesn't even care that we found Miriam, Jed thought bitterly. Wolf found her safe and sound, but that doesn't even seem to matter.* Resentment flared in his heart as he angrily stabbed the pitchfork into the manure on the barn floor.

Chapter 3 – THE TRIP

A shrill blast from the whistle screamed across the hills as the powerful locomotive thundered into the curve, followed by a string of swaying, clattering passenger cars. Mandy snuggled her head close to Jed's, laughing in delight as her long, blond braids fluttered gaily out the window. "Better pull your head in a bit, Sis," Jed suggested. "You'll get a cinder in your eye."

Mandy folded her arms across the windowsill and lowered her head to rest her chin on her hands. "How fast are we going, Jed?"

Jed watched the trees flashing past the window for a moment or two before he answered. "The conductor said we would go as fast as thirty-three miles an hour," he replied. "We're going mighty fast right now, so maybe we're doing thirty-three."

The Lighthouse Mystery

“Thirty-three miles an hour!” the girl exclaimed. “That’s powerful fast!”

Jed laughed and playfully pulled one of her braids. “Look at Granny and Mrs. Pender,” he whispered. Mandy turned and looked in the seat ahead, where the Widow Jarkey and another elderly lady sat together, chatting amiably. “We’ve only been on the train for two hours, but you’d think they’d been friends for life.”

Mandy nodded. “Granny makes friends anywhere,” she agreed.

Jed settled back in the plush seat and pulled his knife from one pocket of his waistcoat and a small chunk of white pine from another. A small pile of shavings began to grow in his lap as the sharp blade sliced carefully along the edge of the block.

Mandy watched in silence for a moment. Finally, she could contain her curiosity no longer. “Whatcha making?”

Jed shrugged as he paused to study the piece of wood from several different angles. “Don’t know yet,” he answered finally. “I’ll just have to wait and see what comes out of the wood. But I’m making a carving for Mrs. Pender.” He carved in silence for

several minutes, and Mandy turned her attention to the passing scenery.

Nathan plopped himself into the seat across the aisle from Jed and Mandy. “I’m starving!” he declared. “Why don’t we head for the dining car?”

Mr. Cartwright overheard him and consulted his pocket watch. “It’s not really lunch time yet,” he declared, “but I’m hungry, too. Why don’t we all take an early lunch?” He picked up Sarah and headed down the swaying aisle toward the dining car, followed by the rest of the family and Mr. Phelps. He paused at the door. “Coming, Granny?”

Granny shook her head. “Go on without me. Naomi and I are busy gabbing.”

The Cartwrights enjoyed a delicious roast beef dinner served by waiters in spotless white uniforms. After having cherry pie for dessert, they headed back to their own car. Granny and her new friend were still chatting merrily as the rest of the family took their seats again.

Jed carved in silence for some time, and then held the carving up for Mandy’s inspection. “What do you think?”

The Lighthouse Mystery

“It’s a locomotive!” Mandy exclaimed. “Just like the one pulling our train.” She took the object from him and inspected it more closely. “Jed, it’s perfect! Mrs. Pender will love it.”

Jed smiled as he closed the blade and slipped the knife into his pocket. “It’s not quite finished, but I’m tired of working on it. I’ll finish it this evening.” Leaving the carving with his sister, he stood to his feet and began to make his way toward the front of the car.

“Where you going, Jed?” Nathan asked as Jed passed his seat.

“Just gonna check on Wolf, then step out on the rear platform for a breath of fresh air,” Jed answered. “Want to come along?”

The boys walked forward to the baggage car. As Jed stepped into the car, Wolf sprang to his feet, delighted to see his master. Jed reached through the wooden slats of the traveling kennel and stroked the big dog’s fur. “How ya doing old boy?” he crooned to the dog. “I wish I could take you for a walk, but the conductor would have a fit.”

He released the latches on the kennel door and let Wolf out.

“What are you doing?” Nathan demanded. “You can’t let him run around. The conductor and Pa both told you not to.”

“It’s just for a minute,” Jed replied. “How would you like to be cramped up in a cage like that?” He played with the big dog for a few minutes, and then locked him back in the kennel.

The boys made their way back through the swaying cars and stepped out on the platform at the rear of the train. As they started to close the door behind them, they realized that Mandy had tagged along behind. The three Cartwrights stood silently for several minutes watching the tracks recede behind the train.

“How long will it take us to get to Grampa’s?” Mandy asked.

“I don’t really know,” Nathan replied. “The railroad wasn’t finished the last time our family went.”

“We should get there by Saturday night,” Jed answered Mandy. “Once we cross Illinois, we still have to go through Kentucky and Tennessee before we get to South Carolina.”

“Where will we sleep?” the girl wondered aloud.

“We’ll sleep on the train,” Nathan told her. “The train will go all night. The only time it stops is for passengers or baggage, or to take on water and coal for the engine.”

The Lighthouse Mystery

The door opened just then, and a tall, skinny youth squeezed onto the narrow platform with them. “Move over,” he snapped at Mandy. “You’re not the only one who wants to stand here!”

Nathan bristled at the newcomer’s arrogance. “Watch how you talk to my sister!” he told the boy.

“Your sister,” the other snorted. “You’ve gotta be putting me on!”

“He’s her brother, and so am I,” Jed told the boy. “And you had better leave her alone.”

The tall boy smirked as he studied the three Cartwrights. “I can believe that you two are brother and sister,” he said finally, “but not him!” He pointed to Nathan.

“What do you mean?” Nathan bristled.

“You have blond hair and blue eyes, and they have dark hair, and dark eyes,” the other replied. “You don’t look anything like them. They might be brother and sister, but not you.”

“We’re all brothers and sisters,” Jed told the boy.

“Then what happened to this jaybird?” the boy jeered, pointing at Nathan. “Didja join the family late or something?”

Jed was angry. He doubled up his fists, but Nathan quickly grabbed his arm. “Jed,” he pleaded, “let’s just go back inside. The air isn’t that good out here now, anyhow.”

Reluctantly, Jed followed Nathan and Mandy back inside. When they entered their own car, Jed picked up Sarah and sat down beside Pa. Pa glanced at him over the newspaper he was reading, saw the troubled look on Jed’s face, and then put the paper aside. “What’s the matter, Jed?”

Jed shrugged. “Oh, nothing.”

Mr. Cartwright laid a huge hand on Jed’s knee. “Come on, son, I can tell when something’s bothering you. Out with it.”

Jed frowned, looked at the floor, and then back at his father. “Sometimes I wish we had never been adopted.”

Surprise registered on Pa’s face. “It’s too late to change it now, son. You’re part of the family. But I thought you liked living with us.”

Jed shook his head. “I didn’t mean that,” he said hastily. “But sometimes I don’t feel like Mandy and I are really part of your family. We’re different. Sometimes I think you adopted us just ’cause you felt sorry for us!”

The Lighthouse Mystery

Pa squeezed Jed's shoulder. "God brought you to us, Jed. I've never doubted that for a moment. And when He brought us together, He also knit our hearts together. Ma and I love you and Mandy every bit as much as we love Nathan, or little Sarah. You know that, don't you?"

Jed was silent for a moment. "Yes, sir, I guess so," he replied finally. "But we don't even look like we belong in the family." He told Pa about the remarks of the boy on the platform.

"So that's it," Pa said. "Jed, you might as well face it— you and Mandy don't look much like the rest of the family. You'll probably hear comments like that for the rest of your life. But remember— there's nothing wrong with being adopted. You're as much a part of the Cartwright family as anyone. Don't let the remarks of other people get under your skin. Shrug it off, alright?"

Jed frowned. "It's not that easy, Pa," he replied. "You don't know what it's like being adopted and hoping you'll fit in with the rest of the family."

Pa started to speak, but then, a thoughtful look crossed his countenance and he stopped. He was silent for a moment. "I think I understand what you're feeling."

"How could you?" Jed exploded. "You don't know what it's like to feel that you're not really a part of the family, but everyone else is! And guys like that jaybird on the platform keep reminding me that we don't really belong. Do you know what that's like?"

Pa shrugged. "Maybe, maybe not. But remember this— you're a Cartwright, and we love you as much as if you had been born into the family. Never forget it."

The three-day trip went quickly. The family enjoyed the novelty of eating their meals in the gleaming dining car and sleeping in the cozy berths at night. Each day they awoke to find the passing landscape completely different from the day before. Mr. Phelps kept the three young people busy with schoolwork each morning, but gave them the afternoons off. They changed trains midday on the second day, and again early on Saturday. Finally, the conductor passed through their car late that

The Lighthouse Mystery

afternoon. “Next stop, Charleston!” he called. “Charleston, South Carolina!”

The whistle shrilled, and with a hiss of steam, the train began to slow as it approached the station. The car swayed and jolted as the brakes fought to bring the speeding train to a standstill. With the screech of metal on metal, the train slid to a stop beside the brightly-painted station.

Mrs. Cartwright bustled about, trying to be certain that everyone gathered his or her belongings, and Mr. Cartwright gave a tip to the conductor. Jed picked up Sarah, who wrapped her little arms tightly around his neck. He crowded into the aisle with Mandy and Nathan, anxious to be reunited with Wolf. The Cartwrights stepped from the train to be greeted by a small, white-haired man in an immaculate uniform. Long, bushy sideburns lent a somewhat fierce appearance to his weather-beaten face, and a captain’s cap perched jauntily on his head. He hurried forward to meet them.

“It’s good to see you again!” he boomed in a foghorn-like voice. “Have a good trip?” He reached up to grab Pa in a bear hug. “It’s good to have you home, son!”

Jed stood to one side as the stocky little man embraced each member of the family one at a time. Finally the man came to him. “And you must be Jedediah,” he said sternly, shaking hands with a crushing grip. “Glad to have you aboard, boy.” He turned to Mandy. “And you are Mandy, I assume. You’re a beauty, little lady!”

Mandy blushed.

Then the man noticed Granny for the first time. “And who,” he asked, “is this lovely lady?” He swept his captain’s cap from his head, revealing a shiny bald head. He bowed low. “Hiram Cartwright, Ma’am, at your service. I trust that your stay at Barnacle Bay will be a very pleasant one.”

Jed turned to Pa in confusion. “Pa,” he whispered, “who is this?”

“This is your Grampa,” Pa replied.

“My Grampa?” Jed echoed. “Your Pa? But you’re so big, and he— he’s not even as tall as I am!”

Pa laughed at Jed’s bewilderment. “He’s my Pa, all right. Has been since I was eleven years old. Jed, I was adopted too.”

Chapter 4 – GRAMPA CARTWRIGHT

Jed stared at his father. “Adopted?” he echoed. “You? But you never told me!”

Pa nodded. “Your Uncle Willard and I were orphaned by a fire. Willard was thirteen when it happened and I was ten. Hiram and Beulah Cartwright adopted us the next year. Our last name was Vanderboeck, but Willard and I were both proud to change it to Cartwright.”

Jed was speechless.

Pa slipped a big, strong arm around him. “I know what you’re going through,” he said softly. “I went through it myself.”

Jed regarded Grampa Cartwright thoughtfully. “Then Grampa shouldn’t have any problem accepting Mandy and me,” he decided, “since you’re adopted, too.”

Pa smiled. “He’ll accept you, Jed, just as he did Willard and me.”

The family walked back to the baggage platform, and Grampa took charge. “You there,” he said, addressing a passing porter, “see to the Cartwright baggage. It needs to be taken to the two carriages waiting at the curb. Look alive now, man!”

“Yes, sir,” the porter replied, and then hurried off to carry out Grampa’s orders.

Jed waited impatiently while the workers unloaded the baggage, and then hurried into the baggage car to free Wolf. “It’s been a long three days, hasn’t it, Wolf?” Jed said as he opened the door to the wooden kennel. “Come on! You’re free! I think you’re gonna like it at Grampa’s place.” He led the huge dog onto the platform beside the train.

Grampa took one look at Wolf, and his eyes widened in amazement. “Look at the size of that beast!” he exclaimed. “He’s bigger than a timber wolf!”

Jed smiled proudly. “Do you like him? His name is Wolf.”

Grampa cautiously stroked Wolf’s head. “I guess I had better like him, hadn’t I?” he replied with a laugh. “I want to be on good terms with any animal his size.”

Grampa turned and walked to the carriages. “You ladies will ride in this carriage,” he said, opening the door of the second

The Lighthouse Mystery

carriage, “and the men will ride in the other. Here, Mandy, up you go.” As Grampa assisted the ladies into the carriage, Jed imagined that he saw a special sparkle in the old man’s eyes when he came to Granny.

Jed climbed into the first carriage and Wolf sprang in and lay down at his feet. Grampa stood to one side as Nathan, Mr. Phelps and Mr. Cartwright climbed in. “Barnacle Bay, driver,” Grampa said, and then climbed in and closed the door.

As the carriages rolled down the cobblestone street, Grampa turned to Pa. “You came at a good time. We’ve had some cold weather already, but it warmed up again yesterday, and I’m expecting it to stay warm for a while.”

Jed gazed in wonder as the city of Charleston passed before them. He was fascinated by the cobblestone streets with their boardwalks and gas street lamps, the many shops with their leaded windows and colorful awnings, and the three-and-four-story buildings that towered over them. “Even St. Louis isn’t like this,” he breathed.

“Charleston is much older than St. Louis,” Mr. Cartwright explained. “Really, St. Louis is still a frontier town.”

“How long will it take us to get there, Grampa?” Nathan asked.

“Barnacle Bay is thirteen miles south of town,” the old man responded. “A bit of a trip, but we’ll be there before you can say ‘hoist the mainsail’.”

Suddenly Jed pointed. “Look!” The carriages had reached the oceanfront, and the Atlantic Ocean had come into view, vivid blue and sparkling. “You— you can’t see the other side!” he blurted in amazement.

Grampa laughed. “Here’s a landlubber for sure!” he remarked. “Son, is this your first glimpse of the sea?”

Jed nodded.

“I’ve spent most of my life on that water,” the old man said wistfully. “I feel more at home on board a heaving deck than I do on dry land.”

Jed sat in silence, watching the foaming white breakers sweep time after time toward shore. He was captivated by the constant motion, and awed at the vastness of the water.

He looked up to realize that Grampa was studying him closely. “So you’re a Cartwright, are ya, mate?”

Jed nodded. “Yes, sir.”

The Lighthouse Mystery

“The Cartwright name is a good ‘un,” the old man said gruffly. “Be sure that you do well by it.”

“Yes, sir,” Jed replied, suddenly feeling very uncomfortable.

The sun was dropping quickly toward the horizon as the carriages topped the crest of a gentle hill. Below the road, an emerald-green meadow fell away to a series of rocky cliffs jutting out above the ocean. Perched on the edge of the nearest cliff stood a sturdy stone house, and just beyond it, a tall white tower with a little gallery of glass windows at the very top. Jed recognized the strange structure as a lighthouse.

“Home it is!” Grampa sang out. “Welcome to Barnacle Bay and Sharktooth Point.”

“Grampa, are you gonna show Jed and Mandy the lighthouse?” Nathan asked.

“Let’s get a bite to eat first,” the old man replied. “There’ll be plenty of time for a tour after that.”

The carriages pulled up in front of the stone house, and the entire family pitched in to unload the baggage. Even little Sarah struggled to carry one of Mrs. Cartwright’s hatboxes into the house. When the last of the luggage had been unloaded, the carriages disappeared over the hill.

“Well, the first item of business is dinner,” Grampa announced. Turning to Ma and Granny, he said, “Why don’t you ladies help me with the fixin’s? We’re going to have a grand seafood feast, and this old salt sometimes moves a bit slow. I could use your help.”

He turned to Nathan. “You can show Mandy and Jedediah around, but keep an eye on little Sarah. I don’t want her too close to the cliffs! We’ll ring the dinner bell in half an hour. Keep an ear open.”

“I’ll keep Sarah with me,” Pa declared. He picked her up and tossed her high into the air and then caught her easily. Sarah shrieked with laughter. “Do it ‘gin, Pa!”

As the adults walked into the house, Nathan headed for the cliffs on the east side of the lighthouse. “Come on, Jed,” he urged. “Wait till you see this place!”

Jed, Nathan, and Mandy stood atop the cliff, watching the powerful surf break against the rocks far below. Jed sniffed the air. “It even smells different here,” he observed. He reached down and stroked the head of Wolf, who pressed close against his hip. “Picked up some new smells here, didn’t you boy?”

The Lighthouse Mystery

Jed's attention was drawn to a flock of large, white birds with huge, snowy wings. The birds screeched and scolded as they circled a small stretch of sandy beach at the water's edge. "Look at those birds!" he exclaimed. "What are they?"

"Sea gulls," Nathan told him. "They're everywhere."

Jed watched the breakers pounding the rocks at the base of the cliff. "It looks so steep," he said. "How do we get down to the water?"

"We can't here," his brother replied. "And it wouldn't be safe if you could. The waves would dash you to pieces on those rocks."

He turned toward the lighthouse. "Let's go over on the other side," he suggested. "The west side of the cliff is rugged, but there's a path going down closer to the water. And once we pass the house, the hill slopes down to a sandy beach where we can swim and fish."

Jed and Mandy followed Nathan as he headed back to the house and then took a small path leading at right angles from the front door. The path led to the edge of the precipice, then twisted and wound its way down the very face of the cliff. Jed held his breath as the trio cautiously made their way down the steep,

rocky trail, but his brother didn't seem to mind the danger in the least. At last they reached a landing and the trail came to an end. Jed looked back. Wolf sat at the top of the trail, watching intently. Jed crept to the very edge and looked down. The water, some twenty feet below, looked dark and deep, but the violence of the waves was lesser here. To his right he noticed a sandy beach, which tapered out just before it reached a point directly below him.

"How do we get down to the beach?" he asked.

"Follow me," Nathan replied. "We have to go back up first."

The boys followed their sister back up the winding trail and then across the gentle slope of the hill. Once they had passed the house, Nathan took a trail that angled gently down to the water. To Jed's surprise, there were no rocky bluffs, but the meadow sloped gradually down to the edge of the beach he had seen from the precipice. Moments later, the trio stood on the sand at the water's edge. Wolf ran along the beach, barking at the incoming breakers.

"Let's go wading," Jed suggested.

The Lighthouse Mystery

But Nathan pulled out his pocket watch and shook his head. “Grampa will have dinner ready in ten more minutes,” he replied. “We’d better head back.”

Once back at the top of the hill, Mandy and Nathan headed toward the house, but Jed hung back. “I want to take a look at the lighthouse,” he said.

“Dinner’s just about ready,” Nathan reminded him.

“I’ll just take a quick look,” Jed replied. To his disappointment, Wolf followed Nathan and Mandy into the house.

Seconds later he stood at the base of the tall tower, head tilted back, enjoying his first good look at the old lighthouse. The structure loomed over him, its gently tapering white walls reminding him of an enormous candle. Two horizontal black bands were painted around the lighthouse about thirty feet above the ground, and Jed wondered why. He stepped forward and opened the massive wooden door. Taking a deep breath, he ventured inside. Several windows above him admitted enough amber light from the dying sun to allow him to see. A winding iron staircase with narrow handrails started at his feet and

climbed in a spiral above his head. He put one foot on the bottom stair, thought better of it, and then turned to go outside.

He noticed a small wooden door. An area beneath the stairs was walled in with stone, forming a small room. Jed lifted the latch and opened the door. To his surprise, he noticed a heavy bolt on the inside of the door.

That’s odd, he thought. Why would you want to lock yourself inside this stuffy little room?

The closet contained several small wooden crates. Jed pushed the door open wider and bent over the nearest crate with interest. Suddenly a strong hand seized him by the collar and jerked him back through the little door.

He found himself face to face with a furious old man. Powerful hands gripped his coat lapels and lifted him off the floor and then slammed him against the wall of the lighthouse. “Grampa!” Jed grunted, amazed at the old man’s strength. The breath was knocked out of him by the man’s elbows.

“What are you doing here?” Grampa raged. “How did you get in here?”

The Lighthouse Mystery

Jed was scared, especially with the old man's angry breath in his face and his thick arms pinning him to the wall. "I just wanted to see the lighthouse," he gasped.

Grampa's eyes stared into Jed's, and he looked so fierce and angry that fear tightened around Jed's chest like a giant fist. He could hardly breathe. "Don't ever come into the lighthouse by yourself," the old man rasped. "And don't ever— hear me?— don't ever, ever open that door again!"

He suddenly stepped back and released Jed so abruptly that Jed nearly fell to the floor. Jed caught his balance and leaned back against the wall, sucking in deep breaths in ragged gasps. His grandfather kicked shut the door to the little room, and then dropped the latch in place. "Remember what I said, boy."

"Yes, sir," Jed mumbled and staggered out the front door of the lighthouse. As he stumbled toward the house, he glanced over his shoulder, but the old man was still inside the lighthouse.

Jed stood on the front porch, trying to catch his breath and waiting for his heart to stop pounding so furiously. His head swam with anxious questions. *What was in those wooden crates? Why did Grampa react so violently? What is in the old lighthouse that he didn't want me to see?*

As Jed walked into the house, a plan was already forming in his mind. He would have another look at those mysterious crates. Grampa's lighthouse held some strange secret, but he was going to uncover it.

Chapter 5 – A WARNING

Jed entered the house to discover the delicious aroma of baking bread. He took a deep breath, forced a smile to his lips, and then headed for the kitchen where he could hear the rest of the family talking. Nathan looked up as he came in. “Jed, you won’t believe what we’re having for dinner!”

Grampa stepped into the room right behind him. “Time to light the lamp,” he announced. “Dinner is running just a few minutes late, anyway.”

He looked at Granny. “If you women folk will see to the galley in our absence, the men will attend to the lighthouse duties. Put the scallops on in another five minutes.”

Ma playfully snapped a dishtowel at him. “Galley nothing, Grampa. We’re on land, so this is a kitchen. Go ahead and take care of the lighthouse, and we’ll get along just fine without you.

But be sure and take Mandy— she’s been dying to see the lighthouse.”

Grampa took two lanterns from beside the door, lit one, and then handed it to Jed. “Better have a little light, huh?” he said, winking at Jed as he lit the second lantern. “It’ll be getting dark soon inside that old lighthouse.”

Jed stared at him in alarm. How could Grampa be so harsh and vicious one moment, then appear to be so warm and friendly the next? Fear and distrust tightened his stomach in knots. He fell in step beside Pa as the group walked toward the lighthouse in the fading twilight.

“Each lighthouse has its own distinct pattern of light, known as its characteristic,” Grampa was saying, “so that ships at sea can instantly tell where they are when they see the lighthouse. Some lighthouses use colored lights; some use double flashes; some flash fast; some flash slow. My lighthouse flashes once every three-and-a-half seconds, which identifies it as the Sharktooth Point light.”

He stopped and pointed up at the side of the lighthouse tower. “See those black stripes? That’s the day characteristic of the Sharktooth Point light. Any sailor seeing those stripes would

The Lighthouse Mystery

know which lighthouse this is, and he would immediately know that he was nearing Charleston, even if he had been way off course.”

“How would he know that, Grampa?” Mandy asked.

“Each ship has a little book called the ‘Light List,’” the old lighthouse keeper answered. “The Light List tells the captain of the ship what each lighthouse looks like in the day time, and what kind of light pattern it flashes at night.”

“How far away can a ship’s captain see your light, Grampa?” Nathan asked.

“The top of the cliff is sixty-four feet above the water at high tide,” Grampa replied, “and the lighthouse is fifty-six feet higher than that, so the light is just about one hundred and twenty feet above the water. At that height, the horizon is twelve-and-a-half miles away. At fifteen feet above sea level, which is the approximate height of the deck of most ships, the horizon is about four-and-a-half miles away. Add those figures together, and you get a distance of seventeen miles. In clear weather, my light is visible for seventeen miles.”

He opened the lighthouse door and then handed his lantern to Nathan. “You and Mandy go first,” he told the boy. “Your Pa

will be right behind you, and Jed and I will bring up the rear with the other lantern. Watch your step!”

As the others started up the gray iron stairs, Grampa put one hand on Jed’s shoulder, holding him back. “I’m sorry if I was a little rough with you, boy,” he said quietly. “But do remember what I said.” Jed just nodded, too frightened to say anything. He turned and followed the others up the stairs. The steps wound round and round in a tight little spiral around a thick iron post. As they climbed, Jed ran his hand along the side of the wall above the railing. The stone felt cold, almost wet.

After what seemed like ages, the winding stairs finally gave way to a steep, black ladder. “Watch your step, Nathan,” Grampa called. “Help Mandy, please.”

As Jed reached the top of the ladder, he found himself in a small, round room with a small window on each side. Overhead he saw a cluster of brass gears, springs, levers, and other machinery. A large black tank stood against one wall, and a shiny brass tube from the tank disappeared through the ceiling.

Jed stepped over to a window and peered out, and then caught his breath. The roof of the house was far below.

The Lighthouse Mystery

“This is called the ‘watch room’,” Grampa informed them. “The room overhead that actually holds the light is called the ‘lantern gallery’.” He placed one hand on a large handle on the side of the tank that Jed had noticed. “This is the fuel tank for the lamp,” he said. “My lamp burns oil, which must be pumped up to the lamp to be burned.” He raised the handle, and then forced it back down again with some effort. “This pressurizes the oil, and pumps it to the reservoir to be burned.”

He pointed to the gears and levers overhead. “Ever wonder what makes the light in the lighthouse keep turning round? Those gears are run by heavy-duty clockwork, and they turn the light. I have to wind the springs up every night when I light the wick.”

He pointed to a narrow ladder. “Let’s go up to the gallery. One at a time, and do be careful. Nathan, you go first.”

When Jed reached the top of the ladder he saw a small, round room, seven or eight feet across, completely enclosed in glass. In the very center of the room, a round brass pedestal about three feet high supported the light. A glass chimney nearly two feet tall sat in the center of the pedestal. Sturdy horizontal

rings of glass ran around the inside of the chimney, while one side of the chimney formed a thick glass lens.

Grampa reached to one side of the lens and unsnapped two brass catches, then swung the lens to one side. “This is known as an Argand burner,” he told them. “You see the hollow wick in the middle? When the lamp is burning, air is forced up through the middle of the wick, which causes it to burn brightly. These parabolic brass reflectors behind the wick concentrate the beam and reflect it out through this lens, known as the ‘bull’s-eye’. These rings of glass you see around the chimney are actually prisms, which help reflect the light to the bull’s-eye. This whole contraption is called a ‘Fresnel lens’. It’s named after the French physicist who invented it, Augustin Fresnel.”

He pointed to a large, brass crank protruding horizontally from the base of the lamp. “Nathan, wind up the clockwork, would you? Give it seventy turns. Count carefully.” Nathan knelt and began to turn the crank, counting as he turned.

Grampa then looked at Jed. “How about you running down to the watch room and pumping up the pressure for the oil? Give the handle at least thirty pumps, more if you can. I’ll light the wick.”

The Lighthouse Mystery

Jed descended the little ladder and began to pump the handle on the side of the tank. At first it was easy, but it soon became more difficult. By the time he reached thirty strokes, he could hardly move the handle. But he doggedly persisted until he had pumped the handle thirty-five times.

When he returned to the lantern gallery, the wick in the center of the Argand burner was burning brightly, but sputtering and smoking. A bright beam of light shone from the bulls-eye. “It’ll take a few minutes before it begins to burn smoothly,” the old lighthouse keeper told them.

He turned to Mandy. “Now it’s your turn. Pull that lever down near the bottom there.”

Mandy knelt obediently and tugged at a lever near the floor. The Fresnel lens and reflectors began to rotate around the Argand burner, and the brilliant beam of light swung around the sides of the gallery.

“Come on,” Grampa urged. “Let’s go down before we’re all blinded by this contraption.”

After descending the winding stairs, the group emerged from the lighthouse to find that it was nearly dark. The moon was out, and a few stars were just beginning to twinkle. Jed was

surprised to see that the ocean breakers were still visible, even in the dim light. Every few seconds, the brilliant beam from the lighthouse cut across the darkness.

Grampa led the way to the house. As they opened the front door, Ma called out, “Dinner’s ready. We were just about to come get you.”

“You should have seen the lighthouse, Ma!” Jed said excitedly. “There was—” He stopped short, staring at the dinner table. “What’s that?”

An enormous silver platter in the center of the table held several large, bright-red creatures with spiny legs and menacing claws. Jed’s mouth fell open as he studied the strange sight. “Giant crawdads!” he gasped. “Are we going to eat those?”

“Actually, Jed, they’re New England lobsters,” Grampa told him, when the laughter had died down somewhat. “They’re some of the best eating there is. You’ll like ‘em, or my name’s not Hiram Cartwright.”

Pa led in prayer and then the family took their places around the table. Jed was hesitant to try the lobster, but Grampa insisted, placing a lobster tail on his plate and showing him how to get at

The Lighthouse Mystery

the succulent meat inside. Dishes of scallops, vegetables, salad, and hushpuppies completed the unusual dinner.

“The lobsters really weren’t too bad,” Jed declared when the meal was finished.

“You must have liked them a least a little bit,” Pa teased, his eyes twinkling, “judging from the way you went at them.”

“The lobsters were good, but the scallops were the best of all,” Jed decided. “I’ve never eaten anything like seafood before.”

“I’ll wager that you’ll have more of it before you leave here,” Grampa said.

Ma and Granny pitched in to help Grampa clean the kitchen, so Jed and Nathan walked out to the edge of the cliffs and watched the lighthouse. The brilliant beam of light swept around every three-and-a-half seconds, cutting through the mist like a giant, white-hot blade, shining far out to sea as a beacon of direction and warning.

Jed turned toward the sea, listening to the breakers pounding the rocks below. “They never stop, do they?” he remarked.

“Grampa said it’s high tide right now,” Nathan replied, “so the waves are at their fiercest.”

He glanced toward the lighthouse and then grabbed Jed’s arm. “Look!”

A tiny light came bobbing down the road toward the lighthouse. “It reminds you of a firefly, doesn’t it?” Jed said. “Wonder who would be coming here at this hour?”

“Let’s go find out,” Nathan replied.

Chapter 6 – A STRANGE SIGNAL

As the boys walked toward the lighthouse, the light on the road suddenly winked out as the person with the lantern passed behind the house. The boys quietly stole across the yard to the back of the house. Nathan started to walk around the corner but Jed pulled him back. “Wait,” he whispered. “Let’s see who it is first.”

The boys peered cautiously around the corner of the house. A tall figure astride a horse sat talking with another man standing on the steps of the back porch. The glow from the lantern in the rider’s hand reflected off a shiny star on his coat. The man on the steps was Grampa. Jed strained to hear what the men were saying.

“But why Charleston?” Grampa asked.

“We think the stuff’s being smuggled into the States through both Charleston and Boston,” the stranger answered.

“We’ve traced it to both cities. And we’re not talking about a small-time operation, either! We figure the gang has already netted tens of thousands of dollars.”

Jed frowned. *I wonder what the ‘stuff’ is that he’s talking about.*

“But what can I do?” Grampa asked.

“Probably nothing,” the stranger replied. “But keep your eyes open. It’s a long shot, I know, but Barnacle Bay would be the ideal landing place for them. Just report anything suspicious, would you?”

Jed shifted his weight to his right knee and a stick broke under his weight with a loud crack. Both men turned toward the sound, and the boys shrank back around the corner of the building. After a moment of silence, the men resumed talking.

“The crown jewels, you say?” Grampa asked.

“Yes, from some obscure European country,” the horseman replied. “Some place I never even heard of. But that’s not all. It seems that they’re plundering all of Europe! Rare art, jewelry, furs, anything of heavy value. And we still think that most of it is finding its way to the States.”

“I’ll keep an eye open,” Grampa promised.

The Lighthouse Mystery

“Much obliged, Hiram,” the stranger answered, and then rode back the way he had come.

“Did you hear that?” Nathan whispered. “Jewels and furs and expensive art work! And it’s being smuggled into Barnacle Bay!”

“Keep your voice down,” Jed replied. “And we don’t know that it’s coming through here. That lawman just said that it was a slight possibility.”

“But wouldn’t it be fun to catch the smugglers?” Nathan exclaimed. “And help recover gold, and jewels, and—”

Strong hands suddenly seized both boys by the collars, jerking them roughly to their feet. “What do you lubbers think you’re doing?” Grampa roared. “I ought to have the two of you keel-hauled!”

“We were just sitting here,” Jed protested. “We weren’t doing anything.”

“Eavesdropping, were you?” the old man stormed. “You’re sailing in dangerous waters, lads, when you start messing where you don’t belong.” He shook them furiously.

“But Grampa,” Nathan exclaimed, “we can help you watch for the smugglers!”

But his words seemed to make the old man even angrier. “Don’t be nosing around in matters that don’t concern you!” he raged. “This is none of your affair, and you’d better steer clear!”

He released his grip on the boys. “Now,” he said in a softer tone, “I want you to forget about the whole thing. Better head for the house. It’s time to turn in.”

Jed lay in the darkness of the little attic room that he was sharing with Nathan. The open window admitted a cool sea breeze with a salty smell as well as the distant sound of the roaring surf. The beacon from the lighthouse brightened the room every few seconds.

Why was Grampa so angry when we overheard his conversation with the constable? Jed wondered. We weren’t doing anything wrong. And why did he get so upset when Nathan offered to help?

Suddenly he remembered the crates beneath the stairs. *What’s in those crates that Grampa is so anxious to keep hidden? And why did the little room lock from the inside?*

He rolled over. “Nathan, are you still awake?”

The Lighthouse Mystery

“I am now.”

“Why do you think Grampa got so upset with us tonight?”

Jed asked. “He was really angry.”

“I don’t know,” Nathan answered. “I guess he just didn’t want us to hear about the smugglers. Or maybe he just got upset cause we were eavesdropping.”

“I think it’s more than that,” Jed replied. “For a minute there, it seemed as though he was angry enough to have killed us!” He paused. “Nathan?”

“What?”

“Do you think— do you think Grampa could be involved with the smugglers?”

“Of course not!” came the indignant reply. “He’s our Grampa!”

“That doesn’t mean that he wouldn’t ever break the law,” Jed argued.

Nathan sat up in bed. “Jed, you don’t know what you’re saying! Grampa is saved. He loves the Lord just as much as you or I.”

“All right, all right,” Jed said. “But there’s something you ought to know about.” He told his brother about the crates

hidden in the lighthouse, and of Grampa’s violent reaction to his finding them.

“What was in the crates?” Nathan wanted to know.

“I don’t know,” Jed said, “but I’m gonna find out! You know what I think? I think Grampa’s got some of the smuggled stuff hidden in those crates in the lighthouse! That would explain why he was so furious when I discovered them.”

“We need to talk this over with Pa.”

“I know, and I’m going to,” Jed replied. “But first I’m going to have a look in those crates beneath the stairs. And I’m gonna do it tomorrow, right after we get back from church. But I need someone to stand guard. Will you help me?”

“I suppose so,” came the sleepy reply. “But right now, let’s get some sleep, shall we? Goodnight, Jed.”

“Goodnight, Nathan.”

But Jed tossed and turned, unable to put to rest the questions that plagued him. Were the smugglers bringing their plunder into Barnacle Bay? Was Grampa involved? Why was he acting so strangely?

Finally, Jed rose from his bed and tiptoed over to the open window. The night was so peaceful with the moonlight

The Lighthouse Mystery

reflecting on the waters of the bay. Over his head, the faithful lighthouse kept its lonely vigil, rotating the brilliant beam of light at three-and-a-half second intervals. The steady whisper of the surf had a calming effect, and Jed was beginning to feel drowsy. He turned back toward the bed.

He paused at the edge of the bed. Something didn't feel quite right, but at first he couldn't put his finger on it. Then it came to him. The beam from the lighthouse was no longer sweeping across the sky every few seconds!

He crept to the window and looked up. The lamp was still lit, its silvery beam shining far out to sea. But the light was no longer rotating. He caught his breath. Standing inside the lantern gallery, his body silhouetted against the beam from the lamp, was the figure of a man! As Jed watched, the man placed a large, flat object directly in front of the lens, cutting off the beam!

What is he up to? Jed wondered. After a few seconds, the man in the lighthouse removed the covering, and the beam again shot out across the waves. He covered the lamp again, and then removed it almost immediately.

The beam from the lighthouse blinked off, on, off, on. Then a pause. Off again, on again. Suddenly, the truth dawned on Jed. The lighthouse was being used to signal someone!

Jed leaned from the window and looked out across the bay. To his amazement, he saw a light, apparently far out at sea, blinking in response to the signals from the lighthouse! Whoever was in the lighthouse was signaling, and receiving signals from, a ship at sea.

The signals continued for two or three minutes, and then the beam from the lighthouse began to revolve in its usual pattern. Jed leaned out and scanned the water, but the bay was dark. There were no more mysterious flashes of light. He glanced up at the lighthouse, but the mysterious figure had disappeared from the lantern gallery.

He went to bed as perplexed as he could be. Who was in the lighthouse sending the strange signals, and what did they mean? Who was on board the ship at sea, sending strange signals of their own? What was going on at Barnacle Bay?

Jed sucked in his breath sharply as an idea hit him with the force of a South Carolina hurricane. *Grampa is involved with the smugglers, after all! And he was using the lighthouse to send*

The Lighthouse Mystery

secret signals to the gang of smugglers! No wonder he was so furious when I discovered the hidden crates, and when Nathan and I overheard the news from the mounted lawman.

Jed fell asleep resolving to talk with Pa first thing in the morning.

Chapter 7 – THE TWINS

Pa Cartwright sat on the very edge of the precipice with his boots dangling into empty space. He tossed rocks into the surf far below as he listened to Jed's account of the events of the night before. "So that's what's on your mind," Pa said, as Jed finished. "Your attention wasn't on the sermon in church this morning. You hardly heard a word the parson said."

"But what if Grampa is involved with the smugglers?" Jed replied. "What are we going to do?"

Pa hurled a large rock over the edge and watched in silence as it fell with a splash into the bay. "Your Grampa's not involved with the smugglers, son," he said softly. "Take my word for it!"

"But there's something strange going on here," Jed protested. "Why would Grampa get so angry at me for finding the crates in the lighthouse? And why didn't he want Nathan and

The Lighthouse Mystery

me to hear about the smugglers? It sure looks like he's involved."

The big man sighed deeply. "Jed, your Grampa loves the Lord as much as any man I've ever met. He's the one that led me to receive Jesus as my Savior. He would not be a part of something illegal! I know my own Pa."

"But he was like a different person when he found me in the little room beneath the lighthouse stairs," Jed protested. "He was so furious that I thought he was going to kill me! Then a minute later in the house, he's so nice and friendly— all of a sudden."

"He's not a smuggler, son."

"What about the strange signals from the lighthouse last night?" Nathan asked. "That sounds mighty suspicious to me!"

Pa turned to Nathan. "So Jed's got you stirred up, too, eh? Well, let's just ask Grampa about the signals flashing from the lighthouse. Here he comes now."

The boys looked up to see Grampa striding toward the cliff in his captain's hat and pea coat, looking every inch a sea captain. "Pa, the boys have a question or two that maybe you can clear up," Mr. Cartwright said. "Jed, tell Grampa what you saw last night."

Jed drew a deep breath. "Someone was using the lighthouse to send signals to a ship out in the bay," he said quietly, his head down. He found that he didn't have the courage to look Grampa in the eye.

Jed's words had a pronounced effect upon the old man. Grampa sucked in his breath sharply and then suddenly suffered a coughing spell. When he recovered, he gave a hollow laugh. "Signals, eh?" he snorted. "From my lighthouse? I don't think so, boy."

"But there were!" Jed protested. "The light had stopped revolving, and someone was in the lantern gallery, blocking out the light and making it flash. And I saw answering signals flashing from a ship out in the bay!"

Grampa's eyes narrowed, but a huge grin crossed his face. "You must have been asleep, Jed," he asserted. "You were dreaming."

"But I know what I saw!" Jed protested. "And I was wide awake!"

"Pa, were you in the lighthouse last night?" Jake Cartwright asked. "Did Jed see signals?"

The Lighthouse Mystery

Grampa shook his head emphatically. “The boy was dreaming, Jake. There were no signals.”

Pa turned to Jed. “There you have it. If Grampa says that there were no signals, then there weren’t. You were dreaming, son.”

But Jed had noticed that Grampa’s voice had a tight, nervous edge to it as he spoke, that his hands clenched and unclenched unconsciously, and that he couldn’t even meet Pa’s eyes. Jed was certain that the old man was not telling the truth.

Pa put a hand on Jed’s shoulder. “Come on, let’s head in for lunch.”

Jed and Nathan slipped from the house as soon as they had finished eating. Jed glanced toward the house as he opened the lighthouse door. “Keep a sharp lookout,” he told his brother, “and let me know the instant the door opens. I’ll just be a minute.”

As Nathan took up a position just outside, Jed lifted the latch and opened the little door beneath the stairs. He glanced

behind him and then ducked into the little room and picked up the top crate.

Moments later, Jed grunted in surprise and Nathan stuck his head in the door. “What did you find?” Nathan asked. “What’s in them?”

“Nothing!” Jed exclaimed. “They’re empty!”

“All of them?”

“Every last one!” Jed replied, closing the little door and securing the latch. “Now why would Grampa get so upset about me discovering a stack of empty wooden crates? I thought he was hiding something really mysterious— stolen goods, or something.”

“Maybe he emptied the crates after you found them,” Nathan suggested.

Jed shook his head. “I don’t think so. The crates are stacked exactly as they were last night. He couldn’t have emptied them without moving them.”

The boys closed the door of the lighthouse and sauntered toward the beach. “There’s something mighty strange going on here, and Grampa’s right in the middle of it,” Jed declared. “And I’m gonna find out what it is!”

The Lighthouse Mystery

The next day Mr. Phelps kept the three young people busy with schoolwork most of the morning, but they were free to explore after lunch. As Jed, Nathan and Wolf hiked down toward the beach, Jed pointed across the bay. “Look!” he exclaimed, “an island!”

Nathan nodded. “Crab Island,” he replied. “Grampa took us out there one time. It’s only about two hundred feet long, and barely eight feet above the water. It gets its name from the thousands of crabs that inhabit it.”

The boys made their way down to the beach, took off their shoes, and then walked along the sand barefooted. Jed enjoyed the feel of the cool, wet sand between his toes. Wolf romped in the surf, snarling and snapping at the incoming breakers. “Hey, look!” Jed exclaimed. “A sailboat!”

A small dinghy lay in the sand at the water’s edge, partially obscured by the rough, porous rocks along the base of the cliff. A painter secured it to the rocks above. The boat was small, but had been fitted with a mast and rudder. A white canvas sail lay

neatly folded beneath the rear seat. Wolf bounded up and began to sniff around the little craft.

Jed climbed in and sat in the stern of the little boat with his hand on the tiller. “Wouldn’t it be fun,” he told Nathan, “to take this out on the bay? Maybe we could even sail to Crab Island.”

Nathan took a step backward and held up both hands. “Unh-uh,” he said. “Not me! We don’t know a thing about sailing, and we had better leave the boat alone.”

“Whose do you think it is?” Jed wondered aloud.

“Hey, you!” a voice commanded, “get out of that boat! It don’t belong to you!”

The boys looked up to see a boy and a girl about their own age hurrying toward them. The strangers were tall and thin, with freckled arms and faces, and flaming red hair. They were obviously brother and sister. The boy was wearing a captain’s hat exactly like Grampa’s.

“Get out of that boat and leave it alone,” the boy ordered again. “It ain’t yours!”

“Sorry,” Jed replied meekly, as he climbed from the dinghy. “We didn’t know it was yours.”

The Lighthouse Mystery

“It ain’t mine; it’s Grampa’s,” the boy replied. “And he don’t like strangers messing with it!”

“Who’s your Grampa?” Nathan asked.

“Grampa Cartwright,” the girl answered, speaking for the first time. “He’s the lighthouse keeper. He’s not really our Grampa, but we call him that ‘cause he wants us to.”

Her brother stepped forward with a frown. “Who are you guys?” he challenged. “Where’d you come from? And why were you messing with Grampa’s boat?”

Jed and Nathan looked at each other and then back to the boy. “Hiram Cartwright is our grandfather,” Jed replied. “We’re staying at Sharktooth Point for a couple of weeks.”

The girl gave a little laugh. “Welcome to Sharktooth Point!” she said, smiling. “Sorry that David jumped on you like that. He didn’t know who you were, and he was just trying to protect Grampa’s boat.”

She suddenly held out a hand to Nathan. “I’m Rebecca Porter, and this is my brother, David. As you can probably tell, we’re twins. I’m two minutes older than he is.”

To Jed’s surprise, her brother became just as friendly. He held out a hand, saying, “Sorry about the rude welcome. I really

didn’t know who you were, and your Grampa gets upset if someone messes with his boat.”

Jed shook his hand. “That’s all right. I’m Jed Cartwright, and this is my brother, Nathan.”

Nathan looked from Rebecca to David. “Is she really two minutes older?”

The boy nodded his head ruefully. “Yeah, and she’ll never let me forget it. She’ll be two minutes older for the rest of our lives. She’s two minutes older, but she’s about two years bossier.”

Rebecca stamped her foot in the sand. “I am not!” she insisted. Then she saw the grin on her brother’s face and realized that she was being teased. Jed and Nathan laughed as her face turned red with embarrassment.

“Hey, let’s take the boat out for a while,” David said, leaning into the craft to unfold the sail. “It’s a perfect day for sailing.”

“I don’t know,” Jed answered. “Are we allowed to? We don’t know the first thing about sailing.”

“David’s an expert sailor,” Rebecca said proudly. “Grampa— your Grampa— taught him, and he says that David

The Lighthouse Mystery

is one of the finest sailors that he has ever seen. He lets us use the boat any time we want.”

“We’d better ask first,” Nathan suggested, so Jed dashed up to the house and got permission from Pa. He returned to the beach to find that Nathan and the twins already had the boat in the water. The sail was in place, ready to be hoisted to the top of the mast. Wolf was waiting patiently at the water’s edge.

“It’d be best if your dog didn’t go,” David told Jed. “He’s so big he could capsize us.”

Jed nodded and pointed up to the house. “Go home, Wolf!” he ordered. The big dog gave him a reproachful look and then headed up the hill.

“He really looked disappointed,” Rebecca observed. “I think he wanted to go with us.”

Jed nodded. “How about if we sail to Crab Island?” he suggested. “I’d like to see the place.”

David took a glance at the sun and shook his head. “Ma said we have to be back in an hour,” he replied. “We’d hardly have the time to sail there and turn around and come right back.”

Seeing the look of disappointment on Jed’s face, he suggested, “What if we go to Crab Island tomorrow? We’ll ask

Ma for extra time, and I’ll bring the sea window. It’s really splendid.”

“What’s a sea window?” Nathan asked.

“You’ll love it!” Rebecca raved. “It has—”

“Wait and let them find out for themselves,” David suggested, cutting her off. “But Rebecca’s right, it is special. It gives you the most magnificent view of the ocean that you could ever imagine. You’ll like it!”

Jed scrambled into the boat and took a seat in the bow beside Nathan. Using the oars, David turned the little boat into the breakers and then began to row with all his might. “Hoist the sail and then take the tiller until we’re past the breakers,” he told his sister.

Jed watched in amazement as the twins skillfully sailed the boat through the line of relentless waves, then sent the little craft skimming across the surface of the bay. He was surprised to notice that they didn’t speak a word to each other, but the timing of their teamwork was perfect. It was as though they communicated with thoughts instead of words.

They sailed about the bay for nearly forty minutes; then David turned the sailboat toward shore. “You ought to come to

The Lighthouse Mystery

church with us next Sunday,” Jed suggested to the twins. “There’s a little church about two miles from here that Grampa goes to.”

But David shook his head. “Our family’s not much on church,” he replied. “But Ma says we’re as good as any church people.”

“We probably are,” Rebecca said, and Jed stared at her in surprise.

“But even good people need a Savior,” Jed replied. “Jesus died for all sinners, good ones and bad.”

But the twins suddenly grew rigid, and Jed realized that they strongly disagreed with his statement. *Lord, help them to see*, he prayed, *that they need you to save them*.

The little craft bobbed about in the breakers as David skillfully brought it toward shore. As they approached the beach, a flock of sea gulls took to the air, screeching and scolding.

Rebecca pointed toward the sandy beach. “Look. There’s Grampa.” She waved. “Grampa, wait for us!”

To the amazement of the four young people, the old man turned and scrambled toward the cliff as fast as he could go.

When he reached the boulders at the base of the cliff, he suddenly disappeared from view.

Jed and Nathan were the first ones out as the tiny sailboat landed. They ran after Grampa, but he had vanished. The beach was empty.

The Cartwright boys stared at each other in bewilderment. “Why did Grampa run from us?” Nathan asked. “It was almost as if he didn’t want us to see him on the beach. But why not?”

“But where did he go?” Jed said. “When he reached the end of the beach, it looked like he vanished! What in the world is going on?”

Chapter 8 – CRAB ISLAND

Tuesday dawned bright and sunny. Jed and Nathan hurried through their schoolwork, anxious for their sailing excursion with the twins, but the morning seemed to drag on forever. Finally, Mr. Phelps closed the arithmetic book with a snap. “That’s all for today,” he announced. “You boys can go. I’ll finish up with Mandy.”

Jed dashed down the slope toward the beach with Nathan hard on his heels. The boys raced across the sand, frightening a flock of sea gulls into the air. The birds chattered and scolded at the interruption but the boys ran on, paying them no attention.

“Ready for a cruise to Crab Island?” David called. He and Rebecca had launched the little sailboat, which now lay in the shallows close to the beach, rising and falling with each wave.

Jed threw his shoes into the boat and then helped David push the little craft into deeper water. Within moments, the

sailboat was skimming toward Crab Island with its four young passengers laughing with delight.

Nathan glanced skyward. “Beautiful day for November, huh?”

David nodded. “Couldn’t be better,” he answered. “But we need to keep an eye on the weather. This time of year, a storm can spring up before you know it.”

“Mama packed us a lunch,” Rebecca said, proudly holding a small basket aloft. “A piece of chicken and an apple for each of us. And a jar of water to drink.”

“That’s lunch?” Nathan snorted. “That’s hardly enough to keep a bird alive.”

Jed groaned inwardly as he saw a look of dismay pass over the girl’s freckled face. He had guessed from the twins’ simple clothing that they were from a poor family. *Why can’t Nathan keep his mouth shut?* he fumed.

Rebecca stowed the basket beneath the seat, sighing as she did, and Jed could tell that she had been hurt by Nathan’s remark.

But the day was bright and cheery, and in moments the girl’s cheerful smile had returned. The weather was cool, but the

The Lighthouse Mystery

noonday sun glistened and sparkled off the deep blue waters of the bay, making Jed think of a giant treasure chest filled with a million blue sapphires.

“Crab Island, dead ahead!” David sang out. “We’ll disembark in less than five minutes.”

Jed stared at the little island. A rocky precipice five or six feet high ran the entire length of the island, and the ocean waters surged and sprayed against it. “How do you land there?” Jed questioned. “We’ll damage the boat!”

David shook his head. “We’ll make our approach from the backside,” he replied. “There’s a little beach there.” He swung the tiller over hard, and Rebecca quickly reversed the boom. The little craft heeled over into the wind and passed by the rocks jutting into the water. As the boat came about on the far side, Jed saw a narrow strip of sandy beach. The redheaded boy headed the boat right for it.

“Drop the mainsail,” he called, and the canvas came tumbling down in a heap as his sister released the line. The little craft slowed and then nudged gently against the sand.

“Perfect,” Jed called, as he leaped over the bow to land on the sand. “You two are some sailors!” The twins grinned broadly at his praise.

“Look at the crabs!” he exclaimed, as hundreds of blue-brown crabs scurried about, seeking a place of concealment. Some darted into the water; some sought refuge in crevices and holes in the rocks above the beach; others attempted to hide beneath leafy fronds of seaweed. Jed lifted a long, golden strand of seaweed, and several dozen of the creatures scrambled sideways toward the water. “I’ve never seen anything like it,” he said with a laugh. “There must be millions of them! But why do they walk sideways?”

The young people beached the boat and then scrambled up a rocky slope to stand atop the little island. A huge, flat-topped rock at one end of the island stood some six feet higher than the rest of the island, and the young people scrambled up to stand on top. Jed gazed across the bay. “The lighthouse looks really keen from here, doesn’t it?” he remarked.

“Rebecca and I call this ‘Turtle Rock’,” David said, “because it looks like the shell of a giant turtle.”

The Lighthouse Mystery

“Get the sea window, David,” Rebecca called as she returned to the boat for the lunch basket. “Jed and Nathan will love it!”

David turned to Jed. “Help me, would you?”

Jed followed him to the boat and then helped lift a square, canvas-covered object from the sailboat. “Careful!” David warned as they lowered it to the sand.

Jed looked up to find Nathan at his side. “What is it, Jed?”

“It’s a sea window,” David replied, drawing the canvas cover aside. “Pa made it two years ago, before he died.” The boys saw an open wooden box nearly two feet square, with a bottom made of glass.

“What’s it for?” Jed asked.

“We’ll float it on top of the water,” David explained. “You can look through it right into the water and see what’s happening below the surface. It’s like having a window right into the sea.”

He stood to his feet. “Help me carry it, would you? Let’s take it to the east end. The water is deep there, and there’s a rocky ledge that’s just perfect for viewing. We’re too far north for a coral reef to form, but there are some patches of coral at that end of the island.”

Once they reached the ledge on the east end of the island, Jed and David slid the contraption carefully into the water. Rebecca brought a small cord, slipped it through a brass ring on one side of the box, and then tied it to a large rock.

“You go first, Jed,” David suggested.

Jed lay on his belly on the ledge with his head and shoulders extending out over the “sea window”. He gasped in amazement. Looking through the glass, he could see right down into the ocean!

He found himself staring into an undersea grotto alive with dazzling color. Blue, yellow, and orange-red coral formations rose in a variety of shapes from the sandy white ocean floor. Brilliant green sea grasses waved back and forth as if blown by an undersea wind, and purple-white organisms resembling flowers opened and closed spasmodically. The entire scene was bathed in a shimmering blue light.

Fish were everywhere, flashing past the sea window in such vivid colors that Jed felt as if he had just entered some strange wonderland. Tiny wrasses sparkled with a deep metallic blue, brilliant orange squirrelfish darted in circles, and multi-colored

The Lighthouse Mystery

angelfish paraded in such brilliant hues that it almost hurt your eyes to watch them.

Reluctantly, Jed finally drew away from the beautiful panorama so the others could take a turn. “Incredible!” he breathed. “I’ve never seen anything like it! Take a look, Nathan.”

Nathan lay down on the rock and placed his face close to the glass, then exclaimed in delight at the magnificent scene below him. “Fantastic! It’s almost like being right in the ocean with them!”

The four young people took turns peering through the sea window and watching the wonderland of marine life below them. During one turn Nathan waited impatiently for Jed, and then finally tried to shoulder him aside. “At least move over a bit,” he complained. “We can both look.”

The two brothers lay side by side, peering in fascination at the underwater panorama before them. “Hey, look!” Jed exclaimed. “What’s that?”

A long, snake-like tentacle slithered out from a dark, undersea cave. As the writhing appendage crept over a rock, Jed could see that the underside was lined with row after row of

round suction cups. A second tentacle appeared, then a third.

“What in the world?” Jed breathed.

David knelt between them and pushed his face close to the glass. “It’s an octopus,” he told them. “And a big one, too! He must be six or seven feet across.”

The three boys watched the octopus in fascinated silence for several minutes until Rebecca called, “Why don’t we eat our lunch? We can use the sea window again later.”

Reluctantly, Jed drew back from the sea window and stood to his feet. David lifted the contraption from the water, placed it carefully on the ledge, and then followed the others to the top of Turtle Rock. The Porter twins watched in silence as Jed and Nathan offered thanks to God for the food. Rebecca passed each person a piece of chicken and an apple.

David checked the sky as he ate. “It’s getting a bit overcast,” he said. “We’d better keep a close eye on the weather, and be sure to head back if it looks like a storm.”

When the simple meal was finished, the four young people hurried back to the sea window. Jed helped David slide the window into the water. Jed peered eagerly through the glass. “Our octopus is still there,” he reported.

The Lighthouse Mystery

As David and Rebecca were taking a turn, Rebecca suddenly exclaimed, “Look! A shark!”

“You’re right,” David replied. “Looks like a young great white, maybe five or six feet long. Hey! I think it spotted our octopus!”

“Let us see,” Jed begged.

The Porter twins moved back from the sea window, and the Cartwrights took their places. “Where’s the shark?” Nathan said. “I don’t see anything.”

“There he is!” Jed exclaimed as a silver-gray shape glided into the grotto. “He looks dangerous!”

The shark suddenly lunged toward the surface, and both boys instinctively rolled backwards from the sea window. “Man, did you see those teeth!” Jed yelled.

The boys pressed their faces against the glass again, only to find that the Porter twins were squeezed in, too. “He’s going after the octopus!” David shouted.

With a quick flick of his powerful tail, the shark zoomed across the grotto, slashed at the octopus, then disappeared from view. The octopus immediately changed shape and shot into the

dark refuge of his cave. A cloud of black ink slowly drifted across the grotto.

“Did you see that?” Rebecca exclaimed. “That black stuff came from the octopus!” The sea window danced and rocked as the shark shot through the grotto again and again. On the fourth or fifth pass, he wheeled and shot straight to the lair of the octopus. He darted in, zoomed away, and then darted in again. Two tentacles shot out of the cavern and intertwined themselves around the head of the shark.

The shark thrashed about violently, and then with a quick thrust of the powerful tail, backed free from the deadly tentacles. He made two lightning-fast passes through the grotto, then struck at the octopus again.

The four young people watched in fascination as the undersea battle raged. As the shark made his second attack, the octopus shot from his cave with a cloud of ink, then threw himself straight at his attacker. The shark dodged and slashed, and the octopus again retreated to his cave. A severed tentacle fell writhing to the ocean floor.

“He’s gonna kill the octopus!” Rebecca wailed.

The Lighthouse Mystery

“The shark may be in for more than he bargained for,” David replied. “I’m pulling for the octopus.”

“But the shark took off one of his arms,” his sister pointed out.

“Yes, but he still has seven others,” David replied.

The battle continued. The shark returned to the grotto again and again to press his attack upon the octopus, while the spectators above watched in breathless fascination. In the next few minutes, the shark succeeded in severing two more tentacles.

“He’s killing the octopus!” Rebecca moaned.

David nodded dismally. “You may be right,” he agreed. “It looks like our friend the octopus has just about had it.”

But the octopus continued to fight gamely with his five remaining arms. Each time the shark charged his cave, the octopus met the attack with vigorous resistance. Clouds of black ink drifted across the grotto, darkening the water.

The shark sped through the grotto, swerving violently from side to side with vicious sweeps of his powerful tail. He made several more quick passes through the little canyon and then

suddenly changed direction and charged the cave of the wounded octopus.

Like a dark arrow from an archer’s bow, the octopus shot from the cave to wrap his remaining tentacles around his attacker. The counter attack caught the shark completely off guard. With frantic sweeps of his powerful tail the shark flailed the water, seeking release from the deadly grip of the writhing tentacles.

“Now the octopus has the shark!” Nathan exulted.

And indeed he did. The shark writhed and twisted, slashed and fought, but eventually his struggles became feebler. He was weakening rapidly. Finally, the dramatic undersea battle ended with the wounded octopus dragging the dying shark into the dark recesses of his cave.

“Wasn’t that something!” David exclaimed, rising to his knees and massaging the back of his neck to ease a cramp. “What a battle! The attacker became the victim, and the prey became the predator.”

He glanced at the sky and then jumped to his feet in alarm. “Look at the clouds!” he shouted. “We’re in for a storm, and it’s gonna be a big one! Come on! Get the stuff in the boat!”

The Lighthouse Mystery

Fear gripped Jed's heart as he looked across the bay. The sky was dark with ominous storm clouds, and the wind was whipping the waters of Barnacle Bay into whitecaps. Sheltered by the end of the island, captivated by the undersea skirmish they had just witnessed, the young people had failed to recognize the obvious signs of an approaching storm. The wind suddenly howled and gusted, bringing a dark curtain of cold rain sweeping across the tiny island.

"Help me with the sea window!" David shouted above the scream of the wind. "We gotta make a run for shore!"

Jed helped David load the sea window into the little boat while Rebecca quickly put the lunch basket aboard. Rebecca scrambled aboard and prepared the sail, and the three boys worked together to shove their frail little craft into the raging waters.

As the sailboat rounded the end of the island, the full fury of the storm struck them. The sail suddenly filled with a sharp crack like the report of a rifle, and the little craft heeled over and began to speed toward deeper water. The gale was driving them away from the shore!

David threw the rudder hard over and brought the little craft back into the lee of the island. "We'll never make it!" he gasped. "The storm will drive us out to sea! Our only chance is to try to make it back to the island!"

Chapter 9 – THE STORM

The storm descended in all of its fury upon Barnacle Bay. Lightning slashed across the dark sky, allowing occasional glimpses of the bay. The wind howled and screeched, driving the pelting rain before it in slashing, stinging torrents. Raging waves that suddenly looked like small mountains tossed the little sailboat about, threatening to capsize it at any moment. The four young people held on desperately, their hearts pounding with fear.

“Drop the sail!” David screamed at his sister. “We have to try to row back to the island. Help me, Jed!”

Jed scrambled into the seat beside David and seized one of the oars. The boys rowed with all their might, but the treacherous currents drove the little craft farther out to sea.

“There’s a rip tide here!” David shouted, lifting his oar from the water. “Let the boat drift for a moment.”

As Jed lifted his oar, the other boy began to sweep his own across the top of the water in long arcs. The boat slowly swung about until the bow was facing into the waves. Jed glanced toward the island and realized that they were being swept laterally along the beach.

“I’m gonna turn her about in just a second,” David shouted above the roar of the storm. “When I say ‘go’, row for all you’re worth! Ready? Go!”

Jed dug in with his oar and pulled with all his strength. The little craft seemed to shudder as the currents opposed them. A huge wave crashed over the gunwale, and Nathan dropped to his knees and began bailing with a rusty clam bucket. Jed strained against the oar, glancing from time to time at the island to check their progress. His heart sank as he realized that they were not even moving. The little craft was merely holding its own against the currents.

Jed’s heart seemed to leap into his throat as the boat suddenly rose into the air. A rogue wave had caught the little craft, lifted it high, and then sent it speeding toward the island. The currents clutched at the boat and spun it around. Suddenly the powerful wave thrust it upon the sand.

The Lighthouse Mystery

David was over the side in an instant with a line in his hand. He dashed for the rocks, wrapped the line twice around an outcropping, and then held on for dear life. “Everybody out!” he screamed. “The boat won’t stay there long!”

Jed, Nathan, and Rebecca tumbled over the side into the shallow water and scrambled for the safety of the rocks. The line parted with a report like a rifle shot, and the sailboat disappeared into the darkness of the storm.

David coiled the length of line in his hands and then rushed to join the others on higher ground. “Quick, up on Turtle Rock,” he gasped, “or the storm will wash us right off the island!”

He scrambled up the side of the rock and then reached down to help his sister. Nathan and Jed scrambled up behind them. “Hurry!” David urged.

The four soaked, frightened young people huddled together in the center of the monolith. David began to uncoil the line he carried. “We need to tie ourselves together!” he shouted, passing the end of the line to his sister. “We’re in for a rough night.”

By now the wind was screaming and howling, driving the waters of the bay across the little island in ten-foot waves. Jed passed the line behind his back and then looped it around his

waist. He fumbled with the line, trying to tie a knot. A brilliant flash of lightning brightened the sky just then, and Jed glanced downward. A stab of fear surged through him.

The rocky ledge on which Turtle Rock perched was no longer visible—the island was completely awash with the storm-driven breakers! “Help us, dear God,” he prayed. “Keep our rock from washing away in the storm!”

As the lightning flashed again he was startled to catch a glimpse of a ghostly-white face just inches from his own. He started and then realized that Rebecca was right beside him, shivering from the cold.

“Help me, Jed,” she wailed above the roar of the squall. “I can’t get my line tied. My fingers are too cold.” Jed fumbled in the darkness for her line, passed it around her, and then knotted it securely.

“Nathan, where are you?” he called into the darkness.

“I’m coming over by you,” Nathan replied. “I’m freezing to death.” He scrambled carefully over to crouch beside Jed. Jed helped him knot the line tightly around his waist and passed the end to David. The boys huddled together for warmth.

The Lighthouse Mystery

“We’re gonna die,” Rebecca moaned. “Nobody can get to us in this storm, and we’re all gonna drown!”

“God knows where we are,” Jed replied, shouting above the noise of the storm. “He can keep us safe.”

“If we die, will we go to Hell?” The question came from David, who had moved in close to his sister, huddling close to her for warmth. “You know we don’t go to church.”

“Going to church has nothing to do with going to heaven,” Jed answered. “You must receive Jesus as your Savior, asking Him to forgive your sins. He died on the cross to pay for your sins so that you can be saved.”

“God can save you right now, if you’ll just ask Him to,” Nathan chimed in.

“This isn’t the time,” David answered. “I don’t think I’m ready for that— I need to think about it first. I’ll do it someday, but not right now.” He grabbed Jed’s arm. “Just pray and ask God to keep us from drowning.”

It was a long, cold, miserable night. The breakers continued to wash over the tiny island as the storm raged on. Jed stared hard through the darkness, searching for a glimpse of the powerful beam from the lighthouse, but even that was not visible

through the violence of the tempest. After what seemed like years, the wind slowly began to abate, and the sky began to brighten in the east.

Never was a day more welcome. In the gray light of dawn Jed could see the waters of the bay below. The storm had subsided somewhat, but the swells were still running five to six feet high. A thick fog obscured the shore from view.

“We’re still alive,” David observed soberly. “But I don’t know how we’re going to get off the island. Nobody could ever find us in this fog!”

A loud boom suddenly echoed across the bay. “What was that?” Jed asked.

“Grampa’s firing the fog cannon,” David replied, “to warn ships away from Sharktooth Point if they can’t see the light. He does it whenever the fog is really severe.”

The cannon boomed every minute or two. The sound was reassuring to the four young people, giving them at least one small link with the safety of the shore. Their spirits picked up immediately.

“Will Grampa try to come get us?” Nathan asked.

The Lighthouse Mystery

“He will the minute the storm dies down enough to make it possible,” David answered. “He knows the sea better than anybody, but he won’t try unless there’s a chance to get back to safety.”

Some two hours later, a shout echoed through the mist. “Jed! Nathan! Are you there? David! Rebecca! Where are you?”

“It’s Pa!” Jed shouted in delight. “Pa, over here! We’re on the island!”

“Who’s with you?” came Pa’s voice. “Are you all safe?”

“We’re all here!” Jed shouted. “Nathan and David and Rebecca. We’re all safe!”

“Thank God,” came the reply. “Keep shouting, so we can locate you in this fog.”

The other three joined Jed in yelling at the top of their lungs. Moments later, a longboat suddenly appeared through the mist. Pa and Grampa rowed hard in the stern, while two sturdy-looking strangers rowed in the bow.

David whipped out his knife. “Better cut you free,” he told the others, slashing at the rope that held his sister. “We’re about to be rescued.”

The men worked hard to bring the longboat to the island, but the sea fought them every inch of the way. Jed prayed hard, keenly aware that a safe rescue would be almost impossible under the present conditions. “Calm the waves, Lord,” he prayed.

The longboat suddenly shot forward and slammed against Turtle Rock, then spun away and disappeared into the fog just as quickly. Jed groaned inwardly. Moments later the boat reappeared, and all four men worked desperately to bring it close to the rock again.

The sea threw the craft forward again, and it surged toward the island. Pa dropped his oar and then leaped to his feet and wrapped both huge legs around a seat thwart. As the longboat passed close to Turtle Rock, he thrust his huge hands into a crevice in the rock and held on with a powerful grip. “Slide down into the boat,” he gasped, straining to hold the craft steady against the violence of the waves. “Hurry!”

The Lighthouse Mystery

Rebecca went first, dropping into the boat and then lunging forward to clutch at a thwart. One by one, the three boys quickly followed.

Pa shoved mightily against the rock and then dropped into his seat and seized his oar. “Men, row for all you’re worth!” Grampa bellowed. “We didn’t make it this far for nothing!”

Nearly thirty minutes later, the longboat grated on the sandy beach to the west of the lighthouse. A group of men waiting on shore helped the occupants scramble ashore, and then strained together to move the heavy craft up on the beach. At last, exhausted and cold, the rescuers and the rescued trudged up toward the house. The long ordeal was over.

The two strangers escorted the twins to their own house while the Cartwrights hurried into Grampa’s house for a hot meal and a warm bath. At last, Jed and Nathan gratefully fell into their beds.

Jed awoke to find golden sunshine streaming through the window. The storm was over. Realizing that Nathan was still

asleep, Jed dressed quietly and then slipped from the room. Wolf met him in the hallway outside the door.

“Come on, Wolf,” Jed said, “let’s go down to the beach. I want to see what the storm did last night.”

Wolf romped in the breakers while Jed walked soberly along the beach. The memories of the harrowing night on the island were still fresh in his mind as he gazed out to sea to take another look at the tiny dot of land. “Thank you, Lord,” he breathed, “for bringing us back safely.” He picked up a starfish and hurled it into the waves.

Evidence of the storm was scattered everywhere. The beach was littered with driftwood; large piles of golden seaweed were strewn about; and Jed even spotted the smashed hulk of a small boat. He hurried over to investigate, but it was not Grampa’s dinghy.

As the setting sun painted the incoming breakers with golden highlights, the boy and the dog turned back east and began retracing their steps toward the lighthouse. Jed glanced out to sea, and then stopped in astonishment.

Peering through the evening mist, he could just make out the ghostly outlines of a tall-masted ship. The vessel was more

The Lighthouse Mystery

than half a mile away, just beyond the entrance to the bay. It rocked gently in the swells, apparently at anchor. But what caught Jed's attention was a longboat with three men aboard, slowly making its way toward the beach!

Jed turned and crept up the slope, out of sight from the men in the boat. Ordering Wolf to stay, he then slipped furtively down to the bluff overlooking the beach. The longboat was just landing as he cautiously rose up to peer over the edge.

A dark figure walked out to meet the boat, and Jed realized with surprise that it was Grampa. His heart sank. Grampa was a smuggler after all, and he was meeting with the others of the gang! Jed flattened himself against the ground, suddenly aware of the fact that he had stumbled into a very dangerous situation.

Chapter 10 – STRANGE BEHAVIOR

The four men stood beside the beached longboat talking in low tones. Jed strained to hear what they were saying. The sound of the men's voices drifted up to him, and he thought he heard the words "jewels" and "return", but he couldn't quite make out the rest of the conversation. If only he could get closer.

Daylight was fading rapidly, and Jed was finding it harder and harder to see the men on the beach. Perhaps it would be safe to slip down to the rocks at the base of the cliff, and then he could hear what was going on. He decided to risk it.

But as he worked his way across the bluff, a large rock went hurtling over the edge and then tumbled down the rocky slope with a clatter. Jed froze. The men on the beach stopped talking immediately.

Jed's heart seemed to stop. He flattened himself against the rocks, thankful that he was wearing dark clothing, but wishing

The Lighthouse Mystery

he could somehow become invisible. He was about to be discovered.

A torrent of rapid exclamations came from the beach, and Jed's eyes widened. The men were speaking in some strange, foreign language! Quietly, he melted behind a cluster of boulders, fear gripping his heart. He prayed desperately.

As Jed peered from his hiding place, he saw two of the men run forward while Grampa and the other stayed beside the longboat. The men stopped at the base of the slope and then stood for several minutes, peering up into the darkness. Jed was afraid to move a muscle.

Finally, convinced that all was well, the men returned to the boat. Jed let out his breath in a long, grateful sigh.

Moments later, all was quiet on the beach. Jed cautiously rose up on one knee to take a quick peek. The longboat was making its way through the surf with the three men pulling diligently at the oars. Grampa had disappeared.

Jed slipped cautiously up the hill, called softly to Wolf, and then raced to the house as fast as he could go. He burst through the front door and stood with his head down, hands on his knees, trying to catch his breath.

"Where have you been, Jed?" Startled, Jed glanced up to see Pa standing in the doorway to the kitchen. And right behind him was Grampa! Jed stared in astonishment. *How could Grampa have reached the house before I did?*

"Wolf and I have been down on the beach," Jed answered Pa. Boldness suddenly seized him and he blurted out the words before he could stop them. "Grampa, who were the men on the beach?"

A strange look crossed the old man's features as he stepped into the room. "What men, Jed?"

"The men I saw you talking with," Jed answered. "The men from the ship!"

An even stranger look appeared on Grampa's face. "I'm not sure what you're talking about, son," the old lighthouse keeper replied. "I haven't been down to the beach since we brought you in from the island this morning." His gnarled hands trembled violently.

"But you were!" Jed protested. "I saw you just a moment ago. And you were talking with three men in a longboat."

The Lighthouse Mystery

Grampa's face seemed to register fear, surprise, and agitation as he turned away muttering, "No, it wasn't me. It wasn't me. I wasn't on the beach."

Pa looked at Jed and shrugged. "Forget about it, son," he said softly. "Let's go to dinner."

When the evening meal was finished, Jed helped Granny with the dishes and then slipped from the house with Wolf. "Wait for us, Jed." Jed turned to see Nathan and Mandy hurrying to catch up. "Where are you going?" Mandy asked.

"Just gonna take another walk on the beach," Jed answered. "Want to come along?"

As the three young people reached the beach, a silvery half-moon peeked from behind the clouds, etching the foaming breakers with a pale light. Mandy began to amuse herself by throwing pieces of driftwood into the water for Wolf to retrieve. Jed sat down on a large rock near the water to watch.

"What's on your mind?"

Jed glanced up as Nathan sat down beside him. "Oh, I don't know."

"Come on, there's something bothering you. I can tell."

Jed sighed. "It's Grampa," he replied. "Nathan, what do you think? Is it possible that he could be one of the smugglers?"

Nathan shrugged. "I really don't know. Why do you keep thinking about it?"

Jed told him about the men on the beach. "And there was a ship anchored offshore, just outside the bay. Why would they come here, if they weren't smugglers?"

"And Grampa was with them?"

"He talked to them for several minutes. But when I asked him about it at the house, he denied everything!"

"Then maybe it wasn't him."

Jed shook his head. "Nathan, it was him! And you should have seen his face when I asked him about it. When I told him I had seen him on the beach with those men, his face turned white. He was actually trembling."

"Did you tell Pa?"

"He was there. He just told me not to worry about it."

"Then don't worry about it."

Jed let out his breath in a long sigh. "I wish I could. But there's something going on here— something serious— and Grampa's right in the middle of it!"

The Lighthouse Mystery

A long bugle blast sounded, and Jed stood up. “Guess they want us back at the house.”

When they reached the house, Mandy and Nathan hurried inside, but Jed sauntered around back with Wolf. Hearing voices on the back porch, he stopped at the corner, grabbing Wolf by the collar. He peered cautiously around the corner.

Grampa was sitting in the porch swing, his captain’s cap perched on his head. In the swing beside him was Granny. “You’re a delightful woman, Virginia,” Grampa was saying. “Ever since Beulah died, I’ve been a lonely old man. I miss the sea, and I desperately miss my wife. Life’s a lonely journey when you sail it alone.”

“I know the feeling, Hiram,” Granny replied. “I’ve been alone for a number of years myself. I lost both my boys in the war, and I lost my husband nearly fifteen years ago.”

“Loneliness is not a good thing, Virginia,” the old lighthouse keeper said softly. “People need others to love and care for.”

Jed clenched his fists. “Leave her alone, you old smuggler!” he wanted to shout. But he stood quietly for a moment before fading silently into the darkness.

“He’d better leave her alone,” Jed muttered to Wolf through clenched teeth. “She’s a good woman, but he’s a smuggler.”

Jed worried about it all the next day, even as Mr. Phelps led Mandy, Nathan, and him through their school exercises. The Widow Jarkey had befriended him on his trip to St. Louis, and had come to live in the Cartwright household after Jed and Mandy were adopted. She had soon endeared herself as “Granny” to the Cartwright kids.

What if Grampa asks her to marry him? Jed worried. I heard them both say that they’re lonely. But she deserves better than him.

Late that afternoon, Jed, Mandy, and Nathan left the house to try their hand at surf fishing. They tiptoed across the porch, trying not to wake Wolf, who was dozing on the front steps. “He’ll just be in the way,” Jed whispered.

Jed shifted Grampa’s bait bucket to the other hand and then held his hand over his eyes to shield them from the late afternoon sun. “Looks like it’s nearly high tide,” he observed.

The Lighthouse Mystery

He glanced down to see a familiar figure standing on the bluff overlooking the deep water. “Hey, there’s Grampa,” he said to Nathan. “I thought he was working in the lighthouse.”

The three young people started down the trail to the bluff. “Grampa,” Mandy called, “come fishing with us.”

The old man turned toward them, and then spun about and raced to the far end of the precipice. As the kids looked on in horror, Grampa leaped from the cliff into the waters of the bay!

Jed dropped his fishing tackle and ran down the steep trail to the bluff, then knelt at the edge to stare into the deep waters below. But Grampa didn’t come bobbing to the surface. The water was empty.

He looked up to see Nathan standing beside him. “Now why did Grampa do that?” Nathan asked.

“Did Grampa drown?” Mandy worried, peering into the water.

“We don’t know yet, Mandy,” Jed answered. He turned and raced back up the trail, then spun to the left and raced down the slope to the beach. His brother and sister were right on his heels.

“Look, Jed!” Nathan pointed into the breakers. “What’s that?” A dark-blue-and-white object tumbled about in the water.

Jed threw off his shoes and waded into the surf to retrieve the item. As he lifted it from the sea, a torrent of water cascaded out. He held it up for Nathan and Mandy to see. “It’s Grampa’s! It’s his captain’s hat.”

Chapter 11 – LOW TIDE

The young people raced frantically toward the house, calling as they ran, “Pa! Come quick! Grampa’s drowned!”

Pa and Ma stepped out on the porch together, to be followed by Granny a moment later. “Jed,” Pa exclaimed, “what’s wrong?”

“Grampa jumped from the cliff!” Jed blurted. “And we found his captain’s hat in the water, down by the beach! We think he drowned!”

Granny promptly fainted. She sank into Ma’s arms, who caught her and laid her gently on the porch. As Ma turned to care for the elderly woman, Pa hurried from the porch. “Show me, Jed.”

“What’s all the carrying on?” a voice boomed. “You all are making more fuss than a sea gull in a hurricane!” Jed’s mouth

fell open as he looked up to see Grampa hurrying from the lighthouse.

“Grampa!” Mandy cried, running forward to hug the old man. “We thought you had drowned!”

Grampa turned from Mandy to Pa. “Would someone kindly tell an old sailor what this is all about?”

“We saw you on the cliff,” Nathan blurted. “When you jumped into the water, we thought you had drowned!” He seized the cap from Jed’s hands. “Here, we found your hat. When we saw it floating in the water, we thought you—” He stopped abruptly as he realized that Grampa had his captain’s cap upon his head!

When the old man saw the cap in Nathan’s hand, his eyes widened in disbelief. Without a word, he spun on his heel and dashed to the lighthouse, slamming the door behind him.

Jed stared after him for a moment, and then raced after him. He jerked open the lighthouse door and raced up the narrow stairs. “Grampa, wait!” He reached the top of the stairs and burst into the watch room, but found it empty. Puzzled, he climbed the narrow ladder to the lantern gallery. But the gallery, too, was empty.

The Lighthouse Mystery

Jed frowned as he descended the stairs. Where could Grampa have gone?

He snapped his fingers as the answer came to him. The little room beneath the stairs! Jed dashed down the stairs and tugged at the door handle, but the door refused to open. The room was locked.

Nathan stepped into the lighthouse. “Find him?”

Jed shook his head. “No, but this little room is locked. I think that Grampa’s in there. Now why would he run from us like that? And if we saw him jump from the cliff, how did he get back to the lighthouse so fast? Where did he get the dry clothes? When I see Grampa, I’m gonna ask him some serious questions.”

“You’ll do nothing of the sort!” The boys looked up as Pa stepped into the lighthouse, ducking his head to clear the doorway. “I’ll have a talk with Grampa myself, but I want you boys to leave him alone, hear? I don’t know what happened just now, but whatever it is, it has Grampa mighty upset. And I don’t want you bothering him about it. Understand? If he brings up the subject, fine— but otherwise, the matter is closed.”

“But, Pa—” Jed protested.

“Jed, the matter is closed, unless your grandfather chooses to reopen it.”

Grampa reappeared just in time for the evening meal. He took his place at the supper table with a worried look creasing his weather-beaten face. Jed was dying to ask about the events of the afternoon, but he remained quiet. Just as the family was finishing the meal, a knock sounded at the front door. Grampa hurried to open it.

“Hiram,” a deep voice boomed loud enough for those in the kitchen to hear, “I brought your little sailboat back. Found it about three miles down shore, but I recognized it as yours. She’s had her mast ripped out and her rudder smashed, but other than that, she looks quite seaworthy.”

“Much obliged, Joseph,” Grampa replied. “I’m beholden to you for towing her back. Much obliged.”

“Glad to do it, Hiram,” the unseen neighbor said, as Grampa shut the door.

The Lighthouse Mystery

The next morning Jed awoke before dawn. He dressed hurriedly. The lighthouse was still keeping its lonely vigil, the beam brightening the room every few seconds.

Nathan awoke. "What are you doing, Jed?"

"It's low tide right now," Jed answered. "I'm gonna go down and hunt for shells, sand dollars, and starfish. Wanna come?"

Nathan thought it over for a moment, and then jumped from the bed. "Sounds like fun! Let's do it."

The boys hurried into the kitchen to fix themselves a breakfast of leftover biscuits and fish cakes. Just as they were finishing, Mandy slipped into the kitchen, rubbing the sleep from her eyes. "Why are you up so early?"

"It's low tide," Jed explained. "We're gonna hunt shells and stuff."

"Can I come?"

"You're not even dressed yet," Nathan told her.

"It'll just take a minute. Please?"

"You haven't had breakfast, either."

"I can eat a couple of biscuits on the way down to the beach. Please, can I come? Please?"

"Get dressed while we finish," Jed told her kindly. "I'll wrap two biscuits in a linen napkin for you. Want some jelly?"

"Yes, please," the girl replied and then hurried to her room.

The air was cool as the trio stepped out on the porch moments later. An amber glow was just beginning to brighten the sky on the eastern side of the bay, and a thick, gray fog hugged the ground. "I didn't know it was going to be this cold," Mandy said, buttoning her jacket and then hurrying to follow the boys around to the back of the house.

"We'll use these," Jed said, as he selected three clam buckets, handing one each to his brother and sister. "Who knows? We might catch a fish or something." He whistled for Wolf, and then the trio headed for the beach.

The tide was out, exposing a wide area of smooth boulders just beyond the sandy beach. Jed, Nathan, and Mandy removed their socks and shoes and waded into the shallow water among the rocks. "The water's cold," Mandy complained.

"Look!" Nathan exclaimed, pointing to the water. "A live starfish."

The Lighthouse Mystery

“I want it,” Mandy said, as she filled her bucket with seawater. Jed picked up the bright orange creature and dropped it into her bucket with a splash.

“Let’s see if we can catch some fish,” Nathan suggested.

“How do we do that?” Mandy questioned. “We didn’t bring the poles.”

“Sometimes fish will hide under rocks like these,” Jed answered, “and we can catch them in our buckets.” He pointed to a large, flat rock just beyond Mandy. “You and Nathan place two buckets on their sides right beside that rock. When I raise the rock, any fish that are hiding might go into your buckets. Here, take my bucket.”

Mandy set her bucket with the starfish on a nearby rock and then took Jed’s. She and Nathan waded close to the rock and placed their buckets in position beside it. Using both hands, Jed slowly raised one side of the big rock. A dark shape shot from beneath the rock and zoomed into Mandy’s bucket.

“Pull it up! Pull it up!” Jed and Nathan shouted in unison.

Mandy jerked the bucket from the water and peered into it eagerly. “We caught one!” she exulted. A frown crossed her features. “What is it?”

Jed looked into the bucket and then exclaimed in surprise, “It’s an octopus! Mandy, you caught a little octopus!”

Mandy danced around in the water, splashing both her brothers in her excitement. “Good!” she shouted. “Let’s catch another.”

The Cartwright kids spent the next hour lifting rocks in search for more of the strange-looking creatures. Together they managed to catch two more octopi, as well as two odd-looking fish. They were so intrigued with their pastime that they failed to notice a spectacular sunrise.

“The water’s getting deeper,” Nathan observed.

“The tide’s coming back in,” Jed replied. “Guess we’d better head back in. Oh, well, it will soon be time for breakfast, anyway.”

He picked up one of the buckets and headed for shore.

“Hey! Look at this!”

A bright object glittered in the shallow water at his feet. His heart began to pound furiously as he stooped to pick it up.

“Look, Nathan, look! Can you believe it? Look, Mandy!”

The Lighthouse Mystery

Jed held aloft a small, golden sword. The morning sun glittered and sparkled off the bright object, bringing exclamations from Mandy and Nathan.

“Let’s see it, Jed,” Nathan begged. “Is it real?”

Jed dropped his bucket to hold his unusual find in both hands. “I think it is,” he stammered. “It’s awfully heavy.” Nathan and Mandy crowded close, their eyes wide.

“It’s a dagger,” Nathan said in awe. “A golden dagger!”

The dagger was nearly twelve inches long, with a thick, wide blade that appeared to be made of solid gold. The golden handle was encompassed with intricate etchings of castles, lions, and angels, and set with numerous gems. Emeralds, diamonds, and rubies glittered in the bright sunlight.

“Wow!” Jed breathed softly. “If these are real, this thing is worth a fortune!”

Nathan carefully took it from him. “How in the world did it ever get here?”

“The smugglers,” Jed replied. “Remember what that constable was saying— something about the crown jewels? I think this dagger was stolen from some castle somewhere over in Europe!”

Nathan began to peer closely at the water. “I think you’re right. And there may be other stuff nearby. Let’s look.”

The trio searched in the vicinity of the dagger, but found nothing. Finally, the rising tide forced them to retreat to the beach. They headed for the house, starfish and octopi forgotten, as Jed proudly carried the glittering treasure he had retrieved from the waters of Barnacle Bay.

“I’m convinced,” Nathan said. “The smugglers are operating through Barnacle Bay, after all.” He hung his head. “And that means that Grampa is involved.”

He looked at Jed. “But what can we do about it?”

Chapter 12 – RETURN TO CRAB ISLAND

Pa held the golden dagger carefully, examining it closely from all angles. “It’s real,” he announced finally. “And it’s worth a fortune! But however did it get to Barnacle Bay?”

“We think it was stolen from a castle somewhere in Europe,” Jed volunteered. “The smugglers brought it here.”

Pa shook his head. “We don’t know that,” he said. “Let’s not jump to conclusions.” He walked to the window and held the dagger up to the light. “Incredible craftsmanship,” he remarked. “I’ve never seen anything like it!” He turned and looked at Jed. “And you say you found it on the beach?”

“It was in the water,” Jed answered, “probably less than ten inches deep. But the tide was out, so the water’s usually deeper there.”

Pa continued to examine the golden dagger closely. “I’ll show it to Grampa and see what he makes of it,” he said.

“No!” The word exploded from Jed’s lips.

Pa turned toward him. “What’s wrong, Jed? Why shouldn’t Grampa see it?”

“It’s just that—” Jed stopped, searching for words. *How can I tell Pa that Grampa is one of the smugglers?* he thought. *He’s never going to believe me. But the dagger should be kept secret!*

“Oh, never mind,” he said lamely.

Pa carefully wrapped the dagger in an old shirt. “Not a word to anyone about what you found,” he told the boys. “This needs to be kept secret.” He headed from the room. “I’ll find a safe hiding place for our treasure.”

After a quick breakfast, the Cartwright kids settled in for a morning of schoolwork with Mr. Phelps. Jed had a hard time concentrating on his studies. His thoughts kept returning to the golden dagger he had found in the surf. He leaned over to Nathan. “Betcha we can find more treasure on the beach, if we look hard enough,” he whispered. “Let’s go out at low tide again tomorrow.”

Mr. Phelps looked up. “Jed, let’s keep our minds on our arithmetic, shall we?”

“Sorry, Mr. Phelps.”

The Lighthouse Mystery

At lunchtime, Jed noticed that Grampa was missing from his usual place. “Where’s Grampa?” he asked.

“He’s been gone all morning,” Granny replied. “He said he had a project to work on.”

Mr. Phelps released the young people soon after lunch, and Jed and Nathan hurried toward the beach. They found David and Rebecca, as well as Grampa, at the little dinghy.

“You kids are in business again,” Grampa said grandly. “Brand-new rudder, and a new mast, even if it is a bit makeshift. But it’ll do until I have time to make a proper one. The little boat’s ready, should you take a notion to do some sailing.”

He turned to David. “Sailor, watch the weather! Let’s not be out in any more storms.”

David hung his head, obviously embarrassed. “Aye, aye, sir,” he replied.

The old man laughed and tousled the boy’s fiery red hair. “Happens to the best of us,” he said. “But if you’re smart, it’ll only happen once. Never underestimate the sea.” He clapped his captain’s cap upon his head and then turned and headed for the house.

David turned to the others. “How about it?” he asked. “Wanna go for a sail?”

The four young people launched the little boat and sailed across the bay with David at the tiller. “What say we head for Crab Island?” Jed suggested.

Ten minutes later the little craft landed on the tiny beach on the far side of the island. “Sorry we lost your sea window in the storm,” Jed said as he helped beach the boat. “It was a lot of fun.”

David shrugged. “Grampa says he’ll make us another,” he replied, “as soon as he has time.”

As the young people stood atop Turtle Rock, Rebecca pulled a shiny brass object from her jacket. “I brought Pa’s old spy-glass,” she said, extending the three tubular sections to their full length. “It makes things look like you’re right close to them.” She handed the telescope to Jed. “Look at the lighthouse.”

Jed peered through the instrument. “I can even see the latch on the lighthouse door!” he exclaimed. “It looks like the lighthouse is only a hundred feet away!”

The Lighthouse Mystery

Each person took a turn with the old spyglass. As Nathan was examining the beach he exclaimed, “There’s Grampa! He’s on the beach.”

“What’s he doing?” Jed asked.

“Just walking along with his head down,” Nathan replied. “It almost looks like he’s looking for something.” He handed the glass to Jed. “Take a look.”

Jed peered through the telescope. “You’re right,” he said, after a moment. “He does seem to be searching for something. He keeps walking back and forth, and his attention is on the ground. Now he’s looking into the water.” He handed the instrument to David.

David watched the old man for a moment or two. “He has a spy-glass, too,” he reported. “Just like ours.”

“Let me see,” Jed begged.

As he focused in on the beach, he saw that Grampa did indeed have a spyglass. He was peering intently through the instrument, and he seemed to be studying Crab Island! As the old man swept his instrument across the island, he suddenly stopped, and his head jerked up in surprise. Jed realized that

Grampa had spotted him, and could see that he was being watched through the twins’ telescope.

Jed and the old man stared at each other through the spyglasses for several seconds. Abruptly, Grampa snapped his telescope shut, spun on his heel, and hurried across the sand. “What’s he doing?” Nathan asked.

“He acted like he didn’t want us to see him,” Jed reported, glancing at his brother. “When he saw that I was watching him through the spy-glass, he took off like a scared rabbit! But he’s at the end of the beach, and there’s nowhere he can go, unless he wades into the water.”

He put the glass to his eye again. “Hey—he’s gone! He disappeared!”

David grabbed the telescope. “Let me see.” He studied the beach intently for several minutes. “There’s no sign of him,” he told the others. “It’s as if he just disappeared into thin air! But how could that be possible?”

Chapter 13 – INCREDIBLE DISCOVERY

The rising sun sparkled across the waters of the bay as Jed and Nathan hurried from the house with Wolf on their heels. Jed paused at the edge of the cliff to survey the beach below. “Rebecca and David are already down there,” he said. “Let’s hurry.” He whistled for Wolf and then strode quickly toward the beach trail.

“You shouldn’t have told them about the dagger,” Nathan scolded. “Pa said not to tell anybody!”

“I didn’t tell them,” Jed retorted. “I just hinted. I just gave them enough information to let them know that we had found something extremely valuable so they would join us on this treasure hunt.”

“Well, you still shouldn’t have said anything,” Nathan insisted. “You know you were disobeying Pa’s orders.”

Jed walked faster in reply.

The twins were waiting impatiently at the western end of the beach. “We’ve been here twenty minutes,” David said as Jed and Nathan approached. “You were going to meet us at sunrise, remember?”

“Sorry about that,” Jed laughed. “We overslept just a bit.”

“What are we looking for?” David asked. “You told us it was a treasure hunt, but you’re both being so mysterious about it. What did you guys find?”

“It was magnificent!” Jed said. “It was right here in the water, sparkling and glittering like—”

“Jed,” Nathan interrupted, “remember what Pa said.”

Jed shrugged. “Sorry, friend,” he told David, “I can’t tell you much more than that, or my dear brother will jump all over me. But I can tell you this— we’re looking for items made of solid gold. The crown jewels, perhaps.”

The twins’ eyes widened. “Just what did you find, anyway?” Rebecca asked.

Nathan shook his head. “Jed’s said enough already. If we tell you any more, we’ll both be in trouble with Pa. As soon as Pa says it’s all right, we’ll tell you the whole story. But right now we’re looking for anything that looks like it’s valuable. We

The Lighthouse Mystery

asked you to meet us here this morning because the tide is out, and it will make the search easier.”

Jed could tell that the twins were still mystified, but they agreed to help in the search. The four young people spread out, then began to wade through the shallow water. Jed’s heart pounded with excitement as he thought about the possibility of finding more treasure.

But the search proved fruitless. The four young treasure hunters made a number of passes across the area, crossing and recrossing the shallows just below the beach, but found nothing but starfish and mussels. Finally, they paused for a break.

“There’s nothing of value here,” David said in disgust. “We’re wasting our time.” He glanced at the Cartwrights. “I wish you guys would tell us what you found.”

“Let’s search the beach,” Rebecca suggested. “Maybe we’ll find treasure in the sand.”

“There’s nothing on the beach,” her brother replied. “It would be in plain sight.”

“There could be something under some of the seaweed or driftwood,” the girl argued. “Or even in the rocks against the cliff. When the tide comes in, the water comes up that far.”

Jed shrugged. “Couldn’t hurt to look.”

The searchers spread out again and began to walk slowly across the sand, heads down, closely examining any place that could possibly contain any article of value. Flocks of seagulls scolded and chattered as they searched. When they reached the end of the beach, Rebecca pointed excitedly. “Look! Someone’s been here!”

A set of footprints was plainly visible in the wet sand, crossing the end of the beach, and then stopping abruptly at the jumble of boulders at the base of the cliff. Jed knelt and examined the tracks closely. “Whoever made these was wearing a strange pair of boots,” he remarked. “Look at the print made by the heel.”

He stood and followed the footprints to the rocks. “Look how they just stop right here,” he said. “It’s as if the person just disappeared, or flew away like a seagull!”

Nathan knelt in the sand. “These weren’t made by Grampa,” he announced, studying the footprints carefully. “He doesn’t wear boots like these.”

David nodded. “You’re right.”

The Lighthouse Mystery

“Then who made them?” Rebecca asked. “This is right where Grampa disappeared yesterday when we were watching him through the spy-glass!”

Nathan shook his head. “These aren’t his tracks,” he said. “The tides would have washed them away last night.”

An idea struck Jed, and he let out a gasp of surprise. Nathan turned to him. “What’s wrong?”

“That wasn’t Grampa we saw on the beach yesterday!” Jed exclaimed. “It was someone else!”

The others reacted in disbelief. “What?” David howled. “Of course it was Grampa. I saw him through the glass.”

Jed shook his head. “It wasn’t Grampa!” he declared. “It was someone dressed to look like Grampa.”

He turned to Nathan. “Remember when Grampa jumped from the cliff, and we found his hat in the water? That wasn’t Grampa, either.”

Nathan frowned. “You’re crazy, Jed.”

“Stop and think!” Jed insisted. “Remember when we got back to the house? Grampa was in the lighthouse, and his clothes were dry. And remember when you showed him the captain’s cap that we found in the water? He still had his cap on his head.”

Jed looked from Nathan to David to Rebecca. “Someone else has been here, dressed to look like Grampa. But it’s not him.”

“Then who is it?” David asked. “And why would he dress like Grampa?”

“I don’t know,” Jed replied. “But it’s not Grampa.” He knelt in the sand beside the last footprint, and then placed one hand against a large, flat slab of limestone that leaned against the base of the cliff. “Whoever made these footprints either jumped into the water, or crawled underneath this rock,” he said. “There’s no way he could have jumped high enough to get a handhold to climb the cliff, and the tracks would have shown it if he had.”

He stooped and ducked his head beneath the edge of the limestone slab. “And there’s no place big enough to hide underneath this rock, either. So where— hey, look at this!”

“What is it?” Nathan asked.

“There’s an opening in the base of the cliff!” Jed shouted. “It almost looks like a tunnel!”

“Let us see.”

The Lighthouse Mystery

Jed backed out to allow the others a chance to take a look. “It goes back several feet, at least!” Nathan exclaimed. “And it’s big enough for a man to crawl into.”

Jed pushed past him. “I’m going in a little ways,” he said. “I want to see if it leads anywhere.”

“Careful,” David warned. “The tide’s coming in. This place will be under water in less than an hour.”

“I’ll just be a minute or two,” Jed answered, crawling into the darkness of the opening. “It’s too dark to see much anyway. I just want to— hey!”

“What is it?” Nathan asked.

“There’s something wrapped in a piece of oilcloth,” Jed replied. “It was on a ledge at the side of the tunnel. I’m coming out.”

He backed out of the tunnel, dragging an object wrapped in a dark piece of waterproof cloth. Nathan and the twins crowded in close as he unwrapped it.

“A lantern!” Rebecca exclaimed.

“And sulfur matches,” Jed said with a laugh. He raised the chimney of the lantern, struck a match, and then lit the wick. He flipped the burnt match over his shoulder into the water and then

turned toward the hidden passage. “I’m going in,” he announced. “Anyone coming with me?”

“I guess we all are,” Nathan replied. “Lead the way.”

“Only for a few minutes,” David warned again, “or we’ll be trapped inside by the rising tide. Unless the tunnel leads upward, we’ll drown!”

Jed crawled into the opening with the others on his heels. After just a few feet, he found that the tunnel widened and began to angle upwards. “We’re heading up,” he announced to the others. “I really think this goes somewhere!”

“We just have a few minutes,” David warned for the third time.

The subterranean passageway continued upwards at a gentle slant for another few feet and then opened into a large chamber. Jed stood to his feet with an exclamation of surprise. “Look at this! Can you believe it?”

The four young people found themselves standing in a large cavern nearly forty feet across, with a rocky ceiling some fifteen feet overhead. To their astonishment, the feeble light of the lantern revealed a small cot with blankets, a stash of food and water, and four brassbound sea chests!

The Lighthouse Mystery

“Someone’s been living here!” David cried.

“The man we saw on the beach,” Jed replied. “The one who looks like Grampa.”

Taking the lantern from Jed, Nathan crossed the underground chamber and threw open one of the chests. “Oh, my!” he exclaimed. “Jed, look at this! You won’t believe what’s in here!”

Jed hurried over to stand beside Nathan and then stared in astonishment. A cold chill swept over him as he gazed into the sea chest. “That’s incredible!” he said softly. “Absolutely incredible!”

Chapter 14 – THE CAVERN

The sea chest was filled with soft folds of luxurious-looking black velvet. Resting on the velvet was a dazzling golden crown, glittering in the yellow light of the lantern! Emeralds, diamonds, rubies and sapphires adorned the crown, reflecting the feeble light from the lantern in a sparkling display of color.

“It’s real,” Nathan breathed.

Jed knelt beside the chest and then reverently lifted the crown. “It’s heavy!” he exclaimed. “I wouldn’t want to have to wear this all day.”

The twins were on their knees beside him. David reached into the trunk and touched the velvet cloth, and then abruptly lifted the folds. “There’s more!” he exclaimed. He opened the layers of cloth to reveal a golden scepter set with diamonds, a number of beautiful rings, and a heavy golden belt adorned with

The Lighthouse Mystery

a variety of large, brilliant gems. At the very bottom of the chest he found a golden dagger with a jeweled handle.

“The crown jewels!” Jed said softly, his heart pounding with excitement.

“Look at the dagger!” Nathan exclaimed. “It’s just like the one we found.”

“You found one like this?” Rebecca exclaimed.

“I have a feeling that this is the one we found,” Jed replied.

“What is this stuff doing here?” Nathan asked.

“This is the den of one of the smugglers,” Jed replied.

“Maybe the head of the smugglers, since he has all the royal stuff!”

Nathan suddenly held up one hand. “Sh-h! Listen.”

“What is it?” Jed whispered.

“Someone’s coming!”

The four young people looked frantically about the cave.

“There’s no place to hide!” Rebecca whispered.

Jed dashed to a dark corner of the cavern and the others quickly followed. A terrifying darkness instantly descended on the cavern as he blew out the lantern. In the eerie silence, Jed could hear the sounds of someone crawling into the cavern.

He tensed as someone dashed across the blackness of the cavern toward him. A heavy weight struck him in the shoulder, bowling him over backwards, and he cried out as a wet object passed across his face. In an instant, a flood of relief replaced his terror.

“It’s just Wolf!” he called, pushing the dog away and fumbling for the matches. “He followed us into the cave.”

A welcome glow brightened the cavern as Jed managed to relight the lantern in spite of the huge dog’s relentless attempts to lick his face. He let out his breath in a long, deep sigh. “Wolf, you scared the life out of us!” he said as he tousled the dog’s fur.

At Jed’s command, Wolf sat still while the young people opened the three remaining sea chests. To Jed’s disappointment, they contained nothing but luxurious clothing. When everything had been examined, their attention was returned to the chest containing the treasure.

“Well, what do we do with it?” David asked. “It must be stolen.”

“I say we take it up to the house and call the constables,” Nathan suggested. “They’ll know what to do with it.”

The Lighthouse Mystery

Jed shook his head. "I think we should leave it here and see if we can catch the thieves that took it," he said. "Wouldn't it be fun to turn in the smugglers, as well as the treasure?"

"What if they get away?" Rebecca worried. "And we lose the treasure, too?"

"We'll guard the cave entrance from the top of the cliff," Jed replied. "You and David can watch it this morning while Nathan and I do school work, and we can watch it this afternoon. Tonight we'll decide if we should notify the authorities."

"I don't think we should tell anyone about the hideout, or about the treasure," David declared. "At least not until tonight."

"Right," Jed agreed. "We won't tell a soul until this evening, when we decide what we're going to do with it."

The young people did their best to arrange the clothing and treasure exactly as they had found it in the sea chests, and then hurried from the cavern. Jed wrapped the lantern and matches in the oilcloth, carefully placing them as he had found them on the rocky ledge. As they exited the cave, they found the sea already lapping at the edge of the opening.

"We don't have to worry about wiping out our tracks," Nathan observed. "The tides will wash them out in the next few minutes."

Jed pulled his watch from his pocket and glanced at it. "Almost time for breakfast and school work," he said to Nathan. "We'd better get moving."

He turned to David and Rebecca. "Why don't you take up a position at the top of the bluff," he suggested. "You'll be able to see the entrance to the hide-out. Come up to the house and let us know if anyone goes in."

David shrugged. "The water's about to cover the entrance now," he replied. "How would anyone go in?"

"We saw the man that resembles Grampa dive from the bluff and disappear into the sea," Jed replied. "There's nowhere else he could have gone. So the cave must be accessible even when the entrance is under water, as long as you know where to find it."

"What a hide-out," Nathan remarked.

"But not a word to anyone about what we found this morning," Jed warned. "We don't tell a soul. Agreed?"

"Agreed," the others chorused in unison.

The Lighthouse Mystery

Moments later Jed and Nathan hurried into the house to find the family just sitting down to breakfast. Pa looked up as they breathlessly entered the dining room. “Where have you lads been?”

“Just down on the beach,” Jed answered, trying to catch his breath. “Low tide is the best time to search for stuff.”

The school work that morning seemed to drag on forever. Jed struggled to focus his attention on his studies, but visions of jeweled daggers and golden crowns kept dancing in his head. *Were those the crown jewels we found in the sea chest? How did they get there? Who is using the cavern for a hideout, and why?* His head spun with unanswered questions.

The cavern is a natural one, Jed told himself, but why would anyone use it as a hideout, unless they were desperate? Whoever’s living there has to be hiding from the law. He shook his head as if to clear his thoughts, and then tried valiantly to turn his attention to schoolwork.

That afternoon as the family was finishing lunch, Pa turned to the boys. “Meet me outside for a moment, gents.” Jed and Nathan followed him to the bluff.

“Stay close this afternoon,” Pa told them, and Jed sensed that he was worried. “I’m going into town, and I’ll be gone most of the rest of the day. If either of you should see any strangers, report them to Grampa immediately. Follow me?”

“Yes, sir,” both boys responded.

“Good,” Pa said. “I’ll trust you to keep an eye on things. Again, if you see anything unusual, or especially if you see any strangers, make sure Grampa knows about it at once. I should be back about sunset.”

Jed frowned. “What’s happening, Pa? You seem worried.”

The huge man just laughed. “I really don’t think that anything’s going to happen, son. But, I just want you boys to keep an eye out for— well, just report anything unusual to Grampa, all right?”

“May we go down to the beach?”

“Sure. But try to keep an eye on things at the house.”

The Lighthouse Mystery

The boys followed Pa to the stable, helped him saddle Grampa's horse, and then watched as he rode toward town. "What do you think he was worried about, Nathan?"

Nathan shrugged. "I don't know. He wasn't saying, was he? But he had something on his mind."

The boys hurried down the trail to the bluff where David and Rebecca waited. "It's been a long morning," David said, rising to his feet and stretching. "My whole body is one big cramp."

"See anybody?" Jed asked.

"Not a soul," David answered. "Rebecca and I are going to head home and get some lunch. I'm starving."

"Thanks for watching," Jed told the twins. "Nathan and I will take a turn."

When the twins had disappeared over the hill, Jed turned to Nathan. "Let's go down on the beach."

Nathan shrugged. "What for? We can watch from here."

Jed nodded. "Yes, but I want to search the beach again. We might have missed something. We'll keep an eye out for the thieves while we search."

The boys made their way down to the beach and then began to meander across the sand. "We can still see the cave entrance from here," Jed pointed out, "but we can find a quick hiding place if anyone comes."

Nathan suddenly grabbed his arm. "Look!" Two men had appeared on the beach, walking straight toward the boys. "Hide!" Nathan whispered.

Jed shook his head. "Too late. I think they've already seen us."

"Pa said to watch for strangers," Nathan whispered from the side of his mouth. "Maybe these are the men he was warning us about."

Jed nodded slightly. "Just keep on walking, as if nothing is wrong. Maybe they'll pass right on by."

But as the men approached, the taller of the two nodded pleasantly. "Good afternoon, lads."

Jed and Nathan kept walking. "Good afternoon, sir," Jed replied as he passed.

The man held up one hand. "Got a minute? We could use your help."

The Lighthouse Mystery

Jed paused, and then shook his head. “Not now, sir. We have to hurry back to the house.”

The man nodded and smiled. “I understand. But this requires just one minute.” He opened his coat to display a shiny silver star. “I’m John Carnes, U.S. Marshal out of Charleston,” he said. “This is one of my deputies, Amos Elkins.”

As he closed his coat, a serious look crossed his friendly face. “We’re looking for a dangerous fugitive, lads. The man is armed, and considered extremely dangerous. Any information you can give us would certainly be appreciated, and perhaps protect innocent lives. Are you sure you can’t spare just a moment?”

Chapter 15 – THE FUGITIVE

The marshal was a tall man, fairly slim, but with muscular arms and shoulders. His strong, tanned face marked him as a man who had spent a great deal of time outdoors, and he moved with the easy grace of a man who was sure of himself. “Can you help us, boys?” he asked again.

Jed liked the man immediately. “How can we help you?” he asked.

“We’re looking for a man known as Philippe Sebastian,” the lawman replied. “He’s the leader of an international band of assassins, thieves, and smugglers, and he’s a very dangerous man. I can’t tell you lads everything, of course, but we have good reason to believe that he’s hiding out somewhere along the Carolina coast. In fact, we got one report that he was spotted close to Sharktooth Point.”

The Lighthouse Mystery

Jed's thoughts immediately jumped to the hideout beneath the cliff. Could it be that they had discovered the hiding place of a man as dangerous as Philippe Sebastian?

But Nathan was tugging at his sleeve. "We'll let you know if we see anything, Mr. Carnes. Come on, Jed, we've got to go!"

But Jed held back. "What if we do find something? How would we get word to you, sir?"

"You can reach me at my office in Charleston," the marshal replied. "Just ask for Marshal Carnes. But remember, the man we're looking for is desperate and must be apprehended immediately."

"We'll have Grampa notify you right away if we see anybody," Nathan said. "Come on, Jed."

"No!" The marshal suddenly seemed agitated. "Your Grampa is the lighthouse keeper, right?" When both boys nodded, he explained, "It would be best if your Grampa was not in on this. Find some other way to get word to us."

Jed was troubled by the expression that appeared on the marshal's face, and he found himself asking, "Is Grampa involved? Is he one of the smugglers?"

The men nodded sadly. "I'm afraid so, son," Marshal Carnes said softly. "In fact, we have reason to believe that your Grampa may be hiding Sebastian. So you see how important it is that you not discuss the matter with him."

"Grampa's not a smuggler!" Nathan declared fiercely.

The marshal sighed. "I wish I could agree with you, boy, but I'm afraid we know otherwise. I know it's hard to take, but your Grampa has been involved for some time."

He put a gentle hand on Nathan's shoulder, but the boy pulled away. "Grampa's not a criminal!" he declared hotly. "He's not! You're mistaken!"

The lawman regarded him with a kind expression, but said nothing. He turned to Jed. "Let us know if you come up with anything that could help us, would you? We'll be scouting around for another hour or so. After that, you can contact us at my office in town."

Jed and Nathan headed up the slope toward the lighthouse. "Pa said not to talk to strangers," Nathan said fiercely. "You were going to tell them about the hideout under the cliff, weren't you? I think we need to tell Grampa that we saw them."

The Lighthouse Mystery

Jed was exasperated with Nathan. “They were lawmen, Nathan. And we can’t tell Grampa! You heard what Marshal Carnes said. Grampa is one of the smugglers!”

“I don’t believe it. He’s not! He can’t be!”

Jed sighed. “I don’t want to believe it either, but the facts are there. I think we need to go back and tell the marshal about the cave. We could have a part in the capture of Philippe Sebastian!”

“Pa said to tell Grampa,” his brother argued.

“And have him warn Philippe Sebastian? You’re not thinking, Nathan.”

“I’m just wanting to obey Pa,” Nathan replied. “He said to tell Grampa if we saw any strangers.”

“Marshal Carnes is not a stranger!” Jed exploded. “He’s a U.S. marshal! And it’s our duty to tell him about the hideout we found under the cliff.”

He looked down at the sea. “The tide’s out now, but it’ll start back in pretty soon. They could probably get into the cave now. I’m going back to show them the opening.”

“Well, I’m not going,” Nathan declared stubbornly. “You’re disobeying Pa.”

“Then promise me one thing,” Jed begged.

“What’s that?”

“Don’t tell Grampa,” Jed replied. “Wait until Pa gets back from town and we have a chance to discuss it with him. All right?”

Nathan thought it over. “Maybe,” he said finally. “But I don’t think you should talk with the marshal until we let Pa know.”

“By then it could be too late,” Jed replied. “It’s our duty to tell him now.”

Nathan turned toward the house, and Jed retraced his steps toward the beach. David met him at the edge of the beach. “What’s up? Something’s happening— it’s written all over your face!”

“Did you see two men?” Jed asked. “They were U.S. marshals, and I need to talk to them.”

“Was one man tall, the other short and stocky?” David asked.

Jed nodded. “That’s them.”

“They were heading toward the other end of the beach just a minute ago,” David replied. “They seemed to be searching for

The Lighthouse Mystery

something. I didn't let them see me 'cause I didn't know who they were."

"We need to talk to them," Jed said, hurrying after the men. As they walked, he told David about Philippe Sebastian and about Grampa's involvement. "So the cave must be Sebastian's hideout," he finished, "and we can help the marshals capture him!"

"And Grampa's involved, too?" David asked, with disbelief written across his features.

Jed nodded sadly. "I'm afraid so. Marshal Carnes told us."

The boys soon overtook the marshal and his deputy. "So you came back, did you?" the lawman greeted them. "What's on your mind?"

"We think we know where Philippe Sebastian is hiding out," Jed replied. He told the men about the cavern at the end of the beach. When he described the crown jewels, the marshal nodded.

"That's our man, all right! You've done a fine bit of work, young man. We appreciate your information."

Jed hesitated. "Could we— could we go with you? You know— uh, and watch while you capture him?"

The lawman looked thoughtful. "He's a criminal, son, and a dangerous one at that. I wouldn't want to place you lads in any danger."

"But there's two of you," Jed protested. "You'll be able to capture him without any trouble."

Marshal Carnes rubbed his chin thoughtfully and then glanced at his deputy. The deputy nodded. "I suppose you're right," the marshal said finally. "But when we get to the hideout, you two stay outside until we know it's safe for you to come in. Fair enough?"

Minutes later Jed and David knelt beside the two men at the end of the beach. "The opening is on the other side of that big, flat rock there," Jed said in a whisper. "You have to crawl under the rock to get in."

The marshal nodded. "Quite a hideout," he whispered. "We'll check it out. Stay here until we call you in. There are no tracks, so apparently he's not even there. But we'll not take any chances until we check it out."

The lawmen opened their coats and pulled long, strange-looking revolvers from their belts. Jed held his breath as the men crept toward the rock. Would the marshal find the dangerous

The Lighthouse Mystery

fugitive? The marshal crawled beneath the rock first, followed by his deputy.

Long, anxious moments followed. Jed and David knelt side by side in the sand, watching the opening beneath the rock. “I wish I could see what’s happening,” David whispered.

Jed nodded. “So do I,” he replied. “I hope they catch him.”

“Boys!” The marshal’s voice echoed from the opening beneath the rock. “Come on in! It’s all right.”

Jed followed David through the opening. A lantern at the end of the tunnel illuminated the cave. The boys entered the cavern to find the two lawmen holding an old man at gunpoint. The fugitive was dressed in clothing identical to Grampa’s, right down to the captain’s cap, and had the same, silvery white hair that Grampa did. “Good work, boys!” Marshal Carnes exclaimed. “This is our man. Caught him napping, we did, but we never would have found him without your help.”

He stepped forward and grasped the old man’s hair, and then gave it a sharp tug. To Jed’s surprise, the hair came off, revealing the darker hair of a much younger man! The marshal then removed the man’s false mustache and bushy eyebrows.

“We meet again, Philippe,” the lawman said mockingly. “Only this time, the situation is much different. This time you’re not so high and mighty.” He pulled a pair of wrist irons from his coat. “Hands behind your back, please.”

The fugitive complied, and the marshal snapped the irons on his hands, then pocketed the key. The captured man turned around and spoke for the first time. “You have me, Demetrius,” he said softly, “but please don’t hurt the boys.”

Jed frowned. What a strange reaction from a dangerous fugitive!

Marshal Carnes suddenly turned and pointed his big revolver at Jed and David, and the deputy did likewise. Jed stared in astonishment. “Tie them up, Rialto,” the marshal ordered.

A feeling of terror slowly came over Jed as the stocky deputy tied his hands behind his back and then did the same to David. At the marshal’s instructions, the deputy dragged the boys into the tunnel. He lashed their feet to an outcropping of rock.

“Marshal,” David cried out, “why are you doing this?”

The Lighthouse Mystery

The marshal set down the sea chest he was carrying, reached inside his coat, and then dropped his shiny badge on top of David. “I won’t be needing this any longer, boy,” he said with a laugh. “You might as well keep it to remember me by.”

He turned to the man in handcuffs. “Let’s go, Philippe,” he ordered. “Don’t worry about the lads— we won’t hurt them. We’ll leave them your lantern, and they’ll be just fine— until the high tide fills the lower end of the cavern.”

As the three men crawled from the opening, Jed bit his lip. *Nathan was right. We should have told Grampa!* “Help us, dear God!” he prayed desperately.

He twisted his body around on the damp floor of the tunnel until he could see the opening less than five feet from his head. Fear tightened his chest, and his heart pounded. The first trickle of seawater flowed in to form a tiny puddle, just inches from his head.

Chapter 16 – PRISONERS

Jed and David lay on the rocky floor of the tunnel, their hands and feet tightly bound, keenly aware of the fact that they were facing almost certain death. Jed struggled against the ropes that bound him, twisting and tugging furiously, but the bonds refused to yield. Finally, he gave up. His wrists were skinned and raw from the effort, but the ropes remained as tight as ever.

Jed lay quietly, panting, trying to catch his breath and calm his racing heart. His head pounded and dark spots swam before his eyes. The fear of drowning was so great that he could hardly breathe. Nathan was the only one who could possibly know where he was, and he had agreed not to tell until Pa got back. “How long— how long before the water floods the tunnel?” he asked fearfully.

“Less than—” David’s voice came as a high-pitched squeak, then broke entirely. He lay sobbing for a moment, and then tried

The Lighthouse Mystery

again. “Less than— an hour— I figure,” he sobbed. “Oh, Jed, I’m afraid— to die!”

Jed’s heart went out to his friend. “I’m not looking forward to it either,” he answered, “but at least I know that I’m going to heaven.”

“I’m not,” David sobbed. “I’ve never been— what did you call it— saved, and I know I’m not going to heaven!” He broke down sobbing, and couldn’t even talk.

Jed suddenly felt a cold wetness, and turned his head. His heart sank. The lower end of the tunnel was already several inches deep in seawater, and the level was rising perceptibly. *We don’t even have an hour!* he thought desperately.

He turned back to David. “Jesus can save you,” he said, praying fervently as he spoke. “He died for you, David. If you’ll repent of your sins— the bad things you’ve done— and ask Him to forgive you, He will. Just tell Him that you believe that He died for you, ask Him to save you and forgive you, and trust Him for your salvation.”

“How do I know that He’ll do that?” David faltered.

“God promises to do it!” Jed responded. “There’s a verse in the Bible that says: ‘For whosoever shall call upon the name of

the Lord shall be saved.’ I’m not sure where it is, but I know it’s in the Bible. Pa showed me.”

“Can— can I ask Him now?” David asked.

“Of course.”

As Jed watched, his friend closed his eyes and began to pray, “Jesus, I know I’m a sinner, and I’m not ready to die.” A sob choked off his words. He swallowed hard, and then continued, “But, Jesus, I know that you died for me, and Jed says that you promised to save me from my sins, if I’ll ask you. I’m asking, Jesus. Please forgive me.”

He opened his eyes and looked at Jed. “I asked Him to save me, Jed. Did He do it?”

Jed grinned broadly. “God never lies, David. He promised to save you, so we know He did it.”

A look of relief crossed David’s anxious face. “That’s good to know.” He suddenly looked thoughtful. “You know, Rebecca’s not saved, either, is she?”

Jed shook his head. “I don’t think so.”

The boys fell silent, watching as the water in the tunnel crept higher and higher. By lifting their shoulders, they were able to keep their heads dry. But the water continued to rise

The Lighthouse Mystery

relentlessly. “When it comes up another foot, we’ve had it,” David observed. Jed just nodded.

David suddenly strained upward as high as he could. “Sh-h! Listen!”

Jed lay quietly, listening intently, but the only sound audible in the cavern that imprisoned them was the gentle sloshing of the seawater that threatened their lives. And then Jed heard a scraping noise, like the sound of someone dragging a heavy object over a rocky ledge.

“Boys!” a voice called. “Are you there?”

“It’s Grampa!” Jed shouted. “Grampa, we’re over here! In the tunnel!”

Seconds later, the old man stood over them with a sharp knife in his hand, his dark eyes smoldering with anger. “I never thought they’d go this far,” he rasped through clenched teeth. “God help me if I catch up to them!”

He reached down and slashed the rope that bound Jed’s feet with two quick strokes of the knife and then helped him to his feet. “Hold still while I free your hands, boy,” he said gruffly. Jed was surprised to see tears in the old man’s eyes.

Jed stood rubbing his chafed wrists as his grandfather cut the ropes that bound David. He glanced up and was surprised to see Nathan. “I told Grampa,” Nathan whispered.

Grampa led the boys up into the cavern and looked them over. “Are you lads all right?” he asked gently.

Jed nodded. “We’re fine. Just a little scared is all.”

Grampa shook his head. “You boys just about made a quick trip to Davy Jones’ locker! Thank God, Nathan told me what was going on and we got here in time. Another twenty minutes and we would have been too late to save you.”

His shoulders suddenly sagged, and a despondent look crossed his face. “They got Philippe, didn’t they?”

Jed nodded soberly. “I’m sorry, Grampa! I didn’t know! I thought they were—”

Grampa held up one hand. “It’s done, son. Now we have to hurry and try to save Philippe’s life.”

“How’d you get in here?” Jed asked. Nathan pointed, and Jed saw to his amazement that a large, flat rock against one wall had been swung to one side, revealing an opening in the cavern wall!

The Lighthouse Mystery

Grampa handed Nathan one of the lanterns and then turned and ducked through the opening. The three boys quickly followed. A narrow corridor wound its way gradually upward through the very heart of the cliff. Jed could tell that the passageway was a natural cleft in the rock, but in places, the steps had been chiseled out by hand. “You won’t believe where it comes out,” Nathan told Jed, with a mysterious grin.

At the upper end of the tunnel, Grampa climbed a flight of stone steps and then reached up and flung open a trapdoor. Jed followed him through and then stopped in bewilderment. He had no idea where he was, and yet, the room looked strangely familiar.

Eight or ten wooden crates were stacked against the wall, and there was a small wooden door with a large bolt on the inside. Suddenly, it dawned on Jed. *We’re standing in the little room at the base of the lighthouse! The corridor from the cavern hideout leads to the lighthouse. No wonder Grampa got so upset when I started to move those crates—he didn’t want me to discover the trap door.*

Grampa unbolted the little door and the three boys followed him from the little room. Jed reached for the latch on the

lighthouse door, but the old man grabbed his arm. “Don’t open that door!”

Startled, Jed turned to face his grandfather. “Why not, Grampa?”

Grampa opened the door less than an inch. “Peek out, Jed, and tell me what you see.”

Jed peered through the crack. The sun had already set, and darkness was falling rapidly. But through the twilight Jed could see a ship just outside the bay, less than half a mile from the lighthouse!

He drew back from the door. “Who are they, Grampa?”

“The ship is named the *Orion*,” the old man answered, and his face grew tight with anger. “The ruffians on board are here to pick up Philippe. If they get Philippe to the ship, his life isn’t worth a bosun’s whistle!”

Nathan looked through the crack, and then turned to Grampa. “Who is Philippe, Grampa? The marshal told us he was a dangerous outlaw.”

The old man snorted. “Marshal? He was no marshal! You were dealing with one of the slickest operators on the seven continents!”

The Lighthouse Mystery

Jed hung his head. “I’m sorry, Grampa. We didn’t know. We really thought he was a marshal.”

Grampa just laughed. “Nothing to be ashamed of, Jed. The man’s name is Demetrius Renaldi. He has conned some of the world’s smartest men. This world is filled with crooks and con artists, but you were up against the best of the best!”

“But who is Philippe?” Nathan asked again. “He’s not a criminal, is he?”

Grampa shook his head. “No, Nathan, he’s not. Philippe is a good man, and one of the most important in all of Europe. Right now, the fate of an entire nation depends upon his safety. We’ve got to keep him off that ship! If the *Orion* leaves Barnacle Bay with Philippe aboard, he’ll forfeit his life!”

“Why is the *Orion* anchored outside the bay?” Jed asked. “If they’re here to pick up Philippe, why don’t they just sail right into the bay?”

“They can’t until high tide,” the old lighthouse keeper responded. “Barnacle Bay is protected by a natural barrier, a shoal of rocks lying less than two fathoms beneath the surface. Crab Island is simply an extension of the shoal. A ship the size of the *Orion* has a draft of at least twelve feet, and can only cross

during high tide. And of course, that means that they can only leave during high tide as well.”

Grampa quietly pulled the door closed and turned to David. “I’ve got a job for you and Nathan. You boys come with me to the lantern gallery.”

Jed followed the others up the winding stairs. When they reached the watch room, Grampa paused at the foot of the ladder leading to the gallery. “Jed, why don’t you pressurize the fuel tank while I show David and Nathan what to do.”

“Aye, aye, sir!” Jed replied and began to pump the handle furiously. When he finished, he climbed to the lantern gallery after the others.

He found that Grampa had lit the Argand burner and was manually rotating the reflectors and lens until the beam pointed out to sea. A lightweight line had been strung across the gallery in front of the lens, and a heavy square of canvas was doubled over it. Jed frowned. What was Grampa doing? The canvas would obscure the beam and keep ships from seeing the light.

“What are you doing, Grampa?” he asked.

“We’re preparing to signal for help,” the old man answered.

The Lighthouse Mystery

He turned to Nathan. “When I’m out of the way, start sending the signal. Let the line sag until the canvas drops to the floor. Count ten seconds, then raise it back up until it blocks the light. Count ten again, and then drop it. Got it? I want the light flashing at ten-second intervals.

“David, you wait at the bottom of the ladder and then spell Nathan when he gets tired. Don’t either of you climb up into the gallery, just in case someone aboard the *Orion* starts shooting at the light. You can operate the line from the third rung at the top of the ladder.”

“How long should we keep doing it, Grampa?” Nathan asked.

“For the next four hours, if necessary,” the old man answered. “We have some friends standing by just a few miles out to sea. We’re signaling them for help.”

Grampa, Jed, and David descended to the watch room, and Nathan began pulling and releasing the line. The beam from the lighthouse began to blink, sending a desperate signal far out to sea. Leaving David in the watch room, Grampa and Jed hurried down the steep stairs.

“Jed, you go straight to the house. Get your Ma, Granny, Mandy, and Sarah, and take them to the upstairs room you shared with Nathan. Have them stay on the floor behind the bed. Ask Mr. Phelps to stay with them.

“You and Mr. Phelps will find weapons in the sea chest at the foot of my bed. I loaded them this afternoon. Place a lantern on the banister just outside the door, and Mr. Phelps will be able to see anyone who comes up the stairs, but they’ll be unable to see him. Tell Mr. Phelps that if anyone comes up those stairs, he is to challenge them once, then shoot to kill. Follow me?”

Jed nodded hesitantly. “I think so, Grampa.”

The old man slapped him on the back. “Once you know that the family’s safe, come and meet me at the dinghy. But be careful! These men wouldn’t hesitate for an instant to kill you. I pray God that you’ll make it safely.”

He opened his coat and withdrew a revolver, checked the load, and then slipped it back. “Let’s pray, shall we?”

Removing his captain’s cap, Grampa bowed his head, and Jed did the same. “Father, we need thy presence tonight,” the old man prayed. “We’re in a position of extreme danger, and we humbly ask for thy protection. Watch over us, but especially the

The Lighthouse Mystery

boys. And Father, guard and protect Philippe, and return him to us safely. In Jesus' name, Amen.”

Ten minutes later Jed crouched in the bushes below the house. So far, so good. The family was safely upstairs with Mr. Phelps standing guard, and the lighthouse continued to flash its distress signal. Jed silently surveyed the cliff and the beach below. All was quiet. The sky was overcast, with thick clouds blotting out the light from the moon and stars. The night would be dark.

His heart pounded with fear as he carefully made his way across the cliffs and then slipped down the slope toward the beach. He glanced out to sea. In spite of the darkness of the night, he could still see the billowing white sails as the *Orion* slowly made its way into the bay. He caught his breath. They were coming for Philippe!

As he crept noiselessly across the sand, the shutter on a dark lantern suddenly snapped open barely five yards from where he stood and a beam of light flashed out across the darkness. With an exclamation of surprise and fear, Jed took a quick step backwards, then tripped and fell flat in the sand.

“It's one of those boys!” a man cried out, and Jed recognized the voice as that of the phony marshal. The beam of light swung toward him.

Jed leaped to his feet and dashed down the beach. The beam from the lantern threw a huge shadow in front of him as the unseen pursuer closed in on him. He ran until his tortured lungs screamed for air, but he dared not slow. “Lord, help me!” he prayed desperately.

Chapter 17 – THE CHASE

Jed ran until his lungs burned and his breath came in ragged gasps. His arms and legs felt as if they were made of lead. But the bobbing light and heavy breathing behind him told him that his pursuer was right on his heels.

He felt a heavy hand strike his shoulder as the man snatched at his jacket. There was no way he could outrun his assailant! He was about to be caught! In desperation, he dropped to the sand and rolled. The sudden move caught his pursuer off guard. Unable to react in time, the man tumbled over Jed and fell heavily to the sand with a curse. Jed heard the sound of shattering glass, and the lantern winked out. In the darkness, he heard the man curse again.

Jed leaped to his feet and dashed for the cliffs, then began to scramble up the rocky slope below the bluff. He paused, breathing hard, but could see no sign of the man. A large pile of

boulders loomed in front of him, and he melted into one of the spaces between them and then quietly sucked in huge lungfuls of cool sea air.

“Where’s the boy?” The voice came from the darkness just below him, sounding as if the man were close enough to reach out and touch him.

“He’s somewhere up there in the rocks,” the first man growled. “The fool boy tripped me, and I smashed the lamp! Help me find him.”

Jed lay quietly, holding one hand over his mouth to muffle the sound of his heavy breathing. He couldn’t see the men, but the sound of their boots on the rocks told him that they were getting close.

“There’s the signal!” one man exclaimed. “The long boat’s coming in. We need to get Philippe and meet it.”

“What about the boy?”

“Leave him! There’s no time to search for him, and he can’t cause us any trouble now. I’d love to get him, but we’ll have to let him go.”

To Jed’s relief, the two men hurried down the slope. “Thank you, Lord,” he breathed. He slowly raised his head.

The Lighthouse Mystery

A tiny light bobbed in the surf less than thirty yards from his hiding place. As he watched, the outlines of a longboat became visible as the craft grated to a stop on the sand. One of the men in the boat opened the shutter wider on the lantern, and the light became brighter.

Three men were silhouetted against the yellow glow as they hurried across the beach toward the boat, and Jed knew instantly who they were. His heart sank as he watched the men wrestle Philippe into the boat and then place a heavy sea chest in after him. The men rowed hard to fight their way through the pounding surf, and the longboat disappeared into the night.

Jed scrambled from his hiding place and hurried down the beach. Grampa was waiting at the dinghy. "Help me get her into the water," he said as Jed came up.

"They got him into a longboat!" Jed blurted. "They got Philippe!"

Grampa nodded as he struggled with the boat. "Our only hope is to keep the *Orion* from leaving the bay until the tide recedes," he answered quietly. "Philippe's life depends on it!"

He seized the oars. "Take the tiller," he whispered urgently. "Help me keep her headed directly into the breakers while I row through. We don't dare use the sail tonight, lest they spot it."

Once the dinghy was safely past the line of pounding breakers, Grampa rested the oars on the gunwales and picked up two gunny sacks. "Time to muffle the oars," he whispered, "so they don't hear our approach."

"What are we going to do when we get there?" Jed asked.

"I really don't know," Grampa answered, as he wrapped the burlap around the end of each oar. "I'm praying that God will send us a plan of attack. We have to keep them here another hour and a half until the tide recedes enough to trap the *Orion* inside the bay. But if they weigh anchor while the tide is still high, there'll be no stopping them."

Grampa carefully rowed the little craft to within fifteen yards of the darkened ship. One lantern hung from the forward masthead, so he approached in the shadow of the stern. In the darkness Jed could see a heavy chain jutting out from the stern of the ship at a point just below the deck, then angling out to disappear into the water. "What's that chain for?" he whispered.

The Lighthouse Mystery

“Keep your voice low,” Grampa warned in a barely audible whisper. “That’s the stern anchor chain.”

Jed stood up and tripped over a coil of line, landing heavily against the gunwale and nearly falling over the side into the dark waters of the bay. “Sorry, Grampa,” he whispered, feeling awkward and clumsy. He and Grampa sat tensely, waiting to be discovered, but apparently no one on board the *Orion* had heard.

Jed reached down to recoil the line, and an idea suddenly struck him. “Grampa,” he whispered excitedly, “I have an idea! I know how to keep the ship from leaving!” He slipped his boots from his feet and peeled off his jacket.

“Jed, what are you up to?” Grampa whispered.

“Please keep the boat here,” Jed replied. “I’m going for a swim.” He slipped over the side, clinging to the gunwale, and cringing at the unexpected coldness of the water. “Hand me the coil of rope, would you, Grampa?”

“Line,” Grampa corrected quietly, his seamanship surfacing even in a time of extreme danger. He handed the coil of hemp line over the side to Jed, who draped it over his head and one shoulder.

“Pray for me, Grampa,” Jed whispered, and then swam noiselessly toward the *Orion*.

When he reached the anchor chain, he reached up to grasp it with one hand and then rested and caught his breath. With his free hand he slid the coil of line into the water and shook out the loops.

Taking a deep breath, Jed grasped the end of the line in his teeth, and then dived deep, following the anchor chain. When he estimated that he was seven or eight feet down, he passed the end of the line through one of the links in the chain and tied a knot. Lungs nearly bursting, he swam upwards. As he neared the surface, he slowed his ascent by gripping the anchor chain.

When he had caught his breath, he clutched the line in his teeth and dived straight down, swimming close to the stern of the ship. With both hands in front of him, he groped in the dark waters for the ship’s rudder. He located it, passed the line around it, and then pulled the line as tight as he could. His lungs were screaming for air, but he forced himself to ignore the pain while he wrapped the line around the big rudder twice more.

Maintaining his hold on the line, he shot to the surface, trying to make as little noise as possible. He grasped the anchor

The Lighthouse Mystery

chain and hung on for over a minute, catching his breath and gathering strength for another dive. Finally, he collected the end of the line, placed it in his teeth, and then dived down the anchor chain again.

Several minutes later as he rested at the chain, a light suddenly winked on in one of the *Orion*'s portholes. His curiosity got the best of him, and he swam over to investigate. Gripping a line dangling over the rail, he cautiously climbed the darkened side of the ship until he could peer into the porthole.

He caught his breath. The porthole opened into a small cabin. Seated on a bunk, his hands and feet shackled, was Philippe! He was alone in the cabin, and the door was closed, but Jed realized that the porthole was much too small for the man to escape. He slipped noiselessly back into the water.

Jed swam out to the dinghy where Grampa waited anxiously. As Jed clutched the gunwale to catch his breath, Grampa's face appeared over the side, just inches from his own. "What in China were you up to, boy?" he whispered. "I couldn't see a thing!"

"I tied their anchor chain to the ship's rudder!" Jed whispered. "Tied it three separate times. They won't be able to raise the anchor!"

His grandfather stared at him in amazement, and then burst into silent laughter. He covered his face with both hands to stifle any noise, but his shoulders shook convulsively, rocking the little boat. Jed hung on and waited. Finally, the old man regained his composure.

"Good work, Jed!" he whispered. "You'd be a credit to any captain's command. I'm proud that you bear the name of Cartwright. Come on, I'll help you into the boat." Jed felt a sudden warmth in spite of the cold water.

"Grampa, what will happen to Philippe if the warships get here in time, and there's a battle?"

"The men on board the *Orion* would kill him first thing," Grampa replied.

"What if he had a weapon?"

"Then perhaps he'd have a sporting chance," the old man answered, "but there's no way to get one to him. We don't even know where he is."

The Lighthouse Mystery

“I do,” Jed whispered. “May I have your revolver? I can get it to him.”

Grampa thought it over and then handed the weapon to him. “Here. But don’t let it get wet.”

Jed nodded and then gripped the revolver in his teeth. Releasing his hold on the boat, he swam back to the *Orion*, being careful to keep the weapon out of the water. His heart pounded as he quietly climbed toward the lighted porthole. When he reached the porthole he pushed on the glass, but the casing was latched. He could see Philippe still sitting on the side of the bunk with his head in his hands.

Jed tapped gently on the glass and Philippe’s head shot up. He stared at the porthole in disbelief, then stood to his feet and shuffled across the cabin. After fumbling with the latch for a moment, he was able to swing the tiny porthole open.

“Lad, get out of here!” Philippe whispered urgently. “These men will kill you in a moment if they catch you here!”

Gripping the line with one hand, Jed passed the revolver through the porthole to Philippe. “Take this!” he whispered. “We’re trying to keep the *Orion* in the bay until help can get here. Don’t give up hope!”

Philippe shook his head as he took the weapon. “You’re the bravest lad I’ve ever met!” he exclaimed softly. “Thank you, son.” He glanced at the cabin door. “You’d better leave quickly. May God be with you.” He gently closed the porthole and then hobbled back to sit on the bunk.

Jed slid down the line into the water and then swam silently back to the dinghy. Grampa helped pull him into the boat. As the old man rowed noiselessly away from the ship, Jed sat in the bow, shivering violently from the cold as he put his jacket and boots back on. Grampa paused long enough to wrap him in the sail. “This will at least keep some of the wind off you,” he said.

Lights began to wink on aboard the *Orion*, and the deck swarmed with activity. “Weigh anchor,” a voice commanded. “Hoist the sails. Look lively, now!” The moon seemed to spring from behind the clouds, bathing Barnacle Bay in a bright, silver light.

The sails billowed white as they unfurled against the night and the bow anchor chain rattled and clanked as the forward winch lifted the anchor from the bottom of the bay. In the stern of the ship, violent cursing filled the air.

The Lighthouse Mystery

Jed momentarily forgot his coldness as he watched the commotion aboard the *Orion*. Lanterns bobbed like fireflies as several crewmen hurried aft. The stern of the vessel became a flurry of activity. “But I tried, sir!” a plaintive voice echoed across the water. “The winch appears to be jammed!”

“Then slack off and try again!” an authoritative voice ordered. “Your incompetence is delaying the entire ship!”

Grampa rested on the oars, his silent laughter rocking the little dinghy. “It’ll take them hours to figure out what’s wrong,” he chuckled. “You stopped them dead in the water, Jed.”

Several minutes later as the dinghy grated on the beach, a huge figure hurried forward to meet them. “Pa!” Jed exclaimed.

Jake Cartwright cradled a rifle in his powerful hands.

“What’s going on, Pa?” he asked Grampa.

“They have Philippe aboard the ship,” Grampa replied anxiously. “But they’re not going anywhere at the moment. Jed stopped them dead. Tied their anchor chain to the rudder!” He began to laugh again.

Pa glanced at Jed. “Son, you’re soaked.” He stripped his huge coat from his frame and handed it to his son. “Get that wet coat and shirt off and then slip this on.”

He turned back to his father. “Let’s go after them, Pa!”

But the old man shook his head. “There’s more than two dozen of ‘em, son. We wouldn’t stand a chance. And they’d kill Philippe first thing.”

Jed looked up and then pointed in delight. “Look!”

Two warships came sailing around the point with their sails billowing ghostly white against the dark sea as they headed straight for Barnacle Bay. As the Cartwrights looked on, the sails came tumbling down and the vessels slowed to a stop just beyond the breakwater. Jed caught occasional glimpses of uniformed men lining the rails.

“Ahoy the *Orion*!” a strong voice rang out. “Stand by and prepare to be boarded!”

But the *Orion* answered by extinguishing most of her lights. The long, black muzzles of four cannons slowly extended from the side of the ship. Jed saw bursts of orange flame and puffs of white smoke and then heard the booming reports of the cannons. But the shots splashed harmlessly into the sea behind the stern of the second ship.

The Lighthouse Mystery

“What are they doing?” Grampa fumed. “They can’t possibly hope to win against two warships! And they still can’t weigh their anchor!”

Fire belched from the sides of the warships as they returned a volley of cannon fire, scoring three direct hits. One cannonball cut cleanly through the aft mast, bringing it down upon the deck of the stricken *Orion* in a confusion of sails, tangled lines, and splintered wood.

The effect was immediate. Nearly two dozen men crowded to the *Orion*’s rails, frantically waving any piece of white cloth they could lay hands on. The battle was over almost before it had begun.

The two warships lowered four longboats filled with sailors. As Jed watched in delight, the boats rowed across the bay and prepared to board the damaged vessel.

Suddenly, three shots rang out from within the ship. Jed’s heart leaped into his throat. “Philippe!” he cried. “They’ve shot Philippe!”

“May God help them,” Grampa muttered. He bowed his head.

Ten minutes later the longboats pulled away from the side of the *Orion* and then headed out across the bay. “They’re taking prisoners to the warships,” Pa said.

But one longboat was making its way toward the beach. As it bobbed through the surf, Jed pointed, shouting, “Look! It’s Philippe! He’s alive!”

When the boat landed, Philippe was the first one out. He approached Jed and saluted smartly. “Your weapon, sir.” He extended his hand, and Jed took the revolver from him.

The man turned to Grampa. “The lad saved my life, Hiram. Just before the sailors boarded, Demetrius came to my cabin, intending to kill me. It took three shots, but I was able to stop him. I owe my life, and my throne, to this brave lad.”

Grampa turned to Jed. “You haven’t been properly introduced, have you? Your Highness, I’d like you to meet my grandson, Jed Cartwright. Jed, meet Philippe, Crown Prince of the nation of Portugal.”

Chapter 18 -- WEDDING DAY

Five ships lay at anchor in the bay, sails furled, their polished decks occasionally reflecting a glint of the afternoon sun. The four Cartwright kids sat stiffly in their dress clothes atop the bluff, taking turns peering at the ships through Grampa's spy-glass.

"They'd better hurry!" Nathan complained. "They're gonna miss the wedding!"

"Here comes Prince Philippe now," Mandy said, viewing the flagship through the telescope. "He's just getting into the longboat. My, isn't he dressed fancy!"

"And here come Pa and Grampa," replied Jed, bouncing little Sarah on his knee. "It must be about time for the ceremony."

The two men spotted the young people and headed for them. Pa was dressed in an elaborate coat and tails, while Grampa

looked smart in a freshly starched captain's uniform. The brass epaulets on his shoulders were polished bright, and a dress sword hung from his belt.

"You look handsome, Grampa," Mandy said.

Pa took Sarah from Jed, tossed her in the air and caught her, and then sat beside the young people. "Today's the day!" he said grandly.

Jed turned to Grampa. "I still don't understand, Grampa. Why did Prince Philippe come to America? And how did he know you?"

"King Ferdinand and I have been friends for years," Grampa explained. "I met the king long before he took the throne, and he once saved my life. When the revolution threatened the throne, he sent Prince Philippe to America to protect the family heritage. If the king had been killed, Philippe would have taken the throne."

"But the revolution failed," Nathan said.

Grampa nodded. "Yes, thank God. But Philippe didn't know that until yesterday when the fleet came for him."

With a huge grin on his weathered face, Grampa drew his sword. "Kneel, Sir Jedediah," he commanded. As Jed knelt,

The Lighthouse Mystery

Grampa lightly touched Jed on the shoulder with the sword. “I dub thee Sir Jedediah Cartwright, Lord Keeper of the light at Sharktooth Point— well, at least for the coming week. Thy valiant heart and bravery in battle hast earned thee this fair honor, bestowed upon thee this very day. Rise, Sir Jedediah!”

Jed stood to his feet while the others looked on, laughing. “You were a brave lad to do what you did, Jed,” Grampa said, sheathing his sword and placing a husky arm about Jed’s shoulders. “Prince Philippe owes his life to you.”

Jed hung his head. “I almost cost the prince his life,” he declared. “Pa told me to tell you if I saw any strangers, and instead, I went and revealed Philippe’s hideout to the men who wanted to capture him. He almost died because of me.”

Pa looked thoughtful. “Have you learned anything, son?”

Jed nodded. “I’ve learned plenty. Remember when you told me not to take Wolf to search for Miriam Watkins, and I took him anyway, and found Miriam? I knew I was disobeying, but it seemed that everything came out better because I did. But this time, my disobedience almost caused a disaster!”

Pa smiled gently. “And...?”

“And I’ve learned my lesson,” Jed declared. “I’ve asked God to forgive me, and I asked Him to help me to obey— every time— even when I think I have a good reason not to. Will you also forgive me, Pa?”

The big man nodded. “Of course, son.”

Grampa cleared his throat nervously. “It seems that I have some confessing of my own to do,” he said softly. He turned to Jed. “I want you to forgive me for lying to you, son.”

Jed stared at him. “What do you mean, Grampa?”

The old man stared at the ground. “The first night you were here was the night Philippe arrived, and you saw me sending signals from the lighthouse. But when you asked me about it, I denied everything. I lied to you, boy.”

He sighed heavily. “Your question caught me off guard, Jed, and I just wasn’t ready for it. I thought I had to protect Philippe’s secret at all costs, and I lied to you. I’m sorry, son.

“And I was a bit rough when I caught you snooping in the room beneath the stairs. I was fearful that you would discover the trapdoor, and Philippe’s hideout would be jeopardized. We couldn’t have that, of course, but I’m sorry I was so tough on you. Can you try to understand why I did it?”

The Lighthouse Mystery

Jed squeezed the old man's shoulder. "That's all right, Grampa."

"Will you forgive me for lying to you?"

"Certainly, Grampa." The old man hugged him.

Prince Philippe came striding up toward the bluff, accompanied by a group of uniformed men. The blue coat of the prince's uniform was trimmed with gold braid which sparkled in the afternoon sun. "Good afternoon!" he called cheerfully. "I trust that my men and I have not delayed the ceremony."

He turned to Jed and Nathan. "Your grandfather tells me that you lads are the ones who found the dagger and returned it to him. My countrymen and I owe you a great debt of gratitude.

"The dagger is over four centuries old," he explained, "and is one of our national treasures. It has been in the royal family for generations, and has passed from one king to the next. My father committed it to me for safekeeping during the revolution. Should he have been killed, the dagger would have been proof of my right to the throne."

The prince shook his head. "So what do I do," he said, "but lose it in the surf the night I landed at Sharktooth Point. I've been searching for it ever since. You spotted me once or twice

on the beach. What a relief when your grandfather informed me that it had been found!"

He shook hands with the boys. "My countrymen and I are grateful! Thank you, lads."

Prince Philippe looked up at Jake Cartwright. "And you, sir, are the father of the lads?" He gazed in awe at Pa's huge, powerful physique. "I'd love to have you in my service. My, what a bodyguard you'd make!"

Grampa pointed up the road, where a lone rider slowly made his way toward the house. "Here comes the parson now. Let's get on with the ceremony."

"Where's Granny?" Mandy asked. "I haven't seen her all day."

"Today's her wedding day," Pa replied. "No one's allowed to see her until the wedding!"

Mandy pointed across the hillside. "Oh, good. Here come the twins. I was afraid they were going to miss it."

Fifteen minutes later, Grampa Cartwright stood facing Granny Jarkey as they exchanged vows at a homemade altar under the weeping willow in the back yard. Pa stood beside Grampa as best man, and Ma stood as matron of honor for

The Lighthouse Mystery

Granny. Mandy leaned over to Jed. “They look so happy together, don’t they?” she whispered.

Jed nodded. “Yes, and Granny really is our Granny, now,” he answered happily. “It’s official!”

“You may kiss the bride,” the parson said, closing his Bible reverently. Grampa lifted the lacy veil and tenderly kissed his new bride, while the onlookers cheered and applauded. Wolf barked enthusiastically.

After the wedding dinner, good-byes were exchanged. The newlyweds sped toward Charleston in a carriage, and Prince Philippe and his men headed for their ships. Nathan turned to Jed.

“We have one more week before we head back for St. Louis,” he said. “We still have plenty of time for sailing with David and Rebecca, and plenty of time for fishing.”

Jed shook his head. “I’m gonna be busy watching after the lighthouse,” he replied. “In fact, I have to go polish the reflectors right now.” He pulled a soft cloth from the pocket of his coat and headed for the lighthouse with Wolf snapping playfully at his heels.

Be sure to read *The Dragon’s Egg* by Ed Dunlop, available from:

www.TalesOfCastles.com

