

# Finders Keepers

By the P6/5 Class of Carbrain Primary School  
with Mike Nicholson



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## Chapter 1

### The Hunt

Summertime. Sunshine. Colours. Warmth. It was all there. The perfect July day. The sort of day for flip flops, sunglasses or even a swimming pool if you could find one.

The twins looked at their Mum. They knew she was going to say it and she did.

“You two should be outside.”

“I wish it would rain,” said Max.

“That’s cos you’re allergic to being outside,” said Emily. “Anywhere without an Xbox and you come out in a rash.”

“Well you only go outside to get to the shops. That’s not really outside.”

“I should build a dome to keep the rain out,” said their Mum. “Then you wouldn’t have that excuse to stay in”.

It was true. Quite often the twins needed some persuasion to go out but today their Mum had been extra-well organised. She handed over a piece of paper which looked like a long shopping list.

Emily took the sheet and looked at her mum’s spidery writing. “Scavenger Hunt?” she said sounding unconvinced. “Oh I like those,” said Max grabbing it from her and scanning down some of the items.

“Dead leaf, squirrel, butterfly, feather, snowdrop...We need to go somewhere like Cumbernauld Glen. That’s where we can find this stuff like this.” Their Mum looked pleased. Her plan to get them out on a sunny day had worked.





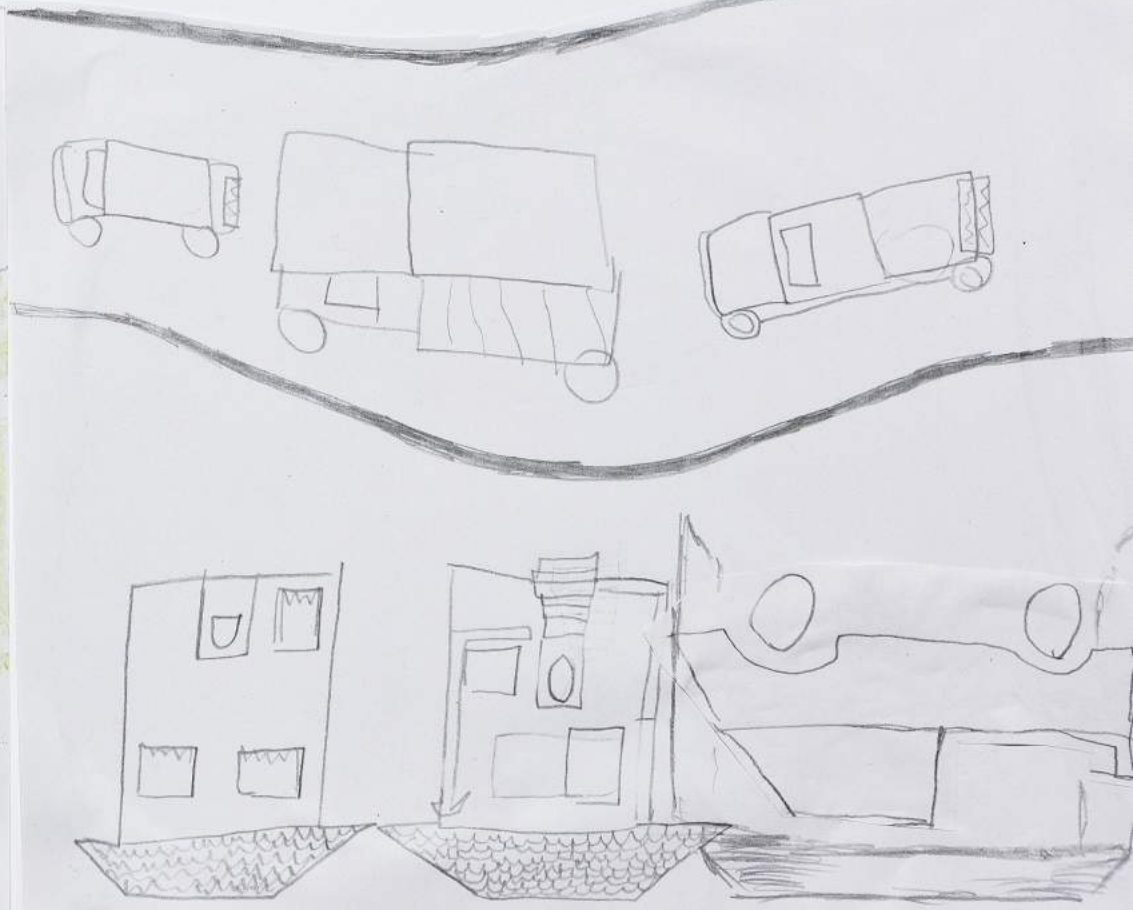


Without too much complaining, Max and Emily stepped through the front door into bright sunlight in Ash Road, Abronhill. From there they walked on pathways between white and grey tunnel houses and flat roof houses until they reached Cumbernauld Field.

“There is a whole load of grass here,” said Max taking in the view. “Shame that’s not on the list.”

“Let’s roll down the hill!” said Emily. Cumbernauld Field was the perfect place for all sorts of activities. Dog-walking, summertime picnics, snowball fights and sledging in winter, but on a bright day when the grass was dry; rolling down the hill. Minutes later the twins were both lying at the bottom looking up at the blue sky grinning, but feeling weirdly dizzy.

As they steadied themselves and set off again they decided to go through Cumbernauld Village to find the first thing on their list. Here in the oldest part of the town where the houses were like cottages they tracked down the War Memorial and wrote down the first surname from it.



“It’s too hot,” Max complained as they left the village. “I want to be inside.”

“Maybe it will be cooler in the Glen,” his sister replied. Sure enough it felt different once they reached the shade of the trees, although the sun still cut through the leaves and dappled the ground. They were now in a world of occasional birdsong, with a buzz of insects and the scents of summer. There was a scramble of movement as a grey squirrel took fright and darted up a tree.

“That’s another one,” said Emily ticking squirrel off the list.

“Shhhh,” said Max. “Look....”





## Chapter 2

### The Stone Door

Thirty metres away a young deer was picking its way between the trees, nibbling at shoots as it went. “Brilliant,” whispered Max.

“I wonder what else there is here,” said Emily. “Maybe badgers and hedgehogs?”

“There used to be wolves,” said Max.

“No there didn’t. That was at Palace Rigg,” scoffed his sister.

“Well maybe it was foxes,” said Max. “I’m glad they’re not on our list.” He looked at what they still had to find.

“Toad?” He said frowning. “That will be impossible. They are so camouflaged.”

“She’s put bunch of snowdrops,” said Emily looking at their Mum’s list. “You only get those in spring. That’s not fair. How will we ever find those?” They carried on searching for items and had soon found an acorn beside an old tree stump, a skeleton leaf buried in the undergrowth and a feather. Tick, tick, tick. “Another one!” shouted Emily pointing at a butterfly. They jumped off the path and chased it through the trees, twigs snapping and old leaves crunching underfoot. The butterfly looked like a little flickering tiger coloured light in the air, fluttering like a piece of tissue paper caught on the breeze.





“This is fun but I still wish it would rain,” said Max. He grabbed a stick. “If I had my way I’d just cast a spell and make it pour!”

"There's the place for a spell," said Emily. She pointed at a circular stone building in a clearing in the trees. It looked as though Rapunzel should live there. "Me and my friends call it the Witches Tower" said Emily.

“It's a doo’cot,” retorted Max. “We learned about that in school. They kept pigeons in there for food for the people at Cumbernauld House. You can still see the wee holes at the top where the birds got in.”

The twins walked closer to the little round tower. There was just one window high up and what used to be a door was blocked by stone. They walked round it in silence, running a hand over its fortress rock.

“How do you get inside?” asked Max.

“Easy peasy lemon squeezy,” said a voice startling the two of them.





As they returned to the front, what had been a stone door was now open and an old woman stood there. Max and Emily were speechless. She seemed to have appeared from nowhere. “It isnae often I see weans here,” she said.

“She’s like an ancient Nanny MacPhee,” said Max out of the corner of his mouth.

The woman was hunched over. Scrawny rat legs with bony ankles and buckled shoes poked out from her raggedy black skirt.

Her hand trembled on the stick she held, so Emily thought it was little wonder that the woman’s make-up was so badly applied. Drawn-on eyebrows, far too much blusher and lipstick which went way beyond her lips.

“Mon in and get a wee heat,” said the woman gesturing to them to enter.

Max was about to say they were hot enough, but actually it now seemed to have clouded over for the first time that day.

“Are yous on your tod?” asked the woman. “Mon in. Ah’m no gonnae bite. Ah cannae get oot ony mair. So it’s braw having someone comin’ tae see me.”

Are you... a witch?” said Emily thinking of the name her friends had given the tower.

The woman chuckled. “Just because I’m an auld lady doesnae mak’ me a witch does it?” she said.

“No but you do have a pointy hat,” said Max looking at her battered black hat below which grey hair straggled.

“Aye, gid point son.” The woman cackled. If she wasn’t a witch then she certainly sounded like one.

“Have you always lived here?” asked Emily.





“Naw,” said the old woman. “I was brought up in the village just doun’ the way. Born in a wee cottage there in 1912. But I moved here when aw’ the changes happened. Terrible it was whit they did to this place. What was wrong wi’ just having a wee village? Suddenly all those roads and hooses and shops and people. Thoosands o’ them. I took masel’ aff tae here fir a quiet life.”

“Born in 1912...she’s 105,” muttered Emily having done the sums. Max raised his eyebrows in disbelief.

Inside the doocot the twins’ eyes adjusted to the darkness as they peered around the gloomy room. There was a rocking chair by a fireplace where a black pot hung on a metal hook. Row upon row of shelves stretched up the walls, lined with labelled bottles.

“How does she get up there?” whispered Emily.

Max grinned and pointed to a broomstick in the corner. “Maybe she uses that,” he joked.







“Now let me get you’s a wee something.” The old woman shuffled across the room.

“Look!” said Max. “We’ve done it... the last two on our list!” On a table near him was a little bunch of dried snowdrops tied up with string. Beside it on a little bed of damp green moss, sat a large toad. “Scavenger hunt done!”

The old woman had paused at a mirror on the wall. She reached for her make up. What happened next made both of them freeze to the spot.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **The Basement**

They had both seen a flash of green. The old woman was putting on even more blusher to hide her skin colour. Green.

“I don’t like this anymore,” said Emily. She looked for the door they had come through but it seemed to have blended into the wall again. “Let’s hide. Quick through here!”

While the woman was distracted at the mirror the twins slipped through an open door to find wooden steps leading down into darkness. They could disappear into the shadows. Seconds later they found themselves in a basement. Any thoughts of a sunny day had been banished. They both held their breath, desperate not to make a sound.

Above them was the shuffling and muttering of the old woman.

“Do you think she saw where we’ve gone?” Max’s words trembled as he spoke. Then they heard a singsong voice.

*“One wee lassie. One wee laddie.  
Think that I’m a goody but really I’m a baddie.”*





Max and Emily looked at each other in fear. The whites of their wide eyes the brightest thing in the basement. There were more footsteps overhead. Then a slow creak.

THUD!

The door at the top of the steps slammed shut. Max yelped. A squeak of rusty metal. A clunk. It was the sound of a key turning in a rusty lock. “No!” said Emily. Then the sing-song voice came again.

*“Put them in the cellar, send them down  
That’s twa less weans in this crowded toun!”*

“Let us out!” shouted Max. There was a cackle as the witch sang some more.

*“A scavenger hunt is playing finders keepers  
“But in the witches tower you’re the losers weepers!”*

Emily thought quickly and turned on the torch on her phone. She wanted to see properly where they were, scared that there might be traps in the floor. There was very little in the basement. Cobwebs hung from the low ceiling. A few scattered odds and ends littered the dusty floor. It smelt damp and there was the noise of dripping nearby. “Can you phone for help?” said Max.

“No signal,” said Emily holding up her phone with no effect.

Something rustled in a dark corner. “What’s that?” said Max petrified at what might be in the basement with them. At that moment something appeared out of the darkness.



## Chapter 4

### The Message

“Where did that come from?” said Max.

“Well you said this is a doo’cot,” said Emily. “Maybe it lives here.”

A pigeon strutted across the dusty floor. Emily shone her torch on the dark corner from where it had appeared. There was a thin gap between two of the stones, just wide enough for a bird to squeeze through. The pigeon looked at them with beady eyes as if it was expecting them to do something.

“Maybe... just maybe...” said Emily.

“What is it?” said Max.

“Carrier pigeon,” said Emily. “This is how we get a message out of here.”

They scratched around on the ground and found an old label and the stub of a lipstick. Hastily Emily scrawled a message.

“Mum - we are TRAPPED in the basement of the Witches Tower - help!” She took a bobble from her hair and attached the label to the pigeon’s pink wrinkly leg. It patiently allowed her to do it, as if it understood what was happening.

Emily instructing it on where to go and then shepherding the bird back to the crack in the stone it squeezed through and was gone. All the twins could do was hope for the best.







It felt like hours but was probably only thirty minutes when the scratching began again in the corner of the room. The children leapt up to find the pigeon poking through the stones again. There was a new piece of paper attached to its leg. "It worked! We've got a message back!"

It was their Mum's writing, familiar to them from the Scavenger Hunt list. The message read: "Don't worry. I know exactly what to do. Push on the stone with the yellow mark. Follow the stream to the meeting of the waters. Then you'll see daylight."

Still the witch sang her songs

*Twa wee weans in ma basement room  
Nae way oot - trapped in a tomb.*

The twins ignored the taunts from upstairs. Wasting no time they used Emily's torch to find the yellow-marked stone next to where the pigeon had entered. They joined forces and heaved against it. It ground and grated and pushed right through, leaving a thick tunnel in the wall. Immediately they could hear running water and crawling through found themselves in an underground tunnel with a stream. Still using the torch they ran ankle deep in the water, their splashes echoing in the stony chamber. Within a minute the stream was joined by another like two roads linking up. "The meeting of the waters," said Emily. "That's what Cumbernauld means. Mum said we'd find this!"

"How does she know this stuff?" said Max.

"Never mind that.... look."

Just as their Mum said there was daylight ahead. They ran faster and out of the tunnel end, and bursting with relief they clambered out of the stream. They were back; trees, grass, birds but more reassuringly the sound of cars, the sight of houses and people; things the witch hated. They had never been so happy to see ordinary life.







They sprinted towards Abronhill. Passers by stared at them as they ran past with panic still in their faces. Neither of them dared look back, especially when they thought they heard an echoing cackle carried on the wind. A pigeon flew over their heads as they ran but they were focused on only one thing. Getting home.

“I am NEVER going out on a sunny day again,” said Max breathlessly as they turned into Ash Road. Their Mum stood at the front gate looking out for them. She ushered them inside like a hen moving her chicks to safety. The twins could hardly speak properly.

“The scariest thing... awful... witch... trapped us... we thought we were goners... yellow mark... you were right... we escaped...”

“It’s ok it’s ok, it’s ok,” said their Mum, in a soothing voice and shutting the front door firmly and locking it. “You’re home now. You’re home now.”

Max and Emily breathed properly again. Max took a crumpled piece of paper from his pocket and smoothed it out.

“We got them all,” he said, managing a smile. “Even the last two things. They were both in that creepy tower.”

“I knew you’d find them in there,” said their Mum.

“How?” the twins said together.

There was a pause. Their mum was looking in the hall mirror and there was an eerie green glow. She reached for a lipstick and smeared it over her lips and above.

She turned and grinned a horrible grin.



I am never going out on a sunny day again!

