



ten

Zoe looked for William. He was sitting by himself by the huge door that led to the Lady Chapel.

"William!"

"Zoe. That poor boy."

"What . . . ? Oh. The Cat. Yes, I know. It was awful. Is he . . . ?"

"Yes," said William.

"But they're coming. His people are going to attack in a few days. Dooby says so."

"Does he?"

"I'm going to get away," she said in a rush. "I know where my boat is, now. I'm going to get out of here, so come with me! They won't be any nicer to us than we've been to them. It'll be no use saying we didn't want them to hurt him. We've got to get out of here."

"I don't want to."

Zoe couldn't believe it.

"What? They won't be taking prisoners, will they? You'll be killed if you stay! Please! Come with me!"

"No," said William again.

Zoe could see he wasn't being difficult; he was just stating a fact.

"Why not?" asked Zoe, desperately.

"I don't want to go anywhere. It doesn't matter if I'm dead, I'm still going to stay here. And if I'm alive, I'm going to try and stop people from doing evil things. When the fight begins I must tell people not to fight. Try and get them to stop. It's wrong. You understand that, don't you?"

"No!" said Zoe, crying. "I don't. They're all as bad as each other, and you won't be able to stop it! They'll kill you, and you're the only good person here."

"That's not true, Zoe. And they're just people. They're not good or bad. It's just that these are bad times, and it makes people do bad things. I want to help them not to."

Zoe didn't say anything. After a while, it was William who spoke.

"There is one thing that's been bothering me, though," he said.

"What?" asked Zoe, urgently. She was desperate to help William understand that he had to leave.

"Well," he said, "you know that man I told you about? The one who stepped in a puddle?"

"Oh. Yes," said Zoe. It was so frustrating talking to William. She knew there was a good person underneath, a sane person, but he kept on drifting off, talking his nonsense.

"Well, I've remembered he was a doctor, see? And I even remember where he went, but I can't remember his name."

"Oh."

"It's really very annoying . . ."

"I'm sorry," said Zoe, "I don't know."

"No?"

"No," said Zoe crossly. She'd had enough of all his nonsense.

"Go west," William said, suddenly.

"What?" Zoe said.

"Go west, Zoe. When you get away. Things are better there than here."

"So why won't you come?"

He ignored her question.

"West. There's a city you should look for. You'll be all right there. It's a magical place, where everyone is happy, and there's none of this . . . this war."

Zoe turned to William.

"I don't believe there is any such place," she said sadly.

"Oh, but there is. Listen to me, Zoe. I know. It's a marvellous place, and you should look for it. And one day, perhaps, when I've finished my work here, I'll go there, too. And then I'll see you there."

"Really?" said Zoe. "You might come? Where is it? How will I get there? What's it called?"

"It's called Golgonooza."

That was it for Zoe. She had thought William was talking sense at last, but it was just more of his nonsense.

"Golgonooza?" she shouted. "What kind of name is that? I've had it with you! I'm trying my best to help you, I want to help you, and all you do is keep burbling out this rubbish!" William looked hard at Zoe.

"It's not rubbish, Zoe," he said firmly.

"No? All your silly stories about floods and puddles and so on. They're just stories. It's nonsense, all of it!"

"No, it isn't nonsense. It's important."

"Important? It's stupid. That's why they all laugh at you, don't you realize that?"

Zoe wished she hadn't said that, she didn't want to hurt William, just make him understand. But William didn't seem to care.

"I don't care what they think," he said fiercely. "There's no one smart enough to understand here anyway. I thought you might be different, though. Just stories? I thought you might understand how important stories are."

"William, I'm sorry, but it's not important. What's important is surviving. Not getting killed, that's what matters."

"Exactly," said William. "And how do you think people have survived? How do people remember who they are and where they're from? And how do they know what it means to be human, what makes us more than animals? How do they pass these things on to their children? Stories, that's how."

"Oh don't be ridiculous," said Zoe. "We're trying to avoid being drowned! And you're telling stories about being drowned! That's no help to anyone."

But even as she said it, Zoe knew that somehow William was right.

"What's the point in surviving if you forget how to be human?" said William. "Stories walk the truth into existing."

"More of your nonsense!" Zoe said, but she was less sure of herself now. William's words had begun to work.

She glared at William, waiting for him to speak.

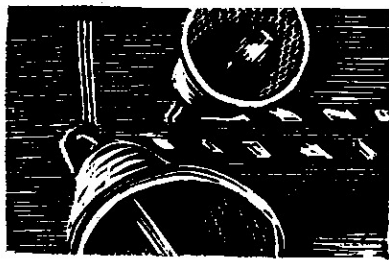
But he didn't, because suddenly a mad ringing of bells hit them where they sat. Zoe tensed, sensing danger.

"What . . . ?" said Zoe.

"It looks like the attack has come sooner than Dooby expected."

"You see!" Zoe shouted at William. "Now how are your stories going to help you survive?"

"They might not help me, but they might help you," William said calmly.



eleven

The mad clanging of bells was coming from way up in the tower that rose from the middle of the cathedral. Shouts and the sounds of people running reached them.

"Attack! We're under attack. Come on!"

"Hand out the weapons!"

"Cats! Dooby, it's the Cats!"

Zoe ran into the cathedral. She was amazed. The same people that had seemed such a mess to her before were now quickly and efficiently organized into an army. Weapons were being passed out, as Spat and Munchkin shouted instructions. Groups of ten or so were running off to guard various doors and passages.

Dooby stood in the middle of it all, satisfied that they were working as he'd taught them to.

He spotted Zoe. She tried to turn, but he grabbed her arm.

"Come with me, Zoe. It'll be all right."

Zoe felt comforted by his calm voice, and hated herself for it. She was even comforted by the painful grip on her arm. It stopped her having to think what to do. But when