



SIX.

"Munchkin?"

Zoe thought she'd spotted him darting down the side of the nave. She'd been on the island for two days, and was starting to feel trapped. She thought about Dooby's threat. About not telling anyone his plan for them to escape. She had to admit it, he had scared her. But only Munchkin and Spat knew where her boat was. And she wasn't about to talk to Spat.

"Munchkin!" she said, louder, sure that it was him.

He stopped and cautiously came over to her. She nearly laughed whenever she looked at him; he was like a mouse. Small and nervous. But she had to remember he was as dangerous as the others. If Spat was Dooby's right hand, Munchkin was the left.

"What?" he said.

The directness of his question threw Zoe for a moment.

"Oh nothing, really," she said, trying to sound casual. She looked around. There was no one else anywhere near them.

"Well, I've got stuff to do for Dooby." He started to leave.

"Wait!" she said. "I was thinking."

"What?"

There was nothing else she could think of to say. She had to ask him, or he would go.

"You moved my boat, didn't you? I thought maybe you could show me where . . ."

Munchkin looked as if she'd said something awful, and began to back off again. But faster this time.

"I'm not supposed to talk to you about your boat . . ."

"No wait, please," said Zoe, "I just want to know if it's all right. That's all."

Munchkin hesitated. He thought for a long time, trying to make up his mind about something. Zoe began to regret mentioning it.

"How should I know?" he said finally.

"Well. Is it still floating?" asked Zoe, genuinely anxious.

"Oh, yes. But that's enough. I've got things to do for Dooby, and he doesn't like it if I get things wrong."

Zoe could imagine what that meant.

"Don't any of you stand up to Dooby?" she asked.

The shocked look came onto Munchkin's face again.

"Oh no! He's the boss. Anyway, without him, we'd all be in big trouble. No one else would know how to organize things, anyway, he looks after us, see?"

"He looks after you?" said Zoe.

"Yes. You don't know what it was like before he came . . ."

"What do you mean?"

"It was terrible, we were nearly starving. And the arguing . . ."

"So how did he get here? On a boat?"

"Yes, on a boat, with some others."

"Who?" asked Zoe.

"Molly. Spat. You know. Just some of the others."

"And Dooby was in charge of this boat?"

"Oh no. Even he doesn't know how boats work. He was just one of the people on it. There was a man. He was in charge."

"So what happened?"

"What do you mean?" asked Munchkin, suspiciously.

"Well, why did Dooby stay?"

"The boat was damaged. It was sinking. They tried to land on the island, and there was a fight. The man who drove the boat was killed. And then it sank, anyway. So they were stranded here. Dooby took control, then. Before he came, it was awful; everyone fighting everyone else. Dooby made it better. First thing he did was to get everyone to get what they could from the ship. It was stuck in the mud for a week, but sinking slowly. Then a storm dragged it off one night. There were loads of stores. Food, blankets. Before the storm we got most of it ashore and stored it in the cathedral. Dooby did it. He saved us."

A thought occurred to Zoe.

"How long ago was this? There wasn't a man and a woman on the boat, was there? A couple . . . the woman looks just like me, but older, and . . ."

She stopped. She saw how pointless her questions were.

"It was a long time ago. Dooby's been in charge since then, without him, it'd be like it was before. It would be awful."

She saw that he meant it. She thought about telling him that Dooby was intending to betray him, and Spat. Then she thought better of it; she couldn't take the risk.

"But he's a bully!" she said, instead. No matter how nasty

Munchkin was, she didn't like the way Dooby was manipulating everyone.

"I've got to go now," said Munchkin, and he went.

He darted round a corner, and Zoe followed, but Munchkin had completely vanished. There was a corridor leading away from her, with a door at the end, but he couldn't have got there in that short a time. There was nowhere else he could have gone. Zoe shook her head, puzzled, but she was really worrying about something else.

If Munchkin told Dooby what she'd asked she'd be in big trouble.

She could only hope that he'd keep it to himself.