

# THE BLUE WAND



DELIVERANCE

LINO OMOBONI



# Contents

Front Matter .....	3
<i>Title Page</i> .....	3
<i>Publisher Information</i> .....	4
The Blue Wand.....	5
<i>Part 1</i> .....	5
<i>Part 2</i> .....	14
<i>Part 3</i> .....	24
<i>Part 4</i> .....	33
<i>Part 5</i> .....	44
<i>Part 6</i> .....	52
<i>Part 7</i> .....	63
<i>Part 8</i> .....	70
<i>Part 9</i> .....	84
<i>Part 10</i> .....	93
<i>Part 11</i> .....	103
<i>Part 12</i> .....	115
<i>Part 13</i> .....	127
<i>Part 14</i> .....	135
<i>Part 15</i> .....	145
<i>Part 16</i> .....	159
<i>Part 17</i> .....	170
<i>Part 18</i> .....	186
<i>Part 19</i> .....	188
<i>Part 20</i> .....	198
<i>Part 21</i> .....	208
<i>Part 22</i> .....	229
<i>Part 23</i> .....	245
<i>Part 24</i> .....	257
<i>Part 25</i> .....	265
<i>Part 26</i> .....	274
 <i>Also Available</i> .....	 279

**THE BLUE WAND  
DELIVERANCE**

Volume One

By  
Lino Omoboni

## **Publisher Information**

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It was a Monday afternoon at the end of winter coming to spring, and the skies were clear and blue.

James Loghead was leaving school.

It was a tall three storey red brick building.

James was 14-years-old and quite tall for his age, with light brown short hair and brown eyes, wearing his grey uniform.

For a moment, he stood on the pavement outside the main gates, just talking to some other boys and surrounded by many noisy youngsters.

“What are you doing tonight James?” asked a girl looking at him smiling.

James tried to avoid getting into a conversation by answering as fast as possible. “I’m watching a film with Joey.”

“Can I watch the film as well? I like films you know.”

James felt uncomfortable. “No, Heather, not tonight,” then he approached her whispering. “I’ve got to have a chat with Joey, you know, boys talk.”

The girl frowned at him in disappointment. “Oh? So Joey is more important than me?”

James felt things were getting out of his control. “No, Heather, that’s not what I meant, but maybe another time?”

She wasn’t happy but she bowed to his explanation. “All right then,” she said and then smiled, “What about next weekend?”

James felt as if he was under siege and he forced a smile. “Yeah maybe. Now I’ll have to go.”

“All right then, see you next weekend,” she said, joining other girls who were looking at her and giggling.

James crossed the road heading towards the street market.

At the same time, his mother, Mrs. Isabel Loghead, in a yellow anorak, was not far from the school. She was also going down the road towards the street market. She was a pretty woman, with hazel eyes and her hair was light brown, long and wavy.

James was heading for the theatre costumes shop, where he stopped almost every day on his way home.

He was dreaming about taking the lead in a play and standing on stage in a packed house.

He knew the shopkeeper, and today he decided to have a chat with him, as he sometimes did.

The shop was messy and the path to the counter strewn with clothes racks full of costumes, telling James the shopkeeper had being busy rearranging the shop.

He had to push them aside to go through. Suddenly he could hear incoherent voices.

In front of him, he was shocked to see the old shopkeeper frantically handing money from the till, to a menacing looking man wearing a pair of ragged jeans, a discoloured army camouflage jacket, and holding a knife with his right hand whilst stuffing the money in one of his pockets.

James presence disrupted the robbery and the man looked at him and run away putting the last notes into one of his pockets; at the same time, he hit James on the face with the fist holding the knife, pushing him down to the floor.

Quickly he stood up. "Are you all right, sir?"

"Yes, James. I'm okay but what about you?"

"Oh, I'll be all right, sir."

"Good, but now you had better go. I'm calling the police."

James turn and run away pushing away the racks with costumes blocking his path, and felt his heart beating fast. Thinks like this did not happen very often in his life.

\*\*\*

The trees were swaying gently with a strong breeze in a beautiful day, and an old man with white long hair, moustache and beard, dressed with a long white robe and using a long staff that ended in the Y shape, was strolling on a narrow footpath.

Soon he arrived at a small clearing with an old big tree at one side, with a big face in the trunk and apparently asleep.

Many different rabbits were close to the tree with many colourful fairies flying around.

Beautiful orchids hanged from its branches.

“You summoned me?”

The old tree opened his eyes. “Mm, what? Yes, I did.”

“Well? What is it?”

“The spirit of goodness has informed me that this time the prophecy might happen.”

The old man sighed. “We heard that before and nothing happened, but I sincerely hope you are right. I mean for the spirit of goodness to be right.”

\*\*\*

James’s mother, Isabel, was walking down the road outside the local shopping centre approaching the outdoor market, and smiling to people as she passed by.

In the meantime, Joey, James’s friend, was walking on another road towards James’s home. He was wearing same uniform as James; he was a bit large, especially round his waste. His hair and eyes were black though his complexion was white and fresh.

Whilst walking he took a banana out of his rucksack. He was also 14- years-old.

In the meantime, James’ mother approached a fruit stall decorated with Christmas decorations. From a cassette player, she could hear pop music.

Isabel was looking at the bananas searching for the best ones while up the road James was coming running as fast as he could.

The fruit-seller, wearing a thick black jacket and a black woolly cap, was serving a customer and advertising his apples.

“Apples, three pound for a pound! Hello darling, how can I help you?”

Isabel smiled. “Hello, how much for the bananas?”

The fruit-seller grabbed a small hand of bananas and threw them in the scale. "Fifty five pence love."

She looked down at the money she had left, and gave a disappointed look at the fruit-seller.

At that moment a police car passed by with its ear piercing loud siren.

"Always in a hurry," said the fruit-seller. "All right, how much you've got."

"Fifty three pence," she said sounding helpless.

The fruit-seller put the bananas in a paper bag with a cocky flourish and talked loudly to the crowd. "Sold to the lady for fifty three pence, nobody can say I'm unfair!"

She smiled exchanging the money for the bananas. "Thank you very much. See you."

"Cheerio love!"

In the meantime, James stopped to look at the passing police car. He looked back and was shocked to see the robber coming down the road walking very fast. He panicked, and resumed his running.

He reached the fruit stall completely exhausted. He stopped with his hands on the edge of the stall panting heavily.

The fruit-seller saw him. "Hey James! There goes your mum!"

James, looked at the fruit-seller and then behind him. His heart jumped in his chest when he saw the robber looking at him from a shop entrance a little way back. He had definitely followed him.

He ran after his mum. "Mum! Mum!"

The fruit-seller helped him by shouting too. "Hey lady! He's here!"

Isabel heard them and stopped, turning back. James caught up with her and they carried on walking together.

"Mum, I saw a robbery and the robber hit me with the same hand he was holding a knife and I finished on the floor."

Isabel was curious. "You look exhausted, darling, and what's all that about a robbery?"

James tried to explain still feeling nervous. "Mum, I'm telling you. The robber had a knife. He could have stabbed me."

Isabel carried on walking but looking at James. “Darling, you shouldn’t get involved with dangerous situations. This weekend I’ll be away helping a friend but I’ll be back by Sunday and I don’t want you getting into any trouble, you hear?”

James stopped and looked surprised at his mother. “Mum, I wasn’t getting involved. The man was there when I went in. He saw me and ran away. He hit me and I fall.”

Isabel stopped and walked back to him concerned. “You’re not hurt aren’t you?” and tried to rearrange James cap, which make him feel dismayed, then she noticed James sore right eye. “Oh dear, what happened to your eye, can you see properly? Maybe we should go to the hospital for a doctor to see your eye.”

“No, Mum, I’ll be fine,” he said whilst trying to rearrange his cap to the position he would prefer.

Isabel carried on walking. “You must always try and avoid being hit on the face.”

“All right, Mum, I’ll try to keep that in mind.”

James tried to keep up with his mother’s pace. “There are some new dummies in the shop and one is really beautiful,” he said with a grin.

“Better looking than your girlfriend Heather?”

“Mum, Heather is just a friend and not my girlfriend,” then he smiled. “The dummy was different but nevertheless, good looking.”

\*\*\*

They reached home, and by then dusk was descending, whilst in the sky behind them, several shooting stars burned out.

Isabel was slightly out of breath, traipsing the last few feet to her front door. She opened it and lugged her shopping bag inside. The house was a three-story building and quite modern, with a small wall protecting a tiny garden.

Just after their arrival, Joey arrived running through the front door, which was still open. “Hey! Wait for me! Hello Mrs. Loghead.”

“Hello Joey. Make yourself at home.”

“Thank you.”

“You’re late,” said James.

“Late? Late for what?”

“The film is about to start.”

“Oh yeah.”

The boys went into the front room taking off their rucksacks and leaving them on the floor.

The room had one sofa and two settees facing the TV set on the right hand side of the fireplace.

Some shelves on the left side of the fireplace had many videos and DVD’s.

Isabel closed the front door and shouted into the house. “George! I’m home!” Nobody answered her. “James! Your dad isn’t home yet. You and Joey stay in the front room and watch the film, okay?”

“Okay, Mum!” he called back whilst searching for the right channel on the TV, “I didn’t see you outside the school.”

“Oh no, I had to go to the shops to get some bananas. That’s why I left in a hurry.”

“That’s all you eat the whole day, bananas?”

Joey smiled. “No, I have a proper meal at the end of the day as well.”

James changed the subject. “Heather wanted to come to watch the film with us.”

Joey opened his eyes, shocked. “What? You didn’t say yes, did you?”

“Well, for a moment I didn’t know what to say but I told her not this time because I wanted to have a chat with you.”

Joey sat straight and looked at James. “You want to have a chat with me? About what?”

“No, Joey. I don’t want to have a chat with you. That was my excuse.”

Joey leaned back and smiled. “You know? She tells everybody you are her boyfriend. She definitely has a crush on you.”

“Yes, I know, she’s good looking but I don’t fancy her as a girlfriend. Though, I wouldn’t mind a girl looking like the dummy

in the costumes shop.”

“Dummy in the costumes shop? I don’t get it,” then he noticed James sore eye. “What happened to your eye?”

“Never mind my eye. I’ll tell you later.”

\*\*\*

James and Joey were lounging on the sofa watching the action film ‘Pirates of the Caribbean’ and eating bananas. The television lights shone on their faces.

At that moment, Isabel entered the room and walked over to James, kissing him on the head. “I’ll be in the kitchen love. You’re welcome to stay for supper Joey, but no more eating bananas until after your supper. Okay?”

James nodded but Joey with his mouth full, just nodded and mumbled. “Mm? Mm.”

Isabel left the room shutting the door behind her.

Joey swallowed. “You see? I will have a proper meal at the end of the day.”

\*\*\*

The front door opened and James father, Mister George Loghead, who was in his late thirties, entered the house. He was taller than his wife Isabel was, with blonde hair and hazel eyes, and had a Mediterranean complexion. “I’m home! Everybody in?” he said very loudly just making sure if there was anybody at home, they would hear his call.

He put his briefcase against the wall and took his jacket off.

“I’m in the kitchen!” called Isabel as her husband hung his jacket on one of the brass hooks on a shiny piece of pinewood on the wall.

George opened the door to the front room. “Hello boys.”

James and Joey acknowledged his presence by waving one hand up without looking at him. “Hi dad,” said James, but Joey who once again had his mouth full of banana, just mumbled, “Mm.” Much to

the amusement of Mister Loghead, who left the room with a smile and shut the door behind him.

A moment later, he entered the kitchen and gave his wife a kiss. "Hi, I noticed James and Joey glued to the TV set again. That boy lives in cuckoo land, just like your father."

His opinion about Isabel's father landed very badly with her, and she answered sharply. "My father was a sailor and you know he used to travel a lot and James likes to listen to his adventures."

Mister Loghead realised his mistake and immediately backed off with a smile. "Sorry."

\*\*\*

In the meantime, the boys were having a good time enjoying the battle raging in the TV.

James put his banana down; his attention drifted from the film, he was deep in thought.

All of a sudden, he got up and went towards the front window drawing the netting aside looking out into the street. It was getting very dark and the streetlights were on.

For his surprise, the robber was standing on the other side of the street close to one of the streetlights, looking at the house.

James could not control his reactions. "There he is!" he cried springing backwards letting the netting cover the window once again.

Joey stood up quickly and rushed to the window. "What? Who's there?"

"Don't look. He's watching the house," but it was too late because Joey just pushed the netting aside and looked out.

"Who? I don't see anybody."

James was not just curious but worried as well. "The man by the lamppost."

Joey looked again and shook his head. "There's nobody there."

James was feeling a bit nervous but cautiously he approached the window.

“I don’t understand, he was standing by the lamppost,” nervously he closed the netting, and turned to look at Joey who was expecting an explanation.

He sighed. “All right Joey, today and just by accident, I saw a robbery in the theatre costumes shop. The robber’s been following me ever since.”

Joey opened his mouth and eyes wide and asked anxiously. “Tell me. What happened?”

“Well, not much. The robber saw me and when running out of the shop, he hit me on the face with the hand holding the knife, and I finished flat on the floor. That’s why I’ve got a sore eye.”

Joey was still with his mouth and eyes opened wide with excitement. “Boy! Nothing like that ever happens to me! Did you tell your mum about it?”

“Yes, I did and she told me to be more careful.”

“It is so fantastic. Don’t you think it will be dangerous for you to go out if that man is stalking you? Maybe you should stay at home for a few days. I think you should go to the police and tell them. Maybe if you give the man’s description you will be helping them to get him.”

James thought for a brief moment. “No, Joey, I have no intention of making this bigger than what it is, but if he carries on doing it, then yes, I will consider it.”

Joey felt disappointed. “All right, it was just an opinion,” and slumped himself back on the sofa.

James was more nervous than excited, and again he went to the window to look but there was nobody standing by the lamppost. “Yeah, whatever,” was his expression. Then closing the netting he turned and walked to the door.

“Where are you going?”

“I’ll ask mum about something. I’ll be back in a moment.”

Joey made himself comfortable on the sofa. “Hurry up or you’ll miss the film.”

James entered the kitchen where his mother was doing the ironing and stood by the door.

“Has the film finished darling?” she asked but then she looked at James who was looking despondent.

James spoke calmly. “No, it’s only half way through.”

Isabel approached him and re-arranged his hair and cap. “What’s the matter, darling?”

“Mum. I’m just thinking. When you go away this weekend can I go and stay with granddad?”

Isabel went back to the ironing table. “Oh that’s what it is, why granddad? Don’t you want to stay with Mrs. Wallaby and her delightful daughter Heather, again? If you go to your granddad instead, she’ll be so disappointed; you know Heather has a crush on you.”

James reacted quickly pulling a disgusted face. “Ehr! No way, Mum! She’s all right and most probably she’ll be here next Sunday anyway, but I prefer to go to granddad.”

“It’s all right James. I was only joking. Of course, you can go to stay with granddad for the weekend. He’ll be very happy to see you.”

James was happy again. “Can Joey come with me too? Granddad knows about him but he has never met him.”

“Okay, I’ll ring Joey’s mum and see if he can go with you. You’ll have to write to granddad first to see if it is okay with him. I think you better write the letter now and send it today, because you know how long it will take to reach your granddad and for him to answer.”

James thought about the robber outside in the street and felt apprehensive of going out to put the letter in the pillar-box. “But why can’t I phone him instead?”

“Because you know how much your granddad likes to read and writing is an art.”

James tried to get out of the letter writing. “Aw, Mum, I write a lot at school and quite a lot doing my homework,” but Isabel just

gave him a look and James lowered his head. "Okay, Mum, I'll write the letter just after the film."

"Yes, you can do that."

James left the kitchen with his head bowed and Isabel looked at him fondly.

He rearranged his cap in the way he like it and went back to the front room finding Joey once again with his mouth stuffed full. "How do you fancy staying at my granddad's house this weekend? This will be your chance to meet him."

Joey looked surprised and still with his mouth full, mumbled and agreed by nodding. "Mm? Mm!"

"Okay then, my mum will call your mum to ask her permission."

Joey nodded again. "Mm."

"But first, as soon as the film finish, I'll have to write a letter to my granddad to see if it is all right to go and stay with him."

\*\*\*

In the meantime, James father came back to the kitchen wearing a bathrobe and slippers.

"James wants to spend this weekend with my dad," said Isabel to George's amazement.

"What? Had enough of Heather's charms, has he?" They both laughed.

George came up to his wife and gave her a kiss but she sniffed the air and pushed him away. "Go and have your shower George."

Surprised, George sniffed the air and left the kitchen. "I'm going! I'm going!"

\*\*\*

The film had finished and James finished writing the last words of his letter and sealed the envelope.

"Okay, Joey, come with me as my bodyguard."

"What do you mean by bodyguard?"

“Very simple, I need to put this letter in the pillar box at the end of the road and the robber might still be in the neighbourhood.”

Joey felt enthusiastic with the idea of being a bodyguard. “Okay with me.”

They left the house but first James looked up and down the road; then feeling satisfied the robber was not in site, off they went.

They reached the end of the road and James put the letter in the pillar-box.

Suddenly, as an impulse, he looked round the corner, and he was shocked. The robber was only a few steps away coming close to it.

James turned and crushed with Joey who was trying to look round the corner.

“Run Joey! Run!” he shouted and Joey recovering from the shock, starting running after James.

James managed to take his keys out of his pocket and ready to open the door. He looked back and his heart jumped with fear, seeing the robber coming up the road, running.

Joey was just looking at James putting the key in the keyhole. They just managed to enter and shut the door. They run into the front room and shut that door too.

They stayed standing for a moment and looking at each other trying to recover their breath.

“What was all that about?” asked Joey, recovering from the scare.

“That was the robber, and I was right by saying he might still be in the neighbourhood.”

“I’ll take your word for it because I never had a chance to see his face. When you shouted run, I just run.”

\*\*\*

It was Wednesday and grandfather was sitting in the front room watching television, when he heard the letterbox flap at the door.

He went to the door, took an envelope from the grill and went back to the settee.

Grandfather Mario Perez was a sixty-five year old retired merchant navy sailor with half-grey short hair and a few wrinkles.

He was smartly dressed with a cardigan and a cap on his head.

His house was a middle terrace building with only two floors, typical of the suburbs of the city.

Sailing mementoes decorated grandfather's front room.

Putting his glasses on, opened the envelope and started reading.

*Dear Granddad.*

*Mum is going away this weekend, so I've asked her if I can go and stay with you. She says I can, but is it okay with you? Can I bring my friend Joey with me? I'm sure we'll have a great time.*

*Love, James.*

"Short, but nevertheless, a letter," he commented and folding the paper took his glasses off and smiled, thinking about something. "And why not, maybe the time is right."

He stood up and went to the phone dialling a number. "Hello? Isabel?"

"Yes, Dad, I can guess you received James' letter?"

"Yes, I've got it a moment ago; a very concise short letter."

Isabel sounded a bit worried. "Is it all right for him and his friend Joey to go and stay with you? Will you take care of them?"

Her words came as a shock to grandfather, he frowned at the phone and put it back on his ear. "What kind of question is that? Of course, I'll take care of them. It will be a pleasure to have him and his friend Joey too. Will you stop worrying for a change? It's about time I saw James again, anyway."

Isabel noticed his tone of voice and kept quiet for a moment. Then she talks gently. "Okay, Dad, anything else?"

Grandfather thought for a couple of seconds. "No, nothing else."

"Okay, Dad, talk to you soon. Thank you. Bye."

"Bye," said grandfather putting the phone down, murmuring. "I ask you. Will I take care of them? What kind of question is that?" He said to himself and gave a growl.

Grandfather went to read the paper left on the arm of the sofa.

The front door opened and Felicia, a woman in her sixties, who did the cleaning and cooking for grandfather, came in.

She was wearing old clothes and a woolly hat with a flower on it. She was carrying a shopping bag and a small umbrella. She had dyed red hair.

"Mister Perez!" She called.

"No need to shout. I'm in the front room!"

Felicia entered the front room putting the shopping bag on the carpet. "How are you today Mister Perez?" She asked whilst taking off her parka, woolly hat and gloves, throwing them on a chair with the umbrella.

Grandfather carried on looking at the paper. "Mustn't grumble, I've got a letter from James, he's coming to visit for the weekend with his friend Joey."

Felicia was happy hearing the news, "Good, the boys might put some sparkle back into your life!"

Grandfather turned to look at her surprised with her opinion. Felicia noticed his look and grabbing the shopping bag left the room and went into the corridor towards the kitchen but grandfather could still hear her. "I'd better go upstairs and prepare their bedroom! It could be a bit dusty and probably the beds need clean sheets."

Grandfather had a thought. "I guess you'll make a cake for them, won't you?"

Felicia gave him the right answer. "Yes, and you can eat it as well!"

Grandfather smiled and then he frowned. "Put some sparkle in my life? Pah!"

"What did you say Mister Perez?"

Grandfather shook his head. "Nothing important!"

\*\*\*

The day passed and grandfather finished searching for a film in the TV. Soon after, he found one, and went to sit in the sofa to watch it.

Felicia entered coming from the kitchen and grabbing her belongings on the chair she was ready to go. "I'm going now Mr. Perez. I left your dinner in the oven. It's chicken casserole. Don't let it overcook, okay?"

"Okay. Did you put the timer on?"

"Yes, I did but don't rely on it. I'm going now, see you tomorrow." And she left the house slamming the door.

Grandfather looked towards the house entrance. "I hate when she slams the door."

A moment later, he heard the timer and stood up going to the kitchen. First, he switched the oven off and took the small tureen with his meal out of it; then, he opened a drawer and grabbed a torch.

He went upstairs to the corridor between the bedrooms and using a wooden ladder that was leaning against the wall; he climbed up to the loft. He pushed the trap door open and switching the torch climbed in to find the switch for the light bulb that was hanging from a beam right in the middle of the roof. The loft was very spacious.

He switched the light on and started looking around, searching for something.

The place was full of boxes and trunks. There was a big mirror standing on one side with one corner missing that reflected the bulb's light on the floor; it was covered with dust.

A couple of minutes later, he found a very old trunk, which he opened after clearing a thick layer of years of accumulated dust on top of it. Some dust got in his nose and provoked a sneezing fit.

He removed several old clothes out of the trunk including his old mariner's cap, which he put on and carried on searching, finding an old framed photograph of himself when he was younger. He looked at it and smiled. "Boy that was some years ago."

He carried on searching, moving more pieces of clothes until he found what he was looking for. It was an old piece of tree branch; just over two feet long and for a few moments, he just observed it, cleaning some dust of it and checking for any damage. "Well my old friend, let's see, let's see."

He put his cap back in the trunk, put the lid down and switching the light off, climbed out of the loft.

\*\*\*

It was Thursday late afternoon and James with Joey came out of the house. James looked up and down the road arousing Joey's curiosity. "What are you looking for?"

James spoke slowly. "Just looking for the robber who followed me the other day, I'm not taking any chances."

"Oh, the robber I never saw his face," was Joey's comment but James was serious.

"Joey, you didn't see his face but it was real and he did follow me; don't you forget my sore eye. Seriously, Joey I'm not quite sure about you. If somebody attacks me, will you defend me?"

Joey opened his eyes wide with surprise and replied. "All right, don't get your knickers in a twist, and I can see that your eye is turning blue."

James insisted. "Yes, I know. Well? Will you?"

Joey wasn't quite sure for a moment but then he answered with confidence. "Yes, of course I will. I'm your friend you know, just in case you forgot about it."

"Thank you Joey. I wouldn't expect less from a friend."

"It's okay. What's a friend for? But on the other hand, will you defend me if I need help?"

"Of course I would. If you remember well, I've done it."

“Hey? When and how?”

“Remember last week at school when I protected you from those girls bothering you?”

Joey thought about it and felt embarrassed. “Yeah, right, you’ve done it, thank you,” was his uneasy answer looking up and down the road and tried to change the subject. “So far I don’t see any prowling robber.”

James jumped up on the wall and started walking on it like if it was a tightrope.

“Talking about your grandfather, what can you tell me about him?”

James sat on the wall and thought about the right answer. “Well, he’s old, he used to be a sailor and he’s Spanish.”

Joey reacted to his words with curiosity. “He’s a foreigner?”

James was surprised with Joey’s question. “Yeah, haven’t you met any foreigners before?”

Joey frowned whilst thinking and then he smiled. “Yeah, my uncle Phillip is French. What do you know about him?”

James smiled sarcastically. “About your uncle Phillip? Absolutely nothing,” and standing on the wall once again, started walking on it with his arms open like walking on a tightrope.

For a moment, Joey was confused, and then he understood the joke. “Oh no, I meant your grandfather.”

James was thinking very proudly about his grandfather. “He’s a very wise man. He’s been to lots of places. To Japan and China; he’s even travelled round Cape Horne.” He said all that looking up to the sky and Joey was admiring James feelings about his grandfather.

“Wow! Lucky you, I can’t remember my granddad because I was very little when he died. I can’t wait to meet yours. He must have met some amazing people and not to mention the adventures he might have had.”

James had a radiant look on his face. “Oh yes. Just to think of all the magical adventures he’s had.”

As soon as he said those words, there was a portentous crack of thunder from the distance, and both youngsters become silent for

a moment until James gave his opinion. "I love thunder. But never stand under a tree in a thunderstorm because tall trees attract the lightning."

"Says Who?"

"My granddad."

Joey just opened his mouth with surprise. "Wow."

James jumped down the wall and went to the house door looking at the sky. "We'll have some rain soon. Come on let's go inside and look at some DVD's and by the way, don't forget about tomorrow."

"What about tomorrow?"

Whilst entering the house James shook his head dismayed. "Boy you're thick aren't you?"

Joey followed James into the house shutting the door behind him. "No, I'm not."

They entered the front room and James went straight to the TV set. "You forgot tomorrow Friday we are going to stay with my granddad. Did you?"

Joey didn't like it. "All right I forgot but I'm not thick," and slumped himself on the sofa. James just ignored him whilst searching for some DVD's.

"What would you like to watch?"

Joey thought about it. "I don't mind," then he changed his mind. "Anything with a lot of adventures, especially sci-fi."

"Hey, what about an old video? We have some old sci-fi. Would you like to see one? They are very funny."

"Yes, I would, I like the old special effects."

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Next day it was Friday and in the afternoon at about five o'clock, grandfather went out to the front of the house to prune a standard rose he had in the centre of the garden surrounded by a well-cared lawn encircled with small plants that this time of the year were beginning to show some flowers.

The house was built with sandstones but through years of punishment with pollution, it looked very dark in places.

A mini-cap stopped in front of the house, James stepped out of it followed by Joey, and grandfather, overwhelmed with happiness put the shears in a holster on his belt and went through the gate to greet them.

Both boys were wearing jeans, a bum-bag on their side, thick colourful cotton shirts, trainers, an anorak and the usual baseball caps.

James put his rucksack on the pavement and gave his grandfather a hug.

“My dear boy, look at the size of you. And you must be Joey.”

Joey just put his right hand up as a salute. “Hi, I’m please to meet you, sir.”

“And I’m very pleased to make your acquaintance Joey. You’re very welcome to my home.”

James interrupted his grandfather. “I hope you have some new videos, Granddad.”

“Oh yes, I do, I do. I have some of the latest sci-fi.”

James felt happy and enthusiastic. “All right, Granddad, that’s great”

Joey felt the same. “All right and I hope there is a shop nearby to get some bananas. I like to eat bananas when I watch films.”

His words attracted James criticism. “Joey, you and your bananas again.”

“What? I like bananas.”

“Not to worry, Joey. I have plenty of bananas in the kitchen and you are welcome to them.”

“Thank you, sir, thank you very much.”

Then grandfather saw James eye. “What happened to you eye?”

James felt dismayed. “It’s nothing, Granddad. I had a little accident.”

“Yeah, like an encounter with a knuckle bush,” said Joey giggling.

Dark clouds covered the sky and it started drizzling. Grandfather paid the mini-cab driver and the car left. Then he turned to the

boys. "Come on boys; let's go inside before the serious raining starts."

Felicia came out of the front door drying her hands with a kitchen towel and James greeted her. "Hello, Felicia. Made any cakes for us?" Joey just opened his eyes at the sound of cakes.

"Yes, James, but you must share it with your grandfather or he'll have a go at me."

"Okay, Felicia, we'll do just that, thanks."

"And I thank you too, I love cakes," said Joey and grandfather gave Felicia one of his grumpy looks.

"You're more than welcome." She said ignoring grandfather's look, disappearing inside the house followed by grandfather and Joey.

Meanwhile, James took a good look up and down the street just to make sure the robber had not followed him. Then he entered the house closing the door behind him. Facing the entrance door was a row of brass hooks on a long piece of mahogany fixed on the wall, where grandfather kept his coat, scarf and gloves. Grandfather had the holster already hanging on the coat hanger and Joey's parka and scarf were there as well with the rucksack on the floor against the wall.

James hung his parka and scarf but like Joey he kept his pullover and cap, plus the bum-bag

James changed the conversation. "Can we get something to drink Granddad?" Joey looked at grandfather with a sparkle in his eyes.

"Of course, just go to the kitchen. You'll find some soft drinks in the fridge and you know where the glasses are."

"All right, come Joey," and Joey sprang of the sofa to follow him.

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Moments later, the boys returned with a large glass of soft drink making themselves comfortable on the sofa. By then, grandfather had selected several videos he had piled at the side of the TV set.

Soon after the boys, Felicia came into the room, putting her parka on and her woolly hat. "Mr. Perez, I'll be off now. I left your dinner in the oven. The timer will let you know when it's ready but you must keep an eye on it. Don't let it burn, it's nearly done."

James was curious. "What are we having for dinner?"

Felicia finished rearranging her hat and with a broad smile looked at James, "Shepherd's pie."

Grandfather interrupted the boy's enthusiasm. "Oh, that's too bad," and the boys look at him with surprise. "You hate shepherd's pie, don't you?" he said trying to look serious.

"But Granddad, I love it."

Joey gave his opinion about food. "I'll eat anything."

Felicia gave them a grin and walked towards the door. "Bye James, bye Joey. See you tomorrow Mister Perez. By the way, the cake is in the cupboard."

Grandfather just waved his right hand up. "Yeah, thanks...see you."

Felicia shut the door behind her and the boys looked at grandfather waiting for a signal. Grandfather looked at them and shouted. "Let's go for the cake boys!"

"Yes!" Shouted James.

Joey sounded like an echo behind them. "Try and stop me!"

They run reaching the kitchen before grandfather.

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Later on that night, the rain was pouring. Through the window, a tree branch rattled by the wind makes the streetlight flickering, whilst James, Joey and grandfather were sitting on the sofa watching a cartoons video with a lovely fire burning in the hearth.

There was a flash of lightning through the window, then a clap of thunder.

Grandfather looked at the window. "Are we glad to be indoor boys?"

James looked at the window and Joey did the same. "You can say that again Granddad. I wouldn't like to be outside on a night like this and get all drenched," he declared whilst Joey just looked at the window nodding.

The video ended and grandfather went to change it.

Joey stretched his arms and yawned whilst James stood up and walked around the room looking at the photos of ships on the walls; Joey just looked around feeling quite comfortable on the sofa. He wasn't much for walking or exercising at all.

"Have you been on all those ships, Granddad?"

"Oh, yes, and a few more, I was at sea for forty years."

Joey's expression was the usual one. "Wow."

Above the mantelpiece, there was an ornate mirror with a golden frame and leaning on it was the piece of tree branch grandfather had put there two days before.

On the left hand side of the mantelpiece was a photograph of grandfather when he was younger and showing black hair. He was wearing a black navy jacket and sporting a thick black moustache. On his head, he had the black mariner's cap he found inside the trunk in the loft.

"I would like to be a sailor like you, Mr. Perez, and travel the world," was Joey's opinion and grandfather gave him some advice.

"Get a profession and travel the world for pleasure, Joey. Sailors don't get the chance to enjoy the scenery. They are too busy working their shift and most of the time all they can see is the open seas and when in a harbour they only see the inside of a bar because the ship will usually stay for just a few hours."

Joey thought about it. "Yeah, right."

In the meantime, James went to the fireplace and looked at the mantelpiece and at the piece of wood on it. He grabbed the small tree branch and examined it. "What's this, Granddad?"

Grandfather who was still holding a video tape turned to look at James. "Oh...it's just a piece of a tree branch I've had for ages."

"How come I haven't seen it before?"

Grandfather wasn't sure how to answer him. "Perhaps, because you were too young," then he opened his eyes wide realising he had spoken too soon.

"Too young for what?"

Grandfather had to find a way to explain. "I used to keep it in my treasure chest, a trunk I have in the loft. I took it out and cleaned it when I knew you were coming," and once again he opened his eyes wide realising he had said the wrong thing.

"Why? Why it is so important? All I see is part of a tree branch."

Joey leaned forward looking at it and nodded. "Yeah, definitely a piece of tree branch."

James looked at it, confused. Grandfather thought hard trying to decide whether to explain or not. After all, he was the one who put the piece of branch there for a purpose. "Well, now it is as good a time as any. Make yourselves comfortable boys. I'm about to tell you a story about that piece of wood."

James put the branch back on the mantelpiece and went to sit beside Joey on the sofa.

Grandfather switched the video recorder off and sat on the settee, facing the boys. "Many years ago, when I was a young sailor, sailing the seven seas..."

"Are there really seven seas Granddad?" Joey nodded looking at grandfather.

Grandfather was startled with the interruption. "Hey? Oh yes, there are seven seas and who knows, maybe more. I need to check on that."

He could not carry on because Joey had to ask something, pulling a face and lifting his hands like claws. "Are there lots of nasty sea monsters Mister Perez?"

Grandfather looked happy remembering. "Yes, I remember seeing giant squids in the Pacific Ocean, more than two metres long. You could feed a whole family with one of those; not to mention the big sharks swimming close to the ship when it was at anchor."

"Wow! Were you scared?"

Granddad scorned at him, and Joey kept quiet. “No, I wasn’t scared and now let me carry on. Anyway, during the war, I was on a cargo ship bound to the orient. We had to berth in Port Said in Egypt with engine trouble, so we had time to play at being tourists. The weather was fine and I set off for the city of Cairo.”

“Was it hot?” interrupted Joey again, but before grandfather opened his mouth, James stepped in showing off his knowledge and looking at his grandfather.

“Of course it was hot. Egypt is a hot country, isn’t it, Granddad?”

Grandfather was beginning to feel impatient. “Yes, Grandson, it is a hot country but I would like to go ahead with the story, if you don’t mind.”

“Sorry,” said James and Joey just nodded.

“I had a few pounds with me, and I decided to buy a souvenir or anything else that I could fancy. There was this big market with street traders and shops selling anything imaginable. Going through this market, I found a very strange and exotic shop and without thinking; like on impulse, I decided to go in. There were a few people browsing around, and the shopkeeper was so happy to see me, and seemed like he was desperate to sell me anything. He wouldn’t let me leave without buying something. He was so persistent. He tried to sell me that stick for two shillings.”

Immediately Joey popped the question. “Two shillings?” and James tried to show off his knowledge again.

“That’s in old money, silly.”

Joey scorned at him. “I know. I know, but that’s hardly anything.”

Grandfather felt amused and tried to explain. “Maybe nowadays, but in those times it was quite a lot of money and I told him so. The shopkeeper looked very serious and told me the stick was a magic wand that was found by a Bedouin in the desert.”

At that moment, grandfather stopped talking and waited for the children’s reaction.

James and Joey looked at each other not sure if they believed it or not but were still curious.