

# The Spectres of Winter

## Deleted Scenes

Hello and welcome to the deleted scenes. Writing a book involves a huge amount of editing, changing round, replacing one thing with another and general tweaking until you end up with the book you actually want. Even then you go through it one more time and still end up moving things round!

What follows in this document are some of the cut sequences though not all of them, cos that would be another book in itself but the ones that are interesting or different in some way.  
Enjoy...

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## Original opening scene

**This was cut because it was a bit too slow and didn't really lead anywhere in terms of the rest of the story.**

Tom Allenby checked out the road that was only a minute's walk away and deciding he could not be seen, turned his attention to what was in front of him. Surrounded by bare vegetation sat a modest sized pond. The last time he had been here it had been to rescue someone but today that would not have even been possible due to the thick layer of ice covering the water.

Ever since his parents had unexpectedly moved to this small village called Rooksbourne last summer Tom had been at the centre of some most unusual events. He had discovered that he was able to control elements like fire or water using an ancient volcanic rock called the Earthstone. He'd found out that the village sat at the epicentre of the world's elemental energy and it seemed as if this is why he was moved here. Things were a little vague after that and a book that was supposed to help him had disappeared. He had learned though that it was his duty to defend the world against threats to nature. It seemed a daunting task for a boy still several weeks away from his fourteenth birthday.

However he had managed to defeat two threats to the world so far and was feeling more confident about his ability to repeat that success. Yet one thing was bugging him and that was the fact that he had to throw the stone to gain control over something. Admittedly it did re-appear in his hand faster than the fastest boomerang ever but it was impractical if he was in a confined space or restricted in some way. Plus it didn't really look as cool as those people in films who could control things just by staring at them. So he wondered if he could simply focus with his brain and the stone would do the rest. He did feel that the power he could use was becoming stronger the longer he was here as if it was growing with him. Today he was going to properly test his theory.

Leaving the Earthstone around his neck underneath his coat, he instead concentrated on the pond in front of him and in particular the ice. He willed it to lift up and after a few moments this was exactly what happened. In one wide sheet, the ice started to rise from the ground looking, thought Tom, a bit like a UFO! He caused it to rise further but the higher it did the more it wobbled as he struggled to keep it steady. So he began to lower it again. Just as the ice was returning to the pond, he felt a hand on his shoulder which completely ruined his concentration meaning the sheet flopped onto the water unevenly.

As he spun around urgently he found the hand belonged to his friend Kyle who was grinning underneath his parka hood.

"You know I could almost see that from the road!"

"Really?"

"Nah, but you need to be careful. If anyone did see it you'd be carted off to the freak show! Still pretty cool you could do that."

"I know, it's the first time I've tried it. Having to throw the stone is so rubbish. It didn't go back on properly thanks to you. What are you doing here anyway?"

## Amber investigates

**This is Amber being a bit of an investigator but was cut because it wasn't really needed.**

Amber knocked on the door of the school office but did not wait to be invited in. The room comprised of several desks, most unoccupied. A prim looking middle aged lady wearing a light pink skirt and black jacket looked up.

“You can't just barge in here Miss...”

“Carlton. Amber Carlton. I've got a very important question.”

“Go on,” came the weary reply.

“Are there security cameras filming the Quadrangle?”

“I can't discuss that with someone like you, not without your form teacher present.”

“It's just that I saw a fight there just now and I think Mr Marlow would want to know about it.”

“Well you can't see it.”

Suddenly Amber screamed.

“What?”

“A rat? I saw a rat under that table...”

Miss Bingham threw her a suspicious look as she went to investigate. As soon as her back was turned, Amber started to look through a series of marked tapes until she found the one she wanted and quickly stuffed it into her bag.

“I can't see anything...” said a kneeling secretary.

“Never mind,” said Amber having now stuffed the tape into her bag.

“What about the fight?”

Amber smiled, “As long as it's filmed, that's good. Mr Marlow will catch the culprits.”

Just as Amber left the room the phone rang and she hurriedly put the fake tape back before going to answer it. Outside, Amber looked pleased with herself as Jake sauntered up putting his phone away.

“Perfect timing.”

“She didn't suspect anything?”

“I told you, I'm good at this kind of thing. Just call me Action Girl.”

“So it's OK for you to do bad things but not me?”

“We're trying to find out what Marlow's up to. If we uncover something we'll be heroes.”

“So tell me how are we going to watch some old tape? Nobody has video recorders any more.”

“Marlow does. Remember last term’s prize giving? Afterwards we all got invited into his office and I remember he had one of those old machines.”

“So we’re going to break into there are we?”

Amber grinned, “Free study period, everyone in class, Marlow out at some conference this afternoon. What do you think?”

## Wooden statue

**This is an earlier version of when Tom and Kyle flee upstairs. Instead of the ice skeletons they encountered a wooden statue animated by ice. This felt too contrived as it was really only here so that later there would be pieces of wood floating about for Tom to use (see hover board cut scene later)**

Tom and Kyle had reached the foot of the stairs leading up to the first floor. Tom could see their breath in the frosty air but the stairs seemed largely free of ice. As they made their way up the impressive wooden staircase Tom kept one hand on the Earthstone in case of unforeseen attacks. On a landing halfway up they passed an imposing wooden carving of a Chinese warrior, given as a gift to the school years ago. A film of ice covered the statue but Tom and Kyle paid it no attention as they passed by.

As soon as they had done so, its head turned creakily to follow their progress upstairs.

As they moved further up the stairs Tom became aware of a sound behind them and stopped when they reached the top.

“Can you hear that?”

“Sounds like...”

Tom looked back and saw that the carved warrior was no longer on the landing. Instead it had taken its first few awkward steps towards them. Tom noticed that the icicles covering the warrior seemed to glow slightly. The warrior was carrying a sword with which it swiped the air taking a chunk out of the rail. As the pieces of wood flew into the air they froze and hovered before falling as chunks of ice onto the stairs.

Tom and Kyle turned and rushed up the remainder of the steps to the first floor, turning right through a set of double doors. It was dark until their presence turned on automatic lights flickering ahead. With the steps of the warrior echoing along the corridor the boys ran as fast as they could towards the other end.

Tom saw the chemistry lab and this gave him an idea. He called to his friend who always seemed able to run slightly faster than he could and pushed open the door, flicking on the lights. Several rows of wooden benches lay idle, though the one thing they shared was the presence of a Bunsen burner on each.

“We haven’t got time for an experiment,” shouted Kyle “and we’d never fit into these cupboards”

“Switch all the Bunsen burners on,” Tom yelled and with the clunk of the warrior’s footsteps coming closer, they rushed around switching on as many of the burners as they could. The smell of gas began to fill the room as blue flames popped up along each bench. By the time they had finished and were breathlessly waiting at the back of the laboratory, the door swung open with considerable force smashing one of the panes of glass and the relentless warrior stepped into the room. It turned it’s ornately helmeted head in their direction and came further into the laboratory.

Tom clasped the Earthstone and focussed on the individual flames willing them to enlarge and intensify before turning them into one large fireball which he sent flying into the warrior before ducking behind the bench. The fireball sent test tubes and pipettes smashing against the walls as it flew over each bench and slammed directly into the warrior’s chest.

Fire caught hold in moments however the warrior tried to stop them with its sword which also caught fire. In seconds the wood was bubbling as the flames took hold and once it intensified the warrior became lop sided and stumbled towards the window not stopping as it smashed through the frame and plummeted down into the snow covered Quadrangle below. As it hit the ground the warrior smashed into a hundred or more pieces.

Tom and Kyle rushed around again turning off the burners which has done their job.

## Ballroom scene

**This was from before I decided that it would make more sense if Taplow was allowing the subterraneans to continue with their plan because it suited his own. Instead why didn’t he just freeze them all? I like this sequence though, it was intended to be quite magical.**

As a group of three subterraneans piled more boxes into the entrance they became aware of sounds drifting down the long corridor towards them. Leaving the boxes and drawing weapons they began to scramble forward to see what was happening. At the end of the marble floored corridor sat three sets of double doors. The distant sound of a waltz was playing through the doors and when the curious subterraneans pushed one of them open there was quite a surprise for the invaders.

The hall was ablaze with light from a rig above the stage casting multiple colours as if it was a concert. On the wooden tiled floor several pairs of figures seemingly made entirely of ice were spinning around engaged in the Viennese waltz, though they had no proper faces and clothes that were merely silhouettes of tails and dresses. Round and round they went moving as real dancers might except for the fact that they left trails of wet ice on the polished surface.

The scene seemed to baffle the subterraneans as they pushed their way into the hall. After the music continued for another minute and the floor began to resemble an ice rink one of the subterraneans seemed to have had enough, raised its weapon and fired at the nearest ice couple. Splinters flew from them though this did not slow down their turning so the other

soldiers began to join in peppering the hall with bullets that removed chunks from the frozen dancers.

The music stopped and as soon as it did so did the dancers. Remaining in hold they turned like robots and began to advance on the knot of creatures. This only made them fire more until from the clasped `hands` pellets of ice shot out slamming the nearest subterranean against the wall. As he slid down to the floor a film of ice started to make its way across his body. The others increased the intensity of their assault causing the freezing silhouettes to become lumps of ice.

The exchange of fire and ice lasted until the ice figures had little shape and stopped in their tracks like icebergs. The sound of applause came from the stage as Ollie appeared. His uniform was now covered in tiny icicles that gave the impression of glitter.

“Identify yourself!” shouted one of the subterraneans.

“I am your enemy,” shouted Ollie, “The one you should be afraid of.”

“Then you will die!” came the retort as both guns aimed at the seemingly defenceless boy and opened fire. Yet the bullets never reached him. Instead, with a wave of his hand they froze in mid –air, began to crack and fell to the floor like snow. As the soldiers backed off, Ollie raised his hand and fired icicles from the tips of his fingers. Both the fleeing subterraneans were cut down, crashing to the floor and sliding in the water. Once the hall was silent the figures continued to drip onto the floor, slowly melting back into water.

Ollie jumped down from the stage and, humming the waltz that had just been playing made his way out of the hall without giving the fallen subterraneans any further attention.

## Escape by car

**The original idea that the kids would escape from the school in a car. I changed it to bikes later on because I didn't really think Izzy would be the sort of person who would bother to learn to drive. She would want to be driven around! The whole sequence of the escape from the school was one of the hardest in the book to write taking about 7 attempts till I had a sequence that made sense and used all the characters.**

They were halfway to the car park when the sound of the engines turning over echoed across the field. Smoke started to belch from the tanks as they seemed to be starting up once gain. As they did Tom heard a gasp and turned to see Izzy looking more annoyed than frightened that her heel appeared to have stuck in the snow.

“Well is anyone going to help me?” she moaned, pulling unsuccessfully at the shoe.

“You're not dressed for the season at all are you?” said Amber as she and Jake turned back.

At this moment the tanks spluttered into life and began moving towards them. Tom spotted rusty metal turrets twisting around in their direction. Though they looked old and rickety there was no doubting the damage they could do. The others were preoccupied with Izzy so Tom touched the Earthstone and tried to force the snow to move to stop the vehicle's tyres. At first it seemed to work, snow slid underneath the wheels causing them to stop abruptly. The engines seemed to stall and each of the vehicles ground to a halt once again.

Izzy had been rescued but the shoe remained stuck in the ground and as they looked ice began to cover it, moving together into a shape like something coming to life. Spindly limbs formed as a transparent torso rose from the white carpet and was soon completed by the head.

“Frosty’s back!” shouted Jake as he turned the gun on the rising menace but Marlow shouted, “Don’t waste your ammunition. I doubt if bullets can stop them.”

“How do you know?” yelled Danny who grabbed the gun from Jake and launched an attack on the ice skeleton peppering it with bullets that sent shards of ice flying into the air. However as they watched the damaged parts simply re-grew themselves leaving Danny open mouthed. Tom whirled around as he heard a whistling sound and saw two projectiles heading in their direction.

Jake grabbed the gun back from Danny and pushed him back.

“Idiot! Now they’ll come right for us!” he shouted as the missiles flew over their heads. One landed at the top of the hill sending a plume of white snow and ice into the air. The second glanced the side of the building taking with it a chunk of red brick.

The ice creature was fully grown now as they fled from its advances. It seemed to walk carefully but deliberately on its spindly legs while it’s long icy tendrils reached forward. Tom focussed on the snow ahead of it causing it to build up into a mound of equal size but their pursuer was wilier than it seemed and simply walked around the barrier.

“Forget trying to stop it,” he called out, “Let’s just get to a car.”

Jake had reached the car park first and was pulling at the door handles of various cars to see if any were unlocked. Marlow indicated to them to follow him.

“My car is round the corner,” he said

Now the snow ahead was disturbed and moving as a number of ice figures started to come to life. Three stopped Marlow and Jake in their tracks before they reached the headmaster’s car forcing them to change direction.

Izzy had stopped in the car park watching as Amber set to work with her skeleton keys to unlock one of the vehicles. Kyle, Tom and Danny reached her and watched as she delicately worked her own magic. This was one power Tom did not have!

Marlow and Jake paused around the corner from the car park. Here they were hemmed in by other buildings and a wall.

“We are going to have to fight our way back,” said Marlow and Jake nodded.

“You seem like you’ve done this sort of thing before, sir?”

Marlow raised an eyebrow, “I wasn’t always deskbound you know.”

At his signal they rounded the corner to face the oncoming ice creatures when unseen tendrils of ice reached down and lifted the guns from both their hands. Left defenceless they had to do their best to run around the creatures which Jake managed with more stealth than Marlow who skidded and fell awkwardly.

Another missile hit the school roof sending a number of tiles air bound as Amber finally unlocked the door of a Range Rover that could theoretically just about fit them all in. They clambered in as icy fingers grabbed at the cold night air. One caught Kyle’s leg and

almost hauled him back before he managed to snap it with his other foot and get into the vehicle. Once the door was slammed he winced in pain and lifted his leg up to display a completely frozen patch of his trousers.

“They could freeze our brains out!” he shouted.

“Wouldn’t take them long with yours,” muttered Izzy as she got to grips with the dashboard.

“Are you sure you can actually drive?” shouted Amber.

“Oh yes, I can drive alright!”

Amber rolled her eyes, then looked round, “Where’s Jake and Marlow?”

Tom replied, “They went round the corner. We can drive round and get them right?”

“If we ever start!”

Danny put his hand on the door, “Stay here; I’ll go and get them. If we’re not back in two minutes, drive off, right?”

“Oh my hero,” mocked Izzy.

“Give me the gun,” said Danny but Amber kept tight hold of it.

“You’ve got to be joking.”

“Do you hear them firing?” he responded urgently, “No- cos it sounds like they’ve lost their guns so I need that one.”

Tom felt this made sense, “Look, Amb it might be an idea. I’ll go with him.”

“No way, I can’t protect you.”

“I don’t need protecting,” replied Tom, “Coming?”

Reluctantly Amber handed the gun to Danny as he and Tom climbed out of the vehicle. As they hurried across the snow Danny looked sideways at Tom.

“Can’t believe I need help from some little rat like you.”

“I can’t believe I have to protect a big prat like you!”

He wondered if he’d said too much and was surprised to see Danny smiling to himself.

“You know how to handle yourself don’t you?”

“I’ve saved the world a couple of times you know.”

“Oh yeah?”

“With help from Amber and Jake and Kyle and others.”

A nearby ice skeleton seemed to appear from nowhere and took a frozen swipe narrowly missing Tom before Danny smashed it out of the way with the handle of his gun.

Tom caused ice nearby to fly at the flailing assailant causing it to collapse under the weight of the assault.

“See!” he called to an astonished Danny, “You might just need *my* help”

Marlow was not badly hurt but slightly stunned by his fall. Jake helped him up and they leaned against a wall.

“You’d better go and help the others,” said Marlow breathlessly, “I’m only going to slow you down.”

“No way- I’m not leaving you here to be deep frozen.”

Marlow showed the strain as Jake helped him across the narrow court towards a doorway illuminated by a single lamp that shone its neon across the pack ice. They leant against the door breathlessly as several ice creatures crowded in upon them.

“I don’t suppose the door will open?” said Marlow as Jake struggled with the unyielding handle.

“Course not! That’d be too simple.”

“I must say you are showing remarkable fortitude. Most pupils would be terrified. It’s almost as if you’ve done this sort of thing before.”

“Oh yeah, this is nothing.”

The clattering snarling ice skeletons were close now, their sharp limbs reaching for the two. All of a sudden a burst of gunfire caused them to shatter into hundreds of shards flying into the air as Danny ran towards them firing continuously. The scattershots were however so random that Marlow and Jake had to crouch down to avoid the bullets more than the attackers. Danny ran forward even though he had not run out of bullets and started using the weapon as a club shattering and unbalancing the already broken creatures.

Tom remained at a distance and focussed on the ice fragments, forming them into a whirling snow blade that lopped further pieces from the attacking skeletons. The storm of snow and ice created its own powdery cloud and Tom realised he could no longer see Danny, Marlow or Jake. So he caused the cloud to disperse and as it did saw the last of the shattered ice skeletons crumble back to the ground. Of the others, however, there was no trace. The door was resolutely shut but they must have got back into the building, surely?

Tom had no choice but to get to the car and with one further look back, he headed back the way he’d come. Part of his mind was telling him that Jake was fine; if anyone could survive something like that it was Jake who had shown remarkably tenacity in the time Tom had known him. Yet another part of his thoughts kept imagining Amber’s face when he told her he had no idea what had happened to her boyfriend. That was something he did not want to see so he convinced himself that Jake had somehow found a way back into the building and was perfectly safe. At least as safe as someone could be in a building covered in unusual sheets of ice.

His thoughts were interrupted by something jumping on his back. He fell into the snow and tried to turn himself around to see what had attacked him. Just in time he saw a sharp looking curved blade headed for his chest but he managed to roll over before it dropped. The subterranean soldier was slightly taller than he was but much stockier and imposing covered from head to toe in thick clothing. Tom got to his feet as his pursuer slashed the cold air again with the sword. The third swipe clanged against a metal pipe as Tom had backed away as far as he could and was now cowering against a wall. From the

corner of his eye he saw icicle teeth glinting in the neon light as he attacker raised his sword ready to deliver his next blow.

“Watch out!” shouted Tom instinctively even though the person he was warning was about to attack him, “Behind you!”

The subterranean paid no heed until icy claws grabbed him by the shoulders, yanking him backwards sending the sword spiralling into the air. Tom considered reaching for it but knew he had no time and headed around the corner towards the car park. As he did, the building shielded the worst of a blood curdling scream that followed. There was no doubt about it- these ice creatures were deadly.

As he ran into the car park, his shoes skidding on ice he heard the roar of an engine as the Range Rover came tearing towards him. Driven by Izzy with a determined look on her face, the car swerved about to pull up directly beside him. Leaning out of a rear window Kyle called for Tom to get in. He hurried into the car, squeezing on the back seat next to Kyle and Amber who immediately stared at him hopefully.

With ice creatures forming and subterranean soldiers rushing towards them, Tom knew there was no time to explain.

“They got back in the building,” he said breathlessly, “Jake and Danny and Marlow. They’re in there.”

“We can’t leave them in there!” shouted Amber, clearly alarmed.

The whole vehicle shook as a somersaulting subterranean landed on the bonnet waving a metal weapon and growling.

“You can walk back if you want,” said Izzy, putting the vehicle in reverse, “But I’m getting out of here as soon as.”

Izzy was surprisingly reckless as a driver and spun the car around sending the attacker rolling back onto the snow which began to move around him. Izzy drove the car towards the field and Tom saw the dark shapes of the tanks.

As they careered out of the grounds towards the road leading down the hill the turrets of the oncoming vehicles swivelled to face them and each blasted something in their direction. One landed close to the car sending chunks of ice and earth spewing across the windscreen. The second exploded further away but it was as if they were driving into a battlefield.

Izzy put her foot down and the car accelerated as another projectile whizzed over their heads and exploded behind them. The tanks were moving now getting closer and several of the subterranean creatures emerged from them all brandishing weapons.

Opening the door Tom leaned out as far as he dared and stood up. Despite the awkward angle he managed to focus on the projectile currently nearer to them. As it exploded he gained control of the flames and caused them to rise up and intercept another missile which exploded in mid-air. He made the flames span out to form a protective barrier around the rear of the car.

As he was doing this and they shot past one of the tanks, Tom noticed one of the creatures was still upright standing on top of the vehicle staring at him and he instinctively knew this must be their leader. It was paying no attention to anything else simply staring

directly at Tom who returned the gaze even though he could not make out any eyes beneath the goggles.

In a short time they reached the school gates which lay wide open, one of them half ripped from its hinges. They seemed to be out of range now; the tanks had not pursued them and shells were exploding harmlessly half way up the hill. As they skidded on the icy road outside, Tom noticed snow had started to fall once again.

## Screer?

**This scene is from a very early draft of the book back in about 2007 when Malvane was called Screer. It was written so long ago I can't remember why it was included or who King Edward was! If you've read Elemental you'll notice I used the carved cages with birds coming to life inside them in that book.**

In an ornate cave lined with richly woven rugs and tapestries and dominated by huge wooden seats, Screer was watching a display unravel in front of him. His fierce eyes stared at shapes being written in mid-air by tendrils of bronze coloured light. Slowly, a three dimensional model of the area surrounding the woods was appearing in copper hue, moving slightly like a tide laps the shore. His subordinates were gazing at the display in awe but Screer's keen mind was weighing everything up. He followed the snaking lights, sometimes on tip toe, once even running up a vertical wall and down again to meet the farthest point of the map. As the pattern settled tiny scale models of buildings began to appear too.

"The place where we will start" muttered Screer in his silkily malevolent tones. His most senior officer, Moga approached his leader cautiously.

"What is to be the plan?" he asked.

Screer whirled round, taking his lieutenant unawares "The plan has not changed. We will be seeking the world above for ourselves. We will be its conquerors."

He leapt with force up onto a rock and turned to address all of the others in the chamber. Even a loomer spider stopped spinning its colours and both eyes flickered upwards attentively.

"The time of the attack will soon be upon us. We have spent the last months planning our way forward and now we are nearly complete. There is only one more element that will be required. Tomorrow, we attack the dark domain!"

If he'd been expecting cheers he would have been disappointed. The subterraneans shifted uneasily, glancing at each other without much confidence. Moga ventured forward;

"The dark domain? Is that needed?"

"Of course, it is needed. There is much machinery and cleverness there. We can take it all. It can assist us."

"But it is said that the domain is surrounded by evil birds and animals."

Screer let out a bellow of disapproval "Trickery! Spells and enchantments! There is only a man in there."

“A man?” said Moga, still sounding tentative “Do you mean King Edward?”

“Ha! *King* Edward! Even I do not dare call myself by such a grand title. What is he King off, hmm? I’ll tell you – he is King of Nothing.”

The large cavern hung silent and semi dark, lit only by a yellow and pink glow that cast unusual shadows from the dozens of cages that dangled from the ceiling. Each cage was different, ornately crafted in bronze and copper and various shapes and sizes. The only thing all of the cages had in common was that they were empty.

Screer led from the front, carrying a long projectile that seemed to glow at one end as if waiting to burst into life. He moved confidently into the chamber, intently looking around; the other subterraneans were less confident. As they advanced, a noise started to fill the chamber; like a distant chirruping that grew quickly in intensity until it seemed to rattle the cages. As they watched, dark black forms started to materialise inside the gilded bars, horrible black birds like ravens gone wrong were poking and squawking at the visitors making a noise that seemed to shake the whole cavern. Screer and his warriors seemed untroubled by the racket; each of them had their ears blocked by small bits of fabric and they watched the demented birds appearing and trying to get at them with increased confidence.

Screer leapt up onto a rock and pointed his weapon downwards towards the nearest cages. Pulses of fierce orange energy shot out and hit several cages at once blasting apart the sculpted patterns sending shards of metal raining onto the floor. Some of the birds perished in the flames; others vainly tried to attack but as the other subterraneans joined in they were soon roasted in mid-air, their smoking bodies plummeting to the floor one after the other.

With some cages still burning behind them, Screer and his tribe made for the passageway that led out the cavern and they rushed into the tunnels.

## The Army’s first attack on the ice wall

**This includes the original glaciologist and was cut for length reasons. Also the Colonel’s surname was Holt.**

The tank rumbled forward its bulk casting long shadows across the early morning snow. There was no crowd of watching villagers at this hour and even Professor Tyrell was sleeping in a chair in the mobile headquarters when he was woken by the noisy engine. Outside Colonel Holt and Professor Danaecker watched the tank roll past and head for the wall of ice. As it got closer the mounds of snow that had remained still for several hours stirred and long ice fingers reached out but the tank ignored them, crushing two snowmen under its treads as it move forward.

When it was a few meters from the wall it fired a number of shells at the structure causing large chunks of ice to fly into the air. At first it looked as if the assault might be making some progress as a definite hollow began to be made. The Colonel looked expectant but the Professor’s expression showed she was less sure. Donning a large parka, Professor Tyrell joined them.

“Showing off again are they, hmm?”

“Ah yes, the military way. I do not think this will be any more successful but I want to see how much impact it makes. Every structure has a weakness, even this one. It is a matter of finding what it is.”

“I’m more puzzled as to where it came from? It didn’t snow for that long yesterday. This is not natural.”

“Then perhaps that is the key?”

“I don’t follow.”

“If someone or something has created it then they may have a weakness which in turn will allow us to make an impact.”

After the tank had loosed a number of rounds and retreated the trio watched as the wall began to heal itself, ice crystals stretching to cover the damage.

The Colonel was not happy.

“That thing is impenetrable!” he shouted, heading back to the mobile.

Professor Daeneacker on the other hand seemed more satisfied.

“Not impenetrable you see?”

Professor Tyrell nodded, “There was certainly damage, for a little while. It took about twenty seconds to heal.”

“Then that is our window of opportunity,” his colleague said, “I think that it is time to be a little cleverer.”

## Meeting between Malvane and Ollie

**The two antagonists meet in this early scene, again before I changed the story so that Taplow allowed the subterraneans to progress their plan but the first embers of that plot are here.**

When the hall doors swung open again and Malvane entered the hall was deserted except for pools of water and the partially frozen bodies of the two subterraneans.

“There was someone here,” said the soldier seeming less confident now. Malvane sniffed the air and scampered on all fours across the wet floor, leaping onto the stage where he picked up a single playing card, an Ace of Hearts. He stared at the card which had traces of ice around the edges before crushing it in his paw.

“Tomorrow no power here can stop us achieving our aim,” he hissed, “I am not afraid of this trickery and deceit. A real enemy would face me here and now.”

There was no sign of anyone ready to meet his challenge even though Ollie was hiding behind the curtain a few paces away. Somehow Malvane could sense his presence as he sniffed at the air once again.

“I know you are here human. Perhaps we can reach an agreement? Perhaps you will leave us unharmed for a day and I will rid the planet of all of your kind.”

Ollie stepped from the shadows.

“Why would I agree to that?”

Malvane turned around slowly, “Because that is what you want. Why else would you surround the place with your wall of ice?”

“You know of the wall?”

“I know everything. I also know that if you had the power you would have destroyed us all by now but you have not. You play elaborate games in here, you hide in shadow. You need me.”

Ollie fiddled with his bow tie, “You know I really don’t.”

“Then kill me...” offered Malvane spreading his arms as if inviting the attack, “Kill me if you dare or perhaps your master will not let you.”

A flicker crossed Ollie’s face and Malvane noticed it.

“I am right am I not? You do not seem like the real power behind all of this. A weak schoolboy? You are the instrument of someone else.”

Ollie seemed confused and unable to respond; his eyes kept darting upwards and sideways as if he was seeking another opinion. Finally he said,

“What are your terms?”

Malvane smiled, “My terms are that you leave us alone. I do not care what happens to any other people in here. Tomorrow I will deliver the end of humanity and then whoever you serve and I will rule this world together...”

With that, Malvane jumped back off the stage and headed briskly to the door.

“Wait!” shouted Ollie, “Don’t you want to hear my reply?”

Malvane did not turn around until he reached the door.

“I am still alive. That is reply enough.”

Flanked by the other soldier, he promptly left the hall and Ollie looking slightly bewildered on the stage.

## Detailed Taplow flashback

**This is when I had Tom knocked out by Ollie when he entered the basement and sees a flashback to what happened to Taplow. In the end I thought this made everything go on too long plus if Ollie was against the idea of violence he wouldn't hit anyone. This was replaced by the more vague vision Tom sees earlier and Bill's knowledge of what happened.**

There was a boy dressed in a school uniform under a duffel coat and with untidy hair. He was thin and rather tall, looking awkward in the confined space of the corner of the room. He appeared nervous and was holding a piece of wire which ran across the room into a number of wooden boxes. As Tom focussed still unsure of what he was looking at he realised that the boy was also holding a box of matches.

There were noises as two other figures pushed into the room. One was a uniformed policeman, the other a young woman wearing a yellow coat and woolly hat. Both carried torches and wore worried looks.

"William?" said the policeman in a clear voice, "Is that you?"

"Of course it's me," the boy replied in rather a posh voice with a sneer, "Don't come any closer."

"Alright, son, calm down. Do you mind if we turn the main light on?"

"If you want," came the surly reply.

The woman flicked a switch and a long strip light flickered on illuminated the scene far better. It now became clear that the box Tom had seen was one of several piled up in the corner of the room. The boxes looked old and each seemed to have a stencil of a skull and crossbones on them and the word DANGER below.

"Now we just want to talk," said the woman, indicating the policeman should stand back.

"Miss Curtis?" asked the boy, recognition in his voice.

"The headmaster called me, what is all this nonsense?"

"He expelled me, kicked me out."

"I know, I heard. I'm sorry about that."

"It's not fair."

"It may not seem fair to you William, but you have to acknowledge what you did."

"Not much, just a bit of fun that's all."

"Now that's not what I heard. You beat up Eddie Jessop so badly he'll be off school for weeks. You could have killed him."

"So *he* says. It wasn't that bad."

"It's not just him is it though William? There are plenty of other children. They can't all be lying."

“Can’t they?”

“You know they can’t because you know it’s all true. Why don’t you just admit it? I thought we’d made some progress, you and me, talking about all this.”

“Maybe. But everyone hates me.”

“William, they hate you because of the way you behave. If you tried to fit in and stopped bullying other pupils, things could change. But you have to make the change first.”

“I could change- I could be good.”

“That’s what you said last time. And the time before that. I think Mr Meredith felt that all the warnings have had no effect. That’s why he had to take action. These children’s parents were threatening to take them to another school. He has the reputation of Harrow Hill to think of.”

“Stuff the school, I’m going to show him.”

“William this is ridiculous. You can start at another school. That’s for the best isn’t it? People won’t know you there and you can become the good boy I know you are deep down.”

“*You* won’t be there.”

“I’m sure the staff at Cedar Grange will be very good.”

“You are the only one who’s helped me here. All the others hate me.”

“William, you can’t keep hiding behind these excuses. You have to take responsibility for yourself.”

“I am doing, I’m going to blow them all up”

Miss Curtis looked exasperated.

“The school’s been evacuated. We’re the only people left inside so you won’t be blowing *anyone* up.”

“Get out! I will do it! I will!”

The policeman stepped forward, “Now look here son, that gelignite is very unstable. It’s been out in the woods for years. Leave the wires and come with us.”

“Get back, keep back!” yelled William as he lit a match but there was then a white blur and the sound of an explosion.

## Original confrontation between Tom, Ollie and Taplow

**There are a few differences here mainly that Ollie is awake. I felt this conversation was a bit awkward so hit upon the idea that Ollie would be frozen for most of it though listening to everything...**

“Are you a ghost?” asked Tom peering at the translucent figure.

William smiled and when he replied it was in a very old fashioned sort of voice, “Yes, I suppose I am in a way. Are you frightened?”

“No.”

“Oh I don’t like him Porter, he’s all sensible and boring.”

“You’re not really here though are you, Will, not like a solid thing.”

“William,” said the boy impatiently, “My name is William not Will!”

“Will I am!” joked Tom eager to see what sort of adversary this person might be.

“You’re talking gibberish. Porter I thought you said this boy was clever and powerful.”

“He is!”

Tom was intrigued, “But you can talk and see me and everything. That’s pretty weird.”

“Isn’t it? You see I’ve been asleep. Well dead actually. Let’s be honest.”

“How did you come back?”

“It happened about four months ago. I woke up. It was like a massive jolt of power had appeared from somewhere and shocked me back to life. It took me a while to remember who I was and even longer to realise I didn’t have a body just a mind. I realised some time had passed. About forty years actually.”

Tom realised William was referring to the time last October when elemental power that had been lurking in the school building escaped.

“So you woke and then what?”

“I didn’t know what to think or to do. I wondered what would become of me and then Porter came into this room and we spoke and became friends.”

Tom turned to Ollie.

“Friends with a ghost? You must have loads of real friends. I’ve seen you with your mates.”

Ollie looked gloomy, “You’d think. But you see there’s a difference between people you know and friends. That’s a thing you’ll know when you get a bit older. Right now for you it’s all best mates and games and laughs but wait two or three years and it changes. William understood me when nobody else did. He came to know the real me, not the jokey magic trick playing prefect with the bow tie. That’s not me at all.”

“I like that you.”

“People do but it’s an act, see. Just a performance for the little kids.”

“So what’s all the ice and everything for?”

“I needed an upgrade?” said William, “Isn’t that the latest word for it? So much has happened since I was alive, I had to update my information and so I got Porter to select the cleverest pupils. This also gave me a useful link to their minds later on.”

“And the wall?”

“My fortress of solitude! Ha! The process will take time so it is important I am alone – these annoying creatures who invaded caused a delay but you helpfully sorted that out anyway for me, thanks for that.”

“You know Ollie can’t use the Earthstone for you yeah?”

“I wasn’t sure about you. Ollie detected something unusual as soon as he was under my control. Your mind was different and it took a while but now I see why. The Earthstone – I know all about it now – how you moved here from London which explains the annoying accent, that business up at Ravensthorpe Hall- imagine- we used to say that Lord Pennington was a vampire and in a way he was. And with the living trees. All very exciting...”

“You scanned my brain?”

“No. I couldn’t seem to do that but then I didn’t need to because I have your friends...”

Ollie walked across to a side door and pushed it open to reveal Amber, Kyle. Bill and Izzy covered in ice standing perfectly still in various poses.

“What have you done to them?”

“Nothing that cannot be un-done, provided you help me. So you see you will cooperate with me or else your friends will freeze to death.”

Tom glared at Ollie,

“How did you even get involved in all this?”

“I volunteered to make the ultimate sacrifice.”

“What does that mean?”

“When my energy is sufficient and I have absorbed all that I need I will take over Porter’s body completely,” replied William as it was of little concern.

“And what happens to him?”

“He will sleep in the walls and the bricks as I did. It’s an exchange.”

“And you’re happy with that?” said Tom to Ollie.

“Yeah. Is it so hard to believe? I don’t want to carry on and William will do great things. He’s deserves a second chance.”

“Really? Ollie what happened, why are you wanting to do this.”

“Well it’s all pointless really isn’t? All these things we do, the waking up, the preparing for the day, school, work and the rest of it. We spend so much energy planning every stage of our lives and then we die. I thought I’d just cut out the middle bit!”

“Look I think you might be depressed...”

“Do you think so? I know your mum’s a GP but I wouldn’t say you are qualified to judge me.”

“This is insane! You’ll die- he calls it sleep but he *died* and it was only because of some freaky elemental thing that he woke up.”

“I don’t care.”

“Ollie I really think you might be suffering from depression. I’ve heard mum talking about it- it’s like an illness were people feel terrible and don’t want to live but it can be treated, you need help.”

“No, no, it’s not me; it is William that needs help. He was badly treated, bullied and persecuted so he used to hide down here but one day they found him and killed him. How can that be fair? He’s a genius and deserves another chance. He deserves my chance.”

William added, “All I want is to become whole, to be like you and everyone else. To be a person again. That’s not much to ask is it?”

Tom shook his head, “I don’t know how to do that; even with the stone. I mean its crazy- you died forty years or more ago. How can I bring you back to life? It’s impossible.”

“No it isn’t. Amber Carlton was brought back to life wasn’t she?”

“That was different, it was a lot of power from a custodian.”

“Whatever it was, the Earthstone can do it. There is enough elemental power stored in it and I can transmit through Porter and take your power for myself. Then I will have my revenge on those who bullied me and expelled me.”

“You’re joking right? Most of the teachers will be old by now or maybe even dead. Even your classmates will be in their sixties.”

“Oh didn’t I say? Not just them but all teachers. In fact all adults. Adults just spoil everything – in my new ice world there will only be children.”

“Er...you do know you can’t have children without adults right?”

William looked irritated, “Well I’ll keep some adults- like people keep cattle.”

“You promised me there’d be no killing...” began Ollie but William rolled his eyes.

“Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. I don’t need you now anyway Porter because I have the caretaker of the world!”

“But my deal was to swap with you so you could have a second chance, the life you missed out on. I’m not helping you become some sort of monster that kills people. I said nobody was to get hurt. I volunteered, nobody else did. You’re out of control; whatever is happening to you, it’s too much.”

“What is happening to me is that I am becoming whole. I can sense it, I can feel it; just a little bit more life energy and we can both have what we want.”

Ollie hesitated again, “Maybe...”

“Ollie!” shouted Tom, “He wants to kill everyone, don’t listen to him. Depression can be treated, you can be fine.”

William waved a finger at Tom, “Oh stop it! Remember your friends in there. Porter – you will connect him to me... now. I have had enough of this irritating brat.”

“I’m not sure...”

“Nothing has changed.”

Ollie was shaking his head, “It *has* changed- Tom will die.”

“So? You’re only his prefect, not his father.”

“And before Jake Tyrell- he nearly died. I had to save him.”

“I am not a doctor!” shouted William, “I cannot save everyone.”

“You trapped them all here,” interjected Tom.

Ollie said, “I said, I totally said, nobody should get hurt. I can’t let someone be killed because of me.”

“It’s not because of you, it’s because of me.”

“You wouldn’t be able to do *any* of this without me,” shouted Ollie.

Tom realised the moment had arrived to reveal what he knew. It was his last throw of the dice to try and get Ollie onside.

“There’s something else Ollie, something Will here hasn’t told you.”

“What do you mean?”

“He wasn’t the victim of bullies- he *was* the bully and that’s why he was expelled. He only tried to blow up the school because of that. He was planning to kill hundreds of pupils.”

William looked shocked and the energy floating around his image fluctuated, “This is rubbish- how would you know anything about me?”

“When I was knocked out I saw what happened- when you were in the cellar with the explosives. I think maybe I was meant to see it somehow, to show me the truth.”

“You’re a liar. You can’t see the past.”

Tom pointed to the bank of crystals.

“Those take information from people’s head’s right? What if they also take the memories of ghosts who happen to be hanging about?”

“Rubbish! Nonsense! He’s making it up Porter...”

“Is he? All that stuff you were saying just now, about revenge, about getting rid of all adults. I can’t be part of that, I won’t. You don’t really care if innocent people die do you?”

“You will help me. You volunteered yourself, remember? And this boy is making things up to trick you.”

## A hover board!

**Originally I planned for Tom to draw the sabre toothed tiger into the woods on a flying piece of wood. It was from the damaged laboratory earlier and as it was wooden Tom could control it. This sounded exciting but then I realised it seemed too difficult to control and a bit too `fantasy` so changed it to a bike.**

Tom ran as fast as he could along the soaking wet corridors, the sound of the sabre toothed tiger close behind. The beast was roaring and Tom had no idea what it might do if it caught him but he didn't want to wait to find out. Ahead lay the open double doors that led into the Quad but as he ran past the windows he saw a number of people had congregated outside.

Tom leapt down the steps into the Quad shouting, "Get out of the way!"

The place resembled a lake with water ebbing everywhere and a number of pieces of wood floating in it, the aftermath of the confrontation he'd had in the chemistry lab yesterday. These gave him an idea and he focussed on a piece of wood nearby willing it to rise out of the water and floating a few inches above.

"Tom- look out!"

He didn't know who warned him but he was glad that they had. The Melodeon was outside now, menacingly loping towards him. The others scattered but Tom knew they were relatively safe. It was him that the beast wanted. He leapt onto the piece of wood and willed it to float a few inches above the ground. His very own custom made hover board! The animal was close behind leaping with surprising skill across the water so it landed with a splash in the middle of the Quad. It roared angrily at the assembled audience before setting off in pursuit of Tom.

## Original Climax

**A mega deleted scene to finish with. This is the ditched ending centred on Amber being kidnapped by Malvane and ending up dangling over a molten metal vat. I realised this was out of character for our villain and also how Tom know where he was or how would he know Tom was coming after him. It also slowed the climax as Tom had to spend time getting down into the furnace. So the whole sequence was cut out which was a lot of material and completely rewritten to put the confrontation between Tom and Malvane in the woods right under the collapsing ice wall.**

Just then Marlow and Danny emerged into the Quad, each of them supporting Jake who seemed to be in pain. A worried looking Amber hurried over to greet them.

"Jake- what happened?"

"It's worse than it looks- I had a fall. I really need a sit down. What's happening? I thought you lot got away to Bill Ambrose's cottage?"

“Well things got complicated.”

“Anyhow the army are here now- we’ve just seen them coming up the hill.”

“I’ll see if they’ve got medical supplies,” said Amber heading out of the Quad and around the corner.

She was distracted by the firing of weapons and what looked like a large tiger before a pair of paws grabbed her by the throat forcing a cloth over her mouth and after an initial struggle she succumbed to the poison. Malvane lifted her over his shoulder and headed for the nearby roamer. As he climbed on top of the vehicle and rather roughly started to drop Amber’s still form into the gap, Danny emerged from around the corner and immediately saw what was going on and yelled at him. Malvane fired several shots at him before disappearing into the vehicle which started up as Danny reached it and clambered on top of it.

As the tank turned he held onto it and remained as it started to rumble down the hill. As it gathered speed and the gun barrel turned, Danny had no choice but to leap from it rolling over as it fired at the troops.

Soldiers were still firing at the subterranean tank as it crashed into the road but their vehicles had seemingly been targeted by Malvane and four of the five were nursing damaged wheels or had smoke pouring from their engines. Only Davenport’s lighter vehicle remained in one piece and Danny leapt into the driving seat as its occupier had his back turned though before the boy could start the engine he was looking up at a pistol pointed at his head.

“What the devil is going on?” thundered the Colonel.

“There’s a girl been kidnapped!” shouted Danny breathlessly, “And I am going to rescue her. Can you help me?”

“As a matter of fact I can. I’ve just seen a sabre toothed tiger and a very odd looking tank so a kidnapping makes a little more sense. Move over, I’ll drive.”

Danny did as he was told and as Davenport sat down and started the vehicle, he asked, “So who is the kidnapper?”

“Er, sort of a big talking walking badger with some crystal weapon,” came the reply.

As he turned the vehicle around, Davenport raised an eyebrow, “Now why doesn’t that surprise me!”

Tom arrived moments later to see the two smoking vehicles and to hear moaning coming from the Army jeep. Danny was pulling his seatbelt off, a cut on his forehead bleeding down the side of his face.

“What happened?” asked Tom as he tried largely unsuccessfully to help the much larger Danny to the ground.

“They’ve got Amber,” said Danny.

“Leave it to me,” said Tom.

The hatch on the tank was up suggesting its inhabitants had fled but he checked inside just to make sure Amber wasn't there. However the vehicle was empty. He clambered down and then spotted the recently fallen clumps of snow nearby. He headed into the bushes to investigate and then saw clear footprints in the snow which he followed for a short time until they ended abruptly. In the distance he spotted a pile of ice and soil that must have been dug out of the snow and rushed towards it. Sitting nearby were a couple of smaller subterranean vehicles that had obviously been left here in case a quick escape was needed. He climbed into one and saw it was the same basic controls as the larger roamer.

Tom had never driven a vehicle larger than a bike or a bumper car before so he felt worried as he turned the ignition and the strange vehicle started with a shudder. He tried his best to control it with a single metal lever but wasn't entirely sure what would happen as he edged over the lip of the hole and tipped over. What happened next was a surprise. With a metallic crunch several flexible poles emerged from the side of the craft and latched themselves onto the sides of the drop with extendable metal claws. Then, like a spider, the vehicle began to descend into darkness. This was an amazing invention and Tom thought of how many people would need such a thing.

The lower this strange mode of transport descended, the warmer it became and Tom started to feel hot air billowing around him as he pulled off his winter coat. Soon the source of that heat became visible in the form of molten metal shards dancing in the air above massive tanks. He realised with a start that unless he did something the metal he was travelling in would be added to the red hot mixture. He shifted the gear sideways and the arms of the craft turned away from the furnace to clamber down the uneven cave walls.

As soon as his transport stopped, Tom leapt out. The smell was so pungent, the heat so intense that it took him a few moments to focus. Clouds of steam floated across the cavern and nearby a tray of recently made metal cups sat on a table. It was while looking at them that Tom noticed a hand and then its owner lying unconscious on the floor. There was no doubt this was the place.

"Malvane!" he yelled above the noise, though the effort made him cough in the noxious atmosphere.

"I'm so glad it is you!" came the reply though Tom could not work out where his adversary was, "The boy who can throw fire!"

"Give it up, mate. There's others coming after me."

"Your kind always believe they are right but I wonder. You can throw fire but can you save someone from fire!"

There was a sudden shout from Amber from whom Malvane had moved a gag.

"Tom get out of here- it's not safe!" she shouted.

"It's ok Amber, I've come to rescue you!"

"You, little child, cannot stop me," shouted Malvane.

There was a flash and a large volume of molten metal shot into the air. Now Tom could see them.

Perched on top of the highest container in the workshop Malvane was holding Amber precariously over the edge. It looked to Tom as if all he had to do was let go and she would be plunged into the red hot liquid.

Surrounded by plumes of hot smoke, Malvane and Amber were on some sort of platform. She was balanced precariously over the edge of a large cylindrical vat which Tom knew from his previous visit contained molten metal.

“Let her go!” Tom shouted.

Malvane sneered, “Why should I? What would you offer in return for this girl’s life?”

“What do you want?”

As he spoke Tom was edging closer to the steps though had no idea how he could save Amber should Malvane let go his grip. He just knew the closer he got the more chance he had.

“Don’t help him Tom.” coughed Amber, “You can’t trust him.”

“Groundlings talk too much and think too little,” said Malvane, pushing Amber over the edge momentarily.

“I want a vehicle,” said Malvane, “A vehicle to get me away from here.”

“I’m thirteen! How can I get a vehicle?”

“Do not waste time. I will kill the girl and you if I need to.”

“I won’t let you kill her and you can’t kill me. You forget I’ve got the Earthstone, that was how I threw the fire...”

“That trinket won’t be quick enough. Not to save your friend...”

Tom’s heart leapt as Malvane let go of Amber who screamed as she fell over the side only to float above the seething heat below. Only now Tom could see she was attached to a metal hoist.

“Now you know I do not lie,” sneered Malvane, “Next time I will unhook her and she will drop into the furnace in two seconds- can you act that quickly?”

Tom looked around desperately but there seemed to be nothing he could use and Amber was dangling precariously over the molten metal.

“OK- why don’t you have me a hostage instead of her?”

“Why would I do that? You are probably immune to the heat.”

Judging by the sweat rolling down his face, Tom was not sure that was true but he had to try something to rescue Amber.

“Maybe. But I’ve got the stone as well, wouldn’t that be a better hostage to have?”

For the first time Malvane did not answer but looked intrigued.

“If you give me that stone,” he said slowly, “I will free the girl and let you live. I am sure there are groundlings who would pay for such a valuable item.”

Tom briefly tried to imagine how someone like Malvane would possibly be able to approach anyone to sell anything but he knew he had found a weakness.

“No, Tom!” shouted Amber.

“Alright.”

Tom had reached the foot of the stone steps.

“Approach,” ordered Malvane, “Join us.”

Tom started to climb the steps. It was a long shot and he still had no idea exactly what he would do but it was better than nothing. As he climbed the heat became more intense and seemed to flow like waves from inside the large metal container. He could only guess how hot Amber was directly above it.

Malvane purred as he saw Tom step out in front of him. The platform was small with just a metal barrier keeping them from the roaring heat beneath.

“I admire you,” the subterranean leader said, “A boy like you who is not afraid the way other groundlings are afraid. You are a worthy adversary but you cannot overcome me.”

“Let’s get on with it then,” snapped Tom.

Malvane nodded and pulled a lever near his left paw causing the pulley to winch Amber back to the side and deposit her on the slab of rock. She looked exhausted and overheated but grateful for respite.

“And now the stone?”

Tom pulled the Earthstone from over his head and held it out in the palm of his hand. As he did so he focussed hard on the energy of the object itself drawing it out into his hands. He did so without showing anything on his face but could feel the power tingling under his fingertips. The question he did not know the answer to was whether this would be enough power to use.

“No tricks,” hissed Malvane grabbing hold of Amber with one paw while he reached out with the other and grasped the Earthstone.

Amber looked shocked that Tom appeared ready to hand over his priceless rock and shook her head but Tom waited for a moment to try and gather the elemental power in his fingers.

“All the power of the elements,” shouted Malvane, “All of it is mine to do with as I choose!”

Tom allowed him to become distracted by the Earthstone before he pointed his fingers and fired green static into Malvane’s paw causing him to drop the stone which immediately returned to Tom.

“Too slow badger breath!”

Malvane roared and shoved Amber sideways causing her to tumble off the platform. Her scream echoed around the cavern and Tom ran to the barrier, his heart thumping like a piston. Amber was still dangling from one chain which remained tied to her left foot. Her hair was inches from the molten soup.

“Hang on!” Tom shouted but he was suddenly pulled backwards by Malvane’s claws which hurled him back against the metal barrier. This assault was painful as his body collided into the metal.

“You will die!” yelled the subterranean as he bared his teeth and charged again. Tom moved out of the way and headed down the steps as fast as he could.

The chain was slipping from Amber’s ankle yanking her downwards so that the tips of her hair were now a few inches from the lava.

“Tom!” she shouted as the smoke swirled around her head.

Tom was halfway down the steps and threw the Earthstone into the vat willing the temperature of the metal to freeze. Slowly the fierce orange began to lighten in colour.

Suddenly Tom was kicked in the side and tumbled down several steps. He lay winded as Malvane leapt on top of him, the crystal weapon glinting in the light as he raised it above his head. Tom could not move but then he saw the weapon knocked out of his assailant’s hand and heard a number of footsteps rushing towards him.

Several armed subterraneans jumped over him and pointed their guns at Malvane who was now defenceless and surrendered once he realised the odds against him. Leading the party was Sarienue who hurried up the steps to meet her brother.

“Sister- you are timely,” said Malvane, “Lock this child up.”

“I am timely,” replied Sarienue, “But I see my work is already done. Thank you Tom.”

“What is this?” thundered Malvane as four soldiers surrounded him and bound him with rope, “*I am your leader!*”

“Your days as leader are over, brother,” replied Sarienue.

“Traitor!” shouted Malvane, “betrayer of your people.”

“*You are the betrayer!*” she shouted back, “You would have destroyed us and slaughtered billions of innocents. I see it now, I was wrong to follow you just as our father was wrong to teach us to hate the groundlings.”

“I do hate them,” snarled Malvane, “I hate them all but most of all I hate this boy.”

“Then it may be that you will have to spend the rest of your life locked up,” she replied, “Take him!”

The guards started to manhandle Malvane down the steps but he did not go easily, shouting and cursing as he was dragged away. He looked up at Tom and roared,

“I will avenge this day child- I will make you suffer for this!”

Before he could say any more a cloth was placed over his mouth and he was bundled away.

Moments later Amber screamed as the chain finally gave way and she dropped down – onto a cold icy surface. As she tried to stand her feet slipped and she ended up sitting on her backside! Tom could not help laughing as it took several subterraneans to help Amber out of the vat and onto the steps where she gratefully sat.

“Oh very funny!”

“Classic!”

“Never mind about that- you did that thing with static coming out of your fingers?” she said in croaky voice, “I’ve never seen you do that before; when did you learn that?”

“Oh you know I can do that stuff easily! Actually I learned it now, just then when you saw it! Are you ok?”

“I could do with a drink of water.”

“You were nearly chips!” said Tom as he sat down with her on the edge of the stone step.

She grinned, “You mean fries! You look worse than me.”

“It’s been a really long day. I nearly got executed this morning.”

“Yeah, and I was nearly thrown in a vat of molten liquid five minutes ago. Thanks by the way for rescuing me, Again! I hope I can repay you one day. I don’t always want to be the damsel in distress.”

“S’ok. That’s my job! But I might need to take you up on that one day.”

Amber thanked a subterranean who offered her a cup of water and she drank a considerable amount in one grateful gulp.

When she put the cup down, Tom said, “Actually maybe you can help me now.”

“I’m not carrying you home!”

“I’m going to a party in a couple of weeks and there’s a girl...”

Amber smiled, “Is it by any chance Melissa Murgatroyd?”

Tom nodded, “Thing is people are really down on her, like there’s this song about her. Even Kyle doesn’t like her.”

“But you do?”

“Well kind of. I mean I don’t know. But I’d like to see.”

“Look at me? Do you think I care what other people think of me? After last summer and what happened to Jade I realised even more you have to grab what you want. Who knows how long you’ll be around? If you like Melissa or you even think you like her then go for it. Whatever people think doesn’t matter at all. And if Kyle is a real friend he’ll be fine with it.”

“Yeah. I mean things get dangerous don’t they? For me anyway.”

“They do. And you don’t want to go into dangerous situations regretting things you didn’t say or do.”

“Right. Definitely.”

“Oh and one other thing.”

“Yep.”

“You’ll have to tell me all about how it goes!”