



Deleted Scenes

Hello and welcome to the deleted scenes folder. Here you'll find lots of stuff that was left out of the book for various reasons. Sometimes it was simply because there wasn't room, other times because the scene didn't work.

Anyway for those interested there's a little explanation before each one saying why it was left out.

Thanks for your interest. Enjoy!

John

Table of Contents

Original opening paragraph.....	2
Alternative chase sequence.....	2
Additional material from Tom's dream	4
Different Autumn Fair / Tree Man	4
Harrow Hill School houses	6
Mrs Allenby's sketches.....	6
Bill tells Tom about the figure in the cloak of leaves.....	7
Jake is attacked	8
Tom, Amber and Kyle under attack	8
More woodland attack	9
Original introduction of the Tyler family.....	10
Jake visits Miss Boswell.....	12
Original Abel Cartwright introduction	14
Confrontation with Abel	14
Amber and Jake rescue girls in the Quad.....	16
Tom and Jake	17
Tree Man encounter.....	17
Lord of the Flies stuff.....	20
Climax after oak tree burns.....	24

Original opening paragraph

Opening a book is difficult and so there are always discarded scenes. This one is atmospheric but it gives away too much too soon and I wanted the story to have a gradual build up. It is though something that did happen just before the book's actual opening scene.

Someone was walking in the midnight woods. Each deliberate footstep left a charred shape on the ground and in the light rain what looked like twinkling stars trailed in the wake of the movement. Had there been anybody about they would be unable to tell whether it was a man or woman hidden beneath a voluminous cowl, hood drawn over the face. A closer look would reveal that the garment itself was made entirely from leaves matted together and meshed by a force that manifested itself in microscopic sparks of static.

It was someone to be avoided. Tiny night crawlers that usually roamed free headed for cover while watchful owls on damp branches turned away as if this was a sight they did not wish to add to their wisdom. Scampering rabbits leapt as far away as they could as the cloak drifted past. A solitary deer picking its way through the moonlit terrain stopped still perhaps hoping it would not be spotted. Nothing seemed to deter this unusual progress. Where the figure was walking was uncertain as the trail ran in ever widening circles as an animal might do when marking its territory.

Alternative chase sequence

This is more or less the same as the one in the book except for the fact that the two people being chased by the police are adults.

The two vehicles spewed surface water from underneath their wheels as they sped along the night time road. There was no other traffic, just the two of them ebbing and flowing as one chased the other. To an onlooker it would seem as if the sleek police car with its blue light flashing and siren wailing would easily catch the small compact white van but the latter was pulling away as they rounded another corner and it turned sharply down a side road. The police car sped past before screeching to a halt and only half successfully managing a three point turn in the narrow lane.

Inside the van, the passenger, a stocky man in his mid thirties banged the dashboard with approval.

“Brilliant, brilliant Eddie! That’s got rid of them.”

Eddie, the driver was rake thin and wore an expression of concern.

“No it won’t. I can still hear the siren. They’ll be coming back any sec.”

“Don’t be stupid, we’ve lost ‘em for good”

A second later the distant reflection a blue flashing light appeared on the windscreen.

“Lost ‘em? You think?”

“Turn off,” shouted Mark, “Quick!”

“You’re joking, right? Its pitch black in there.”

“Do it- before they spot us.”

With a large sigh, Eddie turned the wheel and the van slid off the road and into the darkness of the woods beyond. It bounced and bumped over the uneven terrain until there was a loud bump.

“You’ve hit something!”

“I told you we shouldn’t have come down here.”

They sat staring at the shrubs illuminated by the head lamps.

“Well go on then, reverse it, let’s get back onto the road.” urged Mark pushing the younger man. Eddie turned the ignition key several times but the roaring engine did not cause anything to happen.

“It must be jammed on something,” said Mark after the third attempt, “Go and have a butchers.”

“What if it’s, you know, a body?”

“It’s probably a log. Go see will you?”

Wearily Eddie clambered out of the van and stared at the wheels. He scratched his head, then looked again, then pulled a confused expression that seemed to force Mark outside with his phone, shining the light on the left side wheel.

It had virtually disappeared under a mass of roots that had become wrapped around it.

“How’d that happen so quickly?”

“We must have snagged something further back- come on, let’s get it off.”

They started to pull at the roots which appeared to be highly resistant. As they strained, a number of small animals started to scurry through the area. A group of small mammals scampered over fallen logs and through gaps in the foliage. Some rabbits hopped quickly past. Overhead the flapping of wings was audible though it was too dark a night to see who their owners were.

“What’s going on?”

“How should I know- I hate animals.”

“It looks like they’re running away from something.”

Nearby a sound was getting closer. The sound of someone walking and as the two men abandoned attempts to release the van they started to back off as the shrubs parted. Caught in the light from the van’s lamps was an imposing figure who appeared to be entirely covered in leaves.

For a few moments the two parties stood staring at each other before the sound of buckling metal rang out. Mark and Eddie looked sideways to see their van was now being pulled underground by roots that were writhing across its surface. Slowly the vehicle was disappearing under the soil and the two men turned and ran back into the darkness.

A minute later they emerged breathless onto the main road, bending over with exhaustion.

“What was that thing?”

“Who knows, hang on, there’s someone coming, let’s flag a lift and get out of this freakshow.”

As the car approached, they stepped into the road flagging it down until it drew to a halt. The window wound down and the policeman inside looked very pleased with himself.

“After a lift gentlemen?”

Eddie nodded enthusiastically, “Just arrest us, whatever, but get us out of here!”

Additional material from Tom's dream

Tom's dream was originally a bit longer but there seemed no reason why it needed to be so I cut this bit out. I'm not a big fan of dream sequences in films or books but this was really here to run through the plot of the first book!!

Perhaps he'd better make sure. Gingerly he pulled the curtain back but this time instead of a face he saw something creeping along the walls behind him. He spun round to see a dark black roots moving determinedly across the wallpaper, tendrils stretching across the room. Somehow however hard he tried he could not quite reach the Earthstone as the plant wrapped itself around his legs, pinned his arms to his side and started to twist up his body until he was pulled down into the carpet.

He woke up again and called out but he was in bed and the room was dark. Feint rain drops could be heard on the window but if there had been a storm it was over. He relaxed. He hadn't been awake at all. It was all a dream within a dream and he laughed out loud and flopped backwards. Then something caught his eye. A pulsing green light coming from his bedside table, a light he knew well. When there was elemental danger, the Earthstone would glow green and now it was very green indeed. That could only mean something was about to happen, or perhaps it already was. As he contemplated the prospect of a second adventure, Tom Allenby was not sure whether he was very excited or totally scared!

Different Autumn Fair / Tree Man

Originally I had this idea that every year Rooksbourne's autumn fair included a ceremony in which someone dressed up as the Tree Man, a mythical figure who would cleanse the woods. Bill's shock happened while he was undertaking this duty. In the end I changed it because I wasn't sure Bill would be the right character to believe in this kind of thing and it dragged on a bit. It was replaced by Tom and Kyle accompanying Bill into the woods to help with his traps.

Today, Tom had been told was a very special day in the calendar of the village. It was the day the Tree Man would parade through the woods to ensure that the many spirits that lived within its confines would remain therein and not torment the village during the Winter. Until he'd moved here, Tom would have laughed at such a stupid thing but he had seen enough of the woods to know that things did lurk there. Rather than the spirits of legend they were actually elemental creatures and if the giant worm and evil foxes he had seen were any indication he was happy to take part in anything that might help to keep them at bay however weird it seemed.

Ever since he had met him, Tom had a feeling that Bill knew more than he was saying about elemental matters. Living in the woods he had surely encountered something over the years and the way he had reacted to the plants attacking his cottage suggested he was not unfamiliar with this sort of thing. He had believed everything Tom had told him about the Earthstone yet Tom felt he knew more.

He knocked on the wooden door, now patched up with boards but there was no answer so he pushed it open slightly.

"You're just in time!"

Kyle Marshall ushered him inside. Bill's grand-son had become his best friend after a shaky start. Kyle seemed to spend much of his time here as his parents were always away on business. Tom felt sorry for Kyle who liked to give the impression he didn't mind his long periods unchaperoned but Tom imagined that he probably did. Kyle was taller and broader than Tom who hoped he could have a growth spurt soon. He still felt weedy and small when standing next to Kyle.

"In time for what?"

"You'll see...here he comes now..."

They turned at the sound of Bill emerging from the narrow steps that led upstairs and when he saw him, Tom had to stifle a laugh.

"Blimey!" he exclaimed, "You look...different."

Bill was dressed from head to foot in what appeared to be a voluminous cloak onto which hundreds and hundreds of autumnal coloured leaves had somehow been pinned. Over his head was a hood of similar design, though it was pushed back leaving his lined, grey haired head visible. His stern expression suggested he didn't approve of Tom's amusement.

"City folk rarely know about things," he sniffed.

"No, I mean it's cool. Very ecological and that. What's this Tree Man thing again?"

Bill rolled his eyes and concentrated on adjusting the cloak which did not appear to be very comfortable so Kyle explained as he put on a pair of thick boots.

"The Tree Man has always come to the village each year. Its tradition and these days someone from the village carries it on. The idea is that he touches each of the trees in a trail through the woods surrounding the village and that sets up like a forcefield you know? Protection against the spirits which keeps us safe in wintertime."

"Spirits?"

"Yeah, like the Frostclaw or the Fogsnapper or the Grasssprite or the..."

"Ok, I get it but we know that they aren't spirits but things created from elemental power."

"Well, yeah *we* know. The villagers don't know though do they?"

"But some bloke dressed in a suit of leaves hugging trees isn't going to protect anyone is it? The Earthstone will."

"And there's always been a caretaker you said."

"So what's the point?"

Bill sighed and stood up straight in his bizarre outfit.

"The point young man is that people need to believe in something they understand. Ain't no point tellin' 'em about elemental power cos most will think you're making it up or worse you've got a loose screw. No, you tell 'em something scary from long ago, something that makes them feel safe in their beds and homes and that's fine."

"Lie to them?"

"It's not lying. It's just not telling them the scariest things. Where's the harm? Anyway it gets everyone together and Mrs Barclay does make the finest fruit pies specially for the occasion."

Kyle grinned; "They are amazing, you've got to try them. She manages to pack in several fruits at once."

"There was a big storm last night," said Tom as Kyle donned a large winter coat.

"I saw it, thunder, lightning, the works."

"Did you see anything else, you know in a dream or something?"

Kyle shook his head, "Did you?"

Tom waited for a moment before answering but decided he couldn't really explain the face so he just said, "No."

Harrow Hill School houses

A lot of posh English schools have pupils divided into houses like they do at Hogwarts in Harry Potter and this section was an explanation of the houses at Harrow Hill. It was cut because it slowed down the story and also because having explained all the houses I realised they had no relevance to the plot anyway!

The school was also divided into four 'houses' into which all pupils were placed, rather arbitrarily it seemed. Tom had been hoping there was some elaborate ceremony but contained in the pack his parents had received was the name of the house into which he would be allocated. Unfortunately, each house also had an elaborately coloured blazer. No wonder the school is so isolated, Tom had thought when he'd started, they are embarrassed about the uniform!

He had a dark blue blazer with yellow piping that was the colouring of Marlow House, which wasn't too bad. The really loud design was Becketts, whose members were forced to wear red blazers with orange stripes; colours that did not even match. Still, better than being in Hastings. While their colours were an altogether tasteful green and brown, that house had a reputation for being swots and nearly everyone there ended up going to really important universities. There was a deep rivalry between Hastings and Becketts that reached a peak every summer when the inter-house murder ball competition took place. Luckily murder ball (like football with no rules) was only open to third years and above. The other house was Pembroke (yellow and black) and this was where Amber was. Pembroke was the one whose members always seemed to finish first at sporting events while both the head boy and girl were from there too. Everyone suspected that the reason this happened was to appease the descendants of the school's architect who also sat on the board of governors.

At least Tom had the advantage of already being fully briefed by Kyle before he'd started at the school because as pupils entered through two very tall wooden doors they had to run the gauntlet of various parties. There were teachers checking on one thing or another and urging people to walk in lines. Then there were also sixth formers trying to entice younger pupils to take part in or support projects, charity events or sports. Worst of all, gangs with their own agendas would terrorise particular groups of pupils, feuds between houses would play out in a general atmosphere of pushing and shoving. Someone- usually a younger pupil- would end up on the floor their predicament met with a barrage of denials from older children when teachers enquired as to how it happened.

Mrs Allenby's sketches

This is from a subplot that was cut altogether. The idea was that Tom finds drawings his mum has sketched of some of the events she has supposedly forgotten from the first book. Tom is worried she is becoming influenced by elemental power the same way Mrs Brackley was. Not much became of the idea and it was one plot too many.

As it turned out, if there was to be any further investigation of the strange tree incident, it failed to materialise. Just as Bill was leaving, Tom noticed some drawings lying on the end of the table. He picked them up to examine what were pencil sketches of large

dogs and birds. Almost like the enlarged animals that had briefly attacked the village last summer. He had only seen it from a distance but that was enough for him to realise what was depicted and he also knew that either his mum or dad must have drawn them.

Suddenly the papers were pulled out of his hands by his mum who tore them down the middle and crumpled them up, shoving them into the waste paper bin.

“Let’s keep the house tidy shall we, Tom, for a change?”

“Where they yours?”

“Which - the drawings? No, your father likes to doodle; says it helps him think.”

Bill tells Tom about the figure in the cloak of leaves

An unnecessary scene that I cut in which Bill tells Tom about his encounter. As the readers have already witnessed this it seemed like too much repetition.

Tom did not see Ellie again that day though checked out each group of pupils he saw as he left school. Walking home his mind couldn’t help but drift back to those few moments lying on the grass. His thought were suddenly interrupted by Bill Ambrose.

“I need to have a word with you, “he said looking serious.

“OK, here I am.”

“In private.”

“Nobody’s listening, “said Tom pointing at the groups of pupils strolling along the road, “They’ve all got music on.”

“Of course, I forget that. Sometimes I’m blabbering away at Kyle and he doesn’t hear a word I say. So, anyways, I had the most peculiar encounter.”

“What happened?”

“Well I was minding my own business when this character shows up outside the cottage. Dressed from top to toe in old leaves he was, hood over his head so I couldn’t see him- or her, it was hard to tell. Anyway I followed this person and he sort of vanished and the leaves just fell to the ground.”

“Hang on, you said a person covered in leaves? I think I saw him on the way to school this morning. I wasn’t sure quite what it was but that sounds about right.”

“Aye he must be wandering around the woods. Could move at a fair old speed too I’d say. I think it might be connected with the shock I had yesterday.”

“There’s something going on. Things have been happening at school, strange things like people maybe turning into animals and fighting. And you’ll never guess, there’s someone else with elemental powers like mine.”

“Can’t be- you’re supposed to be the only one right?”

“I thought so but now this girl called Ellie Tyler can catch electricity in a bottle and control leaves.”

“Arthur Tyler’s little girl? I know her well enough to know she can’t do those things.”

“Well she can now.”

Jake is attacked

One of the things about these stories is that sometimes characters are not really doing anything for a while. This was added to provide Jake with a scene during a period he is largely absent. It also comes from a version where I hadn't really decided the extent of the threat so this seemed like a random moment that wasn't necessary.

In the fading light, Jake was on his way home, turning into a tree lined avenue, headphones on and seemingly oblivious to his surroundings. As he stopped to look at something on his phone, a nearby branch started to extend its reach over a garden fence. It slid down the wood and then along the pavement before starting to wrap itself around his left leg. As soon as he felt it, Jake tried to pull himself free, and as he did so, took a photo. The branch released him and in front of his eyes slithered away. Other tendrils sneaked from behind him and he stepped back to avoid them all the time pointing his phone in their direction.

Amber's phone bleeped.

"You won't believe this," she said showing them the shaky film Jake had shot of rogue branches moving like insects, "Jake just sent it, he was attacked just now."

"Is that a prank?"

Amber shook her head, "Jake does *not* do pranks."

"It's like the ivy that attacked the house last night. Look there's a street lamp near where he was. I bet that's how it controlled the branch."

Tom, Amber and Kyle under attack

Believe it or not this sequence where the trio are attacked the first time they investigate the oak tree was the most re-written scene in the book. This is an early version of it.

There was a sudden gust of wind and Amber's woolly hat was blown from her head and went spiralling into the air. She laughed at first as they watched it flying above their heads but then it was grasped out of the air by one of the oak's branches as if it was a hand.

They all jumped and retreated from the vicinity of the tree. The wind was getting stronger now as darkness encroached, dislodging the piles of leaves turning them into swirling mini tornadoes which seemed to be closing in on them.

"Run!"

They sprinted back the way they came pursued by two, three, four spinning wheels of leaves. When they got back to more open area Tom turned and held the Earthstone up in the air so that it was in full view of the approaching leaves. Rain started to pour as if from nowhere and he realised that his display did not seem to have been noticed by whatever was here. He threw the Earthstone to send the leaves flying in all directions but no sooner had he done so than they began to coalesce back- this time they became one much larger vortex.

"Leave it Tom, we need to get out of here!" yelled Kyle as the wind grew even more powerful. They turned and struggled against the weather that appeared to be aimed solely at them.

Twice Tom used the Earthstone to clear a corridor through the pelting rain but each time whatever power was being used against them caused it to collapse soaking them once more. The endless carpet of leaves on the ground was also trying to stop their progress, as

they found the going increasingly slippery. Every so often they would rise in a mound as if something was underneath them but each time Tom was able to push them out of the way but it slowed their progress. They were breathless and bedraggled by the time they reached a thicket of hedges through which they could not traverse.

“We’re going in the wrong direction!” shouted Amber.

As they turned to go back a funnel of leaves that was now at least twenty feet high spun towards them electric static now shooting from its sides.

“If it’s powered by electricity how is it moving now?” yelled Kyle.

Tom could only shake his head as he was concentrating on staying upright. He concentrated again and managed to cause all of the falling rain to turn against the flying leaves creating a barrier which he did not allow them to pass. It didn’t change the fact that they seemed to have nowhere to go.

The vortex was gaining strength now and towered over them, strands of static shooting outwards as Tom tried one enormous effort to stop it. He threw the Earthstone as powerfully as he could hoping to gain control over the leaves which he kept telling himself were just leaves. However the stone did not come back into his hand instantaneously or indeed at all

He looked at the others helplessly as the spinning tornado of leaves and static moved towards them and he realised they had no way to escape.

More woodland attack

Another version in which Tom is knocked out. As he is rendered unconscious again a couple of times later on this was changed.

Amber picked up the branch that had fallen on Tom as if she intended to defend them with it but as soon as she had the oncoming storm seemed to give up. The tornado of leaves spilled in on itself and the static disappeared leaving a large number of leaves flying with the assistance of nothing but the breeze. One by one they fluttered harmlessly to the ground.

Kyle was staring at Tom seemingly unsure what to do until Amber said,

“Don’t just stand there like a lemon; give me a hand with him.”

“We can’t carry him back home!”

“Do I look stupid? There’s somewhere we can take him out of this rain, then we can phone his mum and get her out here to take a look at him.”

“Oh yeah; good idea.”

“Thanks,” she said sarcastically.

Amber lifted Tom’s shoulders while Kyle took his feet and awkwardly they managed to take him around the hedges and into what appeared to be a semi collapsed building. Walls only about six or seven bricks high sat unevenly around a stone staircase leading underground. Elsewhere there were loose pieces of concrete and metal. As they pulled the inert Tom down the steps, they passed a cross eerily sitting in the ground as if planted there deliberately.

By the time they reached the foot of the stairs, both Amber and Kyle were out of breath. Carefully they placed Tom on the ground.

“I wonder if he’s ok?” said Kyle looking worried.

Amber had her phone out but her look of anxiety soon became one of frustration.

“No answer!” she shouted, “Why is there no answer?”

"Maybe she's gone out looking for him. It's nearly half five you know, he should have been home from school ages ago."

"Won't you folks be worried?"

"Me? No, I doubt it. They'll be busy. They're always busy."

Tom woke to distant voices that became closer until he realised they belonged to Amber.

Amber leaned against one of the walls, "You know I don't think it wants to get you- I think it wants to keep you away."

"How'd you work that out?"

"Leave us alone - that's what the voice said when Bill touched the tree wasn't it?"

"I suppose."

"So; it wants us to keep away from that big old oak tree presumably. Oh, I tried to call your mum but she's out."

Tom hastily pulled his own phone out to find a message from his Mum saying she was going to a meeting and could he make his own meal as Dad was working late.

"So they'll never even know I was late?"

Kyle sighed, "Welcome to my world, mate."

Original introduction of the Tyler family

This scene was cut because it gave too much away early making it obvious that Mr Tyler was the figure in the woods. It was also too much of a coincidence that he had a metal working shop which is why Abel Cartwright was added to the plot later on. You'll also notice Ellie has a little brother, Clive, who was dropped in later versions as there were too many characters. There was a plot in which she had an older brother who was the person taken over but again this created too many characters to use.

Sitting on the side of a hill was the Tyler's farm, a sprawling estate comprising several fields each separated by low hedges. The farm house was modern and low, sinking unobtrusively into the hillside though the effect was rather contradicted by a tall wooden shed sitting nearby.

In a long sitting room, Helena Tyler laid plates and cutlery across the wooden table. She looked worried, frowning at everything except her children who received warmer smiles whenever she spoke to them. As she came to the head of the table she laid the knives and forks more carefully.

"Is Daddy coming in for dinner?" asked Clive, the younger of the two children and also the one with most pronounced ginger hair. He was sprawled on the floor in the company of a number of Transformers who were battling each other as he spoke. Ellie was sitting on the sofa, half watching the television and half eying her mother's concern. When Clive received no reply, she stood up and crossed to the table. In a low voice she said; "Will her?"

"I don't think so," was the reponse, "Your father is....busy."

"With what? He's been in that shed all day you said. And he was in there yesterday. What's he doing?"

"I don't know do I? A man and his shed; that's their own business."

"Well I'm going to find out.."

She turned as if to leave the room only for her mother to grab her arm.

"No. Let him be."

"You're hurting me."

Mrs Tyler removed her hand but stood her ground.

"You know what he gets like when he's working on a project. Just let him see it through and then everything will be fine."

"It's not fine though is it Mum? He's different. You know he is."

"I don't know what you're on about, I really don't."

"Since the..."

"..Now you shut up about that. How many times! I'll take your father some dinner later, alright. Now sit down and eat yours."

It was a still cold evening as Helena Tyler stepped out of a side door as if she was entering somewhere dangerous. In her hand was a covered tray but it was shaking as she approached the shed. In the dusk light the building seemed like a monolith compared to the cosy house.

The large door was slightly ajar and the sound of metal on metal could be heard. She pushed through the door and almost choked as she got inside.

There was smoke everywhere and on a bench Arthur Tyler, a thick set man in his fifties with the build of a labourer was hammering a piece of metal, the chimes clanging out. As he hit it small sparks flew into the air, though his eyes were protected by goggles. As she called out he stopped working but shaded goggles remained on shielding his eyes.

"I've brought you some dinner, love."

He mopped his face with a handkerchief but still the goggles obscured his eyes.

"Thanks, just leave it over there will you."

She placed the tray nearby and made a half hearted attempt to waft away some of the noxious smoke, coughing in the process.

"When are you going to let on what you're making in here?"

"Just something important that's all."

"Well it's been three days. What on earth is taking three days. The hens need feeding, there's grass needs mowing, hay needs tidying, all kinds of things to be done and here you are banging away with metal in here."

"Like I said, it's important."

"I don't know what's so important. Bits of metal, what's it all about?"

"It's just important."

"I've never heard such rubbish. Sculptures are fine but they don't pay the bills do they? Normally you take a few hours! Look at all this, what's it all for?"

"Just leave me be will you woman! Going on and on; I'll tell you when it's done."

"What about your eyes? Did you even get them checked out?"

"My eyes are fine."

"I bet they aren't. Let me look."

She moved towards him but as he turned to look at her, a slight green glow became apparent from behind the frosted glasses he wore.

"Will you GET OUT!" he yelled and she scampered away like a frightened mouse. Only when she had reached the door to the house did she stop, leaning against the door and breathing heavily. The door opened and Ellie looked concerned but Mrs Tyler hurried her inside and turned to lock the door behind her.

"Mum, why are you locking it?"

"There's a fox outside that's all- don't want it getting in do we?"

"What about Dad?"

"He's fine, absolutely fine. Just working on a big old sculpture that's all. Now come back to the table."

After his wife had gone, Arthur Tyler crossed to the shed door and slammed it shut. As if suddenly exhausted he slumped against the door and began to prise the goggles over his head and as he did revealed his eyes were glowing with a green light. He groaned and stumbled across to an old dustbin that was piled high with rotting leaves. He scooped a pile of leaves and began to stuff them into his mouth in large clumps. The more leaves he ate, the more relieved he seemed and slowly the green glow in his eyes faded away into nothing.

Jake visits Miss Boswell

Originally it was going to be Jake who had the strange appointment with Miss Boswell.

The door looked as ordinary as every other door in the school. Plainly painted in pastel shades with a black strip around the edges and a number sitting beneath a small window. Most classrooms had nothing more allowing pupils to move from one lesson to another but some other rooms that had one purpose also had a name tag on the door and this one read; "Miss Rosa Boswell, Counsellor"

Jake did not look particularly pleased to be here but Amber was almost pushing him to knock.

"You did promise at least one session."

"OK, but if this is lame I'm not even staying for that."

He lifted his hand to knock but the door opened and it immediately became apparent this room was fairly unique. A rich smell leaked into the corridor making both Jake and Amber pull a face.

"Smells like..."

"Jake Tyrell?"

Standing in the door frame was an olive skinned woman with raven black hair and an array of bracelets that jangled every time she moved.

"Welcome, welcome, please come in."

Jake seemed slightly mesmerised and obeyed but when Amber made to follow, her way was barred.

"I apologise but these appointments are strictly private. Pupils may say exactly what is on their minds without worrying that it will be repeated or misunderstood. You are free to make an appointment of your own of course?"

Amber took a step back, "Er, no thank you very much. I'm fine."

"Are you really fine? You look troubled."

"No really, I am absolutely ok. Not troubled at all."

"If you say so but I sense..."

She raised a hand on which every finger wore an elaborate ring and placed it gently on Amber's forehead then pulled it away instantly a frightened look across her face.

"Oh my word, you have an unusual aura; it is almost as if..."

"What?"

Miss Boswell regained her composure.

"As I said, you are welcome to make an appointment for yourself. Excuse me for now."

With that she closed the door leaving Amber standing in the corridor. Standing on her toes she tried to glimpse through the small window only for a purple curtain to be pulled

across. As she turned away, the unmistakeable sound of the door being locked drew her attention.

Inside the room was more richly furnished than any other in the school. Three comfortable chairs lined one wall, a bookcase filled with mostly unusual ornaments rather than books took up another. The wall opposite the window was home to a long leather couch. Miss Boswell's desk was adjacent to this and in contrast to the rest of the décor looked more modern with very little on it except an open laptop.

"Call me Rosa," said Miss Boswell as she beckoned Jake to sit on the couch, "It is important that these sessions are comfortable for you."

Jake hovered uncertainly near the door.

"Look, to be honest I don't really know why I'm here."

"Of course you don't. If you were sure of the things in your life, you would not need my help."

"It's just that..."

She put a finger to his lips making him even more flustered.

"Please, you must relax. Drink this."

Almost by magic she produced a small china cup containing a pink coloured liquid.

"What is it?"

"It is a herbal relaxant- natural ingredients only. It will make you feel at ease."

"I dunno."

"I've heard you are a bold soul Jake Tyrell."

Jake sniffed at the drink and then tried a small sip.

"Wow, it's kind of warm."

"Now lie down and we can begin."

Jake drank the rest of the liquid in one go and climbed onto the couch, lying down. Rosa pulled up a chair and sat so she was looking down at him directly.

"At your age, and with your experiences, you will be troubled I suspect?"

"You could say that," replied Jake, already appearing more relaxed, "I don't know how to start."

"The best place to start is at the beginning...just relax and let everything float out of your head...how do you feel?"

"Sort of chilled. This isn't what I thought it would be."

"What in life is? We just have to go with the way things turn out."

Amber carefully knelt down by the window having made her way around the building. Crouching down at first, she slowly raised her head just enough so that she could see over the window frame. Just as she looked through the window, a pair of blinds were drawn across completely shutting out her view.

Twenty minutes later, she was still sitting on one of two chairs outside the room. Though absent minded using her phone, her glance kept looking sideways but the door to Rosa Boswell's room remained shut. Then it suddenly opened and Jake emerged. The door shut behind him.

"Well?"

"You were trying to spy on me."

"Well she was a bit weird, don't you think?"

"You wanted me to see her and I'm glad I did. I feel really calm you know."

"What did she do?"

"Nothing. I mean I just explained about things, talked about stuff and it was alright."

Amber looked sceptical; "Three years of trauma cured like that?"

“She is good. I haven’t had three years of trauma anyway. But I feel great now.”

“Jake- have you reverted to the mental state of a prawn?”

“She had this really small piece of rock and once she put in here,” said Jake pointing to his forehead, “She said it would centre me. I felt like I could tell her anything. It’s great; you should try it. I feel great!”

Amber frowned.

“Now I know something is up.”

Original Abel Cartwright introduction

This was the early introduction of Cartwright but he then became difficult to develop so instead I came up with the whole idea of his metal working shed etc.

On the road that skirted the woods, a thick set middle aged man was walking his dog. He wore a long coat and carried a shepherd’s crook and did not appear to be in the least concerned about the weather. Every so often the dog would disappear into the thick undergrowth but a whistle and call from its owner would bring it back.

As they rounded a bend a particularly loud clap of thunder caused the dog to once again vanish into the woods.

“Bobby! Here, boy!” shouted the man, whistling. This time though there was no response. Without hesitation, the man stepped off the road and into the darkness beyond. He continued to call out and during a lull in the noise, a whimpering sound could be heard.

“Bobby?”

The man’s tone changed to one of concern as he plunged further into the woods and as he reached a clear patch he drew a sharp intake of breath at the sight in front of him. His dog lay still half covered by soil encrusted roots that appeared to have crushed it.

The man rushed forward but as he did a streak of lightning hit him square in the head and lifted him from the ground. Crook still in his hand, he floated for a full minute some six feet in the air and various roots and tendrils began to curl their way towards him. They wrapped themselves around him, moving all the way up his body until they reached his head. Slowly they pulled him down again and as soon as he was in the ground the roots released him. He stood motionless for a short time, his eyes closed. Suddenly they snapped open, glowing a fierce green. Then he set off into the heart of the woods.

Confrontation with Abel

Again this shows that I hadn’t worked out what to do with this character yet.

The journey from the Tyler’s farm had already been tense. As they made their way past the thick hedges that lined the narrow roads, small branches had been moving as if snarling at them. Now as they headed to the final crossroads before the woods they found themselves facing a large land rover that had stopped in the middle of the road and was covered in vegetation. Smoke was drifting out of the bonnet but there was no sign anybody was in the car.

They stopped allowing Jake and Kyle to rest the bomb bags on the kerbside.

“Careful..” warned Amber as Tom approached the stricken vehicle.

Tom could see there was somebody inside- a youngish woman who looked dazed and had a trickle of blood running down the side of her face. Without their phones there seemed no way to contact anybody but they could hardly leave her trapped here.

Tom felt the Earthstone in his hand and focussed on the plant life that surrounded the vehicle willing it to move. At first he could sense some resistance, something he had never encountered before but the power of the Earthstone prevailed and the plants began to uncurl and move from the car back towards the bushes and hedges from where they had originated.

“Quick- get her out!” called Tom as Jake, Kyle and Amber moved forward to pull open the twisted door and help the woman from her confinement.

“Mrs Ollis?” said Amber, surprised to realise who they had rescued.

The woman smiled and muttered, “Shouldn’t you be doing your homework?”

“She’s a teacher at school,” explained Amber.

“Tom!”

It was Ellie who called his name and immediately Tom realised something was wrong. He twisted around to see a large, bearded man standing near the bags with a large wooden shepherd’s crook in his hand.

“Who’s he?” whispered Tom.

“Joseph Abel,” replied Kyle, “He’s got a big place a few miles away. He’s a bit grumpy.”

Abel raised the crook and pointed it in their direction whereupon it belched a sheet of bright orange flame that scorched the road surface in front of them.

“Yeah he seems grumpy.”

Tom stepped forward only for something to fly out of the nearby hedges. It looked like a sheepdog, the sort of animal Tom had often seen on TV but as he had come to recognise when it came to elementally charged animals it had exaggerated features. Black and white fur was bristling, its teeth looked larger than they should and its eyes were a piercing green colour.

“Stay!” shouted Kyle only for the dog to bark in his direction and when it did emit a sheet of flame.

The others stayed near the vehicle holding on to Mrs Ollis who looked even more frightened by the turn of events.

“What do you want?” asked Tom.

“We want to stop you,” came the reply.

“Who are you? I keep hearing voices and you took over Arthur Tyler somehow. But I don’t know who you are.”

“You don’t have to know who we are. You don’t have to know anything.”

He pointed the crook at the group who scattered as a searing flame emanated from it, hit the vehicle and caused it to alight.

Tom seized the opportunity, spinning around and hurling the Earthstone to gather up the flames into a fireball he then sent in Abel’s direction. The burly farmer countered it with fire of his own and the two forces met in mid air.

As Jake and Amber struggled to move Mrs Ollis onto a verge, Abel’s dog barked more fire at them, ignoring stones being thrown towards it by Kyle and Ellie.

Suddenly it changed direction, moving around and heading for them. Ellie screamed and this seemed to deter the dog which stopped in its tracks.

Ellie stepped forward pushing away Kyle’s attempts to hold her back. She approached the dog which was looking at her as if curious. She continued walking towards it until she was close enough to have been burned had it belched any more fire but it did not. She reached out her hand and patted it on its head.

The twisting fireballs fizzled out but Abel was still facing Tom.

"You can't harm her can you?" called Tom and Abel's will seemed to falter slightly.

"I –we- cannot harm her. But we can harm you."

He raised the crook but Ellie had moved to stand next to Tom and to his surprise grabbed hold of his hand. It felt warm and reassuring but he wasn't entirely sure why this was.

Abel had already let loose more fire but as Ellie raised hers and Tom's hands together the fire disintegrated before it reached them. When the smoke cleared, Abel had gone and the bomb remained where it had been placed.

"Cheers," said Tom.

"I could sense Dad in there somewhere. They're all connected- my Dad, Abel, the dog, the trees."

"Yeah, but what do they want?"

"I don't know but I do know my Dad is still alive; I sensed him in there somewhere. We can still release him can't we?"

Tom nodded though he wasn't sure, "I hope so, yeah."

"Tom and Ellie sitting in a tree, k.i.s.s.i.n.g" chanted Kyle earning reproachful looks from all concerned even Mrs Ollis.

Tom felt self conscious and pulled his hand away from hers.

Amber and Jake rescue girls in the Quad

In a different version of the narrative it is Ambet and Jake who rescue the girls from the gang in the Quad. I changed it to Tom and Kyle as it allowed for something more spectacular with the fire.

As Amber and Jake watched from the alcove near the exit into the Quadrangle the pile of chairs was getting higher.

"What do you think they're doing?" asked Amber who looked more intrigued than frightened.

"Dunno, it's not woodwork is it?"

"This is real Lord of the Flies stuff, perhaps we should call the police or a teacher?"

"You saw how scared the teachers are, I think we're on our own."

There was a commotion as several girls were dragged out onto the Quadrangle. They, too, had painted faces but their design was a different shade and covered in glitter which glistened in the reflection of the moonlight. Each of them were tied to one of the many pillars that supported the covered walkway which sat on one side of the square.

"Come on," said Amber, "Let's rescue them."

Jake nodded, "Better than hiding!"

Amber and Jake did not take long to speed around the corridors and found themselves peering through the door nearest to the captives. The boys were chanting and two of them were holding table legs that had been set alight.

"That's Danny," whispered Jake.

"Why am I not surprised? Come on, they're too busy doing their chanting to notice."

As the boys danced around the tall stack of upturned chairs, Amber and Jake sneaked out into the almost dark covering of the passageway behind the girls and one by one loosened their bonds; each was tied with skipping rope.

The girls said nothing but willingly followed their rescuers inside. As Amber turned to speak to them first one, then another produced a dangerous looking kitchen knife from somewhere inside their coats pointing them aggressively.

“Hey, we rescued you- don’t point those things at us.”

“You’re our prisoners now,” said one girl as Jake was grabbed from behind and a knife held to his throat.

“Try anything and we’ll kill you.”

Tom and Jake

This was a character scene in which Jake apologises to Tom. It was cut partly because they wouldn’t have that much time for a conversation at this moment and also because I don’t think it is a convincing enough idea. It seems a bit too much like the sort of conversation they have in shows like EastEnders, fine for TV but not really in books.

“Yeah. Look I’m sorry, man.” he said looking down and Tom wasn’t sure why he was apologising.

“Eh?”

“For all that stuff with the gang and everything. I promised Amber I was going to change and it was harder than I thought.”

“That’s good though that you have now, yeah?”

“When you’ve known something for so long, it’s hard to change.”

“Tell me about it. I lived in London till three months ago! And it was way quieter than here!”

“Amber thinks it’s easy for me to leave the gang but Danny’s my best mate really, I’ve known him since we were, like, five. But he’s turned into a jerk and I don’t want to do the same.”

“I’m not sure it’s working!”

“You’re a cheeky little kid aren’t you? I was like you once you know,” said Jake offering Tom a lift up to the window.

“You were?” said Tom climbing out.

“Yeah but then my mum got ill and things changed. Before I had fun but once that happened I got scared.”

“You were scared?”

Jake nodded squatting where he had emerged outside, “Bricking it. What if she never got better, you know. And she didn’t so I figured, what’s the point in anything. If I can’t have the life I want why should other people?”

“You know you don’t have to tell me this. We’re not exactly mates or anything.”

“Sometimes it’s easier to tell people you don’t know very well stuff.”

“I suppose. We’re going on like a couple of girls.”

“Don’t let Amber hear you’ll say that. She’ll hit you with something!”

Tree Man encounter

This was a scene in the Tree Man version where Tom finally encounters him in the woods. I later used this idea of all the animals fleeing for the start of the story.

It started before Tom realised what was happening. A group of squirrels scampered past as he and Kyle were discretely following the Tree Man. Tom thought little of it but then realised that rabbits were scampering alongside them, trying to keep up. There was flapping overhead as various types of birds flew overhead. To his left a deer caught his eyes as it seemed to almost fly majestically through the foliage. It was then that Tom understood- all of these woodland inhabitants were following the Tree Man. He came to a breathless halt and Kyle did likewise though looked puzzled.

“Why have we stopped?”

“We don’t need to rush; all these animals are following him too.”

Kyle looked around as realisation dawned.

“Pied Piper or what?”

The trail was extensive now as various animals, birds and insects trailed in the same direction just as darkness fully descended. It would normally be difficult to see but all they had to was follow the noise. The closer they got to their destination, the more variety of creatures seemed to be gathering. None of the animals paid Tom or Kyle the slightest attention and appeared to be only interested in where they were going.

Tom was not altogether surprised to find himself approaching the same clearing where the enormous oak tree had become the focus of attention. Now that it was dark, the area had taken on a strange quality. Hundreds of pairs of eyes were staring at the shape of the tree which could just be made out courtesy of a large number of fireflies whose glow seemed unnaturally bright this evening.

Tom glanced down at the Earthstone which was glowing a bright green colour something he knew meant they were close to enormous elemental power. The vast array of animals had formed a rough semi circle around the tree. Tom’s idea was that they would watch from the outskirts but as they entered the clearing, some mice and rabbits just ahead of them consciously moved sideways and those in front did the same. Tom felt a knot of concern in his stomach as he realised the animals were moving out of the way for him.

“Best stay here, Kyle” he said and his friend who was shaking seemed to heed the advice without protest.

Tom made his way into the centre of the group of animals as the firefly glow grew so that the whole area was bathed in a lime green light. He pulled the Earthstone from its chain and clasped it in his hand because he had no idea what was about to happen. The path cleared took him almost to the oak tree which sat impassively ahead. In this unusual light, its gnarled trunk resembled a landscape but as Tom got nearer it seemed as if its appearance was altering. The wood was moving but the result was that it seemed to be forming into a shape. As Tom stepped beyond the group of animals, he could see what sort of a shape it was. It was a face, though a twisted angry face with a narrow slit for a mouth, bulbous nose and two dark eyes. Surely it couldn’t really be a face could it? It must be a trick of the light.

As he stared, the long, sunken eyes began to open. Tom felt transfixed by them and he remembered the shadow he’d thought he’d seen in his bedroom window. This was the same face though now it was metres away from him and far more tangible.

“Who are you?” he asked, noticing how weak his voice sounded.

There was no reply- was he really expecting a tree to speak to him? Then the mouth started to move and emitted a bellow so loud that it echoed around the woods. Tom heard another sound- of running, flapping, leaping- and turned to see the packs of animals retreating back from whence they’d come. He stepped back but as the fireflies disappeared, so the tree became normal again. The only light in the clearing now was the glow from Kyle’s phone.

“I filmed it!” he shouted as Tom ran to join him, “I filmed the whole thing.”

“I bet it doesn’t play back- like in that Abby basement place. The images on the wall didn’t show.”

The expression on Kyle's face confirmed Tom was right.

Amber and Jake were running along the corridor as quickly as they could. Every few seconds a burst of white static would hit a nearby wall sending debris across the floor. They doubled back on their pursuers but Amber in particular was tiring.

The gang was relentless and the branches seemed to have an endless supply of firepower. The chase continued up two sets of wide stairs and past a series of science rooms. They crashed through double doors but suddenly came to a halt.

Jake tugged at the next door but it was firmly locked.

"We're trapped," he said as the doors flew open and about twenty pupils, each wearing the black stripe and carrying a twig surged through. They formed a semi circle around Amber and Jake who were forced to retreat until the wall behind them meant they could go no further.

Jake stepped forward in front of Amber.

"Alright, kids- If you want a fight then you can have one."

The youngest looking attacker was standing only a couple of steps away and before he had a chance to notice, Jake grabbed the stick from his hands and pointed it at the gang.

"The odds are more even, scumbags!" he shouted.

The aggressors slowly lowered their weapons as Jake singled the ones at the front out. Then they spoke but as one, each of their voices blending to form a new darker voice.

"WE WILL FEED ON THE HUMAN PESTS."

"Oh yeah?" shouted Jake, "Well feed on this!"

He raised the stick into the air and aimed at something on the ceiling. A blast of fire hit it and immediately an alarm began to ring and a spray of water began to fall from the object.

As soon as the water hit them, it seemed to shut off whatever power was manipulating the pupils and they looked confused and annoyed at being quickly soaked. As they started off, completely ignoring Amber and Jake, they dropped their crude weapons on the floor. Amber picked one up.

"You see," crowed Jake, "They just needed to cool down."

"This is just an ordinary twig; how did they get it to fire that stuff? In fact how did you do it?"

"I could sense it this time. It was just something I knew I could do."

"I couldn't sense anything."

"It's weird but I've not felt it before. At the pond when they attacked Ellie, I didn't feel anything but here it was different."

"Jake; you fired that piece of wood – how did you do it?"

"Dunno, I just did. Maybe it's because I've had elemental power in my blood before, gives me some advantage. Maybe it's because I'm cool."

"Or big headed."

The water stopped abruptly leaving them both dripping wet.

"Mum's going to be so happy," moaned Amber as she tried to squeeze the edges of her school skirt dry.

Jake ignored the water but looked distant.

"Are you alright?"

"Thinking."

"That's unusual!"

"Listen; I got an image of something; when I faced the gang, there was this image at the back of my head. A big old oak tree- weird eh?"

"Or not. Tom's been sending me messages about a strange oak tree. We need to tell him about all this."

Lord of the Flies stuff

This is from a different version of the overnight trouble in the school. In this version the gangs had names. Also there was supposedly a monster stalking the school. There were too many elements so a lot of it was ditched in a re-write.

With a deep breath, Tom pushed open the doors and they emerged into the cool night air. A light breeze was blowing the trees but the neon lights lining the outside of the school showed no activity here. They hurried along the side of the building until they heard a twig snap. They stood as still as they could but there was nowhere to hide as footsteps on crisp autumn leaves became audible moving closer. A figure peered around the corner of the building- to their immense relief it was Amber.

"Met any nutters?" she asked.

"Oh yeah; we've met the Crows," said Tom "They wear black marks across their faces and their leader is Oliver Porter."

Amber looked surprised; "Ollie? He usually seems alright. Anyway I met the Tigers, they are led by Izzy of course, who else would do it? Any chance to harm somebody and she takes it. They're all girls by the way, the Tigers."

"That's weird," said Tom, "All the Crows are boys. It's boys versus girls."

"It's two groups of mad people," said Kyle, "The Crows think the Tigers have a crown and we've got to get it. I hope you're not on their side?"

"*Definitely* not; whatever side Izzy's on I'm on the other! By the way I've got to lead you to the place where they are pretending this Crown has been moved to but they are preparing a massacre. It's all very medieval."

"The weapons are real enough though."

"I know. How do they get ordinary twigs to fire electricity?"

"I reckon it's the same way the power transfers to the trees."

"They have Jake as a hostage too; in case I trick them. They know me too well. Of course we could just leave and let Jake escape on his own!"

"I thought you and he were in lurve!" laughed Kyle.

"What do you know about it? He'll be fine in there, captured by an army of girls. He's probably dreamed of this."

"Ok, don't go mad. If anyone's interested there's a monster as well and I'm supposed to be its dinner."

Tom grinned, "Oh yeah, they keep talking about a monster out here. Kyle's the diversion while I get through the window and nick the Crown."

"I never thought life could be this exciting on a school night," said Amber.

"We have to think of a way to stop it," said Tom, "I think there's some connection with the lights. Whenever they flicker on and off it seems to make people get angrier. We know that power can come through the trees; what if it can come through the power supply as well? And what if that's stopping me from using the Earthstone?"

Amber nodded enthusiastically; "That makes sense I suppose if anything makes sense."

"So if we can turn the power off, it might stop it and everyone will go back to normal, that's what I reckon. What do you think?"

Kyle shrugged, "OK, but how do we switch the power off?"

"That's easy," said Amber, "There's a big switch that turns off the boilers; I've seen it."

"How?"

"Never mind."

"And where is this switch?" asked Kyle in a tone suggesting he knew the answer.

Amber looked slightly sheepish; "In the basement."

"Right- the place where the Tigers live?"

Amber grinned; "I've got a plan."

The window was low and so narrow that Tom wasn't entirely sure if even he could fit into it but as he and Kyle prised it open he was able to crawl inside.

"Don't get stuck!" whispered Kyle as Tom wriggled himself to a point where he could pull himself through the space.

"Don't get eaten by the monster!" he said as he dropped into the darkness.

Tom had no idea where he was, just that it was somewhere in the basement. There was hardly any light except for a small illuminated Emergency Exit sign above a door at the other end of the room. As the Earthstone was virtually useless here, he had to feel his way past shelves full of boxes to reach the door.

As he reached for the handle he realised how many doubts he had about Amber's plan but he pulled it open anyway. It led into a narrow passage that was dimly lit revealing mould on the walls and detritus on the floor. Nobody had probably been along here for decades, thought Tom as he tried to get used to the smell of decay.

Amber and Kyle inched along the outside of the school building, wary of any sudden sound. Their breath was now showing in the neon lit night time air and the sound of the trees nearby could clearly be heard.

"Do you really reckon there's a monster?" asked Kyle.

"No; everyone's seeing things and imagining what's not there. You're not scared are you?"

"Course not."

"It wouldn't matter if Tom was here, he couldn't protect you because the Earthstone isn't working."

"I can protect myself."

"Oh really."

Kyle stopped and turned around to look up defiantly at Amber.

"Yeah. What do you know about it anyway? You'd be dead if it wasn't for Tom."

"I know that; I just wonder what contribution you make."

"What do you mean?"

"We've all been touched by elemental power in one way or another. Obviously what happened to me and Jake was stupid enough to get himself involved with Mrs Brackley's plans and Tom has the Earthstone. You're the outsider."

"Says the girl who ran away from home to live in the woods for weeks."

"I've helped, I've done stuff."

"You're the sidekick, that's all."

"Get lost."

Amber was about to say something when a strange roaring noise trumpeted out from somewhere hidden.

"No monster?" said Kyle, "Maybe you're not as clever as you think."

They hurried on in silence.

Tom was now deep in the rambling basement that ran underneath the school and headed for a larger window as planned. He had to wait a short time until Amber and Kyle arrived and tapped on the glass in a certain way they had agreed. Tom unlocked the window allowing the two of them inside.

"No monster then?"

"I ate it!" replied Kyle, looking relieved to be indoors again.

"He's the only monster," muttered Amber as she joined them.

"What's up with you?"

"Nothing. Actually we did hear something outside."

"What sort of something?"

"Oh you know, dangerous, hungry, that kind of monastery thing."

"Best get this done as soon as."

As soon as Tom had heard about the crown over which both tribes were supposedly at war he did not believe it existed but it turned out that it did. As they crouched just out of sight of two Tiger guards lounging against a wall, catapults in hands, he wondered whether it was worth the trouble.

A nod from Amber signified the plan was starting; she stood up and was followed by Kyle whose collar she grabbed. Though it was all pretend, Tom sensed she rather enjoyed pushing his friend around. Amber shouted and seconds later several garishly clad girls emerged, lights came on and Tom pushed himself further into the corner in which he was hidden.

"This one was sent by the Crows to get the Crown," he heard Amber saying.

"Bring him inside..."

Tom didn't listen to any more, Instead he headed for the open door, now invitingly unguarded and open. As stealthily as he could manage while keeping out of sight behind the piled up chairs and cabinets that littered the basement he moved into the other room which remarkably was empty. He crossed towards the slatted door on the far side of the room distinguishable from two other doors by its large warning notice that said Danger of Death which Tom found appropriate. He produced Amber's skeleton key which he'd often wondered about and turned it round in the lock; to his surprise it opened the door first time and he entered.

Inside it was completely dark and he spent valuable seconds fumbling for a switch. Before he'd found it the light flashed on and he swung around to see a smug looking Izzy with her hand on the wall. The sight of two large boilers and a box on the wall were illuminated.

"Well, well, well what do we have here?"

Tom backed off hoping he could reach the box but Izzy was already almost upon him.

"You stupid little...child," she shouted, "Do you really think you could get the better of me?"

She raised what looked like a sparkler but Tom was aware of a shadow behind her. Jake grabbed her hand and this was the chance Tom needed. He raced across to

the box, used Amber's key once again pulling open the black door. Jake had pulled Izzy away and now took the sparkler weapon from her.

Tom pulled three levers down as he'd been told and in that moment the light flashed out though an emergency light came on immediately bathing everything in a red light. Yet Tom could sense he had succeeded because he felt the power of the Earthstone returning. Izzy looked horrified but then pulled away from Jake.

"Second time I've saved your neck," said Jake as the sparkler puttered out.

"Cheers," said Tom as Amber entered.

"It worked," she said, "Everyone's wandering around looking confused and wondering why they look like tigers!"

Kyle followed carrying something.

"I found it!" he said, "I found The Crown."

There it was- a paper crown from an old school play which had been the source of genuine danger and chaos. It was slightly creased and cheap looking but somehow the elemental power had convinced the tribes that it was worth fighting a war over.

"That's all it was?"

"I think all the stuff came from the drama department."

"I've always said they were a bit too dramatic!"

They walked outside to see the other girls hurriedly trying to wipe the paint from their faces as if embarrassed by what had happened.

"I don't suppose any of them will remember anything," said Amber, "I just wish we didn't have to!"

A knot of pupils started to emerge from the school. Despite the darkness and the remains of face paint the pupils filed away as if completing a regular day. Watching them from the shadows, Tom, Kyle, Amber and Jake ensured they kept their distance.

"I don't know if they can even notice us," said Amber as they followed the girls from a discreet distance.

Gradually the former Tigers emerged into the cool night and hurried off towards the school gates. Moments later, a trail of boys headed in the same direction.

"That's that then," said Kyle, "We can finally go home."

"This has been the longest school day ever!"

"Shouldn't we put the power back on?" asked Jake.

"No, pea brain. If we do that the whole thing will start all over again."

They froze at the sound of a roar that came from very nearby. It was accompanied by a rustling of leaves and a slithering of something along the damp grass.

"Let's get back inside," said Kyle as he turned to go back into the building. Tom agreed, feeling that despite the power being switched back on the Earthstone was only just starting to refresh itself. They ran into the nearest entrance, slamming the door shut as they went.

"Will that door keep it out?"

"It seems to be there to keep people in so probably it will."

As Amber was speaking the nearby window shattered and a tentacle covered in soil coiled into the corridor grabbing Kyle around the waist and pulling him towards the broken glass.

He screamed for help but neither Amber nor Jake could get close enough to do anything as Kyle was lifted into the air above their reach. The root pulled him

abruptly through the gap left by the smashed window and Tom could do nothing but stand there. The Earthstone would still not work.

Climax after oak tree burns

This was the original scene after the oak tree burns which I didn't think was exciting enough so I changed it for the longer climax in the book.

"Run!" yelled Tom but he didn't need to as the others had already started to retreat from the oncoming menace. There were eight trees, each of them burning but each still very much alive as they stalked the woods. Though wood splinters and whole sections of bark fell as they moved, it did not seem to deter their progress.

Tom ran in a different direction to the others in an attempt to draw them off but heard shouting and realised that whatever was still driving the trees they must have realised what he was doing. They had turned to follow his friends instead.

Ellie and Mrs Tyler dived under the cover of a large overhanging bush and lay still while Amber, Jake and Kyle ran on as fast as they could through the undergrowth and vegetation. The pursuing trees were slow but seemed to gain in speed.

Their roots twisted and turned into and out of soil; there were so many of them that each tree was never in danger of losing nutrients. There were always some roots in the earth and Tom imagined that the elemental qualities of the soil were doing the rest.

Tom sped behind them but could not keep up and, not looking where he was going, toppled over into an enormous hole one of the roots had left. As he floundered to regain his footing it gave him an idea. He squatted in the space and holding the Earthstone in both hands concentrated on the soil ahead of him making it start to move and churn. It was slow at first but by focussing it he was able to speed up matters.

Ahead, Kyle stopped in his tracks, unable to continue further.

"Can't...run...any...more..." he gasped as Amber called to Jake. She, too, looked as if she had reached the extent of her energy.

Even so she encouraged the younger boy.

"We have to...those things are so angry..."

Jake shouted at them.

"Get moving or you'll be toast!"

"Jake, we can't run any more. We just can't."

Jake looked frustrated but then there was a crash of foliage and one of the trees lurched into view into view. It seemed to be headed right for them, the fire that had stripped its branches of autumn foliage now blackened and smouldering.

"The fire didn't kill it..." whispered Amber.

Just as it was within reach and they picked up what they could to defend themselves, the tree shook and toppled over, falling just to their left and staying still. Then another fell on top and as they looked the others collapsed like enormous dominoes.

Perhaps sensing defeat the oak tree remained where it was burying as man of its singed roots in the ground as it could allowing Tom to catch up.

To his surprise he heard a voice- it still sounded like Arthur Tyler's only weaker and less distinct.

"The caretaker cannot kill," it croaked.

"I can't let you survive," said Tom, "You're still connected to Mr Tyler. You could start this all over again."

"The caretaker cannot kill," repeated the voice, "But perhaps you don't need to."

"What do you mean?"

"If I let Tyler go you will let me live?"

"Yeah, you'd just be a tree then."

"I have always been that and nothing else. I am over two hundred years old. You cannot kill me. I will release the man."

"How do I know you're telling the truth; he told me he's dead anyway."

"He knows nothing."

"What are you saying; that he isn't dead?"

"Of course not."

Tom had no idea whether this was true. Tyler has assured him of his own demise as soon as he was hit by the lightning and it was surely impossible after all Ellie's father had been through that he could have survived.

"What's up?"

Jake had run back to join him; in his hand he still held the jacket and lighter.

"He might be telling the truth," said Tom.

Jake shook his head, "I don't think so. There's only one way this ends..."

Jake flicked on the lighter and held it to the edge of his jacket.

"No!" screamed the voice, "Help me Tom Allenby! Help me! Help Arthur Tyler!"

"You have to prove to me it's true," shouted Tom, "Prove it or he will burn you down."

Silence.

Tom felt increasingly anxious as the jacket caught fire and knew Jake wouldn't be able to hold onto it for much longer.

"Prove it or you'll burn!" yelled Tom.

Silence.

"You see," said Jake, "Bluffing. I knew it."

He hurled the burning clothing at the base of the charred tree which it lit in seconds and as the flames rose up again the sound of screaming filled the area. It was so intense that Tom had to cover his ears.

The others also had to shield themselves from the raging fire and the unearthly shouts. Whether or not there really had been a chance to save Arthur Tyler they would never know now.

"You could have waited," snapped Tom.

Jake shook his head, "Sometimes you have to just do stuff, not wait. I know what the bad guys do Tom, I know what they're like. It was a trick, man, a trick."

"I spoke to the real Tyler, or what was left of him. He said he died when he was hit by lightning."

"You believed what Tyler told you then, what's changed now?"

"Nothing."

Sometimes thought Tom he wished he could see things as simply as Jake did.