

Praise for

# **THE WANDERDAYS**

**JOURNEY TO FANTOME ISLAND**

“Storytelling at its finest – a heart pounding, edge-of-your-seat adventure with an important eco message at its heart.”

Laura Noakes, author of *Cosima Unfortunate Steals a Star*

“A dynamic and daring tale powered by friendship and sibling strength. I couldn’t put it down!”

Richard Pickard, author of *The Peculiar Tale of the Tentacle Boy*

“Fantastic! A modern classic in the making.”

Cat Gray, author of *Spellstoppers*

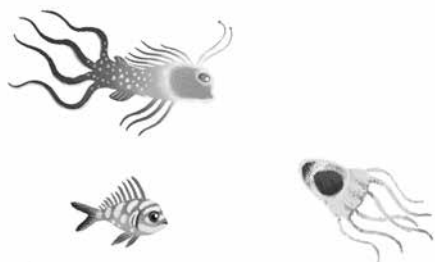
“Filled with fantastical creatures, brilliantly brave kids and dastardly villains.”

Jo Clarke, author of *Libby and the Parisian Puzzle*

“An absolute delight.”

Melissa Cristina Márquez, author, marine biologist and “Mother of Sharks”





For my three mizuko, who joined me  
as I wrote this book. You're forever  
a part of my own story.

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# *THE WANDERDAYS*

*JOURNEY TO FANTOME ISLAND*



CLARE POVEY

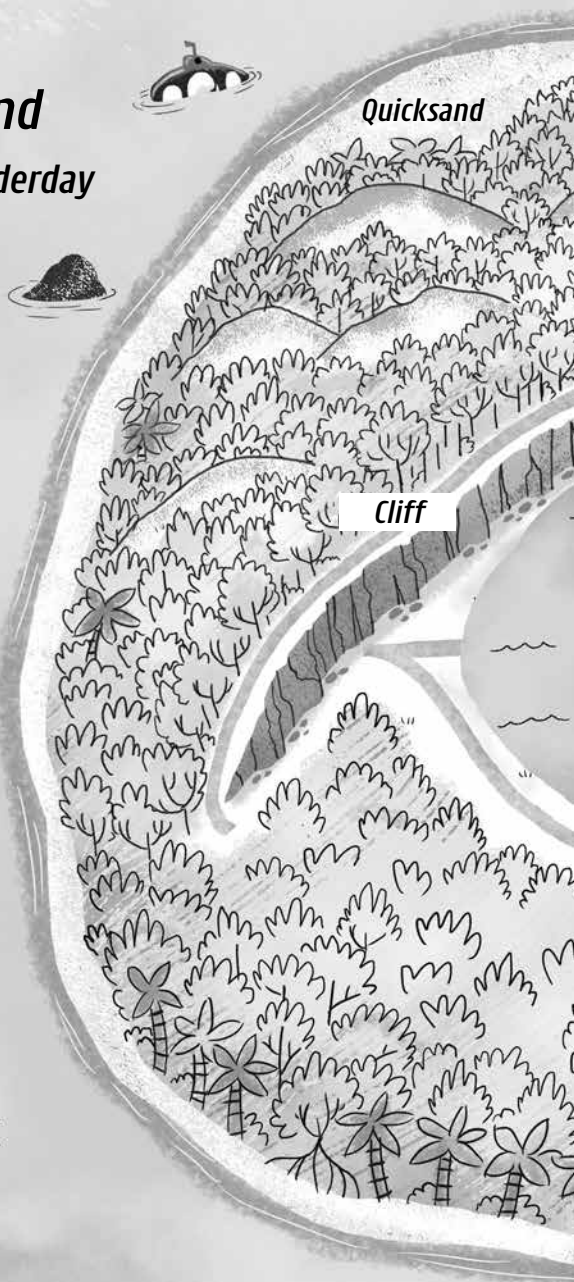


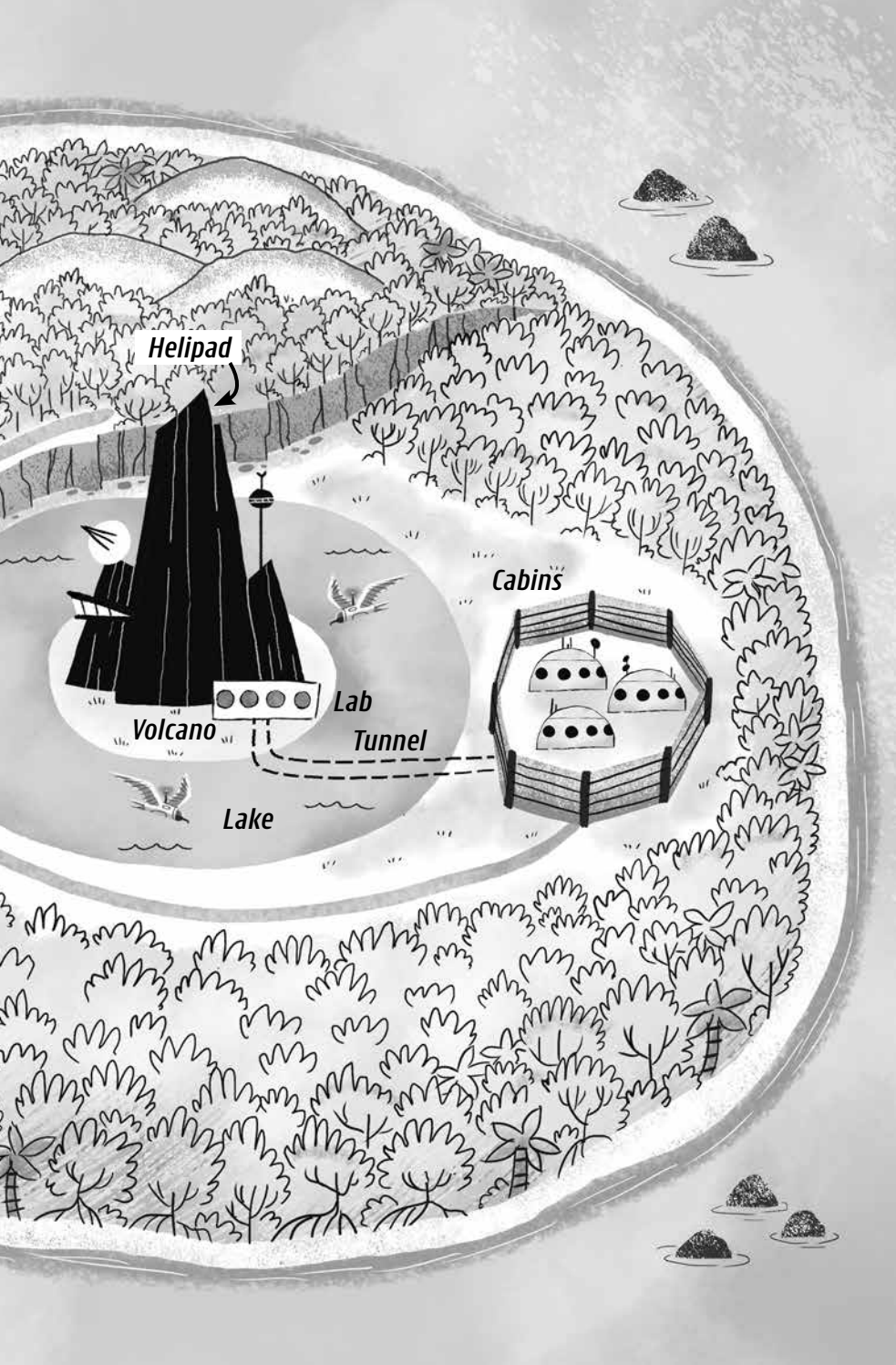
USBORNE

# Map of Fantome Island

drawn by Joseph Wanderday

North Atlantis  
Ocean





Helipad

Cabins

Volcano

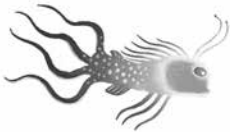
Lab  
Tunnel

Lake



*“When the last tree is cut, the last fish is caught, and the last river is polluted; when to breathe the air is sickening, you will realize, too late, that wealth is not in bank accounts and that you can’t eat money.”*

Alanis Obomsawin







Chapter 1***BAD NEWS BEFORE  
BREAKFAST***

Bad news was forbidden in the Wanderday household until after breakfast. That was the main rule that Flo and Joseph Wanderday had been brought up to respect. Pancake stacks and veggie sausage sandwiches filled you up first, so your well-fed stomach only had room for a little bit of the badness.

But this morning, a warm July day in the port city of Brinemouth, Flo had only just poured the pancake batter into the pan when a terrible feeling crept over her. She checked the starfish-shaped kitchen clock and panicked. It was half past seven. When Mum was away on expeditions, she called every other morning at precisely quarter past seven. Never early, never late;

the famous Nellie Wanderday was always on time. She'd never missed a morning call, not even when The Titans, the famous eco-expedition team that she'd once been a part of, had been stuck in a snowstorm at the top of Mount Ante. But the phone hadn't yet rung and Flo couldn't help but wonder why. It had now been two days since she'd last spoken to Mum and worry tried to take hold of Flo.

Mum's latest expedition was about deep-sea ecosystems in the North Atlantis Ocean and she'd gone with her crew aboard *The Ariel*, her trusty green research boat. Maybe a dive was taking longer than expected? Or she'd discovered something exciting and lost track of time? Mum was like that, putting the ocean before herself; exploring and trying to protect it at all costs.

A loud knock on the door pulled Flo's mind back to shore. It did no good to think in maybes when her brother worried enough for both of them. Mum would call soon and explain everything.

"Jojo!" Flo poked her head out of the kitchen and down the long, blue hallway that connected every room in the apartment. "Can you get that? I'm making *our* breakfast!" Her little brother could sleep through an apocalypse. If zombies ever invaded the Fortunia, the

yellow limestone apartment building where they lived, they'd probably mistake Joseph for one of their own.

Flo flipped the pancake, her frustration simmering as she heard no movement from her brother's bedroom. She loved Joseph more than most twelve-year-olds probably loved their ten-year-old siblings, and was always there when he needed to talk through his unwanted thoughts. Nevertheless, she'd put a lump of rotting seaweed under his mattress if she burned breakfast because of him.

The door creaked under a flurry of knocks and Flo admitted defeat. If they got any louder she'd miss the sound of the phone if Mum called. *When* she called.

"I'm coming!" Flo hurried down the hallway, her trusty camera swinging from the blue strap round her neck. She carried it everywhere she went and, at night, she even tucked it under her spare pillow. Only her best friend Funmi knew that.

Flo had secretly been thrilled when Mum had announced her expedition at the same time Dad had received an invitation to exhibit his paintings at a gallery out of the city. Her parents' trips only overlapped by two days, but she'd fantasized about those forty-eight hours of freedom. Unfortunately, Flo had forgotten

about her extended family, the residents of the Fortunia, and each hour since her parents' departure someone had knocked with home-cooked meals or offers of homework help. If she had to eat another one of Mrs Hearst's lasagnes, she'd stick a carrot in her own eye.

But today was the last day, well half-day, of school before the summer holidays arrived. Flo and Funmi had made so many plans – rooftop sleepovers, samphire foraging in the salt marsh, riding the new big drop at the Aderemi Adventure Park (owned by Funmi's parents) – and Flo was going to capture every moment on film. This was the summer she'd make her first ever documentary and become the next Wanderday filmmaker. Just like Mum.

“Open this door before I knock it down!”

Funmi's voice startled Flo. They usually met in the lobby before school and Funmi was always late, sleeping through her alarm. Why was she here early, shouting and knocking on the door like a demon?

“Hold your seahorses!” Flo fiddled with the key in the lock. Her fingers grew clammy and she kicked the bottom of the door until it finally opened.

Funmi flew in to the apartment. She was usually as light as the candyfloss they ate on the pier, but her dark-

brown eyes were narrow and she anxiously twisted the ends of her long box braids as she paced. Her red painted nails were bitten down to the quick.

“What’s going on?” Flo asked.

“Have you watched this morning’s news?”

The strange look on Funmi’s face startled Flo. “No. I’m waiting for Mum to call. Why?”

Funmi’s mouth dropped open. “Your—I don’t know how to say this.” She grabbed Flo’s hand and pulled her down the hallway.

“What’s going on?” Flo’s question was met with silence as they reached the movie room. It was her favourite place at home and she often spent evenings curled up under the glow-in-the-dark stars on their colourful beanbags (clownfish orange for Flo and sargassum brown for Joseph), in front of the floor-to-ceiling projector screen.

Now, the movie room felt cold and lonely as she flopped down on her beanbag. Funmi hadn’t explained anything yet, but the uneasiness Flo was feeling started to make sense. Mum still hadn’t called and now Funmi was here, anxious and unable to get her words out. Bad news was coming and Flo hadn’t even had breakfast; her stomach was as empty as a washed-up seashell.

Funmi grabbed the remote and the screen lit up, bathing the windowless room in brightness. An image of Mum's boat appeared. The news reporter spoke in sullen, staccato sentences, but Flo couldn't hear anything over the loud rushing in her ears.

Then Funmi squeezed in next to her and Flo willed herself to focus. She took a breath, looked, properly, at the screen and clung on to each of the reporter's words.

*“Contact was lost with The Ariel research boat belonging to Nellie Wanderday, acclaimed ocean explorer and filmmaker, approximately forty-eight hours ago in the North Atlantis Ocean. The boat was last spotted heading north when its automatic tracking system went offline. All attempts at contact since have failed. International police now consider The Ariel a missing vessel and a full investigation is underway.*

*“Nellie Wanderday arrived on our screens twenty years ago with her debut film The Wanderday Chronicles, which documented her travels around the world as a young oceanographer.*

*“After the film's release, Wanderday was recruited by philanthropist and former television presenter Sir Frederick Titan, to join his aptly named eco-expedition team The Titans. The team was created and led by Sir Frederick after*

*he left his successful travel presenter career behind to pursue his true passion of helping countries combat climate change.*

*“The Titans were a team of explorers, including marine biologists, scientists and environmental experts, known for their cutting-edge research and education projects across the globe. Their television show The Titans Tour, which documented their travels and good planet deeds, ran for ten seasons.*

*“But the reign of The Titans was cut short when prominent team member and scientist Percy Parish died in a sailing accident three years ago. A decision was made to disband and members of The Titans went their separate ways.*

*“Both Percy and Nellie, like Sir Frederick, were born and bred in Brinemouth and are considered local treasures.*

*“Since then Nellie Wanderday has travelled the world’s oceans with her own crew. At the time of her boat’s disappearance, she was researching deep-sea ecosystems in the North Atlantis Ocean. It is feared the boat may have been damaged, or destroyed, by the harsh climate of this area. Rogue waves and whirlpools have often destroyed boats here, leaving passengers lost at sea.*

*“We hope that Nellie’s latest adventure has not come to a murky end.”*

Sadness and anger bubbled inside Flo. “This isn’t

happening!” She grabbed the remote and threw it at the screen. “Mum’s boat can’t be missing! This has to be a mistake.”

Yet her words didn’t feel true. She’d felt off since Mum had missed their call. Flo had tried to push the feeling away, but she could no longer escape the facts. Mum hadn’t called because she couldn’t. All communication with *The Ariel* was lost. The boat was missing. Mum was missing.

“They’ll find your mum and her crew.” Funmi hugged Flo tight. “She’ll be home in a few days. Just like she planned.”

A thousand images floated around inside Flo’s brain. As soon as one image of *The Ariel* being sucked into a whirlpool disappeared, another bubbled up. In the middle of the chaos, she pictured Mum: her long black hair always tied back to see through her camera lens; her walrus-like laugh that both embarrassed and delighted Flo and Joseph; and how she always smelled of the disgusting kelp gobstoppers she ate.

Flo allowed herself a minute and then, holding on to those precious images, she built a dam in her brain to block everything bad out. From this moment on, she needed to be stronger than ever before. She had to be



her own life jacket to keep herself afloat in the oncoming storm.

Flo stood and wiped her eyes. From the hallway, the phone rang like a warning sign that had come too late. Any hope she'd had of hearing Mum's voice had all but trickled away.

"I better go and answer that." She nodded at Funmi to follow. "Then we have to wake Joseph and tell him."