



‘Got your sun hats?’ said Arla.

‘Why?’ asked Jude. ‘Where are we going now?’

‘South America,’ Arla said.

‘Big place,’ said Jude. ‘How about Chile? I like Chile.’

‘No, it’s Ecuador. You’re going to the Galápagos Islands, a thousand kilometres out in the Pacific Ocean.’

‘Oh, right,’ Hawker said. ‘Are you going to tell us why?’

Arla looked unhappy. ‘There’s something strange going on. EDI is getting emails every day from the Galápagos. They’re all about Isabela Island and they all say things like this.’ He gave Hawker and Jude a piece of paper.

IMPORTANT NEWSIMPORTANT NEWS***

A new time is coming for our planet.

The first visitors are now on Isabela Island, Galápagos.

Don’t fight them. Don’t be afraid of them. Be friendly.

Tell your government now.

Hawker and Jude looked at Arla, and then laughed. ‘There are a lot of crazy people out there on the Internet,’ said Jude. ‘You don’t believe this one – do you?’

‘Perhaps it’s crazy, and perhaps it’s not,’ said Arla. ‘But when we email back with questions, they don’t answer. The Americans are watching the island by satellite, but they don’t want to tell us why. There are two Australian ships going there. The Mexicans are getting very excited, and the Ecuadorians are saying nothing . . . *Something* is happening on Isabela. What is it? We want to know.’

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From Brussels to the Galápagos is a long way. Hawker and Jude took a plane to Cuba, a second plane to Ecuador, then a third plane out to Baltra Island, in the Galápagos. When they got out of the plane, a wall of hot air hit them.

‘Whew,’ said Hawker. He put on his sun hat quickly.

They went across to Santa Cruz Island and down to Puerto Ayora. There they found a boat, the *Sea-Lion*, to take them to Isabela, about 90 kilometres away. At first, the boatman, Gonzalo, did not want to take them.

‘My boat can take ten people,’ he said. ‘It’s a very good boat, but very expensive for only two people.’

Jude smiled at him. ‘Not for two rich people.’

‘Rich?’ said Hawker. ‘It’s not our money – ouch!’

Jude hit him hard on the arm. ‘We’re on holiday,’ she told Gonzalo. ‘We want to see the giant tortoises on Isabela.’ She looked at Hawker. ‘Don’t we?’

'Er, yes. That's right,' said Hawker quickly. 'We're very interested in the giant tortoises.'

On the way to Isabela Island Jude read a book about the Galápagos, and Hawker watched the sea. 'Isabela is a very young island,' Jude told him. 'And it has – listen to this! – *six* volcanoes. One erupted only two years ago.'

'Oh, that's great!' said Hawker. 'Crazy emails, strange visitors in the middle of the Pacific, and now erupting volcanoes! Thank you, Arla!'

Not many people lived on Isabela, and Puerto Villamil was usually a sleepy place. But when the *Sea-Lion* arrived, there were about fifty people down by the sea. There were two small boats, and on them Hawker and



'Isabela has six volcanoes,' said Jude.

Jude could see chairs and tables, beds, boxes and bags, and a bicycle.

Gonzalo called out in Spanish to the people on the boats, then turned to Hawker and Jude. 'Lots of people are leaving Isabela,' he said. 'They are afraid.'

'Afraid of what?' asked Jude. 'Go and talk to them, Hawker. Your Spanish is better than mine.'

Hawker came back half an hour later. 'You're not going to believe this,' he told Jude. 'The people here say



'Lots of people are leaving Isabela. They are afraid.'

there's a spaceship on Isabela. It came down ten days ago, right down inside Volcano Alcedo. And it's still there.'

'How do they know that?' said Jude.

'There's an Australian, Dr Jim Miller, up on Alcedo. He works here, studying giant tortoises. He saw the spaceship, and now he's waiting for the visitors to come out.'

'So the "visitors" in those emails are extraterrestrials. ETs. Little green men from another planet. Oh dear,' said Jude. 'Can we go home now, Hawker?'

Hawker laughed. 'No, we can't. We climb Volcano Alcedo,' he said. 'Talk to Dr Miller. Say hello to the ETs.'

'Oh dear,' Jude said again. 'I was afraid of that.'

Gonzalo took them in the *Sea-Lion* up to Shipton Cove. There, very early the next morning, Hawker and Jude began their climb up the volcano.

'There is a path,' Gonzalo told them, 'but it is five hours to the top and hard climbing. And very, very hot. You must carry water – two litres for one person for one day. You must sleep at the top and come down tomorrow – but not when the sun is high in the sky. And be careful, please!'

'Careful of the spaceship visitors, you mean?' said Jude.

'I don't know about spaceships,' smiled Gonzalo, 'but Volcano Alcedo is always a little excited – she is always doing something new.'

It was a very hard climb. After two hours, they stopped under some trees. They drank some water and looked out over the blue sea. The black volcanic rocks under their feet were hot from the sun.

'It's so beautiful here,' said Jude.

'Mmm. Yes and no,' said Hawker. Then, 'Hey, Jude! Look! That animal, over there by that rock. What – is – it?'

'Oh, wow!' whispered Jude. 'It's an iguana – a Galápagos iguana. Isn't he wonderful?'

The iguana stared at them with its hot orange eyes, and did not move. Its body was about a metre long, and an orange-yellow colour.

'It looks about a thousand years old,' said Hawker. 'A very strange animal.'

'Everything about this island is strange,' said Jude.

They climbed and climbed, and the sun got hotter and hotter. After three more hours they came to the top, and looked down into the great crater of Alcedo, two hundred metres deep and seven kilometres across. To the north and the south they could see more volcanoes, and across the sea to the west the island of Fernandina – but they could not see Dr Miller or his camp.

'We need to go round the crater to the south,' said

Hawker. 'It's another two hours' walk, the villagers said.'

It was hard walking over the black lava rock, and once Hawker nearly fell. Jude caught his arm.

'Don't break a leg here,' she said. 'I don't want to carry you back down to the boat.'

'Why not?' said Hawker. 'I carried you home once.'

'We weren't on top of a volcano then,' said Jude.

At last they saw Dr Miller's camp, and ten minutes



The iguana stared at them with its hot orange eyes.

later they arrived. Dr Miller was short, very brown, and angry.

'Go away!' he shouted. 'You're Americans, aren't you?'

'No, we aren't,' said Hawker. 'We're European. How do you do, Dr Miller?'

'What are you doing here?' he said angrily.

'We'd like to talk to you,' said Jude quietly. 'About the spaceship down in the crater. Why are you so angry?'

'Because nobody listens to me!' said Dr Miller. 'Nobody believes me! The Americans say, "Oh, crazy man!". The Australian government says, "Get some sleep!" What can I do? Something very important is happening on this planet, and nobody is listening!'

'Well, we're here now, and we're listening,' Jude said.

Dr Miller looked at them. 'Who do you work for?'

'Europe,' said Hawker. 'Europe is very interested in this spaceship. Please tell us about it.'

'Ah, the emails did get through, then,' said Dr Miller.

'Who did the emails come from?' asked Hawker.

'Ecuadorian friends,' said Dr Miller. 'Over on Santa Cruz. Look, I've got some beer here. You want one?'

They sat on the black lava rocks under the hot sun, and drank hot beer. Below them clouds of smoke and steam moved this way and that way across the crater. And was there, under those clouds, a spaceship from another planet?



They sat on the black lava rocks, and drank hot beer.

‘Sometimes I think I can see it down there,’ said Jim Miller, ‘but mostly I can’t. It’s a great white thing, and long legs came out of it when it came down.’

‘But why here, Jim?’ said Jude. ‘Why into a volcano?’

‘Who knows?’ said Jim. ‘Perhaps they like hot places. Perhaps they need something from the hot lava.’

‘And why are you angry with the Americans, Jim?’ Hawker asked. ‘I know their beer’s no good, but . . .’