

The Trouble With Wenlocks

A Stanley Wells Mystery

Joel Stewart

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About the Author

Also by Joel Stewart

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About the Book

Stanley Wells would tell you that he is an ordinary boy. It's just that sometimes extraordinary things happen around him . . .

Stanley and his unusual new friends Dr Moon and Morcambe have a mystery on their hands. There are monstrous wenlocks about, and they spell trouble. Weird things happen to the local children when they encounter these terrifying creatures. Stanley must escape from a train full of wenlocks to find out why. Can he and his companions unravel the truth, with the help of Umiko Lee and her comforting sorrow creatures? What's more, can Stanley learn to play the ukulele in the face of certain doom?

A weird and wonderful debut novel filled with fascinating characters and strange happenings, illustrated throughout with Joel Stewart's atmospheric drawings.

The Trouble with Wenlocks

A Stanley Wells Mystery

Joel Stewart

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*For Maija-Liisa
& Estella Mare*



STANLEY WELLS WALKED between two lampposts on Zoffany Strand and thought to himself, I'm in a new universe now. It looks the same but it's different around the edges.

Then he thought about how he really hadn't entered a new universe, just walked between two lampposts, or that it could be a new universe but no doubt it would be exactly the same as this one. He was beginning to think about how one thought leads to another but how often they come round to where the first one started, when he stopped in front of the abandoned dance school and felt a very happy feeling.

The broken old building was boxy and black, with white and grey streaks from pigeon droppings. It wasn't the usual sort of place to give a person a happy feeling and Stanley Wells wondered whether it had given it to him before. He couldn't be sure. His mother always told him not to stop on his way to the train though, so he stepped over a broken umbrella that lay flapping in the street like a demon's lost bow tie and laughed a small laugh as he carried on towards the station.





STANLEY LET THE vibration of the train's wheels and engine mingle with his thoughts as he leaned his head against the window. In the three years since his parents started living apart Stanley had ridden inside more trains than he'd bothered to count. His dad's house was a long way away. Stanley mostly had to wait for holidays and then ride the train to see him, unless he appeared, travel wrinkled, at the weekend to take Stanley out for pizza. His dad seemed small and lost on these visits to his old home town, which is not a good look for a father, so Stanley preferred visits to the new town.

He rested his eyes on the faint morning moon because they hurt a little from trying to keep up with the blurring trees. He thought, rumblingly, about the chords he was learning for his ukulele; the pretty little four-stringed instrument had been a gift from his father and now rested in its case on Stanley's knees. Then he thought about how long and thin and hollow a train is, like riding inside a big tin snake, and about Katy Parcel, the tall red-haired girl from school.

This train was quite full but Stanley had seen worse. It was good to ride the train today. Sometimes it could be a long, fidgety thing to have to do but today it seemed more of a warm, in-between-things kind of journey.