

RANDOM HOUSE *e*BOOKS



Tree Soup
A Stanley Wells Mystery
Joel Stewart

CONTENTS

Cover

About the Book

Title Page

Dedication

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Chapter 5

Chapter 6

Chapter 7

Chapter 8

Chapter 9

Chapter 10

Chapter 11

Chapter 12

Chapter 13

Chapter 14

Chapter 15

Chapter 16

Chapter 17

Chapter 18

Chapter 19

About the Author

Also by Joel Stewart

The Trouble with Wenlocks

Copyright

About the Book

Stanley Wells is an ordinary boy with some extraordinary friends – not least the mysterious Dr Moon and his canine companion Morcambe. Together they seem to stumble upon strange happenings and trip over mysteries that just need solving . . .

Stanley is sleeping out in the garden of his new house. He wanted some peace and quiet out in the old caravan, but that odd whoooooomphing noise is something he certainly wasn't expecting. There appear to be new trees in the garden . . . very odd. And now his mum and the twins are missing – could these things be connected? And what about Jim, the old man who lives in the woods with his old parrot telling tales of the sea? Could he be involved somehow? Dr Moon is the only person who can help Stanley with this puzzle and luckily he's on his way . . .

TREE SOUP

A Stanley Wells Mystery



JOEL STEWART

CORGI YEARLING

For Higher Trye



STANLEY WELLS WOKE to find his private world spattered with bright morning sunlight. It lit up the old stove beside him, almost as though the thing actually worked (and wasn't just filled with straw and stones), and made a golden patchwork over the scraps of carpet and mouse-nibbled cushions that littered the caravan.

Ever since the family had moved to the house in the country Stanley had worked very hard to persuade his mother to let him use the old caravan that stood, lopsided, amongst the apple trees in the orchard that lay on one side of the garden. Finally he had succeeded and now it was a place for him to escape – especially from the twins, who cried all the time in the house. He liked Cleo and Leo well enough, but it really was a lot of fuss they made, and Stanley's mother and Chris (who was the twins' father but not Stanley's) had hardly a moment for anything else.



Stanley's eyes were squinting, halfway through a yawn, when he glimpsed through his eyelashes a flash of colour at the window. There was a flapping then a swooshing sound and it reminded him of a strange whoomphing! that he had heard just as he was falling asleep the night before. In all his days living in town he'd never realized the countryside was such a noisy place! He went to the door and looked around, but couldn't make out anything that could have been the cause of the sound.

Stepping down, he picked up a freshly fallen apple from the ground and took a bite.



The air is somehow different when you can just step straight outside from where you have been sleeping. Stanley breathed it deeply for a moment. There was nothing unusual out in the orchard though, so he went back into the caravan with his apple. He munched his apple and strummed on his ukulele in turns. He was cosy and time moved slowly by in the warm, musty caravan.



Stanley's mother had checked on him every morning since he'd moved out to the garden, and as mid-morning approached he began to wonder when she would come today. Then he heard the telephone ringing faintly from the house. For a few moments he continued to strum to himself. But when the telephone didn't stop ringing, a stronger shiver of worry ran through him and he felt alone. Why was nobody answering? Why hadn't his mother come to hassle him yet?



Stanley pulled on his shoes and made his way to the house.



THE TELEPHONE WAS still ringing as Stanley pushed at the front door, but he couldn't get into the house to answer it. The door wasn't locked. It was more as though there was something holding it shut from the other side. He leaned on it with all his weight until he finally managed to push a gap wide enough to squeeze through.

Inside he didn't recognize anything. The family had only lived there a few months and Stanley had spent some of that time staying with his father, then he'd been out in the caravan. But that wasn't why he didn't recognize the inside of the house. Up until this morning his house had not been filled with vegetation and roots. Now the whole place was alien with them, like when a potato gets left in the back of a cupboard and grows monstrous in the dark.