

STEWART & RIDDELL



THE
EDGE
CHRONICLES

THE NAMELESS ONE
← BOOK 1 OF THE CADE SAGA →

About the Book

'I'm interested, that's all. Did you not believe me when I told you that you couldn't hide from me?'

Cade Quarter is on the run – wanted for the crimes of an uncle he has never even met. With no money and nowhere else to go, he sneaks onto the *Xanth Filatine*; a mighty skyship bound for the city of Hive. But getting on board is just the beginning of his troubles, and he is soon forced to abandon ship for the harsh lands of the mighty Deepwoods.

Finding himself in a remote backwater known as the Farrow Ridges, Cade must struggle to build a life amongst flesh-eating bloodoak trees, fearsome goblin tribes and monstrous lake creatures. And, perhaps most mysterious of all, a strange, half-formed giant known only as the nameless one . . .

Contents

Cover

About the Book

Title Page

Dedication

Maps

Introduction

Chapter One

Chapter Two

Chapter Three

Chapter Four

Chapter Five

Chapter Six

Chapter Seven

Chapter Eight

Chapter Nine

Chapter Ten

Chapter Eleven

Chapter Twelve

Chapter Thirteen

Chapter Fourteen

Chapter Fifteen

Chapter Sixteen

Chapter Seventeen

Chapter Eighteen

Chapter Nineteen

Chapter Twenty

Chapter Twenty-One

Chapter Twenty-Two

Chapter Twenty-Three

Chapter Twenty-Four

Chapter Twenty-Five

Chapter Twenty-Six

Chapter Twenty-Seven

Chapter Twenty-Eight
Chapter Twenty-Nine
Chapter Thirty
Chapter Thirty-One
Chapter Thirty-Two
Chapter Thirty-Three
Chapter Thirty-Four
Chapter Thirty-Five
Chapter Thirty-Six
Chapter Thirty-Seven
Chapter Thirty-Eight
Chapter Thirty-Nine
Chapter Forty
Chapter Forty-One
Chapter Forty-Two

About the Authors
Also by Paul Stewart & Chris Riddell
Copyright

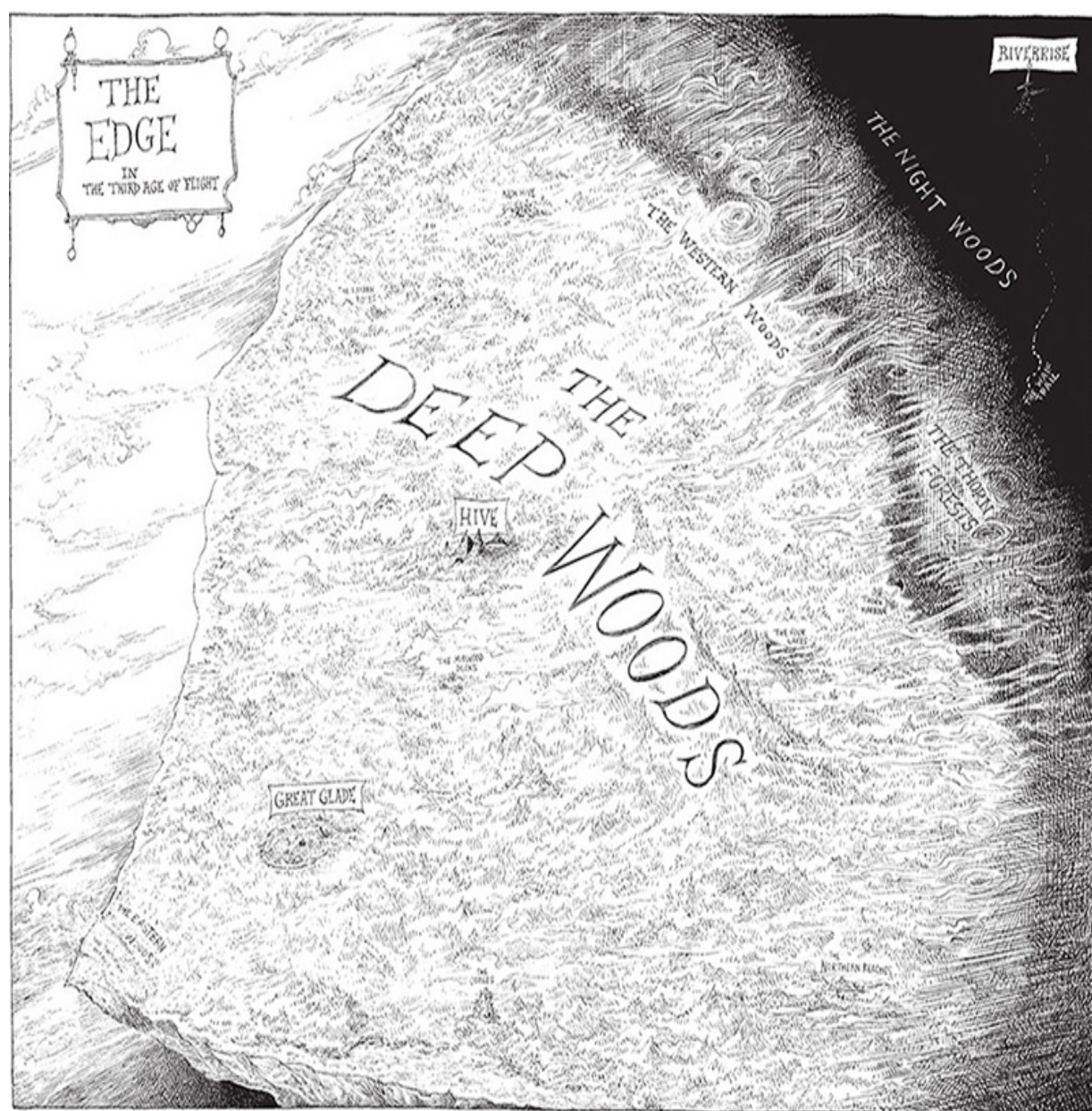
THE EDGE CHRONICLES

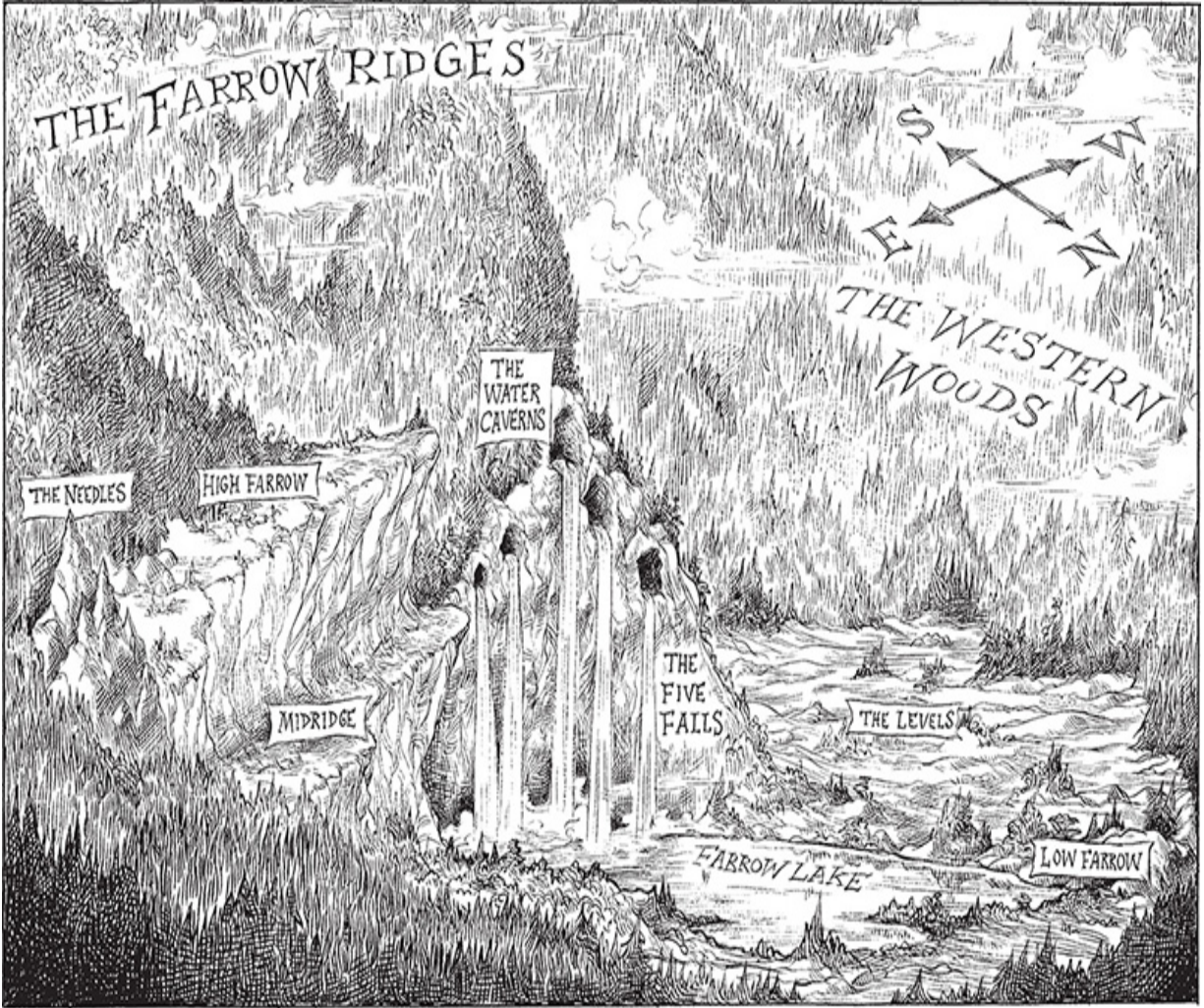
THE NAMELESS ONE
↔ BOOK 1 OF THE CADE SAGA ↔

STEWART & RIDDELL

RHCP DIGITAL

Paul: For Julie
Chris: For Jo





· INTRODUCTION ·

FAR FAR AWAY, jutting out into the emptiness beyond, like the figurehead of a mighty stone ship, is the Edge. A torrent of water pours endlessly over the lip of rock at its overhanging point; the Edgewater River.

The river's source lies far inland at a stone pool high above Riverrise, one of the three great cities of the Edge, deep in the heart of the Nightwoods. A mere trickle at first, the river grows broader and more powerful as it makes its way on into the mighty Deepwoods.

Dark and forbidding, the Deepwoods is a dangerous and inhospitable place. Once, its denizens believed that the Deepwoods went on for ever. Now, in this, the Third Age of Flight, none but the most primitive of tribes, cut off from civilization, believe this to be true. Yet there is no denying the vastness of the forest. It takes even the sleekest phrax-powered skyship several weeks to travel from one end to the other.

By the time the Edgewater reaches the great city of Hive, it has already become a mighty river, cascading down the falls between East and West Ridge. Anglers plunder its stocks of fish. Farmers dam and divert its waters to irrigate their fields. Waterwheels tap its power.

Past Great Glade it flows, the third and greatest city of the Edge; a bustling metropolis of stilthouse factories, parklands, teeming mercantile districts, lakeside mansions and magnificent schools and academies. Then, disappearing under the ground, the river passes beneath the Twilight Woods and into the Mire. It is only at the end of this bogland, with its sinking-sands and blow-holes, that the

Edgewater forms once more. Here, close to the end of its long journey, the Edgewater is at its most magnificent. It sweeps past the ancient ruins of Undertown, beneath the mysterious floating city of Sanctaphrax and on over the jutting rock.

Just as the river flows through the Edge, so too does its history. It flows down the centuries, ever growing, ever changing, ever switching course. And nowhere is this more clearly to be seen than in Sanctaphrax.

The ancient city of lofty academics, built upon a vast floating rock that hovers above Undertown's ruins, is anchored to the ground by a great chain. More than half a millennium earlier, that chain was cut and Sanctaphrax floated away, along with half the scholars who had once bickered and quarrelled so vociferously over the finer points of the sky science they studied. No one thought it would ever be seen again.

But then it returned. And since then its deserted streets and buildings have become a magnet for those who wish to flee the stranglehold exerted by the authorities of the three great cities over their citizens.

Chief among these outcasts and dissidents are the so-called 'descenders' – nonconformist academics who climb down the mighty cliff face of the Edge to discover what lies below. For, just as primitive goblins believed that the Deepwoods were endless, so, in the past, it was believed that anything, or anyone, falling from the Edge would fall for ever. The descenders – with Nate Quarter perhaps the most famous descender of all – have proved otherwise. Unfortunately, however, these brave explorers are now in danger of their lives from those who, like the powerful Quove Lentis, High Professor of Flight, believe that such talk is heresy.

For that is the trouble. There are always those who try to obstruct advances; who prefer to preserve the ignorance of the past rather than embrace the enlightenment of the

present. But time passes. Technology moves on. Advances are made. And no technological advance was ever more significant in the Edge than that which heralded the Third Age of Flight: the harnessing of the power of stormphrax.

Stormphrax. Solid lightning. The most wondrous substance ever to have existed . . .

Its origins lie far out in Open Sky beyond the Edge where violent lightning storms form. These storms are drawn to the Twilight Woods, where they release their pent-up energy in the form of colossal lightning bolts – lightning bolts that turn to solid crystal the moment they penetrate the forest’s permanent golden glow. As the millennia passed, more and more of these solid lightning bolts plunged down into the dark earth, sinking deep, shattering into countless million crystals, until every trace was concealed beneath the ground.

And it is these crystals that the miners of the Eastern Woods dig out, in order for the scientists and engineers of the Third Age to harness their power – the explosive power that fuels the stilthouse factories of Great Glade and Hive, and lights up the permanent night of Riverrise. But that power also gave rise to arms. Phraxmuskets and cannon. Weapons that have left thousands of dead and injured in battlefields across the Edgelands.

Today, more than five hundred years after the power of stormphrax was first safely unleashed, the sky is crisscrossed with steam-trails left by the mighty cloud-barges and skytaverns that journey throughout the Edgelands, carrying goods, raw materials and travellers between the cities, journeying to Great Glade and Hive. To Riverrise. And also to other, more modest places throughout the Edge; places like New Hive and Four Lakes, the Gorges and the Northern Ridges, and dozens of small towns and backwater settlements, each one battling to grow and dreaming that one day they too might become great cities.

There are, however, individuals in the Edge who have become disillusioned with life in the Third Age of Flight. Some hate the pace of change; some regret the loss of a more innocent way of life; many are scarred by a terrible war that broke out between Great Glade and Hive. Turning their backs on the great cities, these pioneers set out for the furthest outreaches of the Edge to carve for themselves a new and simpler life.

Pioneers like Cade Quarter, the callow son of a professor, who didn't even know that such a life might exist . . .

The Deepwoods, the Eastern Woods, the Mire and the Edgewater River. Undertown and Sanctaphrax. Great Glade, Riverrise and Hive. The Farrow Ridges. Names on a map.

Yet behind each name lie a thousand tales – tales that have been recorded in ancient scrolls, tales that have been passed down the generations by word of mouth – tales which even now are being told.

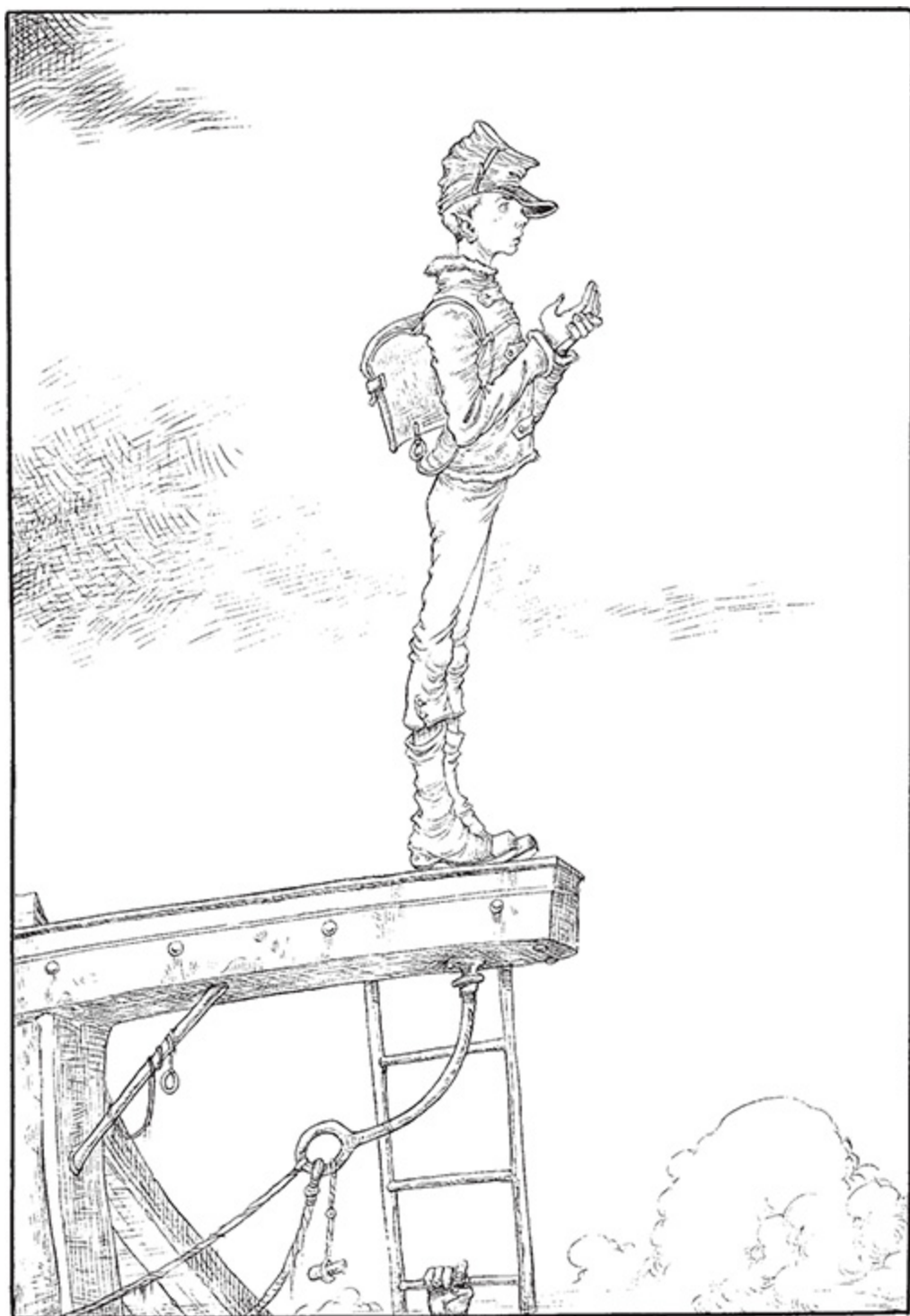
What follows is but one of those tales.

· CHAPTER ONE ·

CADE QUARTER TIGHTENED the straps of his backpack and blew warmth into his cupped hands. The day had broken bright but cold, and here, high up at the top of the highest ironwood gantry in the Ledges, the icy wind that plucked at his tilderskin jacket cut like knives.

He'd been one of the first to arrive that morning. Two others were standing close by him on the narrow wooden platform that jutted out high above the treetops of the forest at the edge of the city of Great Glade. One was a tall mobgnome dressed in a quilted frockcoat that was grubby and frayed and crudely patched, with a scuffed leather over-bonnet and down-at-heel boots. The other was a young, sunken-eyed flathead goblin who didn't look as though he'd eaten in days.

Cade had tried to ignore them, but the narrowness of the gantry forced them to stand shoulder to shoulder with him. He didn't want to engage them in conversation, to hear their life histories. He might like them. And after all, they were competition.



There was a flash of white in the sky and Cade looked up to see a flock of snowbirds passing overhead. Their muffled wingbeats sounded like gloved hands clapping.

‘Wish I had wings,’ came a muttered voice and, despite himself, Cade looked round to see the young goblin staring after the birds longingly. He caught Cade’s gaze. ‘Don’t you?’

Cade shrugged and turned away, and was relieved when the mobgnome spoke up in his stead.

‘A flathead with wings,’ he chuckled. ‘Freak like that, they’d cage you up and charge ten groats a viewing . . .’

‘You know what I mean,’ the flathead protested.

‘Personally,’ the mobgnome continued without missing a beat, ‘I’d have my own phraxlighter and a pouch full of gold pieces – if wishes came true.’ He scowled. ‘Which they don’t.’

The goblin turned away, looking crushed.

Just then, a klaxon sounded from the lower gantries, loud and rasping. Once. Then again. From below him, Cade heard the clatter of shod boot soles on the ironwood rungs of the gantry ladder and felt the wooden platform beneath his feet tremble. Others were about to arrive. Cade Quarter swallowed nervously and pulled on the straps at his shoulder.

He didn’t want wings or wealth. If he had a wish, it was simply that his backpack wasn’t quite so heavy. It could prove his downfall yet.

Literally.

· CHAPTER TWO ·

THE MIGHTY SKYTAVERN was toley-roped securely to a vast docking-cradle, the largest of two dozen which were attached to the towering ironwood gantries of Great Glade. All around it, phraxbarges and phraxlighters were tethered to the hull, both fore and aft, at the upper decks and the lower, like gyle goblins tending to a grossmother.

Up at the skytavern's snub-nosed prow, a cluster of hovering phraxbarges were being unloaded. Long chains of goblins, from wiry underbiters to hulking great barrelchests, were passing foodstuffs one to the other from phraxbarge to hold with piston-like efficiency. There were casks of winesap and woodgrog, crates of knotcabbage, glimmer-onions and earth-apples, boxes of dried fruits, salted meats, pickled roots and spices – each one neatly labelled with its contents; haunches of tilder, barrels of lakemussels and long knotted strings of trussed-up woodcocks and speyturkeys . . .

Enough for the long voyage ahead, both for the opulent Great Salon where the rich and powerful dined, and the slop halls and hanging galleys of the lower decks – and with as much again to trade en route as the *Xanth Filatine* proceeded on its journey, stopping off at the isolated mooring posts and scat-settlements that lay between the great cities of Riverrise and Hive.

The journey from Great Glade to Hive would take three weeks of hard steaming, with a following wind and an absence of storms, neither of which could be depended on. Even if the weather was favourable, there were still many stops to be made. For the sky-platforms built high in the

trees, the market clearings in the depths of the forest, and the trader-settlements scratching a living, the passing of the skytavern was vital. Manufactured goods from the steam factories of the great cities were exchanged for the raw materials of the Deepwoods: pots for furs, phraxmuskets for buoyant wood, and a thousand other trades.

A phraxbarge tethered further down the hull was piled high with bundles of finely woven hammelhorn fleece blankets, which a company of stout, bare-armed grey goblins were pulling free with long-handled hooks, hoiking the goods onto their shoulders and transporting them down into the hold of the skytavern. Beside it, a group of lop-ears were unloading a second phraxbarge that was laden with crates of machine-turned pots and pans, which clanked together as they were set down. A third phraxbarge was weighed down with bolts of shot silk and embroidered taffeta, a fourth with caskets of phraxmuskets, while another swayed precariously as four stooped gyle goblins struggled with a large glass-topped case under the watchful eye of a tall fourthling in a black longcloak and battered conical hat.

‘Careful, careful,’ he was admonishing them, brandishing a gold-pommelled staff as he spoke. ‘One slip and six months’ work will have been in vain.’

‘What are *they*?’ demanded the holdmarshal, an officious-looking lop-ear in a short satin jacket and matching breeches, as the gyle goblins approached. He tapped the tally-board in his hand insistently with his leadstick. The goblins stopped and the holdmarshal peered down at the pale, jelly-like objects set out in rows beneath the panel of glass.



‘Prowlgrin eggs,’ said the fourthling proudly. ‘Fertilized and soon to hatch.’

‘Livestock,’ the holdmarshal muttered. He made a note and pointed to his left.

‘Livestock?’ the fourthling repeated. ‘I was hoping to keep them in my cabin . . .’

The holdmarshal spoke through him. ‘Livestock goes in the hold.’ He glanced up. ‘Bound for?’

‘Hive,’ the fourthling replied, and rubbed his thumb and index finger together. ‘And worth a pretty penny too. They’re pedigree greys from the finest stable in Great Glade. So I’d be grateful if—’

His voice was drowned out by the sound of barking and howling, and the two of them looked round to see a huge crate, dangling on ropes from the hook of a mighty crane as it swept past. The crate was subdivided inside, four by four, with each of the sixteen separate compartments temporary home to a prowlgryn. Orange, brown, black, mottled and striped, piebald and skewbald, the creatures' eyes were wide as they bellowed their fear and discomfort.

'Now, they're what I call prowlgrins,' the holdmarshal muttered as he made a note of their number on his tally-board. 'And bound for the phraxmines in the Eastern Woods, I'd wager.'

'Yet worth a fraction of these unhatched eggs,' the fourthling snorted, flapping a dismissive hand at the crate as a bevy of cloddertrogs steered it down onto the deck and began untying the ropes.

'Quite, quite,' said the holdmarshal, 'but if you want to keep livestock in your cabin, it means the rules have got to be stretched . . .' He held out a hand. 'And rule-stretching don't come cheap.'

The fourthling sighed and reached into his pocket. Drawing out a purse, he opened it and eyed the contents. 'Four gold pieces?' he ventured.

The holdmarshal smiled. 'Five.'

While the phraxbarges were being unloaded of their cargo and provisions at the prow of the skytavern, phraxlighters crowded the sky at the stern, waiting to drop off their passengers. Some of the vessels were elegant and narrow-bottomed, with dark, varnished wood cabins and brass ornamentation; some were sleek blondwood boats with striped awnings, while others were larger, with unfinished timbers and standing room only – the quality of the phraxlighters reflecting the status of their passengers and from which part of Great Glade they had come from.

A wealthy merchant and his wife stepped from a sharp-prowed vessel, followed by their luggage-bearing retinue of

velvet-clad goblins, and were ushered to their stately apartments in the upper part of the stern. Mere strides away, half a dozen grey goblins – stilthouse workers by the look of their grubby homespun – were noisily bartering with the ticket-steward for an upgrade. An extended family of woodtrolls – with great-grandparents down to babes-in-arms – was being detained by a pair of flathead deck-guards. One of them had his hand on the butt of the phraxmusket at his belt.

‘And I say they *are* weapons,’ he was saying as he eyed the hatchets at the woodtrolls’ belts.

‘Tools of the trade,’ said the head of the family, a stocky, middle-aged troll with plaited side-whiskers. ‘All male woodtrolls carry a hatchet. It’s part of our woodlore.’

‘I wouldn’t know about that,’ said the flathead, sounding bored. ‘But if you want to travel on the *Xanth Filatine*, you surrender your weapons—’

‘They’re *not* weapons, I tell you. They’re—’

‘Oh, for the love of Earth and Sky,’ came an imperious voice from behind them, and the woodtrolls turned to see two dark-robed academics glaring down at them.

The pair had endured this dead-end bickering in silence for long enough. The klaxon had already sounded twice. If it should sound a third time before they were on board then the gates would close and they would not be able to travel – and neither of them relished the idea of returning to the academy to face the wrath of Quove Lentis, High Professor of Flight, not now, not after what they’d done.

‘Give him your axe,’ the taller of the academics demanded. ‘Or make way for those who truly do wish to travel.’

‘This is a *phraxvessel*,’ the shorter, stouter academic sneered, his nostrils flaring. ‘It’s not as though you’re going to be asked to chop kindling.’

‘*Valves approaching full steam!*’ The engineer’s voice rang out from high above as the phraxcradle creaked and hissed.

'Departure imminent!'

With a grunt of irritation the woodtroll placed the hatchet into the outstretched hand of the flathead guard. The other woodtrolls did the same. The two academics barged them aside.

'Two mid-range berths for Hive,' they chorused and reached inside their robes for the required fare.

As the steward finally allowed them aboard, a raucous screech echoed behind them, and the two academics turned to see a white raven emerge from a porthole and flap up into the sky. They eyed one another with a look of alarm.

'The High Professor's bird!'

'Then the High Professor knows we're on board,' came the reply. 'He has spies everywhere. We can't risk staying in our cabins now. We'll have to find somewhere else to hide out . . .'

Higher and higher the bird flew, its white wings flashing like blades of silver in the bright sun as it rose above the hustle and bustle of the Ledges, with its cranes and docking-cradles and phraxvessels of every shape and size. It flew, in a broad north-easterly arc, past New Lake and Old Forest, with the corn- and barleyfields of the Silver Pastures beyond rippling like water. Far ahead the stilthouses and steam-factories of East Glade stained the horizon with billowing clouds of white and yellow and grey. Then, wheeling round in the sky, and with the opulent town-houses and lakeside manors of Ambristown to its right, the white raven – Kraakan – headed directly over the Freeglades District. It swooped down low over the tower at Lake Landing, then as the lofty towers and turrets of the academies of the Cloud Quarter loomed up far ahead, it soared back into the sky and gathered speed.

Kraakan had learned the hard way that the master's mood was dependent upon the speed with which it completed a task. With luck, the message it had delivered so swiftly to

the lower decks would bring it not only praise but also a saucerful of rat-scrap.

The white raven was flying high above the outskirts of the Freeglades district when the distant sound of the phrax-klaxon echoed out across the sky.

One, two, three times.

· CHAPTER THREE ·

CADE QUARTER TREMBLED. It was time.

There were seven of them now standing at the top of the highest ironwood gantry in the Ledges. 'The Forlorn Hope', it was known as. The gantry's wooden boards sloped sharply down from where Cade and the others stood, ending abruptly in a sheer drop.

Originally used to roll timber down from logging ships into phraxbarges below, the sloping platform had fallen into disuse when a broader gantry had been constructed on the other side of the Ledges. Now it provided the best place for the desperate and penniless to attempt to board a departing skytavern without a ticket – a forlorn hope . . .

Cade glanced around him. Apart from the mobgnome and the young flathead, there were two young pink-eyed goblins, twins most like, the pair of them scrawny and sullen; a lop-ear goblin matron with dead eyes, a withered arm and a tattered basket strapped to her back, and, towering over the rest, a cloddertrog.

Unlike the others, the cloddertrog had no possessions with him to slow him down. He was powerfully built and looked fiercely determined, as if no one was going to get in his way. The scars on his face and arms suggested that he'd had his fair share of fights, and had survived them. As Cade watched, the cloddertrog braced himself, flexing his huge arms and bending his treetrunk legs at the knee.

He looked like he knew what he was doing, and Cade made a mental note to follow him as closely as he could.

As the third blast of the skytavern klaxon faded, Cade steadied himself. He smoothed down the front of his jacket

and blew into his hands. He tried to slow the frantic beating of his heart.

He didn't want to be here at the top of this ironwood gantry. He didn't want to jump. In fact, he didn't want to leave Great Glade at all. But he had no choice. If he didn't get out of the city now, he was as good as dead . . .

At the far side of the gantries, the *Xanth Filatine* trembled and throbbed at the top of its docking-cradle. Steam poured from its mighty funnel, while a white-hot jet hissed from the propulsion duct beneath. And as the gathered crowds on the surrounding gantries waved and cheered, and the passengers waved back, the crew began unhitching the toley ropes fore and aft.

Wait for it, Cade told himself.

The skytavern rose slowly from the cradle and inched forward in the sky. The crowds whooped and hollered.

Cade watched intently as the skytavern drifted up from the cradle and began to move slowly above the heads of the crowd, its massive hull with its flight-weights, cargo-hooks, hanging sky-floats and tether-rails casting them in shadow. Slowly, but gathering height and speed all the while, the *Xanth Filatine* moved past the lower scaffolding and platforms, over the swinging cargo-cranes, and approached the last and highest gantry: the Forlorn Hope.

'Wait for it . . . wait . . . for it . . .' Cade muttered, his eyes fixed on the cloddertrog.

Suddenly the lop-ear set off down the slope. Maybe with her withered arm, she felt she needed a head start. Whatever, the next moment, the others were off after her – the pink-eyed goblin twins shoving past the mobgnome, with the flathead close on their heels, while overhead the *Xanth Filatine* drew ever closer.

Cade hung back with the cloddertrog, who was eyeing the underside of the skytavern as it loomed. He was clearly choosing a spot to aim for; Cade followed his gaze. Below them, the others had reached the end of the ramp. But too

soon. One after the other, they leaped and flailed and grasped hopelessly at the smooth snub-nosed prow of the vessel – and tumbled down through the air to their deaths.

And as the despairing screams of the mobgnome, flathead, lop-ear and pink-eyes rang out, the cloddertrog suddenly launched himself down the wooden slope at full pelt. Cade gulped and sprang after him, his boots pounding on the juddering boards as he gathered speed.



Teeth clenched and arms outstretched, Cade launched himself off the end of the ramp, his eyes fixed on the line of tether-rails secured along the underside of the huge vessel. Below him, the treetops were a blur of green. The wind tugged at his backpack as he flew through the air.

Too heavy, he groaned, and cursed himself for loading himself down with all those weighty memories best left behind.

He thrust his arms forward, his hands curved, braced. His fingertips grazed the hard, nubbed planking but, unable to grasp a hold of the tether-rail he'd been aiming for, Cade fell – only to be caught by the wrist in a powerful grip.

He looked up. It was the cloddertrog, who had landed on a ledge below a porthole. His scarred face broke into a smile as he pulled Cade up to join him.

‘Room for one more, I reckon,’ he grunted.

Cade was about to thank him when the porthole abruptly flew open and a studded cudgel emerged. With a loud crack, the cudgel slammed into the side of the cloddertrog's head. He lost his grip, and with a cry more of surprise than pain plummeted down to the forest below. The cudgel withdrew and a moment later a bony hand with a large gold ring on one finger appeared at the open porthole. It grabbed Cade by the collar and dragged him bodily through the narrow porthole and into the skytavern.

The place smelled rank; a mixture of rancid fat and stale bodies. And it was dark. After the early-morning dazzle Cade was as good as blind. But he could hear well enough as a gruff voice spoke up.

‘I like the small ones. They don't give no trouble . . . Let's see what the boss thinks.’

· CHAPTER FOUR ·

‘WHAT WE GOT here, then?’

Cade looked up to see two hefty flathead goblins standing over him. Their brow- and neckrings gleamed in the sputtering yellow of an oil lamp that hung down from an overhead beam. With a grunt, the nearer goblin extended a gold-ringed hand and pulled Cade to his feet with such force he felt as though his arm was being pulled out of its socket.

The flatheads Cade knew in Great Glade had adopted the ways of the city. They wore clothes of homespun or serge, with crushed funnel hats on their heads and boots on their feet. They grew up unadorned by neckrings or tattoos. But not these flatheads. These were old school, fresh from the darkest Deepwoods by the look of them. Tilderskin breeches, leather jerkins, fierce-eyed talismans around their necks. Barefoot. Tattooed and ringed. And heavily armed, with studded cudgels and jag-blade knives hanging at their belts. The ornate gold ring on the first goblin’s finger looked out of place.



The second flathead goblin peered at him from the shadows; swarthy and hard-faced. In addition to his other weapons, he had a crossbow slung over his shoulder.

‘Mish-mash by the looks of him,’ he said, his top lip curling. ‘You a mish-mash, lad?’ he demanded.

Cade stared back, confused.

‘A fourthling,’ said the second.

‘Oh . . . y-yes . . .’ Cade stammered. ‘There’s long-hair blood in my family. And slaughterer. And . . . and a bit of grey goblin, I believe, on my mother’s side of the—’

The first flathead goblin cut him short. ‘We didn’t ask for your life history, mish-mash.’ His big hands hovered near the weapons at his belt. ‘You best come with us.’

Cade nodded again. He wasn’t about to argue. His heart was still thumping from the frenzied dash down the slope of the Forlorn Hope. He could still hear the despairing cries of the other leapers, and see the look of horror on the face of the cloddertrog who had helped him . . .

His eyes were growing more accustomed to the smoke-laced gloom of the lower deck, and as he stumbled through the hull quarters, flanked on either side by the savage flathead goblins, Cade took in the strange, shadowy place he’d landed in. Down here in the bowels of the mighty ship, the skytavern was far larger than he’d imagined. Cavernous, in fact – though full to bursting with goblins, trogs and trolls from every part of the city.

Each group of travellers seemed to have its own patch of deck space, dimly lit by the foul-smelling greaselamps and tallow candles which hung from the beams. These makeshift camps were marked out by boxes of belongings or by tilderhides strung up to create makeshift partitions, or sometimes, Cade noticed, just by lines chalked onto the wooden floorboards.

A large family of tufted goblins were seated in a circle, earthenware bowls on their laps, as an old matron with a beaded topknot and filthy leather apron ladled out a thin