

SEPTEMBER 7TH

THE STORM HAS PASSED, BUT IT HAS RUINED us utterly. I went out early to milk the cows. The meadows were a great lake and the cows had on the hillside had gone. The gate into the meadows was off its hinges. There were no cows to be seen, not at first. Then I saw them. Celandine and Petal were lying drowned and swollen where the sea had left them, legs stiff in the air. I ran home.

No one would believe me, because they didn't want to believe me. I didn't want to believe me. They followed me out. Father knelt beside them in the shallows and sobbed. Granny May and Mother led him home, his head in his hands.

I stroked the white patch on Petal's neck, where I always patted her after milking. She was so cold. Her big, blue eyes gazed up at me, unseeing. I ran off and later found myself outside Granny May's house. Her whole roof had gone this time, but that wasn't all. When I went round the side I saw the end of the cottage had collapsed around the chimney. Next to it the Jenkins' house too was beyond repair, like a giant had trampled all over it.

I walked all around the island. Hardly a house had survived intact. When I got home I found the hen-house gone, the hens with it, and the kitchen window had been blown in.

Several boats, not ours, thank God, have been driven on to the rocks and smashed to pieces, and the chief has lost his crabber altogether. Bryher is wrecked. It's like a nightmare. I want to wake up and find none of it is true. We are all ruined and done for and we shall have to leave. Everyone says so - except Granny May. But she hasn't been told about her house yet. Father won't do it and Mother won't do it. They just can't bring themselves to tell her, and neither can I.

When Granny May had gone up to bed this

evening Father said, 'It's like the beginning of the end. In a few years' time Bryher will be like Samson and Tean, abandoned and deserted, left to the rabbits and the birds.'

He cried and I knew I didn't hate him any more, I knew I loved him still. Mother won't cry. I've never seen Mother cry. She put her arms around Father and held him, and that's the first time she's done that since Billy left.



SEPTEMBER 8TH

TODAY I FOUND A TURTLE. I THINK IT'S CALLED a leatherback turtle. I found one once before, but it was dead. This one has been washed up alive.

Father had sent me down to collect driftwood on Rushy Bay. He said there'd be plenty about after a storm like that. He was right.

I'd been there for half an hour or so heaping up the wood, before I noticed the turtle in the tideline of piled seaweed. I thought at first he was just a washed-up tree stump covered in seaweed.

He was upside down on the sand. I pulled the seaweed off him. His eyes were open, unblinking. He was more dead than alive, I thought. His flippers