

evening. We were there to wave them off. Everyone hugged everyone. They were all so happy to be alive and so grateful to us for saving them.

Since he's been back, Billy hasn't had a cross word with Father, and Mother is my mother again.



DECEMBER 25TH Christmas Day

IT SEEMS GRANNY MAY MIGHT HAVE BEEN right after all. I was with Billy cleaning out the cowshed after church when he called me outside. Everyone seemed to be running down towards Green Bay and there was a crowd gathered down on the beach. So we left everything and ran. We met Mother and Granny May coming out of the house.

'There's been a dead turtle washed up,' said Mother. Granny May looked at me, her eyes full of tears. We had to push through the crowd. People were laughing, and I hated them for that. He was covered in sand and seaweed and they were trying to roll him over, but he was too heavy, even for them.

Then I looked again. It was a turtle all right, but it was not our turtle. It wasn't any turtle at all. It was painted bright green with yellow eyes and it looked as if it had been carved out of wood. It was the figurehead off a ship.

Billy crouched down beside it, and brushed the sand off its face.

'That's off the *Zanzibar*,' he said.

Granny May was laughing through her tears. She took my hand and squeezed it.

'Now do you believe me?' she said, and she didn't need an answer.

'If it's off Billy's ship,' she went on, 'then it belongs to Billy, doesn't it?' No one argued with her.

'We'll call him *Zanzibar* and he can live in the garden. Let's get him home.' So we heaved him up on to a cart and trundled him home. All afternoon we scrubbed. A lot of his paint had come off in the sea. He's a little bigger than our turtle was but his face is just the same, wizened, wrinkled and wise like a two hundred year old man. And he smiles just the same too - gently.

I'm looking out of my window as I write this. He looks as if he's trying to eat the grass. He won't, of

course. He'll only eat jellyfish. *Zanzibar* is a good name for him, the right name, I think.



(On the last page, she had written in ink, in the wobbly handwriting of an old lady:)

P.S. One Last Thing

I'm not leaving Zanzibar to anyone. I'm leaving him to everyone. So I want him put out on the Green so all the children of Bryher can sit on him whenever they like. They can ride him wherever they like. He can be a horse, a dragon, a dolphin, an elephant or even a leatherback turtle.

As you know, your Great-uncle Billy lived a good long life. When he died, I didn't know how I'd manage without him. But I did, because I had to. Anyway, we're together again now.

L.P. 1995

