

Hannah and the Hurricane

by John Escott

Hannah is sixteen and lives on an island. She is on holiday from school and is working for Mr Duval on his glass-bottomed boat. They take people to look at the beautiful fish and the coral reef under the sea. Mr Duval can only pay Hannah a little money, but she likes working for the old man. Mr Duval's boat is the only glass-bottomed boat on the island. But one day...

"Look, Mr Duval!" says Hannah. "There's a new glass-bottomed boat!" Hannah is right. The new boat is taking people out to look at the coral reef, and there are people waiting for it to come back. "Why are all the people going on the new boat and not on my boat?" says Mr Duval. "What's happening?" "I'm going to find out," says Hannah.

Hannah soon has the answer. "It's cheaper!" she says. "Yes," says a man standing behind her. "And it's going to be the *only* glass-bottomed boat on the island in a month or two. It's going to be 'Goodbye, Mr Duval!'" And he laughs. Hannah knows the man. His name is Max Marker. He is very rich and has a big house on the island. "Is it your boat?" she asks. "Yes," he says.

"Why is it cheaper on your boat?" Hannah asks. "Oh, I know!" she says, "you want to stop Mr Duval's boat and then your prices can go up." Max smiles. "Come and work for me," he says. "I can pay you lots of money."

"No," says Hannah. "I like working for Mr Duval. Money isn't everything."

"You're wrong," says Max. He is laughing again, but it is not a nice laugh.

The weeks go by. People do not come to Mr Duval's boat. "I'm sorry, but there is no more work for you, Hannah," says Mr Duval one day. "It's OK," says Hannah, but she is very sad to lose her job. Max goes to see the old man. "Do you want to sell your boat?" he asks. "I can give you, a good price for it." Mr Duval is very angry. "No!" he says.

The next morning Mr Duval goes to his boat - and sees that it is under the water! "Oh no!" he says. "I don't understand."

Hannah comes later that morning. The radio says there is a strong storm coming - a hurricane! She wants to help Mr Duval get his boat into the boathouse. But now she sees the glass-bottomed boat under the water.

"This is Max Markers work!" says Hannah. "He wants to destroy your business." "I'm an old man," says Mr Duval. "I'm too tired to fight Max Marker and his nasty games." "I'm not!" says Hannah. "I'm going to his house to see him!"

But it is too late. The hurricane is coming! "We must get to my house!" says Mr Duval.

The hurricane hits the island at 11 o'clock that morning. It pulls trees from the ground and they crash down on houses. Cars roll across the road like children's toys. Soon, many of the island's roads are under water! The strong wind throws Max Marker's boat out of the water, and against a wall. Hannah and Mr Duval are safe in a room under the old man's house.

The hurricane goes on for four hours. Slowly, the wind gets weaker and weaker. Two hours later, people start to come out of their houses. The rain stops. "Now I can go to see Max Marker about his nasty games," says

Hannah. "What can you do?" says Mr Duval. "How can you stop him?" "I don't know," says Hannah, angrily. "But I can do *something!*" And she runs off.

Hannah goes to Max Marker's big house. She sees the work of the hurricane. Some of his house is gone! "Where is Max Marker?" she thinks. "Is he inside?" She starts to run to the house, but she is afraid. Max Marker is inside the house - and he cannot get out! "Help! Help!" he says. "I'm going to die!" But the wind takes his words and carries them away.

Hannah can hear Max Marker but she cannot see him.

"Where are you?" she says. "Here!" he says. "I'm over here!" Suddenly, she sees him.

"He's not laughing now," she thinks. There are stones and some of the roof on top of him.

"Help me!" he cries. "Please!"

"I'm coming," she tells him.

Hannah climbs across and starts to pull the stones off him. It is not easy. The stones are very heavy. She gets one off him... then the next one... "Faster!" he tells her, "Work faster!" "I - I can't!" she cries.

Suddenly, there is a noise above her. Hannah looks up - some of the roof is coming down!

"Help!" says Max, and he starts to cry.

Hannah jumps away and the roof crashes down near her. She waits for ten seconds, and she can see again. She climbs back across the stones to Max Marker. He is very happy to see her!

"How long before *all* the house comes down?" thinks Hannah. "Can I get him out quickly?" She starts to work faster.

Max can move now but he is very weak. He stands up slowly, then he climbs out of the house. Hannah helps him across the street. They look back. The house crashes to the ground!

But Max Marker is smiling now. "You're very brave," he says, "thank you, my friend."

"I'm *not* your friend," says Hannah.

"How can I pay you?" says Max. "Pay for Mr Duval's boat," says Hannah. "And stop your nasty games! Work together with the two boats. Don't fight." "OK," says Max Marker, "but what can I give you?" "I don't want anything," says Hannah. "Some money?" asks Max. "No, thank you," says Hannah. "Money isn't everything." "Yes, I'm starting to understand that," says Max.