

Staying as close to the shore as possible they made their way around the island. After passing a couple of small coves similar to where they had stopped, the island gradually changed, it became much rockier. Rexie was careful to steer the boat out a little further because it seemed quite rocky underneath the water as well. The rocks became steeper and more frightening as they continued on.

Gingernut seemed very small and flimsy alongside the huge granite cliffs jutting out into the sea.

“Cesare said it was like this.” said Rexie reassuringly but even he felt scared.

“Yeah I know, it shouldn’t be too much longer till we reach the lagoon, ” said T-Bird feeling much the same way. Soot sat very steadily looking ahead, she didn’t seem worried but it was hard to tell.

After a while the rocks became smaller again and there was a headland in sight. According to the map the lagoon should be just around this headland. Rexie went a little faster now feeling safe once again.

The little boat continued on to the headland and then it slowed down so they could see what was beyond. It was the most beautiful lagoon T-Bird had ever seen. The water was perfectly still and mirrored the thick canopy of the surrounding trees. The sun was still strong

overhead and the children couldn't wait to swim.

Soot sat watching in the shade under a large gum tree. T-Bird and Rexie jumped into the calm lagoon and swam around in the shallow water. It was very cool, just what they needed after their long trip.

After the swim they sat at the edge of the lagoon and finished off their hummingbird cake and drank heaps of fresh water. Soot had a small bowl of water as well. Studying Old Cesare's map they realised it shouldn't be too far to the statues. T-Bird didn't know why, but she just felt somehow that the statues were connected to the missing cats.

"The trail should be in that direction," said Rexie pointing to a spot further along the beach.

"Yeah, I can see a small clearing," said T-Bird as she helped Soot into her backpack leaving the cat's little head popping out.

They hid the boat at the side of the lagoon under a very large tree. Then they walked carefully along the surprisingly steep and rocky trail. The trees became thicker and taller as they walked on. The overhead canopy blocked out the exhausting heat. It was much cooler here in the forest.

"We almost need a torch," said Rexie.

It was much darker and the children slowed their pace. Eventually they reached the top of

the hill where they were able to see the valley below. It was just as Old Cesare had described. A small pretty valley surrounded by bushy hills and trees but no sign of any birds at all. Rexie thought it looked too peaceful for anything bad to happen here. The trees gradually thinned as they descended the hill. They could see more clearly so they walked faster.

Soot started to squirm around in the backpack. Rexie had a look at her but couldn't work out what was wrong, she seemed very nervous. T-Bird decided to let her walk again, maybe she was just tired of being cooped up in the pack. Soot walked nervously with her fur standing on end. She followed T-Bird miaowing softly.

“What do you think's wrong with her?” asked Rexie “poor little thing”.

“I wish I knew, maybe she can sense something that we can't, I think I'll put her back in the pack” said T-Bird as she stopped and picked up the frightened cat. She cuddled Soot and could feel her little heart racing. Soot soon calmed down and so T-Bird put her back in the pack and they set off again.



Eventually they reached the bottom of the valley and continued on through the trees till

they came to a small clearing. Standing tall and majestic, the three statues stared down solemnly as they approached.

The massive stone carvings were considerably taller than the children. They reminded T-Bird of photos she had seen in a book about Hawaii. It seemed strange for these huge heads to be sitting in the middle of this little valley on the island. T-Bird wondered where they came from. Soot was still inside the pack but making a strange hissing sound. Rexie looked at her small face and patted her.

“She looks really scared” He was worried about Soot.

As they stared at the statues they heard a loud high-pitched squealing overhead. Suddenly a flock of bats flew so low that the children dropped to the ground. Even so they still felt the light flap of wings on the top of their heads.

“This place is weird,” said Rexie lying very still on the ground. Soot was still hissing in the backpack. “I’ve never seen fruit bats flying around in daylight before.”

“Do you feel cold?” said T-Bird shivering all of a sudden although it was bright and sunny.

“Yeah, I’m freezing,” said Rexie

“Let’s have a look around and if there’s nothing here we’ll go” said T-Bird getting to

her feet. This place made her feel very uncomfortable.

“Good idea” agreed Rexie. “The statues give me the creeps”.



Passing the gloomy statues they reached a large cluster of thick trees. As they entered the forest it became even colder than before. Darkness surrounded them as they went deeper. It was hard to imagine the searing hot sun they had been walking under a short while before.

Soot miaowed loudly and then her head disappeared inside the pack. They tried to walk as quickly as possible but it was difficult with all the old gnarled tree roots and stumps under foot. They came to a clearing on the other side where there were three identical statues facing outwards, guarding the strange thick forest.

“Just like Old Cesare said....but why are they here?” said T-Bird puzzled.

“Maybe whatever they guard has gone now,” said Rexie hoping that this was so. He wanted to leave this place as soon as possible. Apart from a faint murmuring sound coming from Soot in the backpack it was very quiet. The children stood looking at the statues wondering what their secrets could be.