

this, children, but if you stay still in one place for long enough you turn into rock. True now.' (And we all froze stiff where we were.) 'And that's just what happened to the Sandman and the three giant turtles. They turned into the three Turtle Rocks out in the bay. And his huge great coracle, the one that was wrecked in the storm, well, we all know what became of that, don't we?' (And we all nodded and chorused: 'Coracle Island!') Dadci went on. 'They've none of them moved a muscle in thousands of years. And that's how they'll stay until the Sandman wakes up; and just as soon as he wakes up – and one day he will – he'll want to go back home to Ireland where he belongs. Fair play. But the thing is, children, he'll only wake up when he feels someone loves him enough to feed him and look after him and help him home to Ireland.'

'I will,' said Polly.

'Course you will,' Dadci said, and he laughed and lit his pipe.

'Another one, another one,' said Polly, wafting away the smoke. An old trick this – I'd done it myself. You talk Dadci into another story and another story and another story so you never have to go to bed. It wasn't that difficult either because Dadci loved telling his stories. He'd settle back, puff his pipe, and off he'd go again.

Next he told us the one about the lighthouse on Coracle Island and the lighthouse keeper, an old Russian sea captain called, (and we all chanted his name together) 'Sergei Ivanovitch Prokoviev!' 'On a dark and dreadful night over a hundred years ago Sergei Ivanovitch Prokoviev, captain of the fastest clipper in the Russian merchant fleet, was caught in a hurricane and driven on to Coracle Rock. He lost his ship and most of his crew with it. It



wasn't his fault but he blamed himself just the same, and it was the shame of it that kept him from going home to Russia. Instead he stayed and became the lighthouse keeper on Coracle Rock, and every night without fail the light shone out from the lighthouse to warn away the ships. Then one night the light never came on; and when they went to find out what the matter was, he had disappeared. They found the door locked fast from the inside. They had to pick the lock. Inside it was all shipshape, the bed made, the washing-up done, and just one window left open. And on the table they found an empty cake tin – Welsh cakes were his favourite – and a sky-blue teapot. And there was more. On the chest of drawers was a clock that had stopped at precisely five o'clock, and a bottle of vodka with an empty glass beside it. They found his clothes folded neatly on the top of an old sea chest and gull's feathers by the

window. Can't be a shadow of doubt about it, children, old Sergei had turned himself into a seagull so's he could fly home at last to Russia. And there's some say,' Dadci was finishing in a foggy flurry of pipe smoke, 'that if you were to put the light going again in the lighthouse, then that would bring old Sergei . . .' (and we all chorused again: 'Ivanovitch Prokoviev!') 'back to his lighthouse so's he could cook himself some more Welsh cakes and pour himself a nice cup of tea.'

'Shivery,' said Polly, and please could she have the dragon story now? 'Please, Dadci,' she pleaded. 'I want the one about the spikey blood-red dragon that sleeps on his treasure in the damp dark lair down on Whaletooth Beach. I like it when all the little people come creeping, creeping across the pebbles to steal his treasure and he hears the stones crunching and it wakes him up and he chases them, and

they run away fast as they can and he breathes out his fire and his thick black smoke and he frizzles them up so's they're all turned into the standing stones up on Buzzard Rock. Tell us that one. Please, Dadci.'

'But, Polly, there's nothing much left to tell now, is there?' said Dadci laughing. 'You've just gone and told it all yourself, haven't you?'

'There we are then,' said Auntie Eleri, seizing her opportunity. 'Say goodnight now, Polly.'

'Cooked your goose there,' Barry sniggered.

'Dumbo!' said Polly, and then she had to go. If there was one thing Uncle Rob could not stand it was arguments.

Barry and I lay in the dark and chatted way into the night. We had a whole year to catch up on. With just a little bit of sleep in between, we were still at it at breakfast when Polly announced that she would be going to the beach.

'Not on your own you're not,' said Auntie Eleri. And Polly looked across the table at me with the smile of a tyrant.

'He's busy,' said Barry firmly.

'Pegleg!' said Polly.

'Parrot,' said Barry.

'That'll be enough of that,' Uncle Rob growled from behind his newspaper. As usual it was Auntie Eleri who kept the peace and sorted it all out. I would be shared: I'd spend the mornings (if that was all right with me) with Polly down on the beach, and the afternoons with Barry. Barry was none too happy about it, but he perked up when I said we could maybe fly his kite that afternoon if the wind was right.

So there I was then, tripping down through the fields to Whitesands Beach with Polly leading me like a donkey. And like a donkey it was me who carried the bucket, the spade, the towels and the picnic.



Polly had grown up a lot. She told me so all the way there, and then opened her mouth and waggled a wobbly tooth at me just to prove it. She fell on her knees in the sand beside the Sandman Rocks and clasped her hands together. 'I know,' she said, beaming up at me. 'Let's pretend we're children. We'll build a real Sandman all of our own and we'll make him fat as fat can be. You make his body, and I'll find some shells to make his buttons and his mouth and his eyes and his nose. Come on.'

There are some people who just expect you to do what you're told, and Polly was one of them. So I didn't argue. Off she went down the beach, bottom in the air, looking for cowries and mussels and cockles and limpets, while I began to think about how to build the Sandman's body. It was going to take a lot of digging and an awful lot of sand. As Dadci said in his story, the Sandman was enormous, a

huge sleeping giant stretching at least four metres from the round rock that was his head to the two sticking-up rocks that made up his feet. One rocky knee was raised up and bent, and one of his arms looked as if it was pointing out to sea, out towards the three Turtle Rocks.

I began with the arms. I always do the easiest things first. I'm like that. I wasn't going to have to do too much fetching and carrying to flesh out the arms. The sand was still wet from the tide, heavy to carry but all the better for sculpting and shaping. Polly would come back from time to time to show me her collection of shells and to tell me just what she thought of my handiwork. 'Fatter,' she kept saying. 'He's got to be a great fat giant like Dadci says.' So all that morning I made him fatter. By the time I'd finished, he had a huge great belly like a sumo wrestler and he had arms and legs to match. Polly added the