

ON THE EDGE

Tug lies on the bed and stares at the bars on the window. He doesn't know where he is, or why he is locked in this room. The Woman and the Man called Doyle bring him food, but explain nothing. Why do they say that he is their son? Sometimes Tug is afraid, sometimes angry. Soon he begins to wonder who he is, and if his real name *is* Liam Shakespeare . . . or Philip Doyle.

Jinny has a lot of work to do on the farm. She has no time to investigate mysteries. But there is something strange about the people staying in the lonely cottage on the moors. What was all the noise on their first night there? Why was there that wild shout from inside the house the next day?

Jinny always likes to find answers to her questions. But with these answers comes danger, from violent people with strange ideas . . . and guns.



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GILLIAN CROSS

On the Edge

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1 TUG IS TAKEN AWAY

Day One – Sunday 7th August

Tug was running. His legs ached, his feet hurt, all his body was screaming at him to stop running. But he didn't want to stop. He wanted today's run to be better and faster than ever before. Now he was nearly at the end of his run, and his legs were burning, but he still went on running. As he came round the last street corner, he saw his own front door, a hundred metres away. *I mustn't stop now!* he thought. *I promised myself I'd do eight kilometres, and I will!*

The church bells were ringing, and the blood was beating in his ears. Suddenly it all seemed easy, and his legs felt strong. *I can do it!* he said happily to himself.



His legs ached, his feet hurt . . .

He reached the front door, and looked at his watch. 36 minutes 20 seconds. *At last! Eight kilometres in less than 37 minutes! I've been trying to do that for weeks!*

He put his key in the door. Now he could have a hot bath. His mother would get home later. She had promised to cook him a special meal – chicken and chips, and a chocolate cake. He smiled as he pushed open the door.

Strange! The house was dark, too dark. And there was something more . . . But he was too tired to think. Suddenly there was an arm round his neck and a hand over his face. He fell, and everything went black.

Day Two – Monday 8th August

Fifteen hours later and two hundred kilometres away in Derbyshire, Jinny Slattery came out of the farmhouse. In the moonlight she could see the ridge of mountains called Ashdale Great Edge. It stood, black and frightening, against the sky, with the Castle Rock at its southern end.

Jinny walked away from the farmhouse, and took the narrow road up the hill. It was two o'clock in the morning, and very quiet. When she reached some trees, her father stepped out and touched her arm.

'Oh!' she cried in surprise, and felt angry with herself. He had told her to be quiet.

'Follow me,' Joe said, and went on up the road. He walked quickly and silently, his dog just behind him.

I must remember what he told me to do, Jinny thought.

I don't want to make a mistake!

Now they were high up on the moors. Further along was an old cottage, which Mrs Hollins used to rent to summer visitors. It was almost hidden by trees. On the right was a gate into a field, the field which they had chosen.

Jinny felt sick. She knew what would happen next. Joe had already filled every hole in the hedges round the field, so the gate was the only way out. Now he was putting a net over the gate.



The cottage was almost hidden by trees.

Just then they heard a car driving up the road.

‘Where is it going?’ asked Jinny. ‘This road only goes to the moors and Mrs Hollins’ cottage.’

‘Visitors,’ said Joe softly, ‘probably renting the cottage. Keep quiet, they won’t see us in the dark.’

The car drove slowly past them and stopped in front of the cottage. Jinny could hear the voices of a man and a woman, and then a strange noise. Were they pulling something heavy into the house? She couldn’t see what was happening.

When it was quiet again, Joe said softly, ‘Remember, Jinny. Remember everything I told you,’ and went silently into the field, followed by his dog.

Jinny was shaking now, not from cold but from fear and excitement. She knew that Joe and the dog were moving slowly through the field. She thought of the hare, lying asleep in the grass. It would try to escape through the gate. Then she must do what Joe had told her.

I can’t! she thought. But she had to do it. ‘If you want to eat meat, you must be able to kill an animal,’ Joe had said. ‘Why should other people do it for you?’

But in the end it almost seemed easy. The hare tried to jump through the gate and was caught in the net. Automatically Jinny hit its neck hard, and the hare’s warm dead body fell at her feet. As she was looking at it, Joe arrived. ‘Good girl,’ he said, and started taking the net off the gate.

Just then a loud noise broke the silence. It was the sound



*The hare was caught
in the net.*

of hammering, and it came from the cottage.

‘What’s that?’ Jinny cried. But Joe didn’t stop what he was doing. ‘Nothing to do with us,’ he replied. That was what he always said. For him the Slattery family was much more important than the outside world.

‘But if someone hears,’ said Jinny, ‘they’ll come up here to see, and then the police will catch us . . . stealing hares that don’t belong to us!’

‘Don’t worry,’ said Joe calmly. ‘From the village you can’t hear anything that happens up here. We’ll make sure that we get home with the hare before anyone comes.’

They walked down the road to the farmhouse. *I’m not like Joe, thought Jinny. I always want to know why things happen. And I want to know what’s happening in that cottage!*

10.00 a.m.

Seven hours later, Tug woke up in the cottage. The room was full of sunshine and very loud music. Above him was a



There was a high window, with strong bars across it.

high window, with strong bars across it, and blue sky outside.

It must be a dream. He wanted to wake up, and find himself in his own bedroom. But the dream did not go away.

Suddenly he noticed a woman at the door. She was about thirty, and very thin, with long legs, long brown hair and long fingers. But her eyes were the most interesting thing about her. They were large and yellow-brown, almost golden.

She said something, but he couldn't hear her because of the music. 'Sorry, I didn't hear that,' he said.

'*I said* how are you *feeling?*' she shouted angrily.

Tug tried to sit up. When he moved his head, he felt sick. 'What happened?' he asked. 'I don't remember this place.' He was sure he had never been there before.

The woman sounded careless, unworried. 'You fell . . . hit your head . . . we had to carry you upstairs . . .'

It was *important*, but he couldn't hear because the music was so loud. 'It's too noisy! We can't talk!' he shouted.

She didn't answer, but opened the bedroom door and shouted to someone. The music was louder through the open door. Tug couldn't think, and his head was still hurting.

A man came into the room, with slow, unhurried steps. He had a strangely white face, with cold blue eyes and thick black hair. The woman spoke quietly to him. Tug couldn't hear.

'Look,' said Tug. He wanted to sound as polite as possible. 'I don't remember anything. Where am I? And how did I get here? And who are you? *Please will you tell me what's happening?*'

'Don't worry,' said the man coldly. 'You hit your head and you've forgotten a few things. That's all. You'll be fine after a rest.'

He turned to go, but Tug reached out for his arm.

'Please!' he cried wildly. 'You must tell me *something!*'

'We're in the cottage that we've rented for our holiday, in the north of England. You remember? Now try and sleep.'

'But who are you?' shouted Tug. They were both leaving

the room. The man said something that Tug didn't hear, '... mirror ...' and closed the door behind him. Tug jumped out of bed and ran to the door, but it was locked.

Suddenly he felt very cold. The music still filled his head, but it didn't stop him thinking now. He had hoped this was all a mistake, that they would answer his questions and explain everything, or take him home. But now he realized that they wanted to keep him a prisoner in that room.

It was a small room just under the roof, with only a bed and a cupboard in it. He looked up at the window above his head. They had hammered the bars on to it very recently. He couldn't escape that way. He sat on the bed and put his head in his hands. He had never felt so miserable and frightened before. Just then he thought of his mother. He knew what she would say to him now. *Why do you always feel sorry for yourself? Get up and do something!* He felt better when he thought of her small angry face. *Cheer up, Tug!* he told himself, and got up to look in the cupboard.

He was very pleased to find his clothes there, all ready for him to wear. But as he reached for them, he noticed something. On the inside of the door was a long mirror. What had the man said? *Something about a mirror.* Slowly Tug turned to look at himself.

And for a second he was in a bad dream. Because the face in the mirror was not his. Then he realized what was different – his hair. It was *black*, not fair. His face seemed very white, and his blue eyes looked coldly back at him. He looked at himself in the mirror for a long time. With the



Slowly Tug turned to look at himself.

black hair, white face and cold blue eyes, he looked just like the man. He could almost be his son.

12.45 p.m.

Jinny ran into the village. Her father had asked her to post something, so she wanted to get to the post office before it closed for lunch. Outside the post office she saw Rachel Hollins sitting on a wall. Rachel's father was the village policeman, and her mother worked in the post office. Rachel was very pretty, and always wore beautiful clothes.

'Hello Jinny!' she cried. 'Do you like my new dress?'

'Very nice,' replied Jinny crossly. 'But I couldn't wear that for working on the farm.'

'Oh, I forgot!' said Rachel. She smiled sweetly – too sweetly, and Jinny wanted to hit her. 'I'm so sorry! Poor

Jinny! You have to work so hard and you never have any new clothes and . . .' She stopped as she saw someone behind Jinny. 'I must go in and have lunch,' she said quickly, and ran inside.

Jinny turned to see who was behind her. It was a woman, with the strangest, loveliest eyes she had ever seen – big, yellow-brown eyes, almost golden. *Hare's eyes*, thought Jinny. The woman looked like a hare, with her long legs and thin face.

'I can see that girl only thinks about clothes,' said the Hare-woman to Jinny, and walked into the post office. Jinny watched her go. *What an interesting woman!* she thought. *And she understands about Rachel!*

Inside the post office the one o'clock news was on the radio. The Hare-woman, Mrs Hollins, and Jinny all listened.

Terrorists are holding thirteen-year-old Liam Shakespeare, Harriet Shakespeare's son, at the family home in London. Police are trying to—

'How terrible!' said Mrs Hollins. 'That poor boy!'

'Who's Harriet Shakespeare?' asked Jinny.

'You haven't heard of her?' asked the Hare-woman in surprise. 'She's a television reporter, always looking for other people's secrets. Thinks herself very important.'

Mrs Hollins pretended to feel sorry for Jinny. 'Poor girl, she doesn't have any newspapers or radio or television in her house,' she explained. 'Her family grow their own food, make their own clothes. They never buy anything new!'

Mrs Hollins always laughs at us Slatterys, thought Jinny. ‘We prefer to do everything for ourselves,’ she said. She really wanted the stranger to understand.

But Mrs Hollins had started talking about the news again. ‘That poor Harriet Shakespeare! She must be very worried. A mother always worries about her children. Have *you* any children?’ she asked the Hare-woman.

‘Ye-es, yes, I have. A son, Philip, almost fourteen.’

‘Well, well! My daughter Rachel and Jinny here are both nearly fourteen. Are you staying near here?’

The Hare-woman laughed. ‘Well, yes, we’re staying in your cottage. We arrived late last night.’



The woman looked like a hare, with her long legs and thin face.

‘Oh, you’re Mrs Doyle!’ Mrs Hollins said, and shook the stranger’s hand warmly. *So the Hare-woman was one of the visitors to the cottage!* thought Jinny.

‘In fact, I hope we didn’t wake everyone in the village up last night,’ said the Hare-woman. ‘Philip fell over and crashed into some furniture. There was a terrible noise. He hit his head, so he’ll be in bed for a while.’

Jinny said nothing, but she knew that wasn’t true.

‘We were very tired,’ continued the Hare-woman, ‘so we took Philip upstairs and went to bed immediately.’

Another lie! thought Jinny. *You didn’t go to bed immediately. You hammered and hammered. Why are you lying?*

Suddenly the Hare-woman seemed to remember something. She stopped talking, bought some food and hurried out.

Jinny walked slowly back to the farm. At first she had liked the stranger, with her beautiful honest eyes. But *why* was she lying?

2 WHAT’S HAPPENING AT THE COTTAGE?

Day Three – Tuesday 9th August

8.00 a.m.

Tug was lying on the bed. He hadn’t slept since the Man and the Woman walked out after their first visit, hours ago. The music had a strong beat which hammered at the inside