The Storm Keeper’s Island - Chapter 1 - The Sleeping Island

She took a bite, her words soupy from half-chewed caramel. “It’s an adventure, Fionny.” She glanced from side to side, then dropped her voice. “This place is magical. Just wait and see.”

“You only think it’s magical because you met a boy last year,” said Fionn with deep, abiding disgust.

Tara shook her head. “No, actually, I think it is magical because there are secrets on the island.”

Fionn tried to waft the smell of chocolate away from his nose. “What kind of secrets?”

“Can’t tell you!” she said, eyes gleaming with triumph.

Fionn sighed. “I can’t believe I’m going to be stuck with you all summer.”

“Well, I wouldn’t worry because I obviously won’t be spending any time with you.” She wrinkled her nose, her freckles hunching together. “You can hang out with Grandad.”

“I already like him better than you,” said Fionn quickly.

“You don’t even know him yet.”

Fionn opened his fist to reveal his crumpled-up ferry ticket. “I like this piece of paper better than you.”

Tara brandished her Mars bar at his nose. “You’re so immature.”

“I am not.” Fionn waited for her to look the other way and then threw the piece of paper at her. He watched it tangle in the ends of her hair and felt a little better then.

Across the bay, a seagull dipped and swirled, its wing skimming the waves. It released a savage cry, and as if called to attention, the island rose to meet them.

Pockets of dark green grass bubbled up out of the sea, climbing into hills that rolled over each other. Gravel roads weaved themselves between old buildings that hunched side by side along the pier, where the sand was dull and brassy. The place looked oddly deserted; it was as if the entire island was fast asleep.

Arranmore.

It was exactly how Fionn imagined it: a forgotten smudge on the edge of the world. The perfect place for his soul to come to die.

Tara flounced back to her perch and Fionn felt himself deflate, like a giant balloon. He watched the faraway blurs on the island turn into people, shops, houses and cars, and too many fishing boats to count. He tried to picture his mother here, in this strange place, wandering along the pier, ducking into the corner shop for bread or milk. Or even standing on the shore, looking out at the ocean, with her arms pulled around her. He couldn’t imagine it, no matter how hard he tried.

When the ferry had finally groaned its way into port, Tara bounded on to the island without as much as a backwards glance. Fionn hovered on the edge of the pier, his spine stiff as a rod. Something was wrong. The ground was vibrating underneath him, the slightest tremor rattling against his soles as though his footsteps were far heavier than they really were. The breeze rolled backwards and twisted around him, pushing his hair into his eyes and his breath back into his lungs, until he had the most absurd sensation that the island was opening its arms and enveloping him.
Fionn searched the jagged lines of the headland. In the distance, at the edge of the bay, where briars and ferns tussled on a low, sloping cliff, a cottage poked out of the wilderness. The smoke from its chimney curled into the evening air like a finger. The wind pushed him across the pier. The smoke kept rising and twisting, grey against the sun-blush sky.

It was beckoning him.

Fionn could almost hear the whispering in his ears: a voice he had never heard before, a voice thrumming deep in his blood and in his bones. A voice he was trying very hard to ignore.

“Come here,” it was saying. “Come home.”

**Questions**

1) Read the paragraph beginning ‘Tara flounced back...’

What is Fionn thinking during this part of the text?
Tick one thought.

- I don’t believe that mum would ever have been here on this island. [ ]
- Those shops and houses look pretty. [ ]
- I can’t wait to go out on one of those many fishing boats. [ ]
- I feel so disappointed. [ ]

2) ‘Tara **bounded** on to the island without as much as a backwards glance. Fionn **hovered** on the edge of the pier, his spine stiff as a rod.’

What do the words *bounded and hovered* suggest about how the characters felt at the time?

3) What impressions do you get of the island?

Give two impressions, using evidence to support your answer.

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