



The RAVEN RIDDLE

VASHTI HARDY

With illustrations by
Nátalie Smillie

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Natalie Smillie

Barrington  Stoke

For Keira and Jack

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Mission Ready



Wardens Grace Griffin and Tom Eely stood opposite each other in the map room of Griffin House. Tom was a new recruit and they were checking they had all the tools and equipment they needed for their next mission.

“Stun stick?” asked Grace.

“Check,” said Tom, and patted the bottom leg pocket of his brown warden’s jumpsuit.

“Multi-tool?”

“Check.” Tom pulled it from the thigh pocket of his right leg.

“Fingerprint dust?” Grace said.

“Check,” Tom replied.

“Magnifier?”

“Check.”

“Jelly babies?”

“Always,” Tom said, grinning.

Grace laughed.

Then Grace saw that Tom looked relaxed, so with lightning speed she swept her leg beneath him. Tom reacted fast and leapt out of the way, then gave a lunge and arm strike.

Grace dodged the counter-attack, smiling. Tom had picked up the art of combat quickly

since moving into Griffin House, and they'd had many weeks of fun as they trained together. It was great for Grace to have someone of her own age around.

“Combat rule number one: always be ready,” said Grace. “I taught you well.”

Watson the robot raven flew down from the mantelpiece and wing-chopped the back of Tom's knee.

Tom almost fell over, but he corrected his balance and turned around.

Watson flapped his mechanical wings so that he hovered in front of Tom. “Combat rule number two: look around for more than one attacker,” Watson said.

Tom planted his feet firmly and extended his arms, facing Grace and Watson. “Combat rule number three: hold your nerve,” Tom said firmly.

Faster than a flash, Grace whipped out her stun stick and twirled it between her fingers like an acrobat. “Even when faced with a stun stick,” she said.

Grace pressed the small button to activate the stun stick and it emitted a silver light. Tom plunged his hand into his pocket to bring out his own stun stick, and with a burst of light their weapons locked as they began to lunge and block each other.

Grace’s mum was standing next to the Griffin map. She now glanced up and said, “Well, you’ve come on superbly with your training, Tom.”

The Griffin family were wardens of the Griffin map, an amazing invention that allowed them to teleport across the whole of Moreland from the city of Copperport where they lived. Great Grandma Griffin had created the map years ago. She’d wanted to find a way to travel to even the most remote places in Moreland

when people needed help or there was a mystery to solve.

Until recently, Grace, her mum and her older brother, Bren, had been the only map wardens – keeping it in the family. But on a mission a few months ago, Grace had met Tom Eely, who had grown up in an orphanage on Eely Isle.

The orphanage had been run by a creative woman who had shared her love of designing new gadgets with Tom. But after she'd passed away, Tom was left alone on the remote island – until Grace turned up. Grace realised Tom's incredible talent for inventing would make him a great warden, and so she had convinced Mum to welcome him into the Griffin family.

It was wonderful to hear Mum praise Tom's progress after weeks of training. Grace grinned. She and Tom were looking forward to putting their skills into action by going on a mission, just the two of them. They were more than ready to find some crooks and solve big

crimes. She'd been hoping Mum would notice it was time.

“Then we're ready for our own red mission,” Grace said. She tried to make it sound like a fact rather than a question.

The Griffin map showed the entire country of Moreland. The many towns and villages each had their own gate on the map. The gates were portals, letting the wardens teleport into the map. The wardens answered calls for assistance and helped to ensure life in Moreland ran smoothly. If a gate flashed red, it was an emergency call, while a flashing blue gate meant it was a smaller problem.

Before Mum could answer Grace, Bren teleported into the room beside the map. He had left a short while ago to answer a call in the village of Brook Hollow.

“That was a short mission,” said Mum.

“I’m not finished,” Bren said. “I left my notebook here, so I’ve just come back to get it. I have a feeling this mission is going to need a lot of notes.”

“It’s hard to carry out a mission without the right equipment,” Grace said, feeling smug at her brother’s mistake. “Mission rule three: keep notes on the situation. *My* notebook is always in my pocket.”

Bren glared at her.

“What’s the problem in Brook Hollow?” asked Mum. “I don’t think we’ve ever had a call from there before.”

“Ravens,” Bren replied.

“Ravens?” Watson squawked, and flew to land on the map table beside Bren. He ruffled his feathers.

Bren nodded. “Ravens have been attacking local residents. But like I say, I didn’t get far because I needed my notebook.”

A red gate started flashing on the map on the far side of the mountains – this was an emergency. Grace widened her eyes and glanced at Tom. This was their chance. She



looked hopefully at Mum, who wavered for a moment. Grace thought that even if Mum insisted on going with them, at least it would be an exciting mission.

“All right—” Mum started.

“Yes!” Grace interrupted, hurrying to the map. “Come on, Tom!” She grabbed a re-compass, which was a pocket-sized device they needed to teleport back home, and reached for the gate.

“Hey, not so fast!” said Mum.

Grace stopped. What had she forgotten? She hurried to pick up a pen to write down the name of the town where the gate flashed on a notepad beside the map. Leaving a note of your destination was teleporting rule number one. “Silly me,” Grace said.

“No, Grace. I was about to say that you and Tom can go on a mission alone, but not this one.

You can take over the raven problem in Brook Hollow. Bren and I will answer the red call. Watson, you'd better go with them."

Grace sighed. "We're not really alone if Watson is with us."

Watson's cogs whirred and he clacked his beak. "Charming," he said.

"Sorry, Watson," Grace said, "but you know what I mean."

"Watson goes with you to Brook Hollow, Grace. Or you don't go at all," Mum said as she grabbed a re-compass.

Grace nodded. She loved having Watson around, but he could nag a bit.

"Sometimes I can read your thoughts, Grace Griffin," said Watson with a cough.

Mum took Bren's hand and they reached for the red gate. With a whirl and a flash of blue, they both disappeared into the map.

Grace looked over at Tom. The excitement of an emergency mission had disappeared like air escaping from a popped balloon. "Sorry. It doesn't look like we'll be able to use many of our fun gadgets or combat skills. I don't think raven pests are going to cause us too many problems."

A grin spread on Tom's lips. "Well, it's still a mission just for us," he said. "At least we can have a bit of fun together."

Grace nodded and patted her shoulder. "Come on, Watson. I know you're not programmed for fun, but problem ravens should be your specialist subject!" She loved to tease Watson.

"And being cheeky is yours, Grace!" Watson replied.

Grace wrote on the notepad beside the map:
*Grace, Tom and Watson – gone to Brook Hollow
to solve a raven riddle.* Then she took Tom's
hand and said, "Ready?"

He nodded and Grace reached towards the
flashing blue gate.