

# THE UPRISING THE MAPMAKERS IN CRUXCIA



EIRLYS HUNTER

## **PRAISE FOR THE MAPMAKERS' RACE**

Selected for the International Board on  
Books for Young People (IBBY) Honour List 2020

Chosen for The Reading Agency UK Summer Reading Challenge

Chosen for Australian Indie Booksellers Summer Reading Guide

*"The Mapmakers' Race* already feels like a timeless adventure ... a thrilling tale full of derring-do and heart." BOOK TRUST, UNITED KINGDOM

"One of the most poised, stylish children's books I've read in a long time."

KATE DE GOLDI, RADIO NEW ZEALAND

"I love this!" KIM HILL, RADIO NEW ZEALAND

"An adventure story of such quality and originality, pace and punch."

BOOKWAGON, UNITED KINGDOM

"This rip-roaring adventure about four kids and a parrot called Carrot is classic read-aloud fare." BEST KIDS BOOKS 2018, NEW ZEALAND LISTENER

"A thrilling adventure tale." THE IRISH TIMES

"I loved this tale of ingenuity, exploration and nature."

BETTER READ KIDS BOOKSTORE, AUSTRALIA

"Full of danger, excitement and adventure with wonderfully memorable characters, this is one not to be missed."

RICKARO BOOKSHOP, UNITED KINGDOM

"Will have some children reaching for ink and paper to become wondrous mapmakers, and others out in the wilderness, exploring and making tracks. Charming, exciting and just a little dangerous."

VOLUME BOOKSTORE, NEW ZEALAND

"A thrilling and thoroughly enjoyable adventure full of setbacks and dangers and family squabbling, but also fun and laughter and the thrill of exploration and storytelling around campfires under the open stars." CHILDREN'S BOOKS IRELAND

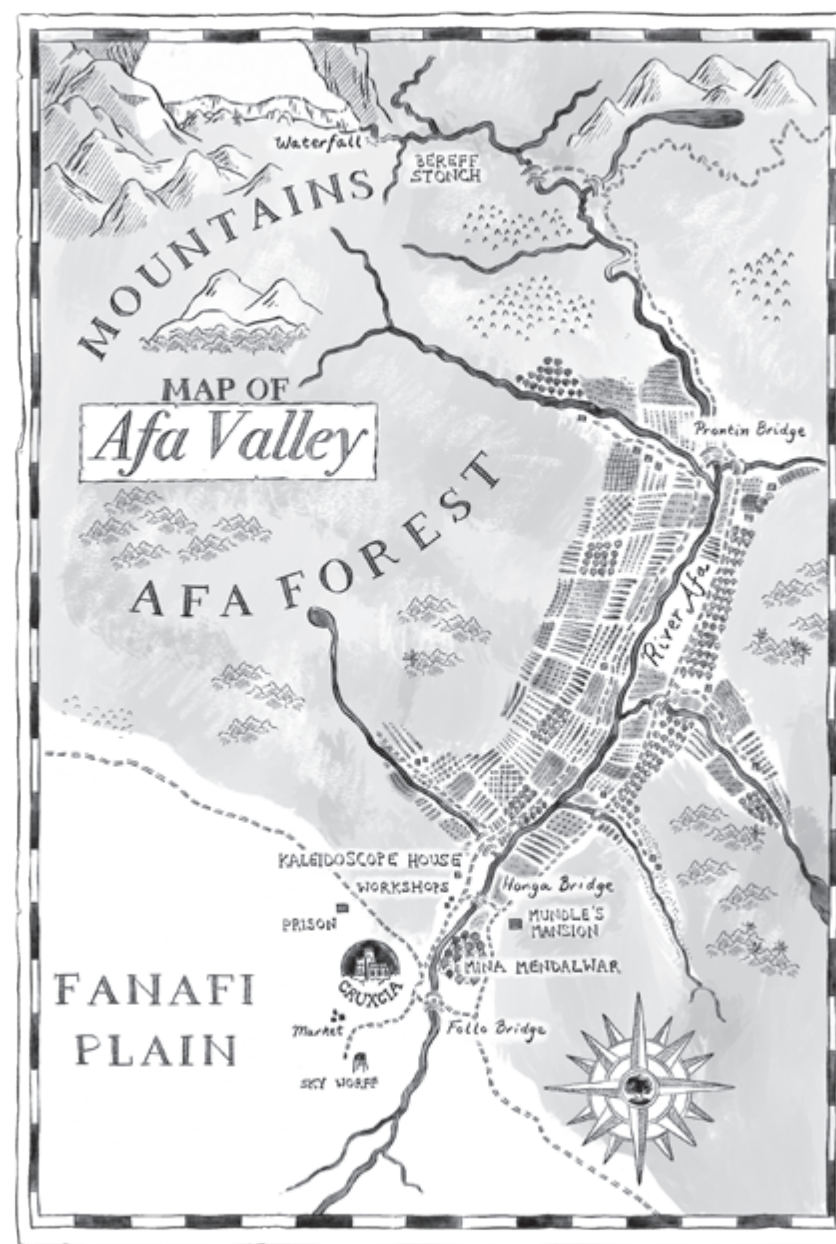
"This is good old-fashioned storytelling, a classic quest with challenges in every chapter, a well-thought-out narrative arc and plenty of in-jokes for all ages." NEW ZEALAND BOOKS

## CONTENTS

*For Idris and Laurence, with love*

ONE	Beyond Porto Pearls	1
TWO	Cruxcia	10
THREE	Cowboys	22
FOUR	How Humphrey Saved the Day	29
FIVE	A Lot of “Whys?” and Some “Becausees”	43
SIX	Progress and Progress	52
SEVEN	Land Grabbing	57
EIGHT	Outrageous Desecration	60
NINE	The Chase	65
TEN	The Prison	76
ELEVEN	Spying	81
TWELVE	Amazement	89
THIRTEEN	The Wisps of a Plan—and Scrolls	93
FOURTEEN	A Genius Idea	99
FIFTEEN	Empire Hotel Odo	103
SIXTEEN	Maps and Plans	109
SEVENTEEN	A Secret, Risky Meeting	115
EIGHTEEN	The Road to Bereff Stonch	123
NINETEEN	Three Amazing Things	136
TWENTY	Going Up	141

TWENTY-ONE	Never, Ever, Ever Again	145
TWENTY-TWO	Which Way?	154
TWENTY-THREE	Tired, Cold, Hungry and Sore	160
TWENTY-FOUR	Kleffi and Tage	169
TWENTY-FIVE	Cousins	175
TWENTY-SIX	Paint and Pyrotechnics Workshop	180
TWENTY-SEVEN	The Land Court	190
TWENTY-EIGHT	Will This Change Everything?	202
TWENTY-NINE	Lysander's Performance	212
THIRTY	Meanwhile...	218
THIRTY-ONE	The Sky Worff	236
THIRTY-TWO	The Party	243





## CHAPTER ONE



# BEYOND PORTO PEARLS

“Where are we? What is this place?” Sal stood, half-asleep, beside the coach that seemed to have stopped in the middle of nowhere.

“Quick, grab your things and hurry,” said Ma. “Hang onto Humphrey, Sal.”

The coachman passed the last bag down from the roof. Ma shouldered her rucksack, picked up the carpetbag and the tool bag and strode away towards some bright lights.

The night was starry black, and cold. They all heaved their rucksacks onto their shoulders and Francie followed Ma, with Carrot the parrot on her arm. Sal picked up the picnic basket and towed a sleepy Humphrey.

“Joe, come *on*.” He’d stopped to stare at the sky. Sal yawned and shivered. “Hurry up!”

Joe came reluctantly. “So many stars.”

There was a low building ahead. Light poured out of the door every time it opened. Inside, a queue of people with bags and boxes curled round a waiting-room and was exiting through

another door on the far side. Ma told them to join it while she went to talk to a uniformed man. She returned clutching tickets. "We made it. Just in time."

The sign on the far door seemed to be written in several languages, but included the words LAWNCHARIUM, SKY WORFF and EMBARKKASHON TOWER. The letters GTC were printed below the sign.

"Embarking on what?" Sal whispered to Joe. "I'm not sure about this."

Francie hugged her stomach.

Ma had refused to tell them how they were getting to Cruxcia, saying it was a special surprise and they'd love it. The queue shuffled forward slowly, then before long they were outside. Ahead of Sal, people were climbing a flight of steps, lit by lanterns. Steps to what? Sal craned her neck to make out a vast whale shape, basking in the air high above them.

"Holeygamoley," she whispered.

Humphrey hid his face in her back. "What is it?"

"I think it's a dirigible," said Sal. "We're going on an airship!"

The dirigible was tethered to a tower. The queue stretched up the steps to the landing stage. This was too exciting, and very scary, though Ma seemed completely calm. She went first, up the stairs, across a gangway that bobbed and wobbled, and into the boat that hung under the giant balloon. It was like a cross between a ferry and a charabanc, with two rows of bench seats facing forward, three people to a seat, and a walkway down the middle. Twelve rows, seventy-two people, Sal counted automatically.

A woman wearing a flying suit looked at their tickets and pointed to the bench that spanned the back of the boat. So lucky! They'd be able to watch the world disappear behind them. But there was nothing to stop them or their things from falling overboard. Sal could already feel her worry warring with the thrill of viewing the world from above.

She squeezed Humphrey's arm and made him look at her. "No leaning over, not even a finger past the rail, understand? Or you'll be dead."

He nodded, eyes huge. "When will we see Pa? Today? Tomorrow?"

"If only," said Joe.

"Today we're going to Cruxcia because we found out that's where Pa's expedition went," said Sal. "Then we have to find out if they're still there, or if they went somewhere else. There are loads of different countries in Grania. But everyone has to be somewhere. We just have to find him."

"I'm good at looking," said Humphrey.

"You are. You're an excellent looker," said Sal.

They sat as still as they could in their seats, and watched four uncooperative sheep and crates of chickens being loaded into storage below their deck. The sky began to lighten in the east and gradually the night turned from black to grey.

Humphrey peered cautiously over the back. "Sal, Sal, there's giant birds!"

Three strange objects with outstretched wings were poised beside the landing strip. They *did* look like giant birds. They had letters painted on their tails. Sal squinted. GTC.

“Those must be ornithopters,” said Ma. “They’re for transport. One day we might go in one.”

A man on the platform blew a whistle, the door in the boat’s side was closed and bolted, and the gangway pulled back onto the landing stage.

Sal had been watching a smudge of dust move along the road from Porto Pearls. It was a four-horse carriage, driving at speed towards the Embarkkashon Tower.

As the tethering ropes fell away, the airship quivered and shuddered beneath her, and slowly began to rise.

Below, two figures, one tall, the other short, scrambled out of the carriage and ran to the steps.

Too late for them: the dirigible was on its way.

The balloon rose, with its ferry boat slung beneath it, and the silent land shrank away. Sal felt as if she were dreaming—even more when the airwoman pulled on ropes and huge maroon and cream striped sails unfurled below the boat. It was all so beautiful, her eyes prickled.

Ma called over the wind, “Someone hang on to Carrot in case she’s tempted to fly. She’d never keep up.”

But Carrot had more sense than that. She didn’t even want to see where they were going. She walked down Joe’s leg, muttering “Riduckulous, Ridonkulous”. She played with his bootlace for a moment, then scuttled under the bench seat.

The sun rose behind the eastern hills, giving the whale and the boat a pair of shadows that chased along the ground together. Francie couldn’t stop smiling. She got out her sketchbook and started to draw this upside-down world: the whale swimming

through air, the boat hanging under the whale, and the sails stretching down towards the land.

Sal turned her attention to the balloon. She stared at the small pod above them, suspended from the middle of the whale, wondering if it contained a pilot. “I’d like to ask the airwoman how this works,” she said to Joe. “She might be able to explain the relationship between the upward motion from the gas in the balloon and the forward thrust from the engine and sails. And how they steer.”

“Save me!” said Joe.

The airwoman continued adjusting ropes and checking dials. Sal wasn’t brave enough to interrupt her.

“Breakfast time,” said Ma, and handed out cheese pastries from the picnic basket. “They’re a specialty of Grania.”

Crunchy, flaky, cheesy—delicious!

They passed over a toy village clustered around toy trees, and they waved to tiny toy figures who ran out and waved back. They rose over steep cliffs, cut through with ravines. Humphrey pointed out a long procession of camels crossing a red plain, but none of the riders took any notice of the dirigible, even when Humphrey shouted: “Hey, camels. Up here, camels!”

“You’re a camel. A camel with no humps,” said Joe.

“No, I’m not.”

“Oh, yes you are. And you’re Hump-free!”

It took him a moment to get it.

Sal pointed to GTC printed on the inside of the door. “What does that stand for, Ma? It was on the ornithopters, and in Porto Pearls too.”

“The Granian Trading Company,” said Ma. “I don’t know much about it—it’s quite secretive. They come from overseas to trade. They buy things in one place and take them somewhere else to sell. Before they started this dirigible service, the only way to get to Cruxcia was six days on a camel—I decided that six days is five and a half days too long for a camel ride.”

“Good decision,” said Sal. “This is the best thing ever.”

It was good to do nothing but watch the world drift by below them, especially after yesterday, which they’d spent in the steamy, stinky, scary bustle of Porto Pearls. The captain of the boat that had taken them there said it should rightly be called Pirate City. Sal was glad they’d only had to stay two nights. They’d seen shocking things in the city: the row of rags that turned out to be a family sleeping in the street, or children and grown-ups begging (including a man with a wooden leg, like an actual pirate). Worst of all, everyone else in the town just stepped around the homeless, hungry families as if they were invisible.

One good thing about Porto Pearls was the map shop. Sal hadn’t known there was such a thing. Thousands of maps hung from its walls, or were rolled up in cubby holes, piled on tables and stacked in racks. New maps, old maps, printed maps and hand-drawn maps. Ma needed a map of the region to start planning the search for Pa, and while she was deciding which one, Francie and Sal flicked through a rack. They were amazed to discover that some of the maps had been drawn by people they knew, or had heard of. They found a map of the Coralian Alps by Monty Basingstoke-Black and one of East Smoke Island by Agatha Amersham—they’d both been on the Great Mapmaking

Race which the Santanders had won. Their winnings were paying for this expedition to find Pa.

Then Francie spotted the name Waldo Watkins in the corner of a map—the friend Pa was working with when he never came home. And it was dated eight months ago! She showed it to Ma, who immediately bought that map too. And all the time, a tall woman and a short man had stood in a dark corner of the shop, whispering together and watching them. They made Sal feel very uncomfortable. Later, Joe and Francie had seen them again in the hotel.

The shop assistant told Ma that he’d bought Waldo Watkins’s map from a nun from the infirmary, who’d sold it to pay for the care of a sick patient. So they set off for the infirmary.

“Could that patient be Pa?” asked Joe.

“No,” said Ma, “I’m sure it’s not Pa.”

They’d crossed Porto Pearls in a cab, and all the way there Sal had thought, *please let it be Pa*. And then she thought, *but only if he’s getting better*. She’d almost convinced herself that they’d find him sitting in a dressing gown in the infirmary garden recovering from a terrible illness.

It wasn’t Pa. At the infirmary a nun explained to Ma that Waldo Watkins had been the patient. He’d been very sick and died of Desert Fever. The nun gave Ma a small bag containing all his possessions, which made Ma cry and squeeze Sal’s hand too tight. They gave three gold coins to the infirmary to thank the nuns for looking after him.

On the way back to their hotel Humph was quiet, then he whispered, “Why did Wallo Watky die? Was he old?”



Ma put an arm round Humphrey. "Yes, he was old. Too old to still be working, really, but he loved making maps and he had no family to stay home for. He told Pa he'd taken this job, that the pay was good, and why not come with him? Pa's last letter to us came from here. It said they were going to meet someone called Zander Abercrombie for final details before setting off the next day, and we might not hear from him for some time, as they'd be far from any postal offices."

"This was just their starting point. They could have gone anywhere," said Sal.

"I'm afraid they could," said Ma.

"Do you think Pa is dead, too?" Humph asked in a mouse's voice.

"No," said Ma. "I believe he's alive, and I'm certain that we're going to find him."

She opened Waldo Watkins's bag of possessions. "Now what's in here?"

There was a pencil box, which Ma gave to Humphrey to encourage him to practise writing, and a drawing pad, which she flicked through. There were sketches of rock formations and studies of trees and leaves, but most of the pages were blank. She gave it to Francie.

Then she pulled out a cylindrical case. Ma smiled. "I feel certain that Waldo would have said, 'Give this to Joe.'"

Joe opened the lid of the leather case and tipped out a tube of dark wood with brass ends. He pulled one end and the tube grew—it was a telescope. He clutched it tight. It was the thing he wanted most in all the world.

The last thing in the bag was a coin purse. It was empty. "Here, Sal, you have this. Waldo was very fond of you when he met you as a baby. He'd be pleased to think that a nearly grown-up Sal was using something of his." Sal fingered the tooled red leather. The purse had compartments, and a clasp that shut with a satisfying snap. She was pleased that Ma realised she was growing up.



## THE LAND HOLDS THE TRUTH... THE MAPS WILL REVEAL IT.

Sal, Joe, Francie and Humphrey Santander are mapmakers looking for their father, a famous explorer who disappeared on his last expedition.

Their search takes them to Cruxcia, where the people are fighting to protect their land from the all-powerful Grania Trading Company. The Santanders' mapping skills may be the missing piece in the Cruxcian race to save the ancient valley—and the key to reuniting their family.



ISBN 978-1-776574-04-9



9 781776 574049