

Gravenhunger 1

"No way!" said Phoenix, glaring at his father across the kitchen table. "I'm not going. Not for the whole of the summer holidays. And not with Rose!"

Dr Wainwright signed. He put down his knife and fork and leaned back in his chair.

"What's wrong with Rose? She was nice enough to you at the funeral, wasn't she?"

Phoenix dropped his gaze. "Of course she was nice to me at the funeral," he muttered. "Everyone was. But that doesn't mean I want to go on holiday with her! Six weeks, dad! With a girl, I hardly know! What on earth were you thinking?"

"I was partly thinking of your cousin, actually," said Dr Wainwright.

He ran his fingers through his greying hair. "Rose has just come back from many years abroad. I don't suppose she's made many friends at her new school yet, so I thought she might like to come on holiday with us."

Phoenix scowled. "But why couldn't I have asked one of my mates from school? Jake or Sam maybe?" He pushed his plate to one side. "And what's with all this going away business, anyway? We never go on holiday. Never. Why changes things now? And why spring it on me at the last minute?"

His father raised his eyebrows. "Because I knew you'd kick up one almighty great fuss," he said. "Exactly like you're doing now."

Phoenix flushed and fumbled in his pocket for a piece of chewing gum.

"Look" his father went on. "You're right, we never go on holiday. You know Mum couldn't stand being away from home. But- well, things are different now. And I thought a proper break would do us good." He glanced at his son's pale face. "Goodness knows we could do with one after the year we've had."

There was a long silence.

"So what's this place like anyway? Said Phoenix at last. "what did you say it was called again?"

"Gravenhunger Manor. It's on the south coast. A couple of miles outside the village of Gravenhunger."

Phoenix rolled his eyes.

"Honestly, Dad. First holiday we've ever been on and you go and choose some old place by the sea I've never even heard of. Why couldn't we have gone somewhere interesting?"

"You know we can't afford that sort of holiday," replied his father. "Especially since the university cut back on my teaching hours. Things aren't easy at the moment, Phoenix. Besides, I think you'll like where we're going. Gravenhunger Manor must have been very grand in its day. The house is huge and so are the grounds. There's a big garden at the back and a pine forest surrounding the whole thing, and a river beyond the trees. It's got something about it. Something unusual. Something different."

"Yeah?" said phoenix. "And how would you know that?" He frowned suddenly. "You've been there before, haven't you?"

Dr Wainwright shifted in his seat. He opened his mouth to speak, then shut it again.

Phoenix folded his arms, his eyes now fixed upon his father.

"Come on, Dad. There's something you're not telling me, isn't there?"

Session 1

What impressions do you get of Phoenix?

Impression	Evidence

What impressions do you get of Dr Wainwright?

Impression	Evidence

What do we find out about the family?

What do you think Dad isn't telling Phoenix?

Gravenhunger 2

His father cleared his throat. "There is something I need to tell you about Gravenhunger Manor. But..."

"But what?"

"It's a bit tricky, that's all. I was going to leave it till we were on our way down there tomorrow. I thought the journey would give us a chance for a good long chat before Rose arrives."

"Can't you tell me now?"

"The last thing I want to do is stir things up for you, Phoenix..."

"Dad! Stop treating me like a little kid! I'm nearly thirteen, in case you'd forgotten."

Dr Wainwright rested his elbows on the table and met his son's gaze.

"All right, he said. "You win. I'll tell you what all this is about."

He took his glasses off and rubbed his eyes.

"This place we're going to," he said, "this house in the middle of nowhere. It- it belonged to your mother. Gravenhunger Manor belonged to her."

"To Mum?"

Phoenix gaped at his father.

"But she never said anything. She never even mentioned it."

"No, not to you- and not to be either."

"You're saying you didn't know anything about it?"

Dr Wainwright replaced his glasses and shook his head. "Nothing at all," he said. "Not until the solicitor's papers landed on my desk back in February. It was just as much surprise to me then as it is to you now. "

"But why didn't she say anything? Did she leave you some sort of explanation?"

His father glanced away. He picked up his fork and began to push his unfinished food around the plate.

"Not really," he said, "All I know is that Gravenhunger Manor was bought by your Mother's parents many years ago. It seems they lived there for a short time when your Mum was a child. For whatever reason the house was never sold when they moved in- so when your grandparents died, it was passed down to your mother."

"And now it's yours?"

"That's right. Which is why I thought it'd be a good idea to go down there this summer and take a proper look at it. "

"But I still don't understand," said Phoenix. "Why would Mum keep something like that a secret?"

Dr Wainwright got up from the table. "I'm afraid it's all a bit of a mystery," he said, gathering up all the plates and carrying them over to the worktop. "But I expect she had her reasons."

He stood there for a moment, his back to his son. "Your mother was quite a complicated person, you know.
"

Session 2

Scan the text and find the words:

gaped	complicated	shook	tomorrow	parents
thirteen	secret	Manor	unfinished	mystery

What does the reader learn about Mum?

What is Gravenhunger?

Why do you think Mum kept Gravenhunger a secret?

What type of story do you think this is? Why?

Gravenhunger 3

How or why he suddenly sensed it he didn't know. The silhouette made no sound as it shimmered behind him. But in the time it took Phoenix to turn from the edge of the burrow and register its presence, he had lost his balance and fallen back against the fragile surface of the mound.

His arms jerked upwards...the torch catapulted from his hand...and beneath the weight of his fall the tunnel-ridden earth began to crumble on itself.

Grab something! Anything! Get a hold of the edge!

But there was nothing to grab hold of...nothing to keep him from falling into the burrow.

He glimpsed the shadowy Silhouette above him...a fragment of sleety sky...and then there was nothing but raining earth and darkness.

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Another second and she would never have seen it happen. She had turned to look out of the window, the strange iron bolt now lying beside her on the sill, and watched as her cousin's torch beam shot up through the darkness, then plummeted to the ground and died.

Rose pressed her face against the glass, willing the light to reappear.

Something was wrong out there, she just knew it. It was as if Phoenix had simply lost control of the torch...as if something had startled him.

She waited another few moments, then twisted round from the window and began tugging on her clothes, her fingers fumbling over the zips and buttons.

There was nothing else for it.

She was going to have to get over there herself. Rose pulled on her waterproof and glanced around the attic bedroom.

She picked up her torch and reached for the iron bolt on the windowsill, brushing cobwebs from its glowing surface and pushing it into her jeans pocket.

Exactly what it was, she had no idea. But she wasn't going to let it out of her sight.

*

Phoenix jolted to a halt at the bottom of the burrow and opened his mouth in a silent scream.

He was going to be buried alive...

Earth was piling up on top of him faster than he could clear it away, squeezing the breath from his lungs.

He thrust out his hands, clawing at the collapsing sides for something to grab hold of...but each time he was driven back by another torrent of cascading soil.

Session 3

Find two words that explain that Rose was in a hurry to dress.

What does 'was driven back by another torrent of cascading soil' mean?

How does the author tell the story from two different viewpoints? How does this affect the reader?

How does the author add suspense and drama in the passage?

What does 'silent scream' mean?

What do you think will happen next? Why?

Gravenhunger 4

Rose thundered through the forest, her torch illuminating a trail of scuffed-up earth and pine needles between the trees.

Her cousin had certainly done a good job of showing her the way...

Not far off she could hear the rushing of water, and moments later she was bursting out into the freezing air and skidding to a standstill beside a huge fallen pine tree.

The river was wider than she had imagined- much wider. And this tree trunk had to be how Phoenix had crossed it.

Vaulting on to the makeshift bridge, she began to shuffle across, the soles of her trainers skimming the seething surface below.

She jumped off on to the opposite bank and stumbled through the undergrowth towards the embankment, then jammed the torch between her teeth and heaved herself up to it.

At the top she paused to catch her breath.

She was far enough away from the house to call to him now surely Her uncle would never hear her from this side of the river.

"Phoenix!" she yelled. "Phoenix!"

But though she strained her ears against the vast darkness, his answer never came.

Session 4

Find one word that means Rose was travelling fast through the forest.

How did Rose know where Phoenix was?

What impressions do you get of Rose?

Impression	Evidence

How does the passage make you feel? Why?

Which words added to the drama of the piece? Why?
