

# Skellig by David Almond

We felt for the handle of the room in which we thought we'd left Skellig. We inched the door open. We whispered "Skellig! Skellig!" No answer. We moved forward carefully, arms outstretched, feeling forward with our feet before we took each step. Our breath was fast, shallow, trembly. My heart was thundering. I opened my eyes wide, glared into the dark, seeking the shape of his body on the floor. Nothing there, just the blankets, the pillow, the plastic dish, the bottle rolling away from my stumbling feet.

"Where is he?" whispered Mina.

"Skellig," we whispered. "Skellig! Skellig!"

We turned back to the landing again, we stumbled up the next flight of stairs, we opened many doors, we stared past them into pitch black rooms, we whispered his name, we heard nothing but our own breath, our own uncertain feet, his name echoing back to us from bare floorboards and bare walls, we turned back to the landing again, we stumbled up the next flight of stairs. We halted. We gripped each other's hands. We felt each other shuddering. Our heads were filled with the darkness of the house. Beside me was nothing but Mina's face, its silvery bloom.



"We must be more calm," she whispered. "We must listen like we listened to the squeaking of the blackbird chicks."

"Yes," I said.

"Stand still. Do nothing. Listen to the deepest deepest places of the night."

We held hands and listened to the night. We heard the endless din of the city all around us, the creaking and cracking of the house, our own breath.

"You hear?" said Mina.

I listened and it was as if she guided me to hear what she heard. It was like hearing the blackbird chicks cheeping in the nest. It came from above us, a far-off squeaking, whistling sound. Skellig's breathing.

"I hear it," I whispered.

We climbed the final flight of stairs towards the final doorway. Gently, fearfully, we turned the handle and slowly pushed open the door.