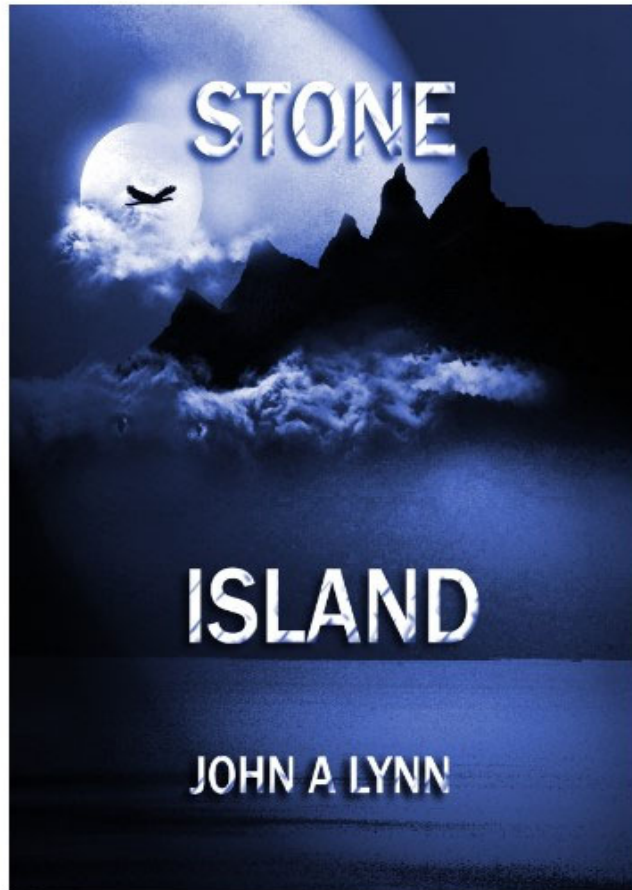


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Stone Island is a supernatural story for children in the age group of ten to thirteen years.

It is a tale of mystery, dark history and secrets from another world. It is also a voyage of self discovery for one young girl who finds that she has hidden powers and realises that she must undertake a dangerous mission. Her very presence on the Island places her friends and everyone around her in mortal danger as a horror from the past awakens.

### **Extract from Chapter 1**

It seemed like only yesterday they'd had the phone call from their Uncle Andy. He'd invited Ciara and her brother Paul to Stone Island for part of the Easter holidays. None of them had ever heard of Stone Island and they'd had to look for it on a map. Even then it was just a little dot in the ocean near the curve of Clew Bay, which would take them an hour or so by boat from the town of Clifden on the wild Atlantic coast. Andy had been left a house on the island about two years ago, and he'd been working on it to make it a good base for wildlife study in that area, and also a place where he could relax and get away from things when he felt like it. As far as Ciara and Paul were concerned, the promise of adventure was too much to resist, so the trip was arranged to include Ciara's closest friend Sara and their cousin Connor who practically lived with them anyway. As an added treat they were flown in a light plane from their local flying club to the tiny airport close to Galway town.

It was always exciting when adventurous Andy arrived out of the blue from his trips to far off places, not least because he always brought some unusual presents. Ciara had carvings from Africa, a Mongolian jacket made from wonderful soft fleece, and loads of things from South America. Andy had become very well known as a wildlife photographer and his work had even appeared in National Geographic magazine.

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Ciara remembered being embarrassed but proud too when Mrs Boland the geography teacher had passed one of the magazines around for the whole class to see.

Ciara's thoughts were interrupted as her sharp eyes spotted a high flying jet leave a pink streamer in the sky. Little icy fingers walked along her spine as she remembered their own plane trip earlier in the day. 'Something', had happened when Nobby the pilot had taken them out over Stone island for a bird's eye view. As they were flying over the highest ridge known as the 'Devil's Saw', she'd had a sudden strange feeling. The window beside her had begun changing colours, swirling like a whirlpool and she could hear whispers and echoing voices. One, rather child like, called her name.

"*Ciaraaaaaa.*" The sound bounced around inside her head. She could feel her body, heavy in the seat as the plane rose and fell slightly in the air, but her mind was being dragged away. Images of dark swirling clouds and lightening filled her head. Then, just as quickly as it had started, everything slid back to normal. She'd tried to tell Sara but it had sounded kind of pathetic.

Sara had been in too much of a buzz. "It's probably just excitement," she'd giggled. Nobody really got much sleep last night with all that larkin' about so we're all a bit whizzy." She'd grinned and given her pal a playful nudge. "But you'd better not tell the boys, especially not Connor; you know what he's like. He'll tease you from now till forever."

Ciara had returned the grin and pretended to agree. But she had a weird creepy feeling that wouldn't go away. *That was real, I know it was, someone called my name.*

### **Extract from Chapter 3**

Ciara woke early. She lounged in the warmth of the covers for a while, trailing her fingers through her hair, wondering if she should wash it or leave it one more day. She smiled as she looked over at the odd shape Sara had managed to get herself into, with one leg hanging down to the floor and her head almost under the pillow. Ciara glanced at her watch on the bedside table. It was almost half past seven. She slipped out of bed and opened the curtains. The sun was still very low in the sky and everything looked pink and gold in the soft colours of morning. She stretched and yawned and was just about to turn away when a sudden movement caught her attention. Her heart jumped. The silvery ghost bird was on the low roof opposite, bobbing its head up and down in a strange nodding motion. It flew across the yard and fluttered onto the window ledge, and its deep swirling pools of eyes stared at her for a moment before it hopped forward and tapped on the glass. This time it didn't fly away. It changed rapidly from almost see through like glass to being more solid, and its blue crystal eyes held Ciara steadily in its gaze.

Ciara felt a strange floating sensation as it moved closer and tapped again, and once more started bobbing its head up and down.

“Sara!.....Sara wake up!..... Come here quickly. Saraaaaa!” she called, trying not to

take her eyes away from the apparition outside.

Sara moaned and then shot upright in the bed. “What ..., what ...!” She struggled out of sleep and stared around in confusion at being wakened so quickly.

“Look! Look!” Ciara pointed to the window. “Sara, it’s come back.”

Sara’s hand flew to her mouth and she gasped in surprise. “Oh jiminy cricket Ciara. What *is* that?”

“I don’t know but I feel like it’s trying to tell me something.”

Sara crept out of bed and stepped slowly across the room to stand beside Ciara, whose eyes were fixed on the ghostly silver swirl.

Ciara whispered. “It’s a kind of bird, but, oh wao Sara, I’ve never seen anything like it. It’s definitely trying hard to say something to me. I just know it is.” As if it understood, it tapped on the glass once more and then launched its self off the sill and glided over to the water barrel, where it looked up, nodding its head excitedly.

Ciara grabbed Sara’s arm. “Quick. Let’s get dressed and go out and see what it does. There’s something very strange going on here.”

“It’s totally weird, agreed Sara, tying the laces of her trainers in double quick time.

“Let’s go.

As soon as they stepped out into the yard the bird floated beneath the archway and along a rough path that was almost hidden by brambles and bushes.

“There’s some kind of building down here, I’ve seen it from the bedroom window,” said Sara in a whisper, as they stopped to look and listen.

They clutched onto each other nervously for a moment before moving along the

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leafy path. A few minutes later they came to a clearing where there was an old wooden out building with broken windows. The door was weather beaten and hanging off one hinge.

The bird was floating just above the door, and when it saw the girls, it dropped gently down inside the shed.

“What do you think?”.... Sara hung onto Ciara’s sleeve. “Ohhhhh Jimminy. I don’t know about this, do you really think we should go in there?”

They looked at each other for a moment until Ciara gave a ‘why not’ kind of shrug, even though she felt *that* strange prickling sensation on the back of her neck. They stepped nervously towards the hanging door and peered into the dimly lit interior. As their eyes adjusted to the gloom they could see a pile of old dust covered garden things and a couple of armchairs with their springs sticking out.

“Look,” whispered Sara pointing to a dark corner.

Ciara took a deep breath as she saw the shimmering bird. It was actually sitting on top of an old cracked mirror that was glowing in a shaft of light from one of the small windows. The bird’s amazing eyes widened as it looked at them for a moment and then tipped it’s head forward as if it was looking right into the glass.

The girls, now holding tightly to each others arms, stepped carefully inside. For a moment there was silence. Then Ciara heard a low humming noise that seemed to come from nowhere and everywhere at the same time. Suddenly a faint light appeared at the edges of the mirror, and a bright blue star began to form in the centre, spinning very quickly and growing with every second.

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“What on earth is that..... Can't you see it Sara?”

“No I can't see anything but I can hear a kind of humming, or singing. I'm getting the jitters Ciara, let's get out of here.”

“No, wait a minute.” Ciara's eyes were fixed on the mirror as misty swirls kept moving ever faster in the centre, seeming to dance with the musical sounds. Then, to her astonishment, a shape in the very middle slowly began to form... a head ....then shoulders, too misty to see properly. It shimmered and shook for a moment or two and slowly, slowly dissolved as the musical sounds started to fade.

Sara gasped, and brought her hand to her mouth. Letters had begun to form in the dust on the glass. There was no noise at all as the ghostly writing spread. When it stopped, the girls just stared, first at the writing and then at each other.

**Extract from Chapter 7**

Trembling with fright, Abe moved carefully in the direction of the light, letting his eyes become used to the gloom. Rounding a slight twist in the cavern, he followed a broken trail that narrowed and began to climb. After another few minutes of terrified glances over his shoulder, he found himself on a broad ledge.

Directly beneath the ledge was the source of the light. Sea water filled a huge bowl of rock, and just under the surface light was coming in through the mouth of a cave. There was a bumping scraping noise as something moved with the surging of the water. Abe dared to flick on his light. With trembling hands he pointed it down towards the sound.

To his amazement, a sturdy wooden boat was bumping against the sides. A long nylon rope from the bow was caught on the bottom, holding it in place. He flicked the light off again and stood still. His heart pounded and he rubbed away a cold sweat that had formed on his top lip. Nothing moved. No faceless creature reached for him. Control yourself...., you've found a way out. Maybe.

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For the moment, the boat was too far down to get to, but Abe remembered one of the boys saying earlier, that to-day's high tide would be around midnight. He glanced at his watch. It was just after eight thirty. The tide was still coming in.

All he could do was wait. Cold, miserable, and half scared to death, he moved to the only place on the ledge where he could make an attempt at hiding. There was a kind of groove in the rock that was close enough to the edge to check the tide now and then. He wrapped the sleeping bag around himself like a coat and leaned against the pack, squishing as far back as possible. His eyes probed the darkness like a frightened rabbit. *Please make this be only a nightmare. I 'm going to wake up any minute.*

The sea rose and fell, and added to its slurping and crashing was to sound of the wind moaning through a maze of underground passages. Abe fought hard not to cry. He was more terrified than he'd ever been in his life, and he couldn't help imagining that whatever it was that had taken Scott would be back to look for *him*.

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