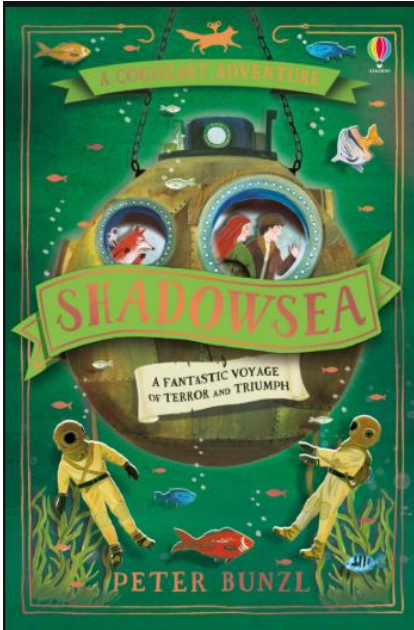


Shadowsea, written by Peter Bunzl

Chapter 1



Lily woke on Christmas morning to find herself not at home, as she had been dreaming, but on a top bunk in the cabin of a sleeper zep that was crossing the Atlantic Ocean.

She blinked her green eyes and rubbed her freckled face until she felt entirely awake. Then, with her fingers, she began combing out the worst of the knots in her tangled fire-red hair.

Under the thrum of the airship's purring engines she could hear the beat of her Cogheart: a mechanical heart of cogs and springs that her papa had given her. It sat ticking in her chest like an overwound carriage clock. Because it was a perpetual motion machine, the Cogheart might go on for ever. Lily didn't quite understand what that meant, but she knew one thing: without it she would not be alive today. Nor would she be taking this trip. Papa, whose name was Professor John Hartman, was lying in the middle bunk beneath her. He wore a nightgown and nightcap and snored softly in his sleep. His feet stuck out the end of the bed, for he was quite tall, even lying down.

Robert Townsend, Lily's best friend in the whole wide world, comrade in arms, first-class clockmaker and her co-conspirator in all things adventuresome, was asleep on the bottom bunk wearing blue-striped pyjamas. A coal-black cowlick of hair curved over his forehead like an upside-down question mark.

Malkin, Lily's pet mechanical fox, most trusted confidant and a red furry-faced know-it-all, lay next to Robert, curled up beside his pillow. Lily was only relieved he wasn't sleeping on Robert's head, which he sometimes did.

Malkin, of course, was frozen still. That was how mechanicals looked at night, when they were run down, before you took their winding key and wound them up again in the morning.

Christmas Eve had been most diverting. The three friends and Papa had set out from Liverpool Airstation on the Firefly airship, for what promised to be a once-in-a-lifetime adventure: a four-day flight to New York.