

## Chapter 1

---

# A long way from home

The bus doors opened. The bus driver looked at the girl. 'Here we are, Miss,' he said. 'Ballycare.'

'Thank you,' said Annie Grant. She looked out of the bus and saw trees and fields of green grass. There was no town. There were no houses and no people.

'Is this it?' Annie asked.

'Yes, Miss,' the bus driver answered. 'It's not a big place. There are some farms and houses.' He showed her a narrow lane. 'If you walk down that lane, you come to a shop. You can ask Mrs Murphy, the shopkeeper, where your friends live.'

'My aunt,' Annie said. 'My mother's sister. I'm going to stay with my Aunt Jean.'

She got off the bus and put her bag on her back. The bus drove away.

Annie wasn't very happy. She was a long way from her home in Scotland. She didn't want to come to Ireland. She liked her Aunt Jean but she really wanted to stay in Glasgow with her mother. But Annie's mother, Sandra, was very sick and had to go into hospital. Sandra didn't have any family in Scotland so she wanted her daughter to go to her sister Jean. Annie and her mother took a bus to the train station in Glasgow. Then Annie took a train to Liverpool in England. There she took a boat at night across the Irish Sea to Dublin. The next morning she took a train from Dublin to Cork.

Aunt Jean wasn't at the train station in Cork to meet Annie. Annie phoned her in Ballycare but she didn't answer. Annie phoned the hospital in Glasgow but she couldn't talk

to her mother. Annie waited at the station for a long time. Aunt Jean didn't come. Annie asked at the station about the bus to Ballycare. All the way on the bus she thought, *Where is Aunt Jean? Did she forget me?*

Now it was late in the afternoon. Annie stood on the side of the road. *I must find Mrs Murphy's shop,* she thought. *She'll show me the way to Five Trees Farm.* She looked down the lane. There were hedges on both sides of it. *This way, the driver said.* The sky was getting darker so she walked quickly. She was a city girl and thought the country was dangerous.

Soon she saw the shop at the end of the lane. But she didn't see any people near the shop.

Suddenly she heard a voice calling, 'Jump, Midnight!' A big black horse jumped over a hedge onto the lane in front of her. The horse stopped just before it hit her. On its back was a boy with red hair and green eyes. He was wearing a riding hat.

'You stupid boy!' said Annie. 'Your horse nearly hit me. It's dangerous! And you're a bad rider!'

The boy looked down at Annie. 'I'm not stupid. And Midnight isn't dangerous,' he said. 'We jump over hedges every day and don't hit people.' He smiled a friendly smile. 'I'm Patrick Devlin. My friends call me Pat. I live in Ballycare. Who are you? We don't see many strangers here, little girl.'

'I am a stranger but I'm not a little girl,' Annie said angrily. 'I'm thirteen years old.'

Pat said, 'Thirteen! You're very small. I thought you were ten.'

Annie didn't like this boy. She walked away from him.

'The shop's shut,' he called. 'It shut early today.'  
*What am I going to do? Annie thought. I must find Aunt Jean. I must.*

