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Opening Extract from...

SAVAGE ISLAND

Written by **Dawn O'Porter**

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For my Uncle Denis, who always bought the best books.

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SAVAGE ISLAND

BRYONY PEARCE

RED EYE

Prologue

"What would you do with a million pounds?"

There was something important behind Lizzie's question; I could tell by the way she kept twisting her short dark hair into knots as she showed us into her room. She was a ball of condensed energy, all excitement.

"You bring us up here for a quiz, Lizzie?" Grady asked as he dumped himself on to a beanbag. His knees almost hit his ears and he grinned. Grady could be a bit odd, but his smile was infectious and Lizzie grinned back.

I leaned my skateboard against the doorway, took a Coke from the six-pack Grady handed me from his bag and passed the rest around. Carmen had already made herself at home and was lying on the bed. She downed half of her can before Lizzie opened hers. My brother, Will, eyed his before

taking it, as if wondering what Grady would want from him later if he accepted.

Lizzie was still running her fingers through her pixie-cut. I remembered the row three years earlier when she first wanted the style. Her mum had forbidden it, so Lizzie had hacked off her long plaits with nail scissors.

"I thought we were heading into town?" I said.

"I need to show you something first. Take a seat – it'll take a while to load." She switched on her computer, but remained standing.

As the monitor flickered into life, I looked around her room. The last time I'd been in here, the walls had been pastel pink and we'd spent whole days playing *Legend of Zelda* on her Wii. Now the walls were a light blue-grey, the posters had morphed from Justin Bieber into Nina Simone, and there was a pile of climbing gear in one corner. But it was the same desk; I ran my finger over our initials carved into the right-hand side and smiled. The bed was the same too: plain white ironwork, decorated with home-made paper birds and butterflies wired on to the joins. I sank my feet into the rug, remembering the feel of the wool on my stomach, the controller in my hand and Lizzie beside me.

"What happened to your mum's 'no boys' rule?" Will slid into the chair by the desk. The way his hair was always hanging over his eyes drove me insane, but girls liked it, apparently.

"Seeing as I'll be at uni in a few months, Mum got reasonable." Lizzie didn't take her eyes off the screen.

"I'm *so* glad it's summer. I mean, those exams nearly killed me!" Grady took a sip of his Coke and sighed. "Hey, have you heard about the Coca-Cola conspiracy?" He didn't wait for an answer. "Did you know that Coke is the main cause of the US obesity epidemic? These cans contain, like, over forty milligrams of sodium. That makes you even thirstier, so you drink more. It's why there's so much sugar in it – to hide the salt."

I pointed at the Coke. "So, you don't want it?"

"It's all about making informed choices, Ben. I can have a glass of water after." Grady burped.

Carmen laughed. "You *are* funny, Grady."

Will looked sideways at Carmen, then away.

"OK, ready!" Lizzie turned her monitor so the rest of us could view the display and pointed to a spinning logo. "Check this out."



Carmen rubbed absentmindedly at the blue kestrel tattooed on the inside of her wrist. "What's the Gold Foundation?"

"It's run by Marcus Gold," Grady jumped in. "The multibillionaire. He owns half of Silicon Valley, runs all those charities, has that airline – Goldstar." He took a deep breath and carried on. "He's rumoured to be part of Yale's Skull and Bones society. He's definitely a Freemason and probably one of the guys behind 9/11, he—"

"The only people behind 9/11 were the terrorists." Lizzie frowned at him.

Grady sighed. "If you'd ever read the information I send you—"

I kicked his beanbag. "We're never going to take anything written by David Icke seriously, Grady. He thought he was the Son of God. Give it up."

"Guys." Lizzie grabbed her mouse and scrolled down the page. "Look!"



Are you the best? Are you driven to succeed?
Are you in top physical shape?
Will you be between sixteen and twenty years old on 15th August 2018?
Can you get a team of five together?
Do you want to win £1 million ... each?

Under-eighteens need permission from a parent or guardian to apply.

Grady rolled off his beanbag and moved closer to the screen. "A million pounds *each*!"

"That's what it says." Lizzie nodded excitedly.

Will frowned. "Why is Gold offering so much money?"

"He's a philanthropist," Lizzie said. Grady snorted loudly but she ignored him. "See here, it says he wants to give bright, proactive teens a push in life. The winners get investment advice to help them

make the best of their prize money."

"Well … we don't have to *take* the advice," Grady said thoughtfully. "There's a lot I could do with a million pounds."

Carmen began to skim read the text. "It says we have to fill in a load of assessment forms."

"But what's the competition?" Will put his hands behind his head. "What do we have to do?"

"The teams that pass the assessment stage go into a lottery. Ten teams get chosen and they're flown out to a remote island owned by Gold, where there'll be tests of endurance and intelligence." Lizzie could barely suppress her excitement. "It sounds like orienteering and puzzle-solving along with a bit of geocaching, rock climbing … that kind of thing."

"That sounds great!" I looked at my brother. I hadn't come up with anything to occupy us over the summer. "We'd enter even without the prize money. Right, Will?"

Will shrugged.

"There's nothing in here we can't do." Lizzie bounced on her toes. "We've got Grady's gaming skills for puzzle-solving. Will was the best orienteer when we did Duke of Edinburgh and we all know his

brain is a miracle. You can fix practically anything, Ben – and Car, you were brilliant when Noah broke his leg last year. If we pass the assessment and get through the lottery, we could totally win this." Lizzie looked at Carmen. "What do you think?"

"I don't know, *chica*." Carmen avoided her gaze. "I'd have to take time off work. I told the salon I could work full-time, starting next week."

"You enjoyed Duke of Edinburgh."

"I liked helping at the animal shelter. But when I agreed to do DofE you promised that we'd have a *fun* summer. This does not sound like fun."

"A million pounds, Car." Will brushed his hair out of his eyes. "It would pay for vet school."

"That was a secret." She glared at him. "A stupid dream."

"You never told me that's what you wanted to do!" Lizzie adjusted her glasses and sat next to her. "You have to come with us. You'd be a fantastic vet!" She smiled. "We can't do it without you."

"Fine." Carmen threw up her hands. "I can always get another floor-sweeping job if I lose this one."

"What about you, Grady?" Lizzie asked.

He grinned. "I'm in if you guys are."

We'd only let Grady join our Duke of Edinburgh squad after Noah's accident left us a man down and his dad put him forward but, despite his oddities, I was glad we had. Grady never went anywhere without his 'bag of tricks' – he took that old scout motto *Be prepared* to heart. Also, Will seemed to like him, which was a definite plus.

"We're entering then?" I looked around.

"This is going to be *amazing*, you guys." Lizzie leaped up and clicked on the link to download the entry forms.

My phone blinked and vibrated. "Will, Mum's calling."

"She's calling *you*." Will didn't even look up.

I left my drink and went out to the landing. There was no telling what mood she'd be in. I took a deep breath, let the phone ring for as long as I dared and then accepted the call.

"Where are you?" she snapped.

"Hi, Mum. We're at Lizzie's."

"Will's with you?"

"Where else?"

"Don't take that tone with me." I could picture

her sitting on the chair in the hall, her pale brown fringe hanging over her face. Her hair was just like Will's – mine was ginger, like Dad's. "Are you watching him?"

"He's almost seventeen, Mum."

"You know how delicate he is."

My jaw tightened. "Yes, I'm watching him."

"You have to *be there* for him, Ben."

"Yes, Mum."

"He was the worst affected when your father left."

"I know, Mum."

Her tone changed. "You'd better not be eating anything over there. I've got your dinner on."

"Yes, Mum. I mean, no, we're not eating."

Will and I were only allowed what Mum put on the table. This month we were doing the Atkins diet. I never thought I'd miss carrots and I'd kill for a plate of chips.

"Just like your father! You make promises then you go and do whatever you want." She was working herself up; probably standing now, pacing.

"I'm sorry."

I held the phone away from my ear as she began to yell at me. "… your responsibility … don't you go

thinking you're too good…"

I waited until she calmed down, then said, "Everything's fine here, Mum, honestly. We'll be back for dinner."

"Promise?"

"Why don't you make a cup of tea and relax?"

"That's a good idea, Ben." Her voice softened and I sighed. I couldn't figure out if she'd worry more when we left home or less. She was the one who had let Will do his exams a couple of years early and apply to Oxford. She wanted to be able to brag about her genius son.

I took a deep breath. "I'll see you later, OK?"

Will looked up as I walked back in. "The usual?"

I tossed the phone on to the bed. "The usual."

The forms had to be filled in by hand and posted, so Lizzie had printed them out. The others had already started. Carmen hummed tunelessly until Lizzie reached over and switched on her old record player. Nina Simone's deep voice filled the room.

"Are you sure your mum will let you come, Will?" Lizzie asked. Her fingers had gone back to her hair, worrying. I wanted to hold her hand to calm her; I gripped my pen tighter.

"She'll be fine with it," Will said.

I snorted. "She won't be 'fine with it'. But Will should be able to talk her round. It would be easier if we could tell the local paper we were applying – she'd love that. But the prize money should go a long way towards persuading her."

"I don't understand this dumb confidentiality clause – why can't we tell the papers?" Grady frowned. "It seems suspicious to me. If this was all above board, it would be *everywhere*."

"It's on the *Internet*, Grady." Lizzie tapped her pencil impatiently. "It *is* everywhere."

"It's not a bad thing," I said. "The fewer people who know about the competition, the more chance we have of getting through."

"Anyway," Carmen added, "do you really want to be in the papers saying, 'We're entering this competition'? If we lose, everyone will know. If we win, we'll be hounded for the money – it happened to my Uncle Javi."

"You have a millionaire uncle?" I asked.

Carmen let out a laugh. "*Chico!* No! He won a year's supply of ham. All he had, day and night, were calls from people wanting free ham." She

rolled off the bed. "I don't know my blood type. I need to call Mami. Can I use someone's phone?"

"Out of credit again?" Lizzie tossed hers over.

Carmen caught Lizzie's phone. "Always." She danced into the hall and down the stairs. "*Buenos días*, Mrs Bellamy. You look lovely today!"

I started my own form while Carmen was out of the room, looking up only when she jumped back on to the bed saying, "I am O negative, by the way."

"That's unusual, isn't it?" Lizzie frowned.

"I am Spanish, remember!" Carmen said, as if that explained it.

"Actually," Grady said, "it means you're descended from the Nephilim … or aliens. Opinion is divided on which it is. I'll send you a link."

Carmen grinned.

"Ben, have you got to part two?" Lizzie asked me. "These questions are nuts – listen to this. *Success is based on survival of the fittest; I don't care about the losers.*"

I turned over my page. "I'm not there yet…"

"What are we meant to answer though? I mean, what do they want us to say? Look at these." She shoved her form at me.

GOLD FOUNDATION

IRON TEEN

Choose the answer that most strongly reflects your opinion about each of the following statements. Please answer honestly.	Strongly disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Strongly agree
Success is based on survival of the fittest; I don't care about the losers.					
I find myself in the same kinds of trouble, time after time.					
For me, what's right is whatever I can get away with.					
In today's world, I feel justified in doing anything I can get away with to succeed.					
I am often bored.					
Before I do anything, I carefully consider the possible consequences.					

I pointed to the question at the bottom of the page. "That's easy – we've got to strongly agree, right? Show that we're going to think things through, not rush into dangerous situations."

"Carmen would have to lie, then." Lizzie ducked as Carmen threw a pillow at her head. "Seriously though – I don't know what they *want*." She looked

at Will. "What do you think? Should we tell the truth?"

Will folded his arms. "You're asking me if I think you should manipulate the system?" He showed his Will-grin; a semi-scathing twist of the mouth.

I looked at my form. "You're really OK with cheating, Lizzie?"

"For a million pounds, are you kidding?" she cried.

I shook my head. "There are two *hundred* questions here. It's designed to trip us up. And you don't know what they're looking for – I think we need to answer honestly."

Will nodded. "Ben's right."

"*You* want to be honest?" Lizzie's eyes were round. "*You* – Will Harper?" She turned to Carmen, who flicked her pink-tipped dark hair over one shoulder. "Carmen?"

"It'll be easier to do it as myself, *chica*. More fun."

"I agree." Grady tossed his pen in the air but dropped the catch.

"Of course you do," Lizzie muttered. "Fine. But I'm going to blame you guys if we get rejected before we even reach the lottery."



IRON TEEN

1. Congratulations, Elizabeth Bellamy, Torben Harper, William Harper, Grady Jackson and Carmen Holguín. You have been selected to take part in this year's three-day Gold Foundation Iron Teen contest.
2. Please be at Bristol Airport, at 10 a.m. on 17th August, wearing the identification badges included in this pack.
3. Your flight will be direct to the Shetland Islands on a private Goldstar plane, GF124.
4. Make sure you are carrying everything you need. There will be no opportunity to make purchases once you have boarded.
5. Late arrivals will not be permitted to board.
6. Arrival at the airstrip on Fetlar will be at 12.30 p.m. The other teams will have arrived ahead of you. You will be guided from the plane to the crossing, but will be expected to go alone to Aikenhead.
7. Aikenhead is a private island owned by Marcus Gold. There are a great many caves on the island and the wildlife predominantly consists of sheep,

seals and seabirds, including puffins. You will find no information about Aikenhead on Google. Please use the information in your pack to educate yourselves on the island. A data sheet on the local flora and fauna as well as a detailed Gold Foundation survey map, which will be used for reference henceforth, are included.

8. When you reach Aikenhead, proceed to grid reference 53.10:-04.21 where you will find the first checkpoint on the course. There you will find a box containing coordinates for the next checkpoint.
9. Each checkpoint includes a locked box. Your team leader, Elizabeth Bellamy, will need to record your arrival by pressing her thumb on the scanner on the box, which will enable you to open it. Inside is a geocache box. You will need to take the contents of the geocache box and replace them with something of equal or greater value at each checkpoint.
10. The winner will be the team that brings all the geocaches to the final checkpoint within the shortest amount of time.

GOLDPRINT

Elizabeth Bellamy, as you are team leader, the Gold Foundation will require a copy of your thumbprint. Please download the following app: GoldPrint on to a device running iOS 8.0 or later. Press your right thumb on the scanner, follow the instructions and press SUBMIT. Your team will not be permitted to take part in the competition without submission of the print.

GOLD
FOUNDATION

Flora and Fauna of Aikenhead by D. Hodgekiss, by permission of the Gold Foundation

The last ice sheet left Aikenhead around 10,000 years ago, leaving behind a bare landscape of rock, broken stone, gravel, sand and mud. This was then colonized by a scrub of willow, hazel, rowan, poplar and birch. Climatic deterioration during the Bronze Age, around 4,000 years ago, left open, peat-covered moorland and grassland with virtually no tree cover. In recent years, small areas of rowan and birch have been planted by the Gold Foundation in an attempt to 'reinvigorate' the island's ecosystem.

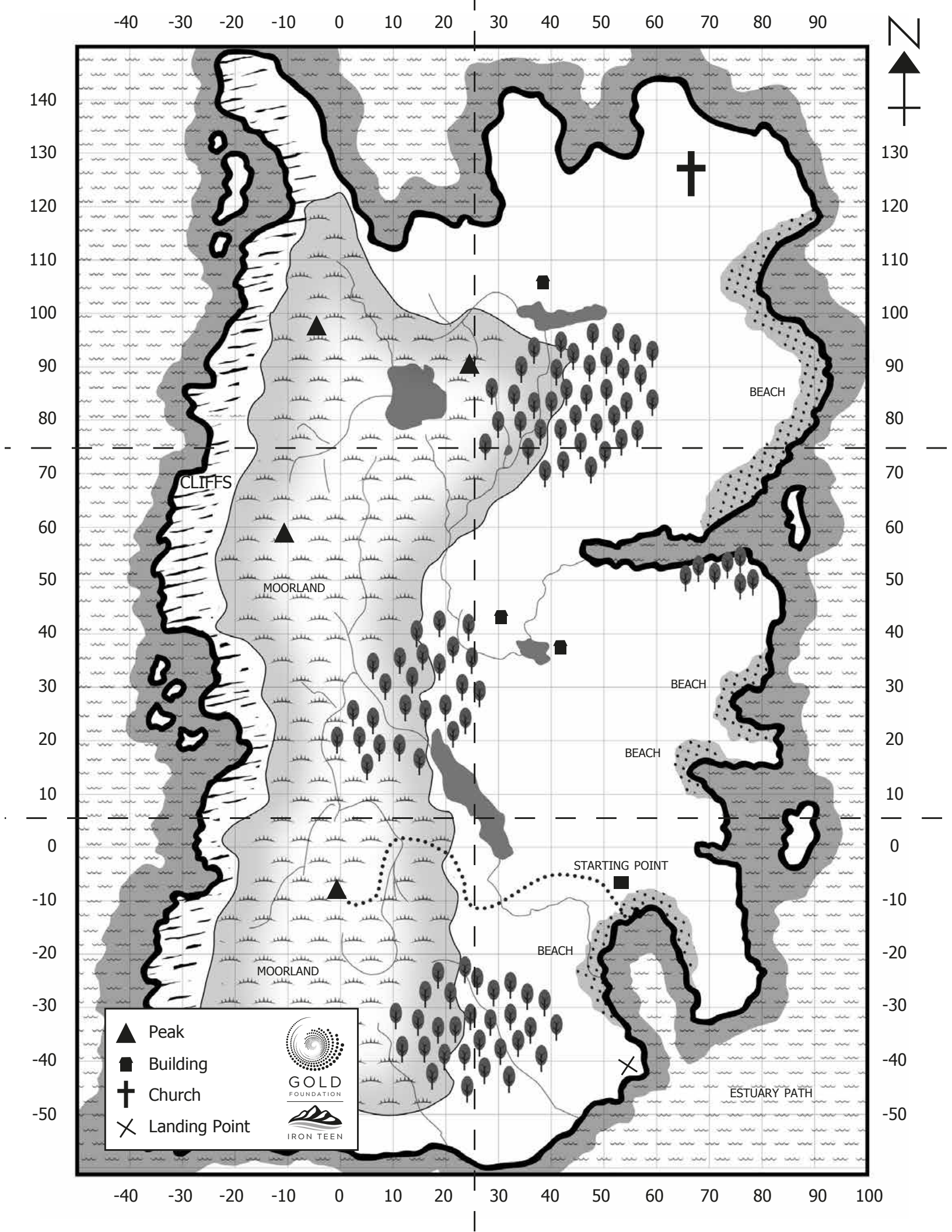
North Atlantic gales sweep across Aikenhead, with gusts of over 173mph. Erosion by the sea has created the cliffs, caves, rock arches and geos (inlets). The North Atlantic Drift brings relatively warm waters moving past Aikenhead from the south. This current is rich in plankton, which pass the islands in a constant stream, supporting a great range of marine wildlife. Over eighteen species of cetaceans have been identified in Shetland waters. The most common around Aikenhead are killer whales, white-beaked dolphins, white-sided dolphins and Risso's dolphins. Minke whales can also be spotted. Seals (grey and common) are frequent visitors. In the autumn, grey seals give birth to their pups in Aikenhead's sea caves. Grey seals have elongated noses and are heavily built, particularly the males, which are 210cm long and weigh 230kg. Common seals are smaller – the males are between 140cm and 190cm long, and have softer, more doglike heads. Otters can also be seen, particularly in bays with streams flowing into them.



The sea cliffs of Aikenhead are 130m high and are home to over 70,000 nesting seabirds. Gannets are common from April to September – a spectacular sight as they dive into the sea from heights of 30m in pursuit of mackerel and other fish. Also breeding on the cliffs from May to September are fulmars, kittiwakes, shags, black guillemots and gulls. There is a thriving colony of puffins.

On the moors above the cliffs, you will find great skuas or 'bonxies', as they are known in Shetland. Walk with caution – these aggressive seabirds will attack intruders in breeding areas. Red-throated divers also breed on freshwater lochs, giving a distinctive high-pitched, wailing *Ya-roo, ya-roo, ya-roo* call.

Plants are small and ground-hugging. Dwarf willow grows in relative abundance. Much of Aikenhead is covered in moorland – a peaty layer on which grow coarse grasses, sedges like cotton grass (bog cotton), heather, orchids and bog asphodel. In sandy soils derived from glacial deposits, heather and grasses grow, as do some rarities such as moonwort, orchids (frog and fragrant), mountain everlasting and fairy flax. Wildflower meadows can also be found.


N
CLIFFS
MOORLAND
MOORLAND
BEACH
BEACH
BEACH
BEACH
STARTING POINT
ESTUARY PATH
Peak
Building
Church
Landing Point
GOLD FOUNDATION
IRON TEEN