

Michael Morpurgo
**Kensuke's
Kingdom**



 SCHOLASTIC

Peggy Sue

I disappeared on the night before my twelfth birthday. July 28, 1988. Only now can I at last tell the whole extraordinary story, the true story. Kensuke made me promise that I would say nothing, nothing at all, until at least ten years had passed. It was almost the last thing he said to me. I promised, and because of that I have had to live out a lie. I could let sleeping lies sleep on, but more than ten years have passed now. I have done school, done college, and had time to think. I owe it to my family and to my friends, all of whom I have deceived for

so long, to tell the truth about my long disappearance, about how I lived to come back from the dead.

But there is another reason for speaking out now, a far, far better reason. Kensuke was a great man, a good man, and he was my friend. I want the world to know him as I knew him.

Until I was nearly eleven, until the letter came, life was just normal. There were the four of us in the house: my mother, my father, me, and Stella — Stella Artois, that is, my one-ear-up and one-ear-down black-and-white sheepdog, who always seemed to know what was about to happen before it did. But even she could not have foreseen how that letter was going to change our lives forever.

Thinking back, there was a regularity, a sameness about my early childhood. Each morning, I went down the street to “the monkey school.” My father called it that because he said the children gibbered and screeched and hung upside down on the jungle gym on the playground. And, anyway, I was always “monkey face” to him — when he was in a playful

mood, that is, which he often was. The school was really called St. Joseph's, and I was happy there, for most of the time, anyway. After school every day, whatever the weather, I'd head down to the playground for soccer with Eddie Dodds, my best friend in all the world, and Matt and Bobby and the others. It was muddy down there. Sometimes the ball would just land hard and stick. We had our own team, the Mudlarks we called ourselves, and we were good, too. Visiting teams seemed to expect the ball to bounce for some reason, and by the time they realized it didn't, we were often two or three goals ahead. We weren't so good away from home.

Every weekend I did a paper route from Mr. Patel's shop on the corner. I was saving up for a mountain bike. I wanted to go mountain biking up on the moors with Eddie. The trouble was, I would keep spending what I'd saved. I'm still the same that way.

Sunday's were always special, I remember. We'd go dinghy sailing, all of us, on the reservoir, Stella Artois barking her head off at the other boats as if

Acclaimed author Michael Morpurgo spins a spellbinding tale of survival and self-discovery in this modern-day *Robinson Crusoe*. . . .

Washed up on an island in the Pacific with his dog Stella, Michael struggles to survive on his own. He can't find food. He can't find water. But just when things are at their worst, Michael realizes that he and Stella are not alone.

His fellow castaway, Kensuke, has lived on the island since the bombing of his native Nagasaki. Kensuke keeps his distance at first, but slowly, he lets the boy into his world. The two teach and learn from each other until, inevitably, they must talk about escape.

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