Praise for

THE FIRST ESCAPE

(BOOK I IN THE DOPPLE GANGER CHRONICLES)

What Readers Are Saying

"I was so absorbed in this book that it only took me two days to read it (I couldn't put it down!). I loved the way it was part graphic novel and part book. That really made me understand what the characters looked like. And my favorite parts made me laugh out loud!"

"I absolutely love The Dopple Ganger Chronicles—the story line is good and exciting and gripping. I especially like Sadie and Saskia because I have a twin, so I like stories about other twins growing up."

What Teachers Are Saying

"I was a reluctant reader when I was a child, and comics were about the only thing I would read cover to cover without interruption. . . . The Dopple Ganger Chronicles will be a permanent part of my classroom for sure. I only hope it is the dawn of a new format of book so others can jump on the bandwagon."

"The children at our school have been so excited by THE FIRST ESCAPE. We have set aside twenty-five minutes every day to read it, and that is not enough, as we have children begging to take it home. We even have a waiting list of children who want to read the book. It's not often that reading can cause such a buzz."

"From the first paragraph we knew this book would be the key we needed to unlock the minds of reluctant readers. For those who already enjoy reading, this is one of the most atmospheric and enjoyable books I've ever seen. I can't wait to unleash it on my reading groups! The illustra-novella is here to stay."

What Parents Are Saying

"My son is almost thirteen, has ADHD, and has a hard time staying focused, so reading is a chore for him. But he is totally into The Dopple Ganger Chronicles! When he's not doing his schoolwork, he has his nose in that book! We're so happy to see him enjoying a book on his own!"

"My eleven-year-old daughter had a reading age of seven and would 'switch off' whenever she encountered a book, as her dyslexia and special needs made reading tedious. But G. P. Taylor's visit to her school inspired her to try THE FIRST ESCAPE. It was the first time she'd ever grasped a book, and she read it all from cover to cover and even wrote a final chapter of her own. The teachers were astonished. . . . It was the mixture of words and illustrations that made her want to read it. It's almost a miracle."

"My eight-year-old son, who has been reluctant to read chapter books despite his abilities, devoured the first Dopple Ganger book, and then his eleven-year-old brother did as well. They are very eager for the next book!"

"I want to thank you for writing The Dopple Ganger Chronicles. My son does not often enjoy reading, but he loved your book—in fact, he couldn't put it down. He keeps asking when there will be another addition to the series. I can't thank you enough; we'll be anxiously awaiting the next installment."

G. P. Taylor

THE DOPPLEGANGER CHRONICLES

BOOK II: THE SECRET OF INDIGO MOON

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THE SECRET OF INDIGO MOON

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FOR

ALL CHILDREN WHO HAVE
NEVER KNOWN THEIR FATHERS

AND

ALL FATHERS WHO HAVE
NEVER KNOWN THEIR CHILDREN.

LET US KNOW WE ARE LOVED AND ADORED
JUST AS WE ARE. . . .

Contents

Chapter One

Night Vision

IN THE HIGH TOWER of Isambard Dunstan's School for Wayward Children, Erik Morrissey Ganger couldn't sleep. He had been counting the hours since midnight, when the storm first began to rage, by listening to the church clock woefully clanging the hours and the quarter hours like a funeral bell. Now he knew it was . . .

Far above Erik's room, the winter thunderstorm clattered against the roof tiles and shook the walls from side to side. Rods of black rain hammered down from the night sky like iron spikes, beating against the narrow windows and rattling the shutters. It was as if the storm had been sent to keep honest folk inside so the wicked could walk the earth unhindered as the water washed away every trace of the crimes they would commit.

Erik could hear the water glugging through the thick iron drainpipes that ran down the high stone walls to the ground far below. They coughed and spluttered like an old man wheezing his last before he gave up the ghost. The sound captured Erik and wouldn't let him go, forcing him to listen to every detail so he couldn't sleep.

Without warning the window burst open, blasting a frigid wind around the room.


KRA-KOOM!
SLAM!
That sounded like the *front door!*
Who visits Dunstan's at *this* time of night -- in the middle of a *storm?*
Saskia, Sadie -- if I find out it's *you*, I swear --


CRASH!
Erik Morrissey Ganger -- you've raced cars, almost drowned, and faced mad criminals.
Surely a door slamming downstairs and a storm outside aren't going to scare you?
CREAK!
CRASH!
SLAM!
Well -- maybe a little.

Erik stared at the door to his room. In the candlelight the door handle shimmered for a moment as if it had been shaken by an icy hand. He was not sure if he had really seen it happen or if this was part of a waking dream.

A sudden, sharp

bang

echoed up the spiral staircase and then down again. Erik leaped from his bed and grabbed the poker from the fireplace as the storm outside began to roar like a hurricane.

Erik could feel his heart beating with panic in his chest, his blood pulsing heavily through the veins in his neck. He walked to the door of the room, twisted the key in the lock, and with trembling fingers turned the handle.

"Is there anybody there?"

he asked as he opened the door and peered into the short corridor that formed a narrow landing outside his room. "Is there—"

His words were cut short by another loud bang, and this time Erik recognized the angry sound of a door being slammed shut. The echo ran swiftly up and down the spiral staircase like an unseen creature. Suddenly Erik was pushed back into his room by a gigantic gust of wind that blew open his door and made the flames of the fire leap up the chimney. As he lay on the floor, poker in hand, he heard above the wind the sound of something being dragged over the cold stone entrance hall below. Jumping to his feet, he pushed against the door and the howling gale that screamed and hissed around him. The door held fast as if the weight of a strange beast were being forced against it.

The wind tore about the room, sending up books, papers, and anything in its way. Flames and coal were sucked slowly up the chimney as Erik strained against the door.

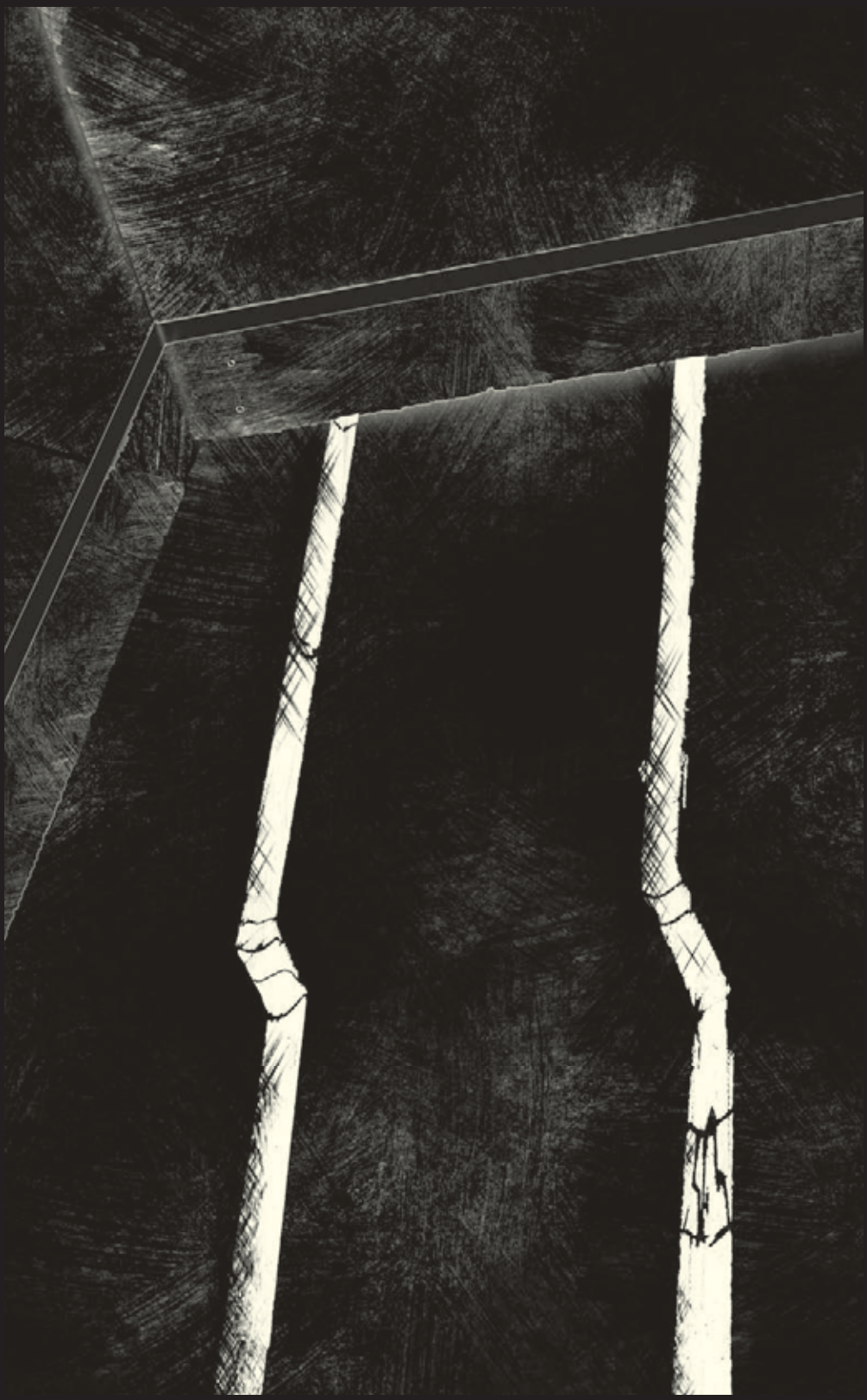

No!!!
Come on... please...

Erik pushed and pushed. The wind beat against him as it rushed up the high tower like a spiraling cyclone. Coal and ash flew up the chimney as the flames disappeared, leaving an empty grate. He pushed harder. The door moved slowly. Then all at once it flew back and slammed shut. Erik fell to his knees. He rose quickly, turned, and locked the door. Then as fast as he could, he took the old wooden chair from beside his bed and wedged it under the handle. He waited for a moment, listening to the rain. Outside, the wind howled viciously as though trying to break through the shuttered window again. His door shook once more, and then as quickly as the fury had come, it was gone. The rain fell softly as the howling wind seemed to just die away.

Unsure as to what had happened, Erik dressed quickly. He pulled on a starched shirt, itchy pants, sturdy black shoes, an overcoat, and a hat. He grabbed a flashlight and faced the door, hesitating for just a moment, wondering if the wind would return. Then he strode forward, removed the chair, and reached for the key.


I'm going to regret this.
I just know I am.
This isn't a storm! This is a hurricane!
Typical. Never a Dopple around when you need one.
But Erik Morrissey Ganger, detective and explorer, doesn't need assistants!
All he needs is his trusty flashlight and an adventure!
Of course, Erik Morrissey Ganger, detective and explorer, prefers adventures that don't involve wild hurricanes, mysterious noises, and sleepless nights.
He prefers adventures that involve lying in bed, eating cream cakes and chocolate.


Arghh!
Stupid mouse cast a big shadow. Scared me.
Tire tracks -- someone was out here!
Drag marks! Something big was dragged outside!
So that's what all the noise was!



The drag marks ended at a solid stone wall and seemed to disappear behind it. It looked like some large object had been miraculously pulled through solid stone, across the slab floor, and then outside. Nervously Erik went to the wall and examined the marks. Each was exactly an inch wide. With a long finger he rubbed the stone. The marks had scraped the surface.

"Heavy," he said in a whisper, not sure if whoever had dragged the object away was still nearby. "It must have—" Erik stopped abruptly. From outside he heard the sound of footsteps on the gravel drive. Someone was coming. Quickly and quietly, he switched off his flashlight, sank back into the dark alcove under the stairs, and pressed himself against the cold stone as he held his breath.

He knew that no one from Isambard Dunstan's should be out at that time of night. The headmistress, Miss Rimmer, would see to that. All children must be in bed by seven o'clock and all staff must be in their rooms by ten, she always said. Any child caught out of bed after lights-out would be sent to the tower and locked in the cold, dank room at the very top until morning. It was Erik's job to make sure that no child escaped from the tower. Apart from sweeping, cleaning, and attending the occasional class, Erik Morrissey Ganger, the only boy at Isambard Dunstan's School for Wayward Children, was to keep the tower room ready and guard it.

But when a wayward child was being punished, Erik had been known to sneak up the tower stairs to make sure she was comfortable and to keep her from growing afraid. Occasionally he would even give the offender a spare key so she could come and go as she wished.

Now, as Erik hid in the shadows, he thought about the last time he had freed someone from the tower. Sadie Dopple and her identical twin sister, Saskia, were well known at Dunstan's for creating mischief and causing destruction, and they had become the bane of Miss Rimmer's existence. When Saskia was sent to live with Muzz Elliott, the famous but eccentric author, at Spaniards House, Erik had rescued Sadie from the tower so they could find Saskia. Disrupting the whole school in their escape, the pair had been chased across Hampstead Heath by Mr. Martinet, the vilest teacher at Dunstan's, and Hercules Kobold, a nasty man with a gigantic bloodhound. Then they were kidnapped by the Great Potemkin, the magician of Hampstead; they escaped in a police van, crashed into a pond, and then rescued Saskia and Muzz Elliott from some vicious treasure seekers who wanted them dead.

It had been two weeks since Erik and the Dopples had returned to Dunstan's. Muzz Elliott had sent them back to the school so she could finish her latest novel. But she had invited Erik and the twins to Spaniards House every weekend since their return.

Now, from the darkness of his hiding place, Erik's thoughts were interrupted by the sound of the footsteps getting closer. They crossed the gravel drive, seemed to stop momentarily on the bottom step, and then continued up the three stone stairs and through the large wooden door.

Erik listened intently, trying to picture who it might be. He imagined a short man as wide as the door, in a long, dirty coat with a wet, dripping hat. He pictured the man's thickset face with gloating eyes.

Erik waited. He could hear the man breathing heavily.

"Can't be hanging around," the man whispered as a gentler, lighter scurry of footsteps crossed the gravel. "I got the car out of the way. I don't think we need it to get the rest of the stuff."

There was a grunted reply, almost like a cough.

"We'll have to be quick. The storm has stopped, and we can't have anyone interfering," the first man said sharply.

"Villains," thought Erik.

The boy held his breath and waited for them to move.

"No one will interfere tonight," said a second, softer voice. "Sleeping like babies, the lot of them."

Crouched in the dark, Erik remained still, thinking hard. He wasn't sure if he had heard the voice before, but it sent a chill up the back of his neck.

"Just one more trip and we'll be away for good," said the first man. Judging from the sound of the conversation, Erik figured the men were coming up the steps and into the hallway of the tower.

"Don't like this place.

Gives me the creeps," the first man said under his breath.

In two paces the man was right next to Erik. In the dim light from the open door, Erik could see a pair of black boots. They were worn down at the sides, as if the man walked in a peculiar way. The bottoms of his trousers were neat and trimmed with leather, and just as Erik had imagined, the man was wearing a long coat that nearly touched his boots.


Never thought I'd have to do this twice in one night -- you don't know what else could be down there!
So don't think about it. You're being paid well!
Squeak?
What was that? Did you hear something?
Probably a mouse. Place is full of them.
Now, where's the catch?

“It’s just here,” the man in the boots said. The hem of his coat rose slightly, and Erik thought he must be reaching for something.

“Be quick,” came the reply. Erik saw the patent leather shoes of the other man dancing excitedly upon the stone floor. His shoes were polished nicely but were flecked with spots of mud. As the man jigged from one foot to the other, something that looked like a feather fluttered to the ground beside him.

Erik couldn’t see what the man in boots had done, but suddenly the wall began to move and a secret entrance appeared. It was just wide enough for the man to get through if he turned sideways and crouched down. Both he and his companion quickly disappeared through the opening, and Erik could see their backs crisscrossed by the shadows of the iron stair railing. He again felt unsettled, like he had seen the man with the patent leather shoes before.

"Shall we leave it open?" The voice of the man in the boots floated back through the doorway.

"Best if we do," replied his companion.

"I don't like it in here," grumbled the man in boots. "There is something wicked about this place. Think of it: she was here for all that time. . . ." His whisper fell away, covered by their echoing footsteps.

Erik stayed hidden in the alcove until he could wait no longer. He slipped from his hiding place, through the portal, and inside the secret passageway. All was dark. From far away he could hear footsteps coming back toward him.

About the Author

A motorcyclist and former rock band roadie turned Anglican minister, G. P. Taylor has been hailed as "hotter than Potter" and "the new C. S. Lewis" in the United Kingdom. His first novel, SHADOWMANCER, reached #1 on the NEW YORK TIMES bestseller list in 2004 and has been translated into forty-eight languages. His other novels include WORMWOOD (another NEW YORK TIMES bestseller, which was nominated for a Quill book award), THE SHADOWMANCER RETURNS: THE CURSE OF SALAMANDER STREET, TERSIAS THE ORACLE, MARIAH MUNDI: THE MIDAS BOX, and THE FIRST ESCAPE. Worldwide sales for Taylor's books now total more than 3 million copies.

G. P. Taylor currently resides in North Yorkshire with his wife and three children.

About the Artists

DANIEL BOULTWOOD was born in London. He studied illustration at Richmond College and went on to work in computer game concept design. From there he moved into flash animation, creating games for DreamWorks and Warner Bros. It was here that he refined his style to the animation-inspired work it is today. He lives in London in a shed with two cats.

LUKE DAAB grew up in Holland, Michigan, and received his BFA in graphic design from the University of Michigan School of Art and Design. In 2007, Luke founded Daab Creative, an award-winning graphic design and illustration agency in the western suburbs of Chicago. Luke currently resides in Winfield, Illinois, with his wife, Jenny, and their pet rat, Rebekah. He enjoys reading comic books, drawing superheroes, writing music, and collecting action figures.

TONY LEE (adapter) began his career in games journalism and magazine features, moving into radio in the early nineties. He spent over ten years working for television, radio, and magazines as a feature and script writer, winning several awards. In 2005 he adapted G. P. Taylor's SHADOWMANCER novel into a graphic novel for Markosia.