

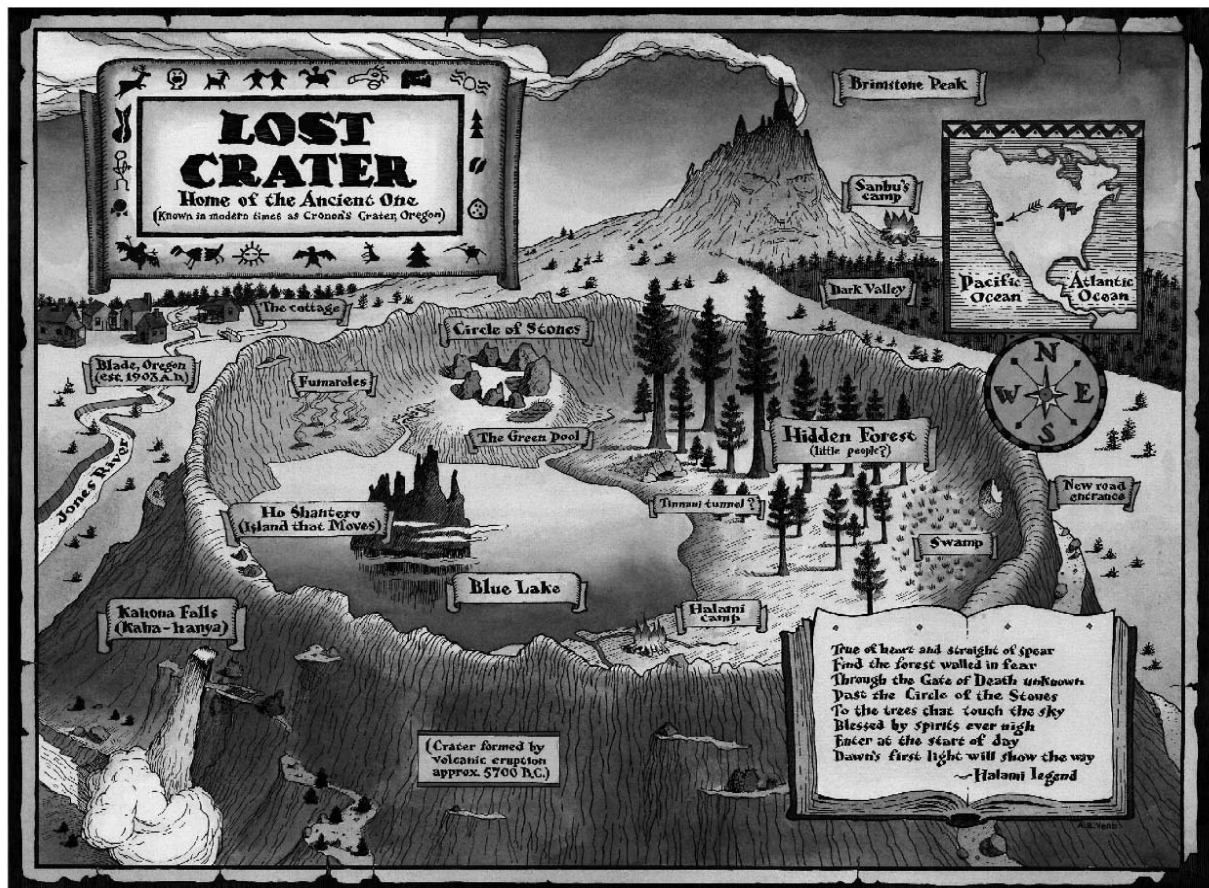
Play
The Ancient One
by T.A. Barron

Part One

Adapted by Suzanne I. Barchers

Illustrations by Heather Ballanca; Map by Anthony B. Venti

Kate wanted to help her aunt stop loggers from destroying ancient redwoods. Now she's in for a bigger adventure than she ever imagined ...



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CHARACTERS

(Main parts in bold face)

Narrators 1, 2

Jody, a teenage boy

Kate, a teenage girl

Billy, a logger

Aunt Melanie, Kate's aunt

Frank, Jody's grandfather, a logger

Sly, Billy's younger brother

Laioni, a native Halami girl

Stones 1, 2, 3, 4

Chieftain, ruler of the Tinnanis

Chieftess, wife of the Chieftain

S C E N E 1

Narrator 1: Kate's sneakers squelch as she splashes through the rain to the post office in Blade, Oregon, a small logging town. Kate is spending the summer with her aunt while her parents are on vacation.

Narrator 2: When Kate scampers up the post office steps, a lean red-haired boy throws open the door, knocking Kate backward down the steps. The boy almost lands on her.

Jody: Hey, watch where you're going!

Kate: Watch yourself!

Narr 1: Suddenly, Kate's eyes fall on the parcel the boy had been carrying. It is a large envelope bearing her aunt's name. The boy snatches up the envelope and runs down the street.

Kate: Hey, come back!

Narr 2: Kate chases after the boy, catching up to him and knocking him to the ground.

Kate: Give me that!

Jody: No way!

Narr 1: The envelope lands in the mud, and a large man puts his foot on it.

Kate: That envelope's mine!

Billy: What envelope? I just see Jody and some girl who likes to crawl around in mud puddles.

Kate: That envelope's addressed to my Aunt Melanie.

Billy: So you're related to the old schoolteacher?

Kate: Yes. And that's her envelope.

Billy: You really botched this one, Jody. *(to Kate)* You've got five seconds to disappear, kid.

Narr 2: Just then, a heavily laden logging truck rumbles down the street. As the others turn toward the sound, Kate grabs the envelope and runs off. Suddenly, her aunt appears in front of her. Kate's pursuers turn and take off.

Aunt Melanie: Kate! Why were they chasing you?

Kate: They tried to steal your mail!

Aunt Melanie: I never thought they'd stoop to that. This town is coming apart at the seams.

Kate: What do you mean? What's in the envelope?

Aunt Melanie: Let's go home. All this can wait.



S C E N E 2

Narr 1: Kate and Aunt Melanie are preparing dinner at home. Aunt Melanie resists talking about the envelope Kate rescued. Then they hear a loud banging on the front door. Jody and an older man stand at the door.

Aunt Melanie: Good day, Frank.

Frank: Wish it were. Hasn't been a good day for near on eight years.

Narr 2: No one speaks for several seconds.

Frank: Look, Melanie. We've been friends a long time. I didn't come over to change your thinking, but I wanted to warn you. People are getting upset. They are bound to do almost anything to keep the sawmill running.

Aunt Melanie: Including stealing other people's mail?

Frank: I'm not excusing that. But you've got to remember what it's like for all the folks who depend on logging to survive. They get mad when you bring in fancy lawyers.

Aunt Melanie: Lawyers were my last resort, Frank. You and the others wouldn't listen to reason. You were about to destroy the whole crater, before we even know what's up there. Banning the logging for a while gives us all a little time, that's all.

Frank: People don't need time, they need jobs. Don't you care about the people?

Aunt Melanie: Of course I care about them. But you can't just keep on destroying the forest. Just look around! People are cutting it down before it has a chance to grow back.

Frank: But people need to eat.

Aunt Melanie: I'm not disputing that, but those old trees are almost gone. And then what? No more trees, no more jobs. Besides, what good does it do to steal my mail?

Frank: It might put things off.

Aunt Melanie: The ban on logging starts on Monday, Frank. The crater's off limits. There's no way to change that now.

Frank: I just wanted to warn you that you're best off staying at home until this blows over.

Narr 1: Frank lingers for a moment, shakes his head, and then moves off into the rain. Jody follows.

SCENE 3

Narr 2: Kate waits patiently through supper for her aunt to explain what's happening. Aunt Melanie gives her a peppermint candy from a big bowl. Then she unfurls a map of southwestern Oregon, pointing to one black dot.

Aunt Melanie: That's us. Most of this area's been logged at least once.

Narr 1: Kate points to a place a few miles east of town.

Kate: What's this?

Aunt Melanie: That's the crater Frank and I were talking about. I call it Lost Crater. It's what's left of an ancient volcano. The volcano exploded about 7,000 years ago, leaving nothing but the huge crater.

Kate: Why is it such a big deal?

Aunt Melanie: It's so steep that it can't be climbed. It rises a good 3,000 feet from the forest floor, much of that straight up. The only reason people know there's a lake inside is from aerial photographs. And with the constant fog over the lake, it's always been hard to see anything.

Kate: What's that got to do with the loggers?

Aunt Melanie: Everyone assumed the lake filled the crater completely. There's never been a road or a trail into the crater. At least none that anyone knows about. It's always been a forgotten place, Kate. Until now.

Kate: Why until now?

Aunt Melanie: Just two weeks ago, a Forest Service technician flew over the forest, doing an aerial survey. He flew over the top of the crater. There wasn't much fog for a change, and what he saw was amazing.

Kate: What did he see?

Aunt Melanie: Well, the lake fills only half the crater. The rest contains a very dense, old, hidden forest. He could see true giants, the kind of trees that make foresters salivate. He took pictures of everything, including a large grove of ancient redwoods.

Kate: And the loggers want to cut them all down.

Aunt Melanie: That's right.

Kate: But I thought the crater is impassable.

Aunt Melanie: Well, once there was a good enough reason to build a road, a few of the loggers started checking it out. They blasted their way in, creating a rough road. So I got a lawyer in Portland to file for an injunction.

Kate: A what?

Aunt Melanie: A court order to ban them from entering the crater or cutting anything until it's determined whether the place should be protected as a park.

Kate: So that's what was in the envelope.

Aunt Melanie: That's right. Frank's a good man, but I suspect the others are probably up to something.

Kate: But what?

Aunt Melanie: I wish I knew. Most loggers are out of work. The last mill in town is ready to close. The trees from the crater would keep them employed for another year or so. But the forest could be the oldest untouched forest in the world.

Kate: Do you mean no one has seen the forest before?

Aunt Melanie: Actually, the Halamis, a Native American group of people, lived there 500 years ago. I've made it my hobby to study them. They called the forest the Hidden Forest and believed it to be sacred. Since their time, the crater has been totally undisturbed.

Kate: What happened to the Halamis?

Aunt Melanie: No one knows for sure what wiped out most of them, but they left behind songs and stories about their way of life, their beliefs, their prophecies. The few who survived blended in with our culture, but managed to keep their wisdom alive.

Narr 2: Aunt Melanie smooths out a small map.

Kate: What's that?

Aunt Melanie: It's a map of the crater, one that I pieced together from years of hearing songs and stories.

Narr 1: Kate studies the map, making note of names such as Kahona Falls and the Circle of Stones. Aunt Melanie lifts the map off the table.

Kate: You must have a theory as to how the Halamis vanished.

Aunt Melanie: There is a legend, but no one knows what to make of it.

Kate: Tell me.

Aunt Melanie: It seems that Brimstone Peak was considered an evil place. The Halamis believed that a wicked being called Gashra lived deep inside it. Gashra wanted to control all the lands around him, but the Halamis resisted him.

Kate: What happened?

Aunt Melanie: Gashra became angry and made the mountain erupt and fill the valleys with lava, trying to kill the Halamis. No one takes the legend very seriously. But it's interesting to note that the last eruption of Brimstone Peak was about 500 years ago.

Kate: Just about the time the Halamis disappeared.

Aunt Melanie: There's another piece, though. Some versions of the legend say that a mysterious tree spirit defeated Gashra in the end. I have no idea how. But I do know Lost Crater holds strange secrets. And the Ancient One lives there.

Kate: The what?

Aunt Melanie: Never mind. My point is that it should be left alone.

Kate: But what can the loggers do? Tomorrow's Sunday, and then the injunction starts.

Aunt Melanie: That's it! They're planning to go there tomorrow before the injunction. If they cut down all the redwoods, there's no point to making the crater a park.

Kate: That's terrible! If only there were some way to hold them off, just for one more day. Who's going to stop them?

Aunt Melanie: We will.

S C E N E 4

Narr 2: Early the next morning, Aunt Melanie and Kate arrive at the crater. They share a thermos of hot chocolate before starting their hike. Aunt Melanie carries a walking stick with an owl shape on its end.

Kate: Aunt Melanie, what did you mean last night about strange secrets and the crater?

Aunt Melanie: There could be things in it beyond anyone's imagination.

Kate: Like what?

Aunt Melanie: I read an interesting article recently. A physicist proposed a new theory about something he called *time tunnels*—places that open up ways to travel to the past or the future.

Kate: Are you serious?

Aunt Melanie: This fellow certainly was. He thinks time tunnels are most likely to occur where things have lived without interruption for long periods, so their energies can multiply enough to distort the flow of time.

Kate: Pretty far-fetched.

Aunt Melanie: Let's keep moving and see if we can get to Kahona Falls by dawn. I want to use the old, abandoned Halami trail.

Kate: I don't understand. If the walls can't be climbed, how can there be a trail into the crater?

Aunt Melanie: You'll see.

Narr 1: As the sun rises, they arrive at the waterfall. They stop, captivated by the water's power.

Kate: Where do we go now?

Aunt Melanie: Look closely.

Narr 2: Kate searches the roaring curtain of water. Finally, thanks to the angle of the early morning sun, Kate spots a ledge behind the falls.

Kate: I see it—a ledge!

Aunt Melanie: Yes. Until I found this entrance last week, it probably hadn't been used by anyone since the Halamis. Follow me.

Kate: But Aunt Melanie, one little slip and you'll die! And even if you can get in this way, do you really think you can persuade a whole team of loggers to go back home?

Aunt Melanie: I've got to try.

Narr 1: Kate watches as Aunt Melanie disappears behind the falls. Then Kate fearfully crawls forward, following Aunt Melanie.

Narr 2: The pair move cautiously along the outcropping. The ledge comes to an abrupt end. Then, Aunt Melanie is nowhere to be seen.

Kate: Aunt Melanie!

Narr 1: Kate searches for where her aunt disappeared and finds a large tunnel opening, as high as her waist.

Kate: *(to herself)* Aunt Melanie must have gone this way.

Narr 2: Kate squeezes into the tunnel and begins to crawl upward. She spies a piece of Aunt Melanie's peppermint candy. She places it in her pocket and continues crawling.

SCENE 5

Narr 1: Kate steps out of the tunnel into a world of white fog. A shadowy shape clutching a walking stick moves toward her.

Aunt Melanie: Welcome.

Kate: I thought you'd disappeared! Are the loggers here yet?

Aunt Melanie: No. We could hear them if they were. What do you think of Lost Crater?

Kate: There's something weird about it—dangerous, somehow. All this steam makes it eerie.

Aunt Melanie: That's from the volcano under the lake. It keeps the water warm and steaming.

Narr 2: Suddenly, the fog begins to shift, and Kate sees a black mass rising out of the lake. The mass appears to move.

Kate: What is that?

Aunt Melanie: That's what the Halamis called *Ho Shantero*. It means "Island that Moves." See those tiny steps? The Halamis made those in honor of the Tinnanis.

Kate: What were the Tinnanis?

Aunt Melanie: They were supposedly small, magical creatures, but no one knows what they were supposed to look like. Now let's keep moving.

Narr 1: Just as they start off, Kate notices a ragged circle of rocks. She recalls the Circle of Stones on the map.

Kate: *(to herself)* I'll just have a quick look.



Narr 2: Kate scrambles up the terrain, drawn by the stones. Then she sees a pool of bubbling green liquid. Just as she reaches out to touch the fragrant liquid, she hears Aunt Melanie's voice.

Aunt Melanie: Kate!

Narr 1: Kate smiles, mesmerized by the pool, and reaches toward the frothing liquid. Just as her hand touches it, a small bird flies at her, and Kate falls back.

Narr 2: Aunt Melanie arrives and grabs Kate's hand. On the back of Kate's hand, a mass of horrible green worms writhe. Kate stares, horrified at the sight and the pain, while Aunt Melanie scrubs at the worms with fresh water.

Aunt Melanie: Your hand will hurt for a couple of days.

Kate: What happened?

Aunt Melanie: You were caught in the spell of the green pool. Watch this.

Narr 1: Aunt Melanie thrusts her stick into the pool, which suddenly ceases its bubbling. Kate sees thousands of venomous worms, with animal bones mixed in among them. Aunt Melanie pulls out the stick, and the bubbling returns.

Kate: How does the stick do that?

Aunt Melanie: It's—well—powerful. I found it on my first trip here. I've only begun to discover what it can do. Somehow, it can show what the pool really looks like.

Kate: The stones here make me feel strange.

Aunt Melanie: They're watching you, Kate. But now, we have to hurry to the Hidden Forest.

Narr 2: Aunt Melanie and Kate resume their hike into the woods. Soon they hear an unmistakable sound.

Kate: Loggers! They're in the crater.

S C E N E 6

Narr 1: Aunt Melanie and Kate hurry toward the noise of a chain saw. Then Aunt Melanie stops.

Aunt Melanie: My stick! I must have left it near the pool. I have to go back for it!

Kate: Let me run back for it. I'll try to get back before you face the loggers.

Aunt Melanie: All right, but be careful. And here, I'll say to you the ancient Halami blessing: *Halma-dru*.

Narr 2: As Kate starts back, the forest is eerily silent. Then she hears voices and hides herself to watch who may appear. She soon spies Sly, Billy's younger brother, who is goading Jody.

Sly: C'mon, Jody. This is your big chance.

Jody: For what?

Sly: To prove you're not a chicken.

Jody: I don't have to prove anything. I just don't like killing things when there's no reason. Let's go.

Sly: Chicken

Jody: I'm not. Killing them is bad luck, and besides, it's too easy.

Sly: Show me.

Narr 1: Jody looks at the low branch of a fir tree, where an owl perches.

Jody: Give me that gun.

Narr 2: Sly hands over a .22-caliber rifle. Kate picks up a rock, desperate to stop Jody. Just as she releases the rock, hoping to scare off the owl, Jody squeezes the trigger. The owl tumbles backward off the branch and falls with a thud to the forest floor.

Sly: Took you long enough.

Narr 1: Jody bends down and looks at the creature, absently stroking its chest. He straightens up, his expression grim. Then his face tightens.

Jody: Aw, it's just a stupid bird.

Narr 2: Suddenly, the sky darkens. Lightning flashes, and hail the size of golf balls begins to pound the forest. Kate retraces her steps toward the loggers and then dashes toward a huge tree and throws herself into a hollowed out space at its base. Little does she know, she is being sheltered by the Ancient One.

Narr 1: Looking out from the tree, Kate sees Jody trying to escape the storm. A branch crashes down on his shoulder, knocking him down.

Narr 2: Without thinking, Kate bolts out, pulls the limb off him, and drags him toward the tree's shelter. She can hear Billy calling out.

Billy: Where's Jody? Jody!

Narr 1: Just as Billy appears, Kate sees Aunt Melanie's walking stick lying nearby. As she grabs it, the stick glows and vibrates. She ducks back inside the tree's hollow trunk.

Narr 2: Suddenly, a surge of energy shoots through the stick. Taking on a will of its own, it strikes the bark of the Ancient One—one, two, three times.

Narr 1: A burst of white light fills the tree's hollow trunk. The approaching logger falls back. Kate and Jody vanish.

S C E N E 7

Narr 2: Kate wakes up slowly, thinking she's been dreaming. She sees Jody slumped against the inside of the tree trunk. Then she hears a young voice singing what she knows is a Halami song.

Narr 1: Kate quietly moves from the tree's shelter toward the song, but the young singer sees her and runs away. Kate gives chase but falls into a large pit. She calls to the girl.

Kate: Help me out, please! I won't hurt you. I promise.

Narr 2: The girl just stares down at her. Kate then remembers the Halami blessing her aunt said to her.

Kate: *Halma-dru. Halma-dru.*

Narr 1: The girl seems to understand. She points to a large branch serving as a makeshift ladder.

Laioni: *Ai-ya, ai-ya.*

Narr 2: Painfully, Kate climbs out.

Kate: *Halma-dru.* Do you speak English?

Laioni: *Yi-teh neh chi wiltu.*

Narr 1: Kate pats herself on the chest.

Kate: Kate.

Narr 2: The girl pats herself and then points to the dog.

Laioni: Laioni. Monga.

Narr 1: Kate and Laioni teach each other a few words. Then Kate remembers having left Jody at the tree. With Laioni, she returns to the spot, only to find that Jody has disappeared.

Narr 2: Kate dives into the hollow tree trunk, picks up the walking stick, and strikes it against the wall. This time nothing happens.

Kate: Take me back! I don't belong here!

Narr 1: Kate lowers the stick and looks out at Laioni, a living member of the Halami tribe. And then she realizes she has traveled 500 years back in time.

S C E N E 8

Narr 2: After a few stunned moments, Kate decides to follow Laioni, who leads her to an encampment of Halamis by the shore of a blue lake.

Narr 1: Laioni leads Kate to Laioni's mother and an older woman, both of whom seem to recognize the walking stick. They begin an exchange of words and pantomime with Kate, offering her food and a place to sleep. Giving in to exhaustion, Kate sleeps.

Narr 2: The next morning, Kate realizes she must try to get back to Aunt Melanie, who could be in trouble. Kate decides to go back to the circle of stones. Laioni follows her.

Kate: We are here, Great Circle, for your help. Please help.

Narr 1: Nothing happens, and Kate starts to leave. She trips, dropping the stick to the ground.

Narr 2: The ground begins to shake and heave. The giant stones begin to change. Eyes, brows, and mouths emerge.

Stone 1: (*deeply*) You are welcome.

Stone 2: Yes, welcome.

Stone 3: No, they are not. We don't know them yet.

Stone 4: (*slowly*) Tell us who you are.

Kate: I'm Kaitlyn Gordon. I come from—ah, the future. This is Laioni. She's a Halami from here. This is her dog, Monga.

Stone 1: We have many names, among them the Ones Beyond Age, although, of course, we really do age like anything else.

Stone 2: Speak for yourself!

Stone 1: Silence! *(to Kate)* You may call us the Stonehags.

Kate: But how do you speak English?

Stone 1: To you I speak English, to your friend I speak Halami, and to the dog I speak Canine.

Narr 1: The stones introduce themselves to Kate, interspersing their comments with jokes and quarreling.

Kate: Wait. I need your help. I belong 500 years from now, and I need to get back.

Stone 3: What's the rush?

Kate: My Aunt Melanie is in trouble. Loggers are going to cut down the redwoods. She was trying to stop them.

Stone 2: We know your aunt. She has visited us before with that stick.

Stone 3: *(suspiciously)* But you could have stolen it from her.

Narr 2: The stones discuss whether to help Kate. Finally, they speak.

Stone 1: You must go to the ruler of the Tinnanis to learn the power of the stick.

Stone 2: To find him, you must go across the blue water to the island called Ho Shantero.

Stone 3: The Island that Moves.

Stone 4: *(slowly)* It is very dangerous.

Stone 3: Show me the walking stick, and I'll read you the secret words inscribed on it. They will help you:

Fire of greed shall destroy;

Fire of love shall create.

Kate: What does it mean?

Stone 3: Only you can discover that.

Stone 1: There's one more thing. Drink of this spring. It gives you the gift of communication.

Narr 1: Kate drinks of the waters that run near the rocks. Laioni and Monga do the same. As they rise, the tremors begin again, and the Stonehags become immobile boulders again.

S C E N E 9

Narr 2: Kate, Laioni, and Monga walk away from the stones.

Laioni: It will not be easy to get to Ho Shantero.

Kate: I was just thinking the same thing, but I have to find my way back. *(suddenly)* Wait! I understood you!

Laioni: It's the gift of the Stonehags.

Kate: Are the Tinnanis real?

Laioni: No one I know has seen one, but we know they are real. People should not go to the island.

Kate: Why?

Laioni: A boy named Toru went there on a vision quest. He never returned. We think it's the work of Gashra, the evil one.

Kate: Why are you following me if it's so dangerous?

Laioni: I'm not sure, but I think you are a tree spirit, here to help my people.

Narr 1: As they pass beyond the boulders, near the boiling green pool full of venomous worms, a small, green, lizardlike figure waits.

Narr 2: He raises his spear and brings it down on the rocks. A second figure appears, and the two attack Kate and Laioni. With the help of the walking stick, Monga, and stones that shift beneath their attackers, Kate, Laioni, and Monga manage to escape.

Kate: Who were they? Tinnanis?

Laioni: No! They are Slimnis, forest creatures who serve Gashra. It's a bad sign that they've attacked.

SCENE 10

Narr 1: Kate, Laioni, and Monga arrive at the blue lake and use a log to get across. They capsize just before reaching land, and are knocked out. They wake to find themselves on a stone floor, near a dark stairway.

Narr 2: They move cautiously up the stairway and enter a large chamber. The walking stick's owl head handle seems to spring to life.

Narr 1: Two owl-like white figures sit on thrones. The enormous one glowers at Kate.

Laioni: (*whispering*) The chieftain.

Narr 2: Next to the chieftain, a softer figure looks on quietly.

Chieftain: Oysters! Bring me oysters! Why don't they have them ready when I want them?

Chieftess: Nobody knows when you're going to want them, dear, so it takes a moment.

Chieftain: And bring me pickled mouse tails. (*to his wife*) Don't tell me they're bad for me. This is a special occasion.

Chieftess: So was yesterday.

Chieftain: And so tomorrow may be! (*to Kate*) Now, as for you! How dare you enter Ho Shantero? (*to the chieftess*) And where are those oysters?

Narr 1: The chieftess sits impassively, watching Kate. The oysters and mouse tails arrive, and the chieftain stuffs them into his mouth. Then he speaks again.

Chieftain: What did the Slimnis want with you?

Kate: They wanted this stick.

Chieftain: That? A fake!

Kate: It is not. It brought me here from the future through a tree—a time tunnel. All I need is for you to tell me how to make it take me back. And soon—before they cut down that tree, the Ancient One ...

Chieftain: Why should I help you? All your kind has ever done is torment my people.

Laioni: That's not so, Your Wingedness. The Halamis live with your people and the rest of the forest beings in peace. A few have turned bad, but most of us take only what we need and cherish the land's fruits.

Chieftess: She speaks the truth.

Chieftain: (*to Kate*) Can you say the same of humans of your time?

Kate: Well, I'm afraid the people in my time have forgotten most of what the Halamis knew. But some haven't forgotten. My Aunt Melanie ...

Chieftain: Enough! Your humans are thankless, grasping, and unconnected to themselves and the land. Their memory is short, and their vision is shorter.

Kate: Aunt Melanie is not like that, and the others can still learn. She's in trouble! Won't you help me get back?

Chieftain: No! I will do something better. Bring me the visitor from the future!

Kate: Aunt Melanie?

Narr 2: They hear a scuffling, and two Tinnanis emerge, escorting an angry captive.

Jody: Let me go, you stupid owls! Kate! You did this. Where am I? Where are my friends?

Kate: Your friends? Like the one who dared you to shoot the owl?

Narr 1: Jody's eyes show real remorse but then widen with fear.

Jody: Is this my punishment?

Kate: (*grinning*) Yes, and you'd better behave, or they'll do to you what you did to their friend.

Jody: I've got to be dreaming.

Kate: (*to Chieftain*) Why did you bring him here?

Chieftain: To learn more about the future.

Chieftess: It was the prophecy.

Chieftain: Silence! No talk of prophecies in front of these unworthies. Now, go away.

Kate: Won't you tell me about the walking stick?



Chieftain: No! Leave.

Narr 2: Kate puts her hands in her pockets and feels an object.

Kate: Wait. I have something here you will like.

Narr 1: She displays the peppermint candy she had found in the tunnel behind Kahona Falls.

Chieftain: How do I know it's not poison?

Kate: I'll prove it.

Narr 2: Kate takes an exaggerated lick of the peppermint.

Kate: Here. I promise it's safe.

Chieftess: She tells the truth.

Narr 1: The chieftain smells the peppermint for a long moment.

Chieftain: Nothing that smells this good could be poisonous.

Narr 2: He plunks the sweet into his mouth.

Chieftain: This is like nothing I've ever tasted before. It is exquisite! Tell me, where did you get it?

Kate: It is a great and rare delicacy called peppermint candy. It is found in my own time, 500 years from now. If you tell me how to get back there, I promise that if I ever return I'll bring you more.

Chieftain: How many more?

Kate: How many would you like?

Chieftain: Fifty. A hundred. No, a thousand!

Kate: A thousand it is.

Chieftain: Ten thousand.

Kate: OK, but that's my limit.

Chieftain: How soon can you come back?

Kate: I don't know, but I promise it will be as soon as I am able.

Chieftain: *(to his wife)* Will she keep her word?

Chieftess: Yes.

Chieftain: All right then. We will tell you. But I warn you, getting back is easier to say than do. Go ahead, my Chieftess, tell this human what she needs to know to make the stick of power do her bidding.

To be continued ...

Play

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by T.A. Barron

Part Two

Adapted by Suzanne I. Barchers

Illustrations by Heather Ballanca

Kate's adventure in the magical past continues ...

When Kate and her aunt try to stop loggers from cutting down a stand of ancient trees, Kate goes through a time tunnel to the land of the Halamis, a tribe of people who had disappeared 500 years ago. Kate persuades the chieftain and chieftess of the owl-like Tinnanis to help her return to the present.

CHARACTERS

(Main parts in bold face)

Narrators 1, 2

Chieftess, wife of the Tinnani Chieftain

Kate, a teenage girl

Chieftain, ruler of the Tinnanis

Jody, a teenage boy

Laioni, a native Halami girl

Kandeldandel, a Tinnani flutist

Gashra, the Evil One

Fanona, daughter of the chieftess and chieftain

Billy, a logger

Aunt Melanie, Kate's aunt



SCENE 1

Narrator 1: Kate waits anxiously for the chieftess of the Tinnanis to tell her what she must do to return home.

Chieftess: The walking stick in your possession is indeed a stick of power. It is very old, with a memory beyond

that of any living being save the Stonehags. Also called the Stick of Fire, it will burst into flames when commanded by its rightful owner. However, that command will destroy the stick and all its powers.

Kate: How do I make it take me home?

Chieftess: The Stick of Fire decides whom to take through time and when that will happen. The only way to control it is to do the single deed that would give you even greater power than the stick itself.

Kate: What's that?

Chieftess: Heal the broken Touchstone.

Kate: Tell me what that means.

Chieftess: The Great One, creator of all that exists, made a single object that would harbor all the powers of creation. This single sphere of pure red obsidian is as light as a bubble and as powerful as a galaxy of stars. He called it the Touchstone and entrusted it to the Tinnanis. It was installed right here on the throne of our chieftain.

Kate: But it's not there.

Chieftess: That's right. The Touchstone gave us the power to connect all living beings. The forest world thrived.

Kate: But what happened?

Chieftess: Gashra, the Wicked One, wanted to own the Touchstone and use its power. He attacked, and we barely fought him off. During the battle, the Touchstone cracked. A fragment broke off, and the stone's power withered.

Narrator 2: The chieftess stops and sighs deeply. Then she lifts her white wings.

Chieftess: The reigning chieftain at that time declared that the broken Touchstone should not be healed—unless its full power were needed to save our people and the forest lands from destruction.

Kate: And have you reached such a time?

Chieftess: Yes, we need the Touchstone now, but we have lost both pieces of it. You see, that chieftain hid the fragment to protect it from Gashra. No one knows where. Meanwhile, Gashra has risen again.

Kate: But what happened to the rest of the broken Touchstone?

Chieftess: A traitor stole it during a holiday feast and delivered it to Gashra! So now, Gashra and his servant Sanbu have started destroying the forest, burning trees for bonfires without replanting. Meanwhile, our power grows less and less. Without the Touchstone, we'll soon lose everything. The island of Ho Shantero will sink and be lost forever.

Chieftain: There is something else Kate should know.

Chieftess: Yes. It was prophesied that the life of our daughter, Fanona, is tied to the broken Touchstone. We aren't sure how. We thought she might find the missing fragment, but she grows steadily weaker. Unless the rest of the Touchstone, now held by Gashra, is returned, she will die.

Narr 1: Jody, standing near Kate, cannot understand the Tinnanis.

Jody: *(to Kate)* Am I dreaming? What do I have to do to get out of here?

Kate: See this stick? It can take us back home.

Laioni: But first, you'll need both pieces of the Touchstone.

Chieftess: And that means going to Gashra's lair.

Kate: I have to go to Gashra's?

Chieftess: That's the only way.

Jody: I'm coming with you.

Laioni: I can help you find the way.

Kate: All right. Let's go first to Gashra's. At least we can find the bigger piece there. Who knows where the fragment might be?

Chieftain: Before you go, I have something to offer you. It might help.

Narr 2: A scrawny, owl-like figure holding a wooden flute comes forward. A small brown owl is perched on his shoulder.

Chieftain: I present to you Kandeldandel, third flutist in my orchestra.

Kandeldandel: At your service. And my friend, Arc.

Chieftain: Sorry, I can't spare any more help. Just don't let Kandeldandel play his flute near your fire pit. His playing puts out fires.

Kate: Let me take it.

Jody: All right. I'll stick with my knife.

Laioni: Let's go.

Chieftess: Hold fast to your stick of power. It is your only hope—and ours.

Narr 1: Kate slips on her backpack. The chieftain claps his hands three times. Great birds lift up Kate; Laioni; Laioni's dog, Monga; and Jody, carrying them toward the top of the great room. A circular door opens in the middle of the ceiling, and they rise through it.

S C E N E 2

Narr 2: Kate enjoys the flight over the island. As the great birds touch down, Kandeldandel and Arc join them.

Kate: It's time to find Gashra. He has the broken Touchstone.

Laioni: We should stay in the trees so Gashra's allies can't see us.

Narr 1: Kate, Jody, and Laioni begin their trek through the forest with the owls flying above. As they cross a stream, the earth heaves with a small earthquake, throwing Kate into the water. Struggling to regain her feet, she loses her precious walking stick.

Kate: The stick!

Narr 2: Kandeldandel flies down and lifts Kate safely to the stream bank. Then he retrieves the stick.

Narr 1: A huge man with a spear appears. He drops his spear and grabs the stick from Kandeldandel. Laioni recognizes him as Sanbu, Gashra's evil servant.

Laioni: (*loudly*) Sanbu!

Kate: Put that stick down!

Narr 2: The owls and Jody attack, but Sanbu spins free and strikes Arc, killing him. Sanbu vanishes into the forest with the stick.

Narr 1: The small group mourns the loss of Arc. After the burial, Kandeldandel, grieving for his lost friend, flies away. Kate, Jody, and Laioni discuss their next step.

Jody: We've got to get that stick back!

Kate: Sanbu will take it straight to Gashra, won't he?

Laioni: Sanbu's camp is on the way to the mountain. It's too far to go the whole way to Gashra's before nightfall, so Sanbu will probably stay at his camp tonight.

Jody: Why don't we go after him now?

Kate: Track him through the night?

Jody: We'd have a chance to get the stick back. A surprise attack.

Kate: I don't know. Could we find his camp at night? And would we stand a chance against his band of warriors?

Jody: If we don't get the stick back, we're stuck here forever. We've got nothing to lose.

S C E N E 3

Narr 2: Throughout the long night, Kate, Laioni, Jody, and Monga move through the dark forest, watching for signs of Sanbu's camp. Suddenly, Laioni gasps, and Kate turns to see what has startled her.

Narr 1: Before them is Gashra's mountain with a campfire and several huts nearby. As the sun rises, they discuss what to do next. Kandeldandel appears from behind a boulder.

Jody: They must have some guards around here someplace. We can't just walk right into them.

Kandeldandel: I just flew over the area. There is only one guard. The others are in their huts. They seem to be celebrating having gotten the stick.

Jody: What did he say?

Kate: One guard. The others are by the fire or in their huts, celebrating.

Kandeldandel: I'll take care of the guard. It will be a pleasure. I have a score to settle with Sanbu.

Kate: For what he did to Arc?

Kandeldandel: That and more. You see, my father was the traitor who stole the broken Touchstone before Sanbu murdered him. Maybe I can avenge his death and restore honor to my family.

Narr 2: Kandeldandel retrieves his flute and a spear from behind the boulder.

Jody: Look! Sanbu's spear.

Kandeldandel: I brought it with me.

Narr 1: Kandeldandel attacks the guard from behind, digging his talons into the lizardlike creature's back and killing it. From the huts comes the chanting of husky voices.

Laioni: A victory chant. Let's spoil their party.

Narr 2: The attackers creep forward across the rocks. Five warriors sit on stones by the fire, unprepared for battle. The huts seem otherwise unguarded. Sanbu rises.

Kate: (*whispering*) If Monga could jump one of them, that would distract the others.

Narr 1: Monga bounds off toward the campfire. But a shaggy brown dog emerges from a hut, and they fight.

Narr 2: Kate, Laioni, and Jody dash into the camp toward Sanbu's men, while Kandeldandel takes flight. Sanbu throws a spear at Kate, narrowly missing her. Kandeldandel attacks Sanbu, and Kate uses the distraction to thrust her spear into Sanbu's side.

Narr 1: Sanbu's followers fight while Kate searches for the Stick of Fire. Just as she finds it hidden in a hut, Sanbu appears with a knife.

Kate: Sanbu!

Narr 2: They struggle for control of the stick. Sanbu picks up a spear, intending to kill Kate, but Laioni hurls herself at Sanbu.

Laioni: Run! Escape while you can!

Narr 1: Sanbu slashes Laioni's thigh, and the injured dog, Monga, releases his death grip on the large dog and bounds across the camp to help Laioni. He leaps at Sanbu with his last bit of strength.

Narr 2: While Monga clamps his jaws around Sanbu's neck, Kate grabs the walking stick and helps Laioni up.

Laioni: Leave me. My leg—I can't walk.

Kate: You're not going to die! I won't let you!

Narr 1: Kate drags Laioni away. She forces herself to move up the rocky ridge, wondering what is happening as the fight continues.

Narr 2: Hail begins, then a blizzard. Without warmth, Laioni will surely die. With no matches for starting a fire, Kate realizes that the precious walking stick—her only way home—is Laioni's only hope. Kate feels helpless, until, as if commanded, the stick begins to glow.

SCENE 4

Narr 1: The walking stick burns as Kate wonders what to do next.

Kate: (*to herself*) I'll never return home. But perhaps I can still stop Gashra. He wants the missing piece of the Touchstone. Maybe I can trick him and stop his destruction of the forest.

Narr 2: Kate decides Laioni is safe for now and begins to climb up the ridge. She searches for a passageway to Gashra's lair.

Kate: (*to herself*) A cave! Maybe it's the way to Gashra.

Narr 1: As Kate moves downward through the cave, she enters a huge chamber where a lake bubbles with lava. Gashra, a beast with the head and body of a *Tyrannosaurus rex* and the enlarged arms and legs of a human, glowers at her.

Kate: (*fearfully*) Gashra!

Gashra: You've caused me lots of trouble! You killed my servant Sanbu.

Kate: (*bravely*) He tried to steal the Stick of Fire.

Gashra: (*soothingly*) How clumsy of him. The last thing I would want is a servant of mine causing you harm!

Narr 2: Gashra stretches his lips into a huge smile.

Gashra: By the way, where is the stick now? Hmmm?

Kate: I destroyed it.

Gashra: You what? Don't you know that stick is the only way to find the missing piece of the Touchstone?

Kate: (*trying to look truthful*) I know. But I already found it.

Gashra: Show it to me!

Kate: Why should I?

Gashra: Because I will kill you if you don't.



Kate: Then you'll *never* find it.

Gashra: Now, Kate, have you ever wondered what we could accomplish together? If you help me, the whole world will be ours.

Kate: How do I know you really have the rest of the Touchstone?

Gashra: I have it. How do I know you have the fragment?

Kate: I wouldn't be foolish enough to come here unless I did.

Gashra: If you don't cooperate, I could boil you in lava.

Kate: You can't threaten me. I know how much you want that fragment.

Gashra: You're right. I do want it. And so I'll grant your deepest wish if you give it to me. I will reunite you with Aunt Melanie.

Kate: (*tempted*) First, tell me your plan.

Gashra: My plan is to conquer. To own everything I can. And my first assault is only minutes away! Even without the whole Touchstone, my power is swelling rapidly. Soon, it will be enough to engulf most of the forest in a sea of fire. That will take care of those miserable Tinnanis and their friends the Halamis for good.

Narr 1: Gashra turns to the bubbling, rising lake of lava.

Gashra: In just a few minutes, the pressure of this lava will be so great that it will blast away the top of this mountain and everything else in its path. Shall we work together?

Kate: All right. But first show me the broken Touchstone.

Narr 2: Gashra opens his massive jaws and removes an enormous ruby-red sphere from under his tongue.

Gashra: Here it is.

Kate: Closer. I want to see where the fragment fits.

Narr 1: Gashra lowers his hand, keeping it out of her reach. The mountain shakes. Kate lunges and grabs the broken Touchstone before Gashra can react. She runs.

Gashra: How dare you!

Narr 2: Gashra smashes his tail against the wall. Rocks fall, knocking Kate backward. She drops the sphere, and Gashra scoops it up.

Gashra: You shall die! I have enough power to rule the world from here to the ocean. I don't need you or the fragment. O mountain of wrath, explode in triumph!

Narr 1: The mountain rumbles down to its depths. The lava lake spits fire high into the air, and explosions rock the walls.

Narr 2: Kate picks up a fist-sized stone and hurls it at Gashra's hand. It misses, but it strikes a giant stalactite. The formation breaks loose, crashes down, and knocks the Touchstone from his hand.

Narr 1: As Gashra leaps to retrieve it, a white-winged creature flies toward the sphere and catches it just in time.

Kandeldandel: Here, Kate! Take it and follow me!

Narr 2: Kandeldandel drops the Touchstone into Kate's hands, and she darts after him as the volcano erupts.

S C E N E 5

Narr 1: Kandeldandel uses his wide owl eyes to guide them. Behind them, the wall of molten lava moves steadily closer. Kate suddenly finds herself wedged between the narrow walls.

Kandeldandel: Come on!

Kate: I'm stuck! And the lava—it's like fire! Help me!

Narr 2: Above the lava's spitting and crackling, Kate hears Kandeldandel playing his flute. The heat fades. The lava grows cold and hard.

Kandeldandel: I never thought my little flute would come in so handy. Now let's get you out.

Narr 1: Kandeldandel tugs on Kate, finally pulling her free. They tumble down the passageway, with Kate landing on him.

Kandeldandel: My wing! I think it's broken!

Kate: Let's get out of here. The lava's coming again!

Narr 2: They stay just ahead of the seething lava, which is consuming everything in its path. Kandeldandel leads them to a grand fir tree.

Narr 1: Kandeldandel releases a long, low hooting sound. The earth quivers beneath them, and the roots of the tree buckle and spread apart.

Narr 2: They drop between the roots onto the floor of an underground cavern. Kate looks up just in time to see the tree consumed by a waves of flames.

Kate: That was close! Do you think Gashra is dead?

Kandeldandel: I doubt it. He'll need time to regain his strength, but he'll be back.

Kate: Where are we?

Kandeldandel: We're in a tunnel, used by the Tinnanis for years to get to the island of Ho Shantero.

Kate: Let's go, then. At least this part of the Touchstone can help your people repair the forest.

Narr 1: Then Kate remembers the others.

Kate: What about Jody and Laioni? Are they all right?

Kandeldandel: Jody's fine. He fought Sanbu's men bravely. He got into trouble, but I carried him off. But we lost Monga.

Kate: He gave everything, like Arc.

Narr 2: They walk quietly.

Kate: What about Laioni?

Kandeldandel: Jody and I found her. She's very weak. Jody stayed to help her while I left to find you.

Kate: But she's alive. That's all that really matters.

S C E N E 6

Narr 1: Kandeldandel guides Kate through dozens of tunnels. At last they see a silver trapdoor in the ceiling.

Kandeldandel: The only way to go through that silver door is to fly. With my injured wing, that's impossible.

Narr 2: Kate squeezes the broken Touchstone in frustration. Suddenly, she finds herself rising slowly.

Kate: Guess it's my chance to give you a ride! Grab my feet.

Narr 1: Kate lifts Kandeldandel straight up through the silver door and through the deep-blue waters of the lake. A Tinnani guard escorts them to a chamber where an assemblage of Tinnanis awaits them. Kate stands before the chieftain and chieftess.

Kate: The broken Touchstone.

Chieftain: Delivered by Kaitlyn the Conqueror.

Chieftain: Bring in the guests. And bring some more oysters! *(to Kate)* We are most grateful to you.

Chieftess: *(to Kandeldandel)* And to you.

Chieftain: You have saved us from destruction. Gashra is defeated and the broken Touchstone returned. And you, Kandeldandel, have brought honor to yourself and your family.

Kandeldandel: I was glad to be of service.

Chieftess: Even so, our victory came at great cost. Much of the forest beyond the walls of our crater is now buried beneath a blanket of molten stone. Restoring it will take many lifetimes, and our friends who died cannot be returned.

Narr 2: She sighs and looks around while the chieftain places the broken Touchstone back on the throne.

Chieftess: And we will never see the final healing of the Touchstone. The missing fragment will never be found, for the only clues to its whereabouts were destroyed with the Stick of Fire. And so our beloved daughter will die.

Narr 1: The chieftess turns to Kate, who averts her eyes.

Chieftess: Saddest of all is the glimpse of the future that I have seen in my dreams. Though the surviving Halamis will leave, seeking new lands to the south, other humans will eventually arrive. To them, the forest will be just a tool, not a friend.

Narr 2: The chieftess ruffles her white wings before continuing.

Chieftess: The Tinnanis will be forced to leave. A few tokens of our past, such as this island, will stay afloat for a while. Yet when the power of the Wicked One rises again, do not expect to find any Tinnanis still residing in the realm of Ho Shantero.

Narr 1: The group stands in stony silence. A Tinnani flies to the throne with a tray of raw oysters, but the chieftain pushes them aside. Then two familiar faces appear, pushing through the Tinnanis.

Kate: Laioni! Jody!

Laioni: You shouldn't have burned the stick, Kate.

Kate: I had to do it.

Jody: We'll never get back to our own time now, but you did save Laioni's life.

Narr 2: Kate hugs Jody, who blushes and thrusts his hands in his pocket.

Jody: Oh yeah, I thought you might want this. It's all that's left of the stick.

Narr 1: Kate takes the charred object in her hand and rubs it against her sweatshirt, revealing a bit of its true color, a brilliant red. Then she gasps and rushes to the throne and reaches for the broken Touchstone.

Narr 2: She slips the charred remains of the handle into the crack. It slides in perfectly. A burst of bright red light and the sound of a distant explosion fill the chamber.

Kate: The Touchstone is healed!

Chieftess: So the fragment was inside the stick all the time! And look —Fanona is growing stronger by the second!

Chieftain: This is a day to remember. Let there be a feast! Break out my entire storehouse of delicacies!

Narr 1: As the Tinnanis celebrate, Fanona watches Kate and realizes how she yearns to go home. Nearly restored to health, Fanona can now speak.

Fanona: Hear me! There is still a way for our friends to go home.

Kate: How?

Fanona: The Touchstone! All it needs is the help of one being whose life stretches unbroken from this time into the future.

Kate: The Ancient One! It brought us here.

Fanona: And so it shall take you home.

Kate: But what if it's cut down before we get back?

Fanona: Then you are stranded forever. There's no time to waste.

SCENE 7

Narr 2: Kate and her friends gather at the foot of the Ancient One.

Chieftain: *(to Kate)* Are you ready to begin your voyage?

Kate: I'm ready. I'm afraid I won't be bringing you any more peppermints. I won't be doing any time traveling without the stick.

Chieftess: You might find another way to visit us. You know you are always welcome.

Chieftain: With peppermints.

Kate: Kandeldandel, I wish you could come with me. You'd love some of the flute music that gets written in the next few centuries.

Kandeldandel: I'm going to miss you.

Laioni: I have no gift for you, only a promise. I promise to teach the ways of the Halamis to all who survive. And I will tell them of the tree spirit who helped save us. A few of our stories may reach you in your time.

Kate: I'll think of you often.

Fanona: It is time.

Narr 1: Kate and Jody step to the base of the massive tree.

Kate: Good-bye.

Laioni: *Halma-dru.*

Chieftain: Don't forget what to bring if you ever come back.

Narr 2: As Kate and Jody enter the hollow trunk of the tree, it fills with a flash of red light. Kate feels herself whirling and loses consciousness.

SCENE 8

Kate: Where am I?

Ancient One: *(in a deep voice)* I hold and protect you, small friend. Tell me your wish.



Kate: I want to go home. To my own time.

Ancient One: Are you certain? That's a time of great sadness, great pain.

Kate: It's my time, and I want to go there.

Ancient One: First you must understand things you never understood before. Then I will take you.

Kate: Please hurry. They'll try to cut you down! Take me before it's too late.

Narr 1: During her journey through time, the Ancient One shares knowledge of the centuries with Kate. She feels she has herself become a tree. Then she awakens to a painful sound—the sound of chain saws.

Narr 2: Billy, completely alone, has begun cutting the Ancient One with a chain saw. Kate leaps to her feet.

Kate: Stop!

Narr 1: Billy can't hear her over the roar. Kate takes an empty gasoline can from near the tree and throws it at his back.

Billy: Ow! What are you doing?

Kate: You can't cut down this tree.

Billy: Get out of my way!

Jody: Billy! I'll keep her away.

Kate: Jody!

Billy: Thanks for your help, kid.

Jody: But first, can I start your saw for you? My grandpa never lets me start his.

Billy: Oh, all right.

Kate: Jody! You can't!

Narr 2: Jody stretches the cord away from the housing. Then he pulls out his pocketknife and slashes the rope in two.

Billy: Hey!

Jody: Just helping out!

Narr 1: Jody dashes away, but Billy turns and lifts another chain saw from the bushes. He yanks the starter cord and sinks the saw deep into the trunk of the Ancient One.

Narr 2: Kate feels the blade as if it were cutting into her side, stumbles, and falls to the ground. Billy continues to cut, and the redwood begins to sway.

Narr 1: Billy finishes cutting, not realizing that Kate lies injured on the ground beneath the swaying tree. As Kate tries to crawl away, he sees her.

Billy: Move!

Kate: I'm trying!

Narr 2: Billy runs toward her. He grabs her by the waist, carrying her out of the way just before the tree topples to the ground.

Billy: You could've gotten us both killed. Don't you even say thanks? I saved your life!

Kate: (*whispering*) And killed someone else.

Narr 1: Billy looks at Kate's mournful face and sullenly walks off into the forest. Aunt Melanie comes running up.

Aunt Melanie: Kate! I'm so glad you're all right.

Kate: Oh, Aunt Melanie! The Ancient One ...

Aunt Melanie: I know. But Billy's stopped now. Frank and I saw him heading for his truck just now.

Kate: It hurts so much.

Narr 2: Aunt Melanie knows Kate means she has a wound no one can see.

SCENE 9

Narr 1: When Kate returns to Aunt Melanie's the following summer, she feels as if she had never left. They talk about Kate's adventure.

Kate: You would have liked Laioni.

Aunt Melanie: I'm sure. Here, take a peppermint. Now, come to Lost Crater. There's a surprise I want you to see.

Narr 2: Soon they are walking on a new trail in the crater.

Aunt Melanie: Look, Kate.

Narr 1: Kate sees a stump in the center of the grove where the Ancient One had stood. A sign on the stump says the place is protected as a park.

Narr 2: Another sign links historical events to the rings of the tree, such as the Norman Conquest of England in A.D. 1066 and ending with Felled by Loggers, A.D. 2000.

Kate: I'm still sad, and I don't see any surprise.

Aunt Melanie: Look again.

Narr 1: Kate looks around and notices that at the far edge of the stump a single young seedling has sprouted.

Narr 2: Kate runs her finger down its delicate length. She feels the sapling's strength. And she knows that it will one day grow as tall as the Ancient One.

Narr 1: In the distance Kate hears the sound of an owl hooting deeply, richly. The sound hangs eerily in the air, like the call of a distant flute.

The End