

Children of the Dark River: Book 1

THE CLIFF

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—PROLOGUE—

Abb and Tem are best friends. They have been friends all their lives.

They live on farms. The farms sit along the Dark River.

Abb lives with her parents and grandma. Tem lives with his dad and brother.

The Dark River People grow crops for food. They hunt for meat. They make their own clothes.

There is always a lot to do. Tem and Abb help with farm work every day.

For the Dark River People, life can be good. But it can be hard, too. They have to be ready for anything...



The Storm

“Oh, no,” Abb said. Dark clouds hid the sun.

Tem looked up.

“You know what Grandma says?” Abb asked.

“About when clouds are the color of a bull? Bad things happen.”

“Your grandma says many things,” Tem said.

“Some don’t make sense.”

Abb crossed her arms. “Grandma is old. She knows a lot.”

Tem shrugged. He liked Abb’s grandma. But he didn’t always like her ideas. They made Abb worry.

“Can you help me?” Tem said. “These baskets are full. I need to move them.”

Tem had a lot to do. His brother often helped. But he was away with their dad.

They were selling fruit. They did it every summer.

Abb looked at the sky. Now it was even darker. The clouds were low. Some were black.

She could no longer see Blue Mountain.

Tem had an apple. He gave it to Dash.

Dash was Tem’s pet goat. He followed Tem and Abb all over.

“Abb? Can you help me?”

Tem rubbed Dash’s head. He waited. Dash chewed the apple.

There was a clap of thunder. Abb jumped.
“Yikes,” she said. “I should go home.”

“Now? What about the baskets?” Tem asked.

“I’ll help later,” Abb said. “My parents will need me. We should close up the barn.”

Light rain now fell. Then, quickly, it began to pour. Sheets of rain came down. It was warm.

Summer was always warm. The rain was warm. Even the night was warm.

The wind picked up. The door to Tem’s house slammed shut.

“Wow!” Tem said. “That happened fast. You *should* go.”

Abb nodded. “I’ll come back soon.”

Abb ran. She went toward the river.

Tem lived on one side of the Dark River.
Abb lived on the other.

A bridge went over the river. The bridge was made of wood. It was built to swing. Abb and Tem crossed it a lot.

Rain shot down. It stung Abb's face.

The wind pushed Abb. Running was hard.

She got close to the bridge.

Then Dash spit out his apple. He ran toward the river.

"Dash!" Tem yelled. The goat did not stop.

Tem saw why. It was a giant wave! It rolled down the river. The wave came at the bridge.

Dash loved Tem. But he loved Abb, too. He ran to her.



***It was a giant wave! It rolled down the river.
The wave came at the bridge.***

“Abb! Stop!” Tem yelled.

She could not hear him. The wind was loud.

Tem ran behind Dash. They raced toward
Abb. She stood by the river.

Abb saw the wave.

Abb had spent her life on the river. She had
never seen a wave like this.

It crashed into the bridge.

The bridge split apart.

Abb looked back at Tem. He ran toward her.

“I’m OK!” Abb yelled.

But she wasn’t.

The river flooded the bank. Abb slipped.
Tem screamed.

The river swept Abb in.

On the River

“Abb!” Tem shouted. “Abb! Where are you?”

Tem could not see Abb. The river pulled her under the water.

Dash ran along the shore. He looked for Abb.

Rain came down harder. Wind howled.

Dash screamed. The goat saw something. It was in the river.

Abb held on to a piece of wood. It was part of the bridge. It floated like a raft.

The raft was on a sandbar. But the water was rising. It rose over the sandbar.

“Abb! Are you OK?” Tem yelled.

Abb could not hear him. The wind was too loud.

Abb was soaked. She held onto her raft.

Tem yelled again. This time, Abb heard him.

“Tem! I’m stuck!” she said.

“Don’t move!” Tem shouted.

Water rushed around Abb. Rain shot down.

“Should I swim?” Abb asked.

“No!” Tem shouted. “You’ll get sucked away!”

Abb was a strong swimmer. But the water moved quickly. Swimming was a bad idea.

“Stay there! I’ll get help!” Tem said.

“No! Don’t go!” Abb said. “Please!”

“What should I do?” Tem said.

Abb’s family was across the river. The bridge

was gone. He could not get to them.

It was a long walk to the next house.

There was no one to help.

Then the river swelled. The water went over Tem's feet.

Abb screamed. "Tem! Get back!"

It was too late.

Tem fell. He was in the river.

He tried to swim. He kicked. He moved his arms. But he could not fight the river.

The rushing water was too strong.

Tem would get tired soon. That would be bad. Abb had to do something.

She wiggled her raft. She pushed it off the sandbar. She kicked her legs in the water.

The raft moved. It slid away from the sandbar. Now it floated quickly down the river.

It went toward Tem. “Get ready!” Abb yelled.

Tem looked scared. He was still trying to swim.

Abb went by. Tem grabbed the raft. Abb gripped his arms. She yanked.

Tem got onto the raft. “Hold on!” Abb said.

Tem looked behind him. He looked at the shore. Dash waited. Tem cried out. He loved his pet.

“Don’t let go!” Abb yelled.

They held on. There were waves. Abb and Tem went up. They crashed down.

They soared down the river. “So fast!” Tem



They held on. There were waves.

shouted. "It's like being on a horse!"

Abb shook her head. The wind howled. It was too loud to speak.

The rain stung. Water filled their eyes.

Their hands hurt. Gripping the raft was hard.

The rain beat down. The river bubbled and foamed. Hours passed. The raft kept going.

Suddenly, the rain stopped. The wind died down.

The storm had started quickly. It ended quickly, too.

But the raft sped on. They could not stop it.

Abb and Tem were far, far from home.