

The Little White Horse

Elizabeth Goudge

¹ They had come to the edge of a clearing in the wood, a desolate place like a quarry strewn with boulders, with stagnant pools of water between the rocks. On three sides the rock rose up sheer like a wall and crowning the wall the way they were facing was a castle built foursquare like a tower, so old that it looked like part of the rock upon which it was built. Upon each side of it, except just this side where its great gate looked down upon the clearing, the pine trees closed about it with the darkness of night. It was a terrifying castle. The only way to reach it, as far as Maria could see, was to climb up the flight of steps that had been cut in the cliff beneath; and to do that they would have to leave the shelter of the pine trees and cross the clearing under the eyes of whoever might be looking out of that window above the gate.

¹¹ 'There's another way,' whispered Robin. 'Wrolf showed it to me when we were here before. Look, he's leading us that way now.'

¹³ They went back among the pine trees, turned to their left in a wide half-circle and began to climb steeply upwards, climbing over the rocks that had pushed themselves out of the ground between the pine trees, and pushing their way through thickets of bramble bushes. ... Then they swerved round to the right again, and they had come right round to the back of the castle. Its frowning walls rose sheer up above them. But there was no door here. No window even. Nothing but the great high wall, as high as the tallest pine tree, with battlements along the top.

²⁰ 'We climb up the tallest tree, and then onto the battlements,' explained Robin airily. 'I tried it the other day to see if it could be done, and it's quite easy.'

