

# Broken ice

The following extract is from the book 'Arthur, the Seeing Stone' by Kevin Crossley-Holland. This passage concerns Arthur, aged 13, his friend Gatty, aged 12, and Arthur's younger sister Sian.



This was when I heard a loud crack, and then a scream from the fish-pond.

'Sian,' I yelled, and I raced round the hedge and over to the pond. Sian had gone through the ice, at least ten steps out. She was in the water up to her shoulders, clutching on to the jagged edge of the ice-sheet with her white fingers.

'Arthur!' she screamed.

'Keep still!' I shouted. 'Don't try to move.'

'Help!' screamed Sian.

'I'm coming,' I called.

At the edge of the pond, I lay down on the ice and began to pull and slide my way across. I looked down, down through the thin ice into the drowning darkness, and saw the darker shapes of gliding carp and trout, and when I looked up again, Gatty was there! She was running round to the other side. Then she, too, bellied onto the ice, and silently began to swim out across it.

Again and again Sian screamed.

Gatty reached her first and grabbed Sian's arm.

'Quiet!' she said fiercely.

When I tried to get hold of Sian's other arm, some of the ice around the hole broke away; then it cracked under me, and I let go of Sian and slid back.

Sian began to scream again.

When I reached out for the second time, I could hear the ice groan and feel it bending.

'Go on!' said Gatty. 'Lift, Sian!'

Sian grabbed Gatty's shoulder, and then my hair. She strained, she moaned, and then all at once she slid out onto her stomach, dripping and mucky and wailing, as if she'd somehow given birth to herself. She'd risen from the darkness into the light, and Gatty and I were the midwives, pulling her up on to the bending ice.

