



Edge Chronicles 9: Clash of the Sky Galleons (The Edge Chronicles)

By Paul Stewart, Chris Riddell

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In the penultimate book in the **Edge Chronicles** series, Quint is travelling with his father, Wind Jackal, on a mission to track down and bring to justice Turbot Smeal, the man who started the fire that killed their family. Having left behind his studies at the Knights Academy, Quint is now eager to learn from his father what it really means to be a sky pirate. But, consumed by his desire to capture Smeal, Wind Jackal's judgment is flawed, and his actions endanger the lives of his crew — and his son.

As they travel from the taverns and backstreets of Undertown and the wonders of the shipbuilders' yards, to the dark dangers of the Deepwoods, Quint and Maris become separated from the rest of the crew. Finally, at the mysterious, ghostly sky-wreck in Open Sky, they discover the truth about Smeal.

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Editorial Review

Review

“Stunningly original.”

– *Guardian*

“Entertaining fantasy at its finest.”

–*Times Literary Supplement*

About the Author

Chris Riddell is the co-creator of the bestselling Edge Chronicles series, with Paul Stewart. He has illustrated many children’s books including the award-winning **Pirate Diary**. He is also the political cartoonist for the *Guardian* and *Observer* newspapers.

Paul Stewart is the co-creator of the bestselling Edge Chronicles series, with Chris Riddell. He is also the author of a number of previous titles for children including **The Wakening**.

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'Not even here in this place of ghosts and demons and half-formed things!' bellowed the wild-eyed sky pirate captain, his voice cracking as he struggled to make himself heard above the screaming wind. 'Not even here will you be safe from my vengeance!'

The sky ship bucked and swayed as it fought against the violent air currents which kept all but the most reckless or foolhardy from venturing over the lip of the Edge and down into the abyss below. For here, where the warm Mire mud cascaded down over the cliff face in huge oozing mudflows and met the icy air currents of the void below, gales and hurricanes and turbulent fog were whipped up into a frenzy.

'No matter how far down into these infernal depths you descend,' Wind Jackal raged, shaking his fist at the eternal gloom below, 'I shall hunt you down . . .'

'Father, please,' the young sky pirate by the captain's side protested, and laid a hand on his shoulder. 'The crew . . .'

Wind Jackal turned from the balustrade at the helm of the Galerider, the look of glazed fury on his face giving way to a frown as he found the eyes of his crew upon him. There was Spillins, the ancient oakelf, high up in the caternest. Ratbit, the swivel-eyed mobgnome, his heavy jacket laden with charms. Steg Jambles, the harpooneer, with young Tem Barkwater, as ever, by his side. Sagbutt, the fierce flat-head goblin, his neck-rings gleaming. And Maris Pallitax, staring up from the fore-deck. They all shared the same expression - one of barely contained panic as they stared wide-eyed at their captain, looking to him for reassurance.

Only the newest member of the crew seemed immune to the terror of this fearful place he had brought them to. The Stone Pilot. Concealed inside the tall conical hood that she never removed, and silent as the day - only weeks earlier - when she had been rescued from the Deepwoods slave market, she tended the flight-rock, seemingly oblivious to all around her. The sight of the Stone Pilot applying the cooling rods and adjusting the blazing sumpwood burners which surrounded the flight-rock seemed to calm the captain, for he took the wheel from his son with a grim smile.

'Forgive me, Quint,' he said, running his hands over the flight-levers. 'It's just that, after all these years, he seems so close . . .'

A blast of wind hit the Galerider, making the sky ship shudder from stem to stern, and forcing Wind Jackal to feverishly adjust the hull-weights. His hands raced expertly over the bone-handled flight-levers on either side of the great wheel, raising this one a tad, lowering that one.

'Sky curse this infernal wind!' he snarled, scanning the mud-clogged cliff edge. 'I can't hold her much longer. We must find somewhere to tether . . .'

Suddenly, the strident voice of Spillins cried out from the caternest. 'Jutting rock at fifty strides!'

'Thank Sky,' Wind Jackal murmured, removing his right hand from the hull-weight levers for a split second; just long enough to put the carved tilderhorn amulet gratefully to his lips. 'Hold her steady as you can, Stone Pilot. We're depending on you. Tem! Ratbit!' he bellowed. 'Man the winch! Steg, prepare to descend.'

A chorus of voices and a flurry of movement erupted all round the sky ship as the crew hurried to do their captain's bidding, taking up their positions and getting to grips with the ship's heavy equipment. Ratbit barked commands at the young and lanky Tem Barkwater as the pair of them swung the winding-winch round until the great ironwood wheel was jutting out over the port side of the sky ship. Steg Jambles secured a leather harness round his midriff, seized the rope that dangled from the winch-wheel and attached one to the other.

'Jutting rock directly beneath us!' Spillins shouted down.

Quint and Maris scurried across the deck - skirting round Filbus Queep the thin-faced quartermaster, who had appeared from his quarters above the aft-hold - and peered over the side. Sure enough, there was the single jutting crag that Spillins had spotted, a small island of stillness and stability amidst the constantly shifting Mire. It stood proud of the oozing white mud, which swirled slowly round it, then poured over the edge in great globules that glistened for a moment, before disappearing into the eternal gloom below.

Quint turned and looked up at the flight-rock platform. The Stone Pilot was standing to the left of the great rock, her back towards him. Since the moment they'd first met, the mysterious figure had uttered not a single word. Yet the hunched urgency with which she worked now, feverishly pumping the rock-bellows and riddling the ashes from the roaring furnace, spoke louder than any words.

Every moment the Galerider hovered here, untethered over the void, it risked being swept away and lost for ever in Open Sky. But the Stone Pilot was a natural, whose skills seemed to grow with every passing day. Under her care now, the heated flight-rock was gradually becoming less buoyant and the Galerider was descending towards the jutting rock.

'Now, Steg! Now!' bellowed the captain, his hands leaping from lever to bone-handled lever as he fought to keep the sky ship hovering motionless in place.

Steg Jambles didn't need telling twice. He tested the rope with a quick tug - just to be on the safe side - before stepping off the side of the ship. Tem and Ratbit took the strain and, when Steg had gathered himself, began turning the pulley-lever. Slowly, carefully, they lowered the thick-set fore-decker down through the air towards the jutting rock.

At the balustrade, Maris gripped Quint's arm and turned to look up at him, her dark eyes glistening with a mixture of awe and excitement. Ever since Wind Jackal had plucked the pair of them away from Sanctaphrax those few short weeks earlier, she had seen so much: the snow-white desolation of the Mire, the treacherous glow of the Twilight Woods, the endless canopy of the Deepwoods from above - as well as the horrors of the slave market from which both the Stone Pilot and Tem Barkwater had been rescued. But this. . . this was the most chilling place they had visited so far, and she shivered with dread.

'The great void,' she murmured tremulously. 'The realm of ghosts and demons and . . . what was it your father said?'

'Half-formed things,' said Quint, staring down at the fore-decker dangling below.

'Stop!' Steg's bellowed command was just audible above the turbulent air.

Tem and Ratbit stopped turning the winch at once, and slid the locking bolt across. Far below, Steg gripped hold of a rough chunk of the jutting rock with one white-knuckled hand, while with the other, he unhooked the glinting rock-spike from his sky pirate coat.

'When you're ready, Master Steg!' Wind Jackal called out from the helm, battling to hold the ship steady, as the howling wind battered and buffeted it, seemingly from all sides at once. Steg thrust the pointed end of the spur into a narrow crack in the rock then, with a great round-bowled hammer that he'd unhooked from his belt, he pounded the spike into place with a flurry of colossal blows. As the sound of Steg's hammer blows rose up from below, Wind Jackal smiled grimly.

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