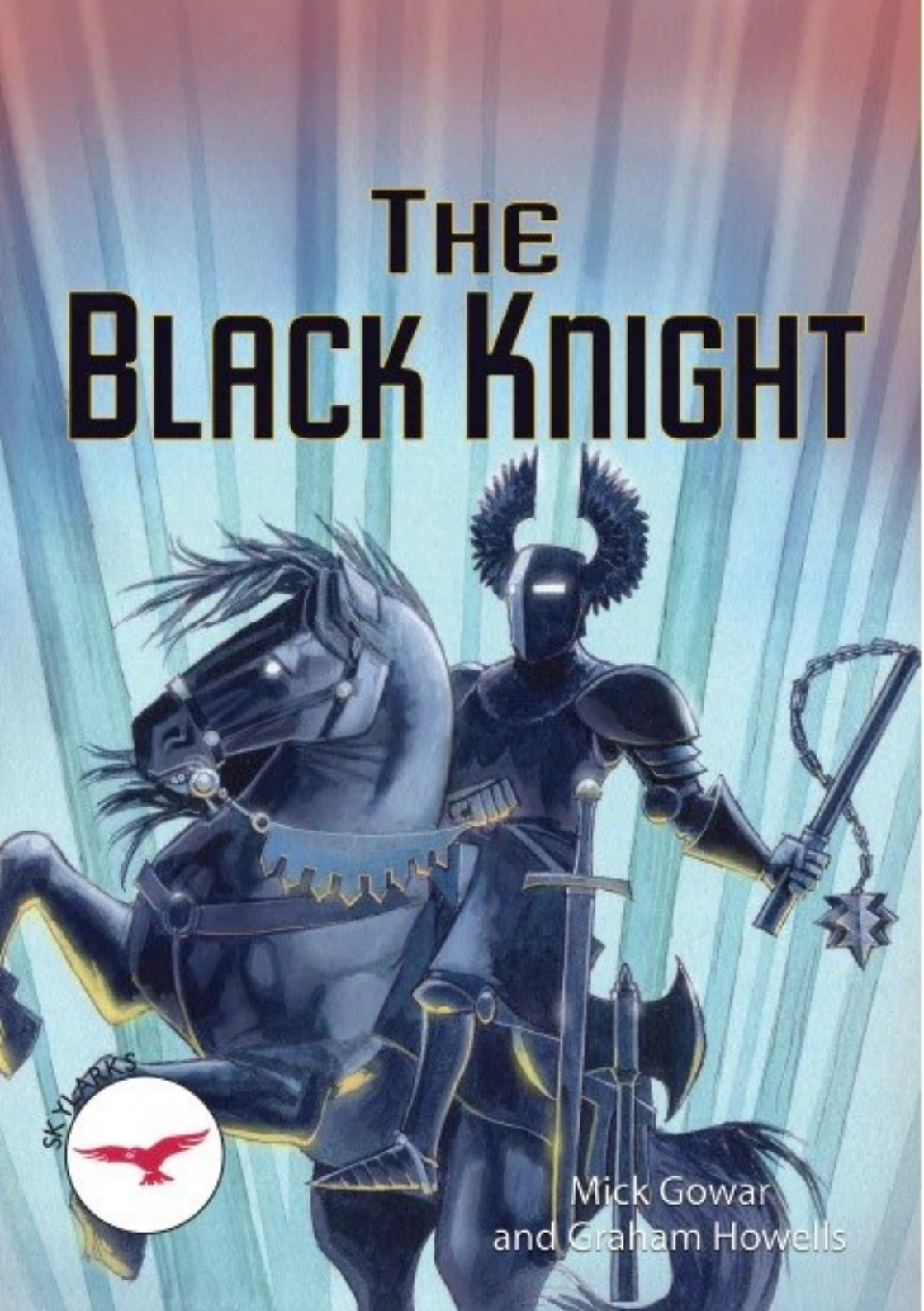
The Black Knight



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SKYLARKS

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Chapter One

At the edge of the village of Wandlebury is an inn called *The Green Man*. Weary travellers can rest at the inn and have a meal, a drink and a bed for the night.

On top of the hill behind the inn is an ancient fort. It doesn't look much like a

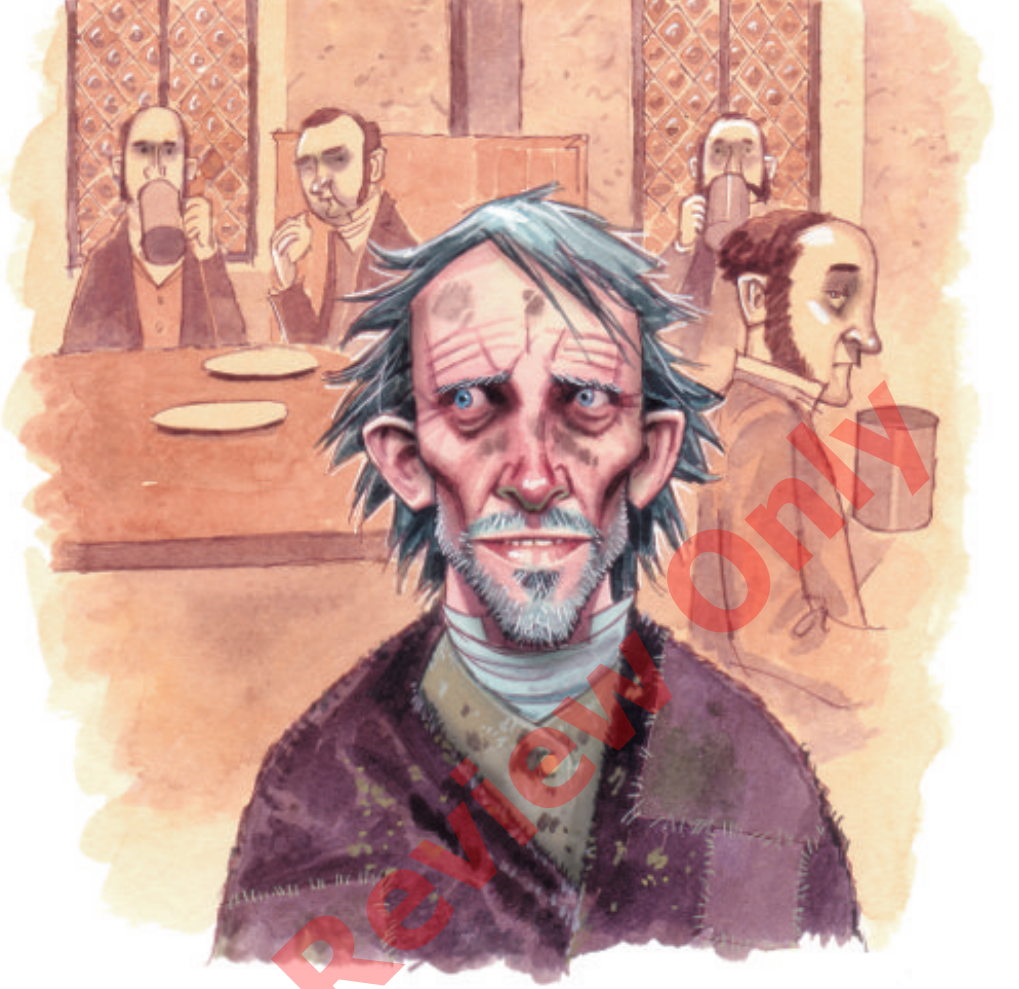
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fort. The walls fell down long ago. All that's left is a circle of bare earth surrounded by ditches. The people of the village never go up the hill to the old fort. This is why.

There was once a boy called Tom, who lived at the inn. Tom's uncle was the innkeeper. Tom worked all day as a potboy. He collected the empty mugs and plates from the tables and washed them up. Tom had never been to school, but he dreamed of leaving the village. Travellers from far away often stayed at the inn and Tom loved listening to their stories. He wanted to travel and see all the wonderful places he'd heard about for himself.

One dark night a stranger came into the inn. Some of the men in the inn

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were drinking, some were eating, and some were singing a silly song. But they all stopped what they were doing and stared at the stranger. His face was unshaven and dirty. He was dressed in a ragged patched cloak.

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"What do you want?" asked the innkeeper, suspiciously. He didn't like strangers, particularly if they looked like beggars.

"A pint of ale, a meal and a bed for the night," replied the stranger.

"How are you going to pay for them?" the innkeeper asked.

"I'll tell you a story," said the stranger, "about a wonderful treasure hidden near here. If you like my story, my bed and meal will be payment. What do you say?"

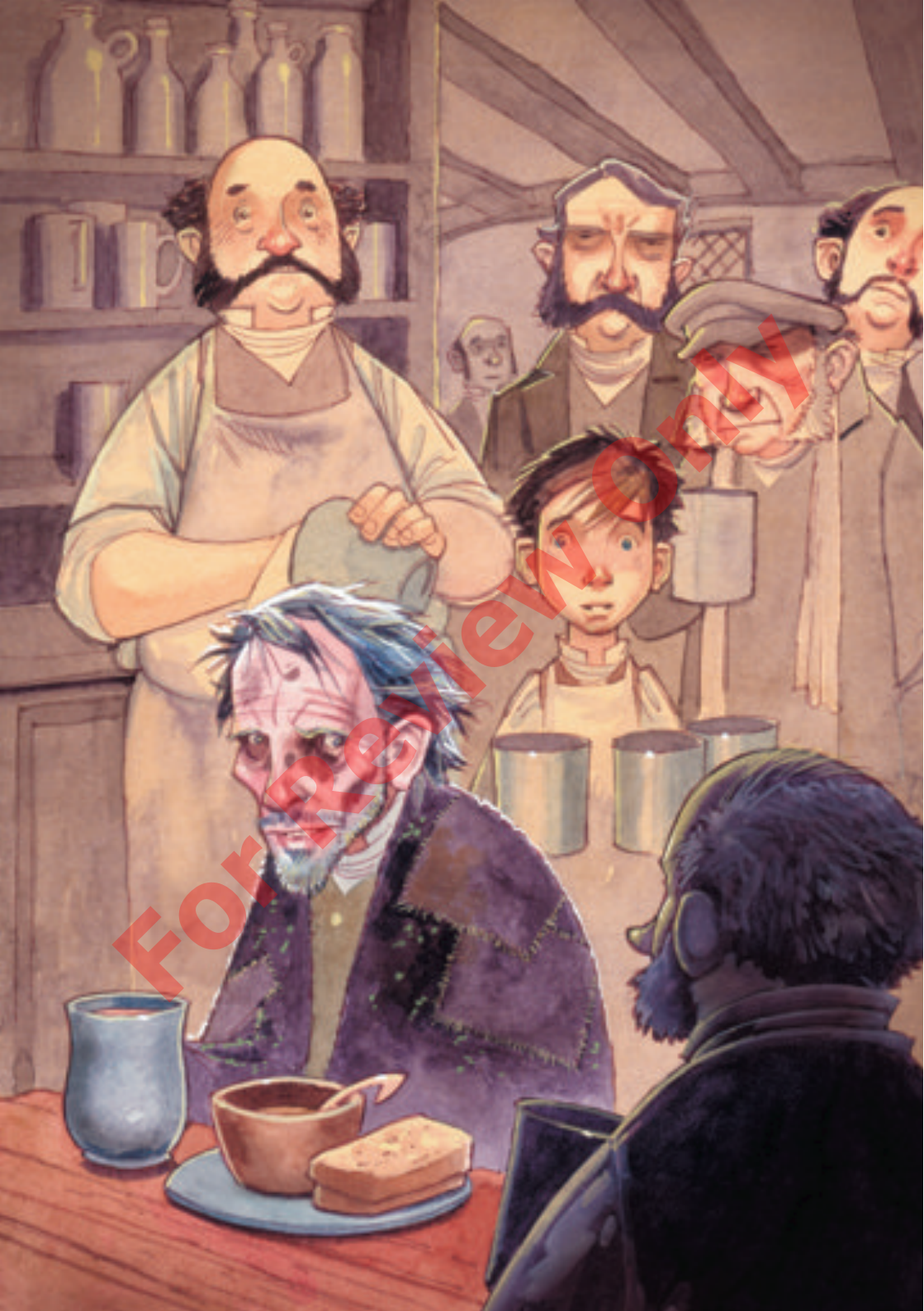
"Treasure?" whispered one old man.

"Let's hear this story!" shouted a red-faced man who was sitting by the fire.

The innkeeper shrugged. "Alright," he said. "We'll hear your story."

So the stranger sat down and began his story.

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Chapter Two

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"Long ago, this land was ruled by King Arthur. Arthur had a group of knights who helped him. These were the famous Knights of the Round Table. They met together around a round table at Camelot, King Arthur's castle. But Arthur's greatest helper was the wizard



Merlin. Merlin used his magic to see into the past and future. Merlin knew what everybody in the kingdom was doing, thinking or saying.

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