

Diana Wynne Jones

The Fantastical Journeys Collection



3 BOOK COLLECTION

Diana Jones

**Diana Wynne Jones's
Fantastical Journeys Collection**

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Come on a journey through the magical worlds of the award-winning Diana Wynne Jones. This exclusive ebook collection of three titles contains *A Tale of Time City*, *The Homeward Bounders*, and her final published novel (completed by her sister Ursula Jones), *The Islands of Chaldea*. Welcome to the world of Diana Wynne Jones, where magical characters take fantastical journeys through lands, space and time. *The Islands of Chaldea* was Diana's last published novel and was completed by her sister Ursula Jones. Aileen is convinced she'll never become a Wise Woman like her Aunt Beck. But when they're sent on an impossible mission together, Aileen realises she might be more special than she thought... In *A Tale From Time City*, Vivian Smith is evacuated from London in 1939, but instead of staying in the countryside is kidnapped by two boys and whisked away to the mysterious Time City. More importantly, they seem to expect her to be able to save it... And in *The Homeward Bounders*, when Jamie wanders into the world of the sinister Them, playing games with human's lives, he is banished to the boundaries of the worlds. Doomed to wander until he can find his way home, Jamie bands with other lost children to try and thwart Their plans. But can they really beat The Game? Winner of numerous accolades including the Guardian Award, Diana's stories are loved by generations of children and adults and she was hailed by Neil Gaiman as 'the best writer of magic there is'.

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**THE
ISLANDS
OF
CHALDEA
A TALE OF
TIME CITY
THE
HOMEWARD
BOUNDERS**

Diana Wynne Jones



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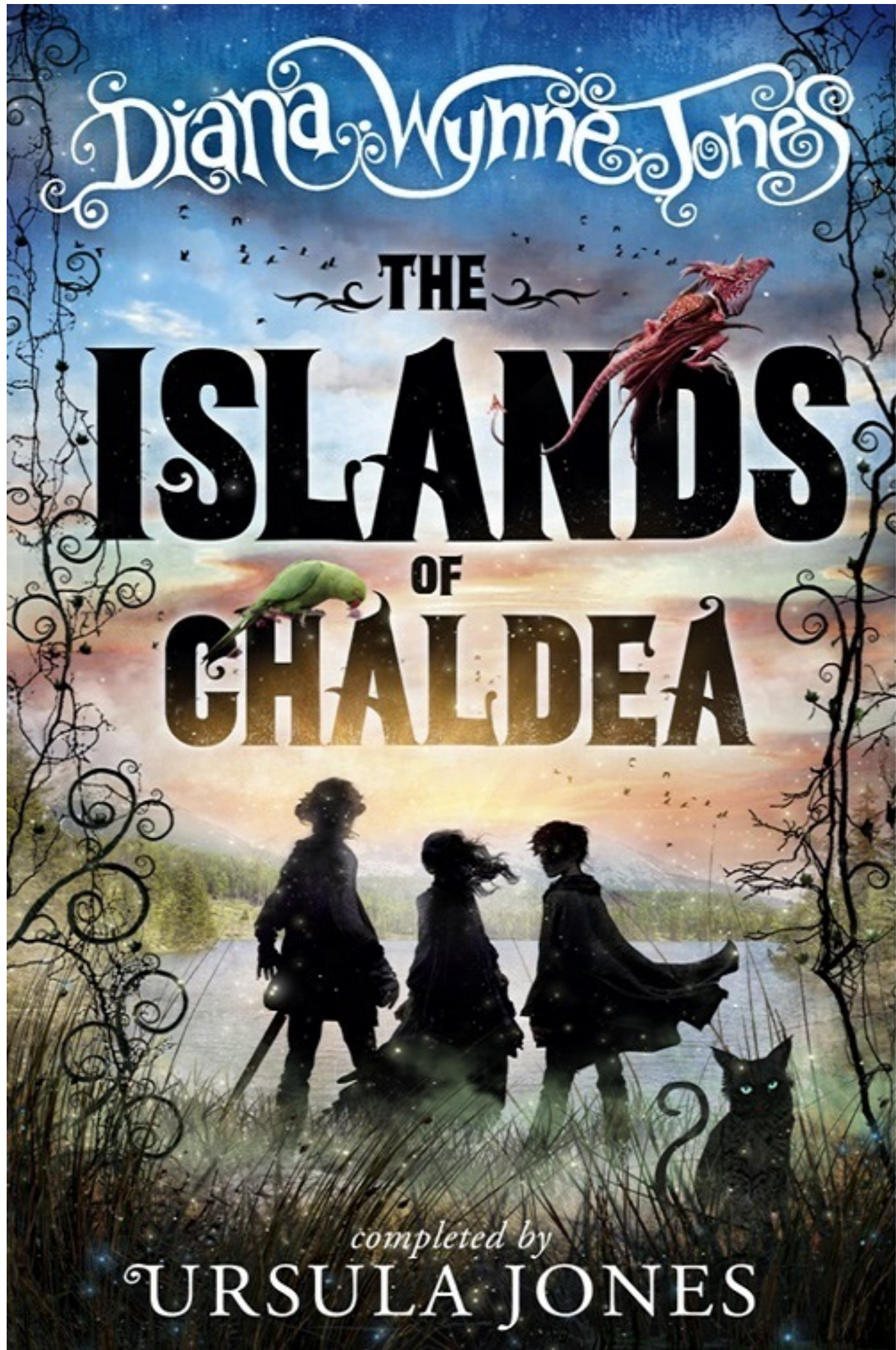
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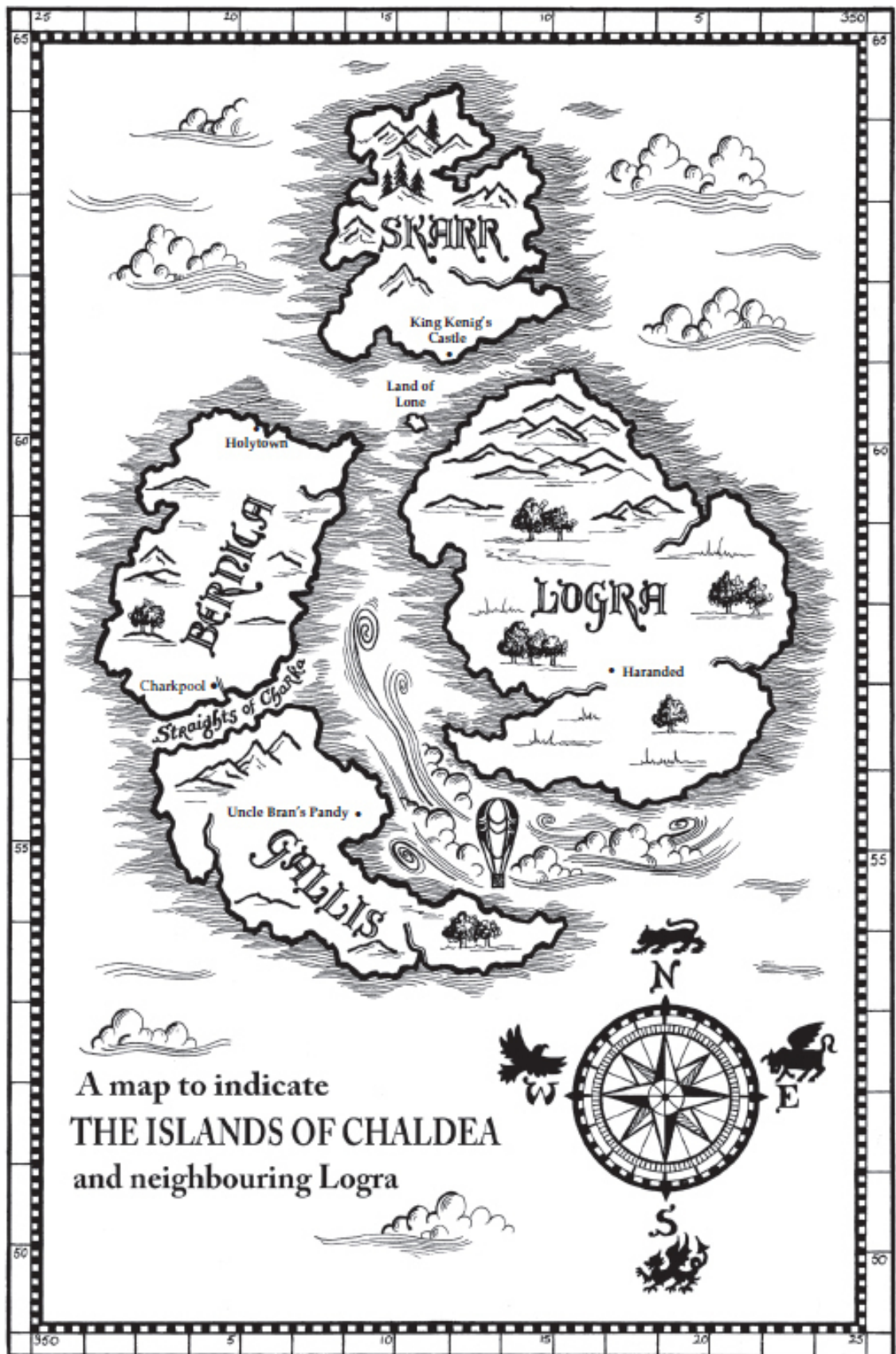


**THE
ISLANDS
OF
CHALDEA**

Diana Wynne Jones



HarperCollins *Children's Books*



To Dave
Diana Wynne Jones
Diana, her family, friends and her readers

Ursula Jones



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CHAPTER ONE

Porridge is my Aunt Beck's answer to everything. The morning after my initiation proved to be such a complete failure, she gave me porridge with cream and honey – an unheard-of luxury in our little stone house – and I was almost too upset to enjoy it. I sat shivering and my teeth chattered, as much with misery as with cold, and pushed the stuff about with my spoon, until Aunt Beck wrapped me in a big fluffy plaid and told me sharply that it was not the end of the world.

“Or not yet,” she added. “And your pigtail is almost in the honey.”

This made me sit up a little. Yesterday I had washed my hair in cold spring water full of herbs – washed all over in it as well – and it was not an experience I wanted to repeat. I had gone without food too all day before that dreadful washing, with the result that I felt damp and chilly all over, and tender as a snail's horns, when the time came for me to go down into the Place. And I hadn't got any drier or warmer as the night went on.

The Place, you see, is like a deep trench in the ground lined with slabs of stone with more stone slabs atop of it covered with turf. You slide down a leafy ramp to get into it and Aunt Beck pulls another stone slab across the entrance to shut you in. Then you sit there in nothing but a linen petticoat waiting for something to happen – or, failing that, for morning. There is nothing to smell but stone and damp and distant turf, nothing to feel but cold – particularly underneath you as you sit – and nothing to see but darkness.

You are supposed to have visions, or at least to be visited by your guardian animal. All the women of my family have gone down into the Place when they were twelve years old and the moon was right, and most of them seem to have had the most interesting time. My mother saw a line of princes walking slowly past her, all silvery and pale and crowned with gold circlets. I remember her telling me before she died. Aunt Beck seems to have seen a whole menagerie of animals – all the lithe kind like snakes, lizards, greyhounds and running deer, which strikes me as typical – and, in addition, she says, all the charms and lore she had ever learned fell into place in her head, into a marvellous, sensible pattern. She has been a tremendously powerful magic-maker ever since.

Nothing like that happened to me. Nothing happened at all.

No, I tell a lie. I messed it up. And I didn't dare tell Aunt Beck. I sat there and I sat there with my arms wrapped around my knees, trying to keep warm and trying not to notice the numb cold seeping up from the hard corners of my bones that I was sitting on, and trying above all not to be scared silly about what was going to happen. The worst and most frightening thing was being shut in underground. I didn't dare move because I was sure I would find that the side had moved inwards and the stone roof had moved down. I just sat, shivering. A lot of the time I had my eyes squeezed shut, but some of the time I forced myself to open my eyes. I was afraid that the visions would come and I wouldn't see them because my eyes were shut.

And you know how your eyes play tricks in the dark? After a long, long time, probably at least one eternity, I thought that there was a light coming into the Place from somewhere. And I thought, *Bless my soul, it's morning! Aunt Beck must have overslept and forgotten to come and let me out at dawn!* This was because I seemed to have sat there for such hours that I was positive it must be nearly lunchtime by then. So I scrambled myself around in the faint light, scraping one elbow and bumping both knees, until I was facing the ramp. The faint light did, honestly, seem to be coming in round the edges of the stone slab Aunt Beck had heaved across at the top.

That was enough to put me into a true panic. I raced up that leafy slope on my hands and knees and tried to draw the slab aside. When it wouldn't budge, I screamed at it to *open and let me out! At once!* And I heaved at it like a mad thing.

Rather to my surprise, it slid across quite easily then and I shot out of the Place like a rabbit. There I reared up on my knees more astonished than ever. It was bright moonlight. The full moon was riding high and small and almost golden, casting frosty whiteness on every clump of heather and every rock and making a silver cube of our small house just down the hill. I could see the mountains for miles in one direction and in the other the silver-dark line of the sea. It was so moon-quiet that I could actually *hear* the sea. It was making that small secret sound you hear inside a seashell. And it was as cold out there as if the whiteness on the heather was really the frost it looked like.

I gave a great shudder of cold and shame as I looked up at the moon again. From the height of it I could see it was the middle of the night still. I had only been inside the Place for three hours at the most. And I couldn't possibly have seen the moon from inside. It was in the wrong part of the sky.

At this it came to me that the pale light I'd seen in there had really been the start of a vision. I had made an awful mistake and interrupted it. The idea so frightened me that I plunged back down inside and seized the stone slab and heaved mightily and pulled it across the opening anyhow, before I slid right back down to the stone floor and crouched there desperately.

"Oh, please come back!" I said to the vision. "I'll be good. I won't move an inch now."

But nothing else happened. It seemed quite dark in the Place and much warmer now, out of the wind, but though I crouched there for hours with my eyes wide open I never saw another thing.

In the dawn, when I heard Aunt Beck drawing back the slab, I gave a great start of terror, because I was sure she would notice that the stone had been moved. But it was still half dark and I suppose it was the last thing she expected. Anyway, she did not seem to see anything unusual. Besides, she says I was fast asleep. She had to slide down beside me and shake my shoulder. But I heard her do that. I feel so deceitful. And such a failure.

"Well, Aileen," she said as she helped me up the ramp – I was very stiff by then – "what happened to you?"

"Nothing!" I wailed and I burst into tears.

Aunt Beck always gets quite brisk when people cry. She hates having to show sympathy. She put a coat around me and marched me away downhill, saying, "Stop that noise now, Aileen. There's nothing to be ashamed of in that. Maybe it's too soon for you. It happens. My grandmother – your great-grandmother Venna that is – had to go down into the Place three times before she saw anything and then it was only a wee scrap of a hedgehog."

"But maybe I'm no good," I blubbered. "Maybe the magic's diluted in me because my father was a foreigner."

"What blather," said Aunt Beck. "Your father was a bard from Gallis and your mother chose him with great care. 'Beck,' she said to me, 'this man has the true gift and I am determined to have a child from him with gifts even greater.' Mind you, after he went the way of Prince Alasdair, this didn't prevent her losing her head over the Priest of Kilcannon."

And dying of it, I thought miserably. My mother died trying to bring a brother for me into the world. The baby died too and Aunt Beck, who is my mother's younger sister, has had to bring me up since I was five years old.

"But never fear," Aunt Beck went on. "I have noted all along that you have the makings of a great magic-worker. It will come. We'll just have to try again at the next full moon."

Saying which, she led me indoors to the sound of the cow mooing and the hens clucking in the next room, and sat me down in front of the porridge. I think much of my misery, as I sat and pushed rivers of cream into pools of honey, was at the thought of having to go through all that again.

"Eat it!" snapped Aunt Beck.

So I did, and it made me feel somewhat better – better enough anyway to trudge to my narrow little bed and fall asleep there until the sun had turned back down the sky in the early afternoon. I might have slept even longer, except that someone came knocking at Aunt Beck's door.

"Open!" he said pompously. "Open in the name of the King!"

It turned out to be the Logran boy, very proud of the way his voice had broken all deep and manly. Only last week he was squeaking and roaring all over the place and people were laughing at him even more than usual. Aunt Beck opened the door and he came striding in, looking quite grand in a new uniform with the heavy pleats of the King's plaid swinging over one shoulder.

People up at the castle may despise him and call him "The Ogre from Logra", but I will say this for my distant cousin the King: he keeps the boy well provided for. He is always well-dressed and is as well-educated as I am – and I go up to the castle for lessons three days a week – and I think they train him in arms too. Anyway, he had a fine sword belted across his skinny hips over the combed-out sheepskin of his new jacket. I suspect he was prouder of that sword than he was even of his big new voice.

He came marching in in all his splendour and then stopped dead, staring and stammering. He had never been in our house before. First, he was obviously dismayed at how small the room was, with me propped up on one elbow in bed just beyond the cooking fire, and then he was astonished at Aunt Beck's paintings. Aunt Beck is quite an artist. She says it is the chief gift of us people of Skarr. Our room is surrounded in paintings – there are portraits of me, of my poor dead mother and of any shepherd or fisherman who is rash enough to agree to sit still for her. My favourite is a lovely group of the castle children gathered squabbling and giggling on the steps up to the hall with the light all slantways over them in golden zigzags up the steps. But there are landscapes too, mountains, moors and sea, and several paintings of boats. Aunt Beck has even painted the screen that hides her bed to look like one of the walls, with shelves of jars and vials and a string of onions on it.

This boy – his name is a strange Logran one that sounds like Ogo, which accounts for his nickname – stared at all of it with his big smooth head thrust forward and his white spotty face wrinkled in astonishment. He had to stare hard at the screen before he could decide that this was a painting too. His ugly face flushed all pink then because he had thought it was a real wall at first.

"What's the matter, Ogo?" said Aunt Beck. Like everyone else, she is a bit sarcastic with him.

"Th-these," he stammered. "This is all so beautiful, so real. And—" he pointed to the group of children on the steps – "I am in this one."

He was too, though I had never realised it before. He was the smallest one, being shoved off the bottom step by a bigger boy who was probably my cousin Ivar. Aunt Beck is very clever. She had done them all from quick charcoal sketches and none of them had ever known they were being painted.

A smug, gratified expression gathered in the creases of Aunt Beck's lean face. She is not immune to praise, but she likes everyone to think she is strict and passionless. "Don't forget to give your message," she said. "What was it?"

"Oh yes." Ogo stood to attention, with his head almost brushing the beams. He had grown a lot recently and was even taller than Aunt Beck. "I am to fetch both of you to the castle for dinner," he said. "The King wishes to consult with you."

"In that case," said Aunt Beck, "will you take a mug of my beer and sit outside while Aileen gets herself dressed?"

Ogo shot a flustered look somewhere in the direction of the shelves over my head. He was very embarrassed at seeing me in bed wearing next to nothing and had been avoiding looking anywhere near me up to then. "If she's ill," he blustered, "she ought not to come."

"You're very considerate," said Aunt Beck, "but she's not ill – just a little tired – and we'll both be ready directly. Outside with you now." And she pushed a mug into his large pink hands and steered him out of the door again to the bench that catches the sun and the view of the sea. "Hurry up," she

said to me as she clapped the door shut behind him. “The blue dress and the best plaid and don’t forget to wash first. I’ll do your hair when you’re ready.”

I got up with a groan as Aunt Beck vanished behind the painted screen. I was stiff all over and still inclined to shiver. And Aunt Beck is so fussy about washing. I felt I had washed half to death yesterday and here she was expecting me to get wet all over again. But I didn’t dare disobey. I knew from bitter experience that she could always tell when I’d only wet the bowl and the face flannel. She never said she knew, but the hair-combing that followed was always punishing.

I dressed gloomily, wondering what King Kenig wanted now. He consults Aunt Beck once a week anyway, but he seldom bothers to include me. In fact, there’s quite a battle there because Aunt Beck nearly always takes me along as part of my education. Then my distant cousin King Kenig scowls and rakes at his beard, and snarls something about not needing the infantry, and Aunt Beck just gives him one of her diamond-hard smiles, very sweetly, and I usually have to stay, listening to the King asking about the omens for a raid on his neighbours or what to do about the crops this year.

The only interesting times are when Aunt Beck calls for the silver bowl to be filled and does a scrying for him. I like to watch that – not that I can ever see anything in the bowl, but I like to watch my aunt seeing. It gives you an exciting sort of shiver up your back when she says, in a strange, groaning voice, “I see fires up on the Peak of Storms and cattle stampeding.” She’s always right too. When she said that, the clans of Cormack raided from the next kingship, but thanks to Aunt Beck, our people were ready for them. I even got to see a bit of the fighting.

Anyway, as you will have gathered from this, Aunt Beck is a Wise Woman as well as a magic-worker, as all the women of our family are. The men born to us marry outside the family. This is how King Kenig comes to be a distant cousin. My great-great-grandmother’s brother married the sister of the then King and their son was King Kenig’s grandfather. At one time, our family was a large one, reputed to be the best Wise Women on the entire huge island of Skarr, but that was in the time of the Twelve Sisters of Kenneal. Now Aunt Beck and I are the only ones left. But Aunt Beck is still said to be the best there is.

She looked the part too, when she came out from behind the screen in her best dress and set about combing out my hair. My hair was still damp and there was a lot of tugging to get the stray bits of herb out of it.

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