Jimmy Crikey's Adventures:

The Emerald Lake

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DEDICATION

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Chapter 1

The windows rattled in their frames, and the front door shook on its hinges, but Mr McDonald did not stir a centimetre despite the constant barrage of noise. Jimmy and Amanda reached for the door latch together, still clad in dressing gowns. The morning air was cool and brought up pimples on their arms, but no one was in sight when they opened the door. "Well, we didn't both imagine it," Amanda said, drawing her nightgown tighter around her waist. Jimmy stepped outside and looked all around. "There's no one anywhere near, Amanda."

“Well, someone was making a lot of noise rattling the door knocker. If there’s no one there, either Roombelow’s children are getting naughtier, or it is one of the witches trying to attract your attention.”

“If it were one of the witches, there would be a message of some sorts,” Jimmy said. “I have never known the children play such pranks, especially this early and before breakfast.”

“Well, it’s a bit too chilly around the ankles to stand here debating the matter,” Amanda said, and she closed the door behind them. “Put a log on the fire, Jimmy, and I’ll make a start on breakfast.” While Amanda busied herself in the kitchen, Jimmy stirred some life into the hot embers with the poker and then laid a log onto the glowing embers. He lifted one end of the log with the poker and balanced it until the air carried the virgin flames around the new fuel supply. As the flames reached higher, the door began jumping on its hinges again. Without a moment’s thought, Jimmy flung himself at the door, determined to catch whoever was playing such silly games. Once again, the town square was devoid of life. No

one else was around. He returned to the fireside as Amanda leaned into the sitting room to learn who was at the door. “No one there again?”

“Your thought that it could be a witch trying to attract attention must be right, but it is so unusual for there not to be a message. I’ll have to run up the hill to see what’s happening at Matilda’s house. The chances are that it’s another spell gone wrong for Jade.”

“You’re going nowhere, young man. Not until you’ve had some breakfast. At the very least, have a bowl of cereals with hot milk. It will only take a minute.”

Jimmy knew better than to argue. “Thanks, Amanda. The kettle’s almost boiling. I’ll lay the table. Shall I put some cutlery out for Mr McDonald?”

“I don’t think he’ll surface any time soon, Jimmy. Council business always takes it out of him these days. He forgets that he’s not a young man anymore.”

Jimmy washed and dressed in record time. There was no point in brushing or combing his red locks. Jimmy’s red hair had a mind of its own. He never let it grow too long because

he didn't want it to cover his pointed ears. When Jimmy twitched his ears, he could hear a pin drop even from a hundred metres away. He was sat at the table ready for breakfast just as Amanda poured out a mug of tea for him. "Don't bolt your breakfast, Jimmy. You'll be in much better shape to face the world when you have some food in your stomach but not if it is still churning around."

Amanda joined Jimmy but only had her cup of tea in her hand. "I'll have my breakfast when Mr McDonald joins us in the land of the living." She smiled and told Jimmy, "Take care of yourself. Hope all goes well."

"Thanks, Amanda. See you and Mr McDonald a bit later."

He pulled on his Attalian boots and was ready for action. The door swung closed behind him, and in the blink of an eye, Jimmy's red Attalian boots carried him up the hill to Matilda's front door.

Jimmy was growing up fast. He was now in his first teenage year. His big feet had been the butt of the bullies' jokes from being a small boy. Very few people knew that his

feet stayed the same size as Jimmy grew in height. All children from Attalia were born with oversized feet. And all boys had their own somewhat unique, red boots, which would last a lifetime. These boots allowed Jimmy to outrun anyone or anything on Earth. Jimmy had a few more unusual abilities because he was an alien from Attalia. But Jimmy was not a superman. He was just a lot stronger than the average human.

Witch Matilda greeted her friend. “How nice to see you, Jimmy. Up and about early this morning. Jade isn’t up yet, but I don’t think she’ll be long when she knows you’re here.

“Jade,” she called up the stairs. “Jimmy’s arrived. Are you up yet?”

There was no reply. “Make yourself at home, Jimmy,” she said. “Say hello to Beatrix while I check on Jade,”

Jimmy always felt at home at Matilda’s house on the hill and her cat, Beatrix, was always pleased to see Jimmy. He had the knack of scratching behind her ears at just the exact position to ease the itch. Her heavy purring was deafening. Matilda’s footsteps returned down the stairs, and she stood in front of Jimmy. Her green-coloured skin had disappeared as it

always did whenever there was no magic about “She’s not there, Jimmy, and it doesn’t look as though she’s slept in her bed. Jade never leaves the house without telling me where she’s going.”

It was a mystery that defeated Matilda’s skills at divination. Unusually her senses picked up no trace of her mini apprentice. Jade was the niece of Gemma, the little lady Diamite. The Diamites were small people who lived in the cave world of Lithnia, and Jade was blessed with a smidgeon of witchcraft in her veins. Chief of the witches, Matilda, detected her hidden ability and offered to train her in the ancient arts.

Jade’s education in the mysterious world of witchcraft was proceeding quickly, and Matilda was pleased with her progress. A few minor problems arose, teaching such a young pupil the intricacies of magic. Jade was prone to making slight errors, and it was not unusual to find strange beasts and tropical animals running around Matilda’s home. The animals came for wherever Jade happened to be when the magic mistakes crept in.

Jimmy offered his opinion, “This smells of a Jade spell gone wrong. I am now certain that it was Jade who was beating on Mr McDonald’s door early this morning.”

“Something’s not quite right here,” Matilda said. “Yesterday, she was practising using the cloak of invisibility, but usually, being invisible leaves you with power to communicate, especially with one of her sisters.

“There were no sounds from her this morning and no words floating in my head. But if she was banging on Mr McDonald’s front door, why is she not trying to knock on my door to let us know she’s here?”

At that point, it dawned on Matilda. “She’s not just invisible. Somehow, she has managed to dematerialise

“So, she can’t move objects when she is in the same place as when she cast the spell. If she cast the spell here, inside this house, she can’t communicate or move anything while she’s here?”

“That’s what it looks like. Let’s walk down the hill a little way and hope that Jade will be able to let us know that she’s

with us. If I know exactly where she is, I may be able to reverse the spell."

Jimmy and Matilda walked halfway down the hill, and Matilda spoke into the empty air and asked, "If you are close by, can you move something to let us know you're here?"

The long branches of a nearby shrub began violently shaking. "I suppose that means you're with us?" Matilda asked. And the shrub shook again. "Right!" Matilda said. "Stay in touch with that bush, Jade. It may take me a moment or two to recall the exact structure of this spell. You appear to have called up a spell I haven't used in many a year. And somehow, you've mixed up invisibility with dematerialisation. Even I may not get it right the first time."

Matilda closed her eyes and lifted her head high. The spell she uttered was in a language that Jimmy had never heard before. It was more like a continuous wailing, the pitch of which rose and fell lin waves like the swell of the sea. Her wand appeared in her hand, and she moved it like a conductor's baton, up and down as the tuneless notes circled the bush, with musical notes visibly falling from its tip.

Matilda's voice was an octave above the notes from the wand's tip. The result was not harmonical. Discordance filled the air, and out of the disturbed air appeared a faint trace of a little girl.

Jade was wide-eyed and tearful but not quite all there. Only her upper body was visible. The rest of her was invisible. Her cries were silent. She still could not be heard. Her eyes were tightly focussed on Matilda, filled with pleading for the magic to succeed.

Matilda crumbled to the ground in a heap and Jade disappeared. "Matilda!" Jimmy attempted to pick up the witch. But there was nothing there. His hands passed right on through what appeared to be Matilda's crumpled form.

"Don't worry, Jimmy. I'm still here. It's just a glitch in the spell. I haven't used it for many years, and I'm not as strong as I used to be. Give a glass of my nectar, and I'll try again."

Jimmy ran back into Matilda's home and reached up into the ever-present smokey fug that hung above the kitchen table and brought down a clean glass beaker. The next item he grasped was a carafe of a golden liquid. Jimmy poured half a

glass full into the tumbler and hurried back down the hill. He passed the glass to Matilda, who had managed to move into a sitting position. The nectar disappeared, almost in a single gulp.

Within seconds Matilda had pulled herself to her feet using Jimmy's leg as a crutch and recovered to standing unaided. "This is no good, Jade. We need to get back into the house. I need to recover my strength and check the spell before trying again. Come, let me lean on your arm, Jimmy. I'll be fine in a few moments, and then we'll try again. Don't worry, Jade. We'll soon have you back. Let's get back inside, out of the morning's cold air."

And all three walked back up the hill to the witch's house. It looked as if there were only two people, but Jade was with them every step, wondering what she had done wrong, this time.