BRONTE TEMPESTRA AND THE ICE WARRIORS

The Bronte Tempestra series

Bronte Tempestra and the Lightning Steeds
Bronte Tempestra and the Ice Warriors

Look out for more

BRONTE TEMPESTRA
AND THE ICE WARRIORS



BEX HOGAN

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Piccadilly

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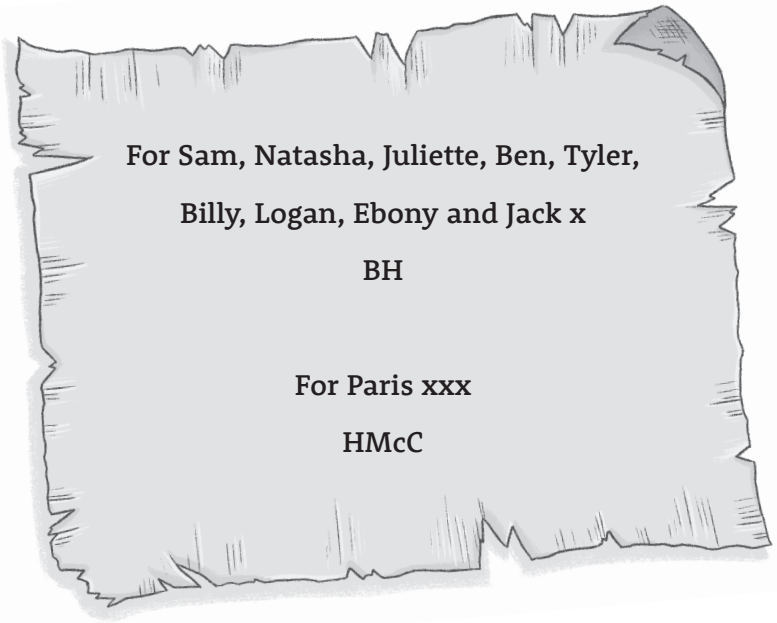
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For Sam, Natasha, Juliette, Ben, Tyler,

Billy, Logan, Ebony and Jack x

BH

For Paris xxx

HMcC


EVERDALE
THE WEATHER KINGDOMS
SUN
STORM
SNOW
MIST
THE CRYSTAL KINGDOMS
EMERALD
RUBY
SAPPHIRE
TOPAZ
HEART OF THE KINGDOMS
SIR SEBASTIAN'S
REALM OF EDUCATION
POOP
SICK
THE FLORAL KINGDOMS
POPPY
CACTUS
ROSE
IVY
THE ELEMENTAL KINGDOMS
EARTH
WATER
FIRE
AIR
THE FORGOTTEN KINGDOMS
?
?
?
?
CAT'S PAW ISLAND


ANCIENT RUINS
THE OLD FOREST
OAK
WEAPON TRAINING HALL
CHERRY
HEADMASTER'S TOWER
RIDING ARENA
TRAINING GROUNDS
TRAINING GROUNDS
TOURNAMENT ARENA


SIR SEBASTIAN'S
SCHOOL FOR SQUIRES
FIRE CAT
CAVES
WILLOW
DINING HALL
ARMOURY
MAPLE
ASSEMBLY
HALL
ENTRANCE
BOAR PENS
BOAR FIELDS
JOUSTING
FIELD
BOAR FIELDS

Ellie!

We did it! We found the lightning steeds! They were trapped in the forest by a horrible scientist called Ackley. He was using their lightning to power his nasty machines, which were mutating all the woodland animals. I was attacked by zombits and squevils and badleys, but somehow survived. And with Lord Errol's help (the griffin lord I met, did I mention him in my last letter?) we stopped Ackley and freed the lightning steeds. They're

back in the skies of the Storm Kingdom now, along with the thunder trolls and Ackley himself!

It was a thrilling adventure, but I'm looking forward to just enjoying school now. Hope all is well at POOP.

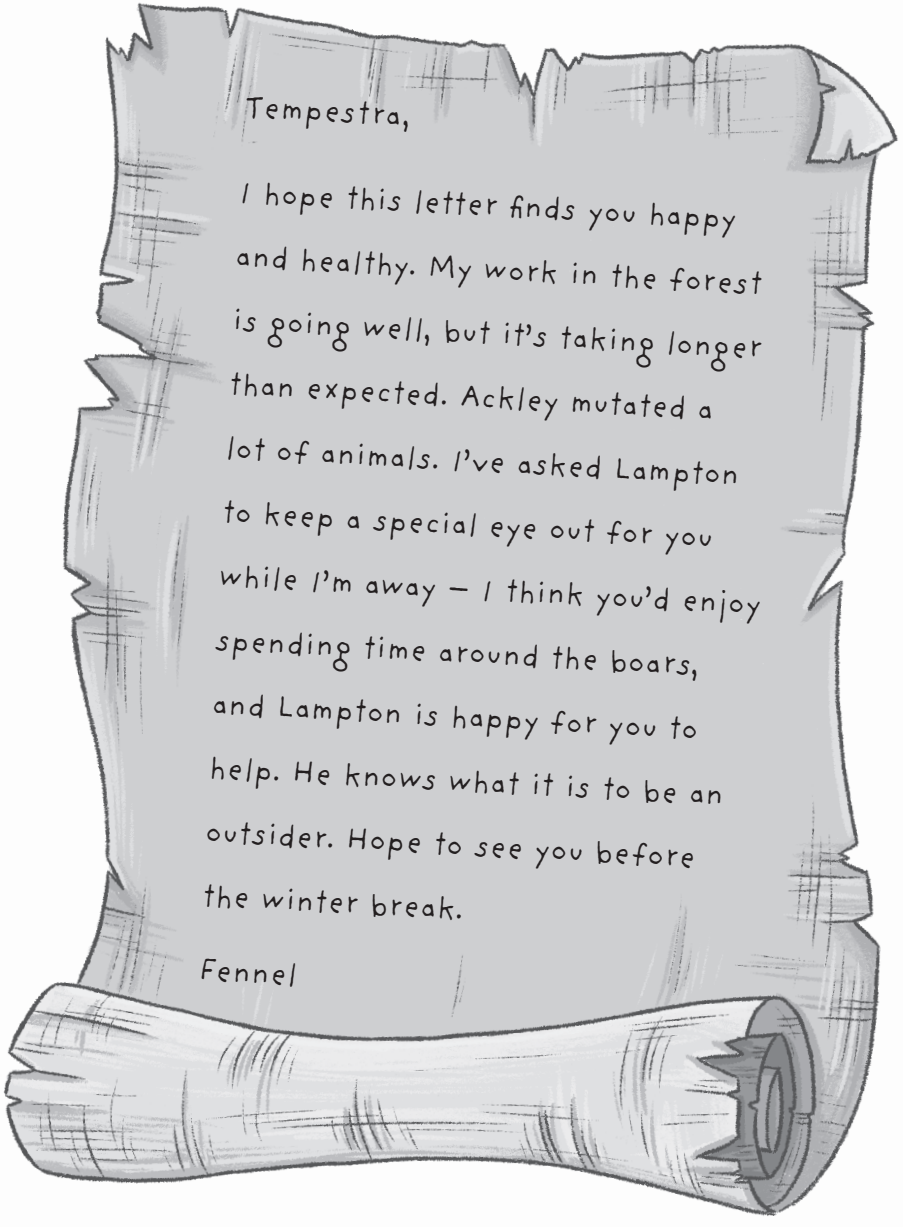
Miss you!

B x

P.S. Don't tell anyone about this! It's TOP SECRET!!!!

School Diary, Day 64

Can't believe how fast this first term is going. A small part of the forest has been declared safe and it's been fun to do Forest Care classes and not have the creatures trying to eat me! Lady Fennel is doing an amazing job de-monstering them. But I miss her. Hope she comes back soon.


Tempestra,

I hope this letter finds you happy and healthy. My work in the forest is going well, but it's taking longer than expected. Ackley mutated a lot of animals. I've asked Lampton to keep a special eye out for you while I'm away – I think you'd enjoy spending time around the boars, and Lampton is happy for you to help. He knows what it is to be an outsider. Hope to see you before the winter break.

Fennel

KNIGHTS WEEKLY

The annual Welcome Winter jousting tournament took place this weekend, and has given us a new champion! Sir Montford Mallow, rising star of the tournaments, has beaten the previous record held for many years by Sir Roland Ripple.

Asked how he felt about his victory, Sir Mallow said, 'I've always known I was capable of becoming the best knight ever. It's no surprise at all to me that I've not only won, but smashed all previous records.' Sir Ripple was not available for comment.



The Mighty Montford Mallow

REALMS' ROUND-UP

SCHOOL STAFFING SHENANIGANS?

Rumour has it that all is not well at Sir Sebastian's School for Squires. First, there was the sudden retirement of headmaster Sir Percival Blake, only days into the new term. And now, according to one disgruntled parent, there aren't enough teachers at all!

We hear that Sir Blake's replacement, Sir Calliphus, spends all his time up in his tower, presumably doing whatever it is that headmasters do, while newly appointed Lady Fennel went on temporary leave less than a week after starting her post.

'That's what you get for hiring a woman,' the unhappy parent said. 'Not up to the task.'





He also reported that his son was told the arrival of new staff had been delayed due to the damage caused by the thunder trolls' recent rampage. But this parent is sceptical.

'It's all gone downhill since they let girls in,' he said. 'My son is in the same class as one and she's been nothing but trouble.'

We reached out to Sir Sebastian's for comment and were told, 'Absolutely everything is fine.'

CAC-GEL



For hair as fabulous as you are.
Sleek. Silky. Strong.

B!!

I can't believe it's only a few more weeks until the winter break! I'm so looking forward to visiting the Snow Kingdom with my family. We're going to do everything snowy I can think of – snow angels, frozen bubble bashing, and building the biggest snowman ever made. We're going to stay in a snow cottage and I'm going to do all the snow sports. Blizzard ball, ice-cave diving, frost-owl sky races – everything! Plus, I'm hoping we might even be allowed to go and see the famous ice thistle. Wouldn't that be magical?

Enjoy the rest of term,

El x



Cabbages

Bronte Tempestra crept silently towards her target. Her mission was simple: capture the villain. Her breath coiled in the cold air, slithering like a mist-snake before disappearing. She raised her weapon slowly. She must not be seen. That was essential to her success.

She could imagine the glory already! How, after she'd saved the school, everyone would cheer! The teachers would proclaim a half-day holiday in her honour and the students would be

so grateful they'd buy her presents and offer to do her chores, while the headmaster would award her a special commendation for exceptional bravery!

Bronte leaped forward, striking with her weapon and . . . **SQUELCH!**

She fell face first into the mud.

'Oh feathers,' she groaned, dripping sludge as she sat up.

The villain grunted loudly, as if he was laughing, and Bronte narrowed her eyes.

'Yeah, yeah, very funny,' she said to the tufty pigling. 'But I'll catch you eventually.'

She retrieved her weapon – in this case, a harness – and shook off the worst of the mud. There would be no heroic celebrations for her today.

'He is such a *nightmare*!' Bronte said, looking

over at Blue, her icekitten, who was wisely keeping well away from the mud. 'Honestly, how many times has he escaped now?'

Blue huffed a puff of ice.

'Exactly,' Bronte said. 'Too many.'

Despite it being Sunday, Bronte had woken early in a futile attempt to catch up with some of her homework, but before she had even begun to write her essay (*Hobgoblins: Friend or Foe?*) she'd caught sight of the fiendish boar trampling through the vegetable gardens.

The battle boars at Sir Sebastian's were mainly fed clouds, but they really would eat anything. Ice, seaweed, prickles, sapphires, mudroot – *anything*! Pig was no exception, and he was also incredibly greedy. Vegetables might be waaaay down his list of favourites, but they were still food.



Bronte had felt certain she could catch Pig and return him to the pens before he ate *all* the vegetables, and so had hurried out into the chilly winter morning. But Pig clearly had no intention of being deprived of his very big breakfast.

'Honestly, you'd think you'd be nicer to me, after I saved your life,' Bronte said to him, as she trudged across the field. 'If it weren't for me and Blue, you'd be one of Ackley's monsters, and I'm certain he wouldn't be feeding you treats.'

Bronte drew closer to where Pig was munching a very large mouthful of carrots and parsnips.

'If you come with me,' she said, 'I'll bring you some leftovers from dinner. Crispy vine leaves stuffed with sweet paste and berries.'

Pig eyed her suspiciously, chewing slowly. Bronte crept closer.

'And if you're very good, I'll crush some ice

cubes on top like sprinkles . . .' she promised in a sing-song voice.

It was enough. Pig allowed her to slip the rope halter over his tusks and around his head. Crushed ice was his absolute favourite.

'See?' Bronte asked, breathing a sigh of relief. 'Was that so bad?'

Pig replied with a massive

buuuurrrPPPPP!

'Charming,' Bronte groaned. Boar belches *stank*!

'Come on,' she said to Pig and Blue.

But they had only taken a few steps before Pig squealed loudly and bolted – stampeding through the vegetable patch and dragging Bronte behind him!

'Whoooooahhhhhh!' Bronte cried, still clinging to the end of the rope.

‘What are you two doing?’ A stern voice stopped Pig in his tracks and Bronte looked up, blinking the mud from her eyes. Lampton, who was in charge of the battle boars, was doing his best to look cross, but was struggling to hide his smile.

‘Pig escaped again,’ Bronte said, scrambling to her feet, and noticing that Blue was running towards the boar pens, leaving her to deal with this mess alone.

‘So I see. At least he didn’t break into the cloud shed this time and eat all the supplies.’ Lampton sighed. ‘What are we going to do with you?’ he asked, scratching the pigling's whiskery snout.

Pig simply snorted.

‘It’s these sparkly tusks of yours,’ Lampton said. ‘Ever since you got them, you’ve broken through every door and fence.’ He glanced at

Bronte. 'How *did* he get them, do you think?'

Bronte blushed and stared at the ground.

Only weeks ago, when she had first started at Sir Sebastian's School for Squires, Bronte had uncovered a dastardly scheme in the old forest, where a scientist named Ackley had been mutating all the woodland animals into monsters. He'd hoped to attack the two schools for royalty in the Realm of Education – the Palace for Obedient and Outstanding Princesses (POOP) and the School for Independent and Courageous Kings (SICK) – as his first step to reclaiming the throne of the Oak Kingdom.

The headmaster, Sir Blake, had allowed it to happen, and then retired in disgrace. His replacement, Sir Calliphus, had decided to keep the whole situation a secret for the sake of the school's reputation, and so he'd instructed Bronte

never to speak of what had happened. The only other people who knew were Bronte's best friends, Tonkins and Ellie, and her favourite teacher, Lady Fennel. Oh, and Lord Errol of the First Battalion of Griffins.

Sir Calliphus had explained Pig's new dazzling tusks away with a sweep of his arm, muttering, 'That sometimes happens.'

Lampton clearly didn't believe him, however. He'd already tried to coax the truth from Bronte several times. She wished she could tell him about how Pig had been mutated, and that although the changes had been reversed, the diamond tusks had stayed. She felt certain Lampton could be trusted. But she didn't want to get into trouble with Sir Calliphus.

Lampton sighed. 'I'll be fixing his pen today, then. Could you help me muck out?'

Bronte hesitated. She really needed to finish that essay, but she enjoyed helping Lampton. 'Can I change first?' she asked with a smile.

'If you want, but you'll only get dirty again. Oh, and you'd better go and tell Chef what's happened,' Lampton said rather apologetically. 'Warn him only the cabbages have survived.'

Great, Bronte thought as she traipsed back towards her treehouse. *Cabbages for tea. Not even Pig had wanted to eat* them*!*



New Arrivals

After Bronte had changed and visited the kitchens (Chef was *not* happy about the cabbage situation), she headed back to the boar pens.

She was trying not to worry about her essay, or the family tree project she had to finish. Having only started Sir Sebastian's earlier that term, Bronte was still making up for lost time, and if she didn't pass her exams at the end of the school year, she wouldn't be able to move up from Year Four to Year Five. Her parents would

probably make her go back to POOP if that happened and that was *not* an option. She still had a lot of homework to do and there was only a week left before the break for winter festivities.

Everyone else seemed so excited to go home, and while Bronte was looking forward to seeing her family, part of her wished she could stay at Sir Sebastian's. It had taken her a while to settle in, and now that she had, she didn't want to leave.

Lampton was hard at work repairing the broken fence of Pig's pen, and smiled at Bronte as she arrived.

'Where's Blue?' Bronte asked, looking around for her icekitten who had abandoned her so unceremoniously.

'Oh, he was here a minute ago,' Lampton replied, pausing briefly in his work.

'He's been wandering off a lot recently,' Bronte

said with a sigh. 'I have no idea where he keeps going.'

'Maybe he's exploring the secret tunnels beneath the school,' Lampton said with a grin.

'The *what*?'

'I'm only teasing,' Lampton said. 'It's just a story my old dad used to tell me. He worked here before me, and his father before him. Used to tell all sorts of made-up legends and myths about this place.'

'Such as?' Bronte asked, fascinated. She loved stories!

'Let's see if I can remember,' Lampton said, scratching his head. 'Oh yes, that long before the school was built, back when this land was still part of the old Tree Kingdoms, whole villages lived below the ground in tunnels supported by the tree roots. The story goes that the first

headmaster ordered they be left there and kept secret, so he could hide in them if the school was ever under attack!'

'Why would a knight want to hide?' Bronte asked, before remembering how reluctant the knights seemed to be to face danger of any kind.

'My favourite part of the story was about the glow-crawlers. Strange creatures who lived beneath the school and had a reputation for being very slow.'

'Oh, wouldn't it be wonderful if they were real!' Bronte sighed, and Lampton chuckled.

'Well, if they are, I've never seen them. Don't worry about Blue – he'll turn up again soon.'

But there was no sign of the icekitten while Bronte worked. It was only after she'd finished scrubbing out the boar pens and was tipping her final load of poop onto the muck heap that

Bronte caught sight of a familiar flash of blue. She left the wheelbarrow and went to investigate.

At the edge of the field, where the muck heap hit the hedge, she found her icekitten with his head in a hole and bottom in the air!

'Blue! What are you doing?' Bronte asked. 'You'd better not have been rolling in poop or I'll have to bath you before you come anywhere near my bed.'



But Blue didn't even look up at the sound of her voice.

'What have you found? Are you hunting mislets?' The small rodents that lived in the hedgerows were one of Blue's favourite snacks.

Blue wiggled out of the hole and puffed a little ice from his nose to clear the dirt. He jumped up and down excitedly, eager for Bronte to look.

'OK,' she agreed. 'It's not like I could get any dirtier today. Have you found a way into Lampton's secret tunnels?'

'Bronts!'

Bronte turned to see Tonkins running up the hill, panting hard, with his firecat Dotty easily keeping pace beside him. She waved to them.

'There you are!' Tonkins said. 'I've been looking all over for you. Where've you been all day?'

'It's a long story,' she said. 'But blame Pig.'

'OK, well tell me later, because right now, you have to come with me.'

'Why, what's wrong?' Bronte said, forgetting about the hole and hurrying towards him.

'Nothing. They're here. The new teachers are here!'

Bronte gasped with excitement, and together the two friends ran back towards the school, with Blue and Dotty just behind them.

Since all the drama in the forest, the school had been short of teachers. Sir Calliphus had replaced Sir Blake as headteacher, and so didn't have as much time to be in the classroom. And Lady Fennel had left to reverse the mutations on the forest animals, and still hadn't come back. Sir Ripple had taken most of their lessons since, so new teachers were an exciting prospect.

They should have arrived *ages* ago, but couldn't because of the travel chaos caused by the thunder trolls' destruction.

Bronte and Tonkins ran into the courtyard, where other students had already formed a crowd, all keen to see the newcomers. Tonkins jumped up and down to try to see over the taller students, but Bronte grabbed his arm and pulled him with her as she wound her way to the front.

Sir Calliphus was waiting at the gates to welcome the new arrivals.

'How many do you think there will be?' Bronte asked Tonkins, raising her voice over the surrounding chatter.

Tonkins shrugged. 'Dunno. It would be nice to have some different teachers, wouldn't it? Apart from Lady Fennel it's been the same old people for years. Higgins Boseley said he heard that a

knight from the Rose Kingdom was coming, but then Connor Devlan said that *he* heard there were twin knights coming from the Fire Kingdom, and Felix Collins said that *he'd* heard a rumour that . . .'

He trailed off, his mouth opening and shutting but no sound coming out. And then:

'No way. *No way!* Bronts, LOOK!!!'

Bronte followed his gaze and watched as a young man stepped out of the carriage to shake hands with Sir Calliphus. He was wearing tight leather trousers and a white shirt with a chainmail waistcoat. The hat he wore was wide brimmed, with a point at the front, much like Lord Errol's beak. When he pulled it off to tuck it under his arm, his slick chestnut hair remained perfectly in place. He wore an expression of total smugness and Bronte couldn't help but roll her eyes.



Tonkins was positively shaking with excitement and clung onto Bronte's sleeve.

'That's . . . that's . . . Sir Montford Mallow!'

'Who?' Bronte asked, guessing from the reaction of everyone else that she was the only clueless one there.

'You know how Sir Ripple always goes on about being a former cover model for *Knights Weekly*? Well Sir Mallow is the current front cover knight. He's amazing! I can't believe he's here!' Tonkins gasped. 'What if he teaches us? How will I ever cope with being in his presence? I mean *look at him*. He's a legend!'

Bronte glanced back at Sir Mallow, who was now walking with a swagger into the courtyard, waving at the delighted students. His cream-and-chestnut-striped firecat had a strut to match.

Just as they were about to pass Bronte and Tonkins, Blue let out a huge sneeze. All the dirt he had breathed in while burrowing into the hole flew out – as well as a blast of ice.



Bronte gasped as Sir Mallow stepped onto the slippery ground, instantly sliding forward and wobbling frantically to keep his balance.

The crowd fell silent in shock, and when he

didn't fall, the students burst into applause at his recovery. But the knight was searching for the culprit. His gaze fell on Blue, who slunk behind Bronte's legs. Sir Mallow narrowed his eyes. Then, as if remembering everyone was looking, Sir Mallow swiftly swapped his glare for a grin. He waved once more while his firecat melted the ice patch. One boy ran out in front of Sir Mallow with a quill and scroll, and the knight happily scrawled his autograph. That was all the permission everyone else needed. They swooped on him like a flock of birds, calling his name and begging him to sign their parchments, their clothes – even their skin!

Tonkins cast around desperately. 'Bronts, have you got a quill on you?'

She raised her eyebrows. 'I'm covered in boar poop. Why would I have a quill?'

‘Right. Wait there. I’ve got to go and get one!’ And Tonkins darted off towards the triple-trunk oak tree where their treehouses were.

Bronte chuckled to herself and turned back to see who else was appearing from the carriage.

Another older knight had already climbed out and was talking animatedly with Sir Calliphus. But Bronte wasn’t paying much attention to them. Because stepping down from the carriage was a woman. She didn’t appear to be a warrior like Lady Fennel. Her thick velvet cloak was wrapped around her as she looked up at the school and smiled.

She looked nice, Bronte thought, and she crossed her fingers, hoping she might have the new teacher for some lessons. The cloaked woman was soon joined by another knight and Sir Calliphus escorted the group towards school.

So there they were, the new teachers. It was definitely shaping up to be an interesting last week of term. Bronte just hoped that none of them set her any more homework!