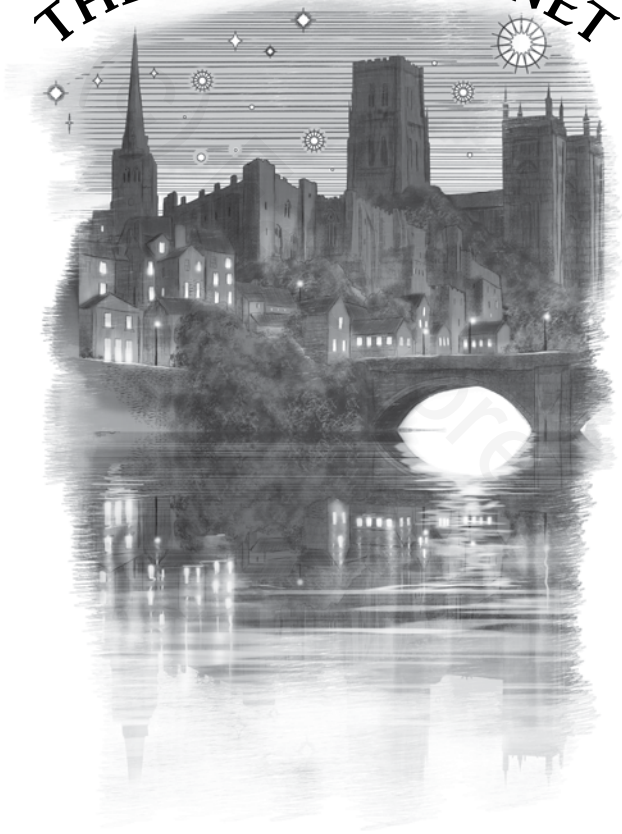
ALEXANDER
ARMSTRONG

EVENFALL

THE GOLDEN LINNET



Farshore

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To my amazing father, Angus,
who has filled our lives with stories
A.A.

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Green Grow the Rushes, O

English folk song, origins unknown

I'll sing you twelve, O
Green grow the rushes, O
What are your twelve, O?
Twelve for the twelve apostles,
Eleven for the eleven who went to heaven,
Ten for the Ten Commandments,
Nine for the nine bright shiners,
Eight for the April rainers,
Seven for the seven stars in the sky,
Six for the six proud walkers,
Five for the symbols at your door,
Four for the gospel-makers,
Three, three, the rivals,
Two, two, the lily-white boys,
Clothed all in green, O.
One is one, and all alone,
And ever more shall be so.



PROLOGUE

Where do I begin this story? Well, it began centuries ago. But I suppose my story began at home in Langley Terrace a couple of nights before my thirteenth birthday. At my bedroom window.

That's where I seem to have spent most of my childhood, at least since Mum's accident. Even without her, it felt like the safest place, to sit, to recharge, with my back to my tiny bedroom and my forehead pressed to the cold glass.

We would sit there together and watch the storms flashing lightning down over Durham. My heart would pound, and we'd open the window to feel the rain on our faces and she'd laugh and put her hand on my chest and say, 'Feel that, Sam? All that energy? All that power?'

After she was gone, I'd still sit there on the chest of drawers in front of the window, sliding my feet down into the gap between the chest and the wall, and resting them on the radiator. There was even a hole in the plasterboard for my toes to poke through. It was so comfortable just sitting there. Watching. Hidden by a house, and safe as one too.

If it was chilly (and it was always chilly – that radiator never worked), I'd wrap myself in the duvet like a Viking warrior in a cape and let the cold glass and the warm bedding pull me in opposite

directions. I used to pretend it pulled open my mind, showing me things that nobody else could see. I thought if I stared out at the world for long enough, I'd find the answers to everything. I didn't find any answers, just a gnawing certainty that something was coming for me. Something huge. The world outside was giving me signs.

I know it sounds strange, but I started to think I had strange and special powers.

There was only one power that I craved, though, and that was the power to make Dad better.

Langley Terrace looked out on to a stretch of dual carriageway. You could see it clearly from my bedroom window. I loved that road. It felt like an irresistible torrent of life. It could be a piece of music in a thousand parts for some of the day, and then at night it would become a steady conversation between guards watching over my domain while I slept. Full of inflections and gear changes, wisdom and balance, it spoke a language I understood.

The road brought people and stories into the city and took others out again. Good stories and bad. Like when the snow came, it was the cars driving in from the moors that brought the first news of it with their white roofs and bonnets. And if anything serious happened I'd know before anyone else because of the sirens. I could feel the pulse of them in the air, before their noise, their flashing lights.

The big stories always broke on the road. But the road brought other things too. Useful things like an umbrella or a hoodie, blown up and over the railing and into our little front porch. I'd find them all

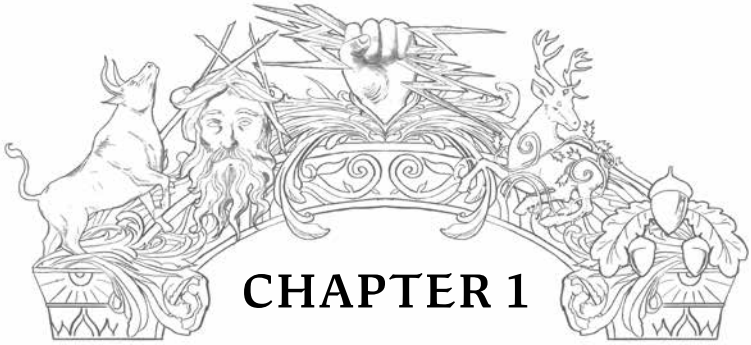
waiting on our doorstep. I even found a lottery scratch card once. It wasn't a winning ticket, but that hardly mattered.

Among its other treasures, I suppose it was the road that brought us Ken Girling.

It brought the package too. But that comes later.

This is my story of how everything changed, a tale they now tell far and wide.

(c) Farshore



CHAPTER 1

New York

'I KNOW WHO IT IS,' said the young man's voice on the telephone. No 'good evening', no 'sorry for waking you up'.

'Who?' replied the older man.

'It's who I always said it was.'

There was a long pause.

'You're certain he's *the* Tempest? *La Tempesta,* as the ancient parchments describe?'

The young man sounded sulky. 'I thought you'd be pleased.'

'I *am* pleased, darling boy.' A rasping cough. 'Just not convinced you've got the right person.'

The young man snorted. 'Your people have been watching him for seven years, Pup-a-Loola, but it's me he's trusted at last. *He's given me the chalice!*'

The old man drew breath to speak, but convulsed again with a spasm of coughing.

'He's the key to Bellasis!' his son continued, more gently. 'And he's mine. Which means we can finally enter the Tempest stronghold, their palace of riches, and loot it for all it's worth.'

'The *óthr*,' croaked his father.

'The *óthr*!' the young man agreed. 'It's all there waiting for you. Timely, wouldn't you say? The state you're in.'

'Georgie, I'm not –'

Georgie spoke over the old man. 'The Tempest told me the magic is so strong that at the right time, in the right place, the *óthr* can heal a person with one drop, bring storms, unlock unspeakable power . . .' His voice dropped to an urgent whisper. 'And finally, *finally* the Elver have made their move. It's all your satellite technology, Puppy-Loo!' He laughed, the sound high and gleeful. It brought a smile to the old man's voice.

'Well done, Georgie.' He drew a painful breath. 'Keep the Tempest safe. We'll need him fit and well for our ceremony.'

Jo Parshore

