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# The Field Guide

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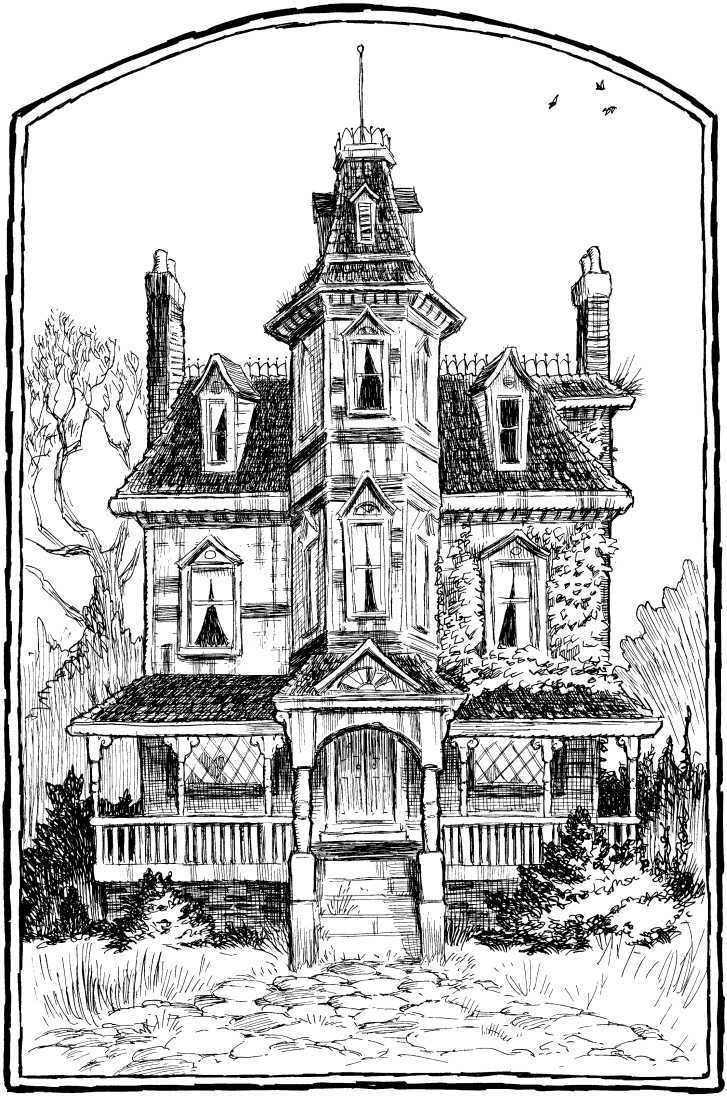
## Tony DiTerlizzi and Holly Black

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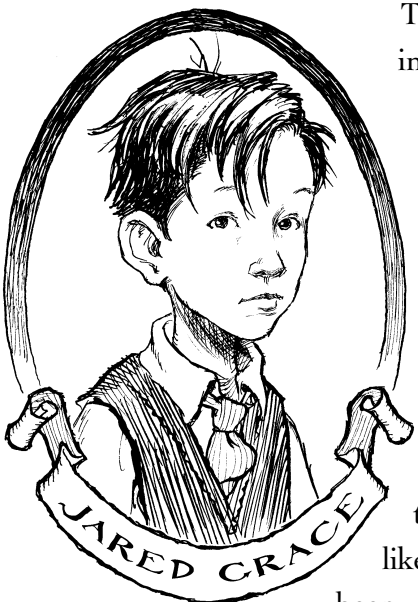
*It was more like a dozen shacks.*

# *Chapter One*



## IN WHICH the Grace Children Get Acquainted with Their New Home

If someone had asked Jared Grace what jobs his brother and sister would have when they grew up, he would have had no trouble replying. He would have said that his brother, Simon, would be either a veterinarian or a lion tamer. He would have said that his sister, Mallory, would either be an Olympic fencer or in jail for stabbing someone with a sword. But he couldn't say what job he would grow up to have. Not that anyone asked him. Not that anyone asked his opinion on anything at all.



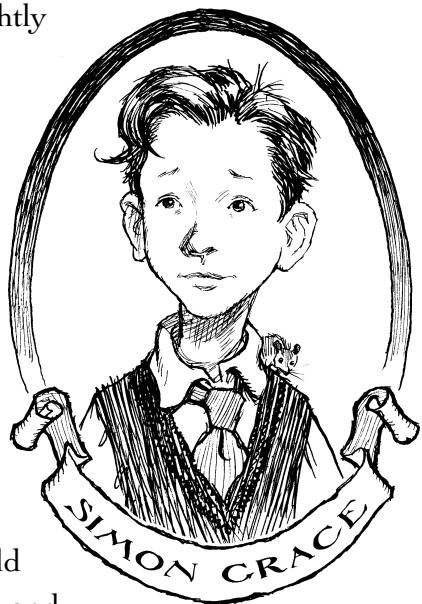

The new house, for instance. Jared Grace looked up at it and squinted. Maybe it would look better blurry.

"It's a shack," Mallory said, getting out of the station wagon.

It wasn't really, though. It was more like a dozen shacks had been piled on top of one another. There were several chimneys, and the whole thing was topped off by a strip of iron fence sitting on the roof like a particularly garish hat.

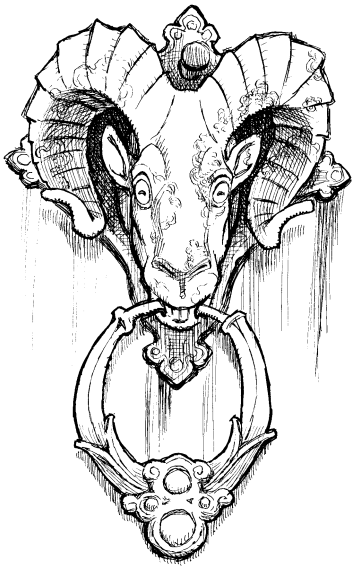
"It's not so bad," their mother said, with a smile

that looked only slightly forced. "It's Victorian."




Simon, Jared's identical twin, didn't look upset. He was probably thinking of all the animals he could have now. Actually, considering what he'd packed into their tiny bedroom in New York, Jared figured it would take a lot of rabbits and hedgehogs and whatever else was out here to satisfy Simon.

"Come on, Jared," Simon called. Jared realized that they had all crossed to the front steps and he was alone on the lawn, staring at the house.



The doors were a faded gray, worn with age. The only traces of paint were an indeterminate cream, stuck deep in crevices and around the hinges. A rusted ram's-head door knocker hung from a single, heavy nail at its center.

Their mother fit a jagged key into the lock, turned it, and shoved hard with her shoulder.

The door opened into a dim hallway. The only window was halfway up the stairs, and its stained glass panes gave the walls an eerie, reddish glow.

"It's just like I remember," she said, smiling.

"Only crappier," said Mallory.

Their mother sighed but didn't otherwise respond.

The hallway led into a dining room. A long table with faded water spots was the only piece of furniture. The plaster ceiling was cracked in places and a chandelier hung from frayed wires.

"Why don't you three start bringing things in from the car?" their mother said.

"Into here?" Jared asked.

"Yes, into here." Their mother put down her suitcase on the table, ignoring the eruption of dust. "If your great-aunt Lucinda hadn't let us stay, I don't know where we would have gone. We should be grateful."

None of them said anything. Try as he might, Jared didn't feel anything close to grateful. Ever since their dad moved out, everything had gone bad. He'd messed up at school, and the fading bruise over his left eye wouldn't let him forget it. But this place—this place was the worst yet.

"Jared," his mother said as he turned to follow Simon out to unload the car.

"What?"

His mother waited until the other two were down the hall before she spoke. "This is a chance to start over . . . for all of us. Okay?"

Jared nodded grudgingly. He didn't need her to say the rest of it—that the only reason he hadn't gotten kicked out of school was because they were moving anyway. Another reason he was supposed to be grateful. Only he wasn't.



Outside, Mallory had stacked two suitcases on top of a steamer trunk. "I heard she's starving herself to death."

"Aunt Lucinda? She's just old," said Simon. "Old and crazy."

But Mallory shook her head. "I heard Mom on the phone. She was telling Uncle Terrence that Aunt Lucy thinks little men bring her food."

"What do you expect? She's in a nuthouse," Jared said.

Mallory went on like she hadn't heard him. "She told the doctors the food she got was better than anything they'd ever taste."

"You're making that up." Simon crawled into the backseat and opened one of the suitcases.

Mallory shrugged. "If she dies, this place is going to get inherited by someone, and we're going to have to move again."

"Maybe we can go back to the city," Jared said.

"Fat chance," said Simon. He took out a wad of tube socks. "Oh, no! Jeffrey and Lemondrop chewed their way loose!"

"Mom told you not to bring the mice," Mallory said. "She said you could have *normal* animals now."

"If I let them go, they'd get stuck in a glue trap or something," said Simon, turning a sock inside out, one finger sticking out a hole. "Besides, you brought all your fencing junk!"

"It's not junk," Mallory growled. "And it's not *alive*."

"Shut up!" Jared took a step toward his sister.

"Just because you've got one black eye

doesn't mean I can't give you another one." Mallory flipped her ponytail as she turned toward him. She shoved a heavy suitcase into his hands. "Go ahead and carry that if you're so tough."

Even though Jared knew he might be bigger and stronger than her someday—when she wasn't thirteen and he wasn't nine—it was hard to picture.

Jared managed to lug the suitcase inside the door before he dropped it. He figured he could drag it the rest of the way if he had to and no one would be the wiser. Alone in the hallway of the house, however, Jared no longer remembered how to get to the dining room. Two different hallways split off this one, winding deep into the middle of the house.

"Mom?" Although he'd meant to call out loudly, his voice sounded very soft, even to himself.



*"Mom?"*