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Opening extract from

Charlie Bone And The Wilderness Wolf

Written by

Jenny Nimmo

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For Max and Molly Philo – one day

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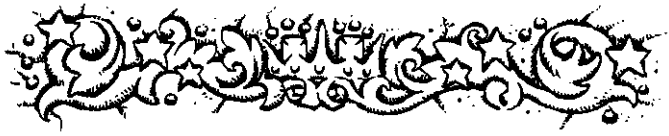
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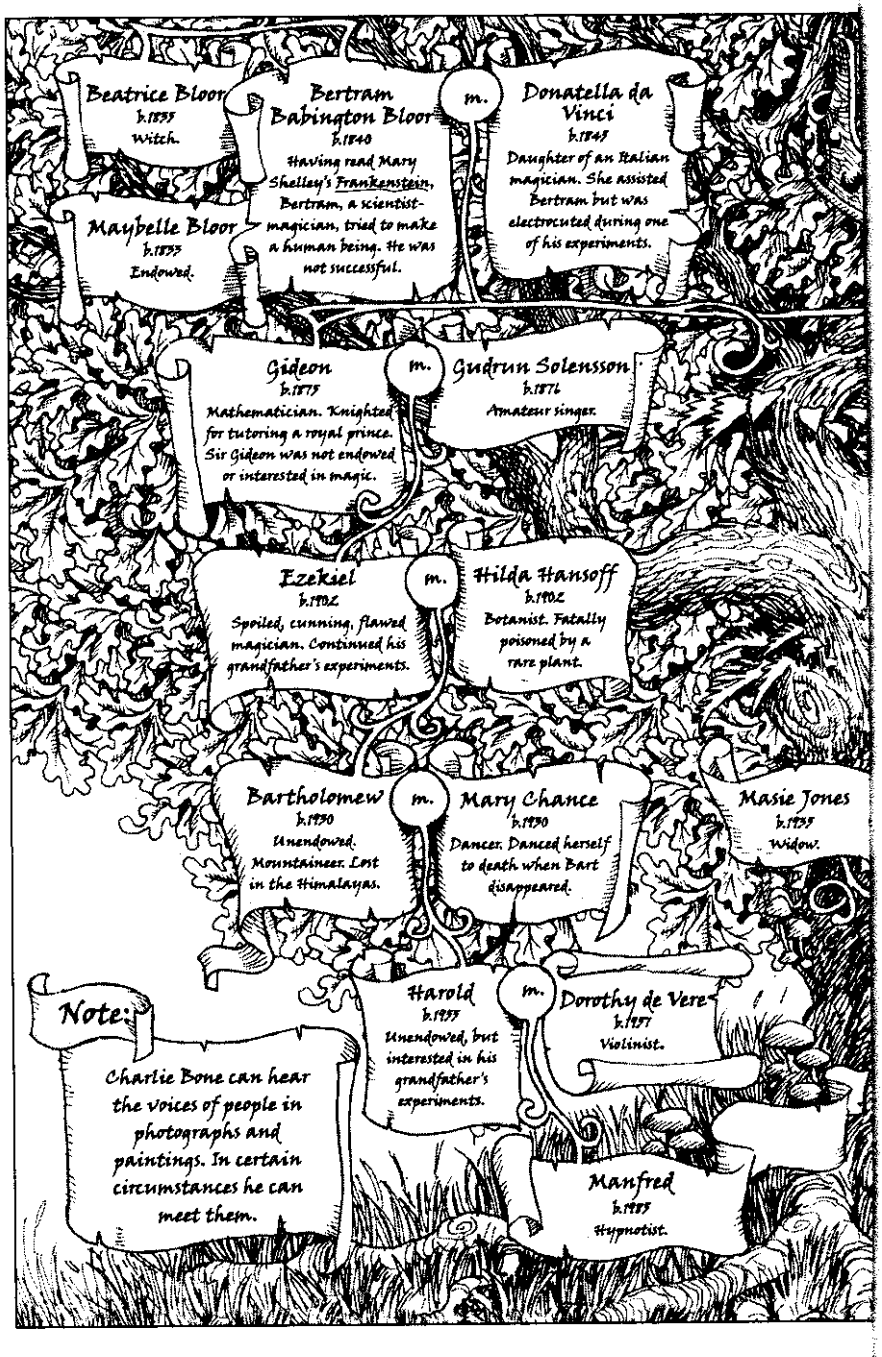
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Beatrice Bloor
b.1855
Witch.
Bertram Babington Bloor
b.1840
Having read Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, Bertram, a scientist-magician, tried to make a human being. He was not successful.
m.
Donatella da Vinci
b.1845
Daughter of an Italian magician. She assisted Bertram but was electrocuted during one of his experiments.
Maybelle Bloor
b.1853
Endowed.
Gideon
b.1875
Mathematician. Knighted for tutoring a royal prince. Sir Gideon was not endowed or interested in magic.
m.
Gudrun Solensson
b.1876
Amateur singer.
Ezekiel
b.1902
Spoiled, cunning, flawed magician. Continued his grandfather's experiments.
m.
Hilda Hansoff
b.1902
Botanist. Fatally poisoned by a rare plant.
Bartholomew
b.1930
Unendowed. Mountaineer. Lost in the Himalayas.
m.
Mary Chance
b.1930
Dancer. Danced herself to death when Bart disappeared.
Masie Jones
b.1935
Widow.
Harold
b.1955
Unendowed, but interested in his grandfather's experiments.
m.
Dorothy de Vere
b.1957
Violinist.
Manfred
b.1955
Hypnotist.
Note:
Charlie Bone can hear the voices of people in photographs and paintings. In certain circumstances he can meet them.


Yorath Yewbeam
b.1870
Shape-shifter.
m.
Vera Kuragina
b.1872
Hypnotist.
Grace Bloor
b.1885
Painter. Unendowed. Lived with her son and grandson, Paton, until she died, aged eighty.
m.
Manley
b.1884
Soldier. Killed in 1918 in the Great War.
Yolanda
b.1900
Shape-shifter. Inherited her father's castle. Never married.
Henry
b.1905
Disappeared when he was eleven. Unendowed.
Daphne
b.1908
Clairvoyant. Died of diphtheria in 1916.
James
b.1910
Unendowed. Historian.
m.
Solange Sourzac
b.1912
French actress. Fell and broke her neck in mysterious circumstances while visiting Yolanda's castle in 1924.
Monty Bone
b.1937
Pilot. Died 1963.
m.
Grizelda
b.1937
Unendowed.
Lucretia
b.1942
Matron. Unendowed.
Eustacia
b.1947
Clairvoyant.
Venetia
b.1952
Designer of magic clothes.
Paton
b.1957
Power-booster.
Amy Jones
b.1967
Store assistant.
m.
Lyell
b.1962
Pianist. Disappeared in 1994.
Charlie
b.1992
Picture traveller
Note:
When James Yewbeam's wife, Solange, died, his four daughters went to live with their evil great aunt, Yolanda, who turned them against their father. Yolanda also tried to steal Paton, but James resisted her.

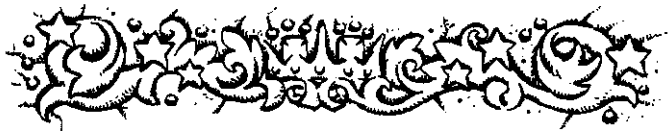


The children of the Red King, called the endowed

Manfred Bloor — Talents Master at Bloor's Academy. Previously head boy. A hypnotiser. He is descended from Borlath, eldest son of the Red King. Borlath was a brutal and sadistic tyrant.

Naren Bloor — Adopted daughter of Bartholomew Bloor, Naren can send shadow words over great distances. She is descended from the Red King's grandson who was abducted by pirates and taken to China.

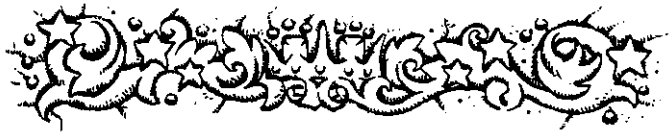
Asa Pike — A were-beast. He is descended from a tribe who lived in the Northern forests and kept strange beasts. Asa can change shape at dusk.



Billy Raven	Billy can communicate with animals. One of his ancestors conversed with ravens that sat on a gibbet where dead men hung. For this talent he was banished from his village.
Lysander Sage	Descended from an African wise man. He can call up his spirit ancestors.
Tancred Torsson	A storm-bringer. His Scandinavian ancestor was named after the thunder god, Thor. Tancred can bring rain, wind, thunder and lightning.
Gabriel Silk	Gabriel can feel scenes and emotions through the clothes of others. He comes from a line of psychics.
Emma Tolly	Emma can fly. Her surname derives from the Spanish swordsman from Toledo, whose daughter married the Red King. He is therefore an ancestor to all the endowed children.



Charlie Bone	Charlie can travel into photographs and pictures. Through his father he is descended from the Red King, and through his mother, from Mathonwy, a Welsh magician and friend of the Red King.
Dorcas Loom	Dorcas can bewitch items of clothing. Her ancestor, Lola Defarge, knitted a shrivelling shawl whilst enjoying the execution of the Queen of France in 1793.
Idith and Inez Branko	Telekinetic twins, distantly related to Zelda Dobinsky, who has left Bloor's Academy.
Joshua Tilpin	Joshua has magnetism. He is descended from Lilith, the Red King's oldest daughter, and Harken, the evil enchanter who married her.



Una Onimous — Mr Onimous's niece. Una is five years old and her endowment is being kept secret until it has fully developed.

Olivia Vertigo — Descended from Guanhamara, who fled the Red King's castle and married an Italian Prince. Olivia is an illusionist. The Bloors are unaware of her endowment.

Dagbert Endless: — Dagbert is the son of Lord Grimwald who can control the oceans. His mother took the gold from drowned men's teeth, and made them into charms to protect her son. Dagbert is a drowner.

The endowed are all descended from the ten children of the Red King: a magician-king who left Africa in the twelfth century, accompanied by three leopards.



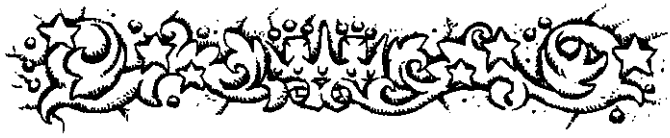
Prologue

Charlie Bone lives in a city that holds many secrets. They are hidden in the walls and buried under centuries of dust.

The city began nine hundred years ago, with a castle. It was built by Charlie's ancestor, the Red King, so-called because of his red cloak and the burning sun emblazoned on his shield. The Red King was an African; he was also a magician.

When the king's beloved queen, Berenice, died, he went to grieve in the forest. He believed that his ten children were safe in the hands of wise councillors and kindly nurses. Besides, each child had been endowed with an extraordinary power.

At that time, the country was a violent and lawless place; murder and robbery were rife. On his way home, the king found that his considerable powers were needed to help the poor and oppressed. He



donned a suit of chainmail and a helmet with a plume of red feathers. Then, conjuring up an invincible sword, he rode out to defend the troubled and helpless people.

For five years the Red King fought tyrants, murderers and plundering nobles. When he finally returned to his castle, he found that five of his children were gone and the other five were using their endowments to wreak havoc on the surrounding countryside. It was these children and their heirs who began the city's history of dreadful magic and wickedness. Unable to fight his own children, the broken-hearted king left his castle forever.

Charlie's grandmother and her three sisters all have a part in the evil. While his father was spellbound they sent him to Bloor's Academy, a school run by a family with an especially violent past. Charlie is often afraid of the Bloors and their allies, but, so far, he has resisted all their attempts to crush him, for he has friends among the descendants of the Red King, friends who use their unusual endowments to help him.

With his own talent for travelling into the past, Charlie is beginning to learn the city's secrets. It is a



dangerous pursuit, but Charlie has his friends to support him and a firm trust in the enduring power of the Red King.

Not-quite-humans

You might think it was rather careless of Charlie Bone to lose his father a second time, especially when he had only just found him. They had been apart for ten long years; spellbound years for Lyell Bone, a time spent in deep forgetfulness, when he could remember nothing of his past or even recall his name.

This time, at least Charlie knew where his father had gone. He was taking Charlie's mother on a second honeymoon. What could be better than to get away from cold, dark February days, to watch whales and dolphins roll through a sunlit sea? They had asked Charlie to join them, of course, but he had politely declined. His parents needed to



be alone and, besides, there were things that he had to attend to at home. A few mysteries to clear up.

At that moment Charlie was standing by the gate of the house where he was born. It was an old red-brick building, with a steep slate roof and four steps up to a blue front door. Charlie and his mother had left the house when he was two, and he couldn't remember it at all. Even the name was unfamiliar to him: 'Diamond Corner' – it stood on the corner of Diamond Street and Lyme Avenue.

Charlie was twelve now; a boy of medium height with dark, unruly hair and walnut brown eyes. A boy who was ordinary in every way except one: he was a picture-traveller, a talent he had inherited from the legendary Red King.

Beside Charlie stood a very tall man with strong, finely chiselled features and straight black hair that almost touched his shoulders. He wore a long, dark coat and the brim of his black hat had been pulled well down, as though to shade his eyes, though there was not the slightest glimmer of sunlight on this murky Saturday afternoon.

'Needs a lot of repair,' the man remarked, looking at



the dark holes where slates had fallen from the roof.

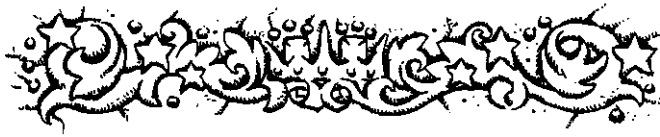
'I wish I could move in right now, Uncle Paton,' said Charlie.

'You won't have to wait long,' said his great-uncle. 'They're starting work next week: builders, painters, plumbers and roofers.'

'Let's have a look.' Charlie opened the gate and walked up the overgrown path. His uncle followed, jangling a bunch of keys. As they drew closer they noticed a light in one of the lower windows.

'Someone's in there.' Charlie ran up to the door. His uncle, only a pace behind, leapt up the steps and fitted one of his keys into the lock. The blue door swung open and Charlie stepped inside.

A stale, mildewy smell filled the hallway. The floorboards were damp and dusty and strips of ragged wallpaper hung from the dark, stained walls. Charlie trod as lightly as he could, but the bare boards creaked with every step he took. He quickly opened a door to his left and looked into the room where he had seen the light. It was empty. Uncle Paton nodded at a half-open door on the other side of the room. 'The kitchen,' he whispered.



A shuffling sound could be heard. It was difficult to make out where it came from. Charlie sprang across the room, his uncle's heavy footsteps pounding after him. But the kitchen, too, was empty. A sharp bang sent Charlie bounding through the kitchen and into the passage. The back door swung open, hitting the wall behind it with another loud bang. A blast of cold air hit Charlie as he squinted outside. He was just in time to see two figures slip through a broken fence at the end of the garden.

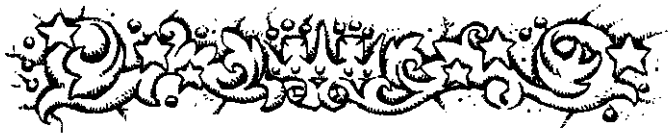
'Hey!' cried Charlie, running through a sea of long dried grass and weeds. When he reached the fence he peered into the narrow gap. But the intruders had vanished.

'Could have been tramps.' Uncle Paton kicked at a pile of newspapers in a corner. 'Let's go, Charlie.'

'Can't I go upstairs?' begged Charlie. 'I want to see if I can remember the room where I slept.'

'Go on then.' Uncle Paton followed Charlie up the stairs. When he reached the top Charlie stood and stared at the two doors in front of him. There were two more leading off a passage to his left, and another on his right. He chose this one.

'You did remember, Charlie!'



'I just guessed,' said Charlie. He pushed open the door. 'OH!'

It was impossible to move any further into the room. Every floorboard had been lifted. Some stood against the walls, others lay scattered on the narrow joists that supported the floor.

'How very odd!' Uncle Paton peered over Charlie's shoulder. 'I didn't know the builders had started already.'

They looked in the other rooms. Every one was in the same state: floorboards wrenched up and thrown carelessly into corners or strewn across the thin joists.

'Looks like someone's been searching for something,' Charlie remarked.

'A pretty desperate search,' his uncle agreed. 'I imagine they did the same downstairs, but re-laid the boards in case anyone looked through the windows.'

'I don't like to think of strangers coming in and trashing my old home,' said Charlie.

As they went downstairs they kept an eye open for any sign that the treads might have been pulled up. And this time they noticed the splintered wood, the nails that had been pulled up, and the slight wobble in the banisters.



'It might be a good idea to change the locks,' said Uncle Paton, when they were standing in the street again. 'I'll tell the agents.'

They began the walk home to number nine, Filbert Street. Uncle Paton was thinking about the intruders and failed to notice that the street lights had come on. Before Charlie had time to warn him he carelessly glanced upwards and the lamp over his head gave a loud pop and exploded.

Uncle Paton ducked as a shower of glass rained down on his head. 'Bother! Bother! Bother!' he cried. 'Who'd be a power-booster?'

Paton Yewbeam, another of the Red King's descendants, had inherited an unfortunate endowment. If he so much as glanced at a light that was on, whether it was in a window, a house, on the street or at home, the element would reach such intense heat that the bulb inevitably exploded. So Paton rarely left home in the daytime. Traffic lights, brake lights and shop windows were all at risk from his unhappy talent. And he found it very embarrassing.

This time Uncle Paton's accident had revealed something. In the bright flash that momentarily filled



the street, two figures could be seen cowering beside a hedge. The moment lasted less than a second but their faces were printed sharply in Charlie's mind. They looked – not quite human.

Charlie had blinked against the shower of glass that fell on to his uncle. When he opened his eyes again, the figures had vanished.

'Come on, Charlie, let's get out of here before someone sees us.' Uncle Paton took Charlie's arm and pulled him away from the scene of his crime.

'Someone did see us, Uncle P,' said Charlie. 'I think it might have been *them*. You know, the intruders. But they weren't exactly people. If you know what I mean.'

'I do not.' Uncle Paton gripped Charlie even tighter. 'Quick, quick! Over here.'

Charlie found himself being dragged across the street. A fast-approaching car gave a warning hoot and Uncle Paton hauled him on to the pavement.

'What did you say about not-exactly-people?' Uncle Paton tugged the brim of his hat. Now even his nose was hidden.

'They were weird, Uncle P,' Charlie panted. 'I can't explain.'



'Try,' commanded his uncle. 'I want to know what kind of creatures we're up against.'

Uncle Paton set off again at his usual breakneck speed. Charlie had to make little skipping movements in order to keep up with him. 'It's not fair,' Charlie complained. 'Your legs are twice as long as mine.'

'I want to put distance between myself and the street lamp,' Uncle Paton snapped. He turned a corner and slowed his pace. 'Now, try again. What made these things inhuman, Charlie?'

'They were a bit hairy for one thing,' said Charlie. 'And their eyes – their eyes, well, I think they were too far apart for a human. They were more like dogs – or, or –'

'Wolves?' his uncle suggested.

'Maybe,' Charlie said cautiously. 'If wolves have yellow eyes.'

'Hmm. Why do I think that the Bloors have something to do with this? Tell me, did your father mention anything that he might have left at the old house?'

'Nothing,' said Charlie. 'But then there were so many things that he'd forgotten.' He smiled to himself. It was enough that his father had remembered his



mother and himself. 'His memory is coming back, though. Every day something new pops into his head. Maybe when he comes home again, he'll be completely recovered.'

'And that's what they're afraid of.' Uncle Paton came to a standstill.

'Who? What?' asked Charlie.

'Listen, Charlie. We believe that Manfred Bloor hypnotised your father, because he caused old Ezekiel's accident. But I have come to think that there was more to it. I believe your father was hiding something that the Bloors wanted. Perhaps they hoped that under hypnosis he would reveal its hiding place. But this never happened. And now they're afraid that he will remember, and find whatever it is before they do.'

Charlie couldn't imagine what had led his uncle to this conclusion. But Paton Yewbeam had an enquiring mind. He was writing a history of the Red King, and his room was crammed with huge books that covered every subject Charlie had heard of, and a lot more that he hadn't.

Diamond Street lay on the outskirts of the city and it took Charlie and his uncle nearly an hour to get



home. By that time dusk had fallen and a thick mist was creeping through the streets. Curiously it smelled of salt, though the sea was at least thirty miles away.

Charlie's grandmother, Maisie, met them at the door. She had the look of someone who'd had a nasty shock. 'Grandma Bone's back,' she whispered, turning out the hall light, in case of a Paton accident.

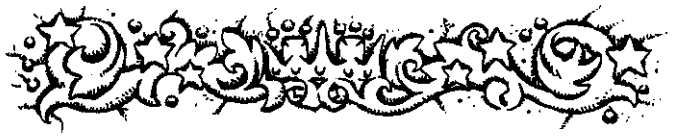
'Back?' said Paton loudly. 'Why on earth . . .'

'Sssh!' Maisie put a finger to her lips. 'Come in here.'

Charlie and his uncle followed Maisie into the kitchen. The table had been laid and while Maisie ladled mushroom soup into three bowls she told them about Grandma Bone's dramatic arrival.

Grandma Bone was Paton's sister. She was twenty years older than him and they'd never got on. She didn't even get on with her only son, Charlie's father. As soon as he'd come home after ten long years imprisoned in Bloor's Academy, Grandma Bone had moved out. She'd gone to live with her three sisters at the end of a grim and gloomy alley called Darkly Wynd. Charlie had hoped he would never see her again.

'She's still got a key,' Maisie told them. 'She marched in, dumped her bag in the hall and said, "I'm back!"



"Why?" I asked. Well, that was wrong for a start. "Anyone would think you were sorry," she said. "I am," I said. "I thought you'd gone for good.'"

Charlie began to giggle.

Paton asked, 'But what is her reason, Maisie? Why has she returned?'

'A wedding!' said Maisie.

'Whose?' begged Paton.

'Your youngest sister, Venetia. She's getting married next week.'

Charlie choked on his soup. 'Great Aunt Venetia? Who on earth would want to marry her?'

'Who indeed, Charlie love,' said Maisie. 'But some poor man is soon going to rue the day.'

'How extraordinary.' Paton stared at Maisie in disbelief.

'Grandma Bone is very put out,' Maisie went on, 'but her sisters are all for it apparently.'

'Phew.' Paton blew on his soup, which couldn't have been that hot because he'd already swallowed several spoonfuls without a murmur. He was trying not to show it but anyone could see that he was utterly baffled and extremely shocked.

Uncle Paton's four sisters were all as bad as each



other. They loathed their only brother and spent their lives tormenting him, just because he didn't agree with their morals and made very sure they knew it. All four of them were mean, spiteful, arrogant, dishonest and greedy. In fact, Charlie couldn't find enough words to describe how horrible they were. None of them had ever given Charlie a kind word, let alone a birthday present, not even Grandma Bone.

Maisie had saved the best part of her announcement till last. 'The worst of it is, he's got children,' she said dramatically. 'What do you think of that?'

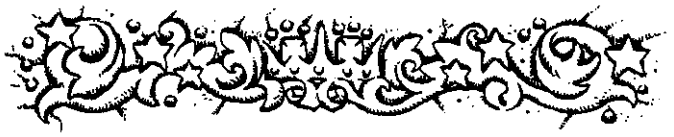
'Children!' Charlie shuddered. 'Poor things. Imagine Great Aunt Venetia being your mother!'

'Impossible.' Paton suddenly looked up.

Charlie had his back to the door and failed to see Grandma Bone walking up behind him.

'I'm glad I'm not your mother,' said Grandma Bone testily. She marched over to the fridge and opened it. 'There's nothing in here,' she complained. 'Nothing but cheese and old bones. No pâté, no mayonnaise and not even a sniff of salmon.'

Maisie gave a huge sigh. 'How was I to know you'd come hunting in here, with your fussy stomach and



your dainty mouth? Sit down, Grizelda, and I'll give you some mushroom soup.'

'No thank you.' Grandma Bone plonked herself in the rocker by the stove.

Paton frowned. He had been meaning to get rid of the rocker. No one else ever used it. It had been a constant reminder of Grandma Bone's gloomy presence. If only he'd thought ahead and chopped it up for firewood a day earlier.

Creak! Creak! Creak! There she went, with her eyes closed and her head nestled into her chin. Rock! Rock! Rock! The sound was enough to curdle the soup.

'So,' Paton found a voice at last. 'I hear you've fallen out with your sisters, Grizelda.'

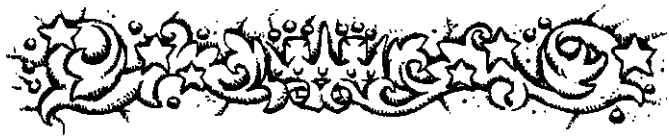
'They're your sisters too,' she snorted. 'Marriage indeed! I never heard of such rubbish. Venetia's fifty-two. She should've given up that sort of thing years ago.'

'What sort of thing?' asked Charlie.

'Don't be insolent,' his grandmother replied.

Charlie finished his soup and stood up. 'I bet you'll leave when my dad comes back,' he said.

'Oh, but you're all going to live in that cosy little Diamond Corner.' She gave Charlie one of her chilly



stares. 'But then whale-watching can be very dangerous. He may never –'

Charlie didn't wait to hear what his grandmother might say next. 'I'm going to see Ben,' he cried, rushing into the hall and flinging on his jacket.

Maisie called, 'Charlie, it's dark, love. Don't pay any attention to Grandma Bone. She didn't mean anything by it.'

'She did,' muttered Charlie. He left the house, ran across the road to number twelve and rang the bell. Filbert Street was always quiet at this time on a Sunday. There were very few cars about and the pavements were deserted. And yet Charlie felt a prickling at the back of his neck that told him someone was watching him.

'Come on, come on.' Charlie pressed the bell a second time.

Benjamin Brown opened the door. He was a few months younger than Charlie and a lot smaller. His scruffy yellow hair was exactly the same colour as the large dog that stood beside him, wagging its tail.

'Can I come in?' asked Charlie. 'Grandma Bone's back.'

Benjamin understood immediately. 'What a disaster! I'm just taking Runner Bean for a walk. Want to come?'



Anything was better than spending the evening in the same house as Grandma Bone. Charlie fell into step beside Benjamin as he headed towards the park. With joyful barks, Runner Bean ran circles round the boys then darted down the dark street. Benjamin didn't like to lose sight of his dog. He knew he worried unnecessarily. His parents were always telling him to lighten up, but Benjamin couldn't help being the way he was. Besides, a mist was beginning to creep into the street; an unusual, salty sort of mist.

Charlie hunched his shoulders. There it was again. That odd prickling feeling under his collar. He stopped and looked back.

'What is it, Charlie?' asked Benjamin.

Charlie told his friend about the not-quite-humans that he'd seen near Diamond Corner.

'Nothing's normal tonight,' Benjamin said shakily. 'I never tasted salt in the mist before.'

And then they heard the howl; it was very distant, but a howl nevertheless. A sound that was almost human, and yet not quite. For the first time since his parents had left, Charlie wished they hadn't gone whale-watching.



Runner Bean came racing back to the boys. His coarse hair was standing up like a hedgehog's.

'It's the howling,' said Benjamin. 'I've heard it before. It makes Runner nervous, though he's never usually scared of anything.'

It wasn't until much later that Charlie made the connection between the distant howling and the not-quite-humans that seemed to be following him.

As for the salty mist, that was another thing entirely.