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Opening extract from

Charlie Bone and the Shadow of Badlock

Written by

Jenny Nimmo

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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

The winds of Badlock were the cruellest in the world; they came from every quarter, screaming against the giant's broad back, tearing his hair and lashing his eyes, so that he could barely open them. At every step great gusts swept around his long legs until, at length, he was forced on to his knees.

Behind the giant lay a vast plain of wind-torn scrub and ever-shifting stones. It had taken him and his child a night and a day to cover this inhospitable terrain. They had come from the range of snow-capped mountains that surrounded the plain like a massive wall.

The giant drew his cloak tight about the boy in his arms. They had been making for a little hollow, where a shelter of trees could be seen, and the gleam of water.

'Forgive me, Roland,' moaned the giant. 'I can go no further.'



'You are tired, Father,' said the boy, twisting out of the giant's arms. 'If I walk you can move more easily.'

The giant marvelled at his little son's spirit. It must come from the boy's mother, he thought. It shamed him to see Roland still so unafraid after their long ordeal. Gathering his strength, the giant got to his feet again and battled forward, while his son staggered bravely at his side.

'Look!' Roland suddenly sang out. 'I see a light in the hollow.'

'The moon,' murmured his father.

'No, Father. A flame.'

The giant brushed a hand across his eyes and blinked. Yes, there was, indeed, a light flickering at the edge of the hollow. But how could he tell if it meant danger? They were unlikely to find help in such a godforsaken place.

All at once, Roland suddenly sprinted ahead. He had always been inclined to rush headlong into things that excited his curiosity.

'Wait!' called the giant.

But Roland, his arms wide as if embracing the wind, forged through the swirling gusts, whirled away towards



the trees and disappeared from view.

When the giant arrived at the hollow, he found his son talking earnestly to a boy of about ten with startling snow-white hair. The stranger raised his rush-light the better to see the form that stood at the lip of the hollow, and the giant noted his large violet-coloured eyes. A goblin, thought the giant. What fairy tricks has he come to play on us?

'Roland, come here,' the giant commanded, stepping closer to the pair.

Of a sudden, as if from nowhere, another figure moved into the circle of light: a tall young man with raven hair and a cloak of some dark shiny stuff.

'Don't be afraid,' said the dark young man. 'White-haired Owain is no fairy. He has sought you for many months.'

'For me?' The giant's eyes narrowed.

'You are Otus Yewbeam?' asked the boy.

'That is my name.'

The boy made a deep bow. 'I am so happy to find you, sir. No one could tell me where you had gone. It was an old woman in your village who, nearing the end of her life, overcame her fear of punishment,



and told me that you and your son had been taken prisoner by a knight all in green.'

'Count Harken.' The giant gave a snort of loathing.

'But you have escaped,' said the dark youth.

'We would have rescued you,' said Owain, 'however fiercely you had been guarded.'

Roland, who had been leaping up and down with excitement, could contain his news no longer and burst out, 'Owain is my cousin, Father, and he,' he pointed to the dark young man, 'he is my uncle Tolemeo.'

The giant frowned. 'Can this be true?'

Tolemeo said, 'Let us go further into this hollow where we can speak more easily.' For they had been shouting in sentences devoid of warmth or feeling, as the wind snatched their words and scattered them into the air.

Tolemeo led the way, followed by Owain, whose flaring torch caused Tolemeo's cloak to sparkle with ever-changing colours, from vivid blue to green to deepest purple.

He is wearing feathers, thought the giant, and a small thread of unease ran through him. Yet I must not expect them to be ordinary, he told himself, for



they are the Red King's children and my own dear wife, Amoret, was a child of the magician-king.

They reached a cluster of rocks at the bottom of the hollow and, easing himself on to a wide slab, the giant asked, 'Have you news of my wife?'

He did not get an immediate answer. Owain looked at the ground. The white-haired boy seemed, all at once, nervous and uncertain.

'Forgive me, sir,' said Tolemeo, 'but you are not my idea of a giant.'

'No,' said Owain, with an edgy laugh. 'I always imagined a giant's head to be swallowed by the clouds.'

Otus smiled indulgently. 'I am not a true giant, though I come from a race of giants. My father stood two fathoms high. I am only two-thirds his height. My brothers are even smaller. Perhaps our descendants will be a more manageable size.' He glanced at Roland and then said urgently, 'But please, have you news of my wife?'

Tolemeo lowered his gaze. His slight uncomfortable shrug caused the giant's heart to miss a beat.

'Tell me, please,' cried Otus, 'even if it is the worst a man can expect.'



'Your wife went to her brother Amadis . . .' Tolemeo began.

'Yes, yes,' broke in the giant. 'We heard that Count Harken was on his way. I thought she would be safe with Amadis. She had a mirror, made by her father, the king, and she used it – for travelling.' Otus looked into the faces that stared up at him. They didn't seem surprised. 'You know of the mirror?'

'We do,' Tolemeo affirmed. 'And we know that it is what Harken craves.'

The giant's mouth twisted in a bitter smile. 'Count Harken may be an enchanter but he craves everything the king, your father, ever made or owned. They surrounded our house, Harken and his army of trolls and thugs. Amoret tried to take our baby with her, she thought the mirror would transport them both but, somehow, it would not work for Roland. He fell into my arms just as his mother vanished. Minutes later, Harken broken into the house and captured us. They brought us here to Badlock and for two years we have been imprisoned in one of his many towers. Three days ago I kicked out at the wretched troll who brought our food and while he was still reeling from the pain of my boot,



clever Roland pushed him into a cupboard and locked the door.'

'And then I untied my father's bonds,' said Roland. 'They didn't know I had grown so strong, or they would have chained me to the wall, like my poor father.'

The giant lifted his son into his arms. 'We have been travelling ever since, but with these accursed winds it is hard to make progress. If we can reach the coast and get a boat, we'll find my wife no matter what. I've heard her brother, Amadis, has a fine castle, on an island in the western sea.'

The silence that greeted this remark was so profound it seemed like a dark chasm where the giant's mind refused to go.

'Tell me,' he whispered.

'Your wife is dead,' said Tolemeo steadily. 'Owain will tell you the rest, for he was there.'

Roland buried his head in his father's neck, his shoulders heaving with quiet sobs. I have known this all along, thought Otus. How could I have hoped to avoid the truth? 'Tell me,' he said.

Owain slipped off his rocky perch and passed the torch to Tolemeo. Then, clasping his hands together,



he looked steadily into the giant's face and began, 'It was my own uncle, your wife's older brother Borlath. You must know that he is one of Harken's allies. He found my father's island and the castle he had built. The loveliest castle in all the world, they said. Borlath wanted it. He brought an army of mercenaries and tried to starve us out, but my father, who could speak with animals, called to the wolves, the bats, the birds and the rats. The rats were especially useful, they ate all Borlath's supplies. When winter came the mercenaries grew sullen, they wanted to leave, and that's when Borlath used his awful power. I saw it myself from the battlements; fire came from his hands, flames from every finger.' Owain held up his hands, his fingers spread wide. 'In a second a ring of fire had encircled us. My father lifted me down. "Run, Owain," he cried. "Run to the well as fast as you can, and don't come out until I tell you." So I ran. And as I went I looked up and a bright mirror came flying over my head, and I caught it, and far, far away, I heard Amoret call out, "Give the mirror to my son." And I went down the well, and my raven came with me. He was my friend, you see, and I talk his language.



'From the depths of the well we listened, Raven and me. We listened to screams, to roaring flames, to beams tearing and crashing, to moans and cries and boulders falling. And I smelt fire, and worse than fire.' Owain lifted his glistening eyes to the sky and his chest rose and fell, as though he were fighting for breath. Tolemeo put a hand on his shoulder, and the boy continued, 'And then it was quiet, very quiet, and I knew my father could never tell me to come out; I knew I would never hear his voice again. So I came out anyway. And they were all dead. Everyone.'

The giant's mouth had fallen open, but his cry was silent. Roland turned his head to stare at Owain. Horror had dried up his tears.

Owain said gently, 'When I came out it was snowing, and the castle walls were as shiny as glass, so shiny I could see my face in them.'

'It was the work of a magician,' said Tolemeo, 'my father's friend, Mathonwy. He sent a cloud of snow to smother the flames. But his help came too late to save Amadis and Amoret. I was in Toledo, my mother's city, when it happened.'

Owain clasped Tolemeo's hand. 'I sent my raven to



find him, and since the day Tolemeo arrived, we have been searching for you.' He put his hand into his jerkin and drew out a mirror set in a jewelled frame. The glass was so brilliant it was as if the sun had touched their faces.

The giant gasped, and turned his head away. 'Amoret,' he murmured.

Tolemeo took the mirror from Owain and thrust it into the giant's hands. 'Take the mirror, Otus Yewbeam,' he said sternly. 'You have lost your wife but you still have your son.'

The giant was about to reply when Tolemeo suddenly spun on his heel, his nostrils flaring, his eyes wide and alert. 'They are upon us,' he cried.

'I heard nothing,' said the giant.

'Nevertheless.' Tolemeo lifted Roland on to his shoulders. 'We have but a moment.' He began to stride round the lake. 'Otus, make haste. They approach.'

The giant stood, clutching the mirror to his chest. He looked up to the rim of the hollow, and there they were – a long line of shadows weaving through the trees. A deep, nasal roar filled the giant's ears as Harken's troll army began to run down the steep bank.



Their tiny eyes and scribble mouths were all but hidden in the fleshy spread of their huge noses. They wore scaley breastplates of dull metal, and tall, ridiculous helmets that disguised their lumpy heads. Their weapons were cudgels, spears and deadly slingshots, and behind them came a group of hideous beings that were neither troll nor human.

The giant began to run, his long legs easily clearing the rocks at the lake's edge. Ahead of him, he could see Roland's small face gazing back from Tolemeo's shoulders. 'Run, Father, run,' called the little boy.

The trolls' bellowing filled the hollow. Rocks and spears began to rain down from every side, and now the giant could see that they were surrounded.

'The Count is angry,' a thick, rasping voice announced. 'He punished me for your escape, Otus Yewbeam. And now I shall punish you.'

The giant recognised Oddthumb, leader of Harken's guards. He was bigger than the others and his face was a corpse-like grey, but what marked him out was the thumb of his right hand, a huge, gnarled, stumpy thing, wider than his palm.

Otus ducked as a rock came winging from



Oddthumb's slingshot.

'The mirror, Father,' cried Roland. 'Use the mirror to save yourself. Mother would have wished it.'

Tolemeo stopped and called back, 'It's the truth, Otus. Give them the mirror. It will slow them down. I will save your son, but you will have to fend for yourself.'

'Save Roland,' cried the giant, and he threw the mirror high into the air.

Every troll face was raised in fear and astonishment as the shining circle spun to earth, its radiance piercing their weak eyes and momentarily blinding them.

A howl of pain and fury went up. The mirror dropped at Oddthumb's feet. He felt its weight but couldn't see it.

'Farewell, Otus!' called Tolemeo.

The giant turned.

Tolemeo was rising from the ground with Roland and Owain clasped in his arms. Higher and higher. Now they were over the lake, and the feathered cloak billowed around them, while the dark water shimmered in the breeze. When they were higher than the trees that rimmed the hollow, two great wings spread behind



Tolemeo. He swung in the air and lay like a swimmer, while the wings beat gracefully above him. He might have been a great bird soaring through the starlit sky, if you chose not to see the two small figures clasped to his chest.

A joyous smile lit Otus Yewbeam's face, and in the long, solitary years that were to follow, the smile would return every time the giant remembered that moment.

The trolls had recovered their sight. They ran down to the lake, swinging their cudgels, grunting and swearing. The giant knew it would be useless to run. He saw that Oddthumb had picked up the mirror. The shadow would have what he wanted at last.