





# THE BOOKS of EARTHSEA

URSULA K. LE GUIN

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES VESS

THE BOOKS OF  
**EARTHSEA**

•URSULA K. LEGUIN•



ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES VESS

GOLLANCZ  
LONDON

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**EARTHSEA**

Miles  
25 50 100 200 300

The North Reach

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Wm. K. Leguin

## INTRODUCTION

They are slight; more like a sailor's chance sighting of a couple of islands than the

discovery of a new world. Earthsea exists in them, though, as the Americas existed in 1492 in Watlings Island, now known as San Salvador Island.

These stories speak of *the Islands*, of *the Outer Reach*, of *the great rich islands*

*of the Archipelago, the Inner Lanes, the roadsteads white with ships, and the golden*

*roofs of Havnor*. Earthsea is there, though unexplored. Some things mentioned—

trolls, black magic—will never appear again. But one element in each story will

turn out to be part of the deep fabric of Earthsea. “The Rule of Names” shows a

magic that works through name and knowledge, and “The Word of Unbinding”

gives a first glimpse of the shadow world of the dead.

The rest of Earthsea waited, then, till 1968, when the editor of Parnassus Press

in Berkeley asked me if I’d write a fantasy novel for younger readers. After I’d

gotten over the panic, and a big story about a young wizard began to sketch itself

in my head, the first thing I did was sit down and draw a map. I saw and named

Earthsea and all its islands. I knew almost nothing about them, but I knew their

names. In the name is the magic.

The original map was on a very large sheet—probably butcher paper, which I

had rolls of for my kids to draw on. That big map vanished years ago, but I'd made a careful copy on a smaller, handier scale, the original of the map in this book. And that provided the model for the many professional illustrators of various editions of the books in many countries to draw as carefully and more skillfully than I.

Its use to me was practical. A navigator needs a chart. As my characters sailed

about, I needed to know how far apart the islands lay and in which direction one

from another. The first book followed a kind of spiral from Gont to Roke and on

round again to Astowell, all within the Archipelago. For the second book, the

map gave me the Kargish land of Atuan. And after that, there was always an island

or place I hadn't visited yet, and a story in it. What island lay farthest to the west?

Selidor . . . Look at Havnor: big enough that there might be people living inland

who'd never seen the sea. What sort of magic did they really do on Paln? What

about the big Kargish land of Hur-at-Hur, way out there as far east as Astowell

and quite unknown to the Archipelagans—were there ever dragons there?

The last story of Earthsea I wrote, “The Daughter of Odren,” came from idly looking at the map and wondering what life was like on O back in the old days. It

turned out to have some curious resemblances to life on Mycenae.

Beyond the elegant chapter headings by Ruth Robbins for the Parnassus’s edition

of *A Wizard of Earthsea*, and Gail Garraty’s ne woodcut-like art in the same style

for the early Atheneum editions, until very recently, the books of Earthsea had no

illustrations. This was partly by my own decision. After Ruth’s unique wraparound jacket for the rst edition of *A Wizard of Earthsea*—with its splendidly stylized, copper-brown portrait face—cover art for the books mostly

went out of my control. The results could be ghastly—the droopy, lily-white wizard of the rst Puffin UK paperback; the silly man with sparks shooting out of

his ngers that replaced him. Some covers were quite pretty in themselves, but

delicate medieval persons on twee islands with castles with pointy towers had

nothing to do with my earthy, salty Earthsea. And as for copper or brown or black



skin, forget it! Earthsea was bathed in bleach.

I was ashamed of the covers that gave the reader every wrong idea about the people and the place. I resented publishers' art departments that met any suggestion that the cover might resemble something or someone in the book by

rejecting it, informing me loftily that they Knew what would Sell (a mystery no

honest cover designer would ever claim to know). Paperback houses wanted commercial, all-purpose fantasy covers; YA departments wanted no suggestion of

adult concerns. So I discouraged all suggestions of illustration.

As the reputation of the books grew, I began to be granted, however grudgingly, more input on the cover art. From that period, 1991, Margaret Chodos-Irvine's four beautiful jacket paintings for the first four books (Atheneum), and the gorgeous metallic covers of the last two (Harcourt). These

last were thanks to my editor Michael Kandel, who fought long and ardently for

me. Years later, Michael let me see the first draft the cover department sent him: a

fat green dragon, clearly modelled from one of those cute wind-up dinosaurs that

spit sparks, sitting up like a dog begging, in a cloud of pink steam. St. Michael

fought that dragon and defeated it, but it took him months.

Some real artists have painted covers for foreign editions of the books. My favorite of them all is Inger Edelfeldt's grave, subtle portrait of Tenar and Therru

on the Swedish *Tehanu*.

The first fully illustrated *A Wizard of Earthsea* is the Folio Society edition of 2015, with paintings by David Lupton. I was given free voice in choosing the

artist, and David most generously sent me his sketches, let me respond and advise, and heeded what he could use of what I said. The combination of our temperaments produced a very grim Earthsea. I like its dark and troubled young

protagonist, and in some of its paintings, I feel a great strangeness, as of magic

actually happening.

And now, with this first fully illustrated, complete Earthsea, I can let Charles Vess's art speak for itself.

I have written so often of how and why it took me so long to write the six books of

Earthsea that the story has become like the book you have to read to your four-

year-old every night for weeks—You *really* want to hear it *again*? Oh well, okay,

here goes!

I wrote the first three books in five years: '68, '70, '72. I was on a roll. None of them was closely plotted or planned before writing; in each of them much of the

story came to me as I followed what I wrote where it inevitably led. I started confidently on the fourth book. The central character was Tenar again, of course,

to balance it out. I knew she hadn't stayed and studied wizardry with Ogion, but

had married a farmer and had children, and that the story was going to bring her

and Ged back together. But by the middle of the first chapter, I realized that I didn't know who she was—now. I didn't know why she'd done what she'd done

or what she had to do. I didn't know her story, or Ged's. I couldn't plot or plan it.

I couldn't write it. It took me eighteen years to learn how.

I was forty-two in 1972; in 1990, I was sixty. During those years, the way of understanding society that we're obliged to call feminism (despite the glaring

absence of its opposite term masculism) had grown and flourished. At the same

time an increasing sense of something missing in my own writing, which I could

not identify, had begun to paralyze my storytelling ability. Without the feminist

writers and thinkers of the 1970s and '80s, I don't know if I ever could have identified this absence as the absence of women at the center.

Why was I, a woman, writing almost entirely about what men did?

Why because I was a reader who read, loved, and learned from the books my culture provided me; and they were almost entirely about what men did. The women in them were seen in relation to men, essentially having no existence unrelated to male existence. I knew what men did, in books, and how one wrote

about them. But when it came to what women did, or how to write about it, all I

had to call on was my own experiences—uncertified, unapproved by the great Consensus of Criticism, lacking the imprimatur of the Canon of Literature, piping up solo against the universally dominant and almost unison chorus of the

voices of men talking about men.

Oh, well, now, was that true? Hadn't I read Jane Austen? Emily Brontë?

Charlotte Brontë? Elizabeth Gaskell? George Eliott? Virginia Woolf? Other, long-silenced voices of women writing about both women and men were being

brought back into print, into life. And my contemporary women writers were showing me the way. It was high time I learned to write of and from my own body,

my own gender, in my own voice.

The central character of *The Tombs of Atuan* is female, the point of view is hers. But Tenar is just coming out of adolescence, not yet fully a woman. I had

had no problem in 1970 writing out of my own experience of what it is to be a

girl-child, an adolescent girl. What I couldn't do then, and hadn't yet done in 1990, was write a fully mature woman at the center of a novel.

Strangely enough, it took a child to show me the way into the fourth book of Earthsea. A girl-child, born in poverty, abused, maimed, abandoned, Theru led

me back to Tenar, so that I could see the woman she had become. And through

Tenar I could see Earthsea, unchanged, the same Earthsea as eighteen years earlier—but seeming almost a different world, for the viewpoint was no longer

from a position of power or among men of power. Tenar was seeing it all from

below, through the eyes of the marginal, the voiceless, the powerless.

The essay "Earthsea Revisioned," reprinted in this edition, discusses that change in viewpoint. When *Tehanu* came out, a good many critics and readers

saw it as mere gender politics and resented it as a betrayal of the romantic tradition of heroism. As I tried to say in the essay, not to change viewpoint would,

for me, have been the betrayal. By including women fully in my story, I gained a

larger understanding of what heroism is and found a true and longed-for way back into my Earthsea—now a very much greater, stranger, more mysterious place

than it had ever appeared before.

Though *Tehanu* is named for the child character, neither it nor the two books after it are books “for children” or de nable as “young adult.” I had abandoned

any attempt to suit my vision of Earthsea to a publisher’s category or a critic’s

prejudice. The notion that fantasy is only for the immature rises from an obstinate

misunderstanding of both maturity and the imagination. So, as my protagonists

grew older, I trusted my younger readers to follow them or not, as and when they

chose. In the PR-driven world of publishing, that constituted a real risk, and I am

very grateful to the editors who took that risk with me.

But there was one thing about *Tehanu* that I myself completely misunderstood

when I wrote and published it. I thought my long-sought fourth volume (my private title for it was *Better Late than Never*) was the end of Ged and Tenar’s

story. And I said so right on the title page: *The Last Book of Earthsea*.

Never say never; never say last!

For nearly ten years I believed I could leave the two of them there in peace and

contentment in Ogion's house on Gont. But then I was asked to write a short story set in Earthsea. I wondered if I could, and took a look at Earthsea. As soon

as I did, I realized I had to go back.

Between the third and fourth books there's no time jump at all; after *Tehanu* catches us up on the years of Tenar's life on Gont, the dragon carries Ged straight

into the book from the end of *The Farthest Shore*. But now, time had passed there

as well as here. Things had changed. I had to go and find out what had happened since Lebannen was crowned. Who had been named Archmage? What had become of the child Tehanu? These questions opened up larger ones—about who could and couldn't work magic, about the afterlife, about the dragons—things the four books didn't explain, things I wanted to know, unfinished business.

As I wrote in the introduction to *Tales from Earthsea*, "The way one does research into nonexistent history is to tell the story and find out what happened."

I did that in five stories, the most historical of which is "The Finder," plus a

description of Earthsea, a brief geography, history, and descriptive anthropology. This fifth book has been treated as marginal, but it's integral. The

long last story, "Dragon y," is a key part of the whole story of Ged and Tenar. It is

the link between *Tehanu* and *The Other Wind*. It foreshadows the material of that

book—what has gone wrong on Roke Island, at the very heart of wizardry and

wisdom; why the afterlife bargained for by wizardry is meaningless; who and

what the dragons are.

Soon after I wrote that story, I began to write the sixth novel. *The Other Wind*

presented itself to me without explaining itself, urgent, imperative, nal. If a

dragon comes to you and says, "*Arw sobriost!*" you don't ask questions. You do

what it says. There is a great taloned foot, set like a step in front of you; and above

it, the crook of the elbow joint; and above that, the jutting shoulder blade: a

stairway. You clamber up that stairway, feeling the ery inner heat of the dragon's

body. You settle yourself between the vast wings, take hold of the big spine-thorn



before you. And the dragon lifts, takes off, takes you where you and it must go,

ying on the other wind, ying free.

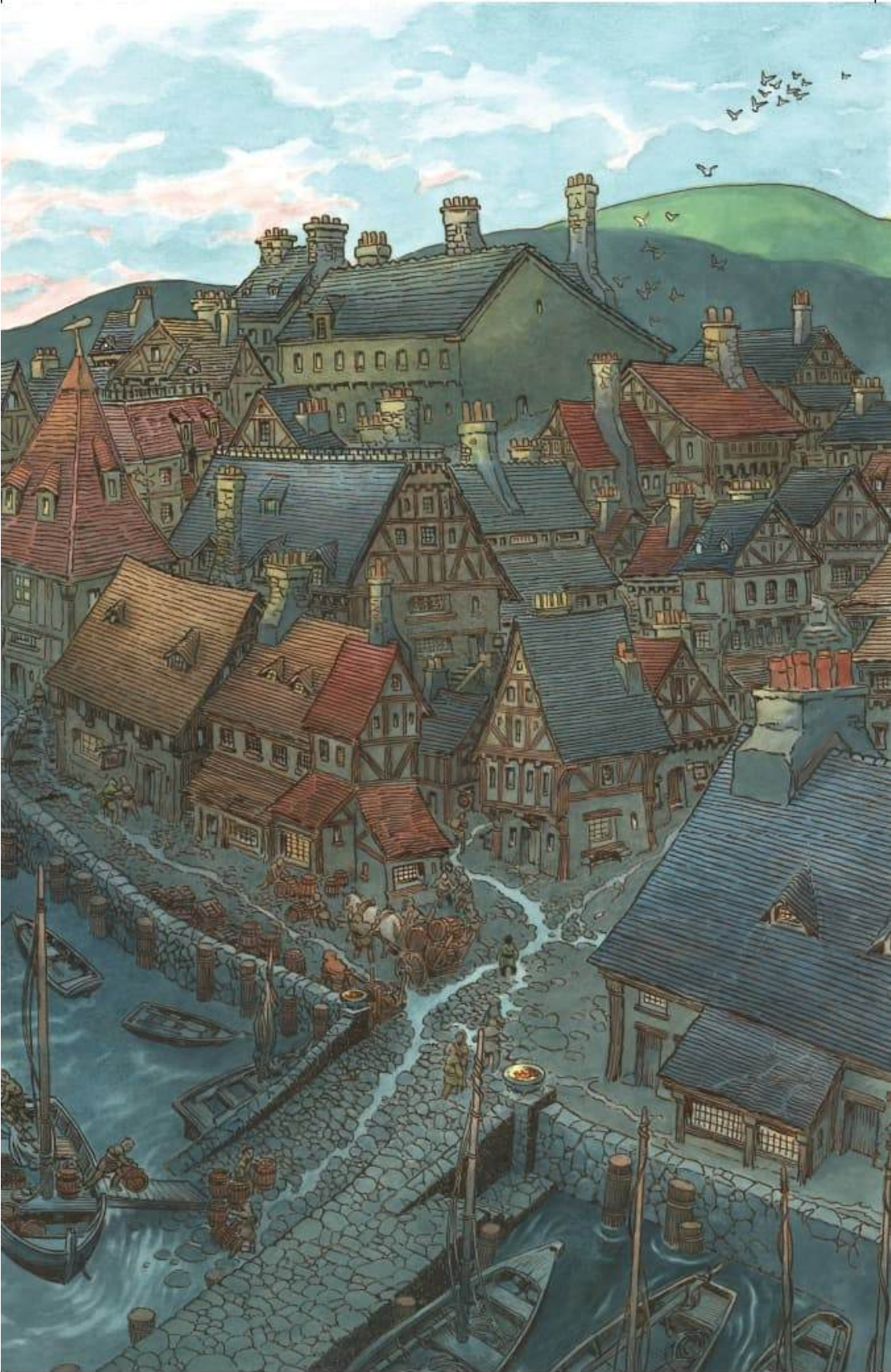
—Ursula K. Le Guin, February 2016



A WIZARD  
of  
EARTHSEA

To my brothers

Clifton, Ted, Karl





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Only in silence the word,  
only in dark the light,  
only in dying life:  
bright the hawk's ight  
on the empty sky.

— *The Creation of Éa*

## CHAPTER 1

### WARRIORS IN THE MIST

The island of Gont, a single mountain that lifts its peak a mile above the storm-

racked Northeast Sea, is a land famous for wizards. From the towns in its high

valleys and the ports on its dark narrow bays many a Gontishman has gone forth

to serve the Lords of the Archipelago in their cities as wizard or mage, or, looking

for adventure, to wander working magic from isle to isle of all Earthsea. Of these

some say the greatest, and surely the greatest voyager, was the man called

Sparrowhawk, who in his day became both dragonlord and Archmage. His life is

told of in the *Deed of Ged* and in many songs, but this is a tale of the time before

his fame, before the songs were made.

He was born in a lonely village called Ten Alders, high on the mountain at the

head of the Northward Vale. Below the village the pastures and plowlands of the

Vale slope downward level below level towards the sea, and other towns lie on the

bends of the River Ar; above the village only forest rises ridge behind ridge to the

stone and snow of the heights.

The name he bore as a child, Duny, was given him by his mother, and that and

his life were all she could give him, for she died before he was a year old. His

father, the bronze-smith of the village, was a grim unspeaking man, and since

Duny's six brothers were older than he by many years and went one by one from

home to farm the land or sail the sea or work as smith in other towns of the

Northward Vale, there was no one to bring the child up in tenderness. He grew

wild, a thriving weed, a tall, quick boy, loud and proud and full of temper. With

the few other children of the village he herded goats on the steep meadows above

the river-springs; and when he was strong enough to push and pull the long bellows-sleeves, his father made him work as smith's boy, at a high cost in blows

and whippings. There was not much work to be got out of Duny. He was always

off and away; roaming deep in the forest, swimming in the pools of the River Ar

that like all Gontish rivers runs very quick and cold, or climbing by cliff and scarp

to the heights above the forest, from which he could see the sea, that broad northern ocean where, past Perregal, no islands are.

A sister of his dead mother lived in the village. She had done what was needful

for him as a baby, but she had business of her own and once he could look after

himself at all she paid no more heed to him. But one day when the boy was seven

years old, untaught and knowing nothing of the arts and powers that are in the

world, he heard his aunt crying out words to a goat which had jumped up onto

the thatch of a hut and would not come down: but it came jumping when she cried a certain rhyme to it. Next day herding the longhaired goats on the meadows of High Fall, Duny shouted to them the words he had heard, not



knowing their use or meaning or what kind of words they were:

*Noth hierth malk man*

*hiolk han merth han!*

He yelled the rhyme aloud, and the goats came to him. They came very quickly,

all of them together, not making any sound. They looked at him out of the dark

slot in their yellow eyes.

Duny laughed and shouted it out again, the rhyme that gave him power over the goats. They came closer, crowding and pushing round him. All at once he felt

afraid of their thick, ridged horns and their strange eyes and their strange silence.

He tried to get free of them and to run away. The goats ran with him keeping in a

knot around him, and so they came charging down into the village at last, all the

goats going huddled together as if a rope were pulled tight round them, and the

boy in the midst of them weeping and bellowing. Villagers ran from their houses

to swear at the goats and laugh at the boy. Among them came the boy's aunt, who

did not laugh. She said a word to the goats, and the beasts began to bleat and

browse and wander, freed from the spell.

“Come with me,” she said to Duny.

She took him into her hut where she lived alone. She let no child enter there usually, and the children feared the place. It was low and dusky, windowless, fragrant with herbs that hung drying from the crosspole of the roof, mint and moly and thyme, yarrow and rushwash and paramal, kingsfoil, clovenfoot, tansy

and bay. There his aunt sat cross-legged by the reposit, and looking sidelong at the

boy through the tangles of her black hair she asked him what he had said to the

goats, and if he knew what the rhyme was. When she found that he knew nothing,

and yet had spell-bound the goats to come to him and follow him, then she saw

that he must have in him the makings of power.

As her sister's son he had been nothing to her, but now she looked at him with

a new eye. She praised him, and told him she might teach him rhymes he would

like better, such as the word that makes a snail look out of its shell, or the name

that calls a falcon down from the sky.

“Aye, teach me that name!” he said, being clear over the fright the goats had

given him, and puffed up with her praise of his cleverness.

The witch said to him, “You will not ever tell that word to the other children, if

I teach it to you.”

“I promise.”

She smiled at his ready ignorance. “Well and good. But I will bind your promise. Your tongue will be stilled until I choose to unbind it, and even then,

though you can speak, you will not be able to speak the word I teach you where

another person can hear it. We must keep the secrets of our craft.”

“Good,” said the boy, for he had no wish to tell the secret to his playmates, liking to know and do what they knew not and could not.

He sat still while his aunt bound back her uncombed hair, and knotted the belt

of her dress, and again sat cross-legged throwing handfuls of leaves into the re-pit, so that a smoke spread and lled the darkness of the hut. She began to sing. Her voice changed sometimes to low or high as if another voice sang through her, and the singing went on and on until the boy did not know if he waked or slept, and all the while the witch’s old black dog that never barked sat

by him with eyes red from the smoke. Then the witch spoke to Dunny in a tongue

he did not understand, and made him say with her certain rhymes and words until the enchantment came on him and held him still.

“Speak!” she said to test the spell.

The boy could not speak, but he laughed.

Then his aunt was a little afraid of his strength, for this was as strong a spell as

she knew how to weave: she had tried not only to gain control of his speech and

silence, but to bind him at the same time to her service in the craft of sorcery. Yet

even as the spell bound him, he had laughed. She said nothing. She threw clear

water on the fire till the smoke cleared away, and gave the boy water to drink, and

when the air was clear and he could speak again she taught him the true name of

the falcon, to which the falcon must come.

This was Duny's first step on the way he was to follow all his life, the way of magic, the way that led him at last to hunt a shadow over land and sea to the

lightless coasts of death's kingdom. But in those first steps along the way, it seemed a broad, bright road.

When he found that the wild falcons stooped down to him from the wind

when he summoned them by name, lighting with a thunder of wings on his wrist

like the hunting-birds of a prince, then he hungered to know more such names

and came to his aunt begging to learn the name of the sparrowhawk and the osprey and the eagle. To earn the words of power he did all the witch asked of

him and learned of her all she taught, though not all of it was pleasant to do or

know. There is a saying on Gont, *Weak as woman's magic*, and there is another

saying, *Wicked as woman's magic*. Now the witch of Ten Alders was no black

sorceress, nor did she ever meddle with the high arts or traffic with Old Powers;

but being an ignorant woman among ignorant folk, she often used her crafts to

foolish and dubious ends. She knew nothing of the Balance and the Pattern which the true wizard knows and serves, and which keep him from using his spells unless real need demands. She had a spell for every circumstance, and was

forever weaving charms. Much of her lore was mere rubbish and humbug, nor

did she know the true spells from the false. She knew many curses, and was better

at causing sickness, perhaps, than at curing it. Like any village witch she could

brew up a love-potion, but there were other, uglier brews she made to serve men's

jealousy and hate. Such practices, however, she kept from her young prentice,

and as far as she was able she taught him honest craft.



At rst all his pleasure in the art-magic was, childlike, the power it gave him

over bird and beast, and the knowledge of these. And indeed that pleasure stayed

with him all his life. Seeing him in the high pastures often with a bird of prey

about him, the other children called him Sparrowhawk, and so he came by the

name that he kept in later life as his use-name, when his true-name was not known.

As the witch kept talking of the glory and the riches and the great power over

men that a sorcerer could gain, he set himself to learn more useful lore. He was

very quick at it. The witch praised him and the children of the village began to

fear him, and he himself was sure that very soon he would become great among

men. So he went on from word to word and from spell to spell with the witch till

he was twelve years old and had learned from her a great part of what she knew:

not much, but enough for the witchwife of a small village, and more than enough

for a boy of twelve. She had taught him all her lore in herbals and healing, and all

she knew of the crafts of nding, binding, mending, unsealing and revealing.



What she knew of chanters' tales and the great Deeds she had sung him, and all

the words of the True Speech that she had learned from the sorcerer that taught

her, she taught again to Duny. And from weatherworkers and wandering jugglers

who went from town to town of the Northward Vale and the East Forest he had

learned various tricks and pleasantries, spells of Illusion. It was with one of these

light spells that he first proved the great power that was in him.

In those days the Kargad Empire was strong. Those are four great lands that lie

between the Northern and the Eastern Reaches: Karego-At, Atuan, Hur-at-Hur,

Atnini. The tongue they speak there is not like any spoken in the Archipelago or

the other Reaches, and they are a savage people, white-skinned, yellow-haired,

and fierce, liking the sight of blood and the smell of burning towns. Last year they

had attacked the Torikles and the strong island Torheven, raiding in great force in

fleets of red-sailed ships. News of this came north to Gont, but the Lords of Gont

were busy with their piracy and paid small heed to the woes of other lands.  
Then

Spevy fell to the Kargs and was looted and laid waste, its people taken as  
slaves,

so that even now it is an isle of ruins. In lust of conquest the Kargs sailed  
next to

Gont, coming in a host, thirty great longships, to East Port. They fought  
through

that town, took it, burned it; leaving their ships under guard at the mouth of  
the

River Ar they went up the Vale wrecking and looting, slaughtering cattle and  
men. As they went they split into bands, and each of these bands plundered  
where it chose. Fugitives brought warning to the villages of the heights.  
Soon the

people of Ten Alders saw smoke darken the eastern sky, and that night those  
who

climbed the High Fall looked down on the Vale all hazed and red-streaked  
with

res where elds ready for harvest had been set ablaze, and orchards burned,  
the

fruit roasting on the blazing boughs, and barns and farmhouses smoldered in  
ruin.

Some of the villagers ed up the ravines and hid in the forest, and some made  
ready to ght for their lives, and some did neither but stood about lamenting.

The witch was one who ed, hiding alone in a cave up on the Kapperding Scarp

and sealing the cave-mouth with spells. Duny's father the bronze-smith was one

who stayed, for he would not leave his smelting-pit and forge where he had worked for fty years. All that night he labored beating up what ready metal he

had there into spear-points, and others worked with him binding these to the handles of hoes and rakes, there being no time to make sockets and shaft them

properly. There had been no weapons in the village but hunting bows and short

knives, for the mountain folk of Gont are not warlike; it is not warriors they are

famous for, but goat-thieves, sea-pirates, and wizards.

With sunrise came a thick white fog, as on many autumn mornings in the heights of the island. Among their huts and houses down the straggling street of

Ten Alders the villagers stood waiting with their hunting bows and new-forged

spears, not knowing whether the Kargs might be far off or very near, all silent, all

peering into the fog that hid shapes and distances and dangers from their eyes.

With them was Duny. He had worked all night at the forge-bellows, pushing

and pulling the two long sleeves of goathide that fed the re with a blast of air.

Now his arms so ached and trembled from that work that he could not hold out

the spear he had chosen. He did not see how he could ght or be of any good to

himself or the villagers. It rankled at his heart that he should die, spitted on a Kargish lance, while still a boy: that he should go into the dark land without ever

having known his own name, his true name as a man. He looked down at his thin

arms, wet with cold fog-dew, and raged at his weakness, for he knew his strength.

There was power in him, if he knew how to use it, and he sought among all the

spells he knew for some device that might give him and his companions an advantage, or at least a chance. But need alone is not enough to set power free:

there must be knowledge.

The fog was thinning now under the heat of the sun that shone bare above on the peak in a bright sky. As the mists moved and parted in great drifts and smoky

wisps, the villagers saw a band of warriors coming up the mountain. They were

armored with bronze helmets and greaves and breastplates of heavy leather and

shields of wood and bronze, and armed with swords and the long Kargish lance.

Winding up along the steep bank of the Ar they came in a plumed, clanking, straggling line, near enough already that their white faces could be seen, and the

words of their jargon heard as they shouted to one another. In this band of the

invading horde there were about a hundred men, which is not many; but in the

village were only eighteen men and boys.

Now need called knowledge out: Duny, seeing the fog blow and thin across the

path before the Kargs, saw a spell that might avail him. An old weatherworker of

the Vale, seeking to win the boy as prentice, had taught him several charms. One

of these tricks was called fogweaving, a binding-spell that gathers the mists together for a while in one place; with it one skilled in illusion can shape the mist

into fair ghostly seemings, which last a little and fade away. The boy had no such

skill, but his intent was different, and he had the strength to turn the spell to his

own ends. Rapidly and aloud he named the places and the boundaries of the village, and then spoke the fogweaving charm, but in among its words he enlaced

the words of a spell of concealment, and last he cried the word that set the magic

going.

Even as he did so his father coming up behind him struck him hard on the side

of the head, knocking him right down. "Be still, fool! keep your blattering mouth

shut, and hide if you can't ght!"

Duny got to his feet. He could hear the Kargs now at the end of the village, as

near as the great yew-tree by the tanner's yard. Their voices were clear, and the

clink and creak of their harness and arms, but they could not be seen. The fog

had closed and thickened all over the village, greying the light, blurring the world

till a man could hardly see his own hands before him.

"I've hidden us all," Duny said, sullenly, for his head hurt from his father's blow, and the working of the doubled incantation had drained his strength. "I'll

keep up this fog as long as I can. Get the others to lead them up to High Fall."

The smith stared at his son who stood wraithlike in that weird, dank mist. It took him a minute to see Duny's meaning, but when he did he ran at once, noiselessly, knowing every fence and corner of the village, to find the others and tell them what to do. Now through the grey fog bloomed a blur of red, as the Kargs set fire to the thatch of a house. Still they did not come up into the village, but waited at the lower end till the mist should lift and lay bare their loot and prey.

The tanner, whose house it was that burned, sent a couple of boys skipping right under the Kargs' noses, taunting and yelling and vanishing again like smoke into smoke. Meantime the older men, creeping behind fences and running from house to house, came close on the other side and sent a volley of arrows and spears at the warriors, who stood all in a bunch. One Karg fell writhing with a spear, still warm from its forging, right through his body. Others were arrow-bitten, and all enraged. They charged forward then to hew down their puny attackers, but they found only the fog about them, full of voices. They followed the voices, stabbing ahead into the mist with their great, plumed, bloodstained

lances. Up the length of the street they came shouting, and never knew they had

run right through the village, as the empty huts and houses loomed and

disappeared again in the writhing grey fog. The villagers ran scattering, most of

them keeping well ahead since they knew the ground; but some, boys or old men,

were slow. The Kargs stumbling on them drove their lances or hacked with their

swords, yelling their war-cry, the names of the White Godbrothers of Atuan:

“Wuluah! Atwah!”

Some of the band stopped when they felt the land grow rough underfoot, but

others pressed right on, seeking the phantom village, following dim wavering

shapes that ed just out of reach before them. All the mist had come alive with

these eeting forms, dodging, ickering, fading on every side. One group of the

Kargs chased the wraiths straight to the High Fall, the cliff ’s edge above the

springs of Ar, and the shapes they pursued ran out onto the air and there

vanished in a thinning of the mist, while the pursuers fell screaming through fog

and sudden sunlight a hundred feet sheer to the shallow pools among the rocks.



And those that came behind and did not fall stood at the cliff's edge,  
listening.

Now dread came into the Kargs' hearts and they began to seek one another,  
not the villagers, in the uncanny mist. They gathered on the hillside, and yet  
always there were wraiths and ghost-shapes among them, and other shapes  
that

ran and stabbed from behind with spear or knife and vanished again. The  
Kargs

began to run, all of them, downhill, stumbling, silent, until all at once they  
ran out

from the grey blind mist and saw the river and the ravines below the village  
all

bare and bright in morning sunlight. Then they stopped, gathering together,  
and

looked back. A wall of wavering, writhing grey lay blank across the path,  
hiding

all that lay behind it. Out from it burst two or three stragglers, lunging and  
stumbling along, their long lances rocking on their shoulders. Not one Karg  
looked back more than that once. All went down, in haste, away from the  
enchanted place.

Farther down the Northward Vale those warriors got their fill of fighting. The  
towns of the East Forest, from Ovark to the coast, had gathered their men  
and

sent them against the invaders of Gont. Band after band they came down from the

hills, and that day and the next the Kargs were harried back down to the beaches

above East Port, where they found their ships burnt; so they fought with their backs to the sea till every man of them was killed, and the sands of Armouth were

brown with blood until the tide came in.

But on that morning in Ten Alders village and up on the High Fall, the dank grey fog had clung a while, and then suddenly it blew and drifted and melted away. This man and that stood up in the windy brightness of the morning, and

looked about him wondering. Here lay a dead Karg with yellow hair long, loose,

and bloody; there lay the village tanner, killed in battle like a king.

Down in the village the house that had been set a re still blazed. They ran to put the re out, since their battle had been won. In the street, near the great yew,

they found Duny the bronze-smith's son standing by himself, bearing no hurt,

but speechless and stupid like one stunned. They were well aware of what he had

done, and they led him into his father's house and went calling for the witch to

come down out of her cave and heal the lad who had saved their lives and their

property, all but four who were killed by the Kargs, and the one house that was

burnt.

No weapon-hurt had come to the boy, but he would not speak nor eat nor

sleep; he seemed not to hear what was said to him, not to see those who came to

see him. There was none in those parts wizard enough to cure what ailed him.

His aunt said, "He has over-spent his power," but she had no art to help him.

While he lay thus dark and dumb, the story of the lad who wove the fog and scared off Kargish swordsmen with a mess of shadows was told all down the Northward Vale, and in the East Forest, and high on the mountain and over the

mountain even in the Great Port of Gont. So it happened that on the fth day after the slaughter at Armouth a stranger came into Ten Alders village, a man

neither young nor old, who came cloaked and bareheaded, lightly carrying a great

staff of oak that was as tall as himself. He did not come up the course of the Ar

like most people, but down, out of the forests of the higher mountainside. The

village goodwives saw well that he was a wizard, and when he told them that he

was a healer, they brought him straight to the smith's house. Sending away all but

the boy's father and aunt the stranger stooped above the cot where Duny lay staring into the dark, and did no more than lay his hand on the boy's forehead

and touch his lips once.

Duny sat up slowly looking about him. In a little while he spoke, and strength

and hunger began to come back into him. They gave him a little to drink and eat,

and he lay back again, always watching the stranger with dark wondering eyes.

The bronze-smith said to that stranger, "You are no common man."

"Nor will this boy be a common man," the other answered. "The tale of his deed with the fog has come to Re Albi, which is my home. I have come here to

give him his name, if as they say he has not yet made his passage into manhood."

The witch whispered to the smith, "Brother, this must surely be the Mage of Re Albi, Ogion the Silent, that one who tamed the earthquake—"

"Sir," said the bronze-smith who would not let a great name daunt him, "my

son will be thirteen this month coming, but we thought to hold his Passage at the

feast of Sunreturn this winter.”

“Let him be named as soon as may be,” said the mage, “for he needs his name.

I have other business now, but I will come back here for the day you choose. If

you see t I will take him with me when I go thereafter. And if he prove apt I will

keep him as prentice, or see to it that he is schooled as ts his gifts. For to keep

dark the mind of the mageborn, that is a dangerous thing.”

Very gently Ogion spoke, but with certainty, and even the hardheaded smith assented to all he said.

On the day the boy was thirteen years old, a day in the early splendor of autumn while still the bright leaves are on the trees, Ogion returned to the village

from his rovings over Gont Mountain, and the ceremony of Passage was held.

The witch took from the boy his name Duny, the name his mother had given him

as a baby. Nameless and naked he walked into the cold springs of the Ar where it

rises among rocks under the high cliffs. As he entered the water clouds crossed

the sun's face and great shadows slid and mingled over the water of the pool about him. He crossed to the far bank, shuddering with cold but walking slow

and erect as he should through that icy, living water. As he came to the bank Ogion, waiting, reached out his hand and clasping the boy's arm whispered to

him his true name: Ged.

Thus was he given his name by one very wise in the uses of power.

The feasting was far from over, and all the villagers were making merry with plenty to eat and beer to drink and a chanter from down the Vale singing the *Deed*

*of the Dragonlords*, when the mage spoke in his quiet voice to Ged: "Come, lad.

Bid your people farewell and leave them feasting."

Ged fetched what he had to carry, which was the good bronze knife his father

had forged him, and a leather coat the tanner's widow had cut down to his size,

and an alder-stick his aunt had becharmed for him: that was all he owned besides

his shirt and breeches. He said farewell to them, all the people he knew in all the

world, and looked about once at the village that straggled and huddled there under the cliffs, over the riversprings. Then he set off with his new master

through the steep slanting forests of the mountain isle, through the leaves and

shadows of bright autumn.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE SHADOW

Ged had thought that as the prentice of a great mage he would enter at once into

the mystery and mastery of power. He would understand the language of the

beasts and the speech of the leaves of the forest, he thought, and sway the winds

with his word, and learn to change himself into any shape he wished. Maybe he

and his master would run together as stags, or fly to Re Albi over the mountain on

the wings of eagles.

But it was not so at all. They wandered, first down into the Vale and then

gradually south and westward around the mountain, given lodging in little

villages or spending the night out in the wilderness, like poor journeyman-

sorcerers, or tinkers, or beggars. They entered no mysterious domain.

Nothing

happened. The mage's oaken staff that Ged had watched at first with eager dread

was nothing but a stout staff to walk with. Three days went by and four days went

by and still Ogion had not spoken a single charm in Ged's hearing, and had not

taught him a single name or rune or spell.

Though a very silent man he was so mild and calm that Ged soon lost his awe

of him, and in a day or two more he was bold enough to ask his master, "When

will my apprenticeship begin, Sir?"

"It has begun," said Ogion.

There was a silence, as if Ged was keeping back something he had to say. Then

he said it: "But I haven't learned anything yet!"

"Because you haven't found out what I am teaching," replied the mage, going

on at his steady, long-legged pace along their road, which was the high pass

between Ovark and Wiss. He was a dark man, like most Gontishmen, dark

copper-brown; grey-haired, lean and tough as a hound, tireless. He spoke

seldom, ate little, slept less. His eyes and ears were very keen, and often there was

a listening look on his face.

Ged did not answer him. It is not always easy to answer a mage.

"You want to work spells," Ogion said presently, striding along. "You've drawn



too much water from that well. Wait. Manhood is patience. Mastery is nine times

patience. What is that herb by the path?"

"Straw ower."

"And that?"

"I don't know."

"Fourfoil, they call it." Ogion had halted, the coppershod foot of his staff near

the little weed, so Ged looked closely at the plant, and plucked a dry seedpod from it, and nally asked, since Ogion said nothing more, "What is its use, Master?"

"None I know of."

Ged kept the seedpod a while as they went on, then tossed it away.

"When you know the fourfoil in all its seasons root and leaf and ower, by sight and scent and seed, then you may learn its true name, knowing its being:

which is more than its use. What, after all, is the use of you? or of myself? Is Gont

Mountain useful, or the Open Sea?" Ogion went on a half mile or so, and said at

last, "To hear, one must be silent."

The boy frowned. He did not like to be made to feel a fool. He kept back his resentment and impatience, and tried to be obedient, so that Ogion would

consent at last to teach him something. For he hungered to learn, to gain power. It

began to seem to him, though, that he could have learned more walking with any

herb-gatherer or village sorcerer, and as they went round the mountain westward

into the lonely forests past Wiss he wondered more and more what was the greatness and the magic of this great Mage Ogion. For when it rained Ogion would not even say the spell that every weatherworker knows, to send the storm

aside. In a land where sorcerers come thick, like Gont or the Enlades, you may

see a raincloud blundering slowly from side to side and place to place as one spell

shunts it on to the next, till at last it is buffeted out over the sea where it can rain

in peace. But Ogion let the rain fall where it would. He found a thick r-tree and

lay down beneath it. Ged crouched among the dripping bushes wet and sullen,

and wondered what was the good of having power if you were too wise to use it,

and wished he had gone as prentice to that old weatherworker of the Vale, where

at least he would have slept dry. He did not speak any of his thoughts aloud. He