

CLIVE BARKER

ABARAT

DAYS OF MAGIC
NIGHTS OF WAR



J O A N N A C O T L E R B O O K S

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Abarat; Days of Magic, Nights of War

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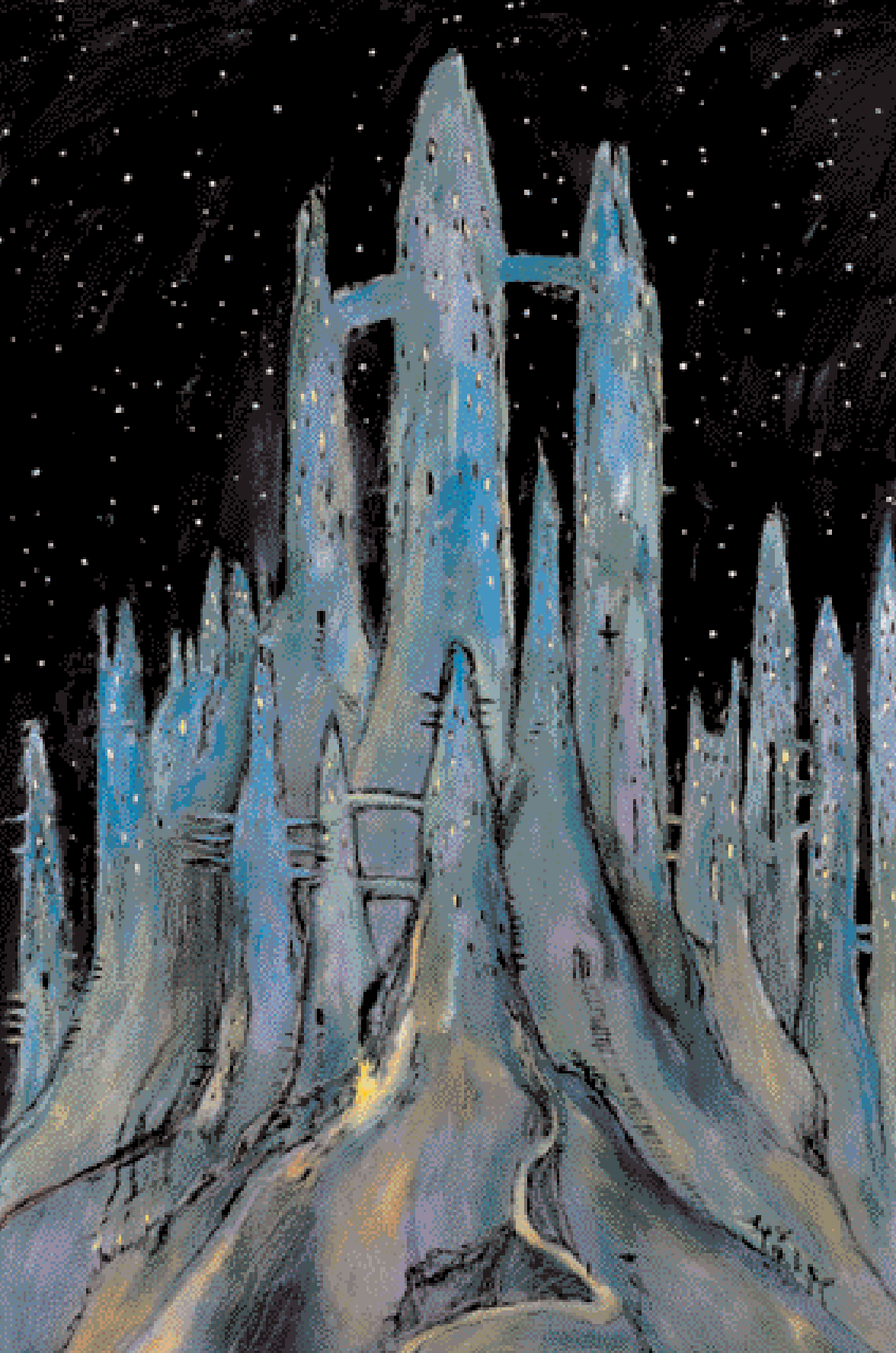
PROLOGUE

HUNGER



*Here is a list of fearful things:
The jaws of sharks, a vulture's wings,
The rabid bite of the dogs of war,
The voice of one who went before.
But most of all the mirror's gaze,
Which counts us out our numbered days.*

—Righteous Bandy,
the nomad Poet of Abarat





OTTO HOULIHAN SAT IN the dark room and listened to the two creatures who had brought him here—a three-eyed thing by the name of Lazaru and its sidekick, Baby Pink-Eye—playing Knock the Devil Down in the corner. After their twenty-second game his nervousness and irritation began to get the better of him.

“How much longer am I going to have to wait?” he asked them.

Baby Pink-Eye, who had large reptilian claws and the face of a demented infant, puffed on a blue cigar and blew a cloud of acrid smoke in Houlihan’s direction.

“They call you the Criss-Cross Man, don’t they?” he said.

Houlihan nodded, giving Pink-Eye his coldest gaze, the kind of gaze that usually made men weak with fear. The creature was unimpressed.

“Think you’re scary, do you?” he said. “Ha! This is Gorgossium, Criss-Cross Man. This is the island of the Midnight Hour. Every dark, unthinkable thing that has ever happened at the dead of night has happened right here. So don’t try scaring me. You’re wasting your time.”

“I just asked—”

“Yes, yes, we heard you,” said Lazaru, the eye in the middle of her forehead rolling back and forth in a very unsettling fashion. “You’ll have to be patient. The Lord of Midnight will see you when he’s ready to see you.”

“Got some urgent news for him, have you?” said Baby Pink-Eye.

“That’s between him and me.”

"I warn you, he doesn't like bad news," said Lazaru. "He gets in a fury, doesn't he, Pink-Eye?"

"Crazy is what he gets! Tears people apart with his bare hands."

They glanced conspiratorially at each other. Houlihan said nothing. They were just trying to frighten him, and it wouldn't work. He got up and went to the narrow window, looking out onto the tumorous landscape of the Midnight Island, phosphorescent with corruption. This much of what Baby Pink-Eye had said was true: Gorgossium *was* a place of terrors. He could see the glistening



forms of countless monsters as they moved through the littered landscape; he could smell spicy-sweet incense rising from the mausoleums in the mist-shrouded cemetery; he could hear the shrill din of drills from the mines where the mud that filled Midnight's armies of stitchlings was produced. Though he wasn't going to let Lazaru or Pink-Eye see his unease, he would be glad when he'd made his report and he could leave for less terrifying places.

There was some murmuring behind him, and a moment later Lazaru announced: "The Prince of Midnight is ready to see you."

Houlihan turned from the window to see that the door on the far side of the chamber was open and Baby Pink-Eye was gesturing for him to step through it.

"Hurry, hurry," the infant said.

Houlihan went to the door and stood on the threshold. Out of the darkness of the room came the voice of Christopher Carrion, deep and joyless.

"Enter, enter. You're just in time to watch the feeding."

Houlihan followed the sound of Carrion's voice. There was a flickering in the darkness, which grew more intense by degrees, and as it brightened he saw the Lord of Midnight standing perhaps ten yards from him. He was dressed in gray robes and was wearing gloves that looked as though they were made of fine chain mail.

"Not many people get to see this, Criss-Cross Man. My nightmares are hungry, so I'm going to feed them." Houlihan shuddered. "*Watch*, man! Don't stare at the floor."

Reluctantly, the Criss-Cross Man raised his eyes. The nightmares Carrion had spoken of were swimming in a blue fluid, which all but filled a high transparent collar around Carrion's head. Two pipes emerged from the base of the Lord of Midnight's skull, and it was through these that the nightmares had emerged, swimming directly out of Carrion's skull. They were barely more than long threads of light; but there was something about their restless motion, the way they roved the collar, sometimes touching Carrion's face, more often pressing against the glass, that spoke of their hunger.

Carrion reached up into the collar. One of the nightmares made a quick motion, like a striking snake, and delivered itself into its creator's hand. Carrion lifted it out of the fluid and studied it with a curious tenderness.

"It doesn't look like much, does it?" Carrion said. Houlihan didn't comment. He just wanted Carrion to keep the thing away from him. "But when these things are coiled in my brain they show me such delicious horrors." The nightmare writhed around in Carrion's hand, letting out a thin, high-pitched squeal. "So every now and then I reward them with a nice fat meal of fear. They love fear. And it's hard for me to feel much of it these days. I've seen too many horrors in my time. So I provide them with someone who *will* feel fear."

So saying, he let the nightmare go. It slithered out of his grip, hitting the stone floor. It knew exactly where it was going. It wove across the ground, flickering with excitement, the light out of its thin form illuminating its victim: a large, bearded man squatted against the wall.

"Mercy, my Lord . . ." he sobbed. "I'm just a Todo miner."

"Oh, now be quiet," Carrion said as though he were speaking to a troublesome child. "Look, you have a visitor."

He turned and pointed to the ground where the nightmare slithered. Then, without waiting to see what happened next, he turned and approached Houlihan.

"So, now," he said. "Tell me about the girl."

Thoroughly unnerved by the fact that the nightmare was loose and might at any moment turn on him, Houlihan fumbled for words: "Oh yes . . . yes . . . the girl. She escaped me in Ninnyhammer. Along with a geshrat called Malingo. Now they're traveling together. And I got close to them again on Soma Plume. But she slipped away among some pilgrim monks."

"So she's escaped you twice? I expect better."

"She has power in her," Houlihan said by way of self-justification.

"Does she indeed?" Carrion said. As he spoke he carefully lifted



a second nightmare out of his collar. It spat and hissed. Directing it toward the man in the corner, he let the creature go from his hands, and it wove away to be with its companion. “She must at all costs be apprehended, Otto,” Carrion went on. “Do you understand me? *At all costs*. I want to meet her. More than that. *I want to understand her.*”

“How will you do that, Lord?”

“By finding out what’s ticking away in that human head of hers.

By reading her *dreams*, for one thing. Which reminds me . . . *Lazaru!*”

While he waited for his servant to appear at the door, Carrion brought out yet another nightmare from his collar and loosed it. Houlihan watched as it went to join the others. They had come very close to the man, but had not yet struck. They seemed to be waiting for a word from their master.

The miner was still begging. Indeed he had not ceased begging throughout the entire conversation between Carrion and Houlihan. “Please, Lord,” he kept saying. “What have I done to deserve this?”

Carrion finally replied to him. “You’ve done nothing,” he said. “I just picked you out of the crowd today because you were bullying one of your brother miners.” He glanced back at his victim. “There’s always fear in men who are cruel to other men.” Then he looked away again, while the nightmares waited, their tails lashing in anticipation. “Where’s Lazaru?” Carrion said.

“Here.”

“Find me the dreaming device. You know the one.”

“Of course.”

“Clean it up. I’m going to need it when the Criss-Cross Man has done his work.” His gaze shifted toward Houlihan. “As for you,” he said. “Get the chase over with.”

“Yes, Lord.”

“Capture Candy Quackenbush and bring her to me. Alive.”

“I won’t fail you.”

“You’d better not. If you do, Houlihan, then the next man sitting in that corner will be *you*.” He whispered some words in Old Abaratian. “*Thakram noosa rah. Haaas!*”

This was the instruction the nightmares had been waiting for. In a heartbeat they attacked. The man struggled to keep them from climbing up his body, but it was a lost cause. Once they reached his neck they proceeded to wrap their flickering lengths around his head, as though to mummify him. They partially muffled his cries a little, but he could still be heard, his appeals for mercy from

Carrion deteriorating into shrieks and screams. As his terror mounted the nightmares grew fatter, giving off brighter and brighter flashes of sickly luminescence as they were nourished. The man continued to kick and struggle for a while, but soon his shrieks declined into sobs and finally even the sobs ceased. So, at last, did his struggle.

“Oh, that’s a disappointment,” Carrion said, kicking the man’s foot to confirm that fear had indeed killed him. “I thought he’d last longer than that.”

He spoke again in the old language, and—nourished, now, and slothful—the nightmares unknotted themselves from around their victim’s head and began to return to Carrion. Houlihan couldn’t help but retreat a step or two in case the nightmares mistook him for another source of food.

“Go on, then,” Carrion said to him. “You’ve got work to do. *Find me Candy Quackenbush!*”

“It’s as good as done,” Houlihan replied, and without looking back, even a glance, he hurried away from the chamber of terrors and down the stairs of the Twelfth Tower.



PART ONE

FREAKS, FOOLS AND FUGITIVES

Nothing

After a battle lasting many ages,

The Devil won,

And he said to God

(who had been his Maker):

“Lord,

We are about to witness the unmaking of Creation

By my hand.

I would not wish you

to think me cruel,

So I beg you, take three things

From this world before I destroy it.

Three things, and then the rest will be

wiped away.”

God thought for a little time.

And at last He said:

“No, there is nothing.”

The Devil was surprised.

“Not even you, Lord?” *he said.*

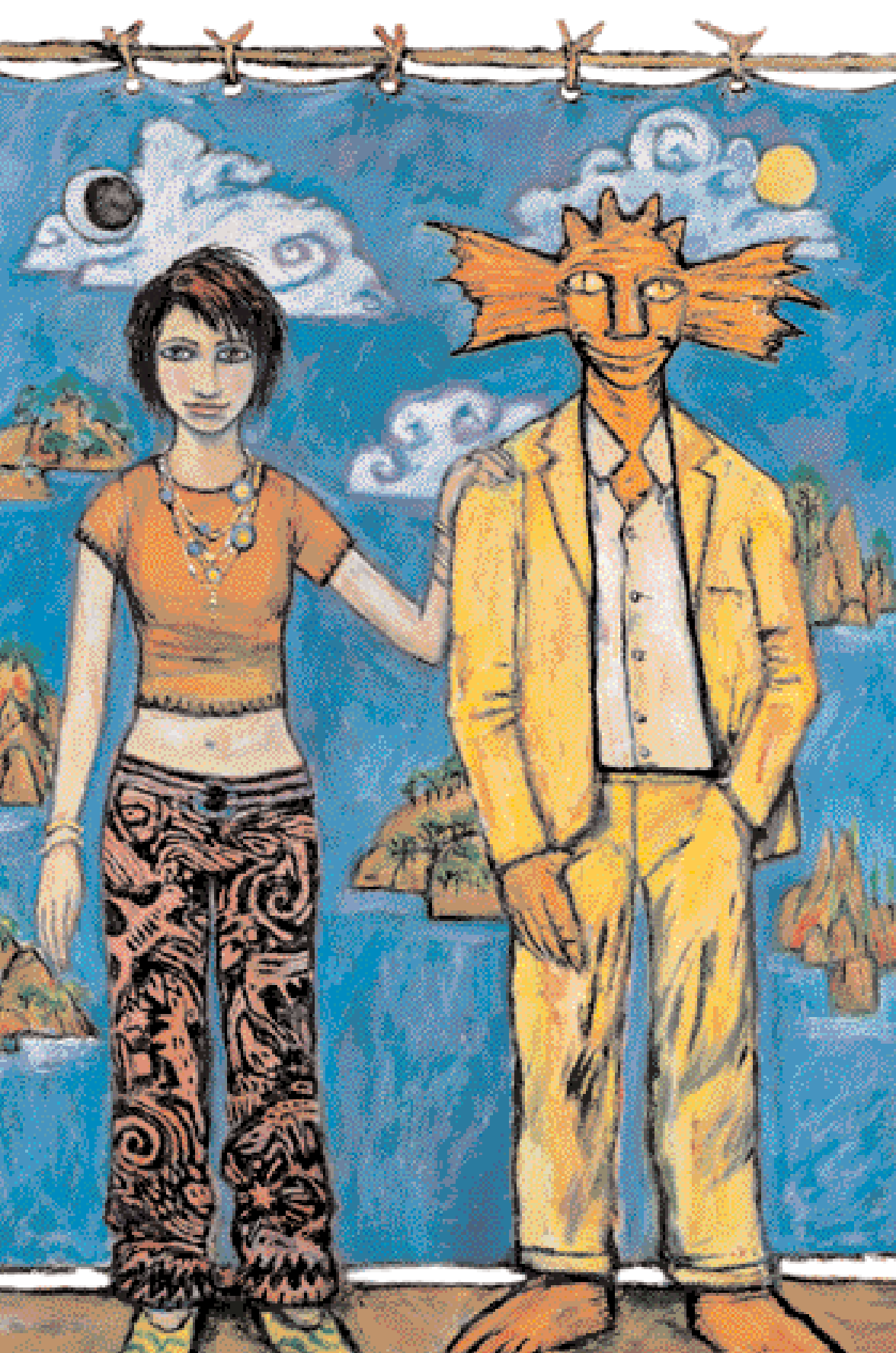
And God said:

“No. Not even me.”

—From *Memories of the World's End*

Author unknown

(Christopher Carrion's favorite poem)



PORTRAIT OF GIRL AND GESHRAT

“**L**ET’S GET OUR PHOTOGRAPH taken,” Candy said to Malingo. They were walking down a street in Tazmagor, where—this being on the island of Qualm Hah—it was Nine O’clock in the Morning. The Tazmagorian market was in full swing, and in the middle of all this buying and selling a photographer called Guumat had set up a makeshift studio. He’d hung a crudely painted back-cloth from a couple of poles and set his camera, a massive device mounted on a polished wood tripod, in front of it. His assistant, a youth who shared his father’s coxcomb hair and lightly striped blue-and-black skin, was parading a board on which examples of Guumat the Elder’s photos were pinned.

“You like to be pictured by the great Guumat?” the youth said to Malingo. “He make you look real good.”

Malingo grinned. “How much?”

“Two paterzem,” said the father, gently pressing his offspring aside so as to close the sale.

“For both of us?” Candy said.

“One picture, same price. Two paterzem.”

“We can afford that,” Candy said to Malingo.

“Maybe you like costumes. Hats?” Guumat asked them, glancing at them up and down. “No extra cost.”

“He’s politely telling us we look like vagabonds,” Malingo said.

“Well, we *are* vagabonds,” Candy replied.

Hearing this, Guumat looked suspicious. “You can pay?” he said.

"Yes, of course," said Candy, and dug in the pocket of her brightly patterned trousers, held up with a belt of woven biffel-reeds, and pulled out some coins, sorting through them to give Guumat the paterzem.

"Good! Good!" he said. "Jamjam! Get the young lady a mirror. How old are you?"

"Almost sixteen, why?"

"You wear something much more ladylike, huh? We got nice things. Like I say, no extra charge."

"I'm fine. Thank you. I want to remember this the way it really was." She smiled at Malingo. "Two wanderers in Tazmagor, tired but happy."

"That's what you want, that's what I give you," Guumat said.

Jamjam handed her a little mirror and Candy consulted her reflection. She was a mess, no doubt about it. She'd cut her hair very short a couple of weeks before so she could hide from Houlihan among some monks on Soma Plume, but the haircut had been very hurried, and it was growing out at all angles.

"You look fine," Malingo said.

"So do you. Here, see for yourself."

She handed him the mirror. Her friends back in Chickentown would have thought Malingo's face—with his deep orange hide and the fans of leathery skin to either side of his head—fit only for Halloween. But in the time they'd been traveling together through the islands, Candy had come to love the soul inside that skin: tenderhearted and brave.

Guumat arranged them in front of his camera.

"You need to stand very, very still," he instructed them. "If you move, you'll be blurred in the picture. So, now let me get the camera ready. Give me a minute or two."

"What made you want a photograph?" Malingo said from the corner of his mouth.

"Just to have. So I won't forget anything."

"As if," said Malingo.

"Please," said Guumat. "Be very still. I have to focus."

Candy and Malingo were silent for a moment.

"What are you thinking about?" Malingo murmured.

"Being on Yzil, at Noon."

"Oh yes. That's something we're sure to remember."

"Especially seeing *her* . . ."

"The Princess Breath."



Now, without Guumat requesting it, they both fell silent for a long moment, remembering their brief encounter with the Goddess on the Noon-Day island of Yzil. Candy had seen her first: a pale, beautiful woman in red and orange standing in a patch of warm light, *breathing out* a living creature, a purplish squid. This, it was said, was the means by which most of the species in the Abarat had been brought into Creation. They had been breathed out by the Creatrix, who had then let the soft wind that constantly blew through the trees and vines of Yzil claim the newborn from her arms and carry them off to the sea.

"That was the most amazing—"

"I'm ready!" Guumat announced from beneath the black cloth he'd ducked under. "On the count of three we take the picture. One! Two! Three! Hold it! Don't move! Don't move! *Seven seconds.*" He lifted his head out from under the cloth and consulted his stopwatch. "Six. Five. Four. Three. Two. One. That's it!" Guumat slipped a plate into his camera to stop the exposure. "Picture taken! Now we have to wait a few minutes while I prepare a print for you."

"No problem," Candy said.

"Are you going down to the ferry?" Jamjam asked her.

"Yes," said Candy.

"You look like you've been on the move."

"Oh, we have," said Malingo. "We've seen a lot in the last few weeks, traveling around."

"I'm jealous. I've never left Qualm Hah. I'd love to go adventuring."

A minute later Jamjam's father appeared with the photograph, which was still wet. "I can sell you a very nice frame, very cheap."

"No, thanks," said Candy. "It's fine like this."

She and Malingo looked at the photograph. The colors weren't quite true, but Guumat caught them looking like a pair of happy tourists, with their brightly colored, rumpled clothes, so they were quite happy.

Photograph in hand, they headed down the steep hill to the harbor and the ferry.

"You know, I've been thinking . . ." Candy said as they made their way through the crowd.

"Uh-oh."

"Seeing the Princess Breath made me want to *learn* more. About magic."

"No, Candy."

"Come on, Malingo! Teach me. You know all about conjurations—"

"A little. Just a little."

"It's more than a little. You told me once that you spent every hour that Wolfswinkel was asleep studying his grimoires and his treatises."

The subject of the wizard Wolfswinkel wasn't often raised between them: the memories were so painful for Malingo. He'd been sold into slavery as a child (by his own father), and his life as Wolfswinkel's possession had been an endless round of beatings and humiliations. It had only been Candy's arrival at the wizard's house that had given him the opportunity to finally escape his enslavement.

"Magic can be dangerous," Malingo said. "There are laws and rules. Suppose I teach you the wrong things and we start to unknit the fabric of time and space? Don't laugh! It's possible. I read in one of Wolfswinkel's books that magic was the beginning of the world. It could be the end too."

Candy looked irritated.

"Don't be cross," Malingo said. "I just don't have the right to teach you things that I don't really understand myself."

Candy walked for a while in silence. "Okay," she said finally.

Malingo cast Candy a sideways glance. "Are we still friends?" he said.

She looked up at him and smiled. "Of course," she said. "Always."