

Please note: what follows is not all one sequence. There's a lot more in each chapter than shown in the sample extracts here. Only the early chapters are shown.

From chapter one.

"What's that ugly thing you're wearing?" asked Tom.

Charley grasped the pendant she was wearing. The hanging jewel was carved with an impish face.

"Aunt Ammy gave it to me years ago. I thought it was the kind of thing to wear for a séance."

"I should think it is," said Robbie. "It's pretty gruesome. Maybe it will attract a ghost."

They held hands and all three took a deep breath. They were silent for a minute, then Charley said, "You don't think... you don't think we might make contact with my mother or father?"

They all peered at the glass, and it was true. There was a light, faint but clear. It was not from the candles for they were in another part of the room and the children's bodies shielded their light from the glass. But they didn't turn around to see what it was. They were all a little afraid.

Suddenly, they were startled by a voice that seemed to be inside the room, though there was no one else there. It had an odd, distant quality.

"Who are you? I c-can see you..." It spoke in English, which the others spoke fluently, as fluently as their own native language.

Tom yelled. The others turned around sharply, and the glass tumbler went clattering across the floor. The voice continued.

"...C-can't you see me? C-can't you hear me?"

.... A little later

Robbie's head spun quickly, peering first at his cousin then at the boy in the mirror. She turned and stared into the mirror, wondering what it was he saw – and stepped back in surprise. The boy in the mirror smiled, seemingly amused at this. Before, the light in that other room had been too faint to see him very clearly.

Now they were up close to the mirror, she could see the boy's face as plain as anything. It was a face she was very familiar with. It was the face she saw every day in the bathroom mirror when she washed, and her dressing-table mirror when she brushed her hair.

She was looking at her own self or rather herself if she cut her hair like a boy and wore a waistcoat and knickerbockers.

She was looking at her twin, but a boy twin. It was weird: like looking at your own reflection, but a reflection which showed a different version of yourself.

From chapter two

Now, Charley pressed close to the mirror and without thinking, placed her hands on it... and so did Charles. For a moment, the mirror was smooth and solid. She stared into his eyes.

As she did, she felt sympathy for this boy who was so strange, yet like her in many ways. Her pendant tingled at her chest and the glass seemed to melt away. Their hands touched. She pushed against his hands, not quite believing they were real.

Then she felt a sudden shock. Charles must have felt it too for he pulled back and Charley, pushing against him, found herself falling into the mirror – really falling, for the next moment she found herself staggering into the other room.

She had gone through the mirror, feeling no resistance except a sensation like a sudden rush of freezing wind. Charles stared at her with an expression that astonishment was too weak a word for.

From chapter three

She jumped out of bed, telling herself it was at least something to do since she couldn't sleep. She found the box and took the pendant from around her neck. As it hung there, just in front of her eyes, she seemed to see a glowing, twisting shape.

It appeared to be in the room yet not in the room, as if she was seeing into a somewhere else, like when she'd seen Charles's world in the mirror. Within it she saw – close, yet far away at the same time – glimpses of strange objects.

A golden sphere, an ivory wand and an ancient leather-bound tome, open, with glowing letters burning in it. She felt a tingling in her skin, as if a flame of powerful magic was shining on her.

The vision slowly faded in the dimly lit room. Then it was gone, leaving only a memory and a faint tingling as if the magic was still filtering into the room. Yet she had seen something else.

A face, so dim and distant she hadn't noticed it at first. She thought at first it had been some strange reflection of her own face but now she knew she was wrong. It had been Charles. Did that weird thing connect to his world? Selena meowed at her.

.... Later....

"I don't see how you can be starving while you're munching all the biscuits in the house. Bethan and I will need the afternoon to alter the costumes to fit everybody, so in you go now and be measured.

It won't take long and then you can have lunch. It will be a light lunch – and a light tea later. There'll be plenty to eat at the party. You can make pigs of yourselves then. In fact, I think I'll have you all dressed up as pigs."

Tom, who had believed Amrita really meant to do this, was relieved to see that there were no animal costumes when they went in to be measured. There were historical costumes, like knights and outlaws, wizards and witches, highwaymen and pirates, princesses and princes.

Few of the costumes were designed for girls, but they knew most of the girls invited would rather be pirates than princesses. The children felt a bit of a thrill on first seeing the costumes, all professionally made and looking like the real thing, though child sized.

But they fairly glowered when they saw the costumes that had been selected for them.

"Beggars!" Robbie looked in disgust at the ragged shirt and trousers selected for him.

“You boys are to be old-time street urchins.

This is for you, Charley.” Bethan held up a shirt and waistcoat, then a pair of knickerbockers. Charley was horrified.

“What are you bothered about, Charley?” Robbie said. “At least you won’t look like a ragamuffin, like us.”

Charley bit her tongue. She didn’t like the costume but that wasn’t why she was upset. Perhaps the boys hadn’t seen Charles as clearly as she had, but her costume was exactly the same as the clothes Charles had been wearing in the mirror world. It was a strange and unnerving coincidence.

Chapter Four

Charley’s hands shook. She felt as if there was no air in the room, for she could hardly breathe. Robbie looked at her anxiously. “Charley...” he began.

But Charley rushed out of the room, fighting back tears.

She hardly heard or saw anything until she found herself in her bedroom upstairs. She flung herself on her bed and stared up at the ceiling, feeling utterly miserable. Then she heard scratching, followed by a plaintive mewling. She sat up and rubbed her eyes.

“Selena! I forgot all about you.”

Then she picked up Selena to stroke her, cuddling her in her arms. The warm little body nudging against her, purring, gave Charley some feeling of comfort and she began to feel calmer.

“I’m responsible for you, Selena. It was me who brought you here and I’ve got get you back, somehow. I don’t know if I can help poor Charles but at least if I returned you to him, he’d have some company.”

Chapter Six

Charley was furious. Her parents had never in her life struck her. Even her outrageous aunt never did that. Missing out on treats or doing extra chores was the worst that ever happened if you misbehaved.

Yet this horrible man who had nothing to do with her had hit her hard and painfully and was shoving her up the corridor. She bit her lip and tried to keep her temper. She realised what had happened.

He thinks I’m Charles because I’m dressed like a boy. I can’t let on – he mustn’t know there are two of us!

“Ouch!”

Charley was slammed against a door, then pulled back. Charles’s uncle opened the door and shoved her inside. She staggered across the floor, barely managing to keep to her feet.

The door slammed shut and she heard a key turn in the lock. A loud voice called through the door.

“There! You won’t get out now. I think I’ll keep you locked in until after lunch. Perhaps missing some meals will learn you!”

His footsteps clumped off down the corridor.

Later...

She signalled Charles to stay then stepped out and moved towards the mirror, keeping close to the desk.

“Hsst! Listen!”

Charley felt the cat rub against her ankles.

“Don’t look down... look at the table beside the mirror.”

The wizard seemed not to have heard. Charley glanced over with the slightest movement of her head. It was a folding table, lying flush against the wall. On top of it was a large, folded cloth: a tablecloth. She realised immediately why Selena had brought it to her attention.

Then that harsh, cold voice called out again.

“What is the matter, child! Cat got your tongue?”

Charley had never heard of cold laughter but the wizard’s laugh at his own joke felt like icy rain on her skin. She looked straight at him now.

There was a feeling of great power about him, which made it hard to look into his eyes. Charley fought the urge to look away and she kept her gaze firmly on him, determined not to back down. The wizard laughed again, a shorter laugh but surprisingly almost warm.

Chapter Seven

She took three deep breaths, then grasped the cat by the neck and stared into its eyes. Amrita’s head relaxed, her hands dropped, and she stared blindly ahead. Selena stood up, suddenly alert, and looked around. The collar-bell tinkled as she meowed.

“Ah, success!”

Robbie and Tom jumped. Even Bethan, who’d had an inkling of what Amrita had planned, was surprised. She hadn’t expected the cat to be able to talk (though it was a funny kind of talking). The Major merely raised an eyebrow. An odd, whining sound, felt more than heard, issued from the mirror.

“Something’s interfering with the enchantment. I must be quick – stand back everyone.”

Even as she spoke, Selena-Amrita leapt from the table to the mirror.

Chapter 8

The man himself, though unshaven and red-faced, was not really dirty the way a tramp would be. He was an honest citizen, but a very drunk one. They could smell the alcohol on his breath even from several yards distance. He staggered over to them and stared at Selena.

“Tha’s a very good trick! Very good. Ventri-li-li-loquism.”

The cat stared at him, then spoke.

“Could we borrow that handkerchief sticking out from your pocket?”

“Wonderful! Do it again!”

“No, please! The boy here has hurt his ankle and we could use it as a bandage.”

The man turned to Charley and then Charles. Despite his fuddled brain, he realised by the way he was leaning against the railing that Charles was injured. He bowed, bowed so low Charley was afraid he would topple over, and presented the handkerchief to her.

“Thank you”

Chapter 9

Charles asked, in a puzzled voice,

“Does a magician live here? Will he put a spell on us if he finds us here?”

“No,” said Selena. “Your world is like ours – a great deal of magic is lost. Many of these old magical artefacts are owned by people who don’t realise there is still power in them. To them they are just valuable antiques.”

“I can feel it now,” said Charley. “The mirror’s that way.”

The mirror was in what Charles called a ‘withdrawing room’. There were quite a few valuable looking objects about the room: statuettes, silver ornaments and the like. The mirror was obviously here as a rare and valuable object to be admired, rather than used for its everyday purpose.

“Don’t light any lamps or candles!” Selena hissed. “Those creatures will find us soon enough without us attracting attention to ourselves.”

“That’s fine for you,” said Charles. “You’ve got cat’s eyes.”