

ARTEZANS

THE FORGOTTEN MAGIC

ALSO BY L. D. LAPINSKI

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ARTEZANS

THE FORGOTTEN MAGIC



L. D. LAPINSKI

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This book is for Isobel

named for a witch
and just as powerful







Author's Note

In Edward and Elodie's world, people who can use magic are called Artezans. This comes from the combining of two existing words: artisan and artesian, and the introduction of the letter Z.

Artisan

One who is a skilled craftsperson

Artesian

A spring or well that flows upwards

Z

From the Phoenician *zayin*, meaning *weapon*

Artezan

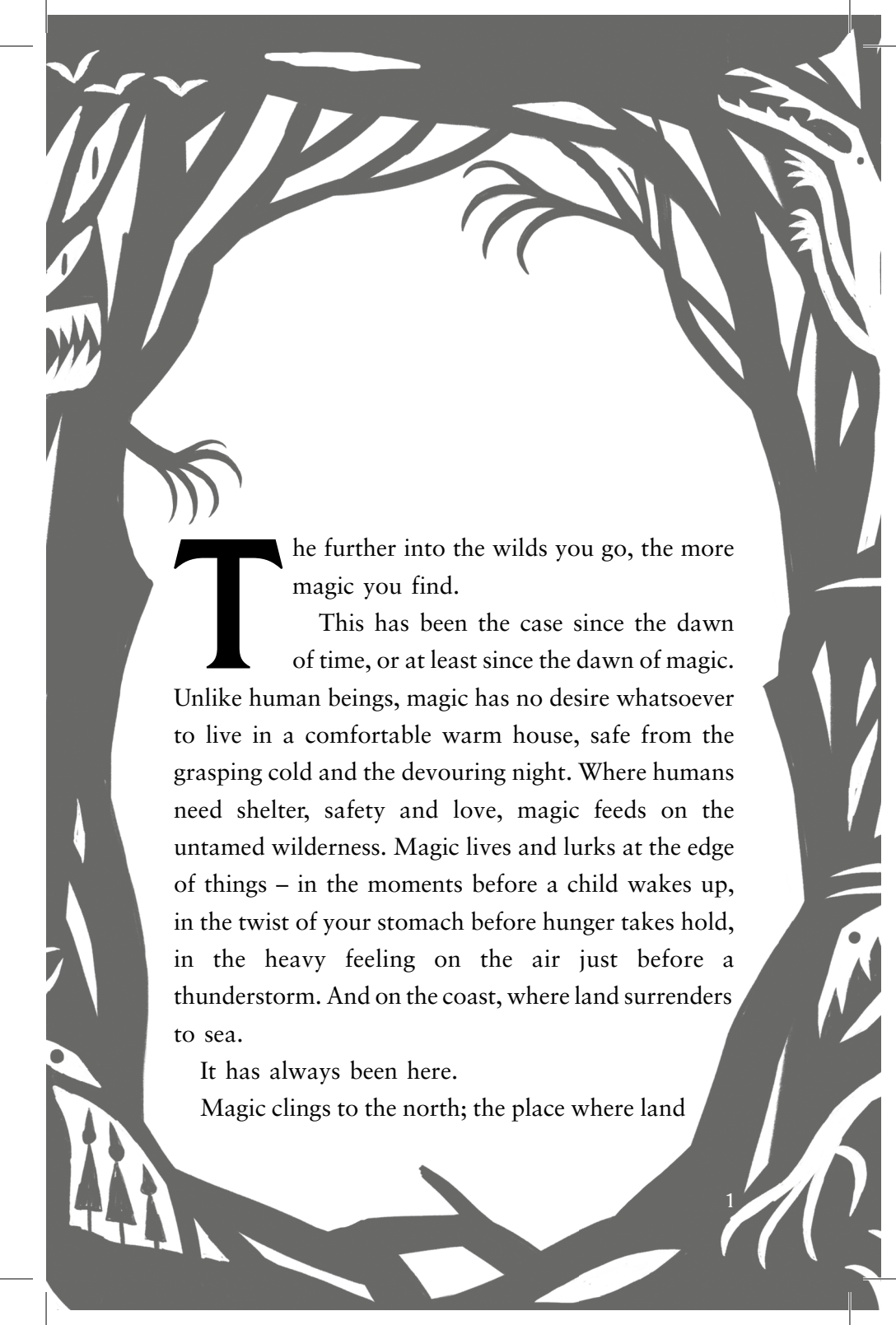
One who can wield the magic
that flows through them



When shall we three meet again?
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?
 When the hurly-burly's done,
When the battle's lost and won.

The Scottish Play
Macbeth, Act One, Scene One
William Shakespeare





The further into the wilds you go, the more magic you find.

This has been the case since the dawn of time, or at least since the dawn of magic. Unlike human beings, magic has no desire whatsoever to live in a comfortable warm house, safe from the grasping cold and the devouring night. Where humans need shelter, safety and love, magic feeds on the untamed wilderness. Magic lives and lurks at the edge of things – in the moments before a child wakes up, in the twist of your stomach before hunger takes hold, in the heavy feeling on the air just before a thunderstorm. And on the coast, where land surrenders to sea.

It has always been here.

Magic clings to the north; the place where land

both ends and begins. It splits our night sky open with coloured beams that human beings call the Aurora. It surrounds itself with twice-made objects, seasonal changes and shifts from one state to another.

Once, magic was a force as undeniable and strong as gravity, albeit a force that could be controlled. Even in non-magical communities, there are ancient tales of Artezans – magic users – though they are known by other names. There are legends of them parting the seas, raising mountains, stopping the march of the sun and the moon across the sky and causing rains of frogs to fall upon their enemies. Paintings of their great deeds hang in galleries around the globe; the Artezans are pictured casting great magical spells, or else standing regally, holding their *tuil* – an object which enables an Artezan to use their magic. A tuil can be anything from a broomstick to a cauldron to an animal; only an Artezan can tell you why their tuil enables their powers, and even then the link is not always crystal-clear.

But the days of astonishing magical deeds are, sadly, over. Much like broth that has had water poured into it over and over again, magic has been diluted. Its power has been spread and shared out as families have grown and multiplied, and Artezans are now about as common as people with the ‘rarest’ blood

group – hardly widespread, but certainly not impossible to find. Magic these days, although kept secret, does not have the power of legend. It is merely an abstract talent that serves little to no purpose in daily life. Some Artezans have an especially sharp sense of smell. Others can heal a broken fingernail with a wink.

One Artezan could likely pick another out from a crowd, but to non-magical people, enchantments are indistinguishable from talents and skills, and so they are ignored. The days of fire falling from the skies and fields of crops being desolated are long gone. Artezans are no longer powerful, they are ordinary.

But, of course, there have always been exceptions . . .





1

Rocks and Bones

The sea let out a seething breath of icy wind that cut through the summer air like a knife.

Edward and Elodie Crane were used to sudden changes in the world around them – it came part and parcel of living on the coast in the Scottish Highlands. You could never be certain as you set out on a clear morning that ten minutes later you wouldn't be squinting through the dreich morning heer – the thick fog that rolled in off the sea and huddled inland like a shipwrecked ghost. But this sort of wind had an unnatural feel to it – a *magical* feel, and with good reason.

It had been the last day of primary school for the twins, and the atmosphere was dense with potential. Every summer holiday is magical, that

goes without saying, but this one was going to be particularly interesting for Edward and Elodie. Not that either of the children were aware, at that moment, just how remarkable things were going to be . . .

‘It’s finally happening!’ Elodie said, her smile brighter than the sun. The two of them were stomping through the thick grass that draped over the roadside verge. Covensea, the wee village where they lived, hadn’t yet discovered the wonder of pavements. If a car came flying down the single-track road, you simply threw yourself into the bracken. ‘It feels a bit like Christmas, don’t you think?’

‘I suppose so,’ Edward replied. He didn’t like arguments, and preferred to agree where possible. ‘There’s no promise of a present for either of us, mind.’

Elodie nudged her brother to try and coax a grin out of him. Although they were twins, Ed and his sister had very few things in common. They both had dark tangly hair, pale skin and burnt amber eyes, that was true . . . but that was where the similarities ended. Where Ed was tall for his eleven years, and scrawny in a way that made dorbie old ladies threaten to feed him up, Elodie was average height, fat and beautiful. They also had different personalities – Ed was somewhat of a social outcast, who had acquaintances

instead of friends and not even many of those. He struggled in school with everything that wasn't reading or making up stories, but not enough to get any extra attention from his teacher. Elodie, meanwhile, was top of the class and had about a hundred close friends. She had been voted Head Girl, Class Councillor, even Best French Plaits at their leavers' assembly. Ed hadn't even been nominated for anything. When people met the two children, they often had trouble believing they were twins at all.

The road split in two, and Elodie made to cross to the right, but Ed kept on the left.

'Are you no coming home?' Elodie asked, eyebrows going up. 'You might miss the start of it all!'

'I hate the summer camp set-up,' Ed said, pointing in the direction of their home. 'There's always so much pressure to be the sort of person they expect. And this year feels even worse than usual. Don't you think?'

'Worse? No! It's finally *our* year! We've been waiting for this our entire lives, you should be excited!' Elodie beamed.

Ed highly disliked it when other people told him how he ought to feel, especially his sister who got excited about everything from dentist appointments to cleaning out the cat's litter tray. He *wanted* to be

excited for this summer, he really did, but where his stomach should have been filled with butterflies of anticipation, there was actually a writhing mass of Anxiety Snakes instead.

‘I just want a wee bit of space before a whole summer of having to be with other people,’ he said. ‘I’m away to the Caves. Are you coming or no?’

‘I don’t know . . .’ Elodie stood dithering at the crossroads, so Ed left her to it. He didn’t mind his sister being excited, because actually most people in their situation would have been buzzing with expectation. But Ed’s nervousness was extremely loud. So loud, in fact, that it drowned out his excitement until he wasn’t even sure if it was there.

Taking big steps over the long damp grass, Ed navigated the ferns that clustered together at the treeline before getting into the woodland properly. Covensea was a glorious Scottish mixture of forest and seaside; the green of the landscape pressed hard against the grey-blue of the ocean, and Ed often thought it was liking living in two worlds at once.

Later, he would laugh at himself for thinking something like that.

Unpredictable weather aside, there were braw joys to living in Covensea. It was a mere quarter of an hour’s walk from school to the sea, so long as you

took the shortcut through the farmers' fields, of course. These stretched out in chest-high carpets of gold, until they stopped suddenly, the land turning from field to cliff almost without warning. The distillery-bound barley became long blades of grass that reached out over the beach, metres below. Ed walked towards the edge carefully, the *thump thump thump* of hares running for cover the only sound other than the swish and crunch of his footsteps in the wind-blown grass.

From where Ed stood, you could see the iron grey sea and the persistent gathered cloud that rested above it (except on clear days when the cloud dispersed and you could see across to Wilkhaven). The water was part of the tringle of ocean that jabbed into north-east Scotland and was called the Moray Firth. At the top of the triangle was John O'Groats, then you had Inverness and Fraserburgh at the other two points. It was a view that Ed cherished, and one of the few things in life he felt was truly his own. Anyone could stand here, that was true, but they would never see the boundaries of the land and sea in the same way he did. He put a hand to his forehead to keep his tangle of dark hair out of his eyes as his heart soared. This was his favourite place. It was here that he understood what his parents really meant when they

went on about the beauty of Scotland.

Ed had been told in school that Scotland used to be attached to Scandinavia, but there was no pointy triangle sticking out of Norway as far as he could see. Which meant that some pieces must have been lost during the break-up. Ed often wondered what had happened to them, whether they ended up as islands too small and secret for maps, or perhaps had drifted to the bottom of the North Sea.

He could head back to the house now, and not be noticeably late, but he didn't feel like it a jot. School might be over for a few weeks, but unlike the other kids, Ed and his sister had an entire summer dedicated to another sort of school altogether . . .

Keen to delay for as long as he could, Ed edged along the cliff to where he knew there was a scoop out of the land, and a skiddy wee path that led down to the beach below. Over the years, people had nailed up old bits of wood, rope and tubing to help anyone with a mild sense of adventure get down to the sea. There were plenty of beaches close to Covensea, though this wasn't one of the most popular – in addition to the risks of the path, the beach was covered in large rocks from past landslides, and the sand was streaked through with black seaweed.

But what the beach did have was the Sculptor's Cave.

Ed knew from experience that you had to be careful with your timing to get down to it, as the cave was a fair walk along the beach itself, and if you didn't know what you were doing you could be caught by the tide. The tide came sort of sideways into Covensea Bay, and the first sign that you'd overstayed your safety was when the sand started bubbling and rippling under your shoes. The water came up, not long after that, from beneath you. But despite his fear of being caught down there, Ed's desire to find the cave won out, and he found it quickly and easily, as he always did.

The Sculptor's Cave had a large mouth, oval-shaped like a whale-shark's, and just as speckled about the outside with barnacles and pit-holes. When the light was at the right angle – around mid-morning – you had a good view inside, but now it was afternoon and the cave was gloomy and cold. Just right for keeping people away.

Ed grinned, and took out his phone, turning on the torch.

The local historians said that the cave used to belong to Bronze Age people, who had lived along the coast and sheltered or even slept within it. Sculpted artefacts had been found inside; bone carvings of fish and waves. Arzean history said the cave was once where

a powerful tide-turner had lived. Sure, it was still during the Bronze Age, but there was a notable difference between the artefacts that once belonged to ancient fishers and those left behind by Artezans. *If you knew what you were looking for.* And Ed had been brought up knowing what to look for.

Edward and Elodie Crane lived in two worlds at once. The ordinary one, with school and bus timetables and supermarkets, and a much more *extraordinary* one. They belonged to a family of Artezans who had wielded magic for centuries, either with a tuil, or with their bare hands. Edward and Elodie had grown up knowing magic was real, and part of what made their family so special.

The skills each Artezan possessed were as unique as their fingerprints, but there were often some similarities in families, and that included the strength of the magic the person had in their control. Where most modern Artezans were only capable of doing small things, like turning a single page in a book by snapping their fingers, the Crane family remained powerful. They were not about to flatten Ben Nevis, but the magic in the family had always been strong, passed through generations of admirable Artezans, until . . .

. . . until Edward and Elodie.

They were the youngest Cranes, and unfortunately also the least likely to have any magic at all. Unlike generations of their ancestors, Ed and his twin were adopted. That meant there was no guarantee they'd have as much as a single drop of magical blood. And the thought of being *ordinary*, in a family where one dad commanded the weather and the other could manipulate the mood of anyone in a room . . . it made Ed want to curl up and hide. He couldn't stand it.

And he would find out whether he was magical or not in only a few days' time. Because this summer – in the year of Ed and Elodie's eleventh birthday – was to be the summer of their Reveal. The moment they'd discover what their Artezan skills might be – or *if* they had any at all. The Reveal Ceremony would be taking place at their home, with a crowd of people watching. There would be no escape from everyone knowing, should the Reveal show that Ed wasn't magical. The thought of all those expectant eyes on him turning to pity made him want to sink under the sand and fossilise. No Crane had ever had to worry about not being magical before.

Of course, there was always a chance he *was* magical . . . but what if the ceremony revealed a truly pathetic power, like being able to clip your toenails

with a single thought? What if (and this was the *what if* that had Ed lying awake, staring at the ceiling) his twin sister was magical, but he wasn't? Ed wasn't sure he'd be able to live it down. All their lives, Elodie had been the one who came first in everything – who was top of the class, who won the all the Sports Day medals, who got interviewed on TV one random Saturday when they were in Inverness . . . while Ed lingered in her shadow. If the pattern continued into their Reveal, Ed seriously thought he might just get on a boat and row out into the firth in search of a new life.

But right then, down in the Sculptor's Cave, all those worries seemed to melt away. It might have been damp and brackish-smelling from the decaying seaweed on the cave floor, but nowhere in Covensea made Edward Crane feel more magical. Not in his house, even when he was watching Baba craft a crackling lightning storm, or when Dad would instantly lift the mood of an entire room at a boring party. Not on his granny's houseboat either, and she made being an Artezian most of her personality. *This* was where magic lay, in his opinion. This was a place of *old* magic, where Artezians would have commanded the seas, raised the dead, or done other awe-inspiring and frightening things. The great deeds of the magical

past were etched into the rock, carved into every grain of sand and carried out on to the waves.

That was the sort of magic that Ed wanted, more than anything. Maybe, since he'd never been good at anything else, he was going to be *amazing* at magic. His heart ached to think of it.

He turned and looked out at the distant waves, the grey of the horizon. There was no sign of Wilkhaven today, it was too cloudy. Distant thunderstorms rolled silently over the sea, their noise drowned out by the wash of the surf on the beach. Ed shut his eyes for a moment, listening to the water. The Sculptor's Cave amplified the sound of the sea like a conch shell, making it seem closer, filling the space as though the sound was something physical, touchable. The noise of the water felt like a comfort – and a warning.

The cave did flood when the tide was high, and the thought of that gave Ed the shivers, making him open his eyes. It was frightening enough to be on the beach when the tide started coming in, but being stuck in the cave would be so much worse. There would be nowhere to run, nowhere to climb to . . . and the slope of the cave meant that swimming out would be difficult, if not impossible. Ed had a very healthy respect for the water.

What would those Artezans of old have felt, living

and casting their spells here? Was that ancient tide-turner glad to live so close to the sea, carving on bones to command the waters? Or had it been frightening? Had they been alone? Or had there been a whole family of Artezans here, long before Ed's trainers stood on these rocks? A family like his?

A lot of Artezans were superstitious, and Ed prided himself on not being one of them. But there was something about this place . . . it just *felt* magical. In winter, if you were lucky, you could see the Northern Lights from the beach; green and pink dancing streams high amongst the stars. Scientists called them a natural phenomenon, but Artezan stories said they were the leftover magic from the great Artezans of Scandinavia, who had blasted the fjords of Norway into existence during their civil wars over the far north lands. Even now, the waterways of the North were deeply magical and special places, much like the Highlands of Scotland. Being northerly was one factor in this, but more important was the fact that they were twice-made. Once by nature, and again by magic.

The ocean crashed in the distance. Edward pulled himself together and shone his torch at the cave floor, starting his search before the sea had the chance to catch him unawares. He didn't always come away with something when he visited the cave, but he had

a good feeling about today. He needed a lucky charm right now.

Just then, the torchlight glinted off something translucent, snuggled into a bed of mouldering seaweed. Ed swallowed down his revulsion (he'd never quite got over touching seaweed), and kicked at the thick ropes of green-brown slime until the treasure he was after dislodged and tap-danced over the rock in freedom.

Ed scooped it up into his hand. It was a chunk of smooth, teal-coloured sea-glass. Covensea didn't get a lot of sea-glass washing up on the beach, it was something to do with the tide, but when it did . . . it was always beautiful. Ed collected it. He had a big jar full of pieces he'd found over the years; jagged broken shards of glass licked soft by the salt water and handed back like gifts. He turned this one over in his hand. A few grains of wet sand clung to it, and he rubbed them away with his thumb, feeling the microscopic bite as they moved against his skin.

This was a good sign. It had to be.

'Ed?'

He turned back to see Elodie looking into the cave. She never went inside; she said the whole place gave her the creeps.

Ed couldn't help being pleased to see her. 'I knew you'd come.'

'No you never. What've you found?' She was genuinely interested. That was the thing about Elodie, she might have been showered in success but she was the least big-headed person on Earth. She was always kind and interested in other people, Ed especially. Ed sometimes wondered if she even noticed how much everyone liked her more than him.

He went over and showed her the nugget of glass. 'I've found a wee good-luck charm.'

'Oh, nice.' Elodie took it from him and blew on it, removing the final obstinate bits of sand. 'Pretty colour. I wonder what it used to be.'

'One of those fancy cocktail glasses, maybe?' Ed accepted the fragment back, and pocketed it. 'Makes me feel better, anyway.'

Elodie gave him a smile. 'You don't need to worry about anything, Ed. We're finally getting our magic!'

Ed forced a smile back. How could she be so confident? Maybe she could teach him.

'Anyways,' she said, 'the tide's coming in.'

Ed sighed. 'Time to go face the music.'

'And the tents.'

'And the singalongs.' The twins groaned in unison. Though their opinions of the summer camp were polar

opposites, one thing they did have in common was their dislike of the Artezan songs. But while Elodie would happily participate in every other aspect of camp, Ed longed for the sort of summer that the ordinary kids in his class talked about; the sort spent having *non-educational* fun with their parents. Whilst other families went on holidays or days out together, Ed had to share his parents every summer with an Artezan summer camp.

The two of them walked briskly back towards the wee path, keeping an eye on the sea. Their shoes weren't quite sinking into the beach yet, so they were safe. Ed had once lost a pair of gutties in the quicksand, and he wasn't keen to repeat the experience.

'I think I'd feel better about it,' Ed started, as they traipsed back up the cliff, 'if it wasnae being held right next tae our house.' The summer camps took place pretty much in the Crane family's garden, so there was really no getting away from it. They had been running every summer for close to twenty years – the brainchild of the Crane family in response to the scattered communities in the Highlands and Islands. Every year, Artezan families descended on Covensea for ceremonies, games, socialising and learning together. Jack and Harrison Crane, the twins' dads, organised and ran the camp.

Elodie shrugged. ‘Maybe. But at least you don’t hafta travel to it. Or sleep in a tent. I think it’s sort of nice, having it right outside the back door.’ She always saw the positive side.

‘Let’s see if you still feel that way after six weeks of magical summer camp,’ Ed said darkly.

