CHRONICLES of WHETHERWHY

THE VIOLET REBELLION



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Prologue

The grandfather looks at his grandchildren, who are a season older than when they were last all together. It is blustery outside but cosy within, and they are eating slices of carrot cake. The grandchildren are eager for their grandfather to tell them a story, although the eldest has entered a suspicious sort of age.

'I've never heard of these books before,' she says, arms crossed in a way that could perhaps be perceived as accusatory. 'I asked in the school library and the librarian said he'd never heard of Whetherwhy and thought it was strange that there wasn't an author.'

'That's because these chronicles aren't in any libraries,' says the grandfather. 'Or bookshops, for that matter. These volumes

are, in fact, the only versions that exist anywhere at all. They are the only copies.'

'Why do *you* have them?' asks another grandchild. 'Did you make them up?'

'I didn't,' the grandfather says.

'Well, who did?' asks another grandchild. Their grandfather smiles but doesn't answer. The grandchildren had plotted before this family gathering to try and get more information out of him but they forgot how he cannot be cajoled into saying anything he doesn't want to. He will not tell them more than he is ready to, for that is not part of the story. Yet. And they – and you – will have to be patient for a little while longer.

'The next chronicle might tell you a bit more about what you want to know,' the grandfather says, as he picks up a large leather-bound tome.

'How many do you have?' asks the youngest grandchild.

'I have four,' says the grandfather, uncharacteristically straightforward.

'Only four?' protests a grandchild – as that means they reached the halfway point last time.

'Only four,' the grandfather repeats. 'This is the third Chronicle of Whetherwhy, and it takes place thirteen years after the second, and starts on the first day of autumn.'

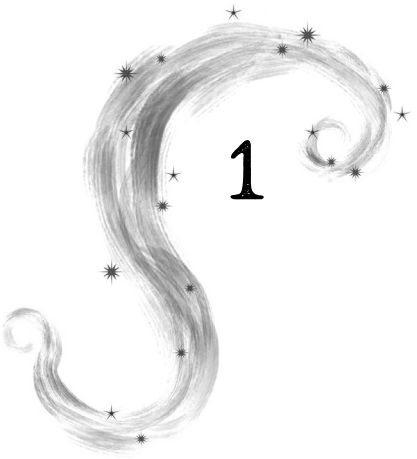
'Another thirteen-year gap,' says a grandchild.

'I think it's probably on purpose,' says the eldest.

'I already thought of that,' the other says. 'I was just checking. They always start on the first day of the season too.'

'They do,' says the grandfather. 'Each chronicle is thirteen years and one season later than the last. Would you like to hear who we will meet this time?' The grandchildren, even the eldest one, nod and settle down, cake plates licked clean and put to one side.

'Well then,' the grandfather says. 'The third chronicle begins just outside a city called Saltgate on the east coast of Whetherwhy . . .'



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Autumn Ember Day: Saltgate

Aurora Green was not expecting to save anyone's life, especially not that of the strange man with no name who came into town every Ember Day. But that was precisely what happened the September before her thirteenth birthday.

Aurora, who went by Rory to her friends and family, lived on a small farm on the outskirts of Saltgate, Whetherwhy's second city. Rory and her family grew fruits and vegetables in their fields and orchards, as well as tending to ten beehives, a flock of chickens, and a small herd of goats, whose milk they used to make cheese. Almost