

EOIN COLFER



**ARTEMIS
FOWL**

**AND THE
LAST GUARDIAN**



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ALWAYS LEARNING

PEARSON

PROLOGUE

ÉRIÚ, PRESENT DAY

THE Berserkers lay arranged in a spiral under the rune stone, looping down, down into the earth – boots out, heads in as the spell demanded. Of course, after ten thousand years underground, there were no physical boots or heads. There was just the plasma of black magic holding their consciousness intact and even that was dissipating, tainting the land, causing strange strains of plants to appear and infecting the animals with uncommon aggression. In perhaps a dozen full moons the Berserkers would be gone utterly and their last spark of power would flow into the earth.

We are not all disappeared yet, thought Oro of the Danu, captain of the Berserkers. We are ready to seize our glorious moment when it comes and to sow chaos among the humans.

He sent the thought into the spiral and was proud to feel his remaining fairy warriors echo the sentiment.

Their will is as keen as their blades once were, he thought.

Though we are dead and buried, the spark of bloody purpose burns bright in our souls.

It was the hatred of humankind that kept the spark alive – that and the black magic of the warlock Bruin Fadda. More than half of their company of warriors had already expired and been drawn to the afterlife, but still five score remained to complete their duties should they be called upon.

Remember your orders, the elfin warlock had told them all those centuries ago even as the clay was falling on their flesh. *Remember those who have died and the humans who murdered them.*

Oro did remember and always would. Just as he could never forget the sensation of stones and earth rattling across his dying skin.

We will remember, he sent into the spiral. *Remember and return.*

The thought drifted down, then echoed up from the dead warriors, who were eager to be released from their tomb and see the sun once more.

make for a very interesting chapter in my v-book: *Foiling Fowl: Outsmarting the Smarty-pants*. (Publishers love the title: *cha-ching!*)

6. Order more painkillers for my blasted hip.
7. Issue clean bill of mental health for Artemis. Final session today.

DOCTOR ARGON'S OFFICE, HAVEN CITY, THE LOWER ELEMENTS

Artemis Fowl grew impatient. Doctor Argon was late. This final session was just as unnecessary as the past half dozen had been. He was completely cured, for heaven's sake, and had been since week eighteen. His prodigious intellect had accelerated the process and he should not have to twiddle his thumbs at the behest of a gnome psychiatrist.

At first Artemis paced the office, refusing to be calmed by the waterwall with its gently pulsing mood lights, then he sat for a minute in the oxygen booth, which he found calmed him a little too much.

Oxygen booth indeed, he thought, quickly ducking out of the glass-walled chamber.

Finally the door hissed and slid aside on runners, admitting Doctor Jerbal Argon to his own office. The squat gnome limped directly to his chair. He dropped into the embrace of its many pads, slapping the armrest controls until the gel sac under his right hip glowed gently.



‘Have you heard of the theory of relativity?’

Artemis blinked. ‘Is this a joke? I have travelled through time, Doctor. I think I know a little something about relativity.’

‘No. Not that theory; my theory of relativity proposes that all things magical are related and influenced by ancient spells or magical hotspots.’

Artemis rubbed his chin. ‘Interesting. But I think you’ll find that your postulation should be called the theory of *relatedness*.’

‘Whatever,’ said Argon, waving the quibble away. ‘I did a little research and it turns out that the Fowls have been a bother to fairy folk off and on for thousands of years. Dozens of your ancestors have tried for the crock of gold, though you are the only one to have succeeded.’

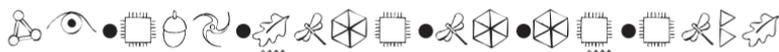
Artemis sat up straight; this *was* interesting. ‘And I never knew about this because you mind-wiped my forefathers.’

‘Exactly,’ said Argon, thrilled to have Artemis’s full attention. ‘When he was a lad, your own father actually managed to hog-tie a dwarf who was drawn to the estate. I imagine he still dreams of that moment.’

‘Good for him.’ A thought struck Artemis. ‘Why was the dwarf attracted to our estate?’

‘Because the residual magic there is off the scale. Something happened on the Fowl Estate once. Something huge, magically speaking.’

‘And this lingering power plants ideas in our heads and nudges the Fowls towards a belief in magic,’ Artemis murmured almost to himself.



chair, being more than six and a half feet tall in a city built for three-footers.

The bodyguard stood and stretched, flattening his palms against the ceiling, which was double-height by fairy standards. Thank God Argon had a taste for the grandiose or Butler wouldn't even have been able to stand up straight in the clinic. To his mind the building, with its vaulted ceilings, gold-flecked tapestries and retro sim-wood sliding doors, looked more like a monastery where the monks had taken a vow of wealth, rather than a medical facility. Only the wall-mounted laser hand-sanitizers and the occasional elfin nurse bustling past gave any hint that this place was actually a clinic.

I am so glad this detail is coming to an end, Butler had been thinking at least once every five minutes for the past fortnight. He had been in tight spots many times, but there was something about being confined in a city clamped to the underside of the Earth's crust that made him feel claustrophobic for the first time in his life.

Artemis emerged from Argon's office, his self-satisfied smirk even more pronounced than usual. When Butler saw this expression, he knew that his boss was back in control of his faculties and his Atlantis Complex was certified as cured.

No more counting words. No more irrational fear of the number four. No more paranoia and delusions. Thank goodness for that.

He asked anyway, just to be certain. 'Well, Artemis, how are we?'

Artemis buttoned the jacket of his navy woollen suit.



‘We are fine, Butler. That is to say that I, Artemis Fowl the Second, am one hundred per cent functional, which is about five times the functionality of an average person. Or to put it another way: one point five Mozarts. Or three quarters of a da Vinci.’

‘Only three quarters? You’re being modest.’

‘Correct,’ said Artemis, smiling. ‘I am.’

Butler’s shoulders sagged a little with relief. Inflated ego, supreme self-confidence. Artemis was most definitely his old self.

‘Very good. Let’s pick up our escort and be on our way then, shall we? I want to feel the sun on my face. The real sun, not the UV lamps they have down here.’

Artemis felt a pang of sympathy for his bodyguard, an emotion he had been experiencing more and more in recent months. It was difficult enough for Butler to be inconspicuous among humans; down here he could hardly attract more attention if he were wearing a clown suit and juggling fireballs.

‘Very well,’ agreed Artemis. ‘We will pick up our escort and depart. Where is Holly?’

Butler jerked a thumb down the hallway. ‘Where she generally is. With the clone.’

Captain Holly Short of the Lower Elements Police Recon division stared at the face of her arch-enemy and felt only pity. Of course, had she been gazing at the real Opal Koboi and not a cloned version, then pity might not have been the



an undertaker and a troll-sized, buzz-cut man-mountain were quite unusual.

The tunnel was barely a metre high so Butler was forced to prostrate himself over three sections, flattening several handgrips in the process. His nose was no more than a metre from the tunnel wall, which he noticed was engraved with beautiful luminous pictograms depicting episodes from the People's history.

So the young fairies can learn something about their own heritage each time they pass through. How wonderful, thought Butler, but he suppressed his admiration as he had long ago disciplined his brain to concentrate on bodyguard duties and not waste neurons being amazed while he was below ground.

Save it for retirement, he thought. *Then you can cast your mind back and appreciate art.*

Police Plaza was a cobbled crest into which the shape of the Lower Elements Police acorn insignia had been painstakingly paved by master craftsmen. It was a total waste of effort as far as the LEP officers were concerned, as they were not generally the type who were inclined to gaze out of the fourth-floor windows and marvel at how the sim-sunlight caught the rim of each gold-leafed cobble and set the whole arrangement a-twinkling.

On this particular day it seemed that everyone on the fourth floor had slid from their cubicles like pebbles on a tilted surface and gathered in a tight cluster by the situations room, which adjoined Foaly's office/laboratory.



Holly made directly for the narrowest section of the throng and used sharp elbows to inch through the strangely silent crowd. Butler simply cleared his throat once and the crowd peeled apart as though magnetically repelled from the giant human. Artemis took this clear path into the situations room to find Commander Trouble Kelp and Foaly standing before a wall-sized screen, raptly following unfolding events.

Foaly noticed the gasps that followed Butler wherever he went in Haven and glanced round.

‘May the fours be with you,’ the centaur whispered to Artemis. His standard greeting/joke for the past six months.

‘I am cured as you well know,’ said Artemis. ‘What is going on here?’

Holly cleared a space beside Trouble Kelp, who seemed to be morphing into her former boss, Commander Julius Root, as the years went on. Commander Kelp was so brimful of gung-ho attitude that he had taken the name Trouble upon graduation and had once tried to arrest a troll for littering, which accounted for the sim-skin patch on the tip of his nose that glowed yellow from a certain angle.

‘Haircut’s new, Skipper,’ Holly said. ‘Beetroot had one just like it.’

Commander Kelp did not take his eyes from the screen. Holly was joshing because she was nervous and Trouble knew it. She was right to be nervous. In fact, outright fear would be more appropriate, given the situation that was being beamed in to them.



‘Watch the show, Captain,’ he said tightly. ‘It’s pretty self-explanatory.’

There were three figures on screen, a kneeling prisoner and two captors, but Holly did not place Opal Koboi straight away because she was searching for the pixie among the standing pair. She realized with a jolt that Opal was the prisoner.

‘This is a trick,’ she said. ‘It must be.’

Commander Kelp shrugged. *Watch it and see.*

Artemis stepped closer to the screen, scanning the picture for information. ‘You are sure this is live?’

‘It’s a live feed,’ said Foaly. ‘I suppose they could be sending us a pre-record.’

‘Where is it coming from?’

Foaly checked the tracer map on his own screen. The call line ran from a fairy satellite down to South Africa and from there to Miami and then on to a hundred other places like the scribble of an angry child.

‘They jacked a satellite and ran the line through a series of shells. Could be anywhere.’

‘The sun is high,’ Artemis mused aloud. ‘I would guess by the shadows that it is early noon. If it is actually a live feed.’

‘That narrows it down to a quarter of the planet,’ said Foaly caustically.

The hubbub in the room rose as, on screen, one of the two bulky gnomes standing behind Opal drew a human automatic handgun, the chrome weapon looking like a cannon in his fairy fingers.

