René Kaiser

Julian and the Guardians of the Elements

Book 2

The Bell in the River



Book 2 · English edition

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The Bell in the River

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Earth · Water · Fire · Air

A New Path to the Water Realm

Dear children and everyone reading aloud,

a frog on a map is unusual. A frog wearing a sailor collar and bringing an urgent request is the beginning of a new journey.

In the first book, Julian and Lio, the silver fox, visited the garden of Borun, the Earth Guardian. A little pebble reminds them that helping also means listening and respecting limits. Now the compass leads them to the Water Realm.

There they meet Maris, Sira the Water Guardian and a bell that has changed an entire river. This book tells a complete adventure. Some clues from Book 1 travel with Julian; everything important is explained along the way.

The 25 chapters offer places to pause together. You can look at a picture, talk about a decision or save the next chapter for another evening. Open questions about the story wait at the end.

Enjoy Julian and Lio’s second journey with the Guardians of the Elements!

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CHAPTER 1

A Frog on the Map



The next morning, a frog was sitting on Julian's map. He wore a navy sailor collar with a white edge and was dripping onto the desk.

“Time to depart,” he said.

Julian pulled the blanket up to his chin. “You came out of the drop?”

“No. Out of the boat inside the drop. An important difference.”

Lio opened one eye. “Does the boat carry towels too?”

The frog bowed. “Captain Quak. Towels are not my department.”

Julian sat up. He remembered Borun's garden, the freed spring and the girl in the water picture. Her voice had been so faint that he had understood only one word. Listen.

On the map, the tiny boat rocked. One seat was empty.

Julian got dressed. He took the earth pebble, Nela's string and his new pencil. The shard of Stillglass stayed in its sturdy pouch. He filled his water bottle with fresh water.

“How do we get back?” he asked.

Quak pointed at the map. “My boat knows your landing place. I'll keep it clear.”

Julian moved the cup with the little tree safely to the window. A leaf door rustled.

Then he laid his finger on the blue drop. The paper softened. A reed grew from a drawn riverbank.

“No boots on the map,” Quak warned.

Julian looked down. The desk had already disappeared.

CHAPTER 2

Between Two Banks



They were sitting in a real boat. A bridge made of water arched above them. Below lay a broad river, as smooth as a freshly ironed tablecloth.

Quak pushed out the oars. Each stroke left a groove that faded only slowly.

Julian held the compass above the side. Ten golden stars glimmered. Beside the green square appeared the outline of a drop.

“The river is holding on,” Quak explained.

Lio sniffed. “It still smells of water.”

“That's about the only thing it's doing particularly well just now.”

Houses stood on long wooden legs along the bank. Narrow walkways connected their doors. A net hung between two posts. A leaf lay in it without moving any further.

Julian started to reach for it, but Quak pointed to the seat.

“Stay in the boat. We're about to land.”

Julian sat down again. The frog rowed around a half-sunken post and tied the boat to a sturdy ring. Only when it lay still were they allowed to climb out.

A girl with dark hair knelt on some steps. Her yellow scarf hung over one shoulder. She was scooping water with a shell.

“Maris,” Quak said quietly. “She didn't want to come and fetch you herself.”

Maris looked up. “I had to stay with the fish.”

Something silver flashed beneath the lowest step.

CHAPTER 3

The Fish by the Steps



Tiny fish crowded into a shallow hollow beneath the walkway. The water barely covered their backs.

Maris scooped a shellful from the river and carefully poured it in.

“The water went down overnight,” she explained. “But this pool has no way back to the river now.”

Julian knelt beside her. “What do you need?”

Maris passed him a second shell.

Lio held back a loose reed with one paw to keep it from falling into the hollow. Quak checked the narrow gap between two posts.

“We only dig as far as the river,” Maris said. “Then the fish can make their own way out.”

They loosened the soft earth with a rounded piece of wood. Julian brought more water. The first silver back turned towards the opening.

Then the fish slipped away, one after another.

Maris sat on the step. Her hands were trembling.

Julian wanted to ask whether she was the girl from the water picture. But Quak was already pointing towards the middle of the river.

A glass bell stood there. It was bigger than a house. Beneath it shimmered a blue stone.

“Our Water Rune,” Maris said.

A dark strand of hair fell across her forehead. She did not brush it back.

“Ever since the bell was put there, the river hasn't been able to flow on.”