René Kaiser

Julian and the Hidden Worlds

Book 1

The City behind the Buttonhole



Book 1 · English edition

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Maps · Doors · Worlds · Connections

A Small Door, a Whole City

Dear children and everyone reading aloud,

after travelling through the four elements, Julian is home again. He has returned the four rune echoes. His pockets now hold string, a pencil and an ordinary wooden token. His compass still carries the ten stars from his first journey.

Then a girl with a long yellow scarf calls through a door at the edge of his map. Kaja needs help for a city between a button and its buttonhole. Its routes are being folded as though houses and people were merely lines on a page.

The 25 chapters begin a new connected journey. You can start with this book: important connections are explained. Julian and Lio meet new characters, different viewpoints and an Atlas that calls for careful observation.

This story belongs to an imaginary world. Adults undertake dangerous work and rescues. Children observe from safe places, ask questions and gather messages.

Read together, study the pictures and pause whenever it suits you. Enjoy discovering what waits behind the buttonhole!

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CHAPTER 1

A Door at the Edge



Julian moved the bread basket to the other side of the table. Lio had already touched it three times with his nose. “I’m only checking that it’s still in the same place,” the silver fox explained.

After breakfast, Julian spread out his map. A tiny door had appeared at its edge the evening before. It had not grown any bigger. But now it had a window. Somebody was waving behind it with a yellow scarf.

Julian lifted the paper towards his face.

“Please don’t fold it!” a voice called. “You’ll crease my market square!”

He immediately laid the map flat again. Lio jumped onto the chair. “That is a remarkably precise greeting.”

“My name’s Kaja,” the voice said. “Our square is getting a corner where it doesn’t belong.”

Julian looked at his wooden token with the open circle. It lay beside his string, pencil and compass with its ten stars. The four rune echoes had stayed with the linden. He picked up his ordinary things and pocketed them.

At home, he told someone where the little door was inviting him. Then he put on his shoes. “Can we get back too?”

Kaja showed him a pale envelope bearing a picture of his room. “I keep this separately. Every journey needs a way home.”

Only then did Julian touch the handle. Beyond the door, a broad paper staircase unfolded. Lio tested the first step with a paw. It held.

CHAPTER 2

The Paper Staircase



The steps were firm, although their edges looked like folded writing paper. A railing accompanied Julian and Lio to a little landing. Kaja stood there with a postbag. Her dark hair ended at her chin, her copper-coloured coat at her knees.

The yellow scarf was so long that she had wound it three times around her waist. One end still hung almost to her shoes.

“No time to roll it up,” she explained.

A city with shining button roofs lay before them. Some had two holes, others four. Lanes wound between them, paved with something like thick paper. Small gloves dried on a balcony. The smell of bread drifted through an open doorway.

Julian turned. Through the city window, he could recognise his desk. Kaja checked the return envelope and put it in a compartment of its own.

“Do you know every route here?” he asked.

“Many,” she said. “I deliver the post. But an address doesn’t tell me everything about what’s behind it.”

Lio sniffed. “The bakery is providing particularly clear directions.”

Kaja smiled briefly. Then a bell rang. Across the square, the paving rose along a straight line. A round fountain suddenly had edges at two different heights.

“Come as far as the red cord,” Kaja said. “For now, we stay behind it.” Julian followed. The city had seemed tiny from his bedroom. Here, it was big enough that he could not possibly see everything.

CHAPTER 3

The Square Gets a Corner



The merchant held his button cart on the level part of the square. Another adult secured it from the side. The red cord left plenty of space before the fold. Kaja fastened a bell to it so that newcomers would notice the boundary too.

Julian and Lio stayed behind it. Green, red, blue and golden buttons gleamed on the cart. Two had already rolled over the edge. The merchant took a step as though to follow them.

“We’ll find a safe route when the square is still,” Kaja said. “Those two stay there for now.”

The man breathed out and turned back to his cart. Julian pointed at a loose wheel without reaching across the cord. The helper checked it and placed a suitable support underneath.

A few steps away, water flowed from the fountain into a lane. The fold separated it from its own puddle. Lio studied the crooked basin. “A fountain ought to make better arrangements with its water.”

Kaja marked her message board. It was a new observation, not a solution. She asked the merchant when the movement had begun. He pointed at the shadow beside the town hall.

“It’s been getting narrower since morning. Before that, my cart could turn there.”

Julian looked at the shrinking space. The fold was not simply a line on paper. It was taking room away from people. Kaja sent a message to the town hall. Then she led her visitors there along a side lane that had been checked.