René Kaiser

# Julian and the Guardians of the Elements

Book 1

## The Awakening of the Four Forces



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Book 1 · English edition

# Julian and the Guardians of the Elements

## The Awakening of the Four Forces

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Earth · Water · Fire · Air

# A New Path with Julian and Lio

Dear children and everyone reading aloud,

sometimes a great adventure begins with something very small: a crumb of earth in a boot, a closed flower or a question that no one has asked yet.

Julian already knows the glowing compass. Its ten stars remind him of his earlier adventures. Now four new signs appear. Together with Lio, the silver fox, he enters a garden whose morning has disappeared.

This book tells a complete adventure and begins the series about the Guardians of the Elements. If you haven't met Julian before, everything you need for this story is here. The chapters offer places to pause, think and look at the pictures together.

At the end you will find open questions about the story. There isn't always just one answer. You can talk, retell a scene or simply look at your favourite picture again.

Enjoy the path beneath the roots!

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CHAPTER 1

# Four Signs of Light



Julian had opened the compass to clean it. A crumb was wedged between the lid and the hinge, behaving as though it were terribly important. He tried to coax it out with the corner of his handkerchief.

Then something glimmered.

A green square floated above the ten golden stars. Beside it appeared a blue drop, a small flame and a white swirl. They were as delicate as light on a windowpane.

“You weren't there yesterday,” Julian whispered.

He held his hand beneath them. The drop did not feel wet. The flame did not warm his fingers. Only the green sign trembled, as though it wanted to say something.

Julian thought of his journey with Lio. Of paths he could never have found alone. Of goodbyes that still hurt a little. The compass had shown him many things. He had always had to make his own decisions.

“Am I supposed to go somewhere?”

The needle remained still. Instead, a faint crack came from his boot.

Julian looked under the desk. His left boot was leaning to one side. A leaf poked out of the top.

Outside, something silver brushed past the window.

Julian forgot the handkerchief. He jumped up, bumped his knee and laughed anyway. Four familiar paws had just landed on the windowsill.

“You really ought,” said Lio, “to check your boots more often.”

CHAPTER 2

# The Earth in His Boot



“Lio!” Julian opened the window and carefully wrapped his arms around the silver fox. His fur smelled of woods and cool evening air.

“Your windowsill is still just as narrow,” Lio remarked. But he pressed his muzzle briefly against Julian's shoulder.

“Are you staying?”

“First I'd like to find out what's growing in your boot.”

Julian sat on the rug and shook the boot. Two crumbs of earth fell out. Then a tiny tree tumbled into his palm, scarcely bigger than his thumb. A small, wrinkled face seemed to hide beneath its bark. When Julian looked more closely, it had disappeared again.

Doors hung from the leaves.

One of them knocked.

“I haven't ordered anything,” Julian said.

“Perhaps someone's come to collect something,” Lio replied. “A boy with muddy boots, for instance.”

Julian found an empty cup and filled it with soil from the balcony planter. He planted the little tree. Its branches immediately stretched.

A letter fluttered out of the smallest door. SOMETHING IS MISSING DOWN BELOW, it said.

“What is it?” Julian asked.

A thin voice answered, “Our morning.”

Lio's ears pricked up. His tail suddenly lay quite still.

Julian fetched the compass. The green square flickered. From behind the leaf door came the smell of rain, mushrooms and a place that had been waiting a long time.

CHAPTER 3

# A Door Made from a Leaf



Julian wanted to touch the door at once. Then he stopped.

“How do we get back?”

Lio looked at the cup, then at Julian. “An excellent question for someone who's already halfway out of the door.”

Something rustled beyond the leaf. “The tree carries you there and back,” said the thin voice. “As long as you don't spill its soil.”

Julian stood the cup in a shallow bowl. He tied a piece of string around the handle to keep it from sliding off the desk. On a sheet of paper he drew the tree and his window. Beneath them he made a thick dot for home.

“For the way back,” he explained.

Into his backpack he put a pencil, a small water bottle and the handkerchief. He folded the letter carefully. Perhaps he could draw more on the back.

“What about you?” he asked.

Lio looked down at himself. “Four paws. Two ears. One almost faultless tail. I'm ready.”

Julian laughed. The green sign in the compass grew steadier. The other three barely glimmered now.

He laid his fingers against the leaf door. It grew larger without the little tree growing at all. Beyond it, a path led steeply downwards.

Julian took one deep breath. Then he and Lio stepped across the threshold together.