

CHAPTER 1

Oxford

Lyra walked quietly through the dusty rooms of Jordan College. She came to the Dining Room. The table was ready for the Jordan Scholars. At the other end of the Dining Room was the Scholars' special room, called the Retiring Room. The Scholars didn't allow Lyra to go in there, so of course she wanted to see it. Her dæmon Pantalaimon – or Pan for short – ran behind her.

'Shh Lyra!' said Pan quietly. 'You're too noisy. They'll catch us!'

'Nobody can hear us,' said Lyra. 'Don't worry!'

Lyra went into the Retiring Room. Pan changed into a bird and flew in behind her. They were looking around when suddenly they heard people outside. They quickly climbed into a cupboard. A man came in with some wine and some glasses and put them on the table.

The Master of Jordan College and Fra Pavel followed him into the room. Fra Pavel was from The Magisterium – the Magisterium controlled Lyra's world. The Master and Pavel were talking about Lord Asriel and his new idea.

'You are Master of Jordan. You must stop him!' shouted Pavel.

The Master did not agree. Asriel was an important man and a good man.

'He is a Jordan Scholar,' said the Master. 'If he wants to go, he can go.'

Fra Pavel was not happy with the Master's answer. He waited for the Master to leave the room. Then he quickly put something into the wine. He smiled a small smile, and then he left too.



'He's trying to kill Uncle Asriel!' said Lyra.

'You don't know that,' said Pan. 'And we're in trouble if someone finds us here.'

At that moment, Lord Asriel came into the room with his dæmon, Stelmaria. He wanted a drink before the others arrived. He put some wine into a glass. He was about to drink it when the cupboard door crashed open. Lyra jumped from the cupboard and hit the glass out of her uncle's hand. It broke. Lord Asriel was very surprised and caught Lyra's arm.

'The man from the Magisterium wants to kill you,' she cried. 'He put something in the wine! I saw him.'



Asriel smelt the wine, but then they heard people outside the room.

'Quick!' he said. He pushed Lyra and Pan back into the cupboard.

The Master and the Scholars came into the room. They sat down and waited for Lord Asriel to start. Pavel looked quickly at the floor and saw the pieces of glass.

Asriel turned on a large machine. A picture appeared in the air in front of them. It was a man and his dæmon. Something around them was glowing.

'I went to the Arctic twelve months ago,' Asriel said. 'I took this picture at the North Pole in Svalbard. Something is coming down from the sky to the man. It isn't light. It's Dust.'

The Scholars all started to talk excitedly.

'What's Dust?' Lyra asked her dæmon quietly. But Pan didn't know.

'As you can see,' said Asriel, 'the Dust is going through the man's dæmon and into him. Where does this Dust come from? I want to find out.'

At the top of the picture there was a shining city. It was hanging in the sky.

'This is a city in another world – a world next to ours – but one of many worlds,' said Asriel. 'Dust comes from there and other worlds. I plan to travel there.'

Fra Pavel did not like this idea at all. But the Scholars were very interested. They agreed to give Asriel money for his work.



After the Scholars left, Asriel pulled Lyra from the cupboard. They walked quickly across the college. Asriel did not answer her questions.

‘Can I come with you?’ she asked. ‘I want to learn about Dust and everything!’

‘What do you know about Dust?’ Asriel asked angrily.

‘Nothing,’ answered Lyra.

‘Good. Never ask about it again. Be a good girl, and I’ll bring you a nice present from the North Pole.’

He didn’t say goodbye. He just left.



That night, Lyra met her best friend Roger Parslow high up on top of the college. It was their favourite meeting place. They were talking about the Gobblers. They were frightened of the Gobblers.



‘They take children from all around Oxford,’ said Roger.

‘And then they eat them,’ said Lyra. ‘Roger, the Gobblers could catch you. But I’ll rescue you – you know that, don’t you?’

'The Gobblers won't get me!' said Roger.
'You'll rescue me too, won't you?' asked Lyra.
'Of course I will. But your uncle's an important man – everybody will look for you.'

This was true, but Lyra didn't like this idea.

'You're just as important as me, Roger,' she said angrily.
Suddenly someone called from below.

'Lyra! Come and put your best clothes on! The Master wants you.'



After Lyra went, Roger walked alone around the college gardens. He was bored. Then he heard something.

'Lyra? Is that you?' he called. His *dæmon* Salcilia changed into a bird. She flew around. Suddenly a golden monkey appeared and caught Salcilia in its hand. A dark form moved towards Roger.

'Let me go! Let Salcilia go!' cried Roger. But nobody heard him.