

KATHRYN BUTLER

*The*  
**Dreamkeeper**  
~ SAGA ~



*The* PRINCE *and the* BLIGHT

“The stakes are high when Lily is called back to the realm of dreams, and her questions and fears will feel surprisingly true to life for young readers. Fortunately, so will the magic. A worthy companion to the first adventure!”

**James D. Witmer**, Managing Editor, StoryWarren.com; author, *A Year in the Big Old Garden, Beside the Pond*, and *The Strange New Dog*

“Though Lily returns to the Realm and finds it marred by darkness, her story is an adventure of the best and brightest kind. Beautiful, honest, redemptive, and true, this book is sure to win a spot in the hearts of those who love the Chronicles of Narnia and the Wingfeather Saga. I can’t wait to see where Kathryn Butler steers her series next!”

**Théa Rosenburg**, blogger, *Little Book, Big Story*

“My favorite thirty minutes of every day are the moments before bed when I gather with my sons to read great stories. Our hearts connect as our imaginations are unlocked by the characters and adventures described on each page. Kathryn Butler’s excellent book, *The Prince and the Blight*, is a book we will read together again and again. Riveting storytelling meets meaningful themes in this treasure. Make room on your bookshelf. Your family will love—and grow through—this fantastical series.”

**Erin Davis**, writer; Bible teacher; mom of four

“What an exciting continuation of the Dream Keeper Saga! The plot twists and layers of character development will keep your kids thinking and guessing. Like the first installment in this series, *The Prince and the Blight* carries on with engaging readers in creative imagination and spiritual depth.”

**Gloria Furman**, author, *Alive in Him* and *Labor with Hope*

“Lily and Cedric were too compelling for one story alone. And Pax! What a joy to have this second book and see them now face a threat so relevant in our times. Kathryn Butler wins our trust with her characters, engaging turns, and deeply Christian themes. I’m excited to add the Dream Keeper Saga to our family canon.”

**David Mathis**, Senior Teacher and Executive Editor, [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org); Pastor, Cities Church, Saint Paul, Minnesota; author, *Habits of Grace*



The PRINCE and the BLIGHT



# *The* **DreamKeeper** ~ SAGA ~

The PRINCE and the BLIGHT

Kathryn Butler

❏ CROSSWAY®  
WHEATON, ILLINOIS

*The Prince and the Blight*

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*To Jack and Christie again.*

*The adventure continues . . .*





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Amber Cliffs

Burning Valley

Ash Canyon

Sherwood

The Cascades

Basin

The Bogs

Gemstone Isle

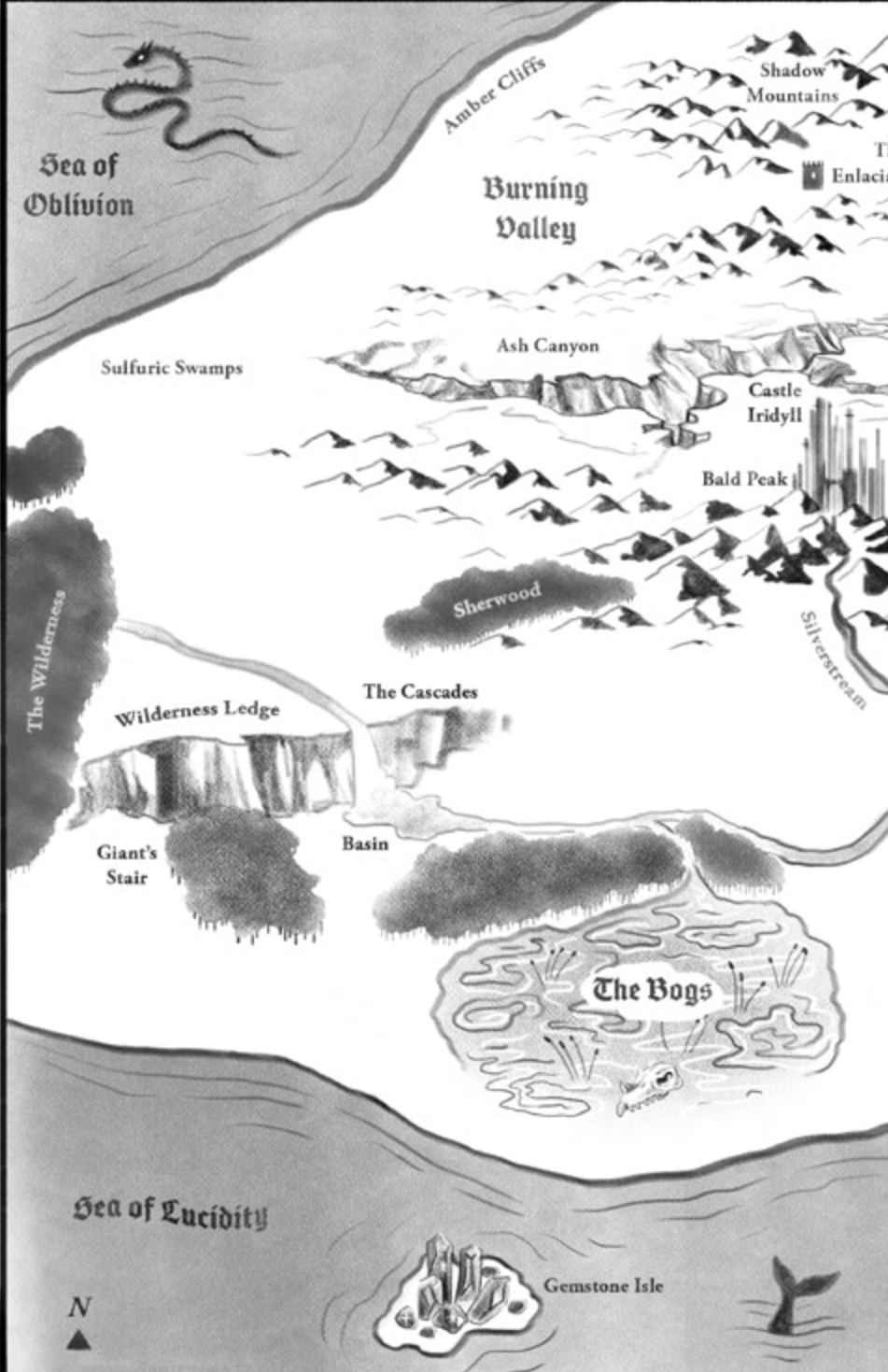
Shadow Mountains

Enlaci

Castle Iridyll

Bald Peak

Silverstream



the Veil

Desolation Mountains

Cave of Lights

Painted Woodland

Camelot

Singing Meadows

The  
Petrified  
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Silver  
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Sea  
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Warf

Sea  
Towns

Port  
Muse

The Frontier

The Western Reaches  
of the  
Somnium Realm





## CHAPTER 1

# The Pterodactyl

*This stuff is like ogre slobber.*

Lily screwed up her face at the paper-mache paste dripping from her brush, and cast a doubtful glance at the mess of newsprint that slouched on the art bench before her. She'd crumpled old advice columns into a lopsided pterodactyl, but the result fell far short from the vision in her mind. She slopped another brushful of paste and wrinkled her nose. *I actually wouldn't mind seeing an ogre right now, if it meant I could be back in the Realm*, Lily thought. *At least, a friendly one. Is there any such thing as a friendly ogre?*

A wadded up gum wrapper thunked Lily in the back of the head. She tried to ignore the kids snickering behind her and the



snapping of gum that she knew belonged to Amanda Weatherby, who'd held a grudge against Lily ever since she'd accidentally spilled mac 'n' cheese all over her dress in second grade (to be fair, it *was* picture day). Without looking, Lily knew Amanda smirked at her, with her head cocked to one side and with a sticky thread of gum wound around a single finger. Evan Kim would be sitting next to Amanda, elbowing her and joking about her great shot.

Lily bit her lip and tried not to let their whispers bother her. She glopped another mound of glue, and the pterodactyl's right wing sagged beneath the weight. Finally she threw down her brush in defeat. *This feels pointless. I've made flames come to life, but I can't manage a pile of newspaper.* She narrowed her eyes and studied the muddle. *I guess that corner does look like its jaws. Maybe it doesn't look quite so bad?*

"What do you think?" she asked the pterodactyl aloud.

In response, the pterodactyl stretched its wings, flapped twice, and squawked.

Lily's heart leapt. She didn't have to look down to know that the stone fragment in her pocket gleamed its brilliant, blue-white light. She reached for the pterodactyl with both hands, but with a few wing beats the reptile evaded her grasp and swept scraps of newspaper onto the floor. Lily caught the creature by the neck and shoved it, still gooey with paste, into the folds of her cardigan, then wrapped her arms around her abdomen in a mighty hug. She teetered as the pterodactyl thrashed underneath

her sweater, and she barely kept her balance when she spun around to flee out the door.

She came face to face with Keisha Reynolds. Keisha stared at Lily, a single beaded braid dangling near one eye. Her gaping mouth told Lily that she'd seen everything: every flying dollop of paste, every flap of the pterodactyl's wings.

Lily searched her mind for something to say, but nothing could explain away the monster wriggling beneath her sweater. When the pterodactyl squawked again, Lily ran for the door. She flew past benches of students who alternated between dabbing paint and flicking glue at each other. *No one look at me*, she pleaded. *Please, no one else look*. Then the pterodactyl bit her arm. Lily gasped, tripped, and stumbled toward the doorway, and all eyes turned toward her.

"Lily! Where are you going?"

Lily froze, then closed her eyes. She wrapped her arms tighter around her middle and prayed the pterodactyl wouldn't writhe or screech as she turned around.

To her horror, Keisha spoke up. "Ms. Gilson, she's—"

"I've got a stomachache," Lily blurted, straining to hide the shakiness in her voice. "I need to go to the nurse's office."

The art teacher raised an eyebrow. "A stomachache? Again?"

"Yeah." Lily gritted her teeth against a sticky poke in her gut. "I think I'm coming down with something."

Ms. Gilson twisted her maroon lips into a pincushion, and Lily feared she'd been caught. *How am I going to get out of this one?* she thought.

To her relief, after a moment Ms. Gilson relaxed her mouth and nodded. “Okay, Lily. School’s almost over anyway. Feel better, all right? And get checked out so this doesn’t keep happening. Change your diet, or something?”

Still clutching the pterodactyl in a gooey bundle, Lily raced from the room, past the nurses’ station, and out the school building. She ran several blocks until she reached the trail through the forest, the way she’d memorized years ago. She ducked in among the trees and didn’t realize until the cool shadows from the canopy touched her skin that she’d been holding her breath.

The pterodactyl whined as Lily leapt over Silverstream and slipped on the muddy bank. She rounded the boulders, and her aching arms, still held tight around her middle, threatened to loosen like rubber bands stretched to the breaking point. The pterodactyl squawked and thrashed, as if it could sense her weariness.

Finally, she reached the Fortress. The clearing still smelled of lumbered pine and sawdust, relics from her father’s efforts a month before to rebuild the burnt treehouse. Lily collapsed to her knees and relaxed her arms, and the pterodactyl burst free and flapped its wings in panic. It stirred up spirals of leaves that rolled like tumbleweed over the dewy earth, but to Lily’s relief it didn’t escape. Although her arms hung limp at her sides, some glue had dried and the creature, fight as it may, stuck to the inside of her sweater.

Lily closed her eyes as the fanning of the pterodactyl's wings lapped her face. In the colors that danced through her eyelids, she discerned flecks of sunset, fireworks, the crackle of a fire. For an instant she pretended that she was back at the foot of the mountains in the Realm, with Cedric stepping out into the sunlight, his eyes the same but everything else glittering and new.

"You've *got* to be kidding me!"

Lily opened one eye. Adam stood over her, his arms folded across his chest. He grabbed the pterodactyl by its awkward neck, and it squealed and flapped in protest. "Seriously Lily? *Another* one? This has got to stop!"

"Just help me with her, please." Lily pried the pterodactyl from the fibers of her sweater, and its wings promptly slapped Adam in the face. Adam held the creature at arm's length and used his free hand to wipe a blob of glue from his forehead. He inadvertently smeared the paste into his cowlick, which stood upright like the comb of a rooster.

"Sheila, stop fighting!" Lily scolded.

"Sheila?" Adam said, scrunching his face. "Sheila the pterodactyl?"

Lily shrugged. "It was the first thing I could think of."

"With a name like that, she *should* be mad."

"Hey. Look who's talking. You named the scrambled eggs Glorf."

"No, you named him. I only made a suggestion." With Sheila still flapping in one hand, Adam struggled up the rope ladder, and Lily followed behind him. Rigel swooped down from his

perch on the Fortress roof, and together they fiddled with his handiwork: a silver net he'd draped over the treehouse to secure its occupants.

"Your knots are super tight, Rigel," Lily said, unraveling the cords to free the doorway. After tugging at a few strands that scratched her fingers, she loosened the netting and then shoved the wooden door open.

The scent of new wood wafted toward them, and pine shavings clung to their sneakers as they stepped inside. Bizarre creatures teemed throughout the room, languished on shelves, and lined the walls from top to bottom. A pile of mutant scrambled eggs (that would be Glorf) had slithered atop Lily's painting set, and now noisily munched some paintbrush bristles. Serpentine shoelaces coiled on the floor and dozed in a patch of sunlight. Beside the shoelaces, a rabbit in a top hat reclined on the floor, one foot lazily draped over the other as he perused an old copy of *National Geographic*. A fairy floated about the room like a tuft of milkweed silk, and an armadillo with horned-rimmed spectacles rummaged through a box of crackers. After much snuffling, he wedged his head into the box and waddled over to Lily for help.

Lily crouched down to free the armadillo, then Adam, still struggling after ascending the ladder, pushed Sheila the pterodactyl through the door. She flapped a few times, circled the crowd, perched on a coat hook, and cocked her head as if to say, "Really? This is it?"

Lily shrugged. "I'm sorry. I know it's not home for you."

"So, do we feed them now?" Adam asked. "I can't stay long, I've got baseball practice."

"Yeah, sounds good. Did you bring them?"

"Yeah." Adam swung his backpack to the floor. "But we need to figure out a better solution. I only have a few more s'mores bars left to trade. Plus, I'm getting a reputation as a food hog."

"Thanks, Adam. I wish they all liked something else, but they're pretty picky."

"Picky? Glorf is eating your paintbrushes."

Lily giggled, and Adam shook his head and pulled a packet of brown paper from the knapsack. He opened the package to reveal a mound of tater tots, all of them procured during trades in the cafeteria. The heap was a sad little offering—half of them were smooshed, the other half soggy, and all of them were cold—but at the first glimpse of them the entire group of creatures pounced, clambering for each morsel and knocking Adam to the floor in their fervor for gummy potato goodness. Lily laughed, then dropped to her knees beside him and pulled a water bottle from her bag. When she unscrewed the cap of her bottle, a shrub in the shape of a dog bounded over to lap up a drink, and a mouse with wings soon joined it. Lily smiled at them and stroked the mouse between its ears with her index finger.

"Lily, I wasn't kidding about what I said earlier. This really has to stop."

Lily's smile faded. "You told me that yesterday."

"And the day before. And now you've added a pterodactyl to the bunch."

Sheila squawked in protest.

"You know I didn't do it on purpose," Lily said. "It just keeps . . . *happening*. I try to control it, but every time the stone starts glowing I can't stop it. It's like it has a mind of its own all of a sudden."

"I get that. But how much longer do you think we can hide all these guys? Especially if you keep making more? It's only a matter of time before someone else sees these things." He glanced up at the pterodactyl, who jeered like a blue jay, circled to the floor, and swiped a tater tot from the rabbit in the top hat. In response, the rabbit jumped to his feet, removed his hat, and swatted Sheila over the head with it.

"Actually . . ." she glanced at Adam anxiously, "someone already has."

"What? What do you mean, somebody has? Who?"

"Keisha Reynolds."

"Who's that?"

"She's new. She moved here a few weeks ago, I think. She's super smart. Anyway, she was sitting right next to me when Sheila came to life."

"What did you do? What did you say?"

"Nothing! It was in the middle of art class, what could I do? I hid Sheila and I got out."

“Great. This is just great.” Adam raked his hands through his hair, then hugged his knees to his chest.

“I don’t think we should panic about it,” said Lily. “I’ll just talk to her tomorrow.”

“And say what, exactly?”

“I don’t know, Adam. I’ll think of something. What else can we do?”

“You can tell your dad.”

Lily didn’t answer. A lump lodged in her throat.

“You’ve said you could trust your dad with anything. I don’t understand why you don’t ask him for help with this. I mean, he knows about that soothstone better than anybody. Wouldn’t he be able to figure out something?”

“Maybe. Probably.”

“Then why not tell him?”

Lily stood up. She tried to coax Sheila from the corner where she’d retreated, but the pterodactyl merely blinked at her. “He doesn’t talk about the Realm anymore. Not even when it’s just us. It’s almost like he wants to forget all about it.”

“Wants to forget it? I know the feeling.”

“You can’t mean that.”

“Sure I do.”

“Adam, you mean you’d *never* want to go back?”

“Nope.”

“Not even for just a little while? To see Cedric?”

“Cedric hated me.”



“That’s not true.”

“He called me a maggot!”

“That was before he got to know you. And let’s be honest, at that moment, you kind of deserved it.”

“Lily, we barely got out of the Realm alive the first time. Why would you want to go back and risk your life all over again?”

Lily sat cross-legged on the floor, face to face with Adam. She pulled the soothstone fragment from her pocket and turned it in her fingers. One side of the stone, smooth and polished, still retained the pale wisps she remembered, like clouds frozen in the rock. When she flipped it over, however, she found the opposite surface cracked, and its edge charred and warped from its encounter with Eymah. “I hate keeping this from my dad,” she said. “I mean, I really *hate* it. But if I tell him, he’s going to ask me to give him the stone, and then I’ll never get back to the Realm again.”

Adam pointed to the burnt edge. “Would that really be such a bad thing? You almost died, like, thirty-seven times. Plus, your dad is home now.”

Adam stared into the distance, and Lily could tell his mind was whirring. “Did your dad come for Kirsty’s birthday?” she asked.

Adam winced, as if he’d swallowed something sour. “Nope. That’s why I made all the stupid s’mores bars. I was trying to cheer her up.”

Lily tugged at her shoelaces. “I’m sorry, Adam.”

He shrugged. “I just don’t get why you’d want to go back, when your dad is here. He’s home.”

“That’s just the thing. None of this *feels* like home. My family does, but as soon as I leave them, it’s like—I don’t know. Like I just don’t belong.” She looked up at him. “Do you ever feel that way?”

“Sure. I think everyone does, sometimes.” Adam held out a crumb of tater tot to the winged mouse. “But why would the Realm be any different?”

“All the ways I goof up here, seemed to—I dunno—actually *mean* something there. Like, it was a good thing to have my head in the clouds all the time.”

“But Pax said you didn’t belong there anymore, remember? He’s the one who sent you back.”

“Maybe he didn’t know. He thought Eymah destroyed all the soothstones, and maybe he didn’t realize I still had a piece of one.”

“I don’t know much about anything, but after seeing the stuff he did, I’m pretty sure he knew.”

Reluctantly, Lily nodded. She remembered how Pax had melted away their fear in the Petrified Forest and lit their path to guide them out. He’d banished Eymah to the fiery depths, and once the Catacombs crumbled, Pax made everything new. Adam was right.

And yet, she wondered, why wouldn’t Pax want her to stay? If he knew she still had a soothstone, why would he send her back with it?

“Anyway, I’ve gotta go,” Adam said, clambering to his feet. “Coach is gonna kill me if I’m late again.”

“You’ve been late?”

“Yeah. Tons.”

“Why?”

He raised his eyebrows. “Can you take a guess?”

Lily smirked, then packed up her own things and followed him out of the treehouse. Rigel lashed the doorway with more cords, and she kissed the top of his silky head, then waved to Adam.

Lost in her thoughts as she headed for home, Lily didn’t hear the gigantic burp that emanated from the treehouse window, or the screech of alarm that followed.