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Shetland magic. I loved it!’ ALEX ENGLISH



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this is going to be a favourite book for a LOT of children.’

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‘A tender story of family with a whiplash of thunder.’

JASBINDER BILAN



‘*The Weather Weaver* crackles with stormy magic.
A masterfully written, utterly spellbinding adventure that
swept me away from the very first page. Tamsin has a rare
gift for crafting mesmerising worlds so real and tangible
that they stay with you long after the last word has
been read. An electrifying and assured debut that is
destined to become a modern classic.’

DAMARIS YOUNG

‘Tamsin is an enormously talented writer. This is a beautifully atmospheric and magical novel, which young readers and grown-ups will love.’

LUCY CUTHEW



‘A middle-grade book perfect for dreamers of all ages.’

ANDREINA CORDANI



‘A warm, sensitive story with an original take on valuing and channeling one’s emotions.’

KIRSTY APPLEBAUM



‘This book is wonderful, drawing on the myths and legends about the beautiful Shetland Isles and the wonders of Mother Nature’s most unpredictable creation – weather.’ NETGALLEY



‘I would recommend this book to all middle grade readers and anyone who loves myths, legends and all those who look up at the clouds and dream.’

NETGALLEY



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A
GATHERING
STORM

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*For Callen, who weathers every storm
with grace and intelligence*





One

THE GATHERING

THE sea was a shimmering net of sparkles, stretching as far as Stella could see. She trained her binoculars on the beach and searched slowly from one end to the other. Tiny waves lapped at the rocks, but otherwise there was no movement. Nobody down there. No sea witch stalking the shallows.

Tamar had claimed that the Haken wouldn't return for months, maybe years, but Tamar had been wrong before. Stella wanted to be sure. It had become her daily ritual – scan the beach whenever they passed this way – make sure nothing was creeping ashore.

“No sign of her,” she said to her cloud.

Nimbus didn't seem that interested in being a lookout. He was zigzagging back and forth across the hillside, flinging brief bursts of rain in all directions. He looked like he was having fun.

"Uh uh! No, you don't!" said Stella, stepping back as he swooped towards her.

A flicker of white caught her eye and she brought the binoculars up again: a sailing boat, near the headland, its sails flapping as it tacked. Her heart contracted and she glanced quickly at Nimbus. He was firing rain vertically upwards, then swooping higher to catch it.

"Nimbus! People!"

Nimbus shot straight up in the air for a better view.

"Stop it! They'll see you. Act normal!"

He froze for a moment, then plummeted to the ground and tumbled down the grassy slope to hide behind her legs.

Stella let out an impatient puff. That was *not* normal. But at least down low, he wasn't so obvious.

She squinted through the binoculars. Out by the headland, the triangular white sail tightened to take the wind, and the boat turned again, out of the bay.

"I don't think they saw," she muttered.

Unless they had binoculars too?

Stella looked down at Nimbus. "If I say 'act normal', just *act normal*, okay? Like a *normal* cloud! Clouds don't go shooting around all over the place *or* hide behind people – not even their friends."

Nimbus glimmered cheerful yellow. It was hard to tell if he was agreeing, or just pleased to be her friend. Maybe both?

Stella shook her head and smiled. “Come on. We’d better get to Tamar’s. We’re meant to be there already.”

‘An early start’, Tamar had said yesterday. But Grandpa had refused to let her leave without breakfast, and she hadn’t wanted to skip checking the beach. That would be *just* their luck, if the one day she *didn’t* check was the day the Haken returned . . .

* * *

Tamar was rolling a fat wooden barrel across the flat stretch of grass in front of the croft. Her tufty white hair was sticking out in all directions and she was pink in the face. Four barrels already stood in a row outside the small cottage.

“Morning, Tamar!” called Stella.

“Ah, good, there you are. Give me a hand.”

Stella hurried over and helped Tamar roll the barrel over to the others and tip it upright. She lifted the edge of the lid and caught a sweet smell – meadow flowers. The inside was padded with twists of hay.

Tamar took the lid from her and set it down, then picked up an armful of what looked like rolling pins. There was a large pile of them, waiting on the ground next to the barrels. She began standing the thick sticks on their ends inside the barrel.

“What are those?” said Stella.

“Rain sticks,” said Tamar.

Stella picked up one of the sticks and ran her finger down the

side. It was intricately carved with a spiral of leaves and birds and flowers. She shook it next to her ear, but it didn't make a sound.

"I thought rain sticks were meant to sound like rain?" said Stella.

"These ones are empty," said Tamar. "That's why I've got them. Charge them up, bring them back to the Gathering, swap them for the empties. There's heavy rain due. Good time to get these charged up."

"*Please* can I come with you?" pleaded Stella. "Please!"

Tamar had already told her several times that she wouldn't take her to the Gathering, but Stella was convinced she could wear her down eventually.

Tamar shook her head. "These things shouldn't be rushed. It's far too early for you to take the trials."

The trials – that's what they were working towards. A series of tests, to prove you were ready to be a full weather weaver, not just an apprentice.

"Not to take the trials," said Stella. "I know I'm not ready. I just want to *see* it all!"

The Gathering sounded amazing – weather weavers from all over the world trading stories and unusual weathers. It was basically like a massive party. A festival of weather weaving. Even if she couldn't join in yet, Stella *really* wanted to go.

"Please?" She smiled hopefully.

Tamar shook her head. "Trust me. It's not a good idea."

"But why?"

Tamar stroked her mouth and looked at Stella uncomfortably. “You’re new to all this, and Nimbus is . . . unpredictable.”

“He’ll be on his best behaviour. I swear. You won’t even know he’s there.”

Nimbus popped out of the last barrel, scattering hay. Tamar raised an eyebrow and looked doubtfully at him.

“I could be your helper?” said Stella. “Carry stuff, run errands . . .”

“Huh,” grunted Tamar. “I don’t see you helping with these rain sticks!”

Stella quickly picked up an armful of sticks and began slotting them into the barrel. *Be good, Nimbus!* she thought. *I think she’s coming around.*

The ends of the rain sticks were smooth and solid. Stella frowned as something occurred to her: “How does the rain get in?”

“It doesn’t,” said Tamar. “Just the sound. Rain follows rain. The sound of it calls in any wild rain clouds in the area.”

“Why would anyone use a rain stick when they could just tell their cloud to rain?”

Tamar rolled her eyes. “Not everybody *has* their own cloud, Stella. There are plenty of people who need rain, but don’t have a cloud. Count yourself lucky.”

Stella looked at Nimbus and smiled. *I do feel lucky.*

Nimbus fluffed himself up to full size and floated a bit higher – he’d obviously heard her thought.

“Alright, no need to get big-headed!” laughed Stella.

Tamar slotted the lid back into place and patted the top. “Good.

All set for this afternoon. Should be a good trade this year – I’ve heard there’s a whole delegation coming from warmer climes. They love a bit of rain. A nice cold breeze always goes down well, too.”

“Shall I go and whistle more winds, then?” said Stella, her eyes lighting up. Nimbus bounced in excitement.

“No.” Tamar shook her head. “Nothing worth catching, this morning. We should have more luck this afternoon – the sentinels say there’s a storm front coming in.”

Stella squinted out at the row of huge clouds on the horizon – the sentinels – Tamar’s early warning system. She still didn’t quite understand how Tamar spoke to them, but they were always spot on about the weather.

Shame they’re not as reliable about sea witches.

“I checked the beach,” she said. “No sign of the Haken.”

“You don’t need to keep doing that,” said Tamar. “I told you. It’ll be ages before she’s back.”

Stella shrugged. It didn’t hurt to look. “There was a boat,” she said.

Tamar narrowed her eyes. “A boat?”

“Yep. It’s gone now, though. It was just tacking.”

“You two weren’t *practising*, were you? They won’t have seen anything unusual?”

Stella’s heart gave a guilty skip.

The people on the boat wouldn’t have seen – she was pretty sure. Even if they had, they wouldn’t believe it. They’d just think their eyes were playing tricks on them.

Tamar might brain-fog them though, just to be sure . . .

Stella shook her head. “The boat was far away. Anyway, I told you, I was just checking the beach. We weren’t practising.”

“Good,” said Tamar, frowning out at the sea. “Always pays to be careful.”

“Can we practice lightning again today?” said Stella, rapidly changing the subject. “Nimbus is getting really good at it, now. Well, apart from his aim, but he’s getting better.”

Nimbus darkened and let out a heavy rumble, making Tamar jump. “Shoosh!” she scolded. “No! Being good at lightning doesn’t mean you get to skip green. Verdure again, this morning. A weather weaver needs to know *every* colour. The full rainbow.”

“But we’re rubbish at growing stuff,” groaned Stella. “You know we are.”

“All the more reason to practice,” said Tamar. “It just takes patience, that’s all. And a good strong feeling of belonging.”

Stella hadn’t had any trouble with the first part of green weather magic – secrets of stone – she could hear stone stories almost as soon as she started listening. But growing plants? *That* wasn’t so easy. She hadn’t managed to grow a single one so far.

Stella huffed – lightning was much more fun.

“Chin up,” said Tamar. “Just think how pleased your grandpa will be – you can give him a hand with his veg patch. This is one type of weather magic he can get on board with!”

True, thought Stella, with a sigh.

“Did you bring everything I asked for?” said Tamar.

Stella nodded. She propped her bag on the wooden bench by the front door and emptied out the things she'd brought from home: spare seeds from Grandpa's shed, a bottle of water, and a wooden dibber for making the holes.

"A dibber." Tamar picked it up and chuckled. "That man and his tools! You know you can just poke a hole with your finger?"

Stella took the dibber from Tamar and wrapped her hands round it – of course she knew that, but she was still going to use the dibber. It was a big deal, being lent one of Grandpa's tools. He was very protective of them. And he'd whittled it himself, so it was special.

Tamar picked up the packets of seeds and shuffled through them. "Black potatoes, kale, beans, courgettes. Lovely! He's given us a fine selection. All you need now is a well-rooted sense of belonging!"

Stella took a deep breath and closed her eyes. *Home. I'm home. I'm where I belong.*

She was sure she'd felt it properly once or twice this week – mostly when she wasn't expecting it. But she wasn't sure she could just conjure it up. She opened her eyes and squinted up at her cloud. "You up for giving it another go, Nimbus?"

Nimbus bobbed eagerly. He looked more confident than she felt.