



WHERE

Do Writers Get

IDEAS?

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HOMESCHOOLED TEEN AUTHOR

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ALSO KNOWN AS PRINCESS KITTEN



TABLETOP ACADEMY PRESS

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Parts of this report were originally published on Teresa's Kitten's Purrings blog,
TeresaGaskins.com.

Published by Tabletop Academy Press, Blue Mound, IL, USA.

TabletopAcademy.net

Cover Photo Credit:

KostyaKlimenko via DepositPhotos.com.

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INTRODUCTION



What I'm going to talk about today is where I start off with my stories—the inspiration, I guess you'd call it. You have to find your own style of writing. I can only tell you what I do, and something that might work for Bob might not work for Frank.

Normally I start by my mind wandering off and running into a scene. The scene could be anywhere from the story: the beginning, the climax, anywhere in between, and (though this one is probably the rarest) the very end, when everything's cooling down. Other times, it's a character that my mind meets, someone who intrigues me, perhaps they have a sad and dark background, or are under-adventurous, or overly so, or anything.

Either way, if it's something that draws me in, I'll bring it back to the real world with me, or at least remember where it lives. Then as time goes on, I'll come up with a story for this scene or character, something that will allow me to use this new friend.

That done, I start writing.

Whether I start with my scene or not, I start writing, and the story becomes the new home for that scene or character. Well, assuming it keeps me intrigued enough that another idea doesn't come and barge in and make me want to write its story instead...

For instance, in my latest NaNoWriMo story, the inspiration for it came from a scene, in which—well, it made me want to know how those characters got there, and where they were going. So I set to work writing. I haven't actually gotten to that scene yet, and by the time I do, it will probably have changed, but that's where it started.

Here, I'll give you a couple of examples from stories I wrote on my blog ([Kitten's Purring](#)) a few years back. Happy reading!

—Teresa Gaskins



EXAMPLE 1



When I was 9 years old, I thought of this image...

*Catterings are pink with gold wings and green eyes.
A cattering smells sweet like a rose. It sounds like a cat
purring long and loud, and it's soft like a fuzzy, warm
blanket. And I'm happy to say I don't know what it tastes
like, because I've never tried to eat one, and I never will.

And now you know what a cattering is, and I hope that
if you ever meet one, that you will like it.*

... Which led to the following story.

☿ How I Met a Cattering ☿

This is the story of how I first met a cattering.

I was walking along in the woods one day, and I saw something move. I turned around and started home. I was pretty sure that I didn't want to meet whatever it was. Luck wasn't with me.

A wolf jumped out at me. I stepped back just in time to not get eaten alive right on the spot.

The wolf began to circle around me, growling angrily. Man, I was scared! As I watched, I saw that the wolf was really thin.

Just then, I was saved. A flash of pink and gold came out of the sky. It was the fastest thing I ever saw. The wolf ran off with its tail between its legs.

The thing pulled to a stop in front of me. It was shaped like a cat with wings. It was pink, and the wings were gold. It was not only the fastest thing, but the most beautiful thing I ever saw.

Then it spoke. "I'm a cattering. My name is Serenity. What is yours?"

I was about ready to run off screaming, but I answered anyway. "My name is Kitten. I'm honored to meet you."

"And I'm honored to meet you, too."

Soon we became great friends, and she walked with me all the way home.

That is the story of how I first met a cattering.



EXAMPLE 2



When I was 11 years old, I made a typo...

I was commenting on my blogging classmate Climbing Gecko's blog, [Intellectual Ramblings](#). For some reason I was putting my name at the end of the comment, and I put "Kitteb."

Of course, I did fix it, so my name didn't change. :P

That was a boring story... Hmm... let's see if I can't spice that up...

... Which led to the following story.

☞ How My Name Nearly Changed ☞

I, Princess Kitten of the land of Kitten's Purring, was walking along a street observing my kingdom.

Now, I was the Princess of this land. But there was no king or queen, prince or other princess. I was feeling very lonely.

Of course I had my subjects, but they always talk about the same thing. And they don't really let you talk back. Once I found one that did talk back...It didn't go well. He was after all half crazy...or was it just his randomness? Read more about that encounter in "[Spam \(this is a random...\)](#)."

So anyway, after a while you memorize each subject's story/conversation/whatever you wanna call it, and he or she gets boring...And I get bored with them faster than most people.

I decided I would write a letter to a friend of mine, Climbing Gecko from the land of Intellectual Ramblings. So I tramped up to my room and pulled out my quill and some paper and started to write. But then I didn't know what to write, so I decided I would pay his land a visit so I would know what to say.

So I got in my traveling clothes, petted my kitties and my white tiger and started off, leaving my white tiger in charge.

My plain brown T-shirt and blue jeans twisted and flapped in the wind. I stopped next to the stables and grabbed my favorite stallion. He was a smooth-coated brown Arabian named Elementary.

I saddled him up and started off, taking my time. We walked

out through the city gates and down the long stone pathway that went between two mountains. It weaved and twisted, and I listened to the steady *clop, clop* of Elementary's hooves against the stones.

Now it was still kinda cold, and dark, gray thunder clouds covered the sky. I was able to keep things bright and cheerful in my land, but outside of it was a whole different matter.

Finally, we emerged into an elegant, green plain and farm land with rolling hills. I took a deep breath of the wet air; wet air could also be called humid air, you know [random science fact].

We trotted for a while, then it happened!

As the boulders started coming in around me, it took only a glance to affirm my fear. I was under a mountain ogre attack. There were about ten of them, the normal size for an ogre clan.

Now, mountain ogres have very poor aim, but that doesn't mean that they don't sometimes get a throw in...and when they do, you'd better hope you have paid all your debts and stuff.

I spurred Elementary into motion. He reared and ran forward with a burst of speed. As he ran, I turned and loosened my bow from its resting place, notched an arrow, and let fly with a loud *TWANG*.

It landed in one of the ogre's armpit, on a small flap of tender skin. The monster roared and ran aimlessly away, upsetting the others as it went. I sent many other arrows flying at other various soft spots, which slowed the rain of boulders and sent the ogres, one by one, running for home.

When I finally got out of range (which took a while, since ogres can throw boulders very far), I was low on arrows. But that didn't matter much. I still had my sword and several darts if needed.

We resumed our steady, trotting pace. The *clip clop* of

Elementary's hooves against the stone road calmed me. It was smooth plains the rest the way to the land of Intellectual Ramblings.

Once there, I looked around and talked to Climbing Gecko's subjects, though I didn't see him anywhere. The ride home was uneventful.

When I got home, it turned out that my talking white tiger had tried to teach all my other cats how to speak, so they crowded around me shouting "Kitteb! Kitteb!" until I shoed them away so I could write my letter to Climbing Gecko. But as I was writing, I accidentally put Kitteb down instead of Kitten! But I remembered it right before I mailed the letter and ripped off the envelope to change it.

It was a close call, but I did NOT let my name go out as Kitteb.

After that, I taught my cats and kittens the proper way to speak.



EXAMPLE 3



Despite its name, Chloe's story was driven mostly by Kate's character. I came up with Kate years ago (probably around the time of the first Avengers movie) as part of a superhero group some friends and I created.

Originally Kate was from the past and had grown up in an Assassins' Guild, but an evil scientist who wanted to use her skills brought her forward through time. The time jump caused her to gain her super-smart abilities. She also had a cat (of course!), so she implanted a device that allowed her to telepathically communicate with it. Stuck in the future with no Assassins' Guild to serve, she took over leadership of the superhero group. She was a collection of characteristics that I found interesting. Assassin. Super smart. Had a cat. Serious personality. Calculating. A bit snide.

When I was 16, my youth pastor started writing a story to share at our student group meetings, one installment per week. He asked if I wanted to contribute to the series. But writing for someone else brought a new problem—since the story world

was already defined, I had to tweak Kate's backstory to fit.

The main pieces still worked: member of the Assassins' Guild gets super-smart ability and changes to the good side. The fact that she was no longer from the past actually helped the story, since I could have the Assassins' Guild chasing her down, like any good Assassins' Guild would. Kate ended up with a sarcastic streak, because those are fun to write and because I needed her character to be a bit lighter than I had first imagined her, without being completely innocent and polite.

Chloe, despite being the main character in this story, didn't get much thought. Homeschooled, and insecure. That let me relate enough to start writing without thinking too hard about her character. As the story moved forward, I let her interactions with Kate define her.

Actually, the most important part of Chloe's development was her name. The first chapter refused to flow until I found a name that worked. I'm not sure why "Chloe" worked, but it fit her. Or maybe my brain just liked the sound of that name and then tweaked her to fit it. Her superhero name, Ora, came because I searched for names with 'light' in the meaning. It was the female form of Or, which means 'light' in Hebrew, and that seemed fitting for a Christian superhero.

❧ Chloe, Chapter 1 ❧

Chloe's nails dug into her palms. She stood at the edge of the sidewalk, staring at a woman a block ahead of her. The woman kept glancing back and forth, then down at something in her hand.

Go ask if she's lost, whispered a voice in Chloe's head. *'Are you lost?'* Three simple words. Chloe took a deep breath and forced her hands to unclench. She took half a step, then stopped again. *The town's not that big, she'll be fine. Besides, even if I try to help, I'll probably take her to the wrong place.*

She hesitated a second longer, then, with a sigh, turned to continue on her way.

Normally Chloe appreciated the quiet afternoons, but today she would have liked some hustle and bustle: the soft sound of her own footsteps were not enough to drown out the voice nagging at her for leaving the woman alone. Even once she'd reached her goal, a small park three blocks away, and it was too late to change her decision, her conscience grumbled on.

Taking a deep breath, Chloe forced out the voice, replacing it with the sights, sounds, and smells of the park.

It was a small park, several trees spaced sporadically, some benches—a couple even with tables—along a path that wound through the grass. In one corner sat a small playground. A brick wall wrapped around it all, making it feel closed off from the rest of the world. A few birds chirped in the trees, and a squirrel

dashed across the ground in front of her, but the park was otherwise empty.

Chloe jogged down the path to her favorite bench, pulling a physics book from her bag as she went. She hopped onto the bench, pirouetted and dropped to sit cross-legged, and was soon lost in the world of light as a wave.

“Chloe? Chloe Walker? Imagine meeting you here!”

Chloe’s head snapped up.

A tall, wiry girl stood next to the bench. She wore a black sweater that looked absolutely sweltering in the noon sun. Black pants of an unfamiliar material flared over black combat boots. Her dark brown hair was pulled back in a pony-tail, revealing dusky black, crystal earrings. Against all the black, the girl’s cheerful smile seemed out of place.

Chloe stiffened. “Do I know you?” she asked.

“Ah, you probably wouldn’t remember. Summer camp by that lake in Minnesota, three years ago. You’d gotten lost and somehow wandered all the way to town and I had to help you get back. Name’s Kate.”

“Heh, sounds like something I’d do,” Chloe muttered, raking through her memories. “I think I remember. You insisted on taking me yourself rather than asking adults.”

“Yeah,” Kate chuckled. “I’ve always been the self-reliant type. Probably not the greatest role model material. I haven’t changed much.”

“Your clothes certainly haven’t changed.” Chloe leaned back into the bench. Though she couldn’t recall much about Kate, she already liked the older girl.

“Well, they’re not *entirely* the same. But enough about me, how’ve you been? You’re fifteen now, right?”

“Still fourteen, actua—”

Kate sprung back. A knife whirled through where her leg had been and thudded into the ground.

Chloe went silent, her mouth still open. She twisted to see where the knife had come from, and her mouth dropped even further open as a man leaped from the wall to land in front of the bench, rolling and coming up standing. A second man dropped down and slowly approached the girls.

"Found you, Kate," said the first man, grinning.

"Really? I hadn't noticed," said Kate.

"Humor doesn't suit you, Kate," said the second.

"You're just salty that I'm better with words than you."

"Salty?" His face twisted with confusion, and his slow advance stopped.

In his momentary hesitation, Kate spun a roundhouse kick straight to his face. He raised his hands in time to block it, but she continued her spin and sent her second boot into his stomach, driving him to the ground.

The first man jumped forward, swinging a punch, but Kate flipped over the fallen man to avoid it. As she landed in a crouch the second man groaned and started to rise. With a quick flick of her wrist, she struck at the base of his neck. He crumpled, and she moved back, rising to a fighting stance.

"Useless idiot," said the first man, stepping over the still form of his companion.

"Chloe, run!" Kate said.

Chloe stood, dropping her book, but her body wouldn't go further.

"Is he dead?" she said.

"Just unconscious, I don't kill. Now get out of here before you get hurt."

"Aw, chasing your friend away?" the man said. "I was hoping

you'd introduce us. Any friend of yours is a not-so-much-friend of ours."

Chloe backed away, his tone sending shivers up her spine.

"She's not a friend," said Kate. "We just met today, so leave her alone."

"Come peacefully, and I wouldn't care if you'd known her since before you were born."

Kate's stance faltered, her arms dropping slightly. The man's grin grew wider, and Chloe didn't think the term 'crocodile smile' had ever been so fitting.

Then Kate's hand moved, and in one motion she wrenched the earring from her right ear and pitched it at the ground. It landed just in front of him, exploding in a black plume.

The man staggered back with a cry, covering his eyes.

Kate jumped over the bench and grabbed Chloe's arm. "Move!"

Chloe spun to follow Kate, her legs sluggishly starting to work again. But as she turned, she saw another man had entered the park. He stood a few yards off, his hand pulled back to throw a knife.

"Kate, behind us," said Chloe.

Kate pulled up short, released Chloe's arm, and turned to face the new threat, but the man's arm was already swinging forward.

Everything seemed to shift and, to Chloe, it was like she could see two versions of the world. One was normal, the grass and trees and air of the once-quiet park. But somehow, separate from that world but also in the same space, it was like they were under water. Tumultuous water, with tides coming from every direction, bouncing and overlapping and swirling, but not overpowering each other.

Without thought, Chloe stepped in front of Kate, throwing her arms out as if to refuse the knife access. As her arms moved, the ‘water’ between her and the knife-thrower stopped, then exploded out in a flash of white.

Chloe’s vision went completely dark, and she cried out as pain lanced up her arm. Squeezing her eyes shut she staggered back into Kate.

When she opened her eyes, her vision was still black, but she could see—or sense—that the waves had returned to normal. And somehow she knew that the knife-thrower had collapsed, his arms over his eyes.

“Thanks,” Kate whispered in her ear. “Now come on.”

Kate pulled her arm, and Chloe stumbled along, blinking rapidly. The waves were slowly fading out, and as they went her regular vision returned.

The two girls had already crossed the park and were nearing a bench. Just before they reached it Kate released Chloe, and without slowing she stepped onto the bench and then launched herself over the wall.

Oh great, Chloe thought, but she managed to mimic Kate’s steps and sprang towards the wall. She didn’t get enough height, and her knees banged against the bricks, yet her hands caught the top and she pulled herself over. For a second, she thought she’d fall and hit her head on the sidewalk, but Kate caught her and helped her find her feet.

“Not bad. I could make a ninja out of you,” said Kate. Then, “This way.”

Kate grabbed Chloe’s hand, and they started running again. As they reached the corner, another man appeared, hauling himself over the park wall. “Not so fast, Kate.”

Chloe hesitated, but Kate merely snorted. In one motion

she pulled lose her second earring and tossed it at the man. It landed just between his hands, exploding straight into his face. He screamed and dropped back out of sight.

“Can’t believe I had to waste two shadow bombs. The nerve of them. Let’s get out of here before any more idiots show up.”

You’re following a stranger, Chloe. How dumb can you get? she thought as they fled down the street. But she didn’t dare wait to see who else might come.

Besides, she had questions that needed answers. “That was amazing. How did you do the thing with the light?” she asked.

“The light?” Kate said, glancing back over her shoulder, her brow furrowing.

Chloe thought she knew what the tall girl would say next, but very much hoped she was wrong.

“That wasn’t me. That was you.”

❧ Chloe, Chapter 2 ❧

The two girls dashed down the street in silence. Chloe gasped for breath and felt a stitch in her side. Behind them, she could hear the thud of boots.

“Almost there,” said Kate. She cut across an intersection and turned left.

Chloe hadn’t thought she was out of shape, but her legs were beginning to burn. Kate didn’t seem faintly bothered by the run. She looked like she was enjoying a pleasant afternoon jog.

They went another block, then Kate grabbed Chloe’s arm and pulled her to the right.

“My car’s just around this corner,” she said. “Get in.”

After the ninja-style fighting and exploding earrings, Chloe expected to see a black sedan. That’s what spies drive, right? Or perhaps a mustang to fit an adventurous lifestyle. But Kate shoved her toward a red minivan.

Out of the corner of her eye, Chloe saw Kate tap at a bright silver watch, and the minivan’s engine revved. Before Chloe even reached it, the door popped open. Without hesitation, she leaped in and pulled the door shut.

“Seatbelt,” said Kate, jumping in the other side.

Chloe grasped her seatbelt and jerked it around, fumbling with the latch. As her adrenaline rush faded, shadows seemed to close in at the edges of her vision. The world was starting to spin slightly.

She heard a click as Kate latched her own seatbelt, and then the car jerked out of its parking space.

Chloe's seatbelt finally clicked. She let out a long breath she didn't know she'd been holding.

She had just begun to relax when Kate hit the gas. With a loud screech, the minivan roared forward and careened down the street. The car whipped around a turn, not even hesitating for the stop sign, and Chloe's shoulder slammed into the door.

"Oops, should have warned you," Kate said. "But they almost caught us as it was."

"S-sorry, I slowed you down," said Chloe.

"Are you kidding? You were great. I was prepared for them to get us right away. But you exceeded all expectations."

The car veered around one more turn, forcing another car to slam on its brakes.

Kate laughed. "Good thing this town's quieter than a ghost town."

"Do you even have a license?" said Chloe.

"I'm sixteen," was all Kate said.

They drove in silence for a minute. As they pulled onto a highway, Kate slowed the van and set cruise control.

"All right, we should be in the clear. The time for questions is now."

"I don't even know where to start," Chloe said. Her brain felt frozen, and she wished the whole situation would go away. She covered her face with her hands.

"Chloe!" gasped Kate, pulling on her left arm.

Glancing down, Chloe saw that her forearm was red with blood that welled from a gash.

I wonder when that happened. She could barely even feel it.

"I should have realized earlier. Here." Kate reached across to

jerk open the glove box and pulled out a small spray bottle and some cloths.

“Kate...the road...” murmured Chloe. She remembered now the pain when the light had blinded her.

“It’s fine,” Kate said as she wiped at the blood. “As long as I keep it to a normal speed, this car can drive itself.”

Then Kate spritzed the bottle at the gash twice, and a white film covered the cut.

“Spray on bandages. They should stop the bleeding for now. You’ll get fixed up properly once we get where we’re going.”

“Where...?” Chloe glanced out the window at the passing cornfields. They were headed for the city.

“My church, among other things. But that’s easier to show than explain.”

“Your church?” Whatever answer Chloe had expected, that wasn’t it. She shook the tired fog away from her mind and forced herself to sit up straight. “Maybe you should just start at the beginning.”

“You’re probably right, though you won’t believe me.” Kate leaned back, setting the bottle and cloths on the floor between their seats. “I am—well, was—a member of the Assassins Guild. My whole family was actually. But a few years back we became Christians and left the Guild, for obvious reasons.

“The Guild doesn’t take kindly to deserters, so we’ve been constantly on the move since then. We would move into a new town, stay a couple weeks or so, and then leave before the Guild found us. And wherever we stopped, we’d find a church to attend.

“Only when we moved here this summer, it turned out the church we found had some secrets of its own. There’s actually a ‘League of Incredible Students’ under its youth house.” Kate paused to laugh. “Basically a bunch of the teenagers in the area

were being gifted with super powers by God. Including me, actually, or we probably wouldn't have found out."

Chloe leaned her head back against the seat. "Super powers?"

"I'm not really the best at explaining it. But, for example, I'm super smart, especially with machines, though I dabble in chemistry, too. I did all the modifications on this car, and my watch, and made my earrings. And my memory's almost perfect.

"Anyway. Since I ended up joining the League, my family decided to stick around. So I was getting the lay of the land, which is why I was at the park and met you. But I guess the Guild finally caught up with us. And then it turns out you have a super power, too! Good thing, or they probably would have caught me. You know what this goes to show?"

"Um, that the world is a whole lot weirder than I thought?" said Chloe, ignoring the part about herself having a super power, that couldn't be right. In fact, none of it could be right. Maybe it was all a dream, and she'd wake up and it would be today again, and this time she'd stay far away from the park.

Kate laughed. "That, too. But I was going with the saying 'God works in mysterious ways.' Especially when you consider that it's because of you my family converted."

"You think God planned this? You meeting me and then getting attacked by...assassins...like this?"

"Well, surely you don't think it was chance, do you?" Kate frowned. "I mean...you're still a Christian, right?"

"Ofcourse, yes," Chloe said quickly. "I meant...how...and..." She shut her eyes. The whole situation was giving her a headache. "It's just too much."

Kate patted her shoulder. "It's okay. You've lost a lot a blood, and you're probably going into shock. For now, you should sleep. When we get to my church, the person who should be explain-

ing this will be there, and the Healer. So for now, sleep.”

Chloe nodded vaguely. Fatigue was pulling at her, but her mind wouldn’t let go. She had one more question. It seemed strangely urgent. “Why the minivan?”

Kate laughed. “It’s actually quite brilliant, isn’t it? I mean, think about it, red minivans are ubiquitous. And I made some changes, like I actually have two license plate numbers on it at any time, so even if the Guild took note of which car we got into and what its plate numbers were, they’ve already changed, and without that it’s the same as any other red van. Except for my other modifications, of course.”

Chloe grinned as she drifted off. “I guess you really are super smart...”



“Here we are!”

Kate’s voice drew Chloe from her sleep. Sluggishly she straightened and rubbed her eyes. They were just pulling into a parking lot, and she caught ‘Harvest Bible Ch—’ on the sign before they had passed it.

Kate rolled down the windows and waved to a couple of teens standing by a large iron cross, then parked the van.

As Chloe gingerly stepped out of the car, she glanced back toward the cross. Her mouth dropped open. One of the teens—a girl—held out her arms, and they were stretching up, and up, and up, until they reached the top of the cross. A boy sat straddling the top of the cross, but once the arms reached him, he slowly stood and put his palms down.

“What are they doing?” said Chloe.

“Looks like repairs are almost done,” said Kate, smiling.

“That’s The Force up top. He’s using his powers to hammer the cross back down, and Elastica’s ready to slow him down if he falls. Not sure why Captain J thinks it’s a good idea for them to be working out in the open like this.”

“Repairs?”

“A while back we had a battle with the Mischief Squad, basically the League’s arch-nemesis. Good news is they won’t be causing trouble for a while. Come on.”

The afternoon’s events washed back into Chloe’s mind, and she swayed against the car. There was too much for her to even comprehend all at once. *I should probably be panicking*, she thought. *I guess I’m still in shock.*

With a sigh, she followed her friend across the parking lot and into a small building, then into a closet where Kate tapped the side of a furnace. With a screech, the furnace started to move aside.

Kate stepped onto the ladder leading down. “It’s a bit of a climb. How are your knees?”

Chloe had forgotten her run-in with the wall. Glancing down, she saw torn jeans and raggedly scraped flesh. “Ugh. They didn’t hurt until you mentioned them.”

“Sorry,” Kate said, then started down the ladder.

At the bottom, Chloe found herself in a large room lit by a bluish light from many computers.

“Hey, Ick,” said Kate, pointing to a boy dressed in a bizarre assortment of blue, black, red, and indigo. “Tell Captain J I need to see him in the infirmary.”

“The multitudinous occasions upon which I have advised you of the true sounding of my name exceeds the power of enumeration.”

“Well, I’ve certainly lost count. This way, Chloe.”

Chloe followed Kate down a dim hallway and then into a well-lit room, lined with beds.

“Welcome to the infirmary. Take a seat, any seat, and I’ll go call the Healer.”

As Kate disappeared into the room beyond the infirmary, Chloe sat on one of the beds, grabbing its pillow and hugging it to her chest. What would happen next? At this point, it seemed dangerous to guess.

After a minute Kate returned, followed by a hunched figure robed so thoroughly in white that it reminded Chloe of a kid’s Halloween ghost costume, without even eye holes.

The figure drifted across the room and set a hand on Chloe’s shoulder.

She could feel her pain ebb away. At first, it made her feel numb, but then she felt completely normal.

After a few seconds, the figure released her, turned, and glided from the room.

“Sorry you had to meet the Healer your first time here,” said a voice.

Chloe turned to see a man standing at the entrance, wearing a black mask.

“I’m Captain J.”

“Ah, I’m Chloe,” she said, hopping to her feet and tossing the pillow back to the bed.

“Kate brought you here because you have a super power, am I right?” he asked.

“Uh—”

“Yeah, she can control light, I think,” said Kate.

Chloe turned to face her friend. “How did he—?”

“He has superhuman mental thinking powers.”

“Which is different from being smart, how?” Chloe asked.

"I'm just super intelligent," Kate said. "He's more...wise, I guess. And he can sense when others have powers. The full explanation of his power is even longer than its name."

"More interesting is *your* power," Captain J interjected. "Now that your gift has awakened, you should start training with it as soon as possible. Since I wasn't expecting you, it will take some time to figure out the best training routine. We'll need to gauge the extent of your power."

"Ooh, do you think she'll be able to bend light around her like Ghost Man?"

Chloe squeezed her eyes shut, not listening to the conversation.

The nagging voice from earlier that day was back. *Do it, it said. It can't hurt, and who knows. Maybe you'll actually be able to help someone.*

More likely, Chloe thought, I'll get someone hurt.

"I think I'd rather just go home and forget the whole thing," she said aloud, bowing her head. "I'm not really cut out for the whole superhero deal."

"Of course you are," said Captain J. "This gift was given to you by God, and God doesn't make mistakes."

Chloe swallowed hard. "I know that!" she said. "It's just... I can't be a superhero."

☿ Chloe, Chapter 3 ☿

The events of the early afternoon seemed far away as the red minivan cruised down the quiet highway, back to Chloe's home town. Kate sat completely silent, not even smiling, and Chloe had no courage to say anything either.

Soon they reach Chloe's town, and after a few turns the van pulled up to her house. Both girls stepped out of the car. Chloe hesitated by the hood while Kate walked around to say her farewell.

"Are you sure you won't reconsider?" Kate asked softly.

"Like I said before, I can't save people."

"You saved me!"

"That was luck. I wasn't even thinking about what I was doing."

"There's no such thing as luck. What happened today happened because God planned it that way. And that's not the only time you saved me."

"What do you mean?"

"Didn't I say before? It's because of you I found God."

"How?"

"When I first met you, you were just sitting on a bench all alone, and when you said you were lost, I asked why you weren't scared. And you said, 'Because God will take care of me.' I laughed and told you God wouldn't really help you, and then you said, 'He sent you, didn't He?' And then after I got you back to camp, you gave me this as a thank you."

As Kate said this, she pulled a necklace from under her shirt. Dangling from it was a simple silver cross.

“So after that, I started asking my parents about God, and then they looked into it, and we converted and left the Assassins Guild. God sent me to help you get un-lost. But also so that I, in an even bigger way, would get un-lost, too. And if God could use you then, then He can use you now. You just have to trust Him.”

Chloe leaned against the car uncertainly. She remembered the necklace clearly, though she hadn’t thought of it in years. She didn’t remember giving it to Kate.

Finally, she shook her head.

“I’m sorry, Kate, it’s impossible for me.”

“Fine. I won’t say I understand, but there’s not much I can do. I hope we can still be friends, though. Here, let me get something from the car.”

Chloe stepped aside. Kate fumbled around and pulled out a small box. She opened it and handed Chloe a silver watch identical to her own.

“It’s one of my backups, so most of the features won’t be useful for you, like the car controls. But there’s also a tracking device. Keep it with you, so I can always find you. And if you ever need help, just press these buttons, and it will send me a distress signal. I’ll be here in a jiffy.”

“Saying things like, ‘I can always find you’ makes you sound like a stalker or something,” said Chloe with a laugh.

“Maybe. But now that you have powers, there will be people who want to hurt you. This way, I can keep an eye on you. In a couple days, I’ll whip you up something a bit more personal.”

“Thank you, Kate. I’m glad I met you, again.”

“Me, too. And remember, it’s never too late to reconsider.”

Chloe smiled and waved as Kate's van pulled away. Then she pulled on the watch and went into her house.



When Chloe awoke the next morning, the events of the previous day felt like a dream, but one glance at the silver watch on her bedside table confirmed them to be real. She slipped the watch on, ate a brief breakfast of cereal and coffee, and, after meandering aimlessly about the house for a while, set out on a walk in hope that fresh air would clear her head.

She considered going back to the park—maybe her bag would still be there—but decided against it. Instead she set out in the opposite direction.

The town seemed as quiet as ever, perhaps quieter. Chloe smiled, breathing deeply of the still air. No assassins. No teens with super powers. Just a calm, normal, small-town morning. Her world, the world that she knew how to handle—for the most part—was still intact. She could just hide here and ignore that overwhelming, unbelievable world Kate lived in.

Yes, she decided. I'll just ignore that other world, and it shan't bother me again.

She turned to jog across the street.

"Excuse me, miss, could you help me with something?" The woman's voice interrupted her thoughts, as a hand caught her by the shoulder.

Chloe was surprised to see the woman from the day before. "It's you," she said.

The woman's brow furrowed. "It's me? Have we met?"

"Ah, no." Chloe's face flushed. "It's just that yesterday I noticed you wandering around, and I...ah..."

She faltered, realizing that made her sound like some crazy people-watcher.

“What do you want?” she said quickly.

The woman pulled three photographs from her pocket and held them up. “Well, you probably haven’t, but have you seen any of these people?”

Chloe’s mind went completely blank, and she could only blink at the pictures. *Kate*. She didn’t recognize the man or the woman, but the third photo definitely showed Kate. It must have been an old picture—Kate looked much younger. But somehow she looked older, too, and her face lacked the carefree enthusiasm Chloe had come to expect.

“Do you know them?” The woman leaned forward slightly.

“Ye—Er, I mean n—Maybe? Why are you looking for them?”

Chloe rubbed her temple. Her mood had gone from great to headache in record time.

The woman laughed. “You are a very poor liar.”

“Well, it’s not exactly a skill I try to cultivate,” said Chloe. She took a step back.

“Do not worry. I mean you no harm,” said the woman. “But I must find these people; I have important information for them.”

“S-sorry. I really can’t help, though.”

Chloe took another step back then turned and walked away. She had just decided to forget this stuff about assassin guilds and superheroes, and here it came knocking again.

“I understand,” said the woman mournfully. “But at least take my contact information to pass along, if you should see them. The information really is life-and-death important.”

Chloe halted, glancing back at the woman, who stood with her head bowed and fists clenched. What if she really was a friend of Kate’s parents?

“What do you need to tell them?” Chloe asked.

“I can’t say.”

“Does... Does it have to do with the Assassins Guild?”

“Ah, you know about that? It does, though I’m afraid I still can’t tell you.”

Chloe sighed. “I can’t really say no. I will—”

“Chloe, don’t trust her!”

Chloe jumped at Kate’s shout and turned to see her friend dashing across the street. Kate reached Chloe and stepped between her and the woman.

“She’s an assassin and a trained actress,” Kate said. “She’s trying to trick you.”

“Kate, what are you doing here?”

“I woke up this morning with the feeling that you were in horrible danger, so I came to see. I’ve been watching you for a while, but I was hoping you could just walk away, and she would leave you alone. Guess I underestimated her.”

“I’m sorry, Kate. I made a wrong decision and caused trouble for you.”

“It’s okay. You couldn’t be expected to know. And I appreciate your concern.”

The woman coughed. “Who’s caring for and protecting whom aside, I believe it is Kate who made the bad decision. We’ll hardly be so careless as to let her escape two days in a row.”

“Perhaps you shouldn’t be making snide comments until you’ve actually caught me,” Kate said. “After all, I don’t think it was so much that you were careless, but rather that you were ‘unskilled’.”

With that, Kate spun around and kicked for the woman’s face. The woman leaped back, avoiding the blow. But, instead of being thrown off balance, Kate grinned. She grabbed Chloe’s

wrist. The two turned to run, but they only got a few steps. Several assassins sprang from the shadows between houses, spreading out to surround the girls.

One man stepped out in front of the others. He looked small, about Chloe's height, but there was an aura around him that sent chills up her spine.

"I don't think you understand, Catherine, what she meant by careless. Those you met with yesterday were merely sent to locate you. They have already been reprimanded for engaging you without my permission. Today we are prepared and even you, with all your talent, will not be able to escape. At least, not without sacrificing your little friend."

The man's voice made Chloe think of a snake sliding through a damp, dark cave.

"Enric," Kate said. "I suppose I should be honored that you would come for me yourself."

Chloe glanced back at her friend. Kate bore a wry half-smile, but her face looked pale.

"But of course. You were the brightest student I've ever known. And that should be *Master* Enric to you."

"You're not my master anymore, and nothing you do will change that."

"Perhaps not. But that is not something to be discussed here. Will you have us spare your friend or not?"

"How do I know you're not tricking me?"

"Please, Catherine. Your friend is obviously a weak fool. She is of no concern to us. I detest unnecessary bloodshed."

"If only your definition of *unnecessary* lined up with most people's definition. But very well, I will go with you."

Kate walked past Chloe, her shoulders slumped and head bowed.

“Kate!” Chloe reached out to stop her friend.

“Don’t worry, Chloe. God will take care of me.”

Enric snorted.

The assassins grabbed Kate and disappeared faster than Chloe could have thought. In less than a minute, she stood alone on the street. Her eyes blurred and her mind felt numb. Trembling, she collapsed to her knees and covered her face. A sob burst from her throat.

Then dropping her hands from her face, she looked up and spoke in a rasping voice.

“Why, God? Why did you let this happen? All I ever do is mess up and cause trouble for people, you know that. And now I’ve done it again, and Kate...I don’t even know what will happen to her now, and it’s all my fault. Why did you put me, of all people, in this situation? Why did you give me, of all people, powers? I can’t do this. I don’t even know *what* this is that I’m supposed to do. Please God, tell me what I should do, and tell me how to help Kate.”

She stared at the sky, not sure what to expect.

When nothing happened, she staggered to her feet and started with wobbling steps towards home. She took five steps, and stumbled.

As she reached out to catch herself against a nearby fence, her silver watch flashed in the sunlight. She stared at the watch. She could almost hear the gears turning in her head, a half-baked plan slowly forming.

“Car controls...Tracking device...”

She smiled. There was one thing she could do.

☿ Chloe, Chapter 4 ☿

Fifty minutes later, Chloe parked two blocks away from where Kate was hidden, according to the blinking light on her tracking device. It had taken only a few minutes to figure out how to use the watch to control Kate's van and program it to follow the signal. Now she stood in an unfamiliar city, surrounded by abandoned warehouses.

Locking the van, Chloe crept passed the first building. At the corner, she crouched low and peeked quickly around the wall. To her dismay, a man leaned up against the next building, dressed in the black clothing that seemed staple for assassins.

Chloe sat back, pressing herself against the bricks of the warehouse wall, trying to keep her breathing even and silent.

Now what? She had come this far. It seemed foolish to turn back, and she couldn't just leave Kate. But how was she supposed to take on who knew how many master assassins?

Just to sneak past them would be impossible, short of actually becoming invisible, and that was certainly beyond her capabilities.

Or was it?

She vaguely remembered Kate mentioning a man who could bend light around himself.

Chloe smiled wryly. She had rejected having a super power in order to avoid hurting people. But now, if she didn't use her power, Kate would suffer for her mistakes.

Here's hoping I'm a quick study, she thought.

She walked back several yards from the corner and stopped, setting one hand against the wall for balance. Then she shut her eyes, trying to recall the sensation from the park of being underwater and surrounded by currents. That must have been the light waves, or at least her mind's way of visualizing them.

In her head, Chloe imagined what the current would look like here, bouncing off buildings instead of trees and bushes. She stood there, until her head started to hurt from being too focused.

Restraining a groan, Chloe slumped to the ground, once more unsure of how to proceed.

"Sorry, Kate," she breathed. "I thought life would be easier if I did things my way. I was wrong."

She paused, and then shook her head. What was she saying? Sorry, Kate? Yeah, Kate deserved an apology, too, but the one Chloe had wronged most was God. She had rejected His gift, had acted like she knew better than the one who is all-knowing.

How truly ridiculous.

Chloe tilted her head back, looking for the second time that day to the sky. And for the second time that day, she prayed because she didn't know what else to do.

I'm sorry, God. I messed up, forgive me. I am painfully reminded once more of how unworthy I am of your love. That knowledge has always made me want to run away. But I am slowly learning that the only way I can ever become better and move forward is to obey your will for me.

On my own, I'm incapable of doing anything, least of all saving Kate. If I am to do this—if it is your will for me to do this—then I need your help, your guidance. If this is your will, then teach me to use this power you have given me. If it is not your will, then please,

PLEASE, show me what is.

Chloe sat there for a moment, and then with a sigh she stood. She smiled. Somehow, she felt like a great weight had lifted from her shoulders. She still didn't know what to do, but she did know that whatever happened next was in God's hands.

The crunch of a boot on gravel startled her from her reverie. In the corner of her eye, she saw an assassin rounding the building. Her mouth dropped open, and she took a step back.

It was like stepping into another world, as the sensation of being underwater immersed her again. With an instinctive twitch of her finger, she shifted the currents to flow around her.

The assassin stopped, staring at where Chloe stood.

She held her breath, hoping he couldn't hear her pounding heart, hoping her power was working the way she thought it was.

He rubbed his eyes, then shook his head before finally saying, "Great, I'm seeing things."

Chloe remained perfectly still as he turned and walked away. Then she released her control of the light and swayed, leaning against the wall.

"Thank you, God," she whispered.

Setting her shoulders with resolution, she removed her shoes to minimize sound and pulled the light bubble back around her. Gravel poked sharply through her thin socks, but with slow steps she made her way past the guard she'd already seen and a handful more standing around a loading dock for the warehouse where the tracking signal said they had taken Kate.

Luckily, there was an empty window. No, Kate would tell her luck had nothing to do with it. Sending up another quick "Thank you" prayer, Chloe pulled herself through.

She found herself in an empty hall. Slinking into the shadows, away from the window, she glanced both ways. According

to her watch, Kate was below her, so there must be a basement floor. But where were the stairs?

She chose to go right, and the hallway soon turned deeper into the warehouse.

There—a staircase leading down.

But two assassins guarded the door. She recognized one as the woman who had stopped her in the street.

“I wish Master Enric would just get it over with,” muttered the woman.

“Patience,” said her companion. “We can’t eliminate the girl until she has done her purpose and lured out her parents.”

Chloe silently sighed with relief. She wasn’t too late.

“Maybe, but I feel like Master Enric is hesitating. Like he still hopes Kate can be reconverted. It bugs me that *that* smart mouth, of all people, gets a second chance.”

“Don’t worry. No matter how he admires her talent, Master Enric has always been very clear: *No one* gets second chances.”

Chloe shuddered. She may not be too late yet, but she couldn’t stand here waiting. Holding her breath, she ducked her head and slipped between them into the stairwell.

“Did you feel something?” asked the woman as she passed.

Chloe’s spine tightened. She froze on the third step down.

“No. You’re just too uptight. There’s no one here but us.”

“Unless they’re invisible.”

For a second, Chloe’s eyes widened, but she relaxed as the two assassins laughed.

At the bottom of the steps, she was stopped by an iron door. If she opened it, the two at the top of the stairs might hear the hinges creak—and having already brought up the idea of someone being invisible, they might start suspecting.

And that aside, who knew *what* waited on the other side?

Chloe weighed her options for a moment, then shrugged. She had no choice.

Bracing one hand against the door frame, she reached for the handle. But before she could touch the cool metal, the door silently swung open. She skittered back as several assassins trooped through and up the stairs. Before the door swung shut, she slipped through.

The basement was straight out of a science fiction movie. The walls and floor were white and smooth, lit by evenly spaced lights built into the ceiling. Obviously not part of the original warehouse.

She crept forward, counting the branching halls she passed, just in case. The underground facility seemed huge, but she could neither see nor hear any activity. It made the unvarying halls feel haunted.

The further she walked, the more tense she felt. Unconsciously her pace quickened.

Then her socked feet slipped, and she fell with a soft thud. Her breath caught in her throat, but no one came running to investigate.

With a chuckle she stood. "This is ridiculous. After getting this far, I shouldn't be freaking out over nothing," she told herself.

Just going straight was getting her nowhere, though, so she turned left at the next intersection. She'd gone barely twenty feet when she glanced down a hall to her right and, in the room at the end of it, she could clearly see Kate. Though the older girl's head slumped forward, hiding her face, Chloe couldn't mistake that long, pony-tailed hair.

She hesitated for a second, surprised at the lack of resistance. Then she dismissed that as just one more thing to be thankful for and dashed down the hall into the room.

She had almost reached Kate when she heard a hiss-thud behind her. She slid to a stop and spun back around. The door to the room had shut.

Enric stood between her and the door, holding a knife and grinning.

“What now, Enric?” said Kate.

“Ah, it seems someone has come to rescue you. Quite cleverly, too.”

“What?” asked Kate.

“I don’t know who you are or what type of device you’re using, but you should know I don’t need my eyes to find you.”

Chloe slowly started to back away and to the side. To her dismay, Enric’s eyes followed her movement. He lunged, his knife slashing for her face. She jumped back, tripped over her own feet, and barely avoided falling. He lunged again. As she twisted away, she felt a swish of air as the knife just missed her ear.

Kate sat fully alert now, turning her head to follow Enric.

The man grinned wider than ever. “This is more fun than I’ve had for quite a while,” he said. “Though I wonder how long you can keep it up.”

Kate’s eyes widened with realization, and she shouted, “Dodge!”

Chloe leaped sideways. Even with Kate’s warning, she barely avoided Enric’s lightning-quick stab. When she landed, her socks skidded and she fell.

“So, Catherine, do you perhaps know what is going on? I should have gagged you after all. Still, even with your help, you friend will not last long without some sort of offense. And it’s about time I evened the playing field.”

At the mention of offense, Chloe remembered the explosion

of light she had caused the previous day. With a furrow of her brow and a flick of her wrist, the currents at the center of the room exploded outward.

At the same time, Enric said, "Lights!"

The flow of light vanished. She saw the briefest flash from her attack, and then she was left in pitch black.

Underground, with no windows, not even the slightest trace of light reached into the room. Chloe's advantage was gone, her power useless, and she was up against someone trained to catch the slightest sound.

Who no doubt already knew exactly where she was sitting.

God, please help me, she shouted in her mind as she threw herself sideways.

Her watch struck against the floor, and the holographic display came up, filling the whole room with light waves. Weak light waves, but enough to see that she had been right to move. Enric had struck at her, and his knife had even cut into the floor.

Enric himself stared at her in shock.

"You," he gasped.

Without thinking, Chloe said, "You can call me Ora."

Then she gathered all the light made by the watch into a tiny ball and threw it so it exploded into his eyes.

He cried out with pain and jerked back, leaving his knife in the floor.

Chloe grabbed it and yanked it free. With a few quick slashes, she cut Kate free.

Kate jumped to her feet. Without comment, she pulled out her hair-band, spun it around her finger once, and then tossed it at Enric. As it flew through the air, it widened to loop over him and then tightened, pinning his arms to his side.

Before Chloe could react, the door slid open and an assas-

sin rushed in, babbling. “Master Enric, the warehouse is under attack. I don’t know who they are but... Uh...ah...”

Kate smiled. “Enric is not available now, but if you run along quietly, I’ll let you take a message back to the Guild: Leave me and my family alone. We’re guarded by the League of Incredible Students. And while a bunch of teens might not be able to handle the Guild, we have someone on our side far greater than any number of assassin guilds: God.”

The assassin’s mouth opened and closed like a gaping fish for a moment, then he fled.

“Now, time for you to sleep,” said Kate, and she struck Enric quickly. He slumped over sideways. Then she turned to Chloe.

“So, what’s with calling you Ora? Does this mean you’ve reconsidered?”

“Uhm...I guess.” Chloe blushed. “Is it a stupid name?”

“Not the worst I’ve heard. Where’d it come from?”

“I think it means light in some language. Don’t remember where I learned that.”

“Well, thanks for saving me, Ora. And good job, fighting Enrique—though you shouldn’t make a habit of defeating other people’s nemeses.”

“I won’t.” Chloe laughed. “Should we go meet up with the League? How’d they find us anyway?”

“My parents monitor my signal. They would have noticed as soon as my movements became unusual. I’m more interested in how you found me. And how did you get here?”

“I borrowed your van.”

“Aren’t you too young to drive?”

“Technically, the van drove itself.”

They both laughed.



READY, SET, WRITE!!! OR NOT...



Sometimes it's hard to get started. After all, a blank page is pretty scary. It's kinda like a zombie—only instead of eating your brains, it eats your creativity. I wouldn't be surprised if, second to writer's block, a blank page was a writer's worst enemy.

Okay, so let's say you walk away from the blank page. If you were about to attempt killing a dragon, would you stand in front of said dragon thinking about it? NO! You'd hide from the dragon, and not come out until you knew what to do.

So, walk away. Do something else. But while you're doing that thing, think about your story. And when an idea comes to you, sit down and flesh it out in your mind. And when you've got that scene ready, run and put it on that blank page as quickly as you can. Don't hesitate, don't stare at the page, just type it out. And then run around yelling about how you conquered the blank page.

Okay, so that last part is optional.

❧ My Favorite How-to-Write Book ❧

Once upon a time, my mom got a free copy of *Spilling Ink*, by Anne Mazer and Ellen Potter, for winning a blog contest. I immediately (okay, maybe that's a bit of an exaggeration) picked it up and started reading.

I had “read” many writing books before. Each time, however, I had barely gotten to the end of the first section. But unlike those writing books, *Spilling Ink* trapped me, and I read it all the way through.

It covered everything: to plot or not to plot, making your characters think they're alive, getting ideas, writers' block 911, revising, and much *much* more (not in that order though ;). Anne Mazer and Ellen Potter supply good advice mixed in with some humor, and I must congratulate Matt Phelan on his brilliant illustrations!

Here is some of what other people had to say about the book (I found this on the back cover):

“For years I have been thinking about writing a How To book for kids who want to write. Now I don't have to. Anne and Ellen have crafted such a wonderful, funny, wise book that when eager young writers send me a letter seeking my advice I can now simply say ‘read this!’ My hat is off to this dynamic duo.”—Bruce Coville

Or then there is:

“The singular, intense yet funny voice of Spilling Ink shares

advice—how to convince your characters they are alive, avoid noisy dialogue tags, wear sunglasses to feel like a spy—with much lively wisdom and nary a hint of adult condescension. An outstanding book.”—Nancy Springer

So that’s what they had to say. So what about me? What’s my opinion? Here it is:

WOW!!!!!! This might very well be AT LEAST the best writing handbook for young writers. But I believe ANYONE, no matter how old, could use the advice found in this book. I must truly say: Thank you for sharing this wisdom, Anne Mazer and Ellen Potter. I shall keep it in mind whenever I write a book. Or try to, at least, sometimes my mind gets a little bit of an “overflowing toilet.”¹

So now, maybe next time you’re at a library or book store, you’ll look for *Spilling Ink* to read it for yourself.

Now maybe I’ll go and find some of those other books that Anne and Ellen wrote and kept mentioning throughout *Spilling Ink*—They sounded interesting...

¹ “Overflowing toilet” is how Anne and Ellen describe the experience of having too many ideas. While most people think of writer’s block as meaning you don’t have anything to write about, it can be just as blockish when your brain comes up with so many possibilities that you don’t know where to start.

☞ And Other Great Resources ☞

- [Nanowrimo Young Writers Workbooks](#)
Tips and worksheets to help you get to know your characters and plan out your story.
- [Nanowrimo Pep Talks](#)
Tons of advice and inspiration for young writers, from published authors.
- [Homeschool Novelist](#)
My mom's Pinterest page with links she thought I might like. For homeschoolers who want to write fiction.
- [The Nine Grid Plan](#)
A very basic outline of nine key plot points. If you like outlining, add as much detail as you want. If you prefer to just write away, use this chart to spark ideas when you get stuck.
- Our favorite writer blogs:
[Fiction University](#)
[Go Teen Writers](#)
[Helping Writers Become Authors](#)
[Ink & Quills](#)
[Jami Gold's Blog](#)
[Writers Helping Writers](#)

∞
ABOUT THE AUTHOR
∞



Teen author Teresa Gaskins was creating stories before she could write. She enjoys a wide variety of fiction, fantasy has always been her favorite genre, and she hopes to keep writing as long as she has stories to tell.

Teresa wrote *Banished* when she was thirteen years old and had been homeschooled all her life. *Revealed*, Teresa's fourth published book, wraps up the adventure of *The Riddled Stone*. It also wraps up her career as a teen author, since she finished the book at the tail end of her nineteenth year.

Teresa lives in rural Illinois, surrounded by fields of corn and soybeans, with her cat overlord Cimorene and her new kitten Puck the Deadly (and the rest of her family).

If you would like to read more of Teresa's writing or send her a message, please visit her blog: TeresaGaskins.com.

Fantasy Novels by Teresa Gaskins

[The Riddled Stone Series](#)

Banished

Hunted

Betrayed

Revealed

Reviews

"A captivating fantasy story with a well-thought-out plot that would be a credit to any writer. But it is especially remarkable coming from a thirteen-year-old student who has been homeschooled all her life."

"People who like medieval-style fantasies with wraiths, spirits, and even an attacking swamp tree will enjoy the story. The excitement, adventure, and suspense will easily keep the reader's attention."

"The setting is a world of 'light' magic. Magic is rare, constrained, and follows a sort of logic, which may or not be fully understood by the people in the world. I like the way in which this sets up plot connections and forces things to happen for a reason, rather than deus ex machina or authorial patronus."



How Can a Knight Fight Magic?

Christopher Fredrico loved the quiet life of a scholar-in-training. Plenty of spare time to spend with his friends. But the night Crown Prince Tyler came to dinner, everything changed.

Falsely accused of stealing a magical artifact and banished under threat of death, Chris leaves the only home he knows.

But as he and his three friends travel towards the coast, they find a riddle that may save a kingdom—or cost them their lives.

If you love exploring magical worlds wracked by the epic struggle of good against evil, then don't miss Teresa Gaskins's four-book serial fantasy adventure, *The Riddled Stone*.

[Available online](#), or by special request from your favorite bookstore.