

*Marguerite de Angeli*  
**THE DOOR  
IN THE WALL**



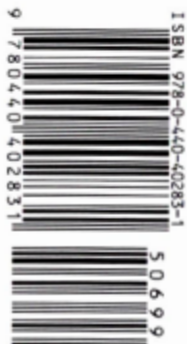
Praise for  
**THE DOOR  
IN THE WALL**

Winner of the Lewis Carroll Shelf Award

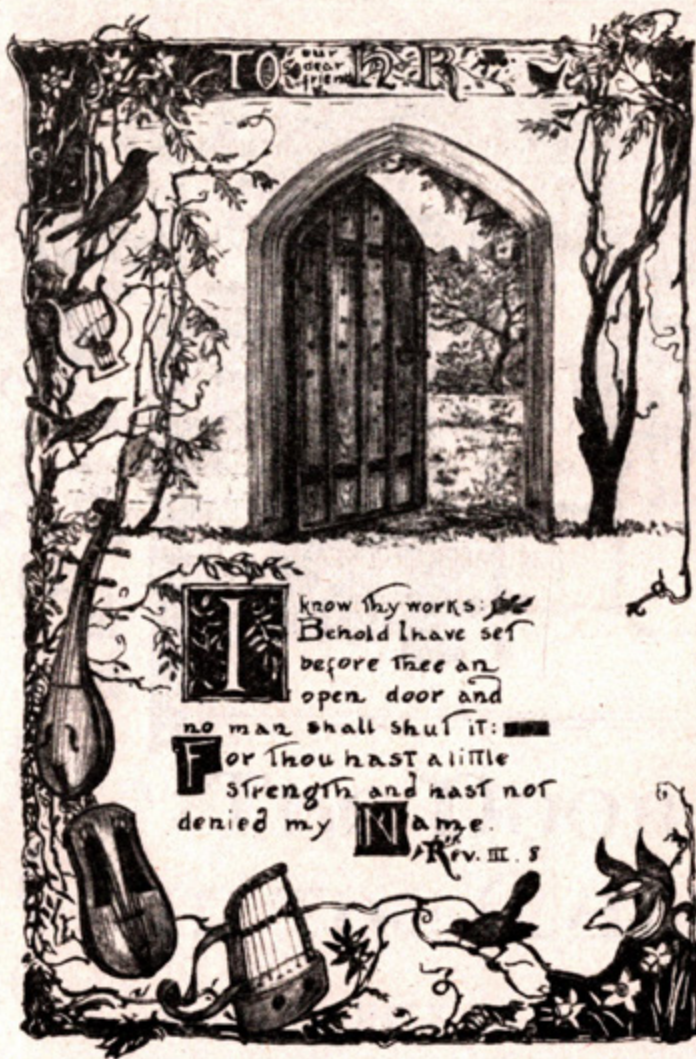
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"A poignant story, full of action, and a strongly painted canvas of the times as well."  
—*The New Yorker*



# The Door in the Wall



**I** know thy works: Behold I have set before thee an open door and no man shall shut it:

**F**or thou hast a little strength and hast not denied my **N**ame.

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THE DOOR  
IN THE WALL

MARGUERITE DE ANGELI

A YEARLING BOOK

Published by Yearling, an imprint of Random House Children's Books  
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ISBN: 0-440-40283-2

Printed in the United States of America

August 1990

70 69 68 67 66

OPM

## INTRODUCTION

As always, Mama was astonished that anyone would think her work superior enough to win the Newbery Medal. To say she was thrilled would be an understatement. Typically, she gave a great deal of credit to an old friend, Harm Robinson, who was the inspiration for *THE DOOR IN THE WALL*, and to her editor at Doubleday, Peggy Lesser (Mrs. Norman Foster).

Her sense of wonder and modesty about her talent were things that lent her work such charm, in both the text and the illustrations, and her love of people, especially children, is evident throughout.

—Ted de Angeli  
1989





**R**OBIN drew the coverlet close about his head and turned his face to the wall. He covered his ears and shut his eyes, for the sound of the bells was deafening. All the bells of London were ringing the hour of Nones. St. Mary le Bow was nearest, St. Swithin's was close by, and not far away stood great St. Paul's. There were half-a-dozen others within sound, each clamoring to be heard. It seemed to Robin as if they were all inside his head screaming to be let out. Tears of vexation started to his eyes, but he held them back, for he remembered that a brave and "gentil" knight does not cry.

Ever since he could remember, Robin had been told what was expected of him as son of his father. Like other sons of noble family, he would be sent away from his mother and father to live in the household of another knight, where he would learn all the ways of knighthood. He would learn how to be of service to his liege lord, how to be courteous and gentle, and, at the same time, strong of heart.

Robin thought of his father and how he had looked on that last day when he rode off to the Scottish wars at the head of the column. Now, remembering, Robin could almost feel the weight of his father's mailed glove on his shoulder as he said good-by. Then he had been straight and strong, standing there in the courtyard as the men rode forth.

"Farewell, my son," his father had said, "forget not to be brave. God knows when we shall meet again. Farewell."

He must not cry.

Robin thought of his mother and how she, too, had said farewell, the day after his tenth birthday. She had called him to her side in the solar where she sat weaving.

"Since your father left for the wars, it has been a comfort to have you near," she said, "but you are ten and no longer a child to be looked after by womenfolk. It is time now for you to leave me. John-the-Fletcher will come for you in a few days and will take you to Sir Peter de Lindsay, as we have arranged. There, too, you will be away from danger of the plague, which seems to be spreading. And now it is fitting that I obey the wish of the Queen to be her lady in waiting, for she is in need of my care. Today an escort will be sent for me and I shall go. Jon-the-Cook, Gregory, and Dame Ellen will serve you until John-the-Fletcher arrives. Farewell, my son. Be brave."

She had drawn Robin to her and had turned away so he would not see her tears.

Little did she know how much Robin would need her! For the very next day he had become ill and unable to move his legs. That had been more than a month ago.

He was cold. He wished Ellen would come to mend the fire.

The bells stopped ringing, and Robin heard the boys from the Brothers' School running and shouting along the street. He hoped that William or John, Thomas or Roger would come in to tell him the news, but when their voices grew faint, he knew they had gone on past.

How he wished he were with them. Even the tiresome lessons of singing and reading would be worth doing if only he could run down the street with the other boys.

But he could not run. He couldn't even get out of bed.

Because he was unable to see out of the wind hole (window) Robin had learned to guess at what was going on down in the street. He knew the sound of armor and knightly equipment, for the King's men passed that way going to and from the Tower or Westminster, to joust or tournament, to parade, or on business for the King. A horse was passing now, but Robin was sure it was not of that order. It was probably the shire reeve's horse, for above the slow clatter over the cobbles Robin could hear the grating of runners on a kind of sled the horse was dragging. From the odor that came through the window he could guess that Wat Hokester had been taken again for selling putrid fish in the market stall.

Robin chuckled. He knew that soon Wat would be standing in the stocks near the fish market with his evil-smelling goods hanging from his neck.

Now Robin heard the sound of Dame Ellen's feet shuffling along the passage to his wall chamber.

He turned his head to see what kind of dish she carried, but quickly looked away again when he saw that it was a bowl with steam rising from it. Was it barley soup? Was it a stew of rabbit? He didn't know and didn't care. The thought of it was all mixed with the sickening odor that came up with the raw wind from the street.

Ellen's skirt brushed the bed as she leaned toward Robin. She was near enough so he could hear the creak of her starched linen coif as she peered at him to see whether he was asleep. He shut his eyes so as not to see the great whiskered wart on her chin, and tried to close his ears to the sound of her Cockney speech. She saw by the squinching of his eyes that he was awake.

"Turn over, do, there's a good lad," she said, intend-

ing her voice to be soft, but it was not. It sounded harsh and flat, "as if her mouth had been stretched too wide," thought Robin. He shook his head and closed his mouth tight against the food.

"Wilt not have this good porridge all with honey spread?" Ellen's coaxing voice went on. Robin shuddered, and buried his face in the cushion.

If only his lady mother were here. She would have seen to it that the porridge had been smoothly cooked and salted. She would speak in her gentle way with the pleasant mixture of Norman French and good English words that were becoming the fashion. If only she were here, all would be well. The damp, sweaty feeling would leave his head, his legs would obey him and take him where he wanted to go, racing up and down alleyways or along the high street. He would be running with the boys down Pudding Lane or across London Bridge, playing tag among the shops.

But his legs would not obey him. They were like two long pieces of uncooked dough, he thought, such as Jon-the-Cook rolled out on his molding board.

Ellen tugged gently at the coverlet.

"Sweet lad," she begged, "'twill give thee strength and mend those ailing limbs."

Robin would neither turn nor answer. Let her take the sickening stuff away. Let her throw it into the street on top of that fishmonger who had just gone past.

"Come, my pretty——" But Ellen got no further with her wheedling. Robin gathered all his strength and flung his arm toward the bowl of porridge, sending it flying out of Ellen's hands and spreading its contents all over her. He was ashamed as soon as he had done it, but Ellen did look funny with the mess hanging from her chin.

"Wicked boy!" she cried. "No more will I serve thee.

Scarce able to stand have I been this day, yet have I been faithful. But I am a free woman and can go my way. Just wait and see when more victuals are brought thee! Ungrateful wretch!" She burst into loud weeping and left the room, wiping the porridge off with her apron. Robin turned again to the wall. "She will come back," he thought, "as she has done before, and she had better bring something I like if she wants me to eat it."

But she didn't come back. An hour went by. Then another hour. It grew colder and colder.

Robin examined for the hundredth time the carvings on the hammer beams supporting the roof of the hall. Each one was an angel with feathered wings. He studied one by one the grotesque carvings of dwarfs that decorated the roof bosses, and the corbels finishing the doorway. He wearied of thinking about them and wished that Ellen would come.

Robin's bedchamber was off the main hall or living room of the house, in an embrasure of the thick wall. Like the hall, Robin's room was somewhat chapel-like, for the houses of the time of Edward the III of England were very little different from churches.

Afternoon sounds came into the room: people passing along the street to and from the shops in Cheapside or Poultry Lane; carters carrying goods to the wharves on the Thames, Belinsgate, or Queen Hythe. He heard children playing games, hoodman-blind and hide-and-seek. He wished he could have been among them, because he knew a secret nook where he always hid and where he was seldom discovered. It was down Honey Lane in the angle of a jutting wall near Black Friars entry. It was so small a space that it appeared to be no space at all. It was still his own secret.

Robin tried very hard to get out of bed so he might look

out of the window, but he only fell back again onto the pillow exhausted from the effort. Hunger bit at his empty stomach. He was hungry enough now to have eaten the porridge Ellen had brought him.

He listened, hoping to hear her footsteps in the passage, but the house was strangely silent. No sound of talk or laughter came from the hall, for most of the servants and retainers had gone either with his father, Sir John de Bureford, or with his mother, the Lady Maud. Robin called for Ellen, and when he had no answer, called for Jon-the-Cook, then for old Gregory, the gardener.

He listened again, holding his breath, but he heard no one, and saw not a soul from Nones to Vespers, when the bells began to ring again.

He was alone.

Just as the bells stopped ringing Robin heard a noise as of a door opening. Then someone mounted the stair and came along the passage. Perhaps it was one of the boys; but not likely, for whoever it was walked rather slowly instead of running, as William or Thomas or John would have done.

The footsteps turned toward the chamber. In the doorway stood a monk with a basket. He came toward the bed where Robin lay.

"Good eve, my son," he said. "I am Brother Luke, a wandering friar, newly come to St. Mark's. I have brought thee food, and, cause 'tis Friday, fish."

*Fish!* Robin's stomach took a sudden turn. But a good smell came from the covered basket Brother Luke carried, and he was hungry. So he smiled a welcome, and the friar explained how he had happened to know that Robin needed help.

"A poor widow, who twice a week is fed from our hospice, told me of thy need. She said that Dame Ellen, who





lately served thee, has this very day been taken of the plague. She it was who told us that all thy servants, too, are fled, because of the plague, and some are dead of it. Dame Ellen told thee not, pitying thee. Now, be a good lad and take thy supper."

He obediently ate what the friar fed him.

When he was fed, Brother Luke, who had talked quietly the while, fetched water in a basin, washed him, and in other ways made him comfortable. He took the rumpled sheets off the bed, then sat down to rub Robin's legs and back. While he rubbed, he spoke.

"It is well known that thy noble father hath of his goodness given money to St. Mark's. So to St. Mark's I'll take thee, and will care for thee in mine own quarters, because all other beds and places are already taken by those in the parish who have great need. Even the corridors are filled and the cloisters lined with pallets."

"But I cannot walk," said Robin woefully. "See you, my two legs are as useless as if they were logs of wood. How shall I go there? My father is with the King at the Scottish wars, and with him are all his men at arms. My lady mother has been commanded to attend upon Her Majesty the Queen. It is supposed by them that I am now page in the household of Sir Peter de Lindsay at his castle in the north. John-the-Fletcher was to have come for me in March, before the Feast of St. Gregory. Instead, a messenger came on that day to say that he had been set upon by thieves and lay wounded in the hospice at Reading. He came later to fetch me, but found me thus, unable to walk or ride. He brought a surgeon who said I had not the plague but some other malady. He told Ellen to feed me well and that he would return. He came not again nor did John-the-Fletcher."

"Alas," said Brother Luke sadly, "because of the plague

all the physicians are working night and day. Either he himself has been taken or he has been so busy caring for others he has not been able to return. As for John-the-Fletcher, he may have gone out the city gate and not been allowed to re-enter, for they are keeping strangers out now. Fear not for the manner of our going to St. Mark's. Tethered in the courtyard is a jennet ready saddled with blankets whereon thou'lt ride softly. Walking beside thee, I shall support thee, and so we shall go through Knightrider Street and Giltspur to Ludgate and then toward Smoothfield where stands St. Mark's. Dost remember the long wall that is about the garden of thy father's house?"

"Yes," said Robin, "of course. Why?"

"Dost remember, too, the wall about the Tower or any other wall?" Robin nodded. "Have they not all a door somewhere?"

"Yes," said Robin again.

"Always remember that," said the friar. "Thou hast only to follow the wall far enough and there will be a door in it."

"I will remember," Robin promised, but he wasn't sure that he knew what Brother Luke meant to say.

While he was speaking, the friar had been caring for Robin, easing his tired muscles, and making him clean and comfortable. He opened a large chest and found underlinen and hosen, a hood with a long peak, and a warm cloak.

"The evening damp creeps up from the Thames," said the friar, pulling the hosen over Robin's shrunken legs, "and though the days are longer now, it is still early in the season. Good English wool will keep thee warm. Now for the hood." He pulled the hood down over Robin's head and settled it around his shoulders while he held him against his coarse-woven monk's frock.

Then Brother Luke put his strong arms under Robin, hoisted him onto his back, carrying the bundle of Robin's clothes and the basket in one hand and steadying Robin with the other. Down they went through the great echoing hall, down the winding stair at the other end past the empty kitchens, and out into the courtyard. There stood the little Spanish horse, Jenny, just as Brother Luke had said, patiently waiting.

Brother Luke set Robin on the jennet, the robe and blankets around him making him comfortable. Brother Luke put a strap around Robin's waist, then ran it under the jennet's belly to keep him from falling. He tied the bundle on at the back, and they set forth.

Out through the door in the wall of the courtyard they went, into the street, Robin leaning against Brother Luke, and the jennet picking her way sedately over the cobbles.

There were not many people abroad, for it was the end of the day. Curfew was ringing as they turned up Creed Lane to Ludgate Hill, and only because the guard knew Brother Luke's habit were they allowed to pass through the city gate. By then they were more than halfway to the hospice, but it was nearly dark when they reached St. Mark's and were admitted by the porter at the postern gate.

"Will I go back home soon?" asked Robin fearfully, for the gate had clanged shut behind them as if it had been closed forever. "Will a message be sent to my father? Or to my mother?"

"Be comforted, my child," Brother Luke answered. "As soon as the plague is somewhat quieted in London, a messenger will be sent to thy father. Meanwhile, we shall care for thee." He lifted Robin and carried him to his own cell and put him on the narrow cot. "Now, rest, my son," he said.

**M**AY came in with a burst of bloom in hedge and field. There was hawthorn both pink and white, and primroses and buttercups carpeted the fields with yellow. In every garden wallflowers blossomed in bright color and filled the air with perfume.

For days Robin was cared for as if he were a little child. Brother Luke brought him food, kept him washed, and changed his clothes, but he was too much occupied with other things to stay with Robin for very long at a time. The bells clamored as loudly as ever, but now the sound was associated with the regular procession of the monks going to devotions. Robin grew to like it.

He began to sleep well on the hard cot and to feel at home in the little cell. He could see nothing but the sky through the small wind hole, for it was high in the stone wall and only in the early morning allowed a ray of sunshine to come in. Against another wall stood a prayer stool and desk combined, with a smaller one beside it. On the wall hung a little cupboard which held Brother Luke's few personal belongings and his breviary.

Robin couldn't see into the corridor, and at first couldn't identify all the sounds he heard. He liked the "s-s-sh-shing" sound of feet on stone, as the monks passed to and fro. Sometimes, when they passed in procession, chanting, he joined in



the singing, for most of the plain songs were known to him. Sometimes there were long silences, when he heard nothing but the mewling of the cat Millicent, or the squeaking of a mouse she had caught.

There were hundreds of people within the hospice, but they were separated by thick walls and long passages. The outer court was far away at the other side of the monastery. There, visiting pilgrims, knights at arms, merchants, and minstrels gathered, each awaiting the attention of the Prior. Because there were few inns, the monasteries were open for the entertainment of wayfarers, rich and poor alike. Besides that portion reserved for travelers there was an almonry overflowing with the poor of London, seeking food and clothing. St. Mark's was a busy place. But most of the activity was far away from Robin. He was much alone, and time seemed long.

One day Brother Luke said, "It is time now to try thee

sitting up." He was rubbing Robin's legs as he did every day, talking the while. "If thy hands are busy, time will pass more quickly. Dost like to whittle?"

"Of course," answered Robin. "Who does not? But I have nought to whittle."

"I shall find thee a piece of soft pine and will lend thee my knife. 'Tis sharp and of good steel. This bench will fit against thy back to support thee." Brother Luke set the oaken bench at Robin's back and fitted a cushion for his comfort.

"Can I make a boat?" asked Robin. "Can I make it now?"

Brother Luke nodded and left the cell. It seemed long before he returned.

Finally he brought the knife and the piece of pine he had promised. It felt smooth and clean to Robin's hands, and he liked to watch the small white shavings peel off. At first he scarcely knew where to begin to bring out the shape of a boat, but little by little it began to round out and at one end a point began to appear, as if it had been a prow.

"Perhaps I can make it into a sailing boat like the fishermen bring to Belin's gate, or a barge such as the King uses," he said. "Perhaps when it is done I will be able to walk, and can go to the Thames to sail it."

"Perhaps," agreed the friar. It was very exciting, but Robin had to stop often to rest.

Brother Luke brought soup in which dark bread was to be sopped. Robin didn't want any of it. He wanted only to go on with his whittling, and turned away from the food.

"But 'tis made of good mutton in which bay and marigold have been seethed," Brother Luke coaxed. "Brother Michael grows these fragrant herbs in the garden. Bay is tasty and gives good appetite; marigold is said to be of value against poor sight and angry words. It is said 'twill draw evil

humors out of the head, and the flowers make fair garlands for maidens because of their golden color.”

What cared Robin for garlands for maidens? What cared he for fragrant herbs? Soppy food he despised. Brother Luke looked patient, said nothing, but continued to hold the food ready, and Robin gave in. He drank the soup and ate the bread dry.

Because he had something interesting to do and to think about, Robin found the days passing more quickly. He began to recognize sounds as he had done before, and to associate footsteps and differing gaits with the people to whom they belonged. Now and then one of the monks would look in on Robin to give him cheer or to say an Ave, so he knew several of the monks by name, and could tell which of them was passing. Brother Andrew he knew, because he dragged one foot a little. Brother Thomas walked very swiftly: heel and toe, heel and toe, whistling tunelessly under his breath as he went. Brother Paul was a large man, and when he walked through the corridor the thudding of his feet seemed to shake the walls, heavy as they were. Besides, one of his shoes squeaked.

Robin worked steadily at his little boat. He finished the hull on the fourth day of the second week.

“I see this is to be a sailing boat after all, instead of a barge,” said Brother Luke. “It is somewhat awry, with the bow aslant from the stern, but it hath an air, as if it had been battling the storm.”

Brother Luke brought small slender pieces of pine and showed Robin how to smooth them into mast and bowsprit, then found scraps of linen for sails and pieces of yarn for rigging. He even begged a scrap of silk ribbon from a traveler for Robin to use as a pennant for the masthead. As if the toy boat had belonged to the King’s fleet, Robin thought.

Never before had Robin done anything of the kind for himself. Always one of his father's retainers had made what toys he had. Once Rolfe had made him a hobbyhorse, and once Elfred the Dane had made him a boat, but it had not seemed so fine as this one. Now, he could hardly wait to begin something else. He would like to carve one of those dwarfs, for example, such as those in the roof bosses in his father's house. Brother Luke suggested something easier.

"Patience, my son," he said. "It takes great skill to carve figures like that. Why not make a simple cross? 'Twill be fit to hang over thy cot if 'tis well made and smoothly finished. I'll find some pieces of wood and will show thee how to begin." Always while Brother Luke talked he rubbed away at Robin's legs, then turned him and smoothed his back.

Busy as he was, Brother Luke found time to bring Robin the pieces of wood he had promised.

"These I saved from the pruning of the walnut tree that stands by the well," he said. "It is weathered, for it hath lain in sun and rain these many months."

"And how shall I fasten the pieces of the cross together?" asked Robin. "Shall I nail it then? Or how shall it be done?"

"When thou'rt ready for that, Brother Matthew will show thee," answered the friar. "Now make it smooth and fine, and have it well proportioned, for it will be a keepsake and not a toy like the little boat. That I leave to thy judgment, for 'tis part of the joy in making things."

Each day the pieces of the cross grew smoother and better shaped, for Brother Luke would examine them and show how they were too wide here or too uneven there.

Each day, too, Robin grew stronger, and could work longer before resting. The knife fitted his hand and obeyed his thought more truly. One or two cuts on his fingers had



taught him caution. Many times Robin held the shorter piece of wood across the longer piece to see how it would look, and would ask, "Isn't it time now to put them together?" But each time Brother Luke's fingers sought out rough places that must be rubbed down with pumice.

Brother Luke was busy all day caring for the sick and the poor. From Vespers until the early bedtime he served his turn in the scriptorium, where all the writing was done.

Once, he had carried Robin to another part of the monastery, and showed him where records of everyday living were written and poems and psalteries copied. Each monk had a small enclosure of his own where he could be quiet to do his work.

Brother Luke set Robin down beside him on the oaken bench in his own particular place, where he could spread out the pages of handwritten manuscript on which he was working. The pages were of sheepskin, called parchment, and were covered with careful lettering and decorations. Gold leaf illumined the capitals and the delicate tracery which bordered the pages. Robin wished he had known how to read what he saw. He wished he could dip the quill into the inkpot and inscribe letters and draw pictures such as Brother Luke had done.

"Will you teach me to write?" asked Robin. "We were taught singing at the Brothers' School, but I know not writing. Will you teach me then?"

"Yes, my son, truly I will, when there are not so many people to care for. But come, now, back to thy cot. First, we shall stop to say a prayer in the chapel for thy strengthening."

He lifted Robin to his back again and started down the corridor.

In some places the passages were so crowded it was difficult to get through without stepping on someone. Old

men and women in pitiful rags sat hunched against the wall or lay upon pallets. Among them went the Brothers of the order, and sisters from the priory near by, cleansing and feeding, dressing and comforting them. Ill-clad children ran about, and a small girl child clung to Brother Luke and begged to be carried.

A boy, not much older than Robin, came hobbling toward them on crutches. He smacked Robin as he passed and saluted him, seeing how Robin's legs were lame, even as his own.

"Good eve, Brother Crookshanks!" he cried, laughing as if it had been a great joke to be lame. "I see I have good company."

Robin's anger rose at the familiarity.

"Keep your filthy hands off me, lout!" he shouted. "Hound's meat! I am no more crook-shanked than you!" But even as he spoke Robin was considering the crutches, and thinking how convenient they would be for himself. Then he remembered that even yet his legs would not support him for a moment.

Brother Luke scolded the boy, but laughed, too, at Robin's anger.

"Fie on thee for an impertinent lad! Still, 'Crookshanks' he is, truly. His legs will be as good as thine one day, boy, and then he shall keep thee company right enough, on his feet." He went on toward the chapel, speaking to Robin over his shoulder as they went.

"The lad meant no offense when he called thee 'Crookshanks,' Master Robin. 'Tis but the way we all are named; for some oddity we have, or for where we live, or for what we do. This boy is called Geoffrey Atte-Water, because he lives by the River Fleet and tends the conduit there with his father. He was so called before he limped as he does now."

"Oh," said Robin, "I wondered why he is not called Geoffrey Crookshanks. Now I understand."

Brother Luke went on to speak of other names and how they began.

"Now I was called Chaucer, because my father was a shoemaker, but since I have taken a vow to be a monk, and to serve our Lord wherever I am most needed, I have taken the name of Luke, the physician in the Gospel."

"And my father is Sir John de Bureford because he came from that place. Is that the way of it?" asked Robin.

"That is the right of it," agreed the friar. "When Geoffrey called thee 'Crookshanks,' he did it because thy legs are *thy* legs and none others. Richard Smaltrot is he with the short step, and not Richard Crowfoot, whose feet splay out like fans."

Robin laughed.

They went into the chapel. It was empty, being between times for service.

Brother Luke placed Robin on the stone seat bordering the wall, propping him against the column which rose high to the vaulted roof.

"Say there thy prayers," he directed, "and in thy mind know thou'rt on thy knees. Forget not to be thankful for all thou hast. Remember thy lady mother and Sir John, thy father, who is at the wars, and pray for us all."

Then he left Robin and went apart to his own devotions. "But what have I to be thankful for?" Robin thought rebelliously. "How will my father like a son who is called 'Crookshanks'?" But somehow as he began his prayers he felt better.

**A**s the days grew warmer, the plague abated somewhat. Fewer people came to the hospital for care, and those who had not died became well and went to their homes. The cloisters were once more free of strangers and the corridors cleared of beds and pallets.

Early one bright morning Brother Luke came for Robin, taking him on his back as before.

"See that thy hold is strong," he said, "for I shall carry thee a good way. 'Tis good exercise for thine arms to make thee hold on, and will be good exercise for me, too, carrying a great lad of ten."

Robin laughed, because he knew that he was small for his age.

"I have somewhat in mind for thee," said Brother Luke.

He carried Robin in and out of halls and chambers, kitchen and parlor, cloisters and outer court; through refectory and almonry, stopping, as always, in the chapel to say a prayer.

Then they went to the gardens at the far side of the monastery.

"Here thy whittling will be more at home," said the friar, settling Robin in a small trundle cart and giving him the pieces of the little cross which was almost finished.

"Brother Michael will welcome thee to his part of

the garden when thou'rt weary of being here. Brother Matthew will look out for thee, and yonder is Brother David, the stone mason. Wilt look after Robin?" he called to the monk in the carpenter shop.

Brother Matthew nodded and left his work to examine what Robin was doing.

"Fret not," he said. "I see he is one of us."

"Twill be a cross when 'tis done," said Robin in greeting, putting the two pieces together to show how they went. "But how to fasten them I know not. Could you tell me?"

"I will, surely," the monk assured him. "But I have better tools. Come nearer where we can reach them." He moved the trundle cart close to the workbench, where he found a chisel.

"Now we shall make a half joint, so, and fit it tightly, cutting each piece only halfway through the wood, so the crosspiece will just fit into the upright one." He showed Robin how to hold the sharp tool and how carefully he must work so that it wouldn't go through the wood entirely.

"Then," he explained, "we shall secure it with fish glue, and the dust which comes from using the rubbing stone to polish the wood will fill in the least crack and make all smooth."

He went back to his work.

Robin, too, went to work. It was exciting to use the sharp chisel. It slid easily into the wood, peeling off the smallest slivers which fell in a pleasant litter around him. Soon the square place appeared where the other piece of wood should fit. For some reason he did not know Robin felt very content. He loved the smell of the wood he was whittling, even the acrid smell of the oak that Brother Matthew was working. He liked the sharp whistle of the plane as it slid over the board, and the ringing sound of the chisel

on stone from the mason's shed. Even the tiresome call of the cuckoo in the walnut tree was only a pleasant sound of summer. The sky above was like the garment of Our Lady: blue, gold-bordered.

Robin stopped to rest, watching the birds that darted about the garden.

He felt so strong that he was sure he soon would be able to get up and walk. He began to whistle, and set to work again.

For a long time only these homely sounds were heard in the garden close, for the monks did not talk at their work.

Then it happened. The sharp chisel slipped and cut a gash across the longer piece of the cross. It broke.

Away flew the other piece as far as Robin could throw it, and after it went the chisel, narrowly missing Brother Matthew's head. Robin's face was drawn into a black cloud of anger, and if he had been able, he would have stormed out of the garden. But he was bound to stay where he was, so he took out his anger in words.

"Traucherous misguided tool!" he shouted. "I'll have no more of you!"

Brother Matthew looked up in astonishment. "'Tis not the tool that is at fault, but thine unskilled hands," he said quietly.

"If thou'rt to learn to use it, patience and care are better teachers than a bad temper."

"Think you I am but a carpenter's son and apprentice?"

But as Brother Matthew kept his steady gaze on Robin, anger evaporated. He covered his eyes with his arms and wished he had been truly a carpenter's son. Then his father would not have been away at the wars, or his mother in waiting upon the Queen. They would have been at home, and he with them.

"Tomorrow is another day," comforted Brother Matthew. "Take thy rest for now, and thou wilt do better work next time. Here is Brother Luke coming to care for thee. I shall not tell him how nearly I lost my head." Brother Matthew's eyes twinkled as he reassured Robin, who had given him a questioning look.

Later, while the good friar cared for him, rubbing his legs and back, working the muscles of his hands and arms, he said, "I was tired, but now I feel better. You are very kind."

"I see thou'rt getting stronger. It may be that this rubbing helps thee. How, I know not. I am no physician; I am but a foolish friar. But it may stir up thy blood and make thee more comfortable. God's good time, His sunshine, and the love that is borne thee are all healing. A bright spirit helps, too, and that thou hast."

"Today in the garden I felt that soon I should walk," said Robin. "I must get well before my father returns from the wars."

"Whether thou'lt walk soon I know not. This I know. We must teach thy hands to be skillful in many ways, and we must teach thy mind to go about whether thy legs will carry thee or no. For reading is another door in the wall, dost understand, my son?"

Robin smiled and nodded. "Yes," he said. "I see now what you mean by the door in the wall."

"We shall read together. Then there is somewhat of the earth and stars that Brother Hubert can tell thee: how they go in their seasons so that in summer when we rise for the midnight office Orion is here. Yet in winter, at the same hour, he is over there." Brother Luke stopped rubbing to point in different directions overhead as he went on.

"Some say that the earth extendeth just so far, then

## YEARLING NEWBERY

Ever since he can remember, Robin, child of Sir John de Bureford, has been told what is expected of him as the son of a nobleman. He must learn the ways of knighthood. But Robin's destiny is changed suddenly when he falls ill and loses the use of his legs. Fearing a plague, his servants abandon him, and Robin is left alone.

A monk named Brother Luke rescues Robin and takes him to the hospice of St. Mark's, where he is taught wood-carving and patience and strength. Says Brother Luke, "Thou hast only to follow the wall far enough and there will be a door in it."

Robin learns soon enough what Brother Luke means. When the great castle of Lindsay is in danger, Robin discovers that there is more than one way to serve his king.

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ISBN 978-0-440-40283-1



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RL: 6.5 • 10 & up  
Cover art © 2005 by Gabriel  
Also available as an ebook