

THE THIEF OF  
FARROWFELL

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**RAVENA GURON** is a British Indian biochemist turned lawyer turned MG author, a superb new voice who brings her own captivating brand of energy, wild adventures and joy to the genre. *The Thief of Farrowfell* is the first in the series following Jude Ripon, and was shortlisted for Penguin's WriteNow scheme, as well as being highly commended in the FAB Prize. Ravena also writes YA, including the acclaimed *This Book Kills*. Ravena is a Londoner through and through: born, raised and educated in London, she lives there still.

**ALESSIA TRUNFIO** was born in southern Italy but grew up in Rome, where she still lives. After graduating with an Animation Degree from the International School of Comics in Rome, Alessia has worked as background artist for some of the most important animation studios in Italy. Fundamentally passionate about cinema, anime, literature, indie music and fried food, Alessia is an eclectic, energetic and inexhaustible illustrator.

*To Matt and Alice, Farrowfell's first readers.*

First published in the UK in 2023  
by Faber & Faber Limited  
The Bindery, 51 Hatton Garden  
London, EC1N 8HN  
faber.co.uk

Typeset in Garamond by MRules  
Printed by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon CR0 4YY

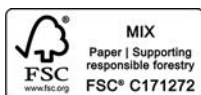
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A CIP record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-0-571-37117-4



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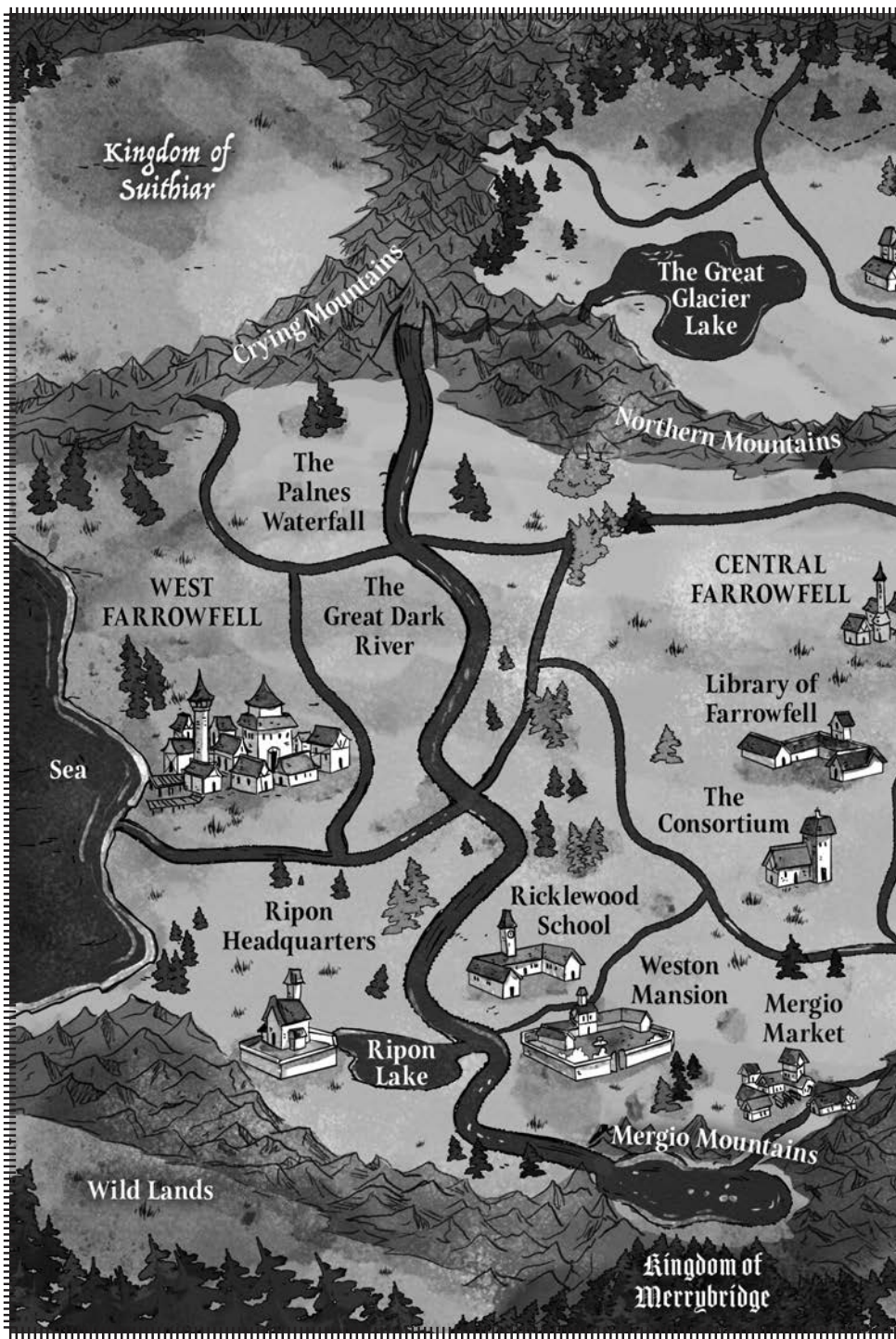
# RAVENA GURON

ILLUSTRATED BY ALESSIA TRUNFIO



# THE THIEF OF FARROWFELL

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Kingdom of Suithiar

Crying Mountains

The Great Glacier Lake

Northern Mountains

The Palnes Waterfall

WEST FARROWFELL

The Great Dark River

CENTRAL FARROWFELL

Library of Farrowfell

The Consortium

Sea

Ripon Headquarters

Ricklewood School

Weston Mansion

Mergio Market

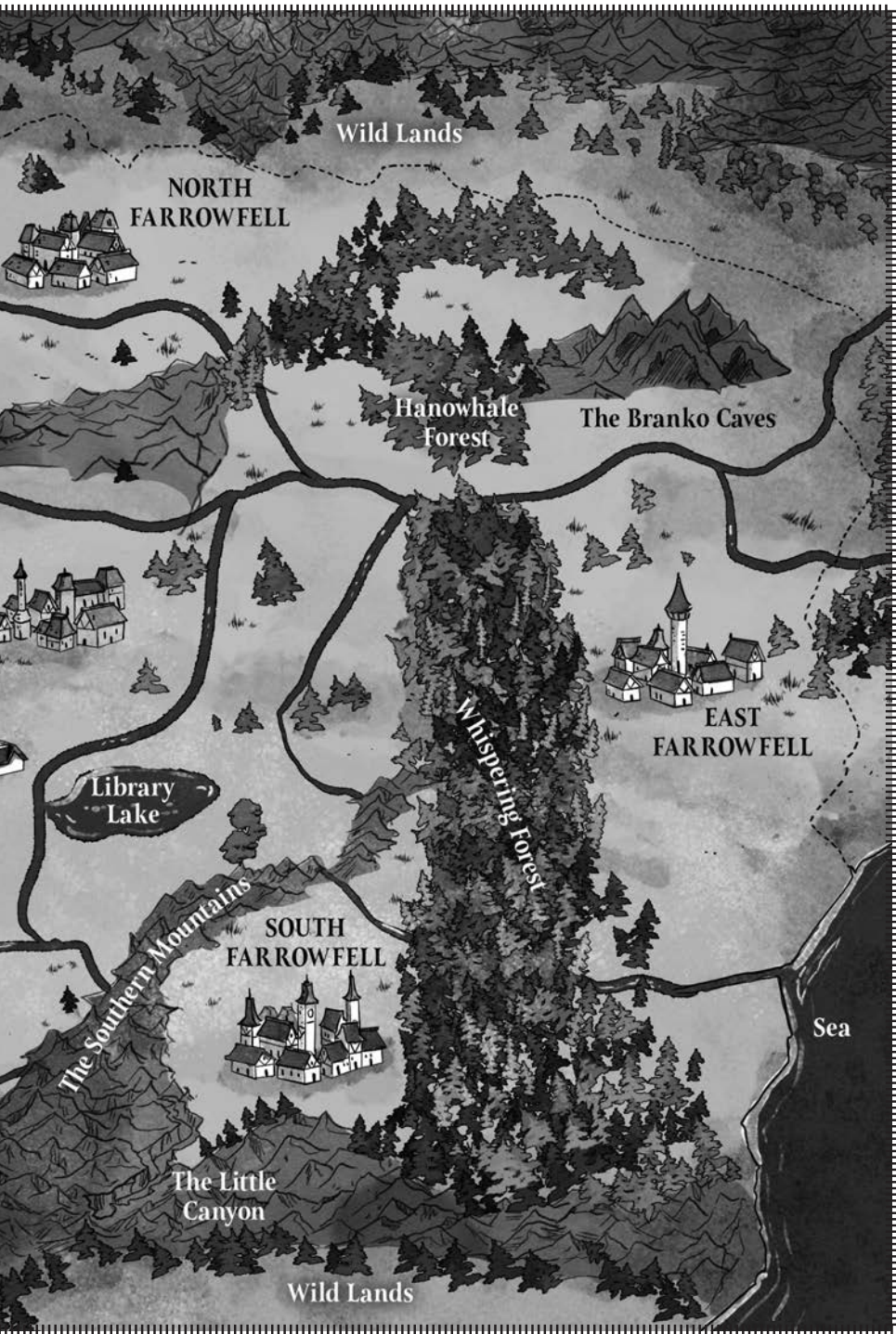
Ripon Lake

Mergio Mountains

Wild Lands

Kingdom of Merrybridge





Wild Lands

NORTH  
FARROWFELL

Hanowhale  
Forest

The Branko Caves

EAST  
FARROWFELL

Library  
Lake

Whispering Forest

SOUTH  
FARROWFELL

The Southern Mountains

The Little  
Canyon

Wild Lands

Sea







## Chapter One

# The Weston Mansion

Jude Ripon loved stealing.

Not just magic, or money, or diamonds and gold, though they were all fun things to pinch. She liked the quiet moments when she snuck through mansions of the rich, her footsteps muffled by thick, plush carpets. The stolen seconds of living someone else's life.

She'd never been allowed to steal on her own, and on the rare occasions her family took her on business she was normally given a lookout role, miles away from the action. Only in the lowest priority houses was she ever allowed the thrill of slipping along and swiping treasures, supervised by her snappy old aunts. Real,

important jobs were given to the adults of her family who had proven themselves to the Ripon criminal empire many times. The only exception was Jude's sister Moorley, who was just three years older than Jude but got to go on all kinds of adventures. She didn't even *want* to. It was completely unfair.

No one took Jude seriously – at twelve years old she was apparently too young to do anything important. But that would change once she returned home from the Weston mansion with rare magic stolen from one of the most powerful families in Farrowfell. Rare magic the Ripons could sell on the black market.

They would *have* to take her seriously then.

The thick stone walls that marked the boundaries of the Westons' grounds towered over her. A lesser thief might have tried scaling the walls, or else wrestled with the cast-iron gate. Jude, however, was prepared. She reached into her pocket, feeling for the squelchy ghost magic she had stolen from Moorley. It was shaped like a raindrop of emerald crystal. She popped it in her mouth and tried not to gag; it tasted like feet.

The moment she swallowed, her body forgot it was supposed to be solid. As she passed through the stone wall the world went dark. All the breath was squeezed out of her lungs and an icy feeling spread through her.

Her senses returned to normal once she made it to the other side and she grinned, hurrying across

the muddy lawn towards the enormous glowing white mansion.

She pulled out a second piece of magic, pinched from her father; a gritty, sand-like mixture, which would turn her invisible. Ghost and invisibility magic, though illegal, were two tools any decent thief needed, and she had got used to helping herself to her father's stash. If he didn't want anyone to snaffle little bits here and there he should have hidden it somewhere more secure than a safe with his own birthday as the passcode.

Jude crammed the invisibility magic into her mouth, wishing she had some orange juice to wash away the bitter taste. She tried to gag quietly – the magic had been made cheaply so she could still be heard. She could also be smelled, an issue because the water at home wasn't working properly. Aunt Victi kept telling everyone that *real* homeowners fixed their own pipes, so the problem wouldn't be sorted until Spry, Jude's cousin, who had a knack for practical work, turned his attention from building flying carriages to figuring out the plumbing.

Now that Jude was a proper (noisy and smelly) ghost, she strode confidently through the front door. No one would see the skinny kid with frizzy black hair and golden-brown skin entering their home.

She found herself standing in an entrance hall with a shiny white marble floor. Pillars reached up to the dome-like ceiling, painted with fluffy clouds tinged

pink to resemble a morning sky. Before her was a wide staircase, which she began to climb.

There were numerous hallways, all with plump couches every few metres, as if the Westons couldn't walk ten seconds without needing to sit down. Jude kept pausing, unable to stop gawking at all the treasures: the expensive artwork, the gold candlestick holders, the precious silver. Her family, under Aunt Morgol's beady eye, didn't waste money on shiny things.

As she went, Jude could already imagine Grandleader's proud face, her mother's smile – and Moorley's envy – when they saw what she'd stolen. The last image especially spurred her on.

Moorley was the reason she'd never been allowed on a real heist before.

Around two years ago, Jude had taken to listening at doors in Ripon Headquarters, because she'd started to realise that her family's most interesting conversations happened when she wasn't around. One day, she'd heard Grandleader telling Moorley how marvellously she had done after *her* first proper heist. He was thinking of giving Jude a proper role on the next one.

Jude's heart had swelled with excitement. This was it – she was finally going to be one of the family rather than the youngest who couldn't do anything.

Moorley's reply still stung to this day. 'No,' she said. 'Jude will just mess things up. She'll never be a true Ripon.'

And Grandleader had listened. Jude wasn't invited

on the important heist and she continued to exist on the fringes of family conversations, never properly let in. Her already lukewarm relationship with her too-serious, too-perfect sister got so cold it turned to ice.

Now, in a few short hours, she would prove Moorley wrong when she burst through the doors of Ripon Headquarters with the rare magic she had come here to steal: decision-making magic.

A low-level criminal called Farlow Higgins had told her of a rumour that the Westons were keeping the magic in their home. Jude knew at once her family would make a huge profit on selling it. Just a small bite of decision-making magic could help someone plot all the possible outcomes from their choices, ensuring they picked the best one. To make it, a person needed to mix large amounts of raw magic with ingredients like the milk from a three-eyed goat, or a perfectly square rock – things almost impossible to find.

A door slammed somewhere in the depths of the house and she jumped, her focus breaking for a second. Was there someone around?

Her arm started to drift apart, disappearing like wisps of smoke as the ghost magic took advantage of her lapse in concentration. Taking a few deep breaths to calm herself she curled her fingers into fists, forcing her arm back together. She continued on her way, cursing herself. Moorley probably never almost floated away when *she* used ghost magic.

Jude made good progress until she came to a fork in the corridor. Was it left or right?

Stepping inside an alcove, she took out the map of the Weston mansion given to her by Farlow Higgins. He wouldn't say how he'd got it, but he had a knack for stealing all sorts of items. Once she was certain of the right direction, she set off again.

A floorboard squeaked underneath her boot and a door nearby opened by itself, like the house was responding to the sound. Now every other floorboard she stepped on groaned, the noise getting louder each time. The house seemed to come alive; the curtains fluttered at the windows and drawers rattled in their tables.

Jude quickened her pace, almost jogging as she rounded a corner and reached a large vaulted door with a cast-iron knob in the centre. She had arrived at her destination.

She grinned as the ghost magic allowed her to glide through.

The room on the other side was half lit with a faded golden glow and empty of furniture, apart from a raised platform in the centre. On the platform a set of display cabinets stood. Much of the space was in shadows.

Jude's heartbeat quickened. She was metres away from items of magic more valuable than anything she'd ever seen. Her breath caught. In the middle cabinet, on a plump violet cushion resting on a small stand, was a butter-yellow stone. It was barely the size of her fist.

‘Yes!’ she whispered as she reached out, expecting her fingers to pass straight through the glass of the cabinet. Instead there was a low buzzing, like an angry bee, and a force pushed her hand back. No matter what angle she came at the cabinet, something in the glass battled her. She tried climbing on to it, elbowing it and even kicking it. Nothing worked.

As a last option she tried a running leap to take the glass by surprise. But the force from the cabinet pushed her upwards and she sailed through the air, landing with a thump on the other side of the room. A shooting pain spread through her backside.

‘Ow,’ she said, wincing as she got to her feet.

The cabinet was warding her off. All tamed magic needed to be activated by something – was her ghost magic reacting with magic in the cabinet? If so, maybe all she needed to do was turn her magic off.

She squeezed her eyes shut, focusing on her fingers and toes, and imagined her body coming together again. A tingling feeling spread across her chest, and pins and needles pricked across her legs. With a soft *pop* she was solid and visible once more.

Jude ran her fingers over the glass, its temperature at least ten degrees cooler than the rest of the room. Her guess about removing her magic had been right.

As she examined the cabinet, a shiver ran down her back.

*She was being watched.*



Quickly, she spun around—  
Nothing.

She was alone in the darkened room. *Of course* she was alone. She wouldn't get caught. Thieving was in her blood.

A floorboard creaked behind her.

At once she dug into her pocket and whipped out her magic yo-yo, squinting into the shadows. Could there be someone else here, using invisibility magic? Surely not – only well-connected criminals had access to it, and it would be too much of a coincidence for someone else to decide to make a steal at the same time she had. No, this was an old house – most likely the floorboard had creaked on its own.

She turned back to the cabinet, thinking. Grandleader had managed to start the Ripon empire with nothing but his wits. Solving this problem would show she was a Ripon through and through.

With a huff she rested against the cabinet – and found herself falling. She knocked into the stand, which fell in a crash that seemed to ring on and on. As she regained her balance, she twisted around to see what had happened.

The glass of the cabinet had disappeared.

'What in the stars?' Jude muttered. What was going on? Was this a trap?

The decision-making magic had rolled away and now lay on its side.

It shouldn't be this easy. Something was wrong.

But the magic was right there in front of her – and she had come all this way. Desperate longing clawed through her, for Grandleader to smile with goodwill, for her mother to tell her she was as good as Moorley. It pushed away all other fears and doubts.

Without a second's more hesitation, Jude picked up the magic. It was heavy for something so small.

Several things happened at once. A spiral of golden light shone from the centre of the stone, flowing around her. And a howling alarm clanged, ringing in the air.

The door to the room scraped open and horror rooted her to the spot. She'd been caught.