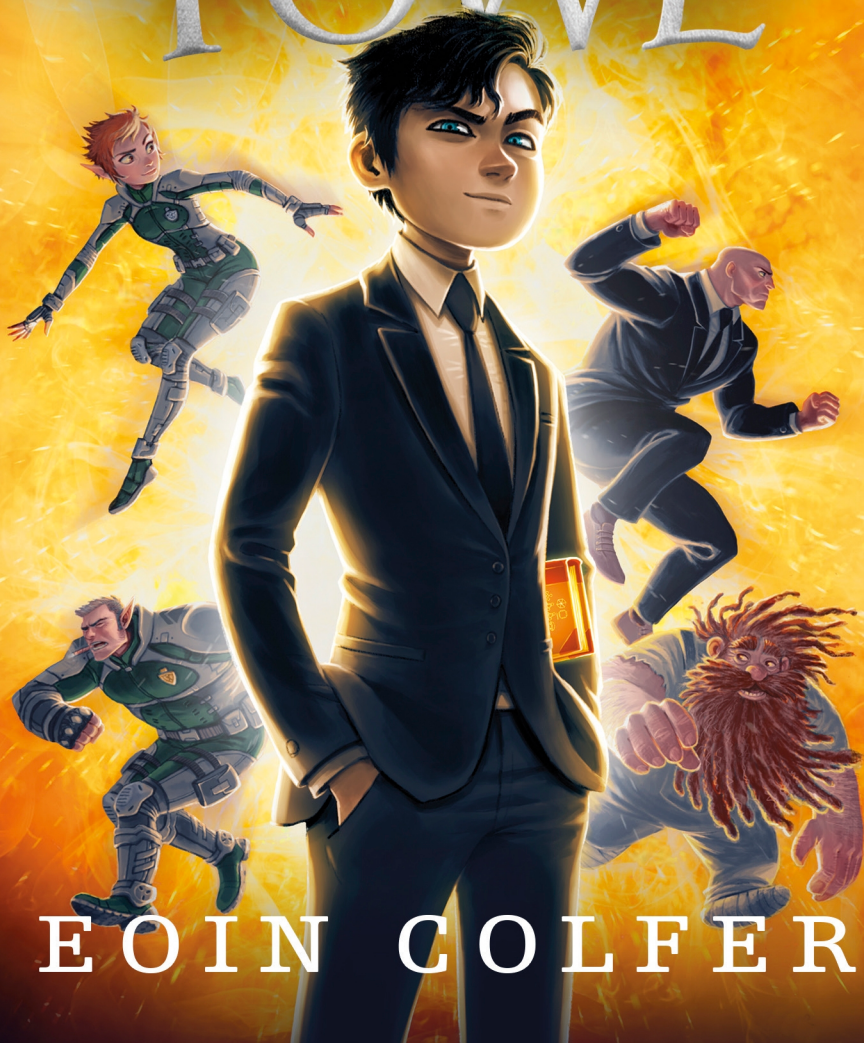


Penguin



Readers

ARTEMIS FOWL



EOIN COLFER

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CHAPTER ONE

The fairy

Artemis Fowl was sitting outside a café in Ho Chi Minh City. It was summer, and it was hot. But Artemis was not on holiday. Artemis did not like the sun. His skin was white from long hours in front of a computer **screen**. But he was in Vietnam because he had some very important business there.

“I hope your man is telling the truth, Butler,” he said to the huge man sitting next to him.

“I’m sure he is, **sir**. Nguyen is a good man,” said Butler.

Adults do not often call twelve-year-old boys “sir”, but Artemis was not a normal person.

Nguyen was late, but Artemis felt a little bit of hope. They were very close to the Book; he could feel it.

A waiter hurried to the table.

“More tea, sir?” he asked Butler. “And for the boy?”

“Sit down,” ordered Artemis.

“But, sir, I am the waiter.”

“You’re wearing expensive shoes and three **gold** rings. You speak good English, and your hands are soft. You’re not a waiter. You’re our man, Nguyen. You’re doing this to check us for **weapons**.”

“That’s true. Amazing,” said the man.

“Not really,” replied Artemis.

The man sat down and took some tea.



“Now I’ll tell you about the weapons,” said Artemis. “Butler here has a gun under his jacket, a knife in each shoe and . . . what have I forgotten, Butler?”

“The bombs, sir.”

“Oh, yes. Two small bombs, one in each **pocket**.”

Nguyen’s hands shook as he drank his tea.

“Butler won’t use his weapons on you,” said Artemis. “And, of course, he could kill you in a hundred different ways without his weapons.”

Now Nguyen could not drink his tea. He did not want another minute with these strange people. Everyone in the **criminal** world knew the name “Fowl”. Nguyen was ready to meet Artemis Fowl the First. But this boy was Artemis Fowl the Second, his son.

“And now we must talk business,” said Artemis. “You have information for us.”

“Yes, Mr Fowl. You’re looking for the Book,” said Nguyen. “I know where you can find one.”

“Really? Are you lying to me? A lot of people don’t like my family.”

“No, no,” said Nguyen, taking out a photograph. “Here, look.”

Artemis looked closely at the picture. It showed a hand – a green hand.

“This woman **heals** people,” explained Nguyen. “She lives near Tu Do Street and drinks rice **wine** all day.”

Artemis nodded. “Very well, Mr Nguyen,” he said, standing up. “Let’s go.”

Butler drove them through the narrow city streets. There were crowds of people, with bicycles. There were fish-and fruit-sellers and playing children, and the car moved slowly. Artemis was feeling excited. Could this be it? This was his and Butler’s seventh journey to look for the Book. Did this old woman have what he wanted?

The streets grew too narrow for their big car, and they had to walk. A thousand eyes followed them. One unlucky man tried to steal Butler’s watch. Butler broke the man’s fingers without looking down. People did not watch them after that.

They stopped on a very dirty street.

“Well?” said Artemis. “Where is she?”

“Under there,” said Nguyen, pointing to a dark hole under some metal stairs. “She never comes out. Now, can I go?”

“Fairies hate the light,” thought Artemis. He walked

closer and put on his night glasses. In the corner something moved under an old coat. It was strangely small.

“Hello?” said Artemis. “I’m here to do business with you.”

“Give me some wine,” a voice said, sleepily. “Wine, English boy.”

“I’m Irish, actually,” Artemis told her. “Butler?”

Butler took a bottle from his pocket. Suddenly a hand reached out from the coat and took the bottle. The hand was green.

Artemis gave a huge smile. “Pay our friend Mr Nguyen, Butler. Remember, Mr Nguyen, don’t speak of this to anyone. You don’t want to make Butler angry, do you?”

“No, no, Mr Fowl, sir,” said Nguyen, taking the twenty thousand dollars and quickly running away.

Artemis turned back to the **creature** under the coat. “Now, then,” said Artemis. “You have something that I want.”

“What? Do you have a problem with your girlfriend? Do you have a bad tooth?” said the voice. “I can help you.”

“No, I don’t have any problems. I want your Book.”

“My book?” the voice said, slowly. “If you want a book, you go to the library.”

“You are a **fairy**,” said Artemis, “and I want your Book.”

The creature’s voice was silent for a long moment. Then a face appeared from the coat. It was an old fairy face. Her nose was long, her ears were **pointed** and she had narrow **golden** eyes.

“If you know about the Book, **human**,” she said, drinking from the bottle, “then you know about the **magic**

in my fingers. Fairy magic can kill you in seconds.” She put the empty wine bottle down in front of her.

“Look at you. You’re nearly dead,” said Artemis. “Years of drinking rice wine has almost killed your magic. I can save you, if you give me the Book.”

“Why do you want it?”

“You don’t need to know that,” said Artemis. “So what will you choose? One, you don’t give us the Book. We go home and leave you here.”

“Yes, I choose this,” said the fairy.

“Ah, careful! If we leave without the Book, you’ll be dead in a day,” Artemis continued.

“One day!” The fairy laughed. “Fairies live for hundreds of years!”

“Not if they’ve drunk **poison**,” said Artemis, picking up the bottle.

“Poison!” screamed the fairy. “You’ve murdered me, human.”

“Maybe,” said Artemis. “You’ll feel the poison burning your stomach soon.”

“Or . . . ?” asked the fairy, holding her stomach.

“Two, you give me the Book for thirty minutes. Then Butler will give you some water from the fairy pool below Tara – the most magical place on Earth. It will stop the poison and bring back your magic.”

The fairy thought for a moment. The pain in her stomach was getting worse. “Give me the water, human,” she said.

Butler took a bottle out of his pocket and gave it to the fairy. She drank, but he took it back before she could finish it.

“You’ll get more when you give me the Book,” Artemis told her.

She reached into her dirty coat. Artemis waited. This was the most important day of his life. “The Fowls will be great again,” he thought, “and I’ll be the **leader**.”

“Here,” said the fairy, passing him a small golden book. “You can’t use it anyway. It’s written in Gnommish, the old fairy language.”

Butler took the Book carefully, and he took photographs of every thin page. Artemis emailed the photographs to Fowl Manor, near Dublin, Ireland. Then he passed the Book back to the fairy.

“The water, human?”

“Oh yes,” said Artemis. “I did promise.”

Butler gave the bottle to the fairy. Her body began to shake as the water healed her, and 100 years of wine quickly left her body. It was not something that was pretty to see, and Artemis and Butler did not watch.

