

*The chronicles of magic.*  
*The unique tree*

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[excerpt]

The children returned to their room after being punished. Yet their hearts were racing: even though they couldn't leave their room, they didn't seem to mind. They ran over to Nancy's bed and knelt down on the floor to get a look at Gabe's hands. His fists were clenched, as though he were carrying something.

Gabe went over to the bed and opened them, but they were empty. Perplexed, the children stared into the empty space. Then, from out of nowhere, a spark leaped out of their hands and onto the bed and, just as with the stove before, the two of them quickly got to their feet, fearing the bed would catch fire. But that wasn't what happened at all. Quite simply, that little salamander reappeared, engulfed in flames.

"Each time you surprise me a little more," Nancy said with a smile.

Then, like a tiny person, the salamander began moving around quite strangely, as if it were dizzy, then began to moan in a high-pitched tone, though its voice was very low, like a squirrel's. Nancy reached for its head and the fire began to glow intensely. She withdrew, fearful the creature was about to explode, and Gabe tried calming it down as well, but it continued to cry.

"What is it saying?" Gabe exclaimed, trying to remain calm.

"I don't know, but if it keeps this up, Grandpa's going to hear!"

The salamander raised its hands and pointed to a small bunch of rowan with amber and red string. Nancy rushed to rip the rowan off of her and her brother's beds, then went over to the window and threw it out onto the roof. The salamander appeared to calm down, and even its flames burned less brightly. The animal

shook itself, as if in a daze.

"It looks like the rowan causes it pain," said Gabe.

"Poor thing, it must have really hurt," said Nancy.

"Isn't it strange that when Grandpa put it there, this creature suddenly began to

suffer? Everything was finally starting to make sense, even Grandpa's talking to himself. He told something or someone to leave, that they weren't welcome, and now these things suddenly appeared out of the rowan, hanging all over the house."

Nancy and Gabe looked at one another, then at the salamander, which was looking all around, climbing among the folds of the blankets as though they were tall hills.