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Life in the Fireplace

Mary Graham Bonner

Jamie and Jackie had both fallen asleep in front of the fire, and now they were somewhere else entirely.

Where the flames had been, there were castles — tall stone towers with turrets and drawbridges and flags snapping in a warm wind. Kings and queens moved about in robes of amber and crimson. Princes and princesses spoke in low voices to each other. Far in one corner, in a cave of dark grey stone, sat an old witch in scarlet, with a tall black hat, looking rather pleased with herself.



Every so often, without warning, a shot rang out.

"What does that mean?" Jackie and Jamie asked together.

"The fireplace clock," said the Sparks.

"It doesn't keep very good time," Jamie said. "It went off three times just now, and before that it was ages."

"We keep the time we like," said the Sparks, a little huffily. "Anyway, our castles are beautiful enough without being criticized for our clock."

"They are beautiful," Jamie agreed quickly. "Truly. We love the fire. We don't mind the clock at all."

"What's that about time?" said someone, and both children were being gently shaken. Their mother. Bedtime.

They crawled into their cool sheets, and lay there in the dark thinking about the castles and the witch in the corner and the irregular, unpredictable fireplace clock.

Then Jamie said: "Did you see the same thing?"

"All of it," said Jackie.

They fell asleep quite happily.

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