



The Iron King

By Julie Kagawa

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MEGHAN CHASE HAS A SECRET DESTINY—ONE SHE COULD NEVER HAVE IMAGINED...

Something has always felt slightly off in Meghan's life, ever since her father disappeared before her eyes when she was six. She has never quite fit in at school...or at home.

When a dark stranger begins watching her from afar and her prankster best friend becomes strangely protective of her, Meghan senses that everything she's known is about to change. But she could never have guessed the truth.

For Meghan is the daughter of a mythical faery king...and a pawn in a deadly war. Now Meghan will learn just how far she'll go to save someone she cares about, stop a mysterious evil no faery creature dare face...and find love with a young prince who might rather see her dead than let her touch his icy heart.

Don't miss the first book in Julie Kagawa's highly anticipated new series, TALON, AVAILABLE OCTOBER 28, 2014

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 8 Up—On her 16th birthday, Meghan Chase's four-year-old half brother is exchanged for a changeling and she discovers that her best friend, Robbie, is actually Robin Greenfellow, aka Puck, from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. He is her guardian and will lead her into the faery world to rescue her brother. Once there, Meghan learns that she is a princess, daughter of Oberon, king of the Seelie Court. With a mortal mother and a faery king for a father, she is very powerful, and Oberon and Queen Mab, queen of the Unseelie Court, are both fighting to keep her. With help from Puck and a talking cat, Meghan sneaks into the Unseelie Court to rescue Ethan, only to discover that he is held captive by more powerful forces that could destroy the entire fey world. Meghan is a likable heroine and her quest is fraught with danger and adventure. The action never stops, and Meghan's romance with Ash, the handsome prince of the Unseelie Court, provides some romance that is sure to continue in the sequel. Faery books are in high demand now, and this is one of the better ones. Expect it to be popular with teens who liked Melissa Marr's *Wicked Lovely* (HarperTeen, 2007).—*Ginny Collier, Dekalb County Public Library, Decatur, GA*

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About the Author

Born in Sacramento, CA, Julie Kagawa moved to Hawaii at the age of nine. There she learned many things; how to bodyboard, that teachers scream when you put centipedes in their desks, and that writing stories in math class is a great way to kill time. Her teachers were glad to see her graduate.

Julie now lives in Louisville, KY with her husband and furkids. She is the international and NYT bestselling author of The Iron Fey series. Visit her at juliekagawa.com.

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The Ghost in the Computer

Ten years ago, on my sixth birthday my father disappeared.

No, he didn't leave. Leaving would imply suitcases and empty drawers, and late birthday cards with ten-dollar bills stuffed inside. Leaving would imply he was unhappy with Mom and me, or that he found a new love elsewhere. None of that was true. He also did not die, because we would've heard about it. There was no car crash, no body, no police mingling about the scene of a brutal murder. It all happened very quietly.

On my sixth birthday, my father took me to the park, one of my favorite places to go at that time. It was a lonely little park in the middle of nowhere, with a running trail and a misty green pond surrounded by pine trees. We were at the edge of the pond, feeding the ducks, when I heard the jingle of an ice cream truck in the parking lot over the hill. When I begged my dad to get me a Creamsicle, he laughed, handed me a few bills, and sent me after the truck.

That was the last time I saw him.

Later, when the police searched the area, they discovered his shoes at the edge of the water, but nothing else. They sent divers into the pond, but it was barely ten feet down, and they found nothing but branches and mud at the bottom. My father had disappeared without a trace.

For months afterward, I had a recurring nightmare about standing at the top of that hill, looking down and seeing my father walk into the pond. As the water closed over his head, I could hear the ice cream truck singing in the background, a slow, eerie song with words I could almost understand. Every time I tried to listen to them, however, I'd wake up.

Not long after my father's disappearance, Mom moved us far away, to a tiny little hick town in the middle of the Louisiana bayou. Mom said she wanted to "start over," but I always knew, deep down, that she was running from something.

It would be another ten years before I discovered what.

My name is M.eghan Chase.

In less than twenty-four hours, I'll be sixteen years old.

Sweet sixteen. It has a magical ring to it. Sixteen is supposed to be the age when girls become princesses and fall in love and go to dances and proms and such. Countless stories, songs, and poems have been written about this wonderful age, when a girl finds true love and the stars shine for her and the handsome prince carries her off into the sunset.

I didn't think it would be that way for me.

The morning before my birthday, I woke up, showered, and rummaged through my dresser for something to wear. Normally, I'd just grab whatever clean-ish thing is on the floor, but today was special. Today was the day Scott Waldron would finally notice me. I wanted to look perfect. Of course, my wardrobe is sadly lacking in the popular-attire department. While other girls spend hours in front of their closets crying,

"What should I wear?" my drawers basically hold three things: clothes from Goodwill, hand-me-downs, and overalls.

I wish we weren't so poor. I know pig farming isn't the most glamorous of jobs, but you'd think Mom could afford to buy me at least one pair of nice jeans. I glared at my scanty wardrobe in disgust. *Oh, well, I guess Scott will have to be wowed with my natural grace and charm, if I don't make an idiot of myself in front of him.*

I finally slipped into cargo pants, a neutral green T-shirt, and my only pair of ratty sneakers, before dragging a brush through my white-blond hair. My hair is straight and very fine, and was doing that stupid floating thing again, where it looked like I'd jammed my finger up an electrical outlet. Yanking it into a ponytail, I went downstairs.

Luke, my stepfather, sat at the table, drinking coffee and leafing through the town's tiny newspaper, which reads more like our high school gossip column than a real news source. "Five-legged calf born on Patterson's farm," the front page screamed; you get the idea. Ethan, my four-year-old half brother, sat on his father's lap,

eating a Pop-Tart and getting crumbs all over Luke's overalls. He clutched Floppy, his favorite stuffed rabbit, in one arm and occasionally tried to feed it his breakfast; the rabbit's face was full of crumbs and fruit filling.

Ethan is a good kid. He has his father's curly brown hair, but like me, inherited Mom's big blue eyes. He's the type of kid old ladies stop to coo at, and total strangers smile and wave at him from across the street. Mom and Luke dote on their baby, but it doesn't seem to spoil him, thank goodness.

"Where's Mom?" I asked as I entered the kitchen. Opening the cabinet doors, I scoured the boxes of cereal for the one I liked, wondering if Mom remembered to pick it up. Of course she hadn't. Nothing but fiber squares and disgusting marshmallow cereals for Ethan. Was it so hard to remember Cheerios?

Luke ignored me and sipped his coffee. Ethan chewed his Pop-Tart and sneezed on his father's arm. I slammed the cabinet doors with a satisfying bang.

"Where's Mom?" I asked, a bit louder this time. Luke jerked his head up and finally looked at me. His lazy brown eyes, like those of a cow, registered mild surprise.

"Oh, hello, Meg," he said calmly. "I didn't hear you come in. What did you say?"

I sighed and repeated my question for the third time.

"She had a meeting with some of the ladies at church," Luke murmured, turning back to his paper. "She won't be back for a few hours, so you'll have to take the bus."

I always took the bus. I just wanted to remind Mom that she was supposed to take me to get a learner's permit this weekend. With Luke, it was hopeless. I could tell him something fourteen different times, and he'd forget it the moment I left the room. It wasn't that Luke was mean or malicious, or even stupid. He adored Ethan, and Mom seemed truly happy with him. But, every time I spoke to my stepdad, he would look at me with genuine surprise, as if he'd forgotten I lived here, too.

I grabbed a bagel from the top of the fridge and chewed it sullenly, keeping an eye on the clock. Beau, our German shepherd, wandered in and put his big head on my knee. I scratched him behind the ears and he groaned. At least the *dog* appreciated me.

Luke stood, gently placing Ethan back in his seat. "All right, big guy," he said, kissing the top of Ethan's head. "Dad has to fix the bathroom sink, so you sit there and be good. When I'm done, we'll go feed the pigs, okay?"

"Kay," Ethan chirped, swinging his chubby legs. "Floppy wants to see if Ms. Daisy had her babies yet."

Luke's smile was so disgustingly proud, I felt nauseous.

"Hey, Luke," I said as he turned to go, "bet you can't guess what tomorrow is."

"Mmm?" He didn't even turn around. "I don't know, Meg. If you have plans for tomorrow, talk to your mother." He snapped his fingers, and Beau immediately left me to follow him. Their footsteps faded up the stairs, and I was alone with my half brother.

Ethan kicked his feet, regarding me in that solemn way of his. "I know," he announced softly, putting his

Pop-Tart on the table. "Tomorrow's your birthday, isn't it? Floppy told me, and I remembered."

"Yeah," I muttered, turning and lobbing the bagel into the trash can. It hit the wall with a thump and dropped inside, leaving a greasy smear on the paint. I smirked and decided to leave it.

"Floppy says to tell you happy early birthday."

"Tell Floppy thanks." I ruffled Ethan's hair as I left the kitchen, my mood completely soured. I knew it. Mom and Luke would completely forget my birthday tomorrow. I wouldn't get a card, or a cake, or even a "happy birthday" from anyone. Except my kid brother's stupid stuffed rabbit. How pathetic was that?

Back in my room, I grabbed books, homework, gym clothes, and the iPod I'd spent a year saving for, despite Luke's disdain of those "useless, brain-numbing gadgets." In true hick fashion, my stepfather dislikes and distrusts anything that could make life easier. Cell phones? No way, we've got a perfectly good landline. Video games? They're the devil's tools, turning kids into delinquents and serial killers. I've begged Mom over and over to buy me a laptop for school, but Luke insists that if his ancient, clunky PC is good enough for him, it's good enough for the family. Never mind that dial-up takes flipping *forever*. I mean, who uses dial-up anymore?

I checked my watch and swore. The bus would arrive shortly, and I had a good ten-minute walk to the main road. Looking out the window, I saw the sky was gray and heavy with rain, so I grabbed a jacket, as well. And, not for the first time, I wished we lived closer to town.

I swear, when I get a license and a car, I am never coming back to this place.

"Meggie?" Ethan hovered in the doorway, clutching his rabbit under his chin. His blue eyes regarded me somberly. "Can I go with you today?"

"What?" Shrugging into my jacket, I gazed around for my backpack. "No, Ethan. I'm going to school now. Big-kids school, no rug rats allowed."

I turned away, only to feel two small arms wrap around my leg. Putting my hand against the wall to avoid falling, I glared down at my half brother. Ethan clung to me doggedly, his face tilted up to mine, his jaw set. "Please?" he begged. "I'll be good, I promise. Take me with you? Just for today?"

With a sigh, I bent down and picked him up.

"What's up, squirt?" I asked, brushing his hair out of his eyes. Mom would need to cut it soon; it was starting to look like a bird's nest. "You're awfully clingy this morning. What's going on?"

"Scared," Ethan muttered, burying his face in my neck.

"You're scared?"

He shook his head. "Floppy's scared."

"What's Floppy scared of?"

"The man in the closet."

I felt a small chill slide up my back. Sometimes, Ethan was so quiet and serious, it was hard to remember he was only four. He still had childish fears of monsters under his bed and bogeymen in his closet. In Ethan's world, stuffed animals spoke to him, invisible men waved to him from the bushes, and scary creatures tapped long nails against his bedroom window. He rarely went to Mom or Luke with stories of monsters and bogeymen; from the time he was old enough to walk, he always came to me.

I sighed, knowing he wanted me to go upstairs and check, to reassure him that nothing lurked in his closet or under his bed. I kept a flashlight on his dresser for that very reason.

Outside, lightning flickered, and thunder rumbled in the distance. I winced. My walk to the bus was not going to be pleasant.

Dammit, I don't have time for this.

Ethan pulled back and looked at me, eyes pleading. I sighed again. "Fine," I muttered, putting him down. "Let's go check for monsters."

He followed me silently up the stairs, watching anxiously as I grabbed the flashlight and got down on my knees, shining it under the bed. "No monsters there," I announced, standing up. I walked to the closet door and flung it open as Ethan peeked out from behind my legs. "No monsters here, either. Think you'll be all right now?"

He nodded and gave me a faint smile. I started to close the door when I noticed a strange gray hat in the corner. It was domed on top, with a circular rim and a red band around the base: a bowler hat.

Weird. Why would that be there?

As I straightened and started to turn around, something moved out of the corner of my eye. I caught a glimpse of a figure hiding behind Ethan's bedroom door, its pale eyes watching me through the crack. I jerked my head around, but of course there was nothing there.

Jeez, now Ethan's got me seeing imaginary monsters. I need to stop watching those late-night horror flicks.

A thunderous boom directly overhead made me jump, and fat drops plinked against the windowpanes. Rushing past Ethan, I burst out of the house and sprinted down the driveway.

I was soaked when I reached the bus stop. The late spring rain wasn't frigid, but it was cold enough to be uncomfortable. I crossed my arms and huddled under a mossy cypress, waiting for the bus to arrive.

Wonder where Robbie is? I mused, gazing down the road. *He's usually here by now. Maybe he didn't flee like getting drenched and stayed home.* I snorted and rolled my eyes. *Skiping class again, huh? Slacker. Wish I could do that.*

If only I had a car. I knew kids whose parents gave *them* cars for their sixteenth birthday. Me, I'd be lucky if I got a cake. Most of my classmates already had licenses and could drive themselves to clubs and parties and anywhere they wanted. I was always left behind, the backward hick girl nobody wanted to invite.

Except Robbie, I amended with a small mental shrug. *At least Robbie will remember. Wonder what kooky thing he has planned for my birthday tomorrow?* I could almost guarantee it would be something strange or

crazy. Last year, he snuck me out of the house for a midnight picnic in the woods. It was weird; I remembered the glen and the little pond with the fireflies drifting over it, but though I explored the woods behind my house countless times since then, I never found it again.

Something rustled in the bushes behind me. A possum or a deer, or even a fox, seeking shelter from the rain. The wildlife out here was stupidly bold and had little fear of humans. If it wasn't for Beau, Mom's vegetable garden would be a buffet for rabbits and deer, and the local raccoon family would help themselves to everything in our cupboards.

A branch snapped in the trees, closer this time. I shifted uncomfortably, determined not to turn around for some stupid squirrel or raccoon. I'm not like "inflate-a-boob" Angie, Ms. Perfect Cheerleader, who'd flip out if she saw a caged gerbil or a speck of dirt on her Hollister jeans. I've pitched hay and killed rats and driven pigs through knee-deep mud. Wild animals don't scare me.

Still, I stared down the road, hoping to see the bus turn the corner. Maybe it was the rain and my own sick imagination, but the woods felt like the set for *The Blair Witch Project*.

There are no wolves or serial killers out here, I told myself. *Stop being paranoid*.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Aurelio Ashley:

Information is provisions for those to get better life, information currently can get by anyone on everywhere. The information can be a information or any news even a huge concern. What people must be consider when those information which is in the former life are hard to be find than now could be taking seriously which one would work to believe or which one often the resource are convinced. If you get the unstable resource then you obtain it as your main information it will have huge disadvantage for you. All those possibilities will not happen with you if you take The Iron King as your daily resource information.

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