



Keys to the Kingdom

A series written by Garth Nix
A book report by Abe Karplus

The covers of the Australian edition
of the *Keys to the Kingdom* series.

Religious connections

Seven deadly sins

Each of the Morrow Days has one of the seven deadly sins. Mr. Monday has sloth (laziness). Grim Tuesday has greed. Drowned Wednesday has gluttony (eats a lot). Sir Thursday has wrath (anger). The remaining books have not been published, however, it is most likely that Lady Friday has lust, Superior Saturday has envy and Lord Sunday has pride.

Cardinal and theological virtues

Each of the seven parts of the Will has a cardinal or theological virtue. Part One (the frog) has fortitude, Part Two (the bear) has prudence, Part Three (the carp) has faith, Part Four (the snake) has justice. The remaining parts' virtues are unknown. The remaining virtues are temperance, hope, and charity.

Prometheus

The Old One is in a way very similar to the Greek Titan Prometheus. Each day his eyes are torn out by puppets from inside a clock that he is chained to. Previously it was his liver instead of his eyes. Each day his eyes grow back again, but he suffers great pain each time.

Prometheus was punished by Zeus by having an eagle eat his liver each day, as punishment for bringing fire to mankind. The Old One was punished by the Architect, but the series does not yet explain why.

The Keys to the Kingdom

The Keys to the Kingdom is a series of seven books, four of which have been released. Each book corresponds to one of the days of the week. The books are *Mister Monday*, *Grim Tuesday*, *Drowned Wednesday*, *Sir Thursday*, *Lady Friday*, *Superior Saturday*, and *Lord Sunday*. The series is written by Garth Nix, who has also written other fantasy books.

In each of the books, the hero, Arthur Penhaligon, has to defeat one of the Morrow Days and get their Key. In the book *Mister Monday*, he has to defeat Mr. Monday, in *Grim Tuesday*, he has to defeat Grim Tuesday, etc. He is assisted by Suzy Turquoise Blue and the Will of the Architect. The reason Arthur has to defeat the Trustees is that he was chosen by the Will to be the Rightful Heir of the House.

Mister Monday

Arthur, when in gym class, sees two figures approaching him. One of them hands him what looks like the minute hand of a clock. This starts his adventures in the House to get the hour hand of the clock from Mr. Monday.

Grim Tuesday

Grim Tuesday indentures Arthur into his pit workers, who mine Nothing. Suzy finds him there and helps him get into Grim Tuesday's treasure tower, where he meets the Mariner, who helps him get the second part of the Will. He then has a contest with Grim Tuesday to see who can create a better item. Arthur wins.

Drowned Wednesday

A wave sweeps Arthur into the Border Sea, where he meets with the pirate Sunscorch and Dr. Scamandros, a House sorcerer. With their help and that of the Raised Rats, he finds the pirate Feverfew's secret base. He then defeats Feverfew and frees the third part of the Will.

Sir Thursday

In *Sir Thursday*, Arthur is drafted into the Glorious Army of the Architect. He has to defeat three things: Sir Thursday, the Skinless Boy, and the New Nithlings. After doing these, his usage of the Keys nearly turns him into a Denizen.

Characters

Arthur Penhaligon is the human hero of this series. He has asthma and has to contend with this often on his adventures. He was adopted when he was very young by the Penhaligon family. His family has just moved into the area where this story takes place.

Leaf is one of the kids at Arthur's new school. She plays an important role in *Sir Thursday*, the fourth book. Leaf is one of Arthur's friends.

Suzy Turquoise Blue is an Inkfiller 6th Class, who works in the Lower House. She is a Piper's Child. She accompanies Arthur on his adventures.

Denizens are the original inhabitants of the House. They live forever if they are not killed. They can be killed by extremely hot fire, Commissionaire weapons, and Nothing.

The Lieutenant-Keeper of the Front Door is a Denizen who is in charge of the Front Door of the House. He is one of Arthur's friends, but his duty forces him to remain at the Front Door (or, because of the nature of the Front Door, *in* the Front Door).

The Architect was the first being to emerge from Nothing. She created the House and then the Secondary Realms. She then left, leaving her Will behind.

The Will was a document that the Architect left to make sure that when the Architect was gone her will would still be done. The Will was divided by the Morrow Days into seven parts. When Arthur first conquered Mr. Monday, he appointed the Will as his second-in-command. The Will then took the form of a woman, calling herself Dame Primus. See sidebar "Religious Connections" for a list of the parts of the Will.

There are seven Trustees, also known as Morrow Days. Each one controls one of the seven sections of the House. Soon after the Architect left, they made a deal in which they split the Will into seven parts and each was entrusted with one of these parts. See sidebar "Religious Connections" for a list of the Trustees.

Each Morrow Day (except Grim Tuesday, see paragraph on Grotesques) has a Dawn, a Noon, and a Dusk, who are Denizens that are the Morrow Day's chief helpers.

The seven Grotesques were created by Grim Tuesday from his Dawn, Noon, and Dusk. He melded his Dawn, Noon, and Dusk into one person, which he then split into seven Grotesques. The Grotesques are extremely ugly and each is weaker than an ordinary Denizen. They are killed by Saturday's Dusk at the end of *Grim Tuesday*.

Nithlings are creatures that are created or naturally occur from Nothing. They are quite dangerous to Denizens and particularly to humans.

Fetchers are humanoid creatures that have faces like dogs, but are wearing bowler hats and suits. Fetchers are easily defeated by salt, which causes them to turn into Nothing. They cause a weird disease called the Sleepy Plague. In the book *Mister Monday*, Arthur wants to get a cure for this plague.

The Skinless Boy is a Spirit-Eater of Arthur. Spirit-Eaters are a type of Nithling that look exactly like the person they are of. When they touch a human or a Denizen, they infect them with a type of grey mold that gives the Spirit-Eater control of that person. Spirit-Eaters need something of the person they are mimicking to function. For the Skinless Boy, this means one of Arthur's pockets.

Soot, who Arthur meets in *Grim Tuesday*, claims to have previously been one of Grim Tuesday's eyebrows. However, Soot could also be an oddly shaped Nithling. He helps Arthur get into Grim Tuesday's treasure chamber.

The Old One lives in the Deep Coal Cellar in the Lower House. He is chained to a clock there. He was chained there by the Architect, however the book does not explain why. Arthur is put into the Deep Coal Cellar in *Mister Monday*, to convince him to hand over the Key. As Arthur wanders through the Deep Coal Cellar, he meets the Old One, who gives him some advice.

The Mariner, whose real name is Tom Shelvocke, is a son of the Old One and a brother of the Piper. He has a harpoon that hurts mortals (including Piper's children) if it is thrown too close to them. Once this harpoon has struck its target, it instantly reappears in the Mariner's hand. The Mariner gave Arthur an amulet that is an instruction to all sailors to help Arthur.

The Piper is the Mariner's brother. He appears in the book *Sir Thursday*. He is the one who brought the "Piper's children" and the Raised Rats into the House. In other literature, he is known as the Pied Piper of Hamelin. The Piper thinks that he, and not Arthur, should be the Rightful Heir.

Sneezer is the name of Monday's butler and the operator of the Seven Dials.

Commissionaires are guards made out of metal that are made by Grim Tuesday out of Nothing. Commissionaire Sergeants are not actual commissionaires, but are Denizens who have been demoted to Sergeants.

Places

The House is the center of all creation. It is divided into seven realms:

- The Lower House, ruled by Mister Monday.
- The Middle House, most likely ruled by Superior Saturday.
- The Upper House, most likely ruled by Lord Sunday.
- The Far Reaches, ruled by Grim Tuesday.
- The Border Sea, ruled by Drowned Wednesday.
- The Great Maze, ruled by Sir Thursday.
- The Incomparable Gardens, most likely ruled by Lady Friday.

The Secondary Realms are the universes outside the House. Earth is part of the Secondary Realms.

The Seven Dials is one way of getting from the House to anywhere in the Secondary Realms. It is located in Monday's Dayroom in the Lower House.

The Front Door allows you to go from the Secondary Realms to anywhere in the House.

The East Area Hospital is a hospital in Arthur's neighborhood that plays an important role in both *Mister Monday* and *Sir Thursday*, as well as a minor role in the other two books. Arthur's adopted mother, Emily Penhaligon, is a famous doctor at East Area Hospital.

Things

Before the Architect left, she created seven powerful items called Keys, and she gave one to each of the Morrow Days. In each of the books of the series, Arthur defeats one of the Morrow days and gets their Key.

The stuff mainly called "Nothing" is a magical substance from which all things were created. At the beginning, the Architect emerged from it, closely followed by the Old One. The Architect then proceeded to create the House from Nothing. After that she created the Secondary Realms, also from Nothing. Nithlings and Fetchers are created from Nothing.

Elevators, wings, weirdways, and transport plates are the main means of transportation within the House. Elevators are beams of light within which there are rooms very similar to those of modern elevators. Wings are quite simply magical feathery wings that attach to the user's back. Weirdways are tunnels through Nothing that provide shortcuts through the House. Transport plates are simply plates or other disks that have been

enchanted to go to another location when stepped on. Some of them are actually made of fine china plates, though those break easily.

The other means of transportation (besides walking) is the Improbable Stair, which the Architect created for her personal use. To use it, you simply imagine a stair where there is something that looks like one and walk up it. It will take you where you want to go, however, not without other landings in between, both in the House and in Secondary Realms.

The *Compleat Atlas of the House and Immediate Environs* is a very queer book that will tell you anything you want about the House or its surroundings, but will only open for you if you have one of the Keys.

References

Some of the information for this book report was taken from Wikipedia, the rest was directly taken from the four books of the series. The URLs for the Wikipedia sites are

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Keys_to_the_Kingdom
 - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Characters_of_The_Keys_to_the_Kingdom_series
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