



## Agnes, her Mother and the Wide, Wide Sky

'Oh, Mother!' Agnes had that annoying tone in her voice that surfaced whenever magic was mentioned. Dangerous stuff, magic, and her mother was apt to experiment with it; she had taken that mysterious book of spells out of her apron pocket and it was in her hand right now.

'It's here somewhere, Agnes. Near the spell for ripening blackberries, I think. Oh, yes, here we are.'

Agnes rolled her eyes. The priest so disapproved of this kind of thing.

Her mother read aloud, '*Restrictions of Sky, to Remove*. That's the one. An *advancement* spell. I think you're ready for it.'

'Restrictions of sky, Mother? Isn't it big and wide enough as it is?'

'No,' said her mother. 'It's time you learned a thing or two. Now then, all we have to do is turn a slow circle and recite, *sky above us, sky around us, sky below us*.'

Agnes knew it was pointless to argue, so they did it, turning on the spot, saying the words aloud in the spring sunshine. She hoped the neighbours weren't watching. Being reported for witchcraft was no joke at all. But they were observed only by the champions blooming in the hedge. And they chose to turn a blind eye.

'I don't see any difference,' said Agnes afterwards, peering upwards.

'Of course not,' said her mother. 'The difference lies in what you know, not in what you see. Don't you understand?'

Agnes shook her head, suddenly aware of appalling ignorance.

'Well,' said her mother, with all due patience, 'You see the sky, don't you, above you and down to the horizon? But there is far more of it, you know. It is beneath you, too, if only you could see it. You can't because the very earth is in the way. But it is surely there, all the way around you. It's much bigger than you think. The difference is, now you know it.'

And Agnes' horizons were indeed expanded by the novel concept that the sky was not just above but below, too. It went in all directions.

Her mother smiled. 'Probably best not to mention it to the priest, though.'