



# Children of Thorns, Children of Water

*Aliette de Bodard*

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## **Children of Thorns, Children of Water** Aliette de Bodard

A prequel story set between *The House of Shattered Wings* and *The House of Binding Thorns*. Dragons, creepy magic, cooking (!).

Once each year, the House of Hawthorn tests the Houseless: for those chosen, success means the difference between a safe life and the devastation of the streets. However, for Thuan and his friend Kim Cuc, — dragons in human shapes and envoys from the dying underwater kingdom of the Seine — the stakes are entirely different. Charged with infiltrating a House that keeps encroaching on the Seine, if they are caught, they face a painful death.

Worse, mysterious children of thorns stalk the candidates through Hawthorn's corridors. Will Thuan and Kim Cuc survive and succeed?

*Children of Thorns, Children of Water* was a preorder reward for *The House of Binding Thorns* (ebook, audiobook or physical book). Currently reprinted in *Uncanny Magazine* issue 17.

## **Children of Thorns, Children of Water Details**

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Author : Aliette de Bodard

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# From Reader Review Children of Thorns, Children of Water for online ebook

## Stephanie says

This novelette is basically the Great British Bake Off with dragons and creepy magic, set in an alternate historical Paris, and I \*loved\* it. Highly recommended!

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## imyril says

Originally packaged as a bonus with pre-sales copies of House of Binding Thorns (to which it forms an immediate prequel), this short tale relates how Thuan became a dependent of House Hawthorn. It's a chancy thing, spying on a Fallen House - least of all one ruled by a master of torture such as Asmodeus - but it's a risk Thuan and Kim Cuc willingly undertake to insinuate themselves into House Hawthorn to do so on behalf of the dragon kingdom (if perhaps a little reluctantly on Thuan's part - he reflects ruefully that no matter how terrifying the Fallen are, there are others - namely Second Aunt - who is he more afraid of). It's no easy thing to be accepted as a dependent: competition is fierce, and Thuan at least is nervy.

So this becomes a tale of two tests: the aborted attempt to make chocolate eclairs to win a place by baking something delightful in too little time with too poor ingredients (which... won me over. I mean, dragons do Bake-Off in post-apocalyptic Paris. Of course it did); and Thuan's attempt to rescue Kim Cuc when a mysterious force turns on the would-be dependents and steals her away.

Those who have read House of Binding Thorns will know how this ends for most of the characters, which kills the tension (although Kim Cuc at least is a new character, and makes a big impression quickly), but I enjoyed this for being genuinely creepy and for the reasons behind the assault - once revealed - being utterly unexpected.

I like being pleasantly surprised (almost as much as I like chocolate eclairs), so consider this a successful side adventure for Thuan, whose company is always a pleasure - and I suspect it will win him plenty of new friends.

*I received a free copy from the publisher in return for an honest review*

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## Kat says

Mini-review here: – <https://ciaracatscifi.blogspot.com/20...>

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## Silvana says

It is not easy to follow if you have not read the series. I don't think it serves as a stand-alone.  
1.5 stars rounded up since I saw some interesting water magic and Vietnamese character.

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### **Crowinator says**

This novelette made me want to read the longer works - I think I would enjoy them more.

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### **Contrarius says**

This is my first Bodard. It's very atmospheric, and I enjoyed the prose. Although it's part of a series and it's easy to see that other things have happened elsewhere, there's enough explanation to follow along with the essentials without being confused.

I liked the creepy yearning and forlorn sense of abandonment in the story's antagonists, and the way that manifested with the growing mold and thorns. Since this is just a novelette there wasn't really enough room to develop the idea completely or connect it with the events or characters of the preceding novel as much as I would have liked to see, but the concept was interesting and IMHO did a good job of introducing a new reader to the basic setup and worldview of the series.

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### **Norman Cook says**

It was only after finishing this story that I found out for sure it was a prequel to a novel, but while reading it, especially towards the end (which is more like the end of a chapter, not the end of a story), I had the distinct feeling that it must be part of a series, a series I knew nothing about. This made the story much more challenging. The story really doesn't stand on its own, and I suspect it is a Hugo finalist on the strength of de Bodard's fans who are already invested in the series. Based on this story I am curious how the novel will turn out, but probably not curious enough to bump anything off my already extensive to-read list.

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### **Derek Nason says**

I wasn't familiar with the Dominion of the Fallen series going into this, which unfortunately capped my ability to enjoy it at some parts. I found that the action scenes were overburdened with explanation. But, I enjoyed it enough to know that I'd enjoy other works in the series. And I'll definitely read them. The only other Aliette de Bodard story I've read is her novella Citadel of Weeping Pearls, which was awesome. Her worlds are incredibly engrossing. And so is this one. I only wish it was longer—took more time and words—so I could appreciate the suspenseful bits.

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### **Alexander Pyles says**

An interesting story fantasy story with fallen angels and subversive magic. It seems that this is a prequel to another book, so some of the world building, while deep and interesting becomes lost in the shuffle of this book. Bodard keeps us interested and there's a certain amount of "unsettling" feelings that come when

children made of thorns begin appearing, but overall the story lacks impact by the end since the implications of the climax fizzle out and don't seem to matter by the last sentence.

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### **Bradley says**

'18 Hugo nom for the shorter works.

I read the first novel in this series and bounced off from it, unfortunately. Picking up this in-between tale before the next novel was pretty fine, tho. Lots of action. Still not caring too much about the characters or the house too much, but the basic idea was okay. I want to like it more than I do.

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### **Aneta says**

Really liked it! Really liked Thuan, too, excited to see more of him in book 2 (*which just shipped yesterday, squee*). ^^

Do not read without chocolate in the house. I have no chocolate tonight and I Suffer.

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### **Lata says**

Fascinating to see the fallout from book one to Asmodeus' House. I like that we're also seeing the dragons engaging, even though it's because of encroachment by the other Houses. I wonder if we'll see the main character in this story show up in book two. And interesting to see how a House-less can be taken in by a House, if they show interesting and necessary qualities. Like baking, of all things!

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### **Cathy (cathepsut) says**

Desperate people come to take a test, in hopes of being taken into a house of fallen angels. Two of them are spies from a dragon kingdom. Dark magic ensues.

I liked it. There was nice, creepy imagery and I identified with the main characters quickly. The world building was well done and the narrative flowed well and kept me hooked.

Hugo Awards 2018 Novelette Nominee

Story can be found here: <https://uncannymagazine.com/article/c...>

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### **Tadiana ☆Night Owl? says**

4.5 stars for this current Hugo award-nominate novelette, free online here at [Uncanny magazine](#). Review first posted on [Fantasy Literature](#):

This novelette is set in the same world as de Bodard's 2015 novel *The House of Shattered Wings*, an alternative history type of novel set in the late 20th century in Paris, which lies in ruins in the aftermath of a magical conflict called the Great War. Helpful background for those who haven't read that novel: Paris is inhabited by both humans and fallen angels, whose bodies carry magic that can be distilled used by other angels and humans. Great Houses, largely under the leadership of the fallen angels, vie for control and influence. Underneath the Seine River is the "dragon kingdom," a hidden magical kingdom of Vietnamese who can shapeshift into Asian dragons, as well as sense and control the magical energy currents of khi (the Vietnamese equivalent of the Chinese chi).

Kim Cuc and Thuan have come from the dragon kingdom on a mission: House Hawthorn is having its annual hiring day for those who are Houseless to apply to become servants and House dependents. Hawthorn is the closest House to the dragon kingdom, and recently this House has begun encroaching on dragon territory under the Seine, for no known reason. If Kim Cuc and Thuan are successful at being hired by Hawthorn, they'll be in a position to spy on Hawthorn's doings.

All starts out well: they are placed in a group of three with Leila, a young girl of Maghrebi descent, and assigned to bake or create something "impressive" within an hour. Luckily Thuan has some skill in this area (Kim Cuc comments that he was "paying way too much attention to old recipes, back when he was trying to seduce the family cook") and chocolate éclairs are well underway when the trio is suddenly interrupted. Some kind of emergency requires a hasty evacuation of the Hawthorn mansion ... but will they all make it out?

The clash between different types of magic and cultures works well here, and the characters are well-developed enough, with a few quirks, to be memorable. The worldbuilding in "Children of Thorns, Children of Water" is rich and imaginative, though a little difficult to absorb if you aren't familiar with that world from *The House of Shattered Wings*. I was floundering just a little during my first read of this novelette, which is set in between *Shattered Wings* and its sequel, *The House of Binding Thorns*. But reading the FanLit review for *Shattered Wings* was enough to give me my sea legs in this world, and the story made more sense and was more impactful when I reread it with this background knowledge. Though it interlocks with de Bodard's novels in her DOMINION OF THE FALLEN series, "Children of Thorns, Children of Water" actually works nicely as a stand-alone story.

Recommended if you like dark fantasy.

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## Acqua says

This is a novelette set in the *Dominion of the Fallen* world, with a **bisexual Vietnamese lead who is also a shapeshifting dragon**.

When I read this story last year, before reading *The House of Shattered Wings*, I didn't like it. The world didn't make sense to me, and I felt like I was missing a lot - that's its main flaw and also why I wouldn't have voted this Hugo-nominated story for the award, **it doesn't stand on its own - but I really liked it on reread, now that I'm familiar with this universe**.

The fallen city aesthetic appeals to me, and there are also cooking scenes (chocolate eclairs!) and creepy

wooden creatures. It's weird. I love it.

Also, I love how **so many characters are casually queer**. A queer main character of color in historical Paris! I can't wait to see more of House Hawthorn and what Thuan will do in there.

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