

Three magical adventures in one!

# The STARBURSTER Stories



## BERLIE DOHERTY

*Twice winner of the Carnegie Medal*

## Contents

[Cover](#)

[About the Book](#)

[Title Page](#)

[The Starburster](#)

[The Humming Machine](#)

[The Windspinner](#)

[About the Author](#)

[Copyright](#)



# About the Book

Join Tam on three wonderful adventures to the land of Faery!

On his journeys to rescue his family, Tam will encounter terrible monsters, midnight bears, mischievous fairies...and, most of all, MAGIC!

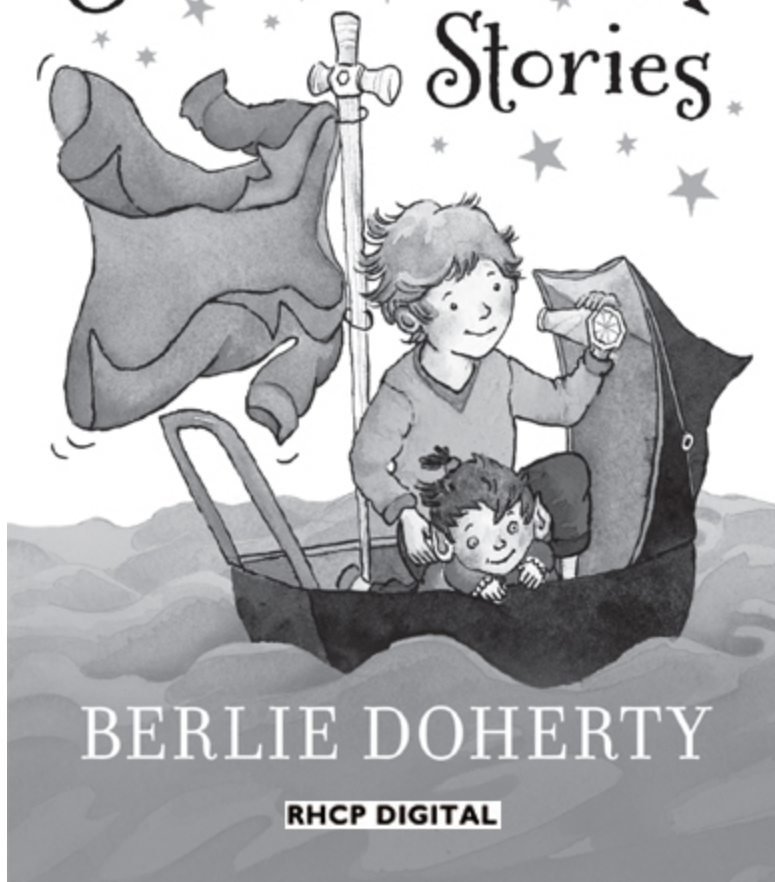
But will he ever get back home?

Three enchanting adventures from much-loved, Carnegie Award-winning author Berlie Doherty.



Illustrated by Lesley Harker

# The STARBURSTER Stories



THE  
STARBURSTER



BERLIE DOHERTY

Illustrated by Lesley Harker

**RHCP DIGITAL**

## Contents

[Blue](#)

[Sapphire Stars](#)

[The Changeling](#)

[Pixillated](#)

[“Only You Can Do It, Tam”](#)

[Something of Silver and Something of Velvet](#)

[Through the Green Passage](#)

[Prince Tamlin](#)

[Go Wisely, Go Bravely](#)

[The Sapphire Lake](#)

[The Fairy Castle](#)

[The Food of Fairies](#)

[The Starburster Is Stolen](#)

[Tanta](#)

[The Baby Glade](#)

[Keekwee Baba](#)

[The Secret Tower](#)

[Blue is Found](#)

[The King of the Fairies](#)

[The Starburster](#)

[Home](#)



## Blue

On the day Tam's baby sister was born, he painted his finger blue.

"Look at that boy with the blue finger," some people said. "He must be very special."

One of these people was his great-grandpa Toby. He winked at Tam and said, "You must be very special. Your little sister will be proud of you one day."

Other people said, "Look at that boy with the blue finger. He must be very silly."

One of these people was Dad. "Don't be silly, Tam," he said. "You don't want your little sister to be scared of you, do you?" He made Tam wash the paint off and took him to the hospital to see Mum and the baby. Mum was in bed and the baby cried all the time and Tam wished he still had his blue finger.

On the day the baby was brought home from hospital Tam hid in the bathroom. The baby cried all the time when she wasn't drinking milk from Mum. Tam decided to make her a drink of her own. He squeezed some toothpaste into a jug of warm water and stirred it round with the end of his toothbrush, then carried it carefully downstairs.



“My word, she’ll enjoy that,” Great-grandpa Toby said. But Dad took one sniff at it and poured it down the sink. “Would you like to hold Baby for a bit?” Mum said. “No,” said Tam, and ran up to his room. “I wish that baby would go away!” he shouted.

Great-grandpa followed him up to his room. “I’ve got a present for you, Tam,” he said. “It’s my most special thing.” He went into his room and came back with a yellow sock in his hand.

“A sock?” said Tam.

“Look inside it.”

Tam put his hand in the sock and pulled out a little tube.

“Hold it up to your eye, and swizzle it round,” said Great-grandpa. “What do you see?”

It was the most marvellous thing. When Tam looked through it, he could see eight Great-grandpas all cut into little pieces. He couldn’t stop giggling. When he turned it towards the bed, he could see eight beds all topsy-turvy, and all kinds of patterns of colours. He had eight new red dressing gowns, and they swayed and billowed like princes’ cloaks. And when he looked out of the window, he could see



eight gardens in tiny slices of colour, as brilliant as rainbows.



“It’s called a kaleidoscope,” said Great-grandpa. “But I call it a starburster. Yes, starburster’s a good name for it.”

“Can I really keep it?” Tam asked. He couldn’t stop looking at things and twisting the tube round to make them glow and splinter and swirl with colours. It really did look as if stars were bursting open inside it.

“Of course you can. Shall we go down and look at Baby through it?”

Baby was asleep when they went downstairs. Tam looked through the kaleidoscope at her and twisted it this way and that, so there were eight pink blobs and sixteen fisty hands and sixteen stubby feet.

“Would you like to hold her?” Dad said.

“No thank you,” said Tam, peering at him through the kaleidoscope. “You’ve broken into lots of pieces.”

“What shall we call her?” Mum asked.

“Your faces are like balloons,” Tam giggled, peering at Mum. “And all your noses are all over the place.”

“My word, I bet you’ll look funny, holding the baby,” Great-grandpa said. “Can I have a look?”

So Tam gave Great-grandpa the starburster and sat next to Mum on the settee, and Mum put the baby into his arms. Tam couldn’t believe how soft she was, and how light and warm and sweet-smelling, and how quiet and still and gentle, and how peaceful her breathing was. Her hands fluttered open like butterflies and her fingers wrapped themselves round his thumb. Tam daren’t move in case he dropped her. He hardly dared breathe. Then, for a second, her eyes opened. They were as blue as the sky. She stared right at Tam.

“What do you think of her?” Mum said.

“I love her.” Tam’s voice was just a whisper. “Can we call her Blue?”





## Sapphire Stars

When Tam wasn't cuddling Blue, he was playing with his starburster. He looked at everything through it, and everything looked strange and wonderful. But the best thing of all was looking at the stars. They shone and sparkled and danced through the starburster as though they were birds made of diamonds. Dad had to keep coming up to Tam's room and putting the starburster back in its yellow sock so Tam would go to sleep.

"I don't know which I love best," Tam said. "My starburster or Blue."

Then, one night, something awful happened. Blue was stolen.

The night started off very well. Tam was looking through his starburster and he noticed that some of the stars seemed to be swarming like bees. They seemed to be coming towards the house. They seemed to be brilliant blue.

He shouted to Great-grandpa, and he woke up at once and came hurrying into Tam's room.



“My word, they’re like sapphires,” Great-grandpa said, twisting the kaleidoscope excitedly.



“What’s a sapphire?” Tam asked.

“It’s a precious stone. It’s very rare. A jewel. And it’s blue.”

“But why have the stars turned into sapphires?” Tam asked.

“My word, I don’t know everything!” Great-grandpa said.  
“Better go to sleep now, Tam.”



And Tam did try to go to sleep, but a strange sound kept waking him up. It was like the sound of tiny wings beating, like hundreds of moths fluttering against the window.

At last he drifted off to sleep, and in no time at all he was woken up by the sound of Blue crying. Then the crying turned to screaming. He put his fingers in his ears and tried to block the noise out. "That's the trouble with babies," he said to himself. "They never stop crying."

The screaming turned to a wailing that was so high-pitched he thought his ears would break. It was the worst sound Blue had ever made. In fact it didn't sound like Blue at all. Mum was shouting now, and Dad was shouting, and then Mum started crying too. Then the high-pitched sound turned into a howl like a dog, and Tam sat up and jumped out of bed. What was the matter with her? The howling suddenly turned into shrieks of laughing. But Blue never laughed like that. She was far too young yet to do anything but gurgle and chuckle.

Tam ran into Blue's room. They were all in there – Mum, Dad and Great-grandpa – all gathered round the baby's cot and staring into it. No one was making any attempt to pick her up.

"Blue, Blue, what's the matter?" Tam shouted. He ran to the cot and stared down at the ugliest baby he had ever seen. It had pointed ears and a tippety nose and a screwed-up cross little face.

"What's happened?" Tam asked. "Where's Blue?"

Mum burst into tears. "Blue's been stolen," she sobbed. "And this little goblin thing's been left in her place."





## The Changeling

Tam couldn't take his eyes off the goblin thing. It really was very ugly. But its eyes were as brilliant as blue jewels.

"Sapphires," Tam whispered to Great-grandpa. "Just like those stars we saw."

"What did you say?" Dad asked.

Great-grandpa looked worried.

"The stars were whizzing about last night, weren't they, Great-grandpa? They were deep, deep blue, just like her eyes," said Tam. "And things were flying and fluttering right round the house."

Dad sat down with his head in his hands. "Why didn't you tell me? You silly old man!"

"You were asleep," Great-grandpa muttered. "Anyway, it was nothing, it was nothing."

"What's all that got to do with this ugly thing in Blue's cot?" Mum demanded. "And where is Blue anyway? Where's my baby?"

"Ask Grandpa," Dad said. "He reckons he knows about such things."

Great-grandpa Toby took out his hankie and blew his nose loudly. "Yes, I think I do know. I think this baby is a changeling."

Mum gasped and started crying again.



Tam glared at the baby. She pulled a face at him and he pulled one back, his best one, with his eyes rolled up and his lips curled back like sausages. Instead of crying, the baby giggled and tried to copy him.

"My word," said Great-grandpa, "I've never heard a little baby laugh like that before. It really must be a changeling."

"What's a changeling?" Tam asked.

"A changeling is a fairy child," said Great-grandpa.

"I've heard of this happening," Mum sobbed. "The fairies come and steal a mortal baby and leave a nasty little goblinny thing in its place. I'll never see my baby again!"

The changeling baby stopped pulling faces at Tam and smiled sweetly at him instead. She held out her arms as if she wanted him to pick her up.

"She's really, really ugly," said Tam.

Mum burst into tears again and ran out of the room, and Dad ran after her. Great-grandpa sighed deeply and sat on the chair. The changeling baby gurgled up at Tam.

"She likes you," Great-grandpa said.

“Well I don’t like her. I’d rather have Blue back, any day.” Tam tried not to catch the goblin-thing’s eyes, but she was smiling her crooked smile at him and staring straight at him with her dazzling blue eyes. It made him feel very strange. He could hardly take his eyes off her.

“She’s bewitching you,” Great-grandpa said.

“No she’s not,” said Tam. “I’m not going to look at her.”

But as soon as he said it, he wanted to look at her again. He went to bed, but all he wanted to do then was to go back to the changeling’s room and peer round the door at her. Maybe what Great-grandpa had said was true. Maybe she *had* bewitched him.





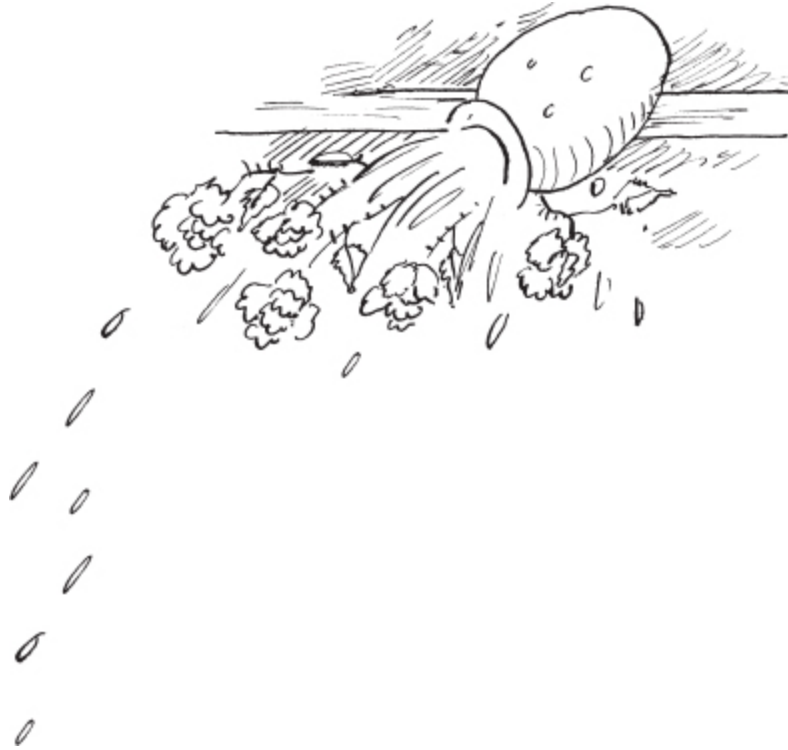
## Pixillated

Mum and Dad refused to go near the changeling, but Tam was worried that she might be hungry. He took her some cornflakes and she scowled at him. He took her a bottle of milk and she crossed her eyes.

“She seems all right,” said Great-grandpa. “And I don’t suppose she’d eat mortal food anyway.”

When no one was looking except Tam, the baby stared at a vase of roses till all the flowers flew across the room and landed in her cot.





She gobbled them up greedily, thorns and all. Then she lay back, burping loudly.

"Can I carry her into the garden?" Tam asked Mum.

"I think she likes flowers."

"Just leave her alone," Mum said. "Try to forget she's here."

But how could they forget? The changeling shrieked and howled whenever Tam wasn't in her room. As soon as he went in, she stopped. They played the faces game for hours.

"My word, better not go out when the wind's blowing," Great-grandpa said. "Soon as it stops, your face will stick like that."

"It's not my fault," said Tam. "She's making me do it. It's her eyes."

She could do other things with her eyes. She could make all kinds of things happen. When she stared at the cupboard, the doors flew open and all the things in it tumbled out in a mess on the floor. Then she just chuckled

and closed her eyes and went to sleep, and nobody but Tam knew it was anything to do with her.

"Did you make that mess?" Mum demanded.

"No, it was the baby," Tam said.

"Don't be silly. Babies can't climb out of their cots and open doors," Mum said. "Not even goblinny things like this one." But she glared at the sleeping baby all the same.

If the baby stared at the clock, the cuckoo popped in and out of its door so wildly that it drove everybody mad with its cuckooing. Nobody saw her do it except Tam. In the end Dad took the clock off the wall and put it in the bin. They could hear it cuckooing to itself out in the yard.



"Cuckoo," sang the goblin baby. "Cuckoo."

"Shut UP!" shouted Mum.

The baby stared at the window and the glass shattered like stars.

"My word, this house is pixillated all right," Great-grandpa chuckled. "I haven't had such fun for years."

"What's pixillated?" Tam asked.

"Bewitched, enchanted, full of mischief," Dad said.

Tam leaned over the baby's cot and she blew bubbles at him.

"It's you, isn't it?" Tam whispered. "Pixillating everything, that's what you're doing. I think we should call you Pix."

And the baby smiled at him so sweetly that he actually smiled back. He just couldn't help it.

Great-grandpa came and stood next to him. "My word, you mustn't let her charm you," he said. "Your poor mum's very upset. That baby has to go."

"Go where?"

"Where she belongs," Great-grandpa whispered. "Faery, that's where she comes from. The land of the fairies. Someone's got to take her back there, Tam."



## “Only You Can Do It, Tam”

As soon as Mum and Dad had gone out of the room he said it again, only louder, so Tam couldn't pretend he hadn't heard him.

“Someone has to take her to Faery, give her back to the king of the fairies, find Blue and bring her home.”

“I suppose so,” Tam agreed.

“And there's only you can do it, Tam. My word, you're a brave boy.”

“Me? But I can't do that! I'm only nine years old!”

“Exactly,” Great-grandpa Toby agreed. “That's why you have to do it.”

“But I don't even know how to get there.”





"I know the way in," Great-grandpa said. "It's called the green passage."

"How do you know that?"

"Because I once met someone who'd actually been there! He was a very old man, but when he went in, he was just a little boy, like you. And when he came out, he was an old,

old man with a beard down to his toes. He'd been there a hundred years, and it just seemed like a day, he said."

"Great-grandpa, I'm not going."

"He told me how to get there, if I ever wanted to go. I never dared. I wasn't brave enough. But I used to go and sit by the green passage and wait in case any fairies came out. I thought I saw the king of the fairies himself, at that very spot, when I was looking through my starburster. Just for a second, I think I saw him, all dressed in green, with hair like dandelion fluff. I think he wanted my starburster, but he wasn't having it. That was ninety years ago." He opened his eyes wide with surprise. "Ninety years!"

"I don't want to go, Great-grandpa."

"You have to take something of your own that's silver and something of your own that's velvet, or you'll never get past the guardian, that's what the old man told me."

Tam sighed with relief. "Well, I can't do it. I haven't got anything of silver, and I haven't got anything of velvet."

Great-grandpa shook his head. "I think you have, Tam. I'm sure you have. And you have to give your favourite thing of all to the king of the fairies."

"My favourite thing? That's not fair!"

"If he gives you Blue back, that's fair, isn't it?"

Tam nodded sadly. He'd almost forgotten about Blue, he'd got so used to Pix.

"You have a think, and I'll have a lie-down," said Great-grandpa. He yawned noisily. "There's something else you have to do, only I can't remember what it is. If you don't do it, you won't come back for a hundred years, like that old man I met. Only I can't remember what it is." He went off to his own room to lie down.

"I really don't want to go!" Tam called after him.

Pix was making her favourite little high-pitched yelping noises. The moon was shining into her cot and she was holding out her hands to it as if she was trying to pull herself up onto its beams. Tam went to his own bedroom.

Mum and Dad would be trying to sleep, he knew, but Pix would be keeping them awake, like she always did. He tried to sleep himself but it was impossible. Her screeches were getting louder. He went back to her room and put his hand through the bars of her cot, and she grabbed hold of his fingers.



“What’s the matter, Pix?” he asked. “Do you want to go home?”

As soon as he said that, she stopped crying. And straight away she fell asleep, smiling.

Great-grandpa hurried into the room with his felt slippers flapping and his eyes shining. “I’ve just remembered what that other thing was! If you don’t want to stay in Faery for a hundred years, you have to get there before the stroke of noon on midsummer’s day. That’s tomorrow, Tam!”



## Something of Silver and Something of Velvet

Tam didn't sleep a wink that night. He lifted Pix out of her cot and carried her into his room and put her on his bed. Then he searched through his toys to see if he had something of silver and something of velvet to take. He knew what his favourite thing was, of course. He had no doubt about that, but he wasn't at all happy about giving it to the king of the fairies.



Great-grandpa fussed round the room, clapping his hands and saying, "My word, I can't believe it! Young Tam's going to Faery!"

Tam sat back on his heels. "I don't want to go. But I'm going to rescue Blue," he said, trying to make himself feel brave and happy about it.

"Something velvet and something silver," Great-grandpa reminded him. "Be quick. Oh, I've remembered something else! The silver thing has to be sharp."

"Something silver and sharp," Tam said, gazing round at his pile of things. "Like a . . ."

"Sword!" they both said together, and Pix woke up and stared at the cupboard, and out fell Tam's toy sword. She closed her eyes and chuckled.

"But it isn't sharp at all, because it's only plastic," Tam said. "And it isn't really silver. It's only grey paint."

"Never mind," said Great-grandpa. "It'll do. Something velvet now."

They looked hopelessly round the room.

"Cotton curtains," muttered Great-grandpa. "They're no use. Anyway, they're your mum's. It has to be something of yours."

They stared at the window. Dawn was coming. If they didn't find something soon, it would be too late. Pix started crying, opened her eyes again and glared at the door. And there it was. It just flew off the hook where it always hung, and draped itself round Tam's shoulders.







“My red dressing gown!” he said. “With its velvet collar!” He stroked the collar. How he loved the feel of it, rough one way, smooth the other, just like a cat’s nose.

Great-grandpa took it off Tam’s shoulders and rolled it up. He carried it downstairs and put it at the bottom of Pix’s pram, then he came back up for Pix and carried her down. Tam followed with the sword and put it carefully in the pram across Pix’s blankets. He couldn’t help feeling a surge of excitement as he laid it there. His hand stretched across to touch it.

“Use it carefully,” Great-grandpa warned.

“Use it?” said Tam, suddenly scared. “How do I use it?”

“I’m sure the guardian will give you instructions,” Great-grandpa said. “There’s bound to be Faery rules. They can’t