



Dear Reader,

You may have seen the recent announcement that the first volume of *The Book of Dust* will be published on 19 October 2017. For a long time, the answer I've been giving to people who asked how it was getting on has been "It's three pages longer today than it was yesterday," which I know wasn't very informative, but it was true.

I didn't say much about it for a reason you'll probably recognise: I think we all work best when we don't have the sense that someone's looking over our shoulder. So I kept the door shut and let all the elements of the story work out their connections and consequences in peace.

There were a lot of things to keep in balance. First, of course, was the fact that the story was about Dust, and about consciousness, and about the deadly consequences of not allowing imagination to thrive.

Secondly, there was Lyra: she had to be at the centre of the story, but it wasn't going to be just a continuation of *His Dark Materials* (a sequel); nor was it going to be only about what happened before that story began (a prequel). I thought it should be an equal.

Thirdly, there were a number of new characters whose importance and meaning I was beginning to discover: some were friends of Lyra, and some were enemies. I found great pleasure in meeting some old friends again, and pleasure too as well as surprise in getting to know the new ones.

Finally, there were a number of scenes that had begun to haunt me, as a vivid dream haunts your mind for days afterwards. There was a man hammering on a door at night in a storm, and handing a bundle to the man who answers before disappearing again; there was an obsessive and murderous pursuit; there was a great flood, in which things hidden and subterranean and secret are brought to light, and assumptions of many kinds are washed away.

All those things had to be woven together, and it soon became clear to me that the story I'd embarked on was too large to be contained in one book. At first I thought it would need two, but it kept on growing. When it got to three, I told it that that was enough. The first will be published in October; the second is already written, but not yet edited; the third is clamouring at me to get on and write it.

I very much hope that you'll enjoy it!

Yours,

Philip Pullman

