

# Vess

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really nice. These books were written for younger readers, but there's a lot of subtext, so they're very complex. It was a real shock when I read the second book, 'The Tombs of Atuan.' It's a pretty dark book. It mostly takes place in catacombs, and it's more from the woman's viewpoint, and there were no dragons. As I read it now, it's become a much better book. I did the best drawings of the whole collection for that book," he says.

Vess says that his feelings for a book definitely affect the quality of his illustrations. "If you hate something, it's really difficult to dredge up the impetus to do a good drawing." One example of this is illustrating "Santa and the Elves in the Singer Sewing Machine Workshop" for an in-house brochure.

"There's any number of those things you have to do when you're first starting out, and you just have to say 'yes' to pay the rent. I remember when I realized I didn't have to say 'yes' to drawing space ships anymore, because I was really bad at spaceships. It was a great day. I had to do lots of spaceships, and my mind doesn't think that way. I found a friend who loved to draw spaceships and gave him a little money, and he drew them for me. They looked great. He loved rocket ships," he recalls.

## Earthsea prints available

There are five Charles Vess "Earthsea" prints available from Out of Step Arts, Bristol, Virginia.

Out of Step Arts was started by Neil Bramlette to help support and promote emerging and established artists who are not only interested in working in comics, but also have interests in other art cultures as well. This could be gallery shows, custom vinyl, graffiti, gig posters, tattoo design, illustration, pin-ups, etc.

He's interested in working with artists who do things a little differently, who have their own style and appeal to varied groups of people.

"Neil's done a bunch of my prints by now," Vess says. "I don't have to ask for proofs, they're always going to be beautiful. He knows how to do it and knows the paper I like. Depending on how well they sell, he may do more of them."

The giclée prints that are available are "Here There Be Dragons," "The Wizard of Earthsea," "The Imminent Grove," "The Farthest Shore" and "The Tombs of Atuan."

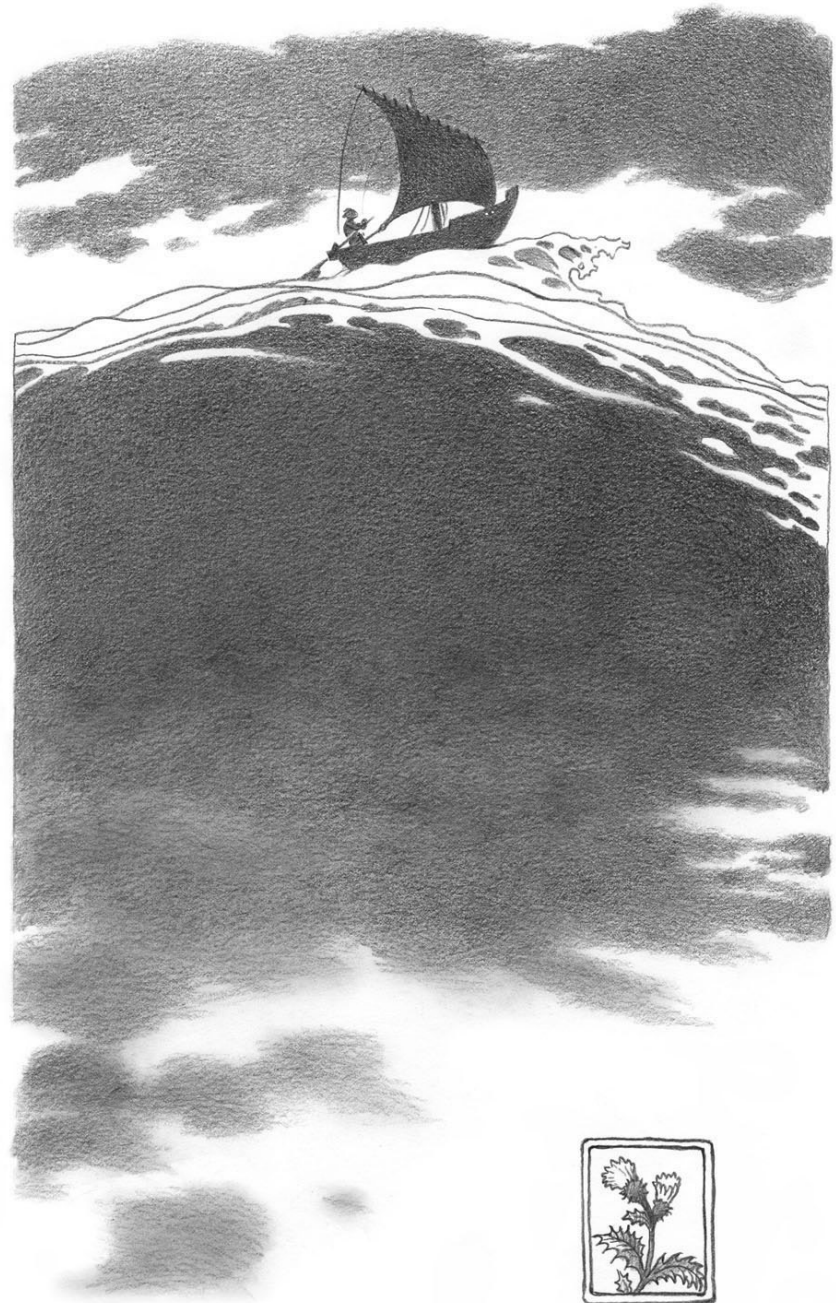
The prints are available at [www.outofsteparts.com](http://www.outofsteparts.com). Bramlette also offers original art on the same website. *A!*

As part of that time when an artist has to say "yes," he had to collaborate with writers on books he didn't care for. "That was hard. You start cursing yourself that you said 'yes.' Now I can say 'no' to writing that doesn't appeal to me," he says.

Working with Le Guin wasn't one of those projects, and it was different from many of his collaborations.

"I really enjoy collaborating. When I work with Neil Gaiman, Charles de Lint or Suzanne Clark, they bring their strengths and you bring your strengths, and you're creating the book at the same time. This was different in that I'd read all the books over and over again. They had been out for years and millions of people had read them. Something in one of my sketches would bring up a memory for Ursula that she hadn't thought about in 30 or 40 years. She'd tell me how she came up with that idea. It was thrilling and fun to find out the hidden secrets," he said.

Vess likes to collaborate, because he likes writing. He says, "There are some very good artists who don't like writing or reading. They just want to do their own work. I enjoy working with writers, because I enjoy writing. It's just what I do." *A!*



"Firelight" illustrates the final story in "Tales of Earthsea," a story which was discovered in Ursula Le Guin's papers after her death. The thistle is representative of Le Guin.