

*Prologue*

The young woman looked up at the full moon that hovered just above the horizon. It was so yellow and frightening. Not at all like the pleasant white circle she was used to. It was threatening, malevolent.

Of course, it was ridiculous to think that she had never seen the moon look like this before. She had to have, many times. But never in this context. Never when she was so very close to it herself.

She reached for the cup on the stone table in front of her. Closing her eyes, she slowly raised it to her lips.

*Part One**Chapter One*

Marielle Sangrall's kitchen was always bustling, even when she was the only person in it. All Hallow's Eve was no exception. It was a perfectly good time to take out her Christmas dishes, she thought. Marielle had always loved Christmas, and eagerly anticipated the day on which she let herself begin to use the Christmas things.

There had been snowflakes in the air that afternoon, and that, combined with the advent of November, made Marielle wish that winter would hurry up. She paused while reaching into her top cabinet, and her hand fell on an old cup. She noticed for the umpteenth time that part of its base was broken off.

"I'm always in too much of a hurry for the next season to take the time to fix things like

this poor cup, aren't I, Sarah?" Sarah meowed in response.

"Yes, I knew you'd agree. Well. I've been meaning to fix this for years. I should probably just do it, shouldn't I? The Christmas dishes can wait."

Marielle carefully placed the cup on the counter and climbed down from the stool. She brought the cup over to the kitchen table and placed it on the gingham tablecloth. The red and white checks looked too summery. It was definitely time to find something more autumnal.

Where was the super glue? Marielle paused as she even thought this. Was it really okay to mend a family heirloom with super glue? But if not, what else would she use?

"What do you think, Sarah?" she mused aloud. Sarah just yawned. Apparently super glue was outside of the realm of feline concern.

"Well." Marielle pretended to huff at the cat. "If any got on your paws, you'd care."

Hmm. And why would she feel that it wasn't okay in the first place? It wasn't as though the cup had any monetary value. It was purely a sentimental keepsake. An icon, if anything. And she definitely wouldn't want to make it into an idol. Her eyes wandered over to where *Penguins and Golden Calves* was lying open on the table. Amazing how it was affecting her day to day thought. Not that there was much connection between golden calves and her old cup. But maybe...

Marielle shook her head, a bit exasperated with herself. It was a cup, for goodness sake. It would look better with the broken piece put back on. She might even drink out of it then. That's it. She would fix it.

## *Chapter Two*

Annie Jordan sprawled across her bed, tossing aside her well-worn copy of *Beowulf*. In the original Old English, of course. She squinted up at her roommate, who was across the room getting ready for a Halloween party.

“You sure you don’t want to come, An?” Kira asked.

“Yup. I’ll be perfectly fine here with *Beowulf* and Grendel and a cup of tea.”

“You really should get out more, Annie,” Kira called over her shoulder as she rushed out the door.

Annie sighed and leaned back on her pillows. She lay there and enjoyed the feeling of the soft flannel against her head. She felt restless this evening, for some reason. She had told Kira she would be fine. And she would. But ... there was something. *Beowulf* just wasn’t quite holding its normal allure.

Her eyes wandered around the room and fell on a paperback sitting alone on the floor by her desk. It was Daphne Du Maurier’s *Rebecca*. A friend had been trying to get Annie to read it for months. Annie wasn’t really sure what it was about, but she associated it with windy cliffs and eerie old houses. Perfect for Halloween night.

Annie stared at the book, strangely tempted. All right, she thought. It’s one evening. Everyone else is out partying. And I can’t concentrate anyway. I might as well do something fun for once.

Annie picked up the book, snuggled down with her blankets and teddy bear, and began to read.

### *Chapter Three*

Marielle was slightly out of breath as she returned from All Souls' Day services. She went directly in the kitchen door and smiled as she stepped into the bright sunlight of her kitchen. Sarah came bounding in to greet her and began to rub against her legs. Marielle checked her watch wryly. All this attention clearly meant that Sarah thought it was dinnertime.

“Yes, Sarah, one moment. Let me just catch my breath and put the kettle on. I'm a bit thirsty after all that walking, you know.” Marielle crossed the room toward the stove, where the teakettle always sat, but on the way she noticed the old cup, sitting on the ledge above the sink where she had left it to dry after mending it the day before. Now that she had mended it, she supposed she might as well go ahead and use it. On further reflection, some nice cold water seemed more appealing than tea to quench her thirst.

She quickly fed the cat and went back to the sink to wash the cup. It felt almost warm in her hands—somehow alive. Stop that, she chided herself. The cup is clearly not alive. It is simply warm from sitting on the window ledge in the sun all day.

Marielle carefully washed and dried the cup, noticing that the crack where the broken piece had been mended was barely noticeable. She filled the cup with cool water and placed it on the table in front of her usual chair. She sat down. Her book lay beside her, but she left it unopened. She had a wool cap in her knitting bag that just needed a few more rounds, and normally Marielle would have taken an opportunity like this to finish it up while she was enjoying her water break. Today, though, something seemed different. She decided to give herself a rest for once; to just sit and drink the water.

Marielle raised the cup to her lips and drank, and then placed it back onto the table and looked into the water. The uneven coloring of the inside of the cup made the water look shimmery. Marielle looked deeper. The water seemed to resolve itself into shapes, then into

pictures. Marielle saw a woman's face, and the woman faded into a baby. For a moment Marielle thought the baby was herself, then realized with a start that it was her long-dead twin sister, Morgana. She was crying. The water suddenly turned murky, and then it was a baby again, but a different one this time. Marielle gasped in recognition. Her half-brother, Morgan. He seemed to be staring at her in the same way he did when she took care of him as an infant. If she didn't know better, Marielle would have thought the baby was trying to tell her something. A look of pain ravaged his face, and Marielle saw him older, as she last remembered him. Then he was a baby again, and the baby's face slowly changed into that of another infant, one Marielle didn't recognize. Then suddenly she knew.

#### *Chapter Four*

The Autumn leaves were coming down quickly now, and they blanketed the college campus in a brilliant but elusive carpet. It seemed that as soon as the groundskeepers blew enough of them into a stack to move them somewhere, a sharp wind would come up and blow them all apart again. The leaves wreaked havoc with the normal paths that the students and professors used to travel from building to building, making the whole campus seem like a liquid labyrinth—a path would appear one moment and be gone the next.

No one ever noticed quite how many trees there were around until they all dropped their leaves at once. The trees that were most commonly associated with the campus were the tall pines that punctuated the skyline, and everyone was used to a more or less constant coating of pine needles in the grass. But once a year the other trees suddenly, dazzlingly made themselves known.

The place where this was most vivid was the lake just beyond the entrance to campus. It was encircled by pine trees, with a ring of smaller maple trees in front of the pines. On calm days, the trees looked almost magical, when the gazer could scarcely tell which was real and which was the reflection. When the leaves fell, this effect was only more enhanced. The leaves still on the trees and those heaped on the ground were reflected in the water, and those that fell into the lake floated for a while, their selves and their reflections very close for a time, until they sank and glimmered up from the bottom. The whole thing was a mass of sparkling gold and orange and red, set vividly against the clear crisp blue of the sky.

A little bridge passed over one end of the lake, and it too was covered with the leaves. It made it look as though it was almost coming out of the lake, or a part of the lake itself. The bridge was seldom used, as there were generally more direct ways for the students to get from one place to another, but to those select few who had noticed and tried it, it was clearly one of the most beautiful walks on campus.

Annie wandered across the bridge. She was walking carrying an open book before her, as she so often did, but as she walked through this glamour, she did not read. She found herself doing so more and more recently--she tried to tell herself that it was just because of the change in seasons and the beautiful colors, but she knew something else was different. Annie especially felt drawn to this particular pool. Odd that she persisted in thinking of it as a pool, somehow, when the rest of campus clearly always called it a lake.

To Annie, though, it was a pool: a clear, clean pool it always seemed, regardless of how many rotting leaves she knew were there. It was interesting how one could very rarely actually see those leaves, though. They had to be there, for after all all those leaves seen falling and floating on the surface couldn't just disappear. But the water never seemed to be polluted by the

remains of the dead leaves.

Annie stopped directly in the middle of the bridge. She carefully placed her backpack down on the weathered wooden planks, and leaned against the railing, staring into the water. For a moment she contemplated playing Poohsticks, but Poohsticks was really much more fun when played with more than one person. It was really a pity that she didn't have anyone to play Poohsticks with. Annie thought about this for a minute. She had no one on campus with whom she could play Poohsticks. That basically meant that she had no one she could just go up to and say, "Come on, let's do something fun and silly." No one she could really count on not to laugh at her, or to understand why things like playing Poohsticks every once and a while was really necessary. There were plenty of people around Annie talked to occasionally, of course, and even spent a fair amount of time with, but she suddenly wasn't sure whether she could really count any of them as friends.

Annie looked at her watch and shook her head. She didn't have time to be having a random personal crisis right now. She had to get to class. It was a class in Advanced Old English Grammar--definitely Annie's favorite this semester, and probably among her favorite classes ever. Even if she didn't have any friends, Annie could at least look forward to spending more time studying the intricacies of *Beowulf*.

As Annie followed the path around the pond, a small orange cat streaked out in front of her. It crossed the path and then doubled back, staring at the girl curiously. Annie ventured a bit closer, hoping to get a better look at the cat without scaring it off. It was really very small, but seemed far too independent to be as young as it looked.

Annie felt bad referring to the cute little thing as "it," even in her own mind. "Are you a boy or a girl? Huh?" she asked it, not expecting, of course, any reply.

But a reply of sorts came. Annie didn't hear the cat speaking to her, or anything like that, but she very clearly knew that it was a girl, and she had not known that before.

“So you're a girl, eh?” I'm talking to a cat, she thought. A cat. And it might be answering. Kira's right. I really do need to get out more. “If you can tell me that you're a girl, then can you tell me your name?”

The cat inched a bit closer, seemingly comforted by the sound of Annie's voice. Surely she couldn't actually understand the words. Annie forced herself to think that. What was wrong with her today? But the cat looked so intelligent, so understanding. So far, she had great potential for being the best conversationalist Annie had encountered in a while. Annie reached out to try to pet her. She knew this could have a disastrous result, but she had to try. The cat stretched out toward Annie's hand, and Annie felt the first hint of fur brushing against her fingers.

Suddenly a car appeared on the nearby road. It broke the magical moment and the peaceful silence. The cat started, and bounded off before Annie could really pet it. Annie looked after it wistfully. She wished she could have a cat, but of course they were not allowed to have pets in the dorms. But still... there was something about this tiny cat...

*Eilena.* Annie suddenly realized that the word had been in her mind for longer than she had been consciously thinking it, perhaps even from when she first caught sight of the cat. The cat's name was Eilena.

### *Chapter Five*

Marielle sat by her kitchen window with her crocheting in her lap. She was making a



blanket for her nephew Josiah for Christmas. Christmas was still almost two months away, but Marielle had so many projects going all at once that she worried about getting any of them done for a deadline. She was really enjoying this blanket, though, and she decided that she should make it a bit larger than she had originally planned. The colors were beautiful--burgundy and grey. They were perfect to work with this time of year. One more skein of each color should about do it.

She had intended to devote the morning to working on this blanket, so Marielle decided to go to the yarn store and get what she needed to continue. She put on her shoes and grabbed a thick warm shawl that she had recently knit for herself, and paused to pet Sarah before she walked out the door.

Marielle had a car, but she usually walked into town, except when the weather was bad. Today was another glorious Autumn day like they had been having so many of lately, so she had no qualms about walking. The walk was fairly long, at least by her neighbors' standards--they thought nothing of piling all their children into their station wagons and minivans for the trip of about a mile. Marielle supposed that if she had small children she too might want to use the car more often, but she thought that the children might do better taking long walks into town than spending all of their time in front of the television.

No, that wasn't entirely fair, Marielle chided herself. Just because she herself had not had something like television when she was growing up didn't mean that today's children shouldn't either. And even though Marielle usually kept her television under a pretty cover she had knitted for it, she did have it and she did watch it occasionally. The majority of the shows that were popular these days didn't really interest her, but Marielle loved documentaries, especially history, biography, travel. Her favorites were usually biographies of foreign royalty

throughout the ages, but recently her local public television station had been doing a series of combination history/travel shows about the south of England. Marielle loved them. She somehow felt drawn to this enigmatic place. Perhaps that made sense, since it was where her father's family was from. And where her brother had disappeared.

Lost in thought, Marielle had reached town almost before she knew it. It was a rather odd sort of town: there were many families who had lived there for generations, but recently the tourist industry had begun to pick up as well, and on weekends the one old inn and the few more recent bed and breakfasts were booked up, full of thoroughly modern people come to spend some time in the "quaint" town and looking around at the nearby "old-fashioned" farms. During the week, there were always a few couples or families staying in the town, but it was generally much more quiet and it was then that one could really get a sense of normal life there. The city people, coming to be "refreshed," really just brought their own lives with them and completely overlooked that of the town. But, Marielle supposed, if they felt they got what they had intended, more power to them.

The craft store was quite conveniently located on the end of Main Street closest to Marielle's house. She walked up the old wooden steps and in the open front door, and paused for a moment to catch her breath. It was a good thing she made herself take these walks every day. Otherwise she would turn into a feeble old lady all the more quickly.

"Hi Aunt Marielle!" called the young woman behind the counter. Stephanie Sembers was the owner of A Good Yarn, having taken over the store when her grandmother, its founder, retired. Old Mrs. Sembers had continued to work in the store until the day she died, about a year ago now. Stephanie's mother had no interest in the family business, so Stephanie inherited the whole thing when she was still in her early twenties. She had kept the store running admirably.

Stephanie was not, of course, Marielle's actual niece. She might have dated one of her nephews once, but that was as close as the connection got. Much of the town called Marielle "Aunt," but she wasn't really sure why. Then again, much of the town had also dated various of Marielle's nephews, but she thought there was more to the naming than that.

Marielle had never married or had any children of her own, but she had always felt a close bond with the children around her. Perhaps she had retained something of childhood as she grew up. Although, come to think of it, she had never felt so close to children when she actually was one. It wasn't until she grew up that she could appreciate them.

"Come on in, Aunt Marielle! Don't just stand in the doorway!" Stephanie's cheery voice broke sharply into Marielle's thoughts. "Did you come for something in particular or just to say hi? Wow, is that shawl what you made with the yarn you brought the other day? I'm impressed."

Typical Stephanie. Not letting Marielle answer one question before moving on to the next. She was a dear girl, but really somewhat exhausting.

"Yes, Stephanie dear, this is my new shawl. I'm really rather fond of it. Glad you like it too."

"Yes. Wow. And it gives me an idea. Hmm. Did you say you were here looking for something in particular? Yes? Well, why don't you find it and let me collect my thoughts and I'll talk to you when I ring you out." Stephanie seemed strangely agitated.

Marielle walked the rows of yarn slowly, enjoying the luscious sights and every once in a while stopping to feel. No hurry, she told herself, no hurry. Better to let Stephanie have time to collect her thoughts, as she had said. No point trying to rush her. Marielle had become a master of waiting throughout her long solitary life. Sometimes she felt like waiting was all she had to

do these days. She needed something to do, a project. Something besides just buying expensive yarn and needlework materials that she couldn't really afford anyway.

She found the yarn that she was looking for and checked that Stephanie still had the same dye lot in stock. Wonder of wonders, she did. As Marielle headed up to the cash register with her yarn she wondered what it was that Stephanie wanted to talk about. She hoped it was nothing bad. Poor girl was doing such a good job running this store all by herself. Marielle had offered to come in and work part time when Stephanie's grandmother died, but Stephanie said that she couldn't really afford it right then, and as she lived in the apartment over the store anyway she was okay there by herself.

There was a big display of the new Teresa Wentzler cross stitch kit in front of the cash register counter. One of the best improvements Stephanie had made to the store since she took over was the expansion into cross stitch and other needlework. Marielle had long loved embroidery of all kinds, and it was really very nice to be able to buy a good variety of supplies right here in town. Before Stephanie made the expansion, the closest place that had any needlework supplies at all was the Wal-Mart in the next town over, and their selection was never very good.

But no. Marielle made herself look away from the beautiful new kit. She simply could not afford that right now. She was blessed to still be able to live from her investments, never having had to work except for short periods when she wanted to, but she shouldn't try to stretch it. She wanted the family money to be there for the next generation, after all. She wanted to augment it, certainly not diminish it.

Stephanie came over to the register and started to ring up Marielle's sale.

"So I was thinking, Aunt Marielle..." She seemed unsure of how to say what she was

trying to get across. “Business isn’t great. I mean, it’s not bad, certainly, but it’s not great. And I’ve been thinking I wanted to do something more to cater to the tourists. They’ll often stop in, even if they don’t knit or do any crafts at all. So...”

“Yes? Go on. That makes sense.”

“So I was thinking it would be nice to have some things that were already made for sale. Scarves, sweaters, afghans, anything, really. I was thinking there would be a big market for hand-knit products, and I don’t think any other store in town really sells anything like that.”

“Stephanie, I think that’s a wonderful idea. I’m sure your grandmother would be proud.”

Stephanie smiled, more sure of herself now. Marielle realized that the invocation of her beloved grandmother’s approval undoubtedly made the girl more at ease.

“I don’t have the time to make them, though, Aunt Marielle, at least not many, and I don’t have the capital right now to buy them outright from anyone. So I was wondering if there would be any chance that you... that you’d make things to sell here, and pay me a percentage of what you sell them for.”

Stephanie gulped, her big idea now out in the open for ridicule or even offense. She hurried to make the words as innocuous as possible. “Now, I understand that you don’t need the money or anything, I just thought you might think it was a fun project, and it could help pay for the yarn you buy here, and--”

“It’s all right, dear.” Marielle smiled thoughtfully. “I know you’re not trying to suggest that I’m destitute. But you’re quite right, it would be nice if I did something to support my own hobbies rather than simply living off money others have earned. And I have been looking for a new project or something to make me feel like my time has structure and purpose. I’d be delighted to try making some things to sell. So I’ll bring in items I’ve made and priced, and give

you, say, twenty percent when they sell? Does that sound reasonable?”

“Yes, yes it does.” Stephanie was immediately thankful and back to her normal talkative self. “That way if that goes well, I can build up to buying them from you wholesale. That would be wonderful.”

“Good. So then, I’ll bring in some things as soon as I can get a few done. A few days, probably. How’s that?”

“Great! Thank you, Aunt Marielle! This is so exciting!”

As she left the store, Marielle realized that she was pretty excited as well. This was just the sort of project she had been looking for. It would give her some purpose. It would let her stop waiting.

### *Chapter Six*

Annie soon realized that she was looking for Eilena every time she walked by the lake. She was even looking for excuses to walk that way when she didn’t really need to. And more often than not Eilena was there. Sometimes she just saw a flash of her in the trees, and sometimes Eilena came out and sniffed around a bit. Annie was slowly working up to being able to pet the little cat for longer amounts of time.

“Yes, I know. I wish you could come home with me too,” she cooed to Eilena. It seemed uncanny sometimes how the cat seemed to be trying to tell her something. She wondered what it could be. What do cats think about, anyway? And did cats feel that any of what they were thinking about was relevant to humans, or any of what humans think about relevant to them? What would a cat think mattered?

Of course, that brought up the question of what mattered at all, in general. Why should humans assume that what matters to them is what matters in general, or even if what they thought mattered to them actually did? Maybe cats knew better after all. Why shouldn't they? Annie generally didn't buy into the whole "innocent perfect nature" thing, but in this case she thought that this particular cat, if not cats in general, might know something she didn't.

Eilena was being particularly affectionate today, and Annie decided she might as well stay with her for a while. The day was fall-like but still warm enough to stay outside for a while without getting too cold. All Annie had to do for class the next day was to read one article that the professor had put on reserve; Annie had already photocopied it for herself. She put her backpack down and settled herself on the grass. She pulled the pages out of her bag and began to read. Annie became so enthralled in her reading that she barely noticed when Eilena climbed into her lap and went to sleep.

Forty-five minutes later, Annie finished the article, and yawned and stretched as though she had just woken from a long sleep. It was then that the full force of having Eilena cuddled in her lap hit her. This adorable little orange cat actually trusted her enough to make herself vulnerable in sleep. Annie decided that this was the surest sign of friendship that she had encountered in a while.

She was so happy with this new turn of events that she really didn't want to wake Eilena up and make her move, even though she was done with her reading and didn't really have any other work with her that she could do. Then she remembered that she had tossed *Rebecca* into her bag that morning just in case she had some extra time to read it. She hadn't really expected to, but since she had it... It did seem as though now would be the perfect time.

Annie wasn't really sure how she felt about this book. It wasn't the sort of thing she

normally read much, although she rarely found a book she truly hated. This one had her captivated, though--not so much by the story, but by the setting. Annie had never really known much about England at all or about Cornwall in particular, but reading about it gave her a strange feeling of coming home. Her mother had certainly not instilled this instinctual love for England in her. Jane Jordan was the typical all-American girl. She often referred to the British as weird, backward, old-fashioned. Perhaps this was because Annie's father's family, whom Jane professed to despise, was British.

Her father's family. Annie suddenly realized that they could have something to do with why England sounded so much like home. Not that she had ever had any contact with them--her parents had separated when Annie was very young, and her mother had severed all relations with that entire half of Annie's genetic makeup. Jane had even gone so far as to change not only her own last name, but her daughter's as well, back to her maiden name of Jordan. Whenever Annie asked about her father or his family, Jane had simply told her that they weren't good people, and that the two of them were perfectly all right by themselves. By the time she was six years old or so, Annie had stopped asking.

But now she found herself wondering. She had always believed her mother when she said that they were fine all alone and didn't need anyone else. For the first time, though, Annie felt that even if they didn't *need* anyone else, wasn't it possible that someone else there could have helped? Just been nice? Annie was a complete person, certainly, but she wondered whether growing up solely under her mother's influence hadn't made her rather one-sided.

Even if she wanted to get in touch with her father or his family, though, how would she go about it? All she knew was their last name. Her mother had never even mentioned Annie's father's first name. It was as though she were determined to not only erase all influence from



him from Annie's early life, but to prevent Annie from ever possibly finding them, or them from finding Annie.

She could try asking her mother one more time. She could say that she was older now, that she had the right to know about her background even if her mother didn't want her to. Knowing her mother, Annie really didn't think it would work, but it was the only thing she could try.

### *Chapter Seven*

Marielle sat curled up on her couch under a blanket on the cool November evening. She was working on a pretty scarf. It was a simple pattern, bulky yarn, and big needles, so it went very quickly. It looked impressive, though--a beautiful silvery-blue that somehow looked elegant and cozy at the same time. She had chosen to knit this scarf today precisely because she knew that it would go quickly while looking harder than it actually was. Marielle had knit four other things for the store in the past few days, and she had decided that five was a decent number to bring to start out with. If she finished this scarf tonight, she could bring her work into town tomorrow, Friday, so that it would be there for the weekend, which was always the busier time for retailers in town.

The repetitive movements of the knitting seemed to be lulling Marielle into some sort of trance, hypnotizing her, soothing her. But at the same time, it was opening her mind to think about things that she had been trying her best to ignore.

Marielle realized perfectly well that one of the reasons she had thrown herself so wholeheartedly into this knitting for the store was in order to make herself forget about the

disturbing incident with the old family cup. She had been able to push it out of her mind by concentrating on complicated stitch patterns or sweater construction. But now that she had started this simple scarf, she couldn't evade her own thoughts any longer.

What had happened with the cup was simply odd. Strange. Unbelievable. She was a simple Episcopalian. Things like that weren't supposed to happen. She went to church and read her Bible and prayed and wholeheartedly believed in everything that the Church had always taught her. Marielle knew that this would be considered hopelessly old-fashioned by many, but it had always worked for her, so she had never seen reason to change it. Until now.

Marielle put her knitting aside and went into her bedroom. She turned on her jewel-green desk lamp, seated herself, and pulled a piece of monogrammed stationery out of one of the side drawers of her old carved wood desk. She started to pick up a normal ballpoint, but then paused, and got out her good fountain pen instead. Filling it before and while writing would be a comforting, familiar ritual.

Finally, Marielle put pen to paper and started writing. "Dear Morgana..."

### *Chapter Eight*

Annie's heart was pounding as she picked up the phone. Would it seem strange if she suddenly called right then? Would her mother be suspicious right off the bat? No, that was silly. She normally called fairly often. It would look suspicious if she *didn't* call.

The phone was ringing. She must have dialed the long-memorized number, although she didn't actually remember doing so.

"Hello?" Jane Jordan's voice sounded as it always did--crisp, efficient, and yet with a

hint of warmth. Annie realized that she, her mother's only child, most likely heard that warmth more easily than most did.

"Hi Mom!"

"Oh, hi, honey. How are you?"

"I'm okay. How's everything at home?" Annie strained to keep up this normal small talk. Finally she saw her opening.

"So... anything else new, hon?" her mother asked.

"Actually, Mom... I was thinking... Maybe I should go abroad for a semester after all." What? What was she saying? This wasn't what Annie had intended to say at all. She had intended to try asking about her father one more time. She hadn't even thought about going abroad anytime recently at all.

But then she realized that what she had said was true. She wanted to go to England.

"I thought you'd eventually realize that that was a good idea. I was a little worried when you said that you wanted to just stay there, actually. I think it will be a very good experience for you to not be just on that small campus for four years. So where do you think you might want to go? How about somewhere exotic... let's see, Greece might be fun, or India, or..."

"Actually, Mom, I want to go to England. I am studying dead English languages, after all..." Annie realized that she was a bit nervous about what the response to this proposal would be.

"England? Why would you want to go *there*? England's no fun. Stuffy people, boring food, lots of fog..."

"Mom. Really. You know it's not all like that. I know you don't like England much, but please, I'm not saying you have to go. Just let me. It would really make the most logical

sense for my field of study.” When all else failed, Annie knew to appeal to her mother’s sense of logic.

“Yes, yes, you’re right, it would. We’ll talk about making most specific plans when you come home next weekend.”

Annie had almost forgotten that she had told her mother she would go home the next weekend. It was only two weeks before Thanksgiving, and normally Annie would have tried to avoid making the longish drive twice in that span of time. But next weekend the school where her mother worked was doing a big fundraiser, and Annie had promised to go help out. Maybe she’d get up the nerve then to ask about her father.

In the meantime, Annie decided to look into universities in England. Maybe it was a silly whim, all because of that book, but she thought she’d really like to go to Cornwall.

### *Chapter Nine*

Marielle realized with a start that her hands were shaking as she picked up the phone. It wasn’t that she was nervous about the conversation she was about to have--she was fairly confident and sure of herself, and Lord knows, she called this number often enough. No, it was that if this phone call didn’t produce the desired result she wasn’t sure what else she could do. It was this or, perhaps, years of aimless searching.

“Silas and Whittier, how may I help you?” The young female voice on the other end of the phone was refreshingly professional.

“Yes, I’d like to speak to Mr. Whittier, please. This is Marielle Sangrall.” Marielle generally tried to avoid using her family name to gain influence, but in some cases it was

unavoidable. At the moment, the most important thing was that Marielle could reach Morgana. Plus, Marielle reflected wryly, Mr. Whittier would probably chastise his young secretary if she made Marielle wait.

“Yes, of course. One moment please, Miss Sangrall.” The voice was replaced with discreet classical music. It was quiet and rather unexciting, but a decent recording, and Marielle was happy to know that Silas and Whittier, at least, had not bowed to the conventions of elevator music.

“Whittier here.” Mr. Whittier’s voice was familiar, crisp, vaguely British. Marielle always loved hearing it.

“Good morning, Mr. Whittier. This is Marielle Sangrall.”

“Miss Marielle! To what do I owe this pleasure?” Mr. Whittier, and his father before him, etc. etc. as far back as anyone could remember had always been the lawyer for the Sangrall family. Marielle considered him an old friend, though they rarely met, and always remained on the most professional terms.

“I need to contact my niece, Mr. Whittier. So I need your help.” No point in beating around the bush. Whittier would appreciate the directness.

“Your niece?” All right, Marielle thought, she supposed she did have more than one niece if her nephews’ daughters were counted. But she had a feeling that Mr. Whittier knew exactly what she was talking about.

“Morgana. My brother Morgan’s daughter.”

“Ah.” It was clipped, uninformative, nonjudgemental, but vaguely disapproving.

“I assume you *do* know where she is, Mr. Whittier?” Marielle knew that this suggestion that he might not be completing his responsibilities to the best of his ability would make Whittier

help her. It was, after all, his job to keep track of all members of the Sangrall family.

“Yes, of course. But I cannot legally give you her address.”

Of course. Whittier had always played by the rules. He would never do something that would in any way impinge upon the honor and respectability of the firm of Silas and Whittier.

“Hmm. Yes, I see how that could be the case. Would you be able to act as a go-between, perhaps?”

“A go-between? How so?” Marielle could tell that Whittier was intrigued in spite of himself.

“I have written Morgana a letter. If I were to send it to you, would you pass it along to her?”

“Oh. Yes. Of course. I don’t see how that could possibly be a problem. I’d be glad to.” Whittier sounded relieved.

“Very good. Thank you. I’d better get to town, then, so I can get it in today’s mail.” As much as Marielle enjoyed talking to Mr. Whittier, she was eager to cut off the conversation and get the letter in the mail before she could change her mind.

She had also finished the blue scarf, so she planned to drop her finished items off at A Good Yarn while she was in town. Marielle gathered her finished items together and decided that packing them in a box would look more professional than just putting them in a plastic bag. She found a decent box that someone had used to ship something to her and folded her products carefully. Then gathering up the box and the letter for Morgana, Marielle headed into town.

## *Chapter Ten*

Annie looked outside and sighed in appreciation. It was one of those gorgeous late Autumn days when it looked like everything--sky, air, earth--was made of pure gold. Annie wasn't sure how exactly it could produce that effect. Part of it, undoubtedly, was the color of the leaves turned golden, but there was definitely more to it than that. The very air seemed golden, and thick and almost sweet.

Annie wished she could be outside enjoying it, but she had studying to do. Now that she had decided she wanted to study abroad, she was doubly determined to get the best grades possible for her midterms, which were what would be looked at on her application. Plus, she now had her application essays to work on as well.

She threw herself into her work with a vengeance. It was really fascinating, and once again Annie was happy that she had chosen the field she had. Her mother had never really approved, of course. Dead languages weren't high on Jane Jordan's list of practical things to learn.

But Annie had been captivated by Old English when she first encountered it while reading *Beowulf*, in translation of course, for a high school English class. She loved how it was so connected with the language she had known and loved her whole life, and yet so different at the same time. And beyond that, she just loved the rhythms, the sound of it. Plus the puzzle of figuring out how something like a language *worked* was irresistible to Annie.

She hadn't really done much with Middle English until she got to college and found that if she wanted to major in Old English she had to study Middle English as well. It never captured her enthusiasm quite as much as Old English had, but she grew to find it extremely interesting and worthwhile in its own right. And she greatly enjoyed the look at history and the evolution of language that she got by looking at Old, Middle, and Modern English simultaneously.

Annie soon realized that her afternoon was gone, though, and the sun was setting. She'd done enough on her Old English for the moment, and she put her books away reluctantly. She still had some time before she'd be hungry for dinner, so she decided to work on one of her non-language classes for a while.

Her two "other" classes this semester were Philosophy of Religion and Victorian Serials: Dickens and Conan Doyle. She was enjoying both of them immensely, and a change from her normal routine was nice. Of course, her mother thought that if she were going to take classes that would not benefit her major, Annie should at least take something *useful*, but Annie had decided that putting up with her mother's fairly harmless disapproval was an okay price to pay for taking fun classes.

The philosophy class was pretty heavy going, really. It was making Annie think about all sorts of things that she had never really been exposed to much before. Religion didn't exactly fall into her mother's category of useful things, either. Annie had grown up going to her mother's parents' house for Christmas and Easter, and occasionally going to church with them as well, but that was as far as her religious upbringing had gone.

When Annie was in middle school, a friend who was trying to "save" her gave her a Bible one day. Annie later realized that this friend was perhaps cleverer than she realized, knowing that the best way to get Annie to notice something was to give her a book about it. Annie had always been a voracious reader. Annie had hidden the Bible in her room, because she knew her mother wouldn't really approve of her reading it. And this, of course, only served to make it all the more interesting. Annie began to read the Bible in bits while she was supposed to be doing her homework or just reading other things in her room. She was fascinated. Once she got to the first mention of the Sabbath, she began to make a point of reading some of the Bible



on every Saturday and Sunday because she could never quite figure out when the Sabbath was supposed to be. The Bible said it should be on the seventh day, which seemed to be Saturday, but Annie knew her friends went to church on Sunday. She decided to be safe and go with both.

Over the next few years, Annie had made her way all the way through the Bible twice. She always found it very strangely alluring. Some of this was undoubtedly its forbiddenness, but she was pretty sure there was something in it itself that made it so interesting. Annie was never quite sure how much of it she believed, though, and how much of it was a sort of anthropological fascination on her part. She was pretty sure that she'd at least like to believe it.

When she went to college and was away from her mother's careful supervision and disapproval, Annie tried going to church a few times with various different friends. No matter which church she went to, though, it never seemed to be quite what she thought it should be from what she had learned in the Bible. Soon Annie stopped going to church, and though she kept reading her Bible occasionally, she got so caught up in college and her studies that she didn't really think about it much.

Until this semester. Annie had been browsing the course listings when they came out last spring, looking for a fun class or two to take now that she was almost done with those required for her major. Since she had known what she wanted to study since her second semester and started Old English classes in her first, actually, by her third year she was almost done. So it worked out that while her classmates were all scrambling to complete their required classes in time, Annie was free to do almost anything she wanted and was looking around for fun classes to take.

When she read the description of Philosophy of Religion, Annie immediately knew that she wanted to try it. She was a little nervous because she hadn't taken any philosophy classes

before, and this was a two hundred level class, but it didn't have any prerequisites listed. So Annie signed up.

On the first day of class, she discovered that the subject matter was just as interesting as she had hoped. Unfortunately, though, this was the sort of class that seemed to bring out the worst in people. Everyone felt as though his personal beliefs were being attacked with the slightest provocation, and discussions weren't really discussions, because very few people in the class would even consider changing their minds about anything discussed.

Annie tried not to think about the actual class as she did the reading, though. Today's readings were about Pascal's Wager, which Annie thought was an interesting concept but somewhat counter to all of her instinctual feelings about the nature of religion. One of the things that Annie found the most interesting, though, was the way that Pascal allowed for the possibility of God not existing, but assumed that, if God existed at all, God *had* to exist in the form of the traditional Christian God with which Pascal was familiar.

Annie almost envied anyone who could be that sure about the being and nature of God. At the same time, though, she thought that they might be missing out on a lot. Annie herself felt that there had to be something out there beyond the science and logic that her mother had taught her, but she really wasn't at all sure of what it was. And she thought she might sort of like it that way. It certainly added a lot of mystery to the universe.

Annie brought herself back down to earth sharply. There she was, off daydreaming again when she had work to do. She really had to stop that. It was getting worse, especially since she had met Eilena and decided to go to England.

Eilena. Annie always loved cats, but Eilena was the most wonderful cat she had ever known. In such a short time, Eilena had grown to trust her as much as any of Annie's cats at

home, whom she'd had for years, ever had. Annie went and sat by the pool every free afternoon now, and almost ever time, as soon as she got there Eilena would appear out of the bushes. Sometimes she would crawl into Annie's lap, as she had that first day, but other days she would go about her own business, chasing birds, napping, rolling in the grass, doing all those normal cat things. And yet she made Annie feel a part of it. It was almost as though Eilena was saying, "You're here doing your homework, your normal life stuff, so I'll be with you here but do my own stuff too."

Annie. Really, she chided herself. Get with it. You're imagining a cat talking to you. That's ridiculous. It really bothered her how much it seemed Eilena communicated. Annie wondered if she were going crazy. She hadn't told anyone about Eilena, partly for this reason. But also, it seemed as though Eilena wasn't just a normal stray. Annie thought of her as some sort of fairy kitten who would just vanish if she were talked about.

Annie sighed and shook her head. She had started daydreaming again in her very attempt to stop. Maybe she just wasn't in the right frame of mind for philosophy today. Annie closed her philosophy book and picked up the Dickens novel she was supposed to be reading for Victorian Serials. Maybe reading something with a plot would better capture her attention. She lowered her window shade, as it was now almost completely dark, and sat down on her bed to read.

### *Chapter Eleven*

Marielle wandered through her "library," as she liked to call the spare bedroom that she had lined with bookshelves. She'd replaced the bed with a comfortable recliner and it was now

her special reading spot. Since she had sent off the letter to Morgana that afternoon, Marielle's mind was somewhat more at peace than it had been of late, but she was still restless. She had tried to knit, but found that, while she could do so for hours on end during the day, after it was dark outside her mind wandered too much. She decided to set herself up a schedule for knitting that would allow her to finish things at a steady rate for the store. After all, one of the main reasons she was doing this was to acquire some structure.

Marielle decided that she would walk to town, if necessary, in the mornings, when she had the most energy. She was saying "if necessary" to herself, but she knew perfectly well that almost every day she would find *some* reason to go. Especially now that she was selling her things at A Good Yarn, she would want to go in every day just to see if something had sold and to drop off what she had finished the day before.

When she returned from town, she would have lunch if she hadn't already, and get done any necessary paperwork and letter-writing. Marielle had always had dozens of penpals from around the world, and she often had letters to write to them as well as her far-flung family. And a few times a month there were, of course, the normal bills to pay. Now that she was running her little craft business, Marielle would have far more paperwork to do than she was used to. She was determined to do this right if she was going to do it, so she kept a careful list of how much the yarn she had bought cost, the things she made to sell, and what had actually sold. Not that anything had actually sold yet, of course, at least not that she knew of, but Marielle was ever hopeful and had a section in her notebook to record sales. She would keep a running tab of each category--expenses, inventory, and sales--so she could see at a glance when she started--she hoped--making money.

Marielle decided that once she finished her paperwork, she would devote the rest of the

afternoons to knitting products for sale. She planned to have a few things going all the time so that she could switch between them and work up to finishing something almost every day. She had put this plan into effect that very afternoon and had started a pair of mittens, a scarf, and a baby blanket. She thought she'd start each knitting session by casting on for something new, and then do at least a row on each project, knitting each for as long as she liked. If it got to be dinner time before Marielle had knitted at least a bit on each project, she would quickly do a row of each before she made dinner. This way everything would progress steadily, even though she would undoubtedly like some of the projects more than others.

Evenings she would have to herself, to read, to work on other crafts for herself and her family, to plan the next day, just to have time to herself. In thinking about planning the next day, Marielle realized that she should make a point of stopping by the library and getting a book on tape to listen to while she knit. And Marielle had recently been feeling like making socks, so when she went to the yarn store she would get some sock yarn to make a pair for sale. She realized that this was a definite benefit to this new knitting business--she could make things just because she wanted to, without worrying whether she had someone to give them to. She thought a nice pair of red and green Christmas socks would definitely look good on her new shelf at the shop.

Stephanie had decided to set things up so that Marielle's work was prominently displayed but distinct from the other items at the shop.

"I think we should give you your own shelf, Aunt Marielle. It would look neat to mix your things in among the yarn, but then people might think they were just there as samples of what the yarn looks like when it's knit up and wouldn't realize they could buy them. And we certainly want them to buy them," she had explained.

Marielle agreed, so Stephanie cleared off a shelf that could be seen easily from both the doorway and the cash register. She had previously kept it stocked with clearance items, but those could be move, and return customers would be sure to look there. The five items that Marielle had brought in that day hadn't really filled the shelf, but they were a decent start. It was nice to know that she could more or less make as little or as much as she wanted, and add new products whenever she'd like.

Marielle smiled at the thought of the pleasant, full days ahead of her. Right now, though, it was getting late and all she wanted to do was get in bed with a good book. She needed an old friend tonight--something to take her mind off the nagging thought of the cup and Morgana. She scrutinized her shelves for a few minutes, and finally pulled down her big volume of Dickens' Christmas books. She always thought that the idea of the Dickensian Christmas was by far the most appealing, and reading these old favorite was exactly what she needed to get herself in the mood.

### *Chapter Twelve*

Annie sang along with the radio as she drove along the windy New England roads on her way home to Rafferton that Friday afternoon. She hadn't really looked forward to making the drive home, but now that she was in the midst of it, she was really rather enjoying herself. The gorgeous weather was holding, and it was great being able to drive through the New England countryside on a nice day this time of year. The foliage was past its peak, of course, but it was still beautiful, and here and there the already completely bare trees made the view more interesting.

There was evidence that the beautiful weather, or at least this sort of beautiful weather, might not last for much longer, though. Instead of the sky being of perfect clear blue as it had for the last several days, it was now dotted with fluffy white clouds, and larger and larger clouds were rolling in. It was still sunny, though, not cloudy, and the huge clouds only made the day all the more beautiful.

Even though she often felt out of place when she actually spent much time in her home town of Rafferton after having been away for a few years now, she still always felt a sense of homecoming as she began to recognize her surroundings. Of course, now that she drove herself, she could recognize the whole route, but there was still something special about when the places that said “home” came into sight.

As she drove, Annie thought about how best to bring up the subject of her father to her mother. She really couldn't think of any good way. She had tried them all years ago. Her only hope now was to convince her mother that now, as a legal adult, Annie had the right to know about her background. Annie doubted that this would work, though--her mother would just brush it off, or try to change the subject as she always did. Actually, Annie knew that the chance that she'd get up the guts to even ask was pretty small in the first place.

Before Annie knew it, she was driving down Main Street in Rafferton. She was always relieved to see that it hadn't changed drastically since her last visit. She knew she would be greatly disturbed if she came home and found that something major had changed or some landmark was gone.

Annie couldn't remember living anywhere but Rafferton until she came to college. She knew that for the first few months or a year of her life she must have lived somewhere else, but she had no idea where. Annie's mother's family had lived in Rafferton for generations, and

when Jane left her husband she returned to Rafferton with her baby daughter and got a job as a science teacher in the local high school.

Annie knew that her mother loved her job, and it was because of this that she was coming home this weekend in the first place. Every year, the school had a big festival a few weeks before Thanksgiving to celebrate Autumn and raise money for the school's holiday programs and celebrations. Annie had helped at the festival for as long as she could remember, and had done almost everything there was to do, from selling tickets to cooking to running games. She wondered what she would be assigned to this year. No matter what she did, the festival was always fun.

With these happy thoughts, Annie pulled into her driveway and rushed into the house.

"Hi Mom! I made it!" she called out. She heard her mother's footsteps clattering down the stairs. Annie realized her mother must have had to stay late at work today, because from the sounds of it she was still dressed in work clothes, down to the shoes. Odd. Jane usually put on slippers as soon as she got home.

"Annie! Hi!" Jane burst into the room and swept her daughter up in a big hug. Annie realized that for all her mother's practical and scientific mind and sensibilities, she was really remarkably affectionate and personable.

"You okay, Mom? You're still in your work clothes." Annie couldn't hide her concern.

"Yeah, honey, I'm fine. Just had to stay late today to give a make-up test and then help get ready for the festival." Jane was quick to reassure her daughter, but Annie still felt like something wasn't right.

"Oh.. okay, Mom."

"So how was the drive? Are you hungry?"



“The drive was really nice, actually. It’s so beautiful out. I hope this weather holds until tomorrow. And yes, I’m hungry. Were you planning something for dinner? Or we could go out if you don’t feel like cooking.” Annie’s mom usually made one of Annie’s favorite meals when Annie came home.

“No, honey, I made you dinner. Stew. With dumplings. You were talking about that recently, so I thought you’d like it.”

“Oh Mom! That’s great. Yum. I have wanted stew, but it seems silly to make a whole thing of it just for myself.”

“Well good. Let’s go turn on the stove so it can warm up, and we’ll be ready to eat in just ten minutes or so. So wait until you hear what’s going on at school...” Jane rolled her eyes.

“Oh dear. What is it this time?” Although Annie didn’t know as many of the people involved in her mother’s stories as she had when she lived in Rafferton full time, she still enjoyed hearing them.

“Well. It seems that political correctness has finally hit Rafferton. We’ve been told that we should consult all parents in our classes and allow them to respond in an anonymous manner before we plan *any* holiday-related celebrations, including Thanksgiving.”

“Wow. How did that happen?”

“Apparently some of the parents just decided this year that they didn’t like the normal Halloween celebrations that we’ve always had. You know, costumes, candy, and that’s about it. Interestingly enough, it was actually the conservative Christian parents who touched off this whole political correctness thing.” Jane had already managed to start heating up the stew and make a salad while she was talking. Annie realized she should do something besides just standing there, and started setting the table.

“Heh. How’d they do that? Didn’t like their kids dressing up as witches and monsters and stuff?” Annie actually thought that they might have a point, but there was no point getting into an argument with her mother about it.

“You got it. So the very few pagan parents in the school, whom the Christians had managed to thoroughly insult, immediately responded by asking whether *their* children should be forced to celebrate Christmas.”

“Yeah, I can see where this is going. So now no one is allowed to do anything.”

“Right. Some even tried to get the festival canceled. Okay, this is warm now. Let’s eat.” Annie’s mom ladled out warm stew and dumplings into two big bowls as Annie poured glasses of water.

“Cancel the festival? What? They didn’t!”

“No, of course they didn’t. Come on, hon, sit down.”

Annie breathed a sigh of relief, and sat and ate for a few minutes in silence.

“Wow, Mom, this is the best thing I’ve eaten in weeks.” It truly was.

“Well, good. Glad you like it.” The silence stretched on. “Is everything okay, Annie?” Jane finally asked.

“Yes, Mom, everything’s fine. I’m just tired. School’s been really really busy recently.” It was true as far as it went. Annie had been very busy.

“Yeah, tell me about it. The town is growing, which means more kids and bigger classes. That’s not such a big deal actually in the classroom, really, but it means a heck of a lot more tests to grade.”

“Yeah, I’d imagine.” Annie was glad for the change in subject. “So how are things shaping up for tomorrow? Do you know what I’ll be doing?”

“It seems to be coming together all right. Lots of crises, of course, but you know it’s always like that and then turns out fine. I think you’re going to be working at the craft table. Not too exciting--hope you don’t mind.”

“No, Mom, that sounds like fun. Don’t think I’ve ever done that before.” The craft table? Annie hadn’t even remembered that there *was* a craft table. She wondered what was involved.

“You know, An, they trust you, so they like putting you somewhere where you handle money. Apparently some really nice sweaters and things have been donated this year, so there are potentially large sums of money involved.” Jane was always happy when the school came up with more ways to raise money for the kids.

“Ooh. That sounds like lots of fun. I’d love to knit a sweater.” Huh. That was another one of those things that Annie didn’t know was true until she said it.

“Would you? Ugh. I tried knitting once. It didn’t go very well.” Jane had never been one for crafts and needlework. Annie always thought it was because her mother felt it was more practical to just go out and buy a sweater instead of investing all that time into making one.

“Anyway. You all done? Do you have work to get done? Don’t worry about the dishes. I’ll do them if you want to get started.” Jane cleared the table as she spoke.

Annie washed off the table, then spread out her books to study.

### *Chapter Thirteen*

Marielle opened her eyes slowly. Her bed seemed so very comfortable today, and she was reluctant to get out of it. She rolled over and switched on the radio. The familiar voice of

one of the big WMAQ personalities washed over her. Hmm. Marielle thought it was usually only commercial radio stations that had “stars,” but WMAQ definitely did too. It was the only station Marielle generally listened to, though, so she couldn’t really say she was sure what other stations did or did not do on a regular basis.

The station seemed to have started their Autumn fund drive. Marielle made a mental note to send them a check on Monday. She had been a member of WMAQ ever since it began twenty years ago. She knew that many people found the thrice yearly fund drives to be annoying, but for some reason she really liked them. Perhaps it was because everyone, especially the man who had founded the station, got so emotional and involved. Marielle never felt such loyalty to her station as when they were asking her for money.

Not today, though. Today was Saturday, and Marielle had decided that her schedule was not applicable to weekends. Weekends were a time for visiting, going to church, baking, doing things around the house. Today Marielle thought she’d work on turning her currently messy craft room into a decent workshop. She needed to generally tidy up, and to organize her yarn. And probably the most important part would be to come up with a good system for storing her works in progress, and a good “knitting spot.” It would have to be a comfortable chair with good lighting, and a basket to hold the spare yarn. She’d need a table for a glass of water and needles, cable holders, scissors, and all those other fun knitting goodies. And it would be nice to have her tape player/radio within reach so she could switch tapes without having to take much of a pause in her work.

But before Marielle started all this, she needed to make some breakfast and get dressed. And that, of course, required getting out of bed. There was something about this time of year that made lying in bed just being comfortable far more appealing than at any other time. Maybe

it was because the weather was changing and the coolness was still a novelty. Marielle liked to cherish the cold while she can. In a month or so, the need for lots of blankets wouldn't seem special anymore, and she would undoubtedly get up just as quickly as normal. Of course, it also helped that she didn't set her alarm on Saturdays--although she wasn't quite sure why at this point. She used the radio as her alarm, not some sort of buzzing, so there was really no reason why she would feel obligated to get up when it went off anyway.

And Marielle really enjoyed listening to news first thing in the morning. It made her feel grounded; it reminded her of her place in the world and put things in perspective. So on days like today, when she hadn't set the radio to go off automatically, she more often than not found herself turning it on when she woke up anyway.

The idea, of course, was that by not turning on her alarm, Marielle was allowing herself to "sleep in." But she knew perfectly well that she never really ended up doing that anyway. It was a nice idea, but she always just woke up. And mornings were when Marielle was most productive, so the thought of trying to force herself to go back to sleep just because she had the time was never very appealing.

All right. Time to get up. Marielle pulled on her slippers and robe and padded down the stairs to her kitchen. Even though she liked to get up early, she really enjoyed staying in her pajamas for a while when she could. Since she wasn't going to town this morning, this was one of her opportunities. She decided to treat herself to a leisurely breakfast in her pajamas with a book and the radio for company.

*Penguins and Golden Calves* was still lying on the table. She found Madeleine L'Engle a very good meal companion, somehow. Perhaps it was the short sections and conversational tone. Recently Marielle had taken to reading several books at once, and leaving them strewn about the

house in her favorite reading places. She then usually just read whatever book was in that place. Of course, she would occasionally get so into one that she would read only it for a while, but right now she was rotating. She had L'Engle in the kitchen, Dickens by her bed, a stack of mysteries from the library by her recliner in the library, and *Little Women* on the coffee table in the living room. She had gotten a Georgette Heyer novel on tape from the library on Friday, so she had that in her craft room ready to start during her "work" hours on Monday afternoon.

Marielle opened her kitchen door and stepped out to see what the weather was like. It was cool and crisp. The world was very silent this morning. Of course, Marielle's area was usually fairly quiet, and she realized that eight on a Saturday morning must be pretty early for most of her neighbors.

Marielle closed the door slowly, glorying in her solitude. She lived alone, and yet it sometimes seemed like there were always lots of people around. She loved these mornings when everything seemed so quiet and peaceful. Marielle fondly remembered her childhood, when everyone got up early in the morning to work on the farms, and evenings were the quiet times. Now it seemed like everyone stayed up late every night and was loud to all hours, and then couldn't get out of bed in the morning. She thought that this change was most likely not for the better.

Ah well. Enough pointless philosophy for one morning. Marielle was hungry--it was definitely time for breakfast. She hummed to herself a bit as she set water to boil for her Cream of Wheat and put the kettle on for tea.

#### *Chapter Fourteen*

“Annie! Come on, honey! Time for breakfast. We have to be at the school in an hour and a half.”

Annie woke slowly to the sound of her mother’s voice and wondered vaguely what was going on. It wasn’t only that she was hearing her mother’s voice at a time when she was used to waking up in the next state over, although that was odd enough. But the really weird thing was that her mother was waking her up. Annie was usually a morning person. Her mother was not. Ever since she could remember, Annie had always woken up before her mother. When she was young, she would generally wake her mother up when she got bored. As she got older, she learned to enjoy her alone time in the early mornings and to use it for reading and daydreaming.

But today Annie’s mother had woken up first, and had had to wake up Annie. How weird. Annie usually couldn’t sleep late if she tried. Oh well. Who knows. She hurried downstairs for breakfast.

Annie began to smell the pancakes as she walked into the kitchen.

“Wow, Mom! Pancakes? You must have gotten up really early.” She was flabbergasted.

“Yes, well, you know. Excited about today. Come eat. We don’t have much time.”

Jane seemed distracted.

Annie sat down at the table, where a plate of pancakes and glass of milk were already waiting for her. A bottle of real maple syrup sat close by. That was one of the things Annie missed most being at college. The dining hall made really good pancakes and French toast, but their syrup wasn’t great. And Annie couldn’t justify buying real syrup for herself now that she ate most of her breakfasts at home anyway.

“I made coffee. Want some?” Jane always drank coffee in the mornings. Annie herself could never decide whether she was a coffee person or a tea person. There seemed to be so

much pressure to choose one or the other--she just wanted to like both.

“Sure, Mom. Coffee sounds good this morning.” It did. Annie sometimes wondered exactly how she decided when she wanted coffee, or how anyone decided what they wanted to eat or drink, in fact. Sometimes the origin was obvious. She would see or read about something, and want the food that was described. Other times, though, she had no idea.

“What do you think, An, is it too early for a Christmas mug?” Jane called. She was mostly teasing. She knew her daughter loved Christmas and tried to push the beginning of the Christmas season up as early as she could.

“Nah. It’s November. I sort of wish this nice weather would go away... I mean, it’s beautiful and all, but I wish it would snow.” Annie looked out the window wistfully.

“Annie. Please. How about you wait for saying things like that until *after* the festival?” Jane was mostly joking, but her expression was pained.

Annie laughed. “Yeah, Mom. Good point.” She hurried to finish up her breakfast, wishing all the while that she could take the time to savor it.

Annie was almost finished by the time Jane sat down, so she volunteered to go take her shower first. Jane nodded through a mouthful of pancakes, so Annie went upstairs to get ready for the day.

### *Chapter Fifteen*

“Make me a channel of your peace...”

The swells of the organ filled the small church. Marielle was swept to her feet with the rest of the congregation and wholeheartedly joined in the song. She had always loved this Prayer



of St. Francis. It was religious, but not so overly religious that it couldn't apply to life in general.

Of course, Marielle chided herself, she shouldn't be thinking about religion not applying to life in general. The entire point was that it *should* apply in general. She didn't want to be one of those people who just left all of her religious feelings at church on Sunday. But sometimes she wondered whether the religion that the church instilled wasn't better left there. Marielle had read her Bible. She knew that there were parts of it, unfashionable nowadays perhaps, that instructed believers to destroy the holy places of other cultures, even to kill those who did not believe. Marielle just couldn't bring herself to believe in a God who would allow and even encourage this.

She struggled to bring her mind back to where it was supposed to be, at church. She really did love this song. Marielle soon found herself wandering again, though. She wondered how soon Morgana would receive her letter, and whether she would respond. Whether she would even read it. In fact, Marielle realized that she wasn't at all sure that Morgana would even receive the letter. Lord knows her mother was difficult enough even before she severed ties with the family. If Morgana were still living with her mother and the letter came into Jane Jordan's possession first, Morgana could very well never know of its existence. But let's see... Morgana would be around nineteen or twenty now. So she was probably in college, or living on her own somewhere. If she was, Marielle could only hope that Mr. Whittier had that address, and used it.

### *Chapter Sixteen*

Annie sat at the craft table in the middle of the bustling festival. When she had arrived, the table had been a mess. It looked as though all of the contributors had just dropped off their

work in boxes, and someone who didn't know the first thing about crafts, or even care, had just taken everything out of the boxes and left it where it happened to be put. Not that Annie knew much about crafts either, but at least she cared.

After checking that it really didn't matter whether things made by one person were kept together, Annie set out to organize her wares in a way that seemed to make sense. She started by grouping together things of one type--ornaments, hats, sweaters, dolls, and so forth. She soon realized, though, that there was no way to arrange all of these things on the one little table in a way that they all could be seen. So Annie decided to only put out what could be seen at once, and to replenish the table as she sold things. This would look better, probably sell more, and give her something to do besides just sitting there.

So most of Saturday had been taken up by arranging and rearranging the table. Annie had great fun trying to put the items she most wanted to sell in prominent places, and then rearranging everything whenever she had sold enough to justify doing so. Her most glorious success was with the sweaters. There were about twenty of them that had been donated in all, ranging from plain, homemade-looking garments to gorgeous works of art with color patterns and cables. Annie realized that if she just left them all in a stack on the table, no one was really going to see any of them. So she picked out what she thought were the two prettiest and hung them up behind the table, leaving the rest in stacks. Every time she sold one of the hanging ones, she picked out another from the stacks to hang up in its place. By three o'clock on Saturday afternoon, all of the sweaters were gone.

Today was Sunday, though, and Annie had sold so much that everything she had left was out. She was happy about that, of course, but it meant that she didn't really have much to do. She picked up a scarf that was made out of some sort of soft fuzzy yarn and rubbed it gently on

her cheek. Then she looked at it more closely. All those little interlocking loops looked as though they'd be really hard to make, but she had seen people knit so quickly that she knew it couldn't be *that* hard. Maybe she should find a book or something to learn how to do it.

"Miss?" A sharp but elderly voice cut across Annie's thoughts. "Excuse me, miss."

"Yes? May I help you?" Annie felt bad about neglecting her duties and not noticing this woman standing very close by her at the side of the table. She hoped she hadn't lost a sale for the school.

"Oh, no, dearie, I don't want to buy anything. It's just that I knit that scarf that you're looking at. Glad to see you like it." The old woman's voice sounded considerably less sharp now.

"Oh! Wow," Annie exclaimed. "It's so beautiful. I'd love to be able to do that."

"Would you? Really?" the woman asked.

"Yes, I would. I've been thinking about it all weekend while I've been sitting here." It was true; she had.

"Are you going to be here for the rest of the day?" the woman asked.

Annie nodded, puzzled.

"I have some spare needles and yarn in the car. Would you like a lesson?"

"Sure!" Annie was delighted. "I'd love that. Thank you so much." She watched as the woman wove her way through the crowds and disappeared. Annie straightened up the table while she was waiting for the woman to come back.

The woman reappeared in about five minutes, this time carrying a plastic bag.

"Here you go, dear... Now, what was your name?" The woman smiled brightly. "I am Agnes Merriweather."

“I’m Annie Jordan. My mother, Jane Jordan, is a science teacher here at the school.”

“Yes, dear, I remember your mother from when she was a little girl. We were all so glad when she came back here with you.”

Annie nodded politely. She knew such people usually meant well, but sometimes she wasn’t sure whether they were actually disapproving or ridiculing her single mother.

“Now, dear. I happened to have some blue yarn in the car. I hope you like blue?” Annie nodded as Mrs. Merriweather kept talking. “Here’s the yarn and here are some needles. They are size eight: it’s a nice medium size, and good to start with.”

Annie found herself holding the needles and the yarn as she struggled to keep up with Mrs. Merriweather’s quick instructions and narrative. She already knew how to make a slip knot, and she managed to cast on after the older woman showed her at least ten times. An hour later she had knit three rows of what would eventually turn out to be a scarf.

“Well, dear, I should be going soon,” Mrs. Merriweather said with regret. “You are catching on marvelously.”

“Thank you, Mrs. Merriweather. This has been so much fun,” Annie answered earnestly. “I’ll definitely be doing more.”

“That’s wonderful. It is always good to see a member of the younger generation picking up the craft.” Agnes Merriweather smiled. “There’s one problem, though. I haven’t shown you how to cast off.”

“Oh. Yes, that could be a problem.” Annie was crestfallen.

“You don’t know anyone who could show you?”

“No, I don’t think so. I mean, I’m sure there are people at my college who knit, but I don’t know who they are. Couldn’t I learn from a book?” Annie was used to turning to books

when there weren't enough people around to help.

“Yes, yes, I suppose you could. Your library might have some knitting books, and if not, a craft store certainly would.”

“All right.” Annie was happy that a solution had been found.

“You could even go see Lizza McMairon at One Sheep, Two Sheep while you're in town. She's taken over now that old Mrs. Greenking left it to her when she past away.” Mrs. Merriweather, Annie could see, enjoyed a bit of gossip.

“Oh, I see.” Annie tried to seem as interested as she could, even though she didn't really know any of the people involved. “Maybe I'll go over there next time I'm home.”

Mrs. Merriweather nodded approvingly and made her farewells. Annie smiled as she watched the woman leave. Then she returned to her scarf, biting her lip in concentration.

### *Chapter Seventeen*

The days past quickly now. Marielle loved her new routine. Just having a routine was a definite improvement. She got much more done, even things unrelated to her knitting, now that she had more things to do. Funny how it worked like that.

This afternoon she was enjoying a lunch of tomato and mozzarella salad, with some basil and oil and vinegar thrown in. It was one of her favorite meals. She especially liked it in the summer, but every once in a while she got in the mood for it when it was cool out, as well. As she savored the last bits of cheese--she always left a good part of the cheese for last--Marielle thought about the afternoon ahead of her.

She thought she'd cast on for a sweater. It would be the first sweater she'd made to sell,

but the rest of her things had been selling fairly well so she thought it was time to venture out into the more complicated waters of the sweater. She had bought some pretty grey wool last time she was at the shop, and it would do nicely for a ladies' cardigan. The hardest part was making sure that she did not use any copyrighted pattern, of course, but she thought that she had probably knit enough sweaters in her life to just make one without using a pattern.

Marielle washed her lunch dishes and headed up to her work room. She looked for a moment at the projects she had in progress: a lacy scarf, a washcloth, a baby blanket, and a big afghan that would take many times longer than any of the other things to finish. She loved the afghan, though--it was in stripes of all different shades of purple, in all different types of yarn. More pretty than practical, she supposed, but it was truly gorgeous.

Yes, she was definitely in the mood to work on the afghan today. But first she had to cast on for the sweater, and do a few rows on the scarf, which she had started before the afghan. It seemed odd that something as small as a scarf should still be in progress even though she had already done about a foot on the afghan, which she had started after the scarf. But the scarf, while pretty enough, was somewhat difficult and just not all that interesting to Marielle.

She switched on the radio and sat down in her knitting chair. Marielle had learned that she really did enjoy most of the afternoon programming on WMAQ, and she had a book on tape handy in case something came on that she really didn't like or didn't care about. Her fingers itched to start right in on the blanket--she was in the middle of a stripe of fuzzy royal purple chenille--but she dutifully picked up a circular needle and the grey wool and began to cast on.

### *Chapter Eighteen*

Annie bent over her knitting. Her scarf was getting pretty long now. It would be done soon, and she would have to think of something else to make. Perhaps another scarf, this one for her mother for Christmas. Or maybe she'd branch out and try a hat. The book that she had found in the college library had fairly clear instructions, and she thought she could probably do it.

Of course, this knitting was taking some time away from her schoolwork. But Annie knew she couldn't work *all* the time, and it was nice to have something to distract herself with, especially since she wasn't too big on the distractions of parties and such that most of her classmates used. For most of her college career, Annie's only real distraction from her books had been other books. This was fine for her intellectually, but after a while she just got sick of the physical act of reading. Knitting was definitely proving to be a good alternative.

The days certainly seemed to be passing more quickly now that she had her knitting to occupy her. It was almost Thanksgiving. Tomorrow, Tuesday, was her last day of classes, and she would be driving home Tuesday evening. She had originally planned to give herself some more time to pack and go home on Wednesday, but the Web site of the yarn store that Mrs. Merriweather had told her about said that it was having a pre-Thanksgiving sale on Wednesday. Annie saw this as the perfect opportunity to pick up enough yarn for her next several projects. Maybe a shawl, she thought. A warm cozy shawl would certainly be nice, and probably not too difficult.

But before Annie could go home and buy yarn, she had to finish the paper that she was in the midst of writing. She had meant to take a quick break to knit while she thought about the paper, but the repetitive movements had been addictive and she had kept knitting longer than she had intended. She woke up her computer and tried to concentrate on the paper again.

"Hey Annie?" Kira walked in to the apartment. "You here?"

“Yes, I’m right here,” Annie called. Kira came in through their open door.

“Judy at switchboard says they have a certified letter for you. You should go get it before they close,” Kira told her.

“A certified letter? Me? Why?” Annie was confused.

“I don’t know. It’s your letter, silly.” Kira threw her coat on her bed and sat down at her desk, opening one of her big math books.

“Okay, okay. I’ll go get it.” Annie was somewhat reluctant to leave the apartment, although she had certainly been procrastinating on her paper already. But it was chilly out--the weather report had said that it might even snow today. She grabbed her jacket and headed out.

As she walked down to the College Center, she saw a few snowflakes in the air, just as the radio weatherman had promised. Annie always loved the first snow of the season. She loved autumn, but she was starting to think that winter might really be her favorite time of year. As soon as she got back to her room she’d have to put on some Christmas carols--now that she’d seen the first snowflakes of the year, it was allowed.

Since she needed to get to the College Center before it closed, Annie took a shortcut that did not allow her to go around the lake. Sorry Eilena, she thought. I’ll come by on my way back. Annie shook her head. Now she was talking to a cat who wasn’t even there. What would she find herself doing next?

She finally arrived at the College Center and hurried in.

“Hey Judy. Kira said I have a special letter or something?” she asked.

“Yes, Annie, here you go.” Judy handed her the letter. “They let me sign for it but made me promise I’d put it right into your hands.”

“Huh. Weird. I have no idea what it is.” Annie looked at the return address. It was



some law firm. “Maybe they have the wrong Annie Jordan?”

“Annie, come on. Open it up and find out.” Judy grinned. “You’re keeping me in suspense here.”

“Okay, okay.” Annie carefully slit the envelope and pulled out the letter. She began to read: *Dear Morgana, You probably don’t know who I am, but I am your aunt...*

Annie hardly knew what she was doing as she ran out of the College Center. She vaguely heard Judy calling after her. “Annie? You okay? Annie?”

### *Chapter Nineteen*

Marielle’s new daily routine was starting to feel as though it was something she had always done. There was one bit she had added--stopping for the mail on the way back from town. She didn’t always have mail, of course, although it seemed that she got more and more junk mail every day. Mail was no longer a treat, as it had been when she was a child. Then, a family would get a letter or bill every few days, and it would be an event. Now the mail was a chore.

Today, though, there was only one envelope in her mailbox at the end of the long dirt road. It was addressed to “Miss Marielle Sangrall” in unfamiliar youthful feminine script. Could it be? She looked at the name on the return address. “A. Jordan.” Jordan was the maiden name of Morgan’s wife. But “A.”? The wife was Jane, the daughter was Morgana. Neither of those started with A.

Marielle was tempted to just open the letter up right away and read it, but she was holding a bag of yarn and one of groceries. Besides, she thought that she should first go

somewhere where she could sit down, just in case the letter contained something shocking.

Marielle was very aware of her own age and physical fragility lately.

She rushed home as fast as she could manage, and was slightly out of breath when she finally reached the house. She made herself calm down and go about her normal tasks. She put the bag of yarn in her workroom, first taking out the receipt and placing it on her desk with her other paperwork. Then she put away the groceries. She didn't want the milk spoiling while she was reading a letter, after all.

Finally Marielle was done with all of these mundane tasks. She poured herself a glass of water and sat down at the table to read. With trembling hands, she pulled the sheets of thin paper out of the envelope.

*Dear Miss Sangrall,*

*Or should I say "Aunt Marielle." I am Annie Jordan, whom you know as your niece, Morgana Sangrall. I was delighted to receive your letter, as I know nothing of my father's family and have been wondering how to get in touch with them.*

Marielle stopping reading as her eyes filled with tears. Her niece. A young woman now, not the little baby she remembered, with a different name and identity, but it was still her. And she wanted to get to know her family.

Marielle paused for a moment and continued reading. Morgana--Annie--gave her a brief history of her life so far, a description of what she was doing now. She was studying ancient English languages. How fascinating. It was something Marielle had always been interested in. And her writing sounded so much like Morgan's. It was almost like having her brother come back to her.

As soon as she finished reading Annie's letter, Marielle began her reply. Lunch and her

schedule and routine could wait. As she filled the page with descriptions of the family, answers to Annie's questions about her father, stories of Annie's own infancy, Marielle wondered if she should mention the cup. It was, after all, why she had wanted to establish a connection with Annie in the first place. But she didn't want to scare the girl. If she wrote about something as strange as the cup so soon, she might never hear from Annie again. And Marielle didn't think she could deal with losing her new-found niece right away.

So she wrote a normal letter. Well, it was as normal as it possibly could be under the circumstances. Marielle was beginning to get an inkling of what mothers who gave up their babies for adoption and then were reunited with them as adults felt like at the point of that reunion. Even though she had what seemed at times like scores of nephews, Marielle had always felt the lack of this niece. She wasn't sure if this was because she knew Morgana existed somewhere, or if it was just because there were all those boys and no girls in the family. But a hole that had always been somewhere slightly below Marielle's conscious mind had been ripped open with the odd experience of the cup, and was starting to heal with Annie's letter.

### *Chapter Twenty*

Annie sat at her desk, staring at the myriad of forms in front of her. She had received her acceptance to Oxford as a visiting student, so now she had to fill out all of their forms, as well as apply for a passport and an International Student ID Card. Oh well, there was no time like the present. Annie grabbed the form at the top of the stack and started writing.

The first line on the form was, of course, "Name," and this was the one that had always tripped Annie up. She had always thought of herself as Annie Jordan, but at the same time, she

couldn't remember not knowing that on anything "official" she had to write Morgana Sangrall. She wondered how her mother had initially explained that to her. Or perhaps she hadn't. Maybe it was one of those things that just "was," one of those things that she learned when she was young enough not to question it.

But today she looked at it differently. Since her letter from Aunt Marielle, she felt more like Morgana Sangrall than she ever had before. Morgana was a very pretty name, really. Annie had always thought that "Morgana" was prettier than plain "Annie," but Morgana had never seemed like her name, any more than had Cordelia or Rosalind, both of which Annie thought were just beautiful. But she couldn't just change her name to Morgana, her legal name, any easier than to Cordelia or Rosalind--it had never been *her*.

But now it somehow felt as though it was. She fleetingly thought of trying to get people to call her Morgana instead of Annie, but that was silly. Everyone at school had known her as Annie for three years now. It would be ridiculous to try to get them to change. And besides, her mother would never forgive her.

Annie shook her head and continued to fill out the forms on autopilot. She couldn't believe she was actually doing this. It seemed like such a split-second decision, but it also seemed so right. Even though she hadn't thought about it before a month or so ago, Annie felt now like she couldn't possibly do anything but go to England. Nothing had ever felt quite so right before.

## *Part Two*

### *Chapter One*

Annie walked with her mother down the long hallway of Logan Airport toward her gate. Her plane was not scheduled to take off for another hour and a half, but Annie wanted to get there early. She hadn't been on a plane in years, and she had never been out of the country. So she was really a bit nervous.

She had checked her baggage without a problem--now all she had with her was her backpack. She had heard about friends having problems occasionally with their carry-on luggage being too heavy, so she had made a point of bringing as little as possible onto the plane with her. She had a notebook, a few pens, a book of crossword puzzles, and a few paperbacks, along with such necessities as her wallet and passport and a pack of gum for take off and landing.

When they arrived at the gate, they found that Jane was not allowed to go past the security checkpoint. Apparently security was more strict on international flights than domestic ones, and only passengers were allowed at the gate. So here was where they had to say their goodbyes.

"Have a great time, honey. I know you will." Jane had tears in her eyes. She thought she knew what it was like to lose her baby now that Annie was in college, but she now found that it felt very different when Annie was going across an ocean than just to the next state.

"Yeah, Mom. I'll try." Annie was crying too. This had felt so right, but now she wasn't so sure. It would be the farthest away from home she had ever been, and the longest, as well.

"No, you will." Jane was firm, since Annie couldn't be. "Call me when you get there."

"Of course. I love you, Mom."

"I love you too, Annie Jordan." Jane watched as her daughter walked through security

and over to her gate. Soon she was lost in the crowd. Jane slowly turned and walked toward the exit. She felt as though she should wait at the airport until the plane took off, but that was silly. It was going to be on schedule, and she couldn't wait in the terminal with Annie anyway, so she would not even have any way of knowing when the plane took off. It was much more sensible to leave.

*Annie Jordan.* As Annie watched her mother leave, she wondered what conscious or not-so-conscious motivation her mother might have had for calling her that so emphatically as her last words to Annie before she left. Annie knew her mother must feel threatened by Annie going to England, the home of her father's family. Perhaps Jane felt the need to hold on to the name she had given her daughter for as long as possible.

Annie felt a twinge of guilt. She hadn't told her mother about her correspondence with her aunt Marielle Sangrall. She had kept meaning to, but the time had never seemed right. Annie knew that it wasn't her responsibility to protect her mother, but she couldn't help it. Annie was all Jane had--she didn't know how Jane would deal with the idea of having to share her.

Annie thrust these thoughts aside as she tried to figure out exactly where she was supposed to go. That was more important at the moment. She looked at her boarding pass again: it still said Gate 39. Annie walked to the gate and up to the desk. She had already checked in, of course, but she would feel better if she confirmed it here.

Half an hour later, Annie had determined that she was indeed going to be able to get onto this plane, and looked around to find a seat to wait until it was time to board. She thought she would try to read a bit, but she knew she would probably be too nervous and excited to really get into a book. She sat down on one of the notoriously uncomfortable plastic chairs and picked a

book at random from her backpack. It was *A Circle of Quiet* by Madeleine L'Engle. Annie remembered enjoying some of L'Engle's books when she was younger, and when Annie's mother had taken her to a bookstore and offered to buy her some books for the plane, this one had jumped out at her.

Annie glanced around her. The gate was surprisingly uncrowded. The person sitting nearest to her was a guy who looked like he was maybe a bit older than she was. He looked up at her as she was watching him, and he nodded.

"Hello." He smiled politely. She liked his voice even just from that one word. His voice was British, crisp but somehow friendly.

"Hello." She smiled back. He nodded again, and she felt like she had kept smiling just a bit too long. She looked down at her book quickly as she felt herself blushing. Annie tried hard to lose herself in Madeleine L'Engle's world, but she found herself still acutely aware of the young man's presence.

She found that she was very much enjoying her book, though, and by the time her flight was called, Annie barely noticed the announcement, one of hundreds she had heard since arriving at the airport. L'Engle's world somehow seemed much more real than the unreality of being in an airport waiting to board a plane to England.

Annie stood up hurriedly, dropping her book back into her backpack and zipping it up as she walked toward the line that was forming. She noticed that the young man who had said hello was right behind her.

"Hello," he said again.

"Hi," Annie replied, and then immediately felt horribly stupid and immature. The word "hi" sounded so silly and insufficient when compared with the more substantive "hello."

The young man didn't seem to notice, though. He stuck out his hand.

"I'm Peter."

"I'm..." She paused. This question wasn't supposed to be difficult. She made a sudden rash decision and smiled up at him. "I'm Morgana."

"Morgana. What a pretty name. One doesn't hear that too much nowadays." His voice was just as charming as she had thought. It sounded more formal than those she was used to, as British voices almost always did, but it somehow held incredible warmth.

"Thank you. It's an old family name, I think. My mother has always called me Annie, but I recently decided that I like Morgana better, and since it's technically and legally my name, well, I might as well use it." She stopped short, and blushed again. Why did she feel compelled to confide in this stranger like this? She was probably boring him to tears.

"Indeed," he said, and smiled again. "My mother called me Petey until I finally made her stop a few years ago, and the boys at school of course nicknamed me Pete, but I really don't feel like a Pete. Peter seems to fit me better, somehow, or at least I think so."

Annie was tongue-tied. This handsome guy was talking to her, purely because he himself wanted to, and she had no idea what to say.

"So are you... are you from England?" Wow. Another supremely stupid thing to say. Of course he was from England. Or at least he sounded like it. And if he wasn't, then she had just shown him how ignorant and prejudiced she was.

"Yes, from Cornwall. Tintagel, in fact." Peter showed no signs thinking Morgana was stupid.

"Oh!" Annie exclaimed before she could stop herself.

"Do you know Tintagel?" Peter politely edged up in line as they talked.



“Well, no, not personally,” Annie hurried to explain. “But I’ve read about it, and I think my father may have lived near there for a while.”

“Ah, I see. What a lovely coincidence.” Peter was surprised that he was so genuinely happy to hear this.

*Lovely*, Annie thought. She liked England already if people used words like “lovely” in normal conversation.

“So are you going to England to visit your father, then?” Peter’s words cut in to Annie’s musings about the British vocabulary.

“Oh, no, no. I--I never knew my father.” Annie had always thought that was the simplest way to put it.

“Oh, I’m so sorry.” Annie was surprised at how truly concerned Peter seemed. People normally didn’t know what to say when she mentioned that.

“I’m going to England to study at Oxford for a semester,” she explained.

Peter grinned.

“Another lovely coincidence, Morgana. I am at Oxford as well. I was just in the States to visit an aunt for New Year’s.”

Annie was glad she had told him to call her Morgana. She liked the way it rolled off his tongue. Now she would just have to work on thinking of herself that way.

“Your aunt lives near Boston, then?” It seemed a safe, if slightly obvious, question.

“No, actually. She lives in Illinois.”

“Ah.” Annie was clearly confused.

“I’m just in Boston changing planes,” Peter said.

“Oh, of course.” Why did he make her feel so stupid? She said that first non-obvious

thing that came to mind. "I have an aunt in Illinois too, actually."

"Yet another coincidence. Maybe they know each other." *Or maybe we're cousins*, he thought, but he didn't say it. He didn't want to dwell on the possibility of this pretty girl being his cousin.

"Yes, maybe, although I think Aunt Marielle lives in a rather small town. I've never been there, so I'm not really sure. I've never even met her, actually." She was rambling again, telling him much more than he could possibly want to know. "So what are you studying at Oxford?"

"Astrophysics. You?"

"Old and Middle English." How different the two fields seemed.

"We both are in disciplines that sound rather prohibitive to outsiders, I'm afraid," Peter said. "But yours has always been rather a hobby of mine, actually. I'm determined to someday get through *Beowulf* in the original."

Annie--Morgana--grinned.

"*Beowulf* is one of my favorites. And I've always thought astrophysics was extremely interesting myself. But Physics I made me realize that I'd much rather read about the concepts than actually work equations."

"Yes. Sometimes I'm afraid you might have the right idea there." Peter stopped abruptly as they reached the head of the line. "Don't suppose we're sitting together?"

They checked their boarding passes. They were not.

"Ah well. That would perhaps be too many lovely coincidences all at once. See you in Oxford." And with that, Peter boarded the plane.

*Chapter Two*

Marielle wandered restlessly into her kitchen. She had the television in the living room on, and she had had it set to news all afternoon. She couldn't just sit and watch it, though. Marielle was so unused to watching normal television that she couldn't stand to just sit there, even if she had her knitting in hand.

A glass of water. She would get herself a glass of water. That would be something to do. Marielle went to the cupboard to get herself a glass out, but she hesitated. Somehow she felt as though by using the old family cup, the cup that should someday be Morgana's, she would ensure Morgana's safety as she flew to England.

Marielle filled the old cup with water and walked into the living room with it. The news continued as normal. Still no plane crashes. Marielle knew there was no reason to devote her entire day to watching the news, but she still felt better with it on. She picked up a book and tried to read, but the background noise of the television was too distracting. She picked up her knitting again, but she kept making mistakes. It was useless. She would just have to resign herself to getting nothing done today.

Marielle settled herself back in her chair and pulled a blanket around her. It was one that she had made recently but couldn't bear to sell. She had started thinking of it as "Morgana's blanket," actually, which was probably part of why she couldn't sell it. She had started working on it on the day she got the first letter from her niece, and after that she had always thought about Morgana while working on it. She had resolved that she would give it to Morgana when she met her. For now, though, she would wrap herself in the blanket and try to feel connected.

*Chapter Three*

Annie shifted in the uncomfortable airplane seat, trying hard to find a more comfortable position. They had been in flight for a few hours now, and the novelty of actually being on a plane on its way to Europe was starting to wear off. She had finished the L'Engle book, and didn't really feel like reading any of the other things she had brought with her.

She reached down and pulled her notebook out of her backpack. While she was packing it up, Annie had stuck Aunt Marielle's letters in between the pages of her notebook. She took them out now and began to look them over, starting with the most recent one.

This letter, received just a few days ago, had been full of talk about Annie's trip. Aunt Marielle had been in England and all over the British Isles frequently in her youth, and her letters were peppered with stories of her time there. She had plenty to tell Annie about places she must visit and people she must look up.

Perhaps the most important of these people was Uncle Charles. Annie wasn't sure how exactly she was related to Uncle Charles, but the first time that Aunt Marielle had mentioned him she had written "your uncle Charles," so to Annie he was Uncle Charles from that time forward. Aunt Marielle wrote that Uncle Charles lived in one of the old family homes, the one in Glastonbury, right near the Abbey. Annie couldn't wait to visit Glastonbury itself, as well as to meet Uncle Charles, for Aunt Marielle's letters had made her extremely curious.

Uncle Charles was a bit older than Aunt Marielle, and Annie got the impression that as a young girl Marielle had had a bit of a crush on her dashing older cousin. The familial relationship was distant enough to make it safe from any incestuous insinuations, but for some reason nothing had ever come of it. Marielle and Charles still wrote letters every week, though,

and planned to have a visit again in a few years. Perhaps, Annie mused, Aunt Marielle could visit Uncle Charles in Glastonbury sometime in the spring, and Annie would get to meet her. Heh. It would be funny if Annie and Marielle, both from the States, did not meet until they were both visiting England.

“Enjoying a nice reminisce?” The almost-familiar voice broke into Annie’s thoughts. She looked up. It was Peter, of course. He was standing next to her seat, peering down at her.

“Reminisce?” God, one of those wonderful British-sounding words again.

“Well, you were lost in your letters. Perhaps from a sweetheart left behind? Shall I leave you to them, Morgana?” He smiled at her. It seemed he was always smiling at her.

“No!” she cried. “That is, no, I was just looking at my letters from my aunt. She has spent a lot of time in England and wrote to me about the places she loves and the family there. But I’ve read them all before. I was just rereading them for lack of anything better to do.”

“In that case, then, may I sit down?” He motioned toward the empty aisle seat next to her. “There hasn’t been anyone here all flight, has there?”

“No, no there hasn’t.” Morgana nodded. “Please, sit down.”

Peter slid into the seat more gracefully than Annie would have imagined possible for the stiff uncomfortable things.

“So, are you just coming to Oxford for the semester? A visiting student, rather than a transfer?”

“Yes, that’s what I’ve planned. Unless, of course, I fall in love with England and decide I need to stay.”

“That may well happen. It’s a brilliant country, and I get the impression that you are the sort who will truly enjoy it, Morgana. I love it myself,” Peter continued. “I enjoyed my visit to

the States immensely, but England is home.”

“Yes, that’s interesting...” she trailed off. “I have to admit, I had always been interested in England in the abstract, but never really thought about actually going there until last autumn. It’s hard to believe I’m actually on a plane on my way.”

“Yes. Amazing if you think about it, isn’t it though?”

Morgana could do nothing but agree, and they lapsed into silence. She thought it was a companionable silence, but she wasn’t completely sure that he would interpret it the same way, so she looked at him in hopes of finding something to talk about.

“That’s a beautiful sweater. Is it handmade?” she asked.

“Yes, it is. My mother made it for me before I left for the States. She thought it would keep and protect me while I was gone.” Peter fingered the edge of the sweater lovingly. “She’s Irish, you see, and this is made in a version of the traditional pattern of her family.”

Annie had wondered. The sweater was made out of the traditional off-white fishermen’s wool, and the cable pattern was complex, and gorgeous. Ever since she had started knitting herself, Annie had found herself noticing others’ handknit garments much more often.

“It’s sort of morbid, really,” Peter commented. “Each family developed its own particular cable pattern so that the corpses of drowned sailors could be more easily identified.”

“Ugh.” Morgana shivered. “That’s horrible. But somehow beautiful at the same time.”

“Yes.” Peter was emphatic. “That’s exactly how I’ve always felt about it myself. Amazing.” She wasn’t sure whether he meant that the concept itself was amazing, or just that it was amazing that they agreed.

“I’ve started knitting recently, actually,” Morgana volunteered. “Nothing as complicated as that yet, of course, but I’m learning.”

“Oh, that’s great!” Peter was visibly thrilled. “Do you have anything you’re working on right now?”

“Well, no.” Morgana felt bad. “I wasn’t sure if they’d let me bring the needles on the plane. But I have my current projects in my suitcase.”

“Oh, that’s sensible of you. But you’ll show me sometime? Please?” Peter looked at her. “How about this scarf? Did you make it?”

It was her blue scarf that she had started that day at the festival. She was a bit embarrassed to be wearing it in public since it was uneven and very amateurish, but it was warm and made her feel safe.

“Yes, I did. But it was the very first thing I ever knit, so it’s not very good.” She really hoped he wouldn’t judge her knitting skills by the scarf.

“Oh, posh. I think it’s beautiful.” *Posh??* she thought. These words...

“Thanks.” Morgana blushed. “But really, what I’m working on now is much neater...”

“Yes, I’m sure it is,” Peter agreed. “My mother will love meeting you. She’s always looking for new knitters. She wanted a daughter to pass on the tradition to, but all she got were boys. Now she’ll just have to wait for one of us to get married. Paul is the only one married so far, and his wife doesn’t knit.”

“How many of you are there?” Morgana asked.

“Eight, believe it or not.” Peter chuckled.

“Wow.” Morgana was momentarily speechless. “I’ve always rather envied people from big families. I don’t even have one brother or sister.”

“Well. As I told you, Ma kept trying for that daughter, and is none too happy that she ended up with all of us boys instead.” He said it in a perfectly serious voice, but Morgana could

see a smile playing with the corners of his mouth.

“No! That can’t be true,” she said adamantly. “She must want all of you.”

“Yes, yes she does. She’s a wonderful mum. Da’s great too, of course.”

“So what are all of your names?” Morgana wasn’t sure the question was very polite, but she was just dying to know.

“Well. They named us in themes, somewhat.” Peter laughed. “Ready?”

“Yup!” She couldn’t wait.

“Paul, Peter, and Patrick, James, John, and Joseph, and Timothy and Thomas.” He gave the recital like one who had said it more times than he could remember.

“Wow. So they stopped there because they couldn’t think of another T name?”

“Well, that’s what we tease them,” Peter replied. “But of course they immediately counter with Thaddeus and Theodore. Or Theresa, should they have a girl, wonder of wonders. But of course, we’re not entirely sure they’ve stopped.”

“Oh?” Annie couldn’t imagine her own mother having another baby at this point, so it always surprised her when people talked about mothers of children around her age doing so.

“Tommy’s only five, after all. So it’s perfectly possible that they’ll have another. Unlikely, though, as Ma is forty-five. But possible.” It seemed somewhat strange to Peter to be sharing all of these very personal family things with someone he had just met, but there was something about Morgana that made him want to tell her everything. “Actually, the most probable next babies in the family will be from my older brother, Paul, and his wife Jean. They got married last fall.”

“Oh, that’s neat.” Annie hadn’t been to many weddings, but she had enjoyed the ones she’d been to. “How do you like having a sister-in-law?”



“Quite frankly, it’s weird.” Peter was blunt. “I mean, Jean’s been around for quite a while, so it’s not like we’re not used to her or anything, but it seems very strange that she’s actually suddenly a member of the family now. It’s kind of hard to make it actually sink in.”

“Yeah, I’d imagine. I’ve had some experience lately with suddenly adding new family members. These weren’t by marriage, though; they were aunts and uncles I had just never met before.” Annie stopped herself before she went on and on about her own weird family situation. “But you didn’t tell me all your middle names!”

“Oh, you really want to hear?” Peter was skeptical.

“Of course. I love names.” Morgana smiled.

“Well. I’m Peter Giles, which is of course the most important for you to remember.” He felt himself blush. “Anyway, we have Paul David, Peter Giles, Patrick William, James Henry, John Stewart, Joseph William, Timothy Edward, and Thomas Andrew. What do you think?”

“They’re great! Nice old fashioned names.” She definitely approved. “No Hunter or Chance or anything like that.”

“Nope. Ma and Da like names that have been around for centuries. Like yours, of course.” Peter thought for a moment. “Did you tell me your middle name?”

“No, I don’t think so,” she replied. “I have two of them, actually... Jane Jordan, after my mother. So I’m Morgana Jane Jordan Sangrall. But for as long as I can remember I’ve just gone by Annie Jane Jordan.”

“Ah. I take it your mother didn’t have much to do with picking out your name, then?” Peter hoped he wasn’t prying, but he was extremely curious.

“No, not really. Morgana is a family name... the first daughter in each generation of my father’s family has had it for ages. Plus my father’s name was Morgan. So when my mother left

him, she didn't want me to have a name that was so much like his. Too many bad memories." She stopped abruptly, her voice catching.

"I hope I'm not bringing back too many bad memories," Peter said worriedly.

"No, no, it's okay. As I said, I never knew him. I just wish I had." Morgana realized that it was the first time she had ever actually admitted that out loud to anyone.

"Yes, I bet you do." Peter's words were cut off as an announcement came over the intercom. It demanded that all passengers return to their seats and fasten their safety belts immediately.

"Whoops, I'd better go back to where I'm supposed to be, Morgana." He was regretful. "See you when we get there."

She watched him walk back down the aisle of the plane towards his own seat. She wondered how they would find each other once they got to England--but somehow, she knew he would find her. Then Morgana pulled another book out of her bag and began to read.

#### *Chapter Four*

As she stood in the middle of Heathrow Airport, Morgana suddenly realized that she had never had to do this part of flying on her own before. She had been okay when she could just follow the crowd--through immigration and customs, to baggage claim--but now she had gotten her luggage and her paperwork was all set. She just needed to figure out where she was supposed to meet the Oxford shuttle. She looked at another airport directory and started working, wheeling her suitcase along with her.

All the time when she had been waiting to get through customs, waiting to claim her

baggage, Morgana had half-expected Peter to appear. Like a knight on his white steed he would sweep in out of no where and save her; he would make everything all right. It was silly, she knew. She had absolutely no reason to think that Peter would even remember meeting her, much less appear out of no where to make her life easy for her.

Nope. She shouldn't expect anything to come of the conversations in the airport and on the plane. Nothing at all. Just because it had been a big and unusual event for her didn't mean that it had meant anything to him. For all she knew, he told his life story to random girls on planes all the time. She really should try not to think too much about it.

But... but... he had definitely said that he would see her at Oxford. And it didn't just sound like a nicety, a polite "See you around" when you really have no intention of doing so. He had sounded as though he meant it. Morgana wasn't really sure the way that things worked at Oxford... how big it was, how much interaction there was between the various colleges. So she didn't know how likely it would be that they would actually just happen to run into each other without actively trying. Not very likely, though, she would think.

Would he try to find her? To seek her out? They certainly knew each other's names quite well now after all that discussion. Peter Giles. Morgana didn't think she had ever actually known anyone named Giles before. It was straight out of *Cadfael*. She loved it. She wondered if it was a family name, or just something his parents had like. He hadn't really said where any of the sixteen names that he and his brothers had between them had come from, come to think of it. It was more than likely that at least some of them had been family names. Although the themes of the first letters of the first names worked out so nicely that she somehow doubted they could all be from tradition. Although one never knows. He could have a very large extended family... then there would be more than enough names.

Ah well. It would be something to ask the next time she saw him. If there was a next time, Morgana reminded herself. No guarantee, of course. But she felt awfully sure, for some reason she couldn't quite put her finger on. There would have to be a next time, even if Morgana had to make it happen herself.

Well. Thinking about it more, she wasn't so sure. Morgana knew herself well enough to know that even with her new name and the opportunity for a new persona that seemed to go along with it, she doubted that Morgana would really have any more confidence to just call a guy up than Annie had. Which, of course, meant none whatsoever. She didn't have much confidence in general, come to think of it. Maybe she should try to work on that, to see "Morgana" as someone new and different who wasn't afraid to talk to strangers or to assume that anyone would actually want to talk to her. She sort of doubted it would work, but it was worth a shot.

Morgana stopped walking and scanned the airport around her, trying to orient herself once again. Just as she thought she was hopelessly lost, she saw a sign. Shuttle to Oxford! Thank goodness! She broke into a jog, suddenly afraid that now that she had finally found them, they would leave before she could get across the huge open space in the middle of the airport to get to them.

As she drew up closer, Morgana slowed to a walk, trying to decide who exactly she should approach. Finally she noticed a youngish woman holding keys and a clipboard. She must be the one.

Morgana took a deep breath and walked up to her.

"Hello there," the woman said in a pleasant British accent. "Are you one of our new students?"

“Yes. I’m...” Morgana hesitated, but just for a moment. “I’m Morgana Sangrall. Glad to meet you.”

### *Chapter Five*

Morgana stood in front of the desk in her new dorm room, trying desperately to make the few books she had packed stand up on the shelf. She was interrupted by a sharp tap on the door.

“Hellooo?” a melodic voice called.

“One sec!” Morgana called back as she stepped away from the desk and toward the door. She groaned as the books promptly fell over the moment she stepped away.

She opened the door and found a girl of about her own age standing outside. She had long dark hair and looked vaguely exotic. Mediterranean, perhaps.

“Hello there. Are you... Morgana?” The name sounded even more new and foreign the way that she said it.

Morgana nodded.

“Yes. I’m Morgana.”

“Pleased to meet you, then. My name is Carmen.” She grinned. “I think we’re roommates.”

“Oh!” Morgana was a bit startled. In all of the commotion she had almost forgotten to even wonder about her roommate. “Well, come on in then, of course. Do you have anything you need me to help carry or anything?”

“No, thanks.” Carmen walked into the room as she was talking and put her bag down on the bed on the opposite side of the room from where Morgana had unpacked her things. “I

shipped most of my things, so I'll just go pick them up tomorrow. Didn't want to bring everything on the plane with me."

"Ah, okay," Morgana said. "I hadn't even thought of doing that. It's a good idea, come to think of it. I probably would have been able to bring more of my books that way." She cast a rueful glance at the bookshelf, where all the books were still laying on their sides. "Although I'm having a hard enough time making these few books behave as it is."

Carmen followed her gaze and chuckled as she saw the books. She had a deep musical laugh. Morgana liked it.

"Well, maybe you just need some more books to straighten them out," Carmen suggested. "That way they wouldn't have any room to fall down."

"Yeah, maybe," Morgana agreed. "That's a good point. Well, I'm sure I'll have more once I buy all the books for classes and stuff. Anyway, I seem to acquire books at a fairly steady rate regardless of how many I have."

"Yes, true. I know what you mean." Carmen smiled. "So where are you from? From your accent I'd guess the States, but it's not as blatant a U.S. accent as many have. Much more subtle."

"Yes, I'm from the States. Massachusetts, actually. In New England, if that helps at all." Morgana wondered how much foreigners generally knew about United States geography. "Where are you from?"

"Spain," Carmen answered. "A small town on the coast. My grandfather was British, though, so I've spoken English as well as Spanish all my life. That's why my accent is so difficult for people to figure out."

"Oh, how neat," Morgana breathed. "I'd love to go to Spain sometime."

“Well, you’ll just have to come home with me some long weekend, then.” Carmen smiled again. “Do you speak Spanish?”

“Not much, but I’m good with languages,” Morgana answered. “Will you teach me?”

“Sure. That would be fun.” Carmen began to pull things out of her bag and suitcase and started putting them away. “In all of our free time, of course.”

“Of course.” Morgana noticed that Carmen’s bed was still bare. “Are your sheets being shipped with the rest of your things? I have an extra set if you want to borrow them until you get yours.”

“Oh, thanks bunches. That would be great. I can tell we’re going to get along already.” Carmen was beaming. She seemed to be one of those naturally cheerful people, but not in a bad, sickeningly sweet way. She was just genuinely joyful, in the literal sense, full of joy. She simply exuded it.

“So what are you studying?” Morgana hoped she wasn’t just sounding like she was trying to make conversation. She was really quite curious about this stranger who she would be living with for the next several months.

“Music. Voice, actually. I want to be an opera singer.” Carmen grimaced. “And no, I am not named after *the* Carmen. I am named after my grandmother, who may in fact be named after *the* Carmen, but we’re not quite sure.”

“Heh. Okay then,” Morgana chuckled. “I probably would have asked. What do you sing? Soprano?”

“Yes, I do. Everyone always manages to guess. I’m not quite sure why.” Carmen screwed up her face as if in thought. “I guess maybe it’s just the most common.”

“Yeah, maybe,” Morgana agreed.

“Your turn. What are you studying?” Carmen sat down on her freshly made bed.

“Old and Middle English,” Morgana answered. She waited for the requisite bewildered “Oh, wow.”

“Fun!” Carmen surprised her yet again. “I’ve done a bit of that myself. My British grandfather was quite into it. It was really his passion.”

“And yet he moved to Spain?” Morgana had to ask.

“Yes. He went for a visit once and met my grandmother, and she didn’t want to move, so that was that.” Carmen sighed. “Beautiful romantic story, isn’t it?”

“Yes, quite.” Morgana nodded.

“Not quite that perfect after all, though,” Carmen continued. “He always missed England. He never really got over leaving, although he did grow to like Spain a lot too. I was his favorite granddaughter, so I was the one he spoke English with the most and told all his stories to. He had me reading Chaucer by the time I was twelve.”

“Oh, that’s great. I mean, not great that he had to be away so much from the place he loved,” Morgana corrected herself, “but great that you could have that bond with him.”

“Yes, it was. He past away last year, and that’s when I decided that I needed to come to England for a while,” Carmen explained. “My parents weren’t terribly thrilled with the idea of me being so far away for so long, of course, especially my mother. She thought that I should go to a good music school on the continent, instead of a general university all the way over in England. But I think my father understood. Even though he had to present a united front with my mother, of course, he seemed to be secretly pleased by the idea of me coming back to England. He studied here as a boy, and even though he doesn’t really have the love for England that his father did, he’s happy that I am here because of my grandfather.” Carmen paused and



took a deep breath. “Boy, I’ve been running on. I don’t want to scare you off.”

Morgana giggled.

“Oh, you won’t. I’m interested.”

“Well, I’m interested in you too. After all, we’ll have to be living together for a while,”

Carmen pointed out. “So how do your parents feel about you being so far away?”

“Well, I’ve never known my father, but his family was from England, which was one of the reasons why I wanted to come here in the first place,” Morgana explained. “But for the same reason, my mother didn’t want me to come. So it has been interesting.” She found it more and more difficult to explain her family every time she tried. It had always just seemed normal to her, of course, but she realized that somehow it had never been this difficult or this much of an issue when talking to others who didn’t already know her history. She had met plenty of new people at college, of course, but Morgana supposed she might just not have told them much about herself. How odd. Perhaps she just hadn’t met anyone whom she’d really wanted to connect with the way she had with Peter and now with Carmen. Interesting.

“Ah, I see.” Carmen’s voice pulled Morgana out of her thoughts. “Do you still have family here, then?”

“Yes, I do, but I’ve never met them. I have the address of one uncle. I’ll have to look him up. He lives in Glastonbury. I’m not really sure how far that is from here.” Morgana considered getting out her atlas and trying to find out, but she was tired from unpacking and decided it could wait.

“Yes, I don’t really know either.” Carmen shook her head. “But you should definitely find out. I’ve always wanted to go to Glastonbury.”

“Me too. I’ve been reading a lot about the Holy Grail recently. I’d love to go see the

Abbey and the Chalice Well and the Tor and all.” Morgana looked out her window longingly as though, now that she was in England, these things should just appear.

“Well, I think I’m unpacked enough for now,” Carmen said. “If I stay here any longer I’ll get overwhelmed. What would you say to some exploring?”

“Sure!” Morgana agreed wholeheartedly. She was definitely ready for a break. And who knows, they might run in to Peter in their exploring. She tried not to hope for it too much as they gathered up their coats and walked outside.

### *Chapter Six*

Marielle’s hand was shaking as she reached into the mailbox. She had been like this every day since the day when she knew that Morgana had left for England. Since she had never actually met her niece, she had no reason to expect her to call or anything like that, but Morgana had written that she would write Marielle a letter as soon as she got there and settled. It had only been a few days now, but Marielle was still quite anxious to actually get the letter.

There seemed to be three envelopes and a few catalogs in the mailbox today. One of the letters looked like a routine mailing from the bank, and another looked like junk mail from a credit card company or something. The third, though--the third looked as though it might really be a letter. Marielle drew them out slowly, trying to make the feeling of potentially having received the letter that she was waiting for. She knew perfectly well that just the fact that she had received *a* letter didn’t mean that it was *that* letter. After all, Marielle received letters fairly frequently from her dozens of penpals around the world.

When she had the letter in her hand, Marielle made herself look at the stamp before she

looked at the return address or even the way that it was addressed to her. The stamp and postmark were clear. The letter was from England. That in itself was encouraging, of course, but not in any way definitive. Marielle received letters from England fairly regularly. She had family there, of course, and various other penpals as well. But this postmark was from Oxford. Morgana was the only person Marielle could think of who would be writing to her from Oxford.

Slowly Marielle moved her hand away to uncover the address. It said “Miss Marielle Sangrall,” followed by her address. Nothing terribly telling in that. Now the return address... there it was. “M. Sangrall,” in Oxford. It was from Morgana. She was safe. Marielle knew that if there had been a plane crash or anything of the sort, she would have heard about it on the news. In addition, Mr. Whittier would certainly have told her if anything dire had happened to any member of the family. So as the days had passed since Morgana’s departure, Marielle had managed to go about her normal routine and not focus too much on her thoughts about her niece. Still, though, it was nice to get some confirmation that Morgana was indeed all right.

With a sigh of relief, Marielle gathered up the rest of the mail. Now that the suspense of the letter was for the most part over, she noticed just how cold it was outside. She decided to wait to actually open and read Morgana’s letter when she got inside. Marielle walked carefully up the icy lane to her house.

### *Chapter Seven*

The days seemed to pass quickly as Morgana was drawn in to life at Oxford. By the time she was unpacked and settled, classes were starting, and, as the beginning of the semester often is, it was all-consuming. She was really enjoying her work, but it was certainly different than

what she was used to. It was really interesting to see how the same discipline was taught so differently in a different place. Morgana thought it probable that her field especially was taught and viewed differently in England than anywhere else. There was much more of a sense of ownership here. At her college in the United States, Old and Middle English had been taught as foreign languages--foreign languages that bore an unusual similarity to their own language, and had a unique relationship with it, yes, but still foreign languages. At Oxford, they were inextricably linked with history and with the very personal heritage of the teachers, students, and the country as a whole.

It was a few weeks into the term before Morgana really had the time to notice how much she liked just being in England. She felt so at home here, although the feeling was very different from the one she had for Rafferton, where she also felt at home. Rafferton was comfortable, familiar, cozy even. All of her own personal memories were there. It was a small town, so she knew almost everyone in it and everything about it. She felt that she belonged there, because she had always been there. But she somehow had also felt as though it wasn't really where she was supposed to be. Especially in high school, she had been restless, and not just restless in the way that many high schoolers are, restless in wanting to get out of the small town and away from home. Morgana didn't want to get away from home, particularly. She wanted to *be* home. It was just that sometimes she didn't feel like Rafferton, the only place she had ever lived, was really her home.

England was different. It was in many ways unfamiliar and foreign. But even as she was just discovering what it was like, Morgana somehow felt like part of her really knew it all along and was just remembering now. She didn't feel as though she belonged there quite as much as she did in Rafferton--at least not yet--but she thought it possible that she might someday come to

belong. She felt at home on a different level, even a more spiritual one, perhaps. Morgana had never really thought much about spirituality and religion, since it wasn't something her mother had passed down to her, but some of the old churches and even just the hills and trees in England struck her in a way that could only be described as holy.

On a more practical, mundane level, Morgana had discovered the joys of English breakfast. It was odd that she liked it so much, as she didn't really like eggs or the British bacon, but she loved the rest of it, and just the whole idea of a traditional breakfast like that. Sometimes Morgana thought that she really should have been born in a more formal time and place. Instead of being annoyed by the delays caused by the traditional order of breakfast events, as some of her fellow American students were, she loved the idea of a two-course breakfast.

Starting with cereal first was nice. It was cold and simple and somehow seemed a good first thing of the day to eat. The university dining hall where Morgana usually ate her breakfast offered both bran flakes and corn flakes. Morgana had rarely eaten either one before she came to England, but she found herself liking both a great deal. They were simpler than the sort of cereal that Morgana was used to eating--things like Lucky Charms or Cocoa Pebbles when she was little, and Smart Start or granola once she reached high school. She had always enjoyed the cereal she ate, but the corn flakes and bran flakes had a much fresher taste, somehow. One thing she did miss, though, was hot cereal. Much as she liked the way that the English breakfast in the dining hall worked, Morgana missed her ritual of making oatmeal or Cream of Wheat on the days when she had extra time in the morning to do so.

The second course of breakfast was perhaps even better than the first. Morgana didn't like the eggs or the type of bacon that was generally served--it was more like Canadian bacon than the type she was used to--but she loved having toast and tomatoes. She had always like

tomatoes in general, but had never had them cooked in the way that seemed typical here. They were quickly becoming one of her favorite foods. Morgana really hoped that they wouldn't stop being such a treat as she got more used to them. She truly enjoyed the toast as well. It was something she thought was too often overlooked, or just seen as a filler rather than as a perfectly good food in its own right. Recently, Morgana had even begun to think about trying to like eggs, just so that she could have a more complete experience of the breakfast.

And then there was the tea. Morgana had always wavered between preferring tea or coffee, but now that she was in England she found that she was drinking far more tea, and very little coffee. Tea was on the table at breakfast, so it seemed natural to just drink it instead of requesting coffee. She had a cup of it with her cereal and then another cup with her toast and tomatoes. Between tea for breakfast and tea at tea time in the afternoon, Morgana was drinking more tea than she ever had before in her life. She chuckled as she thought that perhaps the great quantities of British tea now flowing in her veins were what was making her feel so at home in England.

There was another part of breakfast that Morgana loved as well: the reading ritual she had set up. Since she had had such limited space in her packing, Morgana had only brought to England a few books that were unconnected with her studies. These "fun books" were all old childhood favorites. Morgana had started bringing one of them to breakfast each day to read. It was really a beautiful way to start a day in a strange place--with Anne or Laura or Jo, who were always available and waiting for her here now that she was in England just as they had been when she was in Massachusetts.

Right now she was reading *Anne of Green Gables*. There was really something about that book that always got to her, although she could never quite put her finger on what it was.

Morgana loved all of L.M. Montgomery's books, but somehow the first Anne book had something that none of the others did. In fact, no other book she had ever read had quite this quality.

Maybe it was just because it was the first L.M. Montgomery and Anne book that Morgana had read, but she thought it went beyond that. It wasn't even so much the character of Anne herself, although Morgana did like her. It was more the whole atmosphere and feeling that the book evoked. It got her excited about doing academic work, for one thing, which was certainly one of its most useful attributes. Morgana always read it on the first day in August or so that really felt autumnal.

But it was far from the beginning of Autumn now. It was cold early February instead, and still Morgana felt that reading *Anne of Green Gables* was the best thing she could do right then. As she nibbled on her toast and sipped her tea, she was transported from the old dining room at Oxford now filled with chattering students to a farm in rural Prince Edward Island. The only problem with this morning routine was that occasionally Morgana started to lose track of time. She would get so lost in her book that the forty five minutes she usually allotted for breakfast passed before she knew it. On days when she was particularly caught up on her work and didn't have much that had to be done that day, Morgana let herself linger at breakfast for a little longer than normal and really get into the book she was reading.

Today, though, she had too many other things to do. She had to finish up some reading for a tutorial meeting this afternoon. More importantly, though, Morgana was resolved to finally write to her Uncle Charles. She had meant to do so since the day that she had arrived in England, but there were always too many other urgent things to be done. One thing about being in school was that it certainly provided lots of deadlines that always managed to seem more

necessary to be met than were those of any self-imposed tasks.

Morgana was quite determined that today would be different. Today she would really make the time to write. Despite her pointless delays, she was really quite eager to meet her Uncle Charles, and this eagerness had only been enhanced when she had received another letter from Aunt Marielle yesterday. In addition to all of her normal news, descriptions, and observations, Marielle had mentioned that she had received a letter from Charles that spoke of how much he wished to meet his niece. Morgana felt bad that she hadn't written before.

Now, though, she had to get to work on her reading. Class was in just a few hours, and she wanted to have it finished as soon as possible so that she could get the letter in the mail today. Morgana left the dining hall and began to walk up the slippery path back to her room.

"Morgana!" She heard a voice call out behind her. It was vaguely familiar, but she couldn't quite place it.

She turned, and put her hand up to her forehead to block out the morning sun. She saw a man with dark hair hurrying up the path toward her. Could it be--really? Morgana squinted to try to see better. It was. It was Peter.

She paused in her walk to let him catch up. Her heart was pounding. She hadn't seen him since the plane, and she had about given in and accepted that he had forgotten about her. But here he was.

"Hello!" he called as he got closer. "I've finally found you!"

"Yes. Hello," she said stupidly. How was one supposed to respond to something like that?

"I'm so sorry it has taken me so long." He looked pained. "You must have thought that I had forgotten about you."



“Well...” she hesitated. “I know you must have been busy. I certainly have been. But I was sort of wondering.”

“I’m so sorry,” he repeated. “So how have you been liking it here?”

“Oh, I love it!” Morgana cried. “I’ve just come from breakfast, which I think has become my favorite meal.”

“Yes, breakfast is one thing they do do well here,” he agreed. “But I know somewhere they do it much better. What are you doing Saturday morning?”

“Uh, nothing, I don’t think,” she answered. Truthfully, weekends were one thing she hadn’t quite gotten used to here. She often just stayed in her room and did her work, which was good for her academically, but made for rather lonely weekends. “I was thinking of maybe exploring the town a bit more than I’ve been able to so far.”

“Well, shall we explore together, then?” Peter paused. “Of course, if it’s something you wanted to do alone, I certainly understand. I didn’t mean to invite myself. It’s just that I’ve been wanting to see you, and I think that showing you around would be lots of fun.”

“Sure.” Morgana grinned. That did sound like much more fun than the lonely wandering she had planned.

“Brilliant. What time should I pick you up? Do you usually sleep in on Saturdays?”

“Well, sort of, but for me, sleeping in rarely goes past eight o’clock.” She hoped that didn’t sound too weird.

Peter laughed.

“Yes, I always seem to wake up pretty early too, even when I fully intend to let myself sleep. So. Shall I come to your dormitory at, say, half eight?”

“Yes, that sounds good.” Morgana loved phrases like “half eight.” They sounded so

much nicer than “eight thirty.”

“Great! I have to get to the lab, but I wanted to make sure I found you before another day went by.” Peter held out his hand and clasped Morgana’s in a sort of half-handshake, half-handhold. “See you Saturday.”

“See you then!” she replied as he started back down the path.

Wow. He had come all this way just to try to find her. He hadn’t forgotten about her after all. And he wanted to spend Saturday with her. Not just breakfast, after which he could get on with his day like normal. But no. It sounded more as though he intended to spend the whole day showing her around the town. Morgana couldn’t wait.

### *Chapter Eight*

The next few days passed quickly. Morgana wrote her letter to her Uncle Charles, did her school work, went to lectures and tutorial meetings. Before she knew it, it was eight o’clock on Saturday morning.

Freshly showered, Morgana stood in front of her closet and wondered what to wear. Dear Lord, she felt like a character out of one of those teen TV shows. Or maybe *The Babysitters Club*. But she really didn’t have any idea what to wear. She hadn’t been out to breakfast in England before, for one thing, and she had no idea what the place to which Peter was taking her would be like. He hadn’t mentioned a name or anything, and she hadn’t really wanted to ask. Of course, even if he had said a name, it probably wouldn’t have meant anything to her.

Her first thought of what to wear had been jeans and a sweater, which was a sort of standard uniform in the States. But Morgana had noticed that people didn’t wear jeans quite as

constantly here, and she certainly didn't want to look sloppy or under-dressed. If she were to wear a dress, though, she would run the risk of looking very over-dressed, and might even humiliate Peter by implying that she expected to be taken somewhere fancy. Maybe a skirt. Yes, that could work.

Of course, another big problem in figuring out what to wear was that Morgana really wasn't sure what this day was going to be. Was it a date? He hadn't said so, but it might have been implied. Morgana didn't have enough other experience to really be able to tell. In fact, the problem was that she didn't really have *any* other experience. What made something a date? If the people involved were of opposite genders and unattached, was it necessarily a date? No, that didn't seem right. She had gone out with male friends before and those hadn't been dates. Maybe it mattered if there was a preexisting friendship? Although that certainly couldn't be a hard and fast rule, as people did date people they were already friends with. And would a bit of conversation in an airport and on a plane count as enough of a preexisting friendship to make future meetings not count as dates unless they were explicitly stated to be such?

Morgana sighed. What did it matter? If it was a date it was, if it wasn't it wasn't. She should stop agonizing over it and just get dressed. She picked out a navy blue skirt that fell just below the knee, and topped it with a white blouse and yellow cabled cardigan sweater. Then she stopped for a minute, thinking. It somehow seemed wrong to wear a store-bought cabled sweater like that when Peter had such gorgeous ones hand-knit by his mother. Morgana's own knitting had progressed nicely since her arrival in England, but she was certainly not yet up to elaborate things like cabled sweaters. It wasn't that she thought Peter would mind if she wore the sweater--he wouldn't, at all--but she herself felt odd about it.

Instead of the sweater, then, she picked out a sort of camel colored cardigan/blazer. Her

mother had bought it for her shortly before she left for England, as a sort of belated Christmas present. She really liked it, but somehow just happened to not have worn it yet. This seemed as good an occasion as any.

All dressed, Morgana checked the time again. It was ten after eight. She had twenty minutes left before she should begin to expect Peter. She definitely had time to dry her hair. Morgana didn't usually like drying her hair, as she thought it generally looked better when she let it at least partially dry naturally. She decided to dry it most of the way, so it wouldn't look all scraggly and wet when Peter arrived, but would still have a chance to dry a little bit on its own.

Makeup? She didn't usually wear it. In fact, she virtually never wore it. Maybe once a year, if that. It wasn't that Morgana had anything against makeup, particularly, but more just that she didn't want to take the time to put it on every morning, and most days on a college campus there was really no need for it. She used it when she went to formal occasions, of course, but she didn't really go to very many of those. If this was a date, though, did that mean she should?

No. She really didn't want to. Much as it might make her look nicer on this particular occasion, Morgana really just wanted to be herself. No reason to give Peter any false impressions of her. If he didn't like her without makeup, then it was best to just know that now.

Of course, Morgana realized after a moment that that thought was just silly in the first place. She hadn't been wearing makeup in the airport or on the plane, and that was when Peter had first talked to her. In fact, that was the one time when he was under absolutely no obligation to speak with her, and he had. So she should just stop worrying about makeup.

Okay. She thought she was all ready to go now. She just needed a book to throw in to her purse. Even though Morgana didn't expect to need the book while she was actually with

Peter, of course, she always brought one with her wherever she went, so she didn't want to stop now. It somehow made her feel better, anyway. She had finished *Anne of Green Gables* at breakfast yesterday, so she grabbed *Anne of Avonlea*, the next book in the series, off the shelf. It didn't have quite the same magic of *Anne of Green Gables*, but it had a different sort of wonderfulness all its own.

Morgana walked outside to wait for Peter. The dormitories were kept locked, so she couldn't expect him to come in for her, and she didn't think he knew exactly where in the building she lived anyway. She settled herself on the low wall outside the front door and began to read.

After she had read only a few pages, she saw Peter walking up the sidewalk. She was surprised, somehow, that he was walking--she had been listening for a car. But now that she thought about it, there were plenty of interesting things close enough to walk to. Hmm. Speaking of close enough to walk to, she wondered where he lived. Within walking distance, apparently.

"Good morning, Morgana," he called out as he drew near. "Beautiful day, isn't it?"

She looked around. It was. She had barely noticed. It was actually sunny for once. One thing she had noticed about England was that it did tend to rain just as much as it was stereotypically rumored to do. But today the sun was shining on the few piles of old snow that had yet to be washed away by the incessant rains.

"Yes, yes it is." She smiled at him as she put her book away and got up off the wall.

"What are you reading?" he asked.

"An old favorite--*Anne of Avonlea*." She hoped he wouldn't laugh at her for reading a "children's book." She didn't think she could really like someone who would do that. If he

didn't want to read it himself, fine. But far too many people she had gone to college with not only refused to read things outside their narrow definitions of "literature," but looked down upon anyone who did.

"Oh, I haven't read the books yet, but I love the movies," Peter replied.

"Wow!" Morgana couldn't help exclaiming. "You do? Really?"

"Indeed." Peter chuckled. "They are some of my mother's favorite books, and she was so excited when the movies came out that she made all of us boys watch them. Some of us didn't like it, some did. I was one of the ones who did."

"I love them too. Even though they are somewhat different from the books, of course," Morgana qualified.

"Yes well." Peter was smiling again. "My mother always has the same complaint. I haven't seen them in a while, actually. I'd like to watch them again sometime."

"Well, Anne's birthday is next month," Morgana pointed out. "That would be a logical time to watch them."

"Yes, it would. Perhaps we should do that," Peter mused.

*We?* Morgana wondered.

"Anyway," Peter interrupted himself. "I'm getting hungry. You?"

"Yes, I am," she agreed. "I normally eat right around eight."

"All right, then, let's go." Much to her surprise, he took her arm and began walking down the street. "I thought I'd take you to my favorite place right in this neighborhood. I hope that's okay." He looked a bit nervous.

"Yes, of course." She noticed that he walked briskly, which was nice, since the morning was cool. "I can't wait."

*Chapter Nine*

Marielle sat in front of her window, with her new spinning wheel on the floor in front of her. It had been a Christmas gift from a few of her nephews, and she had quickly grown to love the soothing, rhythmic movements of spinning. She bought fleece from a local sheep farmer, and Stephanie was eager to stock her yarn at A Good Yarn. So now Marielle had two different product lines there: skeins of yarn that she had spun herself as well as her knitted products.

Spinning was even better than knitting for making Marielle totally entrenched in her own thoughts, though. She was looking at the old family cup that sat on the window ledge while she spun, and the combination of the rhythmic movements and whirring of the wheel and her unchanging gaze started to make her feel hypnotized.

In her mind's eye, Marielle saw something very similar to what she had seen that time that she looked into the cup filled with water and saw what could only be described as visions there. She saw the little baby again, the little girl baby, the last one: Morgana. At first she was happy, laughing, but suddenly it seemed as though she was struck by a sharp pain. She screamed. One piercing scream. And then the baby began to sob.

Marielle jumped up with a start. This was ridiculous. She was sitting here having visions and worrying and not doing anything about it, when there was very clearly something wrong. This wasn't her first indication of it. She had felt vaguely worried ever since she had begun to correspond with Morgana. There was definitely a threat somewhere, a threat to the family, to her. At first she had wondered if the problem might be Morgana herself, but Marielle had quickly ruled that out. The threat was to Morgana, not from her.

Marielle couldn't help thinking that it might have something to do with Morgan. Her brother, Morgana's father. He had been heartbroken when Jane left him and took Morgana with her. They had never been very well matched in the first place, though. Jane had been very jealous and almost afraid of Morgan's close connection with his family. And she had hated the very idea of England, for some reason that no one in the family could ever quite figure out. Morgan, on the other hand, had loved England. He had studied there as a young man, after falling in love with the country when he visited with his father as a boy. After college, he went back as often as he could. He traveled all over the small country, but always returned to a few favorite spots: London, Glastonbury, the old family home at Tintagel. It was probably Tintagel to which he was most drawn. The ruins of the castle there were what he often mentioned as "his favorite place on earth."

Jane had even visited with him once or twice. Morgan tried his hardest to show his bride all of his favorite places, favorite things, what he loved about this place. She never enjoyed the trips, though. She made it very clear that she was just tolerating being there for his sake, and soon stopped going with him at all. England became "that place." She later spoke of her husband's trips there in the way that other divorced women spoke of their husbands' visits to mistresses or prostitutes. Marielle tried to give Jane the benefit of the doubt--she supposed it was vaguely possible that Jane believed that Morgan did have a mistress in England. Marielle doubted it, though. Even though there was no love lost between Jane and her husband's family, Marielle could recognize that Jane was basically a sensible woman.

Perhaps that was the whole problem right there. Jane was sensible. Morgan was not, especially in his feelings toward England. He saw the country of his family's heritage in a way that was definitely spiritual, maybe even religious, bordering on fanatical. England was one of



the most important things in the world to him. To go a year without visiting would be like suffocating for Morgan. Jane knew that--she had to know that. And yet she tried to prevent him from going. She told him that he was married now, had a family, a beautiful little baby girl. Therefore, Jane thought that Morgan should stop gallivanting about the world and really settled down. She wanted him to be steady, dependable, boring.

Marielle had no doubt that her baby brother could have been all of these things if he had tried. But Morgan wouldn't try. Perhaps he should have. Marielle didn't really think that it was her place to judge. But plenty of others did. Perhaps Morgan should have given up England--what he had always loved--for the sake of the wife and child whom he clearly should have loved more.

He did love them, though. Just as much, if not more. Especially Morgana. Morgan would have done anything for his daughter. It was not his choice to cut off all contact with her. He never would have chosen that. He hated it. But he was not given much of a choice, really. Jane told him to give up everything within himself that was important to him. He would not. And so she left, and took the baby. She changed her name and Morgana's too, and completely vanished from the life of the Sangrall family. And with her, of course, vanished Morgana.

Until Marielle had dragged her back. Marielle was beginning to wonder whether getting in contact with her niece was really what she should have done. Perhaps it would have been better to have left Annie Jordan alone, completely unaffected by her family, her heritage. That way, at least she would have been safe.

But no. Even as Marielle thought this, she realized it wasn't true. Not making contact with Morgana would not have kept the girl any safer. She was beginning to be affected by her father and his family even before she had received the letter from her aunt. She had told

Marielle so in her first letter. She had wished she could make contact herself.

This way, Morgana might at least have some idea of what was going on. Well, no, that wasn't entirely true. Marielle really had no idea, not even any real proof that there was danger. Maybe she was just being a crazy old woman who had lived alone too long and now was making up stories out of her own paranoia and self-importance.

But no. Much as she would like to believe that, Marielle couldn't. For one thing, Charles didn't either. His latest letter had mentioned something along these lines. He had written that he had finally received a letter from Morgana and was "very anxious" to meet her. Not eager, but anxious. He was concerned about his niece. And he had been the last one to see Morgan before he disappeared. Perhaps he knew something, even sub-consciously, that the rest of the family did not know.

So there was definitely something wrong. But what could Marielle do? She was all the way over here in the middle of the United States. She could do absolutely nothing to protect a young girl across the ocean.

Marielle's spindle clattered to the floor as she was struck by a sudden thought. That was it. The reason she couldn't do anything was because she was all the way over here. In the wrong country, on the wrong side of the ocean. On the wrong continent. So if she wanted to be able to do anything at all in whatever was to come, she must go to England. It seemed so simple and obvious now that she wasn't sure why it hadn't occurred to her before.

She had planned to go for a visit some time in the Spring while Morgana was there, anyway. She was eager to meet her niece, and she hadn't seen Charles in a few years now. Why not go right now instead?

She picked up the phone and quickly dialed a long series of numbers that she had had

memorized for years, but very seldom used.

“Good evening,” a familiar voice on the other end of the line said.

“Charles. This is Marielle.” As always, she found herself dropping into a semi-British accent as she talked to him.

“Marielle! What a lovely surprise.” He was trying to be his normal polite and pleasant self, but Marielle could tell that something was wrong.

“A surprise? Really, Charles?” she pressed.

“Well, no.” He sighed. “Not really. I’ve been somewhat expecting you to call. You were very obviously concerned in your last letter.”

“So were you, Charles.” She always loved talking to him. Even under circumstances like these, Marielle realized that part of her was concentrating on the joy of talking to Charles, not on the content of their conversation at all.

“Yes, yes, I suppose I was.” He sounded very tired. She wondered if he was ill.

“So have you met Morgana by now?” Marielle realized that there was no point to beating around the bush.

“I have. She came for tea last Sunday, and I expect her again this week. I think we may make it a weekly routine.”

“What did you think of her?” Marielle was almost afraid of his answer. She had such confidence in Morgana, but she had never actually met the girl. Charles now had.

“She’s a lovely girl, Marielle,” he said tenderly. “Positively delightful. Almost reminds me of you at the age.”

“Oh, I’m so glad to hear it.” Marielle breathed a sigh of relief. “I mean, not that she reminds you of me, of course, but that she is as good as I thought she was.”

“Yes, she is.” He sounded positive.

“So should I come? Would it help anything at all?” She realized that she really wasn’t sure of what his answer would be.

“Yes...” Charles hesitated, and then drew in a deep breath. “Yes, I think you should.”

“All right, then. I’ll call Mr. Whittier right away and try to make it out tomorrow. I’ll let you know when I find out what time I’ll be getting in.” Even though he was the family’s lawyer, not anything to do with travel, Mr. Whittier generally handled the family’s travel arrangements as well. He said that it was because he cared about them.

“One other thing, Marielle...” Charles trailed off.

“Yes?” she asked.

“I think you should bring the cup. It clearly has something to do with all this.” It sounded as though he knew more, or at least thought more, but didn’t want to tell her at this point. It was all right. She could wait until she got there.

“All right, I will.” Marielle paused. “In spite of the circumstances, I’m really looking forward to seeing you, Charles.”

“And I you, Marielle dear.” His voice was tender again. “Now go call Mr. Whittier so you can get here as soon as possible.”

“Yes, I will.” She tried to keep her voice from breaking. “Good bye, Charles.”

“Good bye, Marielle.” She heard the click as he hung up the phone.

### *Chapter Ten*

Morgana was sitting cross legged on her bed reading one late February afternoon. She

was having trouble concentrating. The reading itself wasn't terribly interesting, but she didn't think that was the entire problem. She had often been restless lately, it seemed, especially since she had met Uncle Charles last Sunday. She had really enjoyed her time with him, and could hardly wait to go back this Sunday.

Suddenly a knock came on the door, which was standing ajar. This was unusual, as the other girls in the dormitory usually just called or pushed the door open, and the outside doors of the building were kept locked, so it was not very often that visitors could make it in this far without informing the person they were visiting.

Carmen was sitting at her desk, which was closer to the door, so she got up to answer it. Morgana heard a voice from the hallway reply to her roommate's curious "Hello?"

"Good afternoon. Is Miss Morgana Sangrall in, please?" Morgana was quite sure she had never heard the voice before. It was cool, aristocratic, and yet somehow attractive.

"Yes, she's right here," Morgana heard Carmen say. She jumped up off her bed and headed for the door.

"I'm Morgana Sangrall." She pulled open the door to reveal her visitor, and couldn't keep herself from gasping. It was a young man who seemed to embody all of the ideals of the British aristocracy. He was tall and thin, but muscular. His hair was light brown and curly and his eyes were blue.

"Pleased to meet you, Morgana." He smiled down at her. His smile was perfect too. "My name is Colin Hapworth. You don't know me--yet--but we're... distant cousins."

"Oh? I assume it's on my father's side? The Sangrall side, I mean?" Morgana was confused. And a bit swept off her feet.

"Yes, yes, the Sangrall side of course." Colin seemed to find that somewhat distasteful.

“But distant. Very distant.” He flashed her another gorgeous grin.

“But how--How did you know about me? That I was here? How did you find me?”

Morgana was still confused.

“News travels fast, darling.” *Darling?* she thought. He continued, “Especially news of pretty American cousins suddenly landing on our soil.”

Morgana felt herself blushing. She wasn’t used to being called pretty.

“Well... thanks,” she managed. “Would you like to come in?”

“No, that’s quite all right. I don’t want to intrude.” Colin chuckled. “I remember well the state of my dorm room during my university days. I’d settle for taking you out to dinner tonight. Unless you have other plans, of course.”

“Oh, uh, no, I don’t.” Morgana wasn’t quite sure how to respond to this. “Except, of course, that I have classes tomorrow, and so I don’t want to get home too late.” Oh dear. That sounded awfully childish.

“Of course.” He chuckled again, clearly thinking that she did indeed sound childish.

“Wouldn’t want your carriage to turn into a pumpkin, now would we?”

All Morgana could do was blush again and laugh confusedly.

“I’ll pick you up at seven, then? That should give you enough time to get ready.” He checked his watch.

Morgana checked her own watch. It was three thirty--or half three, as she was coming to think of it.

“Yes, sure,” she told him.

“Brilliant. See you then!” he called as he stepped out the door.

As soon as Morgana had closed the door behind Colin, Carmen looked up from her work.

“What was *that* all about?” she asked curiously.

“I... I don’t quite know.” Morgana sat down on her bed, thinking that perhaps things would be more clear if she didn’t have to devote any energy to standing up. They weren’t.

“He says he’s my cousin,” she continued.

“But you’ve never heard of him?” Carmen asked.

“Well, no. But I’ve never heard of the great majority of my cousins on my father’s side,” Morgana pointed out.

“Oh, right.” Carmen found this a bit hard to remember at times. She came from a very close extended family.

“He didn’t really have any proof that we were related, though.” Morgana wrinkled her forehead. “He said it was ‘very distant.’ And he didn’t really tell me how he knew about me or where I was, either. Just that news travels fast. That seemed very strange.”

“Morgana!” Carmen laughed. “Why do you *care* if he’s really related? He’s gorgeous! It might be better if he isn’t related. Although of course that’s why he was stressing the ‘very distant’ thing.”

“Oh. Huh. Maybe.” Morgana felt very dense. “But... I don’t know. Wow. He is pretty cute, huh?”

“I do believe that is the understatement of the year, my dear.” Carmen laughed again. “So what are you going to wear?”

“Oh gosh. I don’t know. What do you think I should wear?” It was the whole “Is it a date?” problem all over again. Might as well as Carmen. “Do you think this is a date? Does that matter with what I wear?”

“Of course it is,” she replied briskly. “And of course it does. Now let’s look at what

you've got.”

Half an hour later, they had settled on an understated black dress with silver jewelry. Morgana worried that it might be a bit too fancy, but Carmen told her that that was just silly, and that it would be fine. Morgana dressed and sit down on her bed with her book to wait.

### *Chapter Eleven*

Marielle shifted uncomfortably in her seat on the plane and tried to concentrate on her book. She was really too restless and distracted, though. She did feel better now that she was actually on her way to England, but there was still nothing she could do right now. Thank goodness Mr. Whittier had managed to get her on a plane just hours after she called him.

Marielle tried to concentrate on the fact that in a few short--or long--hours she would be with Charles, and maybe even get to meet Morgana. Between them, they would make everything all right. They had to make everything all right.

### *Chapter Twelve*

When Morgana reentered her room around ten o'clock that night, she found Carmen sitting waiting for her.

“So how was it?? I want to hear all about it!!” Carmen cried.

“Hold on. Let me sit down and catch my breath first.” Morgana truly felt as though she had been running a race or something. She was exhausted.

“It was great. I think,” she told her roommate.



“You think? What’s that supposed to mean?” Carmen was skeptical.

“He was quite nice. Gorgeous, as you noticed. Charming.” Morgana wasn’t quite sure what she was trying to say.

“Good, good... so was I right? Was it a date?” Carmen was eager for validation of her strongly-held views.

“Yeah, I think so,” Morgana said. “At least, I think he thought so.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Carmen said again.

Morgana didn’t really know. She thought about how to respond.

“Oh!” Thankfully, Carmen continued talking before Morgana really had to answer.

“Your other boy called while you were out.”

“My other boy?” Morgana had no idea what Carmen was talking about.

“Yes.” Carmen began to file her nails.

“What other boy?” She still didn’t get it.

“How many other boys do you have?” Carmen asked jokingly.

“Umm...” Morgana was beginning to lose patience with this.

“Morgana. Really. What other boy do you *think*?” Carmen was beginning to lose patience herself.

“Uh--Peter?” He was the only man who Morgana could think of who might be calling her. They had seen each other a few times since that first day together, and the past few days they had met up at lunchtime, quite coincidentally at first, but beginning to be a tacit agreement of meeting. Morgana wasn’t really sure why he would call, though.

“Of course, silly.” Carmen seemed to enjoy being exasperated with her roommate.

“Well, what did he say, then?” Now Morgana was curious.

“Nothing in particular,” Carmen answered vaguely. “He just wanted to talk to you.”

“Oh. Well, what did you tell him?” Morgana began to get ready for bed. It was cold out tonight--she thought she'd get all cozy in her flannel pajamas.

“That you were out, of course.” Carmen looked at her oddly. “What else would I tell him?”

“Oh, I don't know.” Morgana was getting more tired by the minute, and didn't quite feel up to dealing with this right now. It had been a very confusing evening. “Did he say I should call him or anything? I don't think I even have his phone number,” she yawned as she pulled back her covers.

“No, he just said he'd see you tomorrow,” Carmen replied. “Do you guys have plans?”

“No, not really. But we've been having lunch together most days,” Morgana explained.

“Lunch together? Over here somewhere near the college, I assume? Don't see how you'd really have the time to go anywhere else,” Carmen said.

“Yes, I generally run into him when I'm leaving my last morning class... Why?”

Morgana didn't understand what Carmen was getting at.

“Just seems odd that he'd walk all the way over here every day on the chance that he might run into you, that's all.” Carmen looked back down at her nails and continued filing.

“All the way over here?” Carmen clearly thought that she was saying something perfectly obvious, but Morgana just didn't get it.

“We're a bit of a ways away from the physics laboratories, Morgana dear. Or hadn't you noticed?” Carmen laughed.

“Oh, are we? Huh.” Morgana stopped brushing her hair in midstroke and thought about it. “I guess I don't know where they are.”

“Well, I’m not positive either,” Carmen allowed, “but my impression is that all the science buildings are together on the other side of campus. Your boy has a nice walk at lunch every day, I guess.”

“He’s not my boy,” Morgana mumbled automatically. She didn’t feel like arguing about it now. She was too tired. “Anyway. I’m going to go brush my teeth, and then I’m going to bed. I’m tired. So very very tired.”

“Okay.” Carmen shrugged as Morgana walked out the door and down the hall to the bathroom.

When she returned, Carmen was standing by the door with the phone in her hand.

“It’s for you,” she said. “It rang while you were brushing your teeth. I offered to take a message, but he said he’d wait.” She paused. “You’re very popular tonight.”

Morgana shook her head and took the phone from her roommate.

“Hello?” she said into it.

“Morgana?” The voice was vaguely familiar.

“Yes?” She was beginning to be concerned. It was pretty late. Phone calls this late were always a little scary.

“I hope it’s not too late. Your roommate said you were getting ready for bed.” The voice still seemed familiar.

“I’m sorry, but who is this?” She had to ask.

“Oh, I’m sorry, dear. This is your uncle Charles,” he apologized.

“Oh! Hi!” Morgana was delighted. “No, it’s not too late. I was just surprised. I don’t get many phone calls.”

“Ah, I see.” He sounded vaguely confused. “Well, I won’t keep you long, since I know

you were headed for bed. I just wanted to tell you that Marielle is coming for a visit.”

“Aunt Marielle? When?” Morgana knew she was planning to visit at some point in the spring, but wasn’t sure why that would warrant a late evening phone call.

“Well, she’s actually on her way right now,” Uncle Charles said.

“Oh. Wow.” Morgana was shocked. “Is everything okay?”

“Well...” He hesitated. “For the moment, yes. But we have things the three of us should talk about. And she is very eager to meet you, of course. What time do you finish with classes and things tomorrow?”

“Half two,” she replied. “Friday is my early day.”

“Well that works out nicely.” He sounded pleased. “And I hear you’re already starting to talk like us. Good girl. Hmm. Do you have any plans for the weekend?”

“No, not really.” Morgana had hoped to do something with Peter, but that certainly didn’t count as plans.

“Would you like to just come here for the weekend, then? That way we have plenty of time to talk, and show you around Tintagel as well.” He seemed worried that she wouldn’t want to come.

“Oh, sure! I’d love to!” Morgana thought a weekend in Tintagel sounded great. She had gone just for the afternoon last Sunday, and would love to have more time there.

“Is it all right if I send someone to pick you up at, say, three in the afternoon tomorrow?” Charles hoped that Morgana didn’t think it overly extravagant that he could just speak of “sending a car” that way. He had to remember that she hadn’t grown up knowing her family.

“Yes, that sounds fine,” Morgana replied. “I should have time to come back to my room and pick up my things by then. Is there anything specific I should bring clothes to be appropriate

for?" She wasn't quite sure whether that question was okay to ask, but she thought she'd rather be rude and ask it than be completely unprepared.

"Hmm. Well, I'd like to take you both to a favorite restaurant of mine on Saturday evening, so if you had a skirt and sweater or something like that it might be good to bring it. If you don't, though, it is certainly not a problem." Charles wasn't really sure what sort of wardrobe a contemporary university girl would have.

"Yes, sure, " Morgana replied, and then winced. She somehow always felt most blatantly American when saying "sure." But in any case, the yellow cabled sweater would certainly be appropriate to bring. "I'll see you tomorrow afternoon, then, Uncle Charles."

"See you then, dear. I look forward to it." She thought she heard a catch in his voice.

"Me too, Uncle Charles. Good night." Morgana gently hung up the phone. She wondered what on earth was going on, and then sighed as she encountered her roommate's predictable demandingly curious look.

"It was my Uncle Charles, Carmen," she explained. "You know, the one in Tintagel. My aunt from the States is coming to visit and he wanted me to come for the weekend to meet her."

"Ooh. Don't suppose he invited your lovely roommate with whom he had a thirty second long conversation as well?" Carmen was ever hopeful. Visiting a rich uncle sounded like a good thing to do, even if it wasn't her rich uncle.

"Nope, sorry. It sounds like this weekend is going to be a family thing. Lots of old pictures and stuff." Morgana was making this up as she went along, but it sounded good.

"You'd probably be bored out of your mind."

"Okay..." Carmen didn't sound particularly convinced.

“I’ll mention you to him, though,” Morgana promised. “And I think he’s definitely the type to tell me to bring a friend once I’ve been out there a few times.” Of course, even as she said this to Carmen, she found herself imagining wandering around the old house and quaint town with Peter.

“Huh,” she continued. “I forgot to ask him about who Colin is, and if he told him about me. Uncle Charles is the only relative over here whom I’ve really been in much contact with, so it must have been him.”

“Yes, perhaps. Well, you’ll have plenty of time to talk to him this weekend,” Carmen said practically.

“Yeah, you’re right,” Morgana allowed. “I’ll be seeing him tomorrow. And I guess there’s no reason to feel that it’s so urgent.”

“Nope, none at all.” Morgana smiled as Carmen said this. Her roommate had clearly been picking up some of her own Americanisms. They sounded so cute with her crisp foreign accent.

“Okay. I guess I’m going to bed now.” Morgana got into bed and read for a minute, but she was clearly too tired to absorb anything about Medieval history and how it affected the development of the English language. Within minutes, she closed her book, turned off her light, and rolled over and went to sleep.

### *Chapter Thirteen*

Marielle stepped out into the airport and looked around. It seemed as though things had changed a great deal since her last visit a few years ago, but she knew that at least some of the

changes were of her own imagining. She used to know this place so well, when she visited at least twice a year, but now she was getting old. Old and confused, she thought. But no. She wasn't senile--yet--and she had to allow that the airport really had changed. It wasn't all her fault.

She wondered who Charles would send for her. She wondered if she would even recognize any of his staff. Now that she thought about it, she didn't really know why she had stopped visiting so frequently. Inertia, she supposed. It was just easier to stay in her snug little house all alone, knitting and sewing and reading and writing letters.

She paused in her thoughts abruptly as she saw someone very familiar standing a little way away from her. Then she looked again. It really looked like Charles! Charles himself, not one of his staff. How very odd. It wasn't that he was a recluse--far from it. He just liked to stay in Cornwall and very rarely traveled to London. But this did look like him...

"Charles?" she tried calling out.

The man turned toward her. It was definitely Charles.

"Marielle! You've made it!" He began walking toward her, a huge smile on his face.

"Yes, yes I have. But you--you said you'd send someone. I didn't expect you to be here yourself." She could tell that he was trying to act as though everything was all right, but it clearly wasn't.

"Oh, I was just eager to see you, my dear." He could tell she wasn't satisfied with that answer. "In addition, I had a few errands to do in town that I didn't want to entrust to anyone else. We'll talk in the car," he said, lowering his voice a bit.

"Ah." Marielle was beginning to understand. He didn't want to talk too much in public. "All right. Let's go get my luggage, then."

*Chapter Fourteen*

Morgana was walking over to check her mail after a late breakfast when she heard Peter's call.

"Morgana!"

How odd. She was used to seeing him around lunch time, and if Carmen was right and the places where Peter worked and studied were not anywhere nearby, running into him as a coincidence was even more unlikely. It was a little later than Morgana usually finished breakfast, since she had packed for the weekend before coming, but it certainly wasn't late enough for their usual run-in at lunch. She hurried down the path to meet him.

"Good morning!" she said cheerily.

"Hullo!" he cried. "I tried to call you last night, but you weren't there. Did your roommate give you the message?"

"Well, yes, she told me you called," answered Morgana, beginning to wonder if Carmen had gotten something wrong. There hadn't been a message. "But there wasn't really a message. She said I didn't need to call you back or anything."

"Right, yes," he said. "I thought it would just be easier to try to find you today, although I may be too late now with what I wanted to ask." He seemed hesitant, unsure.

"Yes?" she encouraged.

"Well, I'm going home this weekend. Just for the weekend. And I was wondering if you... If you'd like to come with me. To get away from here for a bit, see some more of the country, meet my family. I'm sure they'd love you." He paused. "Of course, this is very short



notice, so of course I understand if you already have other plans,” he added hurriedly, clearly trying to make sure she had a way of declining politely.

“Oh!” she exclaimed. “I’d love to, but--but my uncle in Tintagel called late last night and asked me to come visit him this weekend. My aunt from the States suddenly decided to fly over--she should have landed by now, actually--and Uncle Charles said there were some things we needed to talk about. I really don’t have any idea what’s going on, but it sounds like big family stuff.”

“Oh.” Peter sounded very disappointed. “That’s all right, then. Maybe some other time.”

“I really would love to,” Morgana repeated. She was worried that he would think she just didn’t want to come. That couldn’t be further from the truth.

“Wait,” he said, brightening. “Where did you say your uncle lived, again?”

“Tintagel,” she replied.

“Well, that’s where I’m going, of course.” He grinned. “Remember? I’m sure I’ve told you that I’m from Tintagel.”

“Oh!” She had completely forgotten. “Right! You know how it is when you meet lots of new people... everyone’s details seem to blend together...”

“Yup, I know. That’s all right. Hmm,” he hesitated. “Do you think the family stuff is going to keep you occupied all weekend? Or could they maybe spare you for a meal, and you could come meet everyone?”

“Yes, I’m sure that would be all right,” she agreed eagerly.

“Brill!” he exclaimed.

Morgana giggled. She loved it when he said that.

“Now, do you have any idea what meal you might be free for?” he asked.

“Well, Uncle Charles just mentioned going out for dinner tomorrow night. I’m not sure what any other plans might be.” She thought hard, but couldn’t come up with anything.

“Hmm. Have you ever had a Cornish cream tea?” He smiled.

“No, I don’t think so,” she answered. She didn’t even know what that was.

“Well, Ma makes a great one.” He could just taste it. “Why don’t we plan on having you come for tea on Saturday--tomorrow--and you can call me tonight if that doesn’t turn out to be okay. You *are* going tonight?”

“Yes, I am. I’m leaving in just a few hours, in fact,” she explained.

“Oh, how are you getting there? Train? I’m driving--you’d be more than welcome to ride with me, of course.”

*So he does have a car,* she thought.

"No, my uncle said he would send someone to pick me up, so I’m sure they’re on their way already.” She hated to disappoint him again. “Too bad. We could have saved whoever it is the trip. Hmm. When are you coming back to Oxford? Perhaps we could carpool that way.”

“Yes, definitely! I think I’ll be coming back Sunday afternoon, after an early tea.” He seemed relieved.

“All right, that sounds good,” she said. “Don’t forget to give me your phone number so I can call you if I need to.” She patted her pockets. “I don’t think I have anything to write it down with, though.”

“Here you go.” Peter pulled a pen and a piece of scrap paper out of his pocket and wrote the number, with “Peter” at the top. Morgana thought it interesting that he didn’t feel it necessary to include a last name. She somehow liked it that he thought he was that important to

her.

“All right, so shall I pick you up at three tomorrow if I don’t hear from you before then? Where does your uncle live, exactly?” he asked when he finished writing.

“Sure. But I don’t have the foggiest idea how to direct you to Uncle Charles’s house.” Her face fell. She hadn’t thought of this. “He calls it Chalice Keep, if that helps at all,” she volunteered. “I suppose I can call you tonight and have him give you directions.”

“Chalice Keep?” Peter’s eyes widened. “Sangrall... of course...” he muttered under his breath.

“What?” she asked.

“Oh, nothing, sweetheart,” he answered hurriedly. “It’s just that I do know where Chalice Keep is. I was just being stupid--I somehow didn’t connect that Charles Sangrall with your Uncle Charles.”

“Oh, you know him?” Morgana was surprised, for some reason.

“No, not really. Not personally,” Peter clarified. “I’ve just seen him around. It’s a small town.”

“Ah. Okay.” That made sense to Morgana. It was like Rafferton. Everyone knew everyone.

“Well, I’d better get going. I have a few things to do before I leave, and my brother Timothy has a school play this afternoon that he wants me to see.” Peter smiled almost apologetically.

“Oh, that sounds great. Have fun!” Morgana told him.

“I will. See you tomorrow!” he called as he walked away briskly.

*Chapter Fifteen*

A few hours later, Morgana was in her uncle's car on the way from Oxford to Tintagel. Last time she had gone, she hadn't been sure how long the ride would be, and had been very glad that she had *Anne of the Island* in her purse. This time, though, she had planned better, and had brought some school work to do in the car. Morgana wasn't sure how much time she would have for work over the weekend--she didn't want to be rude and just sit there reading while she was visiting her relatives--so she hoped to get a good bit done during the ride to Chalice Keep.

The work was interesting, and the time seemed to pass quickly. Before she knew it, they were pulling into Uncle Charles's long driveway. The same man had come to Oxford to pick Morgana up this time as last. She wondered who exactly he was. He was clearly someone who worked for Uncle Charles, but Morgana got the impression that he was definitely not just a chauffeur. From what she had seen at the house, she got the impression that the man, who had been introduced as Joshua David, was a general aide and helper to Morgana's uncle. Morgana realized that she didn't even know if David was his last name, or if Joshua David was all his first name.

"Well here we are, Miss Morgana," he suddenly said. *Speak--think--of the devil*, Morgana thought. Joshua David had only spoken occasionally all trip. Morgana was really very curious about him. She would have to ask Uncle Charles.

"Thank you," she said as Joshua David helped her out of the car. She wasn't really sure what to call him, so she settled for trying to avoid calling him anything. He opened the trunk and took out her small overnight bag that she had packed. He offered to take her backpack as well, which she had kept in the back seat with her so that she could work on her school work on the

way, but she already had it on her back, so she tried to decline as politely as possible. She hoped he didn't think she was rude--not that Joshua David would ever actually think that a member of the Family was rude--but she really felt more comfortable, and safe somehow, with her familiar backpack on her back.

As she walked up to the great big front door of the equally imposing house, Morgana wondered why she had even thought that. She wasn't the sort to usually worry about her safety. Of course, she took the proper precautions when walking around at night and all, but she certainly didn't dwell on any feelings of being unsafe all the time. And Uncle Charles was certainly the type to induce feelings of safety, not the opposite. Hmm. Before Morgana could get any further in her thoughts, she had arrived at the front door. She rang the bell.

She heard voices and footsteps inside, and then Uncle Charles himself opened the door wide. He grinned when he saw his niece. For some reason, it surprised Morgana that someone who had a driver and various other servants would open his front door himself. Both this time and the last, Morgana had half-expected to be greeted by a maid in an old fashioned ruffly uniform.

"Hello, my dear!" Uncle Charles beamed. "So glad you're here."

"Good evening," Morgana murmured. Much as she liked Uncle Charles, she had really only met him once, and she still felt somewhat awestruck in his presence. Like his house, he was imposing. He was tall and thin, but muscular. He had never mentioned doing anything particularly athletic, at least not to his niece, but he certainly looked fit. His hair was wavy and steel gray. He wore old fashioned looking glasses, but instead of making him seem weak in any way, they merely reinforced the impression of extraordinary intelligence that was quite decidedly suggested by the rest of his face.

“Well, come along inside,” he said quickly, breaking into her thoughts. “Marielle is here, and she is just dying to meet you.”

Morgana followed him inside, marveling once more at the extraordinary beauty of his house. It was full of what had to be valuable family heirlooms, but Charles--or whoever had lived there before him--had managed to furnish it in a way that did not look tacky or ostentatious in the least.

On the previous occasion that Morgana had visited, she had been led directly into the front parlor for tea. It was a beautiful room, but not very home-like. She had almost felt as though she were in a museum. This time, though, Uncle Charles brought her in to what she could only think of as the breakfast room. Morgana recognized it from old novels and social history books that she had read, but she had never actually encountered someone who had a breakfast room before. Wow. Apparently it was used for more than breakfast.

“Yes, my dear, this is the breakfast room.” Uncle Charles seemed to be reading your thoughts. “I hope you don’t mind either the informality or the inherent semantic contradiction of eating supper here.”

“No, not in the least,” Morgana replied. Her uncle smiled, and she saw that it had been the right answer. Morgana suspected that only members of the family, and perhaps very close friends, were brought here. Last time she had been a stranger, and he had invited her for tea to see what she was like. Even though Uncle Charles had been perfectly nice to her, in the back of her mind she had felt all the while as though she were there on inspection. This time, though, she was family. Apparently she had passed the inspection satisfactorily.

Morgana let her gaze travel about the room. It had great big windows facing east--part of the breakfast room idea, she was sure--but there were also windows in the opposite wall. They

would allow whoever was sitting in the room to see the sunset over the ocean during tea or supper. This led Morgana to suspect that Uncle Charles used the room for meals other than breakfast rather frequently.

There were several sofas along the edge of the room, and a small table in the middle. The table was a rectangle, and placed so that six people could sit at it in all, but four, if they sat in the right places, could see either the sunrise or sunset. The table was now set for three, facing the west. The sun had mostly set by now, of course, but it was not yet completely dark, and the twilight view of the ocean was magnificent. Morgana drew in her breath when she saw it.

“I see you like my pretty picture on my wall?” Uncle Charles asked.

“What an understatement!” Morgana couldn’t help exclaiming.

“Yes, it is, isn’t it?” Uncle Charles mused. “Well, make yourself at home, my dear, and enjoy it to your heart’s content. I’m going to go see where your aunt Marielle has run off to.”

Morgana sat down on a sofa facing the west and continued to stare at the sea as Uncle Charles walked to the doorway of the room opposite to the way that they had come in.

“Marielle!” he called. “Morgana is here! We’re in the breakfast room.”

Morgana could distantly hear Marielle calling something back, and then there were footsteps down the stairs nearby.

“I’m sorry, Charles, I was just upstairs checking on something in a book,” Marielle said as she paused just outside the doorway. “So she’s here?” she whispered. “I’m nervous now.”

“Don’t be silly, my dear.” Morgana could tell that Uncle Charles was trying to whisper, but his deep voice carried well into the room regardless of his best efforts. “Come on in and meet her.” Uncle Charles took Aunt Marielle’s arm and led her into the room.

“Well, Morgana,” Uncle Charles said as they drew near the sofa. “This is your aunt

Marielle. Of course, after all your letters, I'm sure she knows you far better than I do, so it would have been more fitting for her to introduce me to you. Ah well."

Morgana stood up to greet her aunt. Aunt Marielle looked just as she had imagined. She was on the short side, with soft gray-white hair. She was beautiful. Her face looked strong--she had clearly been through a lot and survived it all--but she still somehow looked warm and comfortable. Morgana had intended to simply shake hands, but she found herself impulsively hugging her aunt instead.

"Morgana!" Marielle cried. For a minute they just hugged, and both women found their eyes filling with tears. Slowly they pulled apart, and Marielle drew back to get a good look at her niece.

"You look just like your father!" she breathed.

"She looks just like you, my dear," Uncle Charles countered.

"Really? Like my father?" Morgana asked. "No one has ever told me that before."

"No one? Really, Charles." Marielle tried to look sternly at her oldest friend. "How could you spend an entire afternoon with her and not tell her she looked like Morgan?"

"Well, as I told you, Marielle dear," Uncle Charles replied a bit testily, "I was so struck by her resemblance to you at that age--and even now--that I didn't notice the resemblance to Morgan at all. Now that you mention it, though, I may be able to see it a bit."

Marielle sighed.

"Men," she clucked to Morgana. "You do look like your father, my dear."

"Thank you," Morgana answered fervently. "So you are here awfully suddenly, Aunt Marielle. How was your flight?"

"Oh, it was as good as could be expected, thank you," Marielle answered, clearly



avoiding her niece's unspoken question.

"Well. That's good." It was all Morgana could think of to say right then, at least until she knew more about why she had been called here, why Marielle was here at all.

There was a short awkward silence.

"Well, why don't we sit down," Uncle Charles suggested. "I hear Rebecca making her way in with dinner. I told them to wait until about ten minutes after we came in--I knew you two ladies would need your time to hug and cry before trying to deal with food."

They all laughed, and sat down at the table. A young woman--Rebecca, apparently--arrived with the cart of food a moment later. Morgana noticed that Rebecca was indeed not dressed in an old fashioned maid outfit.

Dinner was delicious, and, as always, conversation came more easily over food. They talked about Aunt Marielle's trip, and then Uncle Charles and Aunt Marielle had to hear all about Morgana's experiences at Oxford so far. As she was telling them about her classes and her daily routine, Morgana suddenly remembered something that she really did need to talk to them about.

"Uncle Charles, one of the friends I've made is from Tintagel. He has a big family--maybe you know them." It was funny how she was almost nervous to talk about Peter to her uncle and aunt.

"Quite possible, especially if they've been here long. What is their name?" Uncle Charles asked.

"It's McMairon. My friend's name is Peter. We met in the airport in Boston, actually. I believe his parents are David and Colleen." Morgana had realized that in that whole conversation about names on the plane, he hadn't told her his last name. She had not found it out

until recently.

“Oh, of course.” Uncle Charles smiled. “I certainly know David McMairon. Lovely family. All of those sons. They still have some little ones, I know, so your Peter must be one of the eldest--is he?”

“Yes.” Morgana blushed to have Peter referred to as “her Peter.” “He’s the second oldest. His one older brother Paul got married recently, I think.”

“Yes, of course,” Uncle Charles agreed. “I remember that wedding. Just last fall. I saw pictures in the paper. The bride was lovely, of course.”

“Of course.” Morgana smiled. “Anyway, Peter happened to be going home this weekend, so he is here in Tintagel as well. He wants me to come over and meet his family.”

“Oh, that would be lovely,” Aunt Marielle said, suddenly entering the conversation. Charles could tell that Marielle liked the idea of a potential romantic interest for her niece.

“Certainly,” he agreed. “So do you have a time planned to go there? Did he give you directions, or will he pick you up? Joshua David could certainly drive you if necessary.”

“He said he would pick me up,” Morgana told them. “I wasn’t sure what your plans were, though, Uncle Charles, or when I would be free. So we’ve tentatively decided on tea tomorrow, if that’s all right.”

“Yes,” Uncle Charles said, thinking. “Yes, tea should be fine, so long as you don’t stay too late.” He laughed at himself. “Oh dear, that sounds horribly paternal of me. What I meant, of course, was that we have a supper reservation for eight o’clock at my favorite restaurant, so you’ll have to be back in time for that.”

“Of course,” Morgana said. “That shouldn’t be a problem. Peter said he would pick me up at three if he didn’t hear from me before that.”

“That sounds wonderful, dear.” Aunt Marielle clearly approved. “We’ll want to meet him, of course.”

“All right.” Morgana was afraid they were making a bit much of this. But Carmen at least agreed with them, so perhaps Morgana herself was the one who was under reacting. “I think you’ll like him, Aunt Marielle. And his mother knits. He has a beautiful sweater she made with the traditional family fishermen’s cable pattern.”

“I like her already.” Marielle smiled. “So how is your own knitting coming along, Morgana? Have you gotten any time to work on it while you’ve been here?”

“Yes, actually, I have,” Morgana said. “Right now I’m trying my first pair of socks. I brought them with me if you’d like to see them later.”

“Of course!” Marielle cried. “Speaking of knitting, have you heard from Aunt Susanna recently, Charles?” Morgana was somewhat surprised to hear her aunt referring to an aunt of her own.

“Yes, I saw her just a few weeks ago, actually. Her health is definitely failing, but her spirits are good,” Uncle Charles told them.

The conversation progressed into a discussion of all of the other relatives with whom Aunt Marielle would have to catch up while she was in England. Morgana had not ever even heard of the majority of the people being discussed, but she was intensely interested nonetheless. This was her family that was being talked about. It was somehow hard to actually absorb that. She had grown so used to thinking of her mother’s small family as all she had. Morgana was quite eager to learn all she could about this new-found family.

She soon noticed that Uncle Charles and Aunt Marielle were both very interesting speakers, and one played off of the other quite well. They would have made the stories amusing

and worth listening to even if Morgana hadn't been related to the majority of the people mentioned. Both Aunt Marielle and Uncle Charles seemed so alive when they were talking to each other. Once again, Morgana found herself wondering why the romantic tension that seemed so palpable even now between the two of them had never come to anything.

Suddenly, Morgana thought of Colin. She had wanted to ask Uncle Charles about him-- who Colin was, how he knew about her. She waited somewhat impatiently for Uncle Charles and Aunt Marielle to finish discussing the latest family scandals caused by Cousin Rosamund. When there seemed to be a lull in the conversation, Morgana eagerly broke in.

"Uncle Charles, Aunt Marielle," she said.

"Yes?" asked Uncle Charles.

"What is it, dear?" said Aunt Marielle. She could tell that Morgana was worried about something.

"I met someone yesterday who said he was a cousin, but I don't know who he is. I was hoping one of you could tell me." She was trying to phrase it as neutrally as she could.

"Most likely," Uncle Charles agreed. "I think I pretty much know everyone in the family, at least everyone around here."

"Yes," Aunt Marielle chuckled. "The only one who knows more is Mr. Whittier."

"Mr. Whittier?" Morgana asked. She was quite sure she hadn't heard of a Mr. Whittier in any of her relatives' talk about all of the various cousins. Unless, of course, they meant the poet. She wondered if it was some obscure literary reference that she just wasn't educated enough to get.

"He's the family lawyer, Morgana," Aunt Marielle explained. "He lives--"

"Yes, yes," Uncle Charles broke in. "Morgana can hear about our dear Mr. Whittier

later. I want to hear about this mystery cousin whom she met.”

“Well, he was about my age, or probably a little older,” Morgana began. “He showed up at my dorm room yesterday afternoon. Someone probably thought he looked like a student and let him in. He asked me out to dinner. Since he said he was my cousin, I went.”

“Did you find out his name, Morgana?” Uncle Charles asked. His voice had a sharp edge to it, and Morgana wasn’t quite sure why.

“Oh yes, of course.” Morgana blushed. How stupid of her. “He said his name was Colin Hapworth.”

Uncle Charles and Aunt Marielle exchanged a look. Morgana couldn’t really read it, but it was definitely meaningful, and did not look overly happy.

“Hapworth,” Uncle Charles muttered. “Interesting.”

“So you know who he is?” Morgana asked. “He’s really a cousin? I mean, I don’t know why he would say he was if he wasn’t, but I thought the whole thing was sort of odd.”

“No, I don’t know this Colin in particular,” Uncle Charles replied. “But I have had some experience with other members of the Hapworth family.”

“Oh!” Aunt Marielle exclaimed. She had just realized what exactly Charles was talking about, and what it implied about her own fears.

“Are they related to us?” Morgana pressed. She wasn’t sure why it was so important to her, but it was.

“Perhaps. Somewhat,” Uncle Charles answered.

Morgana just looked at him, clearly confused.

“I’m sorry, Morgana. I know this is all confusing for you,” Uncle Charles said. “I know I’m probably not making much sense.”

Morgana nodded silently, and waited for more.

“This is all connected with the reason that Marielle came here, and what we needed to talk about. If the Hapworths are involved, it makes it all rather more complicated than I had anticipated and, indeed, hoped.”

“I see,” Morgana started to say, but stopped. She didn’t see. She didn’t see at all.

“But--but--who *are* the Hapworths?” she tried again. “All I know is that this guy appeared at my door yesterday. He seemed nice enough. Extremely nice, in fact. Handsome. Charming. He seemed intent on sweeping me off my feet. But something seemed somewhat odd about the whole thing.”

“Yes, that sounds like a Hapworth.” Uncle Charles nodded. Rebecca entered the room to clear the plates, and whispered with Uncle Charles for a minute.

“Coffee or tea, Morgana?” he asked her, a complete non sequitur. “Your aunt Marielle is having tea, I assume, and I am having coffee, so you have your choice.”

“Oh. Coffee, please, then,” she answered. “I usually drink both, depending on my mood, but since I arrived in England I’ve been drinking a whole lot of tea and no coffee. Coffee will be a nice change.”

“Yes, many here in our beloved company refuse to even give coffee a chance.” Uncle Charles chuckled. “Personally, I like them both as well. You Americans are good for something after all.” He smiled, so Morgana knew he didn’t mean the insult seriously. At least, he mostly didn’t. “I usually drink tea in the mornings and afternoons and coffee in the evenings,” he continued.

“That sounds nice,” Morgana agreed. Clearly her Uncle Charles wasn’t willing to discuss the Hapworths any more right now, so they might as well talk about hot beverage

preferences. “That way you get to have them both.”

Aunt Marielle laughed and joined the conversation.

“I’ve never understood the appeal of coffee myself,” she said. “Although some of those new coffee drinks that are getting so popular--you know, cappucino, mochacino, latte, all that--sound so good when they are described, but I have never really liked any of them that I’ve tried.”

Morgana grinned.

“I like them all,” she said.

“Well, I find that there are so many varieties of tea to try that I never get bored,” Aunt Marielle continued. “Even just the normal grocery store now has dozens of varieties. All the flavored teas, herbal teas... of course, nothing can beat a nice cup of real British tea. That’s one of the reasons I love to come back here.”

“Yes, I’ve definitely been enjoying the teas here,” Morgana agreed.

“Oh, do you know what I’ve been drinking lately that I really like, though?” Aunt Marielle demanded. Despite her tone of voice, it was clearly a rhetorical question, so Uncle Charles and Morgana just waited.

“That new chai stuff!” Aunt Marielle announced. “It’s so popular all of a sudden, and it really is tea based, so one day I thought I might as well just try it. They have it now at the tea room that I go to sometimes for lunch in town.”

“And you liked it?” Uncle Charles asked. He could barely keep the amusement out of his voice.

“Yes, I loved it!” Aunt Marielle smiled broadly. “I’ve gotten it almost every time since then.”

“Brigid, Patrick, and Columba,” Uncle Charles murmured. It was clear that he was

trying to make it sound as though he were speaking under his breath, but wanted to make sure that Marielle and Morgana both heard him. “Will wonders never cease?”

Morgana looked at him perplexedly.

“Brigid, Patrick,--and *who?*” she asked.

“Columba, my dear,” he told her. “Dear old Saint Columba. They are Celtic saints all three of them.”

“Ah, I see,” Morgana answered.

“I take it you don’t know much about the Celtic saints?” he asked.

“No, not much more than I’ve learned from *Cadfael*,” she told him. She felt as though she were disappointing him. Morgana hated that feeling.

“Well, Cadfael is certainly a good start,” Uncle Charles conceded. “Now how about King Arthur? You *are* named after his sister, of course.”

Morgana felt as though there were more to the question than she was understanding.

“I am?” she asked. “But I thought I was named after my father,” she protested.

“Well, in the most direct sense, you are.” It was Aunt Marielle who answered her this time. “But it is a name that has been in the family for centuries, and it was originally because of Arthur’s Morgana.”

“No, Marielle,” Uncle Charles corrected. “That’s not quite right. It originally *was* Arthur’s Morgana.”

“What?” Morgana asked. “I’m named after her? Morgan le Fay? I mean, I’m not just named after her, but *descended* from her?” She was so surprised that she could barely speak.

“Well, that is the family story, dear one,” Aunt Marielle said. “It can never be completely proven, of course. But the family tradition has always been remarkably consistent



about it.”

“Yes.” Uncle Charles stated it forcefully. “I am fairly certain that, for all intents and purposes, we can consider ourselves to be descended from Morgan le Fay, beautiful and always misunderstood sister of the great King Arthur.”

“Wow.” It was all Morgana could say. “Wow.”

They allowed a moment for the news to settle in. Rebecca brought in the tea and coffee, and the three of them carefully poured and stirred, none of them wanting to be the first to speak.

“Well.” Morgana finally broke the silence. “I guess that would explain why I’ve always been so interested in King Arthur and his family and stories.” Even as she said it, she realized how silly it sounded. How could something she had never had any idea of affect her? And yet she had a feeling that it had.

“Yes, yes it would.” Uncle Charles nodded as though confirming something to himself that he had long suspected. “Does the Hapworth issue make any more sense now, Morgana?”

“Well, no, not really.” She hated being so dense, but it really didn’t.

“Hmm. I’m trying to think of the best way to explain this,” he mused. “Have you by any chance read *The Mists of Avalon* by Marion Zimmer Bradley?”

“Yes, of course!” Morgana was excited. This she could talk about without sounding completely stupid. “It’s one of my favorite books. Has been since middle school.”

“Well, Ms. Bradley did make up a fair amount of what she wrote, of course,” Uncle Charles said, shaking his head. “But she did have a few things right. Remember Morgause?”

“Of course,” Morgana replied. She knew the book quite well.

“Well. The Hapworths claim to be descended from Arthur through Morgause.” Uncle Charles obviously found the idea distasteful.

“Through Morgause? What? That’s ridiculous,” Morgana protested.

“Well, she did raise Mordred,” Uncle Charles pointed out. “And *The Mists of Avalon* certainly made clear how power-hungry she was. I think we can trust Bradley with that much.”

“Wow. I didn’t have any idea there were people who argued about descent from King Arthur, never mind that they were in my own family!” Morgana was flabbergasted. “But *why*, exactly? What do they possibly hope to gain? I mean, if they think they are King Arthur’s descendants, fine. They can think whatever they want. Why do they care if anyone else agrees or not?”

“Well, the true descendants of King Arthur are, of course, the heirs to certain... well, heirlooms.” Uncle Charles said this as though Morgana should understand what he was talking about. She didn’t.

“Heirlooms? I mean, I know he was rich and everything, but I can’t think of any jewels or anything offhand that are particularly associated with King Arthur,” Morgana said. Wow. It was just starting to seep in that not only was she descended from Morgan le Fay, but that that meant she was descended from King Arthur himself as well.

“Morgana, please.” Uncle Charles was beginning to sound just a bit exasperated. “You’re a smart girl. And a language major, no less. Just think about your name.”

“My name?” Morgana thought as hard as she could. “Morgana... from the sea, I know that much...”

“Your other name,” Aunt Marielle spoke up faintly.

“Oh! Sangrall.” Morgana was being to understand. “Sangrall. Sangraal. Sang raal. Of course. The Grail.”

“Good girl.” Uncle Charles was pleased now. “I know you’d figure it out.”

“So--we think we should be the heirs to the Grail.” Morgana certainly understood more now, but she still wasn’t sure exactly what the Hapworth family was after. Unless-- “Wait, do we *have* the Grail?”

“Yes.” Aunt Marielle’s voice wavered a bit. “We had forgotten that we had the Grail. But we have it. Or at least, we have *a* Grail. I’m not sure how much it matters to anyone at this point which Grail it is.”

“Which Grail? There are more than one?” Morgana felt like her head was spinning now. Had she stepped in to some odd sort of fantasy land? King Arthur? Morgan le Fay? The Grail? Her? She couldn’t help but giggle as she thought of what her mother’s reaction would be. Then she abruptly stopped, and something inside her turned cold. Perhaps this was why her mother had torn her away from her father and all of her father’s family. She would have to ask Uncle Charles about that, or better yet, Aunt Marielle. But first, she should figure out exactly what this Grail stuff was.

“Over the centuries there have been thousands of cups which have been claimed to be the Holy Grail,” Marielle explained. “I had never really known much about it, but I’ve been doing a lot of reading recently.”

“Oh, yes, of course. That makes sense. I think I’ve read about some of them,” Morgana said. “They can generally all be traced back to some point of origin or introduction, right?”

“Generally, yes,” Aunt Marielle agreed.

“So where does our Grail come from?” Morgana asked.

“Well, that’s part of the issue,” Aunt Marielle said. “No one is quite sure. As far back as we have been able to trace, it has been passed from one Morgana in the family to the next.”

“That’s part of the reason why our Grail seems so real.” Uncle Charles picked up the

explanation. “It seems somewhat contrary to what you would think, but I think it makes sense if you think about it. It would make sense for the real Grail to be the one that is simply passed down from generation to generation, instead of one that can be traced to a specific church or shady antique dealer.”

“Yes, I suppose that makes sense.” Morgana nodded slowly. “But--passed down from Morgana to Morgana? Who has it now, then? You haven’t mentioned any other Morganas in the family.”

“I do,” said Aunt Marielle softly.

“But your name isn’t Morgana--is it?” Morgana asked.

“No, it’s not, don’t worry,” Aunt Marielle laughed. “I had a twin sister named Morgana. She died shortly after birth, long before the next Morgana--you--was to be born. So the elders of the family at the time--my father, my grandparents, my great-aunt Morgana--”

“Who was my grandmother,” Uncle Charles put in.

“Yes,” Aunt Marielle continued. “They all decided that since I was Morgana’s twin, I should be the keeper of the cup for that generation. Of course, they weren’t really thinking about it as the Grail then.”

“They weren’t? Why not? And how do you know it is if they didn’t?” Morgana asked. She really wanted to understand all of this.

“Well, we’re not exactly sure why they weren’t,” Aunt Marielle said. She seemed uncertain as to how to proceed.

“We are starting to think that the Grail story was forgotten around the time that the family went to the States,” Uncle Charles said. “That was right before the Civil War. I think that it makes sense that something like that could be forgotten between the moving and then the

war.”

“Yes, I see,” said Morgana. “So then there was still this cup, and it was still handed down to each person named Morgana, but it was just a family tradition, and no one really knew why?”

“Yes, that’s right,” Aunt Marielle said.

“So what made you start looking into it?” Morgana wondered.

“Well, a piece of the base was chipped off--it had been that way for years, maybe even since I got it,” Aunt Marielle began. “So one day last autumn, I decided to mend it. Then I started drinking out of it occasionally, and had odd experiences. Visions, perhaps. Hallucinations, even. But they all had to do with the cup.”

“Wow,” Morgana breathed. Visions.

“One of the things I kept seeing was you,” her aunt continued.

“Me?” Morgana broke in. “But you didn’t even know me then.”

“No, I didn’t, but I had known you when you were a baby,” Aunt Marielle pointed out.

“And in these visions I saw you as a baby.”

“Oh, I see.” Morgana thought she was beginning to understand now. “So is that when you wrote me that letter?” she asked.

“Yes, it was.” Aunt Marielle smiled. “And completely regardless of all of these matters, I’m quite glad that I did. I’m just sorry that I waited as long as I did. I would have loved to be around to see you grow up.”

“Yes.” Morgana thought about how different her childhood would have been if she had had someone like Aunt Marielle around. “Yes, that would have been nice.” She was afraid she was going to cry. This was too much all at once for her.

Once again Uncle Charles seemed to be reading her mind.

"I think that's enough serious talk for one evening, ladies," he said. "You must both be tired from your journeys."

They agreed, and it was only then that Morgana noticed just how tired she actually was. She said good night to Uncle Charles and Aunt Marielle and followed Rebecca up the grand sweeping staircase. The house was an old one that had been much added on to over the years, and Morgana still had no real directional sense within it. She was glad that there seemed to be plenty of people around to lead her from room to room whenever she had to move.

Rebecca led her into a beautiful bedroom, furnished in way that was old-fashioned but classic. Morgana sleepily looked around her. At the moment, the piece of furniture that stuck out the most to her was the big wooden four-poster bed. It was one of those beds that was so high up off the ground that it had to have its own little step stool to assist the sleeper in getting in. Morgana had always loved those. The bed was covered with fluffy blankets and pillows. In her current state of mind, Morgana thought it looked extremely enticing.

She nodded sleepily as Rebecca showed her around. The girl showed her the towels on the chair, the extra blankets in the closet, Morgana's own overnight bag, which Joshua David had apparently brought upstairs for her and placed on the dresser. Through her heavy eyelids, Morgana noticed how beautiful and subtly rich the room was. It even had its own bathroom--and not a small one, either--through a little door. Morgana had never known how well-to-do her father's family was. She was sure somehow that they had offered her mother money to help bring her up, and she was equally sure that her mother had refused the assistance, partially because it was like Jane Jordan to insist on doing things her own way and herself regardless of who was offering to help, and partially because her mother would not have wanted "that family"

to be able to claim any influence at all over her daughter.

Morgana realized that Rebecca had left the room while she was lost in thoughts of her mother. Her mother. She wasn't sure how much to tell her about all of this Grail stuff, and Uncle Charles and Aunt Marielle. Oh well. Morgana was sleepy. She could worry about everything tomorrow. She pulled her nightgown out of her overnight bag and changed into it, carefully folding her clothes from the day and putting them back in the bag. She wondered briefly if putting her clothes away was something she was supposed to allow the maids to do--if they would be offended or something if she did it herself--but she soon thrust that thought aside as silly. She wanted them to see that she was neat and a good guest, and she wasn't used to having maids around anyway.

Morgana climbed up into the high bed with *Anne of Windy Poplars* in her hand, all set to read it for a few minutes before going to sleep. Once she was snuggled down in the bed between the soft blankets and cushy mattress, though, she could barely keep her eyes open long enough to read more than a paragraph or two. Much as she liked Anne, she and her adventures at the Kingsport Ladies College would have to wait.

After she marked her place carefully and put the book on the nightstand by the bed, Morgana laid back down and pulled the blankets up to her head. She fell asleep thinking dreamlike thoughts about Anne having visions of the Grail at the bottom of a well.

### *Chapter Sixteen*

Marielle and Charles paused outside Morgana's door.

"What do you think, Charles?" asked Marielle softly.

“I think she took it very well, considering,” Charles replied.

“Yes. Considering.” Marielle herself seemed to be considering something. “It’s really too bad about that mother of hers, you know.”

“Oh?” Charles wasn’t entirely sure what she meant.

“Morgana loves her so much. And Jane hates us so much.” Marielle thought the implications were clear. “Some day, Morgana will have to make a sort of choice. Maybe she already has.”

“Yes,” Charles agreed slowly. “Or Jane will have to change. Which is always possible, of course.”

“Hmph.” Marielle wasn’t convinced. “Possible. I suppose.”

“Give the woman a chance, Marielle,” Charles chided. “It’s possible for anyone to change. Now come on, I think you should get some sleep.”

He took her arm and gently guided her to her room.

### *Chapter Seventeen*

When Morgana woke up the next morning, she wondered for a moment where exactly she was. Not in Rafferton, not at school... England... but not Oxford... and then suddenly she remembered. She was in the great big high bed in the pretty bedroom in Chalice Keep. Uncle Charles’s house. Her own family house. The house of the family that was descended from King Arthur. She was descended from King Arthur.

It was certainly an interesting way to wake up. Morgana chuckled as she wondered what would happen if she tried to get anyone she knew back in the States, in Rafferton or at college, to



believe that she was, in effect, a princess. They would clearly think the idea ridiculous. Really, she thought the idea was rather ridiculous herself. But one thing she had learned so far was that just because something seems ridiculous doesn't mean that it isn't true.

Morgana slipped out of bed and walked to the dresser to look at her watch. It was almost nine. No wonder she felt so rested. She hoped that Uncle Charles and Aunt Marielle weren't waiting for her, wouldn't mind that she had slept so long. She wondered whether they would expect her to take a shower and get dressed before coming downstairs for breakfast or not. Hmm. It would certainly be more polite and formal to do so, but she had definitely gotten the message last night that she was a member of the close immediate family now. And she didn't want to make them wait any longer than necessary.

Suddenly Morgana noticed a robe hanging by the door of the bathroom. It was one of those big fluffy fleecy velvety robes, in a brilliant purple. Morgana had always wanted a robe like that. It made her decision for her. She would go downstairs in her pajamas and the robe.

As she took the robe off of its hook and began to put it on, Morgana noticed something that made her stop short. The robe had an embroidered monogram--and the letters on it were MS. Morgana Sangrall. Or--who?

She would definitely have to ask Uncle Charles. Enrobed in lush purple, Morgana left the bedroom and went out into the hall. Once she was there, she realized her next problem. How exactly did she get downstairs?

Morgana listened hard for a moment, and thought she heard voices coming from a little way off, vaguely in the direction that she thought the breakfast room should be in. She started off that way and soon found the stairs. Good. From the stairs, she knew what to do. She thought.

After a few wrong turns, Morgana found one of the doors to the breakfast room. She could hear Uncle Charles and Aunt Marielle talking and laughing inside. She was glad to hear that they didn't sound too sad or upset or serious. She just hoped she wouldn't be interrupting anything by entering the room.

"Good morning," she called as she walked in. Uncle Charles and Aunt Marielle were seated at the table with the remnants of their breakfasts in front of them and what looked like old notebooks spread out on the table around them.

Uncle Charles, ever a gentleman, rose from his seat and walked toward her.

"Good morning, Morgana," he said, and pulled out a chair for her to sit down.

"Good morning, Uncle Charles. Good morning, Aunt Marielle," Morgana said as she sat and poured herself a cup of tea.

"Good morning, dear. How did you sleep?" asked Aunt Marielle, looking up at her.

"Very well!" Morgana exclaimed. "Better than I have in a while, actually. That bed is very comfortable."

"Oh good," said Uncle Charles. "I thought you might like that room. And I see you've found your robe." He gestured toward it.

"Yes--wait, *my* robe?" Morgana asked. "I mean, I noticed that it had my initials on it, of course. But how is it mine? I've never seen it before."

"Well, the robe once belonged to my grandmother, who was also Morgana Sangrall, and to my aunt," Uncle Charles explained.

"And your aunt was Morgana too?" Morgana asked.

"Yes, she was," answered Uncle Charles.

"So this robe has just been passed from Morgana to Morgana, which makes it mine

now?" Morgana stirred a bit of sugar into her tea.

"Yes, I suppose you could put it that way," Uncle Charles said, pouring another cup of tea himself.

"Wow," said Morgana. Rebecca entered the room with a cart to replenish the breakfast table. Morgana chose bran flakes this morning, with a banana to slice on top.

"How do you like your eggs, miss?" she asked Morgana.

"Oh, no eggs for me, thank you," Morgana answered.

"Bacon? Tomatoes?" Rebecca tried to hide how odd she found it that Miss Morgana did not want eggs.

"Just tomatoes and toast, please," requested Morgana. She looked over at Uncle Charles and Aunt Marielle, who were still looking at the old books.

"What is that you're reading?" she asked, and then bit her lip. She hoped the question wasn't rude. It wasn't necessarily any of her business.

"They are old journals of various members of the family," answered Uncle Charles.

"Do you keep a journal, Morgana?" asked Aunt Marielle.

"Yes, well, sometimes," Morgana said. "I always try, but it doesn't always last for very long. Actually, my current journal has lasted for a while, so I think I've discovered the secret to journal-writing, at least for me."

"Oh?" Uncle Charles looked very interested. "I've never managed to keep a journal myself."

"Well, when I started this one, I started writing in Old English," Morgana explained.

"To practice. And I've kept it up."

Uncle Charles and Aunt Marielle both dissolved in peals of laughter, and after a minute,

Morgana joined them.

“I’d love to see you try that method of keeping it up, Charles,” Aunt Marielle laughed.

“Ah well,” chuckled Uncle Charles. “Perhaps I’m just not meant to keep a journal.”

Morgana had finished her cereal by the time they all started laughing. She pushed the bowl to the side and sipped her glass of milk as she looked at the journals spread out around them. There had to be at least a few dozen of them. She wondered how old they were.

“So are all of these journals recent, or do they go back for generations?” she asked.

“Well, we’re not really sure,” Uncle Charles began. “I, for one, have never read much of them before. I knew we had them on a shelf in the library, of course, but I’ve always thought it better to let sleeping dogs lie.”

“Why are you reading them now, then?” Morgana asked. She realized that she might know the answer as she was asking the question.

“We think they may give us some insight that will help us figure out what is going on with you and the Grail and Colin Hapworth,” Uncle Charles stated.

“To answer your original question, though, dear,” Aunt Marielle said, “it seems as though some of these go back at least a few hundred years. You would probably have better luck than either of us in reading the oldest ones.”

Morgana nodded, barely hearing what her aunt said. She was thinking about Colin Hapworth, the dashing young man who had been so charming to her. Why would he try so hard to make her like him if their families were such bitter enemies? Unless--

“Oh!” she exclaimed. Uncle Charles and Aunt Marielle both turned to look at her. “Colin Hapworth. I had assumed that he was trying to be nice to me so that he could somehow get the Grail. But it’s more than that, isn’t it?”

Aunt Marielle nodded slowly, but didn't say anything.

"He doesn't just want me to give him the Grail," Morgana continued. "He wants me to *marry* him. Or at least his family does. So that then if I had his children"--she shuddered at the thought--"there couldn't be any dispute any more about the bloodline. It would combine the two."

When Morgana stopped speaking, there was a long silence. Finally Aunt Marielle broke it.

"Yes," she said. "We can't be sure, of course, but we think that that is what they are trying to do."

"In fact," added Uncle Charles, "we think they might have been trying to do that for years. Centuries, even."

Morgana's eyes widened. "Really?"

"Well, that is what is suggested in some of these journals," Aunt Marielle agreed cautiously. "In the time when the main branch of the Sangrall family moved to the States, the Hapworths couldn't get at us so easily, so we haven't had any run-ins with them recently. But now that you are here, they seem to be up to their old tricks."

"Wow," said Morgana. She couldn't believe this was actually happening. It seemed like something out of an old Gothic novel.

"Perhaps they have been trying recently." Uncle Charles looked pained. "Many years ago, I had a relationship with a young woman named Lillian Clare. If I remember correctly, her mother was a Hapworth."

Now it was Aunt Marielle's turn to look surprised.

"Then that means..." she whispered.

“That she never really cared a fig? Yes, I’m afraid it does,” said Uncle Charles.

Morgana didn’t quite understand what they were talking about, but thought that she didn’t need to inquire about her uncle’s personal life. If it was something she needed to know, they would tell her. Eventually.

“So I should just stay away from Colin, then?” Morgana asked. It certainly seemed the safest course of action.

“Yes,” replied Aunt Marielle with surprising forcefulness.

“Well, I’m not sure,” said Uncle Charles. “We have to think this through, Marielle,” he answered Aunt Marielle’s surprised and furious look.

“Think it through? Putting Morgana into their hands?” Marielle couldn’t believe what Charles was saying.

“Come, Marielle,” he said soothingly. “It is not as though they are going to hurt her, or anything. Morgana went on what appeared to be a perfectly normal date with Colin. It would look extremely suspicious if she simply refused to see him again without giving any sort of explanation.”

“Well yes, I suppose,” Aunt Marielle allowed. “We don’t want them to know that we know what they are doing, after all.”

“Right,” agreed Uncle Charles. “Morgana? What do you think of all this?”

“I think I can handle it,” she said, more bravely than she felt. “As you said, he’s not going to hurt me. He will do whatever he can to make me like him. I’ll just have to play along.” *And certainly not let him kiss me*, she thought. She was glad she had pulled away when he had tried to do so the other night.

“Good girl,” said Uncle Charles. “Now, your young man is coming for you at three

o'clock, is that right?"

"Yes," Morgana answered, and blushed again. She wondered what Peter would think of being referred to as her young man.

"We should have time to get through a good number of these journals before that, then, and then maybe we'll know better how to proceed," Uncle Charles said.

"Why don't you finish your breakfast, dear," suggested Aunt Marielle, "and then go up and get dressed. Then you can come back down to read with us."

"Good idea," agreed Uncle Charles. "Why don't we go read in the library, instead? I think it's a more comfortable reading room."

"Certainly." Aunt Marielle smiled. She liked the library.

"All right," said Morgana. "That sounds good. The only problem is that I have no idea where the library is."

Aunt Marielle and Uncle Charles chuckled.

"It is a confusing house, isn't it dear?" said Aunt Marielle sympathetically. "Those who are born here seem to have no problem with it, but it took me a years before I knew exactly where everything was."

"To get to the library, just turn right when you go down the stairs instead of left," Uncle Charles directed. "It's a big room, lots of books. You can't miss it." He grinned.

Morgana giggled.

"All right," she said. "See you in a bit." She went upstairs to shower quickly, ready to lose herself in a day of reading the exploits and adventures of her ancestors.

### *Chapter Seventeen*

At half two that afternoon, Morgana got up and stretched. She had been reading old journals for several hours now. They were fascinating, but they were old, so the ink was faded, and the writing was often small and hard to read.

Morgana had found that even the parts of the journals that had nothing whatsoever to do with the Grail were intensely interesting and enjoyable. She had always loved British social history, and here it was in abundance. There were journals from the perspective of a dozen generations of men, women, and children in the Sangrall family.

Early in the reading process, Aunt Marielle had picked out several of what seemed to be the oldest journals and given them to Morgana to start with. None of them were quite old enough to really count as Middle English, but the development of language was, of course, a continuum, and it was hard to draw exact boundaries as to when people started speaking “Modern” English. Morgana definitely found her knowledge of the ancient languages helpful when reading the old journals.

Aunt Marielle and Uncle Charles looked up from their own reading as Morgana stood.

“I think I’m going to go upstairs and brush my hair and stuff,” she said. “I want to be ready when Peter gets here.”

“Yes, run along, dear,” Aunt Marielle beamed. Uncle Charles simply nodded and returned to his reading.

When Morgana returned downstairs a few minutes later, she sat back down and tried to pick up her reading from where she had left off, but she found that she couldn’t really concentrate very well. She was excited about seeing Peter again, and really rather nervous about meeting his family. She really hoped they liked her. Then she stopped and wondered why she



cared so much. No matter what Aunt Marielle kept implying, Peter wasn't really her "young man." Did she want him to be? Morgana wasn't sure.

Morgana jumped up when the doorbell rang, leading Uncle Charles to look up from his book and chuckle.

"Don't be too anxious, my dear. You don't want a gentleman to think that you are too eager, or just sitting at home waiting for his call." Despite his words, he smiled kindly at his niece.

Morgana knew that Uncle Charles was probably right, but she didn't really see any reason to act as though she were indifferent when she wasn't. She walked briskly down the hallway and, with much effort, threw open the big front door.

Peter stood on the doorstep grinning at her.

"Good morning, Morgana. That door a bit much for you, my dear?" he teased.

"Well. It *is* awfully big and heavy," she pointed out. "Would you like to come in?"

"Sure, for a minute," he answered. "Don't want to bring you late for tea, though."

"Of course not," she agreed. "It will be quick. I just want you to meet Uncle Charles and Aunt Marielle. I think you'll like them."

He followed her inside and down the hall to the library. Charles and Marielle both rose as they entered the room.

"So this must be Peter McMairon," Uncle Charles said jovially. "I think I'd recognize you as one of the McMairon clan even if my niece hadn't told me your name, my boy."

"Yes, sir," Peter said politely. "Everyone says that we all look alike." Morgana thought that he looked a bit awestruck, just as she had when she had first met Uncle Charles and Chalice Keep. It was kind of funny to think of how quickly she had gotten used to it all. Now if only she

could actually learn her way around--but first, she had better complete the introductions.

“And this is my aunt, Miss Marielle Sangrall,” she told Peter, motioning toward Aunt Marielle.

“Pleased to meet you,” he said. “You look just like Morgana.”

“Doesn’t she though?” Uncle Charles asked. “That’s what I keep telling them.”

“Pleased to meet you too, Peter,” Aunt Marielle said. “And we hope we’ll get to see more of you soon, but I understand that you are going to your mother’s house for tea, and you wouldn’t want to keep them waiting.”

“Yes, ma’am,” Peter agreed. “I think we had better get going, Morgana.”

“All right,” Morgana said. “Let me just get my coat.” As she and Peter walked to the closet to get her coat and then out to the car, it seemed a little awkward. They were outside of their normal realm of interaction, and she hoped they would be able to adapt.

By the time they pulled up to his parents’ house, though, they were completely back to normal, and Morgana found that she rather liked seeing Peter in this different context. She wondered what he would be like with the rest of his family.

As they walked into the house, Morgana could smell fresh-baked scones.

“Ooh,” she couldn’t help saying softly to Peter. “That smells heavenly.”

“Yes, it does, doesn’t it?” he whispered back. He took her hand--a surprise--and led her into the kitchen, where a few boys of various ages were sitting at the table studying and a pretty motherly-looking woman was stirring something at the stove. She turned as they walked in.

“Oh, there you are, Peter!” she said cheerily. “And this must be Morgana. We’re so glad to finally meet you, dear.” Morgana liked her already.

“And over here,” started Peter, “we have John, Timothy, and Thomas.”

Morgana saw that it hadn't been hyperbole--they did all look remarkably alike. She wasn't sure she would be able to keep them apart at first, especially as there were another four of them whom she hadn't even met yet. She just smiled at the boys, who barely looked up at her anyway.

"Come on, chaps," Peter said. "Be polite and say hello."

A chorus of hellos followed this, and then the boys promptly lost interest. Peter sighed.

"Ah well. That's little brothers for you." He shook his head. "There could be an earthquake and they wouldn't even notice."

Morgana giggled, and then hoped that her giggling didn't sound too silly and immature.

"Where's Da, Mum?" Peter asked.

"In the study, I think," Mrs. McMairon said. "I wouldn't advise disturbing him, though. He said he was very busy, but would be out for tea to meet Morgana."

"Oh, all right," Peter replied. He turned to Morgana. "Pat is away at school, and since Paul is married he lives somewhere else, of course, but you should get to meet everyone else."

"Well, not quite," his mother corrected. "Joe is over to a friend's house today. But Paul and Jean called and said they were coming. They have news, they say. Da and I have some news too, in fact. But that will all wait. Why don't you take Morgana outside and show her around a bit? It's a decent day for once."

"Yes, Ma," Peter said obligingly. "When should we be back in for tea?"

"Oh, I don't know... say twenty minutes or so," Mrs. McMairon said. "That should give your father enough time to finish what he's doing."

"All right, then." Peter headed for the door. "This way, Morgana." She followed him out the kitchen door into the garden.

“It doesn’t look like much now, of course.” Peter seemed almost apologetic. “But Ma has beautiful flowers all spring and summer.” He smiled at Morgana. “You’ll have to come back at the end of the semester to see them, of course.”

“Sure,” Morgana murmured. It hadn’t even seemed like a question.

She looked over at Peter. He had knelt down and was joyously greeting a small orange cat. Morgana went over to join him. She loved cats. And something about this one seemed familiar, somehow. She knelt beside Peter so she could pet the cat as well.

“Affectionate little thing, isn’t she?” Peter cooed. “I call her Eilena.”

*Eilena!* That was why Morgana thought she had seen the cat before. She was just like the little cat by the pool by at college. She even had the same name.

“This sounds crazy,” Morgana began cautiously, “but I knew a cat back in the States who looked just like this, and I called her Eilena too.” She almost held her breath, wondering how he would respond.

“Wow.” Peter looked at her, amazed. “I’m not sure what to say. Just... Wow.”

“If I didn’t know better,” said Morgana as she petted Eilena, “I would think it actually was the same cat. She’s just like her.”

“Hmm,” Peter mused. “Why did you name the one you knew Eilena?”

“I’m not sure,” Morgana replied. “It just seemed like her name. She wasn’t really mine--she just lived on my college campus. I had never seen her before last November, but she was around for the rest of the semester after that.”

“Interesting,” said Peter. “Who knows? Maybe it is the same cat.”

“But--but that’s impossible,” Morgana said. *Not much more impossible than everything else you’ve been hearing lately*, countered a little voice in the back of her head. “You, of all

people. You're a physicist. Isn't it impossible?"

"You know what the one most important thing I've learned while studying physics is, Morgana?" It seemed as though Peter was changing the subject, but Morgana knew he probably wasn't.

"What?" she asked.

"As you get more and more into theoretical physics, anything is possible." Peter shook his head. "But this... I don't know."

They petted the cat in silence for a few minutes. Then Morgana remembered something she had wanted to bring up.

"Your mother was saying everyone had all sorts of news to tell at tea," she started.

"Should I really be there for that? Won't I just be in the way?"

"No, no, of course not," Peter reassured her. "Ma and Da have been dying to meet you. Paul too, so I'm glad he is coming after all. It's just too bad that you won't get to meet Pat and Joe. Oh well. Another time."

"So you really don't think it will be a problem for me to be here when everyone is telling their news?" Morgana asked again.

"No, I really don't," Peter said. "I am somewhat curious as to what all the news is, though. I'm afraid Ma almost had that 'we're having another baby' look on her face."

"Oh!" Morgana exclaimed. "That would be exciting! Wouldn't it?" She realized that she wasn't really sure how Peter would feel about it.

"Yes, it would." Peter smiled. "You'd think after six little brothers I'd stop getting excited about them, and just get annoyed. But you're right, I think it would be exciting if that was their news. And I can't think of anything else it would be, offhand. At least not anything

good.”

“Oh,” Morgana said. She wondered what bad news Peter was afraid of, but she didn’t want to ask.

“Well, I guess we should get inside so we can actually hear all of this news instead of just speculating about it,” Peter pointed out. “I wonder if Paul and Jean are here yet?”

“I didn’t hear a car,” Morgana said.

“Oh, they just live in town, a little way away,” replied Peter. “It’s a long walk, but they both like walking, so when the weather is decent that’s what they usually do.”

“Oh, that’s neat.” Morgana had always wanted to live somewhere where she could walk to places. Houses were too far apart for much of that in Rafferton.

They went back into the kitchen, where there was another flurry of introductions with Paul and Jean, and Peter’s father. Morgana decided that she liked them.

Soon they were all seated at a long table in the dining room, and the little boys were finally mostly quiet as they ate. Morgana put a scone on her plate, and prepared her tea while trying to figure out exactly how she was to go about politely eating the scone.

“So we hear that this is your first real cream tea, Morgana?” Mrs. McMairon asked.

“Make sure you show her what to do, Peter.” Morgana was grateful for the instruction.

“Of course, Ma,” Peter said. “Pass the clotted cream over here, will you, Jacky?” One of the young brothers passed over a dish of something that looked like it was somewhere between whipped cream and butter. Morgana was quite sure she had never had it before.

“So that’s clotted cream?” she asked, as Peter spread a liberal amount on her scone for her and then broke the scone in two. “I think I’ve read about it, but I’m sure I’ve never eaten it before.”

“Ooh, you’re in for a treat, then,” Paul told her. Beside him, Jean smiled.

“Clotted cream is one of Paul’s favorite foods,” she explained to Morgana.

After a few bites, Morgana definitely understood why. The clotted cream was unlike anything she had ever eaten before, but she loved it immediately. It did taste like something somewhere between whipped cream and butter, just as it had looked. It was divine.

“Wow,” she murmured appreciatively. “This is heavenly.”

The McMairon family laughed.

“Glad you like it,” Peter said. “Ma made it herself. That and the scones both.”

“You did? Wow.” Morgana was truly impressed. “I was just thinking that these were the best scones I’ve had since I arrived.”

Mrs. McMairon thanked her, and they all lapsed into comfortable chatter. Morgana talked mostly with Peter, and with Paul and Jean, since they were the ones he was sitting closest to. Toward the end of the meal, Paul cleared his throat and tried to get everyone’s attention.

“So Jean and I have some news,” he said once everyone was quiet. He paused, clearly trying to draw out the suspense for as long as possible. “Ma, Da... If all goes well, your first grandbaby will be born in October.”

“Oh!” Mrs. McMairon gasped. “How--how wonderful.” Morgana thought that the mother looked extremely surprised, more so than necessary, but this was quickly covered over when the family burst into applause.

“Have a boy, Jean,” little Tommy said. “I want a baby nephew.”

Jean smiled. “Well, I don’t really get to pick, you know, Tommy. We’ll just take whatever we get.” She clasped Paul’s hand.

Now it was Mrs. McMairon’s turn to clear her throat.

“Your father and I have some news as well,” she said, voice wavering. “You all will have a new brother or sister in September.”

The dining room erupted with shouts of astonishment.

“Baby Teddy at last, eh, Mum?” Peter asked as soon as it was quiet enough to be heard. “You just couldn’t stop without finishing the sequence.” He grinned at Morgana.

“Teddy OR Tessa, of course,” his mother countered with a mischievous grin.

“Yes, Mother. Of course. We’ll let you delude yourself a bit longer,” answered Paul.

The meal was over shortly after this, and Peter and Morgana wandered into the sitting room to chat with Paul and Jean.

“Hey Peter, did you know that Jim is getting married in April?” Paul asked a few minutes later.

“No! I hadn’t heard.” Peter turned to Morgana. “Jim is a very good friend of us all, but most especially Paul.”

“So he and Karen have finally set a date?” Peter asked Paul.

“Yes, the invitations just went out. You should be receiving yours any day. The wedding is the Sunday after Easter,” Paul continued.

“Hmm, okay. That might work out well with our Spring recess, anyway,” Peter said, smiling at Morgana. She had been wondering what she’d do for spring break, actually, but she wasn’t sure whether his inclusion of her here meant anything or not. Did he mean he would want her to come to the wedding as his date? She wondered whether weddings were done differently in England. Not that she was really all that knowledgeable about weddings in the United States, of course. The only one she had attended had been when she was very young.

The conversation turned to other subjects, and the brothers and Jean tried hard to make



sure Morgana wasn't too left out. She didn't mind when they talked about people and things that were unfamiliar to her, though, because even when they did so, they didn't make her feel superfluous. She realized how comfortable she felt with them. It seemed so natural to be here with Peter's family.

Before she knew it, an hour or so had passed.

"Morgana, it's half six already," Peter said. "I should take you home so you're not late to go to dinner with your uncle."

"Yes, I suppose so," Morgana said reluctantly. She had really enjoyed her visit.

She said good bye to Paul and Jean, and then to what of the younger boys they could find. They ended up in the kitchen, where Peter's parents were cleaning up. Morgana shook hands with Mr. McMairon and then turned to his wife.

"Good bye, Mrs. McMairon. Thank you so much for having me. I had a great time." Impulsively, Morgana stepped forward and gave the older woman a hug.

"Oh, good bye, dear. Thank you for coming. You will definitely have to come back, especially now that you know we live so close to your Uncle Charles." Colleen McMairon turned to her son. "You'll have to bring her back to see us again, Peter, you hear?" Turning back to Morgana, she amended her words. "Of course, Morgana, you don't need to wait for Peter to bring you. You're more than welcome any time by yourself."

"Thank you," Morgana replied fervently. She took Peter's proffered arm and walked out to the car.

### *Chapter Eighteen*

Dinner that night was at Uncle Charles's favorite restaurant, a short way outside of Tintagel, and it was delicious. There was a very interesting salad to start with, and then Morgana had prime rib and potatoes as her main course. Prime rib was something she generally wouldn't order herself, but Uncle Charles had urged her to get whatever she wanted, and he hadn't seemed satisfied when she mentioned French onion soup and a jacket potato, which had quickly become her standard meal while eating out in restaurants in England.

The prime rib was wonderful, though, and Morgana was glad she had ordered it. It was definitely a nice treat. The conversation, unlike the food, stayed fairly light throughout most of dinner. Morgana told Uncle Charles and Aunt Marielle all about Peter's family and her afternoon with them, and she asked them about local wedding customs. They thought that from what Peter had said, it was quite likely that he would ask Morgana to go as his date, but they, of course, were somewhat biased. Then this led in to a discussion of other local families and local history in general. Even though this was only the second time Morgana had been in Tintagel, she already felt a sort of kinship with it.

"We really have to take Morgana up to the castle, Marielle," Uncle Charles was saying. Noticing that he had her attention, he directed his next comment toward Morgana herself. "You really cannot get the full experience of Tintagel without it, Morgana."

"Yes, I've read about the castle, of course," said Morgana, "and I've seen plenty of pictures of what they think it might have looked like when Arthur's mother and sister lived there, and when Arthur himself was conceived there, of course, but I don't think I've seen many pictures of what it looks like now."

"Well," said Uncle Charles, "it isn't quite as picturesque now as it was then, of course, or at least not in the same way. But it is still astonishingly beautiful."

“I’d love even to just take a walk by the beach somewhere,” Morgana mentioned. “What I’ve seen out windows and such has looked so pretty, so I would love to see it up close. And the famous cliffs, of course--I haven’t really gotten a chance to see them yet either.”

“A walk on the beach we can certainly arrange for tomorrow, don’t you think, Marielle?” Uncle Charles asked.

Aunt Marielle nodded.

“I’d like to devote a whole day to the castle, though, the first time we take you there,” Uncle Charles continued. “And I’m assuming you’ll want to get back to Oxford at a decent time tomorrow, so that had better wait.”

Back to Oxford. Morgana had somehow almost forgotten about Oxford in the middle of everything else that was happening. She told this to Uncle Charles and Aunt Marielle.

“You can’t forget about Oxford, Morgana!” Aunt Marielle exclaimed.

“She’s right, of course,” Uncle Charles agreed. “Oxford is the whole reason that you’re here in the first place, after all.”

“Well, I’m not sure,” Morgana started. “I mean, of course I can’t forget about Oxford, and of course it is very important. But I’m not so sure any more that Oxford is the whole reason that I’m here.” She told them about the identical cats. “I’m feeling more and more like something was pulling me here. Maybe the Grail.”

This was the first time that the Grail had been mentioned since Morgana returned from the McMairon house, and they all fell uncomfortably silent for a moment. They had been ignoring the subject, but it had not gone away.

Morgana was the first to break the silence.

“Where *is* the Grail now, anyway?” she asked. It was an issue she had totally forgotten

about last time they all had talked.

“It is in Chalice Keep,” answered Aunt Marielle. “I brought it here with me because I suspected it might be part of the issue.”

“Isn’t it interesting,” observed Uncle Charles, “how in all of this talk about possession of the Grail, this is the first time that we’ve actually discussed where it is right now?”

“Huh,” Morgana said. She liked this idea. “Does that suggest that maybe the actual possession of the physical cup is not really what is important after all?”

“Perhaps,” agreed Uncle Charles. “That seems a rather facile explanation, but it is probably somewhat close to the truth.”

“How interesting,” replied Morgana.

The waiter arrived then to take their dessert orders, so conversation stopped for the moment. Morgana lost herself in contemplation of another important question: chocolate cake or bread pudding?

### *Chapter Nineteen*

Morgana slept extremely well again that night, and after breakfast on Sunday morning, she, Uncle Charles, and Aunt Marielle went for a walk on the beach. For most of the time, they walked in silence, each lost in his or her own thoughts, meditations, and contemplations. As they turned back toward Chalice Keep, though, they began to talk about Morgana’s return to Oxford later that day.

The beach and all of Tintagel was so beautiful that Morgana did not really want to think about going back to Oxford. It seemed so mundane after the magic of Tintagel. She wondered

for a moment whether everything that she had learned over the weekend--the good and the bad--would just vanish once she left. She didn't really think it would, of course, as things were not known to just randomly vanish, but things were also not known to behave in the way that they seemed to be recently.

"You'll have to be careful, of course, Morgana, even though we really don't think there is any immediate physical danger," Aunt Marielle told her.

Morgana nodded. If she thought about it too much, she knew she would think of plenty of ways in which the Hapworths might provide physical danger--what if they thought that if they killed her they could set up one of their own as the next heir? No, that was silly, but maybe--but she just could not think about it too much. There was no point to being uselessly paranoid.

"Yes, I'll be careful," she promised.

"Good girl. But, for goodness sake, please *try* to make things appear as normal as possible," Uncle Charles requested. "We know that at least that Colin is lurking about, and there might be others."

"Yes, I know." Morgana nodded. "We don't want them to know that we suspect anything."

"Even more so, Morgana," Uncle Charles looked grave. "We don't want them to know that there is a *we*. You probably mentioned to Colin that you had met me, so we can't keep that a secret, but he doesn't need to know that you have seen me again. That could have been one isolated incident--an obligatory visit to an old uncle."

Morgana nodded again.

"Yes, that makes sense," agreed Aunt Marielle. "And if we could manage to keep him from knowing that I am in the country at all, I think that would be good."

“Yes. And you know, Morgana,” Uncle Charles said slowly, “you really should try to make another date with young Colin as soon as possible.”

“What??” Morgana and Aunt Marielle exclaimed in unison.

“Charles! You can’t be *encouraging* her to see the man,” Aunt Marielle demanded.

“I am afraid I am,” said Uncle Charles sadly.

Morgana thought for a moment.

“Ohhh.” She nodded slowly. “I think I see what you mean.”

“What does he mean?” demanded Aunt Marielle.

“Under normal circumstances, it would be extremely unlikely for me not to go out of my way to see Colin again. It would be extremely unlikely for *any* girl not to,” Morgana explained. “He’s completely gorgeous, and he treated me like a princess.” Something within her went cold as she said that and realized all of the possible implications. In Colin’s world, she *was* a princess, or at least she was claiming to be. An unwilling Anna Anderson.

“Right,” said Uncle Charles approvingly. “I am very glad that you are understanding this so well. Plus, now that you know what Colin is up to, you may be able to discover more particulars if you spend more time with him.”

“Ye-es..” Aunt Marielle nodded reluctantly. “I suppose he is bound to let something slip.”

“Of course,” said Uncle Charles. “Now here we are.”

Morgana had hardly noticed that they had arrived back at the house.

“Why don’t you get your things together,” suggested Aunt Marielle. “And then perhaps we can have an early lunch before she goes, Charles?”

“Certainly,” agreed Uncle Charles.

“Sounds good.” Morgana went up to the beautiful room to pack.

### *Chapter Twenty*

Back at Oxford the next day, Morgana slowly began to fall back into her normal routine. She knew that it would never be quite the same again, though. It was so odd to not be able to talk about the great majority of her weekend with any of the people around her.

She had managed to satisfy Carmen’s curiosity last night by focusing on her visit with Peter’s family. That was, of course, the part in which Carmen was most interested anyway, and she was perfectly willing to accept Morgana’s descriptions of the rest of the weekend as “quiet, just visiting with relatives” so long as Morgana was willing to repeat over and over a blow-by-blow account of her tea at Peter’s parents’ house. Carmen thought the idea of Peter gaining a sibling and a nephew or niece at about the same time was wonderful, of course, and she agreed with Aunt Marielle that Peter had all but invited Morgana to the wedding.

Morgana had made arrangements with Uncle Charles to return the next weekend, and already she was beginning to feel as though she were leading some sort of double life--weeks as a normal college student in Oxford, and weekends in Tintagel trying to sort out centuries’ worth of intrigue. It was definitely surreal.

“How long are you staying, Aunt Marielle?” she had asked before she left Chalice Keep on Sunday.

Aunt Marielle and Uncle Charles exchanged another unreadable look.

“For as long as I need to be here, my dear,” Aunt Marielle finally answered.

Morgana was glad of this, for she loved her aunt, and it would be nice to be able to see

her so much. But she wondered what Aunt Marielle and Uncle Charles expected would happen. How would there be a resolution to this? Or would Aunt Marielle stay at Chalice Keep until the end of the semester, and then she and Morgana would go home to the States and forget all about it? No, Morgana did not think that was what Aunt Marielle could have meant. She just didn't know.

Morgana saw Peter at lunch that day, as had become normal, and that was good, because normalcy was reassuring. And Peter somehow seemed in both worlds as well--for even though he had not been in on any of the discussions about the Grail, he was still from Tintagel, and Morgana had seen him there. And there was the cat. Peter's cat somehow seemed tied in with it all.

He noticed that she was out of sorts that day, though.

"What's going on, Morgana?" he asked. "I can tell something isn't quite right. I hope it's not something I did over the weekend."

"Oh, no, no," she answered. "It isn't something that you did. It might not have anything to do with you. I'm not sure."

"All right..." he said. She could tell that he felt shut out.

"I want to tell you," she said. "I'm just not sure that I can. I just don't know yet. It's a family thing, so..."

"Okay." He seemed content with this. They sat in companionable silence for a few moments longer.

Then suddenly Morgana thought of something. Maybe "telling" him wouldn't be telling him at all. He was *from* Tintagel. Perhaps what had been big news to her was just a fact of life for someone who lived there. She wasn't at all sure, but it was worth a shot.



“Peter?” she asked.

He turned to look directly at her.

“Yes?”

“How much do you know about--about the Sangralls? About my family?” Maybe he even knew more than she did.

“So that is what this is about.” He sighed. “I suspected it might be.”

Morgana waited for him to continue.

“I know some,” he finally said. “About the same amount as most Tintagel natives, I’d imagine. Chalice Keep--the name Sangrall--it all points to the Grail, of course. And of course your name. There is always a Morgana, and you are her this time. Which goes with being at Tintagel, of course. So yes, I know some.”

“Wow,” she answered. “I didn’t know any of it until this weekend. It’s sort of scary. And--and there’s more.”

“More?” he asked. “What more?”

“You may already know, of course,” she said. “This may all be old news to you. But I didn’t know.”

“Perhaps. But what is it? Go on,” he encouraged.

“Do you know about the Hapworths?” She held her breath, waiting for his answer. She didn’t know if she was supposed to be telling him--or anyone--this much. All sorts of horrible possibilities occurred to her. Maybe he *was* a Hapworth. Maybe he had been lying to her all along. Maybe he didn’t really like her. He could have been planted in that airport and told to get her to like him. She had thought it surprising at the time that he wanted to talk to her. Maybe he hadn’t, really. No. No. This was all silly.

“Hapworths?” he replied. He wrinkled his forehead in thought. “No, I don’t think so.”

“Oh,” she answered, somehow relieved.

“Can you tell me?” he asked. “I understand if you can’t. I know it’s all very confusing, and you don’t know what you’re allowed to say.”

“I think I can tell you,” Morgana said slowly, “but not right here.”

“Okay. Somewhere private?” he asked.

“Yes,” she said. “But not right now. I have a tutorial meeting soon. What are you doing tonight?”

“Nothing.” He smiled. “I’m all yours.”

“Where can we meet?” she asked. “I have a roommate, and she is usually home in the evenings. She’s great, but--”

“Yes, I understand,” he said. “If there is someone else there, you never know.”

“Right.” She was glad he got it so well.

“Well, you could always come to my apartment, of course,” he said. “If you would be comfortable with that.”

“Oh, sure. That sounds good.” Wow. She would finally get to see where he lived.

“Where do you live, anyway?”

“Huh, that’s right,” he said. “We’ve never really talked about things like that. You’ve seen my parents’ house, where I grew up, but not my apartment here. How odd.”

“Yes, it is,” she agreed.

He gave her directions to his apartment, and they agreed to meet there after her last class got out at five.

“All right, I’d better get going,” Morgana said. “Don’t want to be late for class, even if I

am Morgan le Fay reincarnated.”

Peter laughed and gave her a quick hug.

“It will all be okay, sweetie,” he said. “See you at five.”

### *Chapter Twenty-One*

Peter and Morgana sat at Peter’s kitchen table later that evening. It was a small table-- Peter lived alone--but fine for two.

“Wow,” Peter said. Morgana had just finished telling him everything she knew about what was going on.

“Yeah,” Morgana agreed. “That’s exactly what I keep saying.”

“I don’t like the idea of you seeing this Colin guy again,” Peter said.

Morgana grinned at his protectiveness. How wonderfully sweet of him.

“Well, who knows,” she said. “Maybe he’ll just disappear and I won’t have to see him again.”

“Morgana.” Peter shook his head at her. “You know perfectly well that that won’t happen.”

“Yes, yes, I know,” she admitted. “But I can wish, can’t I?”

“Yes, sweetie, you can wish.” He sighed. “I’m sorry. I don’t want to make this even harder for you.”

“Oh, you’re not!” she cried. “You’re letting me talk. That helps. And you’re just being there.”

“Yes, that much at least I can manage,” he said self-deprecatingly.

“Stop that!” she told him. “I’m serious. That’s really important. I don’t have anyone else who is just there.”

“What about your mother?” he asked suddenly. “Have you told her any of this?”

“No.” Morgana realized that she hadn’t. “I’m not sure what to tell her, or how to even start.”

“You probably should,” Peter pointed out. “She *is* your mother, after all.”

“Yes. I know. But--how?” Morgana had no idea.

“I’m still not entirely clear on why it’s so hard to tell her,” Peter said. “I mean, I know that she left your father, and doesn’t like your father’s family.”

“Right...” Morgana wasn’t quite sure where he was going with this.

“But what would happen if you just called her up and told her the truth?” he asked. “She might be unhappy for a while, sure. But what’s the worst that could happen?”

“Hmm. I don’t know.” Morgana thought for a moment. “When you put it like that, I really can’t figure out what the issue is.”

“Are you just trying to protect her?” Peter’s words seemed to hang in the air like a challenge.

“Oh. Maybe I am,” Morgana said.

“She’s your mother. She’s an adult,” Peter pointed out. “Don’t you think you owe her the respect of telling her the truth and letting her deal with it?”

“Hmmm. Maybe.” Morgana nodded. “You’re probably right, of course. But it’s hard.”

Peter nodded sympathetically.

“Yeah. I know it is,” he said. “It’s getting late, and I’m sure we both have schoolwork to do. Shall I walk you home?”

“Okay,” Morgana agreed.

She gathered her things and they walked out into the cold night air. The sky was remarkably clear, and they stood for a moment, just watching the stars together. Then Peter took Morgana’s hand and began to walk.

### *Chapter Twenty-Two*

The next morning, Morgana woke up early. She was in the room at Uncle Charles’s house--at Chalice Keep, as she was trying to learn to think of it--that had quickly become known as “Morgana’s room.” She slipped out of bed and began to dress as quietly as she could, for Aunt Marielle’s room was near by, and she didn’t want to wake her aunt up, both out of concern for Marielle getting enough sleep and Morgana’s own desire to be alone.

Once she had dressed, Morgana tiptoed down the stairs and to the kitchen. She grabbed an apple out of the bowl on the table as she went out the kitchen door. It was not as noisy as the big front door, or at least Morgana hoped it wasn’t. Once outside, she began to breathe a little easier. She had made it out without anyone noticing, or if someone had noticed, he or she certainly had not tried to talk to Morgana or stop her.

The issue wasn’t, of course, that Morgana thought anyone would try to prevent her from going out alone that morning--or at least anyone in Uncle Charles’s house. She didn’t know what the Hapworths might or might not do. No, as concerned as Uncle Charles and Aunt Marielle were for Morgana’s safety, they recognized that she was an adult and had to be allowed to make her own decisions. Besides, Morgana certainly wasn’t any use to anyone herself. Colin

Hapworth was trying to woo her, not take her prisoner. The only way that Morgana thought a kidnapping could possibly be of any use to them would be if she had the Grail with her. And this morning, she very definitely didn't.

The morning was beautiful, Morgana realized as she walked up the pretty old roads of Tintagel. She stayed as close to the coast as possible, for the ocean was beautiful, as it always was. Just gorgeous. Morgana wondered how she had lived her whole life inland without realizing how much she was missing.

Almost of their own accord, Morgana's feet bore her toward the ruins of the old castle. She wasn't sure that she had actually made any conscious decision about going there, but as she was on her way she realized that she could not possibly have done anything else. Her pace quickened as she drew near. She almost paused for a moment when she realized she wasn't sure what time it opened. She checked her watch. It was just after eight. It was odd that it felt so much earlier--she usually got up at seven and that felt normal. Morgana thought for a minute. Maybe it felt earlier because it was Saturday, or because so very few other people were up yet. Oh well. It didn't really matter. The castle probably would not technically be open yet, but Uncle Charles had told her that members of the Sangrall family had always had free run of it. She would just have to hope that that was true.

When she got up to the gate, it was indeed closed. Morgana began to look around for another way in, vaguely feeling like she was trespassing. But Uncle Charles had *said* it was all right. She shook her head and supposed that it did not matter whether she was trespassing if she couldn't find a way in anyway.

Suddenly a guard in a National Trust uniform appeared, seemingly out of no where. He walked toward the gate to open it for her, and Morgana nodded good morning, not sure of what

to say or if he knew who she was. She was pretty sure that he was the same guard she had seen yesterday when she was with Aunt Marielle and Uncle Charles, but she couldn't be sure.

“Good morning, Miss Sangrall,” the guard said. Ah. So it was the same guard, and he had recognized her. Unless, of course, it was someone else who had heard her described well enough to recognize, but that seemed silly. She didn't see why people would be talking about her.

“Good morning,” she greeted him. She felt a little bit bad about not knowing his name, since he knew hers. “Beautiful day, isn't it?” she asked.

“Yes, quite.” The old man smiled. “Going up to the castle, are you?”

“Yes,” Morgana began, then stopped. “Well, at least, I would like to. If that's okay.”

“Of course,” the old man chuckled. “As if Old Tom Housen would ever refuse entrance to Tintagel to Morgana herself. The very idea.”

She smiled, not sure quite how she should respond.

“Go on right in, dearie,” he continued, seeming to take pity on her discomfiture. “I hope you have a good time.”

“Thank you.” Morgana smiled gratefully and walked through the gate. She started up the path and sighed as she saw the steps. Somehow she had managed to forget just how steep they were between yesterday and this morning. She took a deep breath and began.

When she reached the top, Morgana sat down on a little ledge by the top of the steps to catch her breath. She stared again at the ancient rocks. They were so beautiful, somehow, but so mighty and awe-inspiring at the same time. Morgana, like countless others before her, wondered how on earth they had managed to be moved up here and in to place without the use of any modern construction equipment or technology. It was just amazing.

Once she felt a little bit rested, Morgana continued around the curve of the stones and up a few more steps to the very top, where the castle keep had actually been. It meant so much more to her now than it would have even a few months ago, or when she arrived in England. Here was where the original Morgana had been born, and possibly where she had died. And that original Morgana was actually one of Morgana's own foremothers. It was really just amazing to think about.

Morgana didn't think she could actually comprehend all of the implications of it with her conscious mind, so she walked over to the very edge of the cliff and sat down on one of the rocks, facing the sea. She just let the beauty of it all wash over her as the waves crashed one after the other on the rocks below. Morgana began to breathe deeply as she stared down at the rocks with the water playing and splashing around them. Like the rocks of the castle, they were beautiful, but stark and forbidding at the same time. The water was so very blue. Morgana just sat there and let the waves crash around her, into her, feeling almost as though she was being lulled into some sort of trance.

Half an hour later, Morgana came back into herself and looked around her. She could hear the first tourists of the day on their way up the steps. It was time to leave. She could tell, though, that in that half hour of walking and climbing and then the second half hour of just being with the water and the rocks, something had happened deep within her. Something was different. More peaceful. And Morgana knew exactly what she had to do.

### *Chapter Twenty-Three*

Morgana closed her eyes as Uncle Charles tried to parallel park his old station wagon on



a side street in Glastonbury. She wondered when had been the last time he drove. The level of seriousness that he gave their task today really struck her when she realized that he had probably given Joshua David the day off not only so Joshua David could visit his mother in Glastonbury, but so that there would not be more people around than necessary. It was certainly a nice thought, in either case, but Morgana sort of wished Uncle Charles had at least let Peter drive.

Once the station wagon was safely (sort of) parked, Morgana and Peter climbed out of the back seat, and Aunt Marielle and Uncle Charles out of the front. As they walked up the sidewalk, Aunt Marielle handed Morgana a small package wrapped in plain brown paper. Before she even felt it, Morgana knew that it was the cup. Marielle had held it in her lap during the trip from Tintagel to Glastonbury, while Morgana simply sat in the back seat grasping Peter's hand tightly. But at this point, Morgana herself had to carry it.

The four of them walked down the sidewalk and around the corner toward the entrance to the Chalice Well. On the way, they pointed out to each other the other different wells and springs along the road that claimed to be holy as well, or, in some cases, the "real" holy water. It seemed very funny to all of them, somehow. When they reached the entrance to the park sort of place that the Well was in, they joined on the end of the line of tourists waiting for admission.

"Makes you realize how nice it is to just be able to walk in to Tintagel, doesn't it, Morgana?" Uncle Charles asked.

"Yes, definitely," Morgana agreed.

"Yes, I've always envied you Sangralls that," admitted Peter. "I think it would be nice if everyone who had lived in Tintagel for a while could just get in without standing in line."

"Oh, I agree with you," said Uncle Charles. "But I don't think the National Trust would. They would claim that Tintagel natives are the ones who use the castle park most, so they

shouldn't be able to get in without paying."

"Well, they paying part isn't really what I mind," Peter protested. "It's the standing in line that I don't like. There must be some other way."

"Like EZPass," Morgana giggled.

"What?" the other three asked as one.

"EZPass. It's a special little thing you can get on your car so that you don't have to stop to pay tolls on the highway, but just get a monthly bill or something," Morgana explained. "I'm not sure exactly how it works. Don't they have that out where you are, Aunt Marielle?"

"Hmm," Aunt Marielle mused. "Yes, I think they might have something like that, now that I think about it. Different name, though, I'm pretty sure. I don't know--I don't really drive on the highway very often."

Peter was still trying to figure out exactly what Morgana was saying.

"I think I get it," he said. "That's a really neat idea. So the point is that the people who drive on the road often don't have to stop and pay the toll?"

"Yup," Morgana said. "That way it's quicker for all the drivers, since the lines are shorter, and it lets them hire less people to collect the tolls, too. I think they are trying to get as many people as possible to switch over to it."

"I think I read an article about that when they first started it a few years ago," Uncle Charles put in. "It did sound very interesting."

"But don't people just drive through even if they don't have the thing on their car?" Peter asked.

"Hmm. That's a good question." Morgana thought for a moment. "I think they have cameras, so that they take pictures of all of the license plates. That way they can track down

people who try to just go through without pay.”

“Ah. Yes, I guess that would work,” Peter conceded.

By this point, they were up to the head of the line. Uncle Charles paid for the four of them quickly and they walked in. Most tourists wandered around the garden first before going up to the Well on the next terrace, so the Sangralls and Peter did so as well. They wanted to blend in, after all. To look normal. They were all tense, though, and they soon fell silent.

Suddenly Uncle Charles broke the silence.

“Hello, Mr. George,” he said. Morgana looked up, and tried to follow her uncle’s line of sight. She realized that he was talking to a long-haired man who was standing with a big dog in among the trees. The man and the dog both looked as though they just belonged in the Chalice Well garden.

“Hello, Mr. Sangrall.” The man nodded. “I see you’ve brought Miss Marielle, and the niece you were telling me about.”

“Yes,” Uncle Charles said. “We’re all here.”

Morgana wondered who this Mr. George was, and how much he knew about what was going on. She liked him instinctively. She looked at him again, and realized that it looked as though he was looking at the package that she was carrying. Morgana shook her head. It was probably just her imagination. She shouldn’t be so paranoid.

Suddenly, Morgana realized that she couldn’t see Aunt Marielle or Uncle Charles. She looked over to Peter, who was standing next to her. He motioned his head up toward the path to the Well.

“They went up already?” Morgana asked. She was surprised. She thought that the plan had been to wait and allow her to decide when to go up.

“I think they did, yes,” Peter said carefully. “Maybe they saw something or someone they wanting to get closer to.”

“Or wanted to avoid,” pointed out Morgana. “I hope everything is all right. I wouldn’t want to be lingering up here if them going up there is a sign that they think we should proceed with it right now.”

“No, I think in that case they would have made sure that we followed,” Peter pointed out logically. “They don’t seem to be wanting to rush you. Or maybe they just want some time alone. Together.”

Morgana nodded. That seemed quite possible as well. She hoped that was the case. During their time in England, Morgana had decided that Uncle Charles and Aunt Marielle were definitely made for each other.

“Speaking of which,” Peter began, “do you think that maybe when all of this is over, you and I might get some time alone?”

Morgana simply nodded again. She wasn’t sure what to say. She settled for just looking at him inquisitively.

“Don’t try to look so dense, Morgana dear,” Peter teased. “You know exactly what I mean.” Suddenly, he pulled her close for a quick hug and rested his lips on her forehead. Morgana returned the hug, not sure exactly what to do. Then his lips flickered down to hers for a fraction of a second, and returned to her forehead before she could really register what had happened.

*He had kissed her. Hadn’t he?* It had happened so fast. She *thought* it had happened, but it seemed so unlikely. Someone had actually kissed her?

And here? Now? With everything else that was going on? Well, this would certainly be

a memorable day.

Peter looked down at her and smiled.

“Ready?” he asked.

“Yes, I think so,” she answered. He was acting like nothing had happened. Maybe nothing *had* happened. Maybe she was imagining it.

Peter took Morgana’s hand and led her up the path to the Well. They walked over to Uncle Charles and Aunt Marielle, who were standing a little way off to the side of the Well. Morgana smiled to see Uncle Charles’s arm around Aunt Marielle’s waist.

“So here we all are,” said Uncle Charles as they approached.

“I hope we didn’t rush you.” Aunt Marielle looked concerned. “That certainly wasn’t our intention.”

They all looked at Morgana for an answer, but suddenly she couldn’t speak.

“No,” Peter began, but Morgana finally found her voice.

“No, you didn’t rush us,” she said. She cleared her throat. “I am ready.” Peter helped her unwrap the cup, and handing the wrapping paper to Uncle Charles, who stuffed it in his coat pocket.

Morgana stood by the side of the Well, holding the Grail. Or maybe it was just a cup, after all. It didn’t matter any more. She stepped up to the very rim of the Well and knelt.

She could just see the water down there, way down toward the bottom. Perhaps it really was holy. Perhaps it was only colored red, a freak of nature. She thought she would prefer to think it holy.

Morgana took a deep breath and closed her eyes. She quickly reached out her hand: quickly before anyone but the other three would notice, quickly before she could change her

mind. She dropped the cup down, down the long verticle tunnel. She opened her eyes to see it just as it passed into the water without a sound.

Morgana's eyes filled with tears--tears of sadness, tears of joy, tears of relief, of loss. She stood up and slowly backed away from the Well. Her vision blurred as she felt Peter's arms wrap around her.