



The Ghost Mirror
~ A Dark Tale ~

By
Jamieson Wolf



eTresures Publishing
A Great Place to Get Published
A Great Place to Buy Books
<http://www.etresurespublishing.com>

United States of America

©2007 Jamieson Wolf Villeneuve
All Rights Reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any format or by any means without express written consent from the publisher. This book in electronic format may not be re-sold or re-distributed in any manner without express written permission from the publisher.

First Printing.

Cover Art by Jamieson Wolf

Published in the United States of America
Published by
eTreasures Publishing
P.O. Box 71813
Newnan, GA 30271
<http://www.etreasurespublishing.com>

Printed in the United States of America

This work is entirely fiction and bears no resemblance whatsoever to any person or persons, now living or dead in content or cover art, nor to any actual place known, or is purely coincidental upon such an occurrence. This work is solely from the author's vivid imagination.

.

***To Robert
Who inspires my dreams...***

Acknowledgements

The Ghost Mirror is perhaps my favorite book of all I have written. It takes a lot for me to say that, as I suffer from what I like to refer to as the *Tragic Writer's Clause*. Writers are their own worst critics, and I firmly believe that most of what I write is not worth the paper it's printed on.

Thankfully, I don't believe this of *The Ghost Mirror*.

No one writes alone. There are many people in my life who have influenced my writing and the shaping of my craft, and no book would be complete without thanking them. No one writes in limbo; life goes on around the writer, sometimes at a fast pace, and there are those around me that help me live in the world of the mundane while my brain is living in the land of fantasy.

First and foremost, I'd like to thank my parents. Wonder Mum and Wonder Dad; you have shown me that anything is possible if you dream hard enough. You have encouraged me to follow my dreams, though others have told me to give up. You have shown me that wishes do come true, and words will never be enough to show you my gratitude.

To my husband, Robert. You have shown me that love does in fact exist, that good things do happen if you let them. You have shown me so much support that it still makes my head spin. Never have I known or had such love in my life, and I am thankful beyond words to have you and to have you love me as you do. My heart is yours, and I give it to you freely.

To my Muses: Wanda, Naomi, Kimberlee and Erin. You have all shown me such love support for my writing. I know that *The Ghost Mirror* would not be half the book it is if I did not have you in my life. Your faith in me and in my ability as a writer has kept me going long after I would have stopped and followed another dream. You are my Muses, my sisters, and I love you beyond words.

I also have to thank Dorothy and Sandy. You have both helped me become a better writer. You have taken my words, fragile as children, and shaped them into something beyond what they could have been. With your guidance and support, my writing has grown from a small seed to a gorgeous flower. Without you, I know that my writing would not be as it is today, and I thank the Gods and the Goddesses that you came into my life.

I would also like to extend thanks to my cat, Mave, who was the inspiration for this story. She truly is a witch's cat, and it's only fitting that she had a starring role in *The Ghost Mirror*. She sat on my lap through most of the writing of the novel and told me which good parts to leave in.

Last but not least, this book is also for our cat Cleo, who passed away shortly before Christmas. She was just over a year old and suffered from feline leukemia. I know that as a character in this novel, even if it is in name only, at least her spirit will live on.

To all of you, I am thankful.

Jamieson Wolf

What lies beyond the silver glass?

The Ghost Mirror

~ A Dark Tale ~

By

Jamieson Wolf

In the Beginning...

Mr. Lavender looked down at the body that rested at his feet with some trepidation.

The body was that of a young boy, no more than twelve years old. A small wound at the back of his head oozed blood onto the white tiled floor underneath him. The boy was clothed in shorts and a t-shirt that had been ripped to shreds.

Mr. Lavender made a tut-tut sound and moved around, so he could see the body from another angle. It always helped to get a different perspective on things. He spared a momentary glance at his companion who stood by the doorway.

The room around them was white, almost blinding. Its cleanliness was in sharp contrast to the rest of the house. All the other rooms were filled with cobwebs and shadow, inches of dust on table tops. Only the bathroom was sparkly white.

Mr. Lavender shuddered slightly at the cleanliness of the bathroom. He preferred the grimmer rooms; the ones filled with stacks of old

books and papers that littered the floor. He could spend days poring over the papers; stacks of obituaries, old newspapers that detailed events past. Old things were filled with mystery. With magic.

"You found him like this?" Mr. Lavender asked his companion.

The companion, a thin man with dark, greasy hair and a pale face, nodded. "He was here this morning." The man's voice was gruff compared to Mr. Lavender's soft-toned voice. "I didn't touch anything." The companion was so pale that it looked as if he were going to fade into the whiteness of the walls.

"As well you shouldn't," Mr. Lavender said. He moved around the boy again so that he could see the boy's eyes. They were still open. "Tut, tut," he whispered. "What are we going to do with you, my little popinjay?" He regarded the boy almost sadly, though his mouth did curve into a small smile. "Well, needs must," he said simply.

He crouched down closer to the boy. Carefully, he laid the boy's body on its back, so that his eyes stared skyward. Mr. Lavender opened the boy's mouth slightly, as if the boy were forming a sound of surprise.

Gently he prodded the boy's chest with the tips of his fingers. "*I am made from more than blood,*" Mr. Lavender whispered. "*I am filled with spirit strong.*"

In response to his words, the air around them became thick, as if time stood still. He watched as whiteness, a soft mist, started to crawl out of the boy's mouth.

"I am made from more than flesh," Mr. Lavender continued. *"I am filled with blood's pure song."*

The rest of the incantation made the air thicker still. The companion watched as the mist leaving the boy quickened and started to take shape. He watched as Mr. Lavender bent close to the boy and breathed in through his mouth. The mist, slowly at first as if resisting, started to flow into Mr. Lavender's open mouth.

When the mist was no more, and Mr. Lavender had closed his mouth, the air around them became normal once more.

CHAPTER ONE

~ The Forgotten Child ~

Ever since Mave Mallory could remember, there were spirits at her grandmother's house.

She would see them roaming the hallways at nighttime, silent pale beings too stubborn to die completely, too afraid to completely die.

She would let her fingers brush through them as they passed her in the hallways. Some would turn to look at her, a smile on their face. Some avoided Mave's touch. They knew she saw them; Mave made no secret about seeing them. Some of them would watch over her while she slept, sitting in a chair by the window, guarding her against the things that moved at night.

Her grandmother told her not to pay them any mind. She said that they would get her into trouble if she didn't focus what was in front of her face. She had to remember to focus. "Others can see the spirits, too," she had said. "But we must remember how to act in front of those who can't. You're more special than you know, Mave Mallory."

It was wise advice. Mave knew from watching and listening to other children that they couldn't see ghosts. Even if they played with her in her grandmother's house, they could not see them. Some ghosts would make faces at Mave's young friends. Mave would sometimes have to hide a smile or a laugh if she was not focusing enough.

She visited Grandmother every summer while her parents were on holiday. They had no wish to be bogged down with a growing adolescent child. She was a shy and awkward thirteen-year-old; her legs were long and lanky and her red hair fell in wild curls all over her head. They reached down to the middle of her back and framed her face in a wild flame of red and gold. The hair made her black eyes stand out all the more. They were dark, like shadows, surrounded by pools of white.

The effect was very startling. Her parents tried dying her hair, so that she wouldn't stand out so much. No dye would take. It remained stubbornly curly, stubbornly, startlingly red. They also tried to get Mave to wear contacts, but they hurt her eyes too much. So she remained as she was. Her parents, both blonde and blue eyed, were startled by the way she looked. The only person in her family that resembled Mave was her grandmother. They were almost identical in appearance, except that Grandmother's hair had faded to a soft, silver gray.

It took Mave a few years to realize that her parents were actually afraid of her. "They mean well dear," Grandmother had told her, "But look at them. They're so pasty." She had said it with a grin. It didn't help matters much. She would

wander her own house all year long, her parents determined to not pay attention to her. It had gotten so bad as of late that they ignored her presence completely, no matter what she tried to do.

They were both too busy living their important lives. They both worked as real estate brokers and played tennis in the afternoons at country clubs. They had martinis in the evening by pools, went to parties late at night and didn't come home till early in the morning. They were often drunk and had no time to spend on a weird looking daughter who didn't fit in, who didn't belong. Together, they joked that Mave was actually a child of a dark prince that her black gaze hailed from darker waters than theirs. They were afraid of her, afraid of their own daughter, so they mocked her.

This year had been particularly horrible. Her parents ignored her completely, ever since her return from her grandmother's house last summer, and no friends visited anymore. She would scream at them to get their attention and still they didn't hear her. She had to fend entirely for herself. She made her own meals, bought her own clothes, and had to find her own way to school. Her parents pretended she didn't exist.

"You can't pretend I don't exist, you know," she said to her mother one morning, a few weeks after her return. "I'm your daughter."

Her mother continued to make coffee and toast. Her mother's eyes were bloodshot and her hair was mussed. She passed a coffee and a plate to her father, who sat behind his morning newspaper. "Here's your toast, dear," her mother said.

Her father grunted in return.

Mave made herself a bowl of cereal and poured herself a glass of orange juice. She munched on the cereal for a while, watching her parents. She could feel them not looking at her, knew that they tried their best to pretend she wasn't there.

It had been the same every day since her return on the 31st of October. She always returned from her grandmother's house on Halloween, after she had been taken Trick-Or-Treating. Usually, her parents made noises about how much candy she had gotten, how it would rot her teeth. This time when she came home, no one was there to greet her at the door.

The front door was locked.

She pounded on it, beat it with her fists. Still the lights remained out and the door did not open. Mave wished she had not turned down her grandmother's offer of accompanying her home to her front step. Her grandmother knew what her parents were like. But they had never done something like this.

Mave beat on the front door for what seemed like hours until she finally admitted defeat. She went into the backyard and found a soft patch of grass underneath one of the oak trees her mother grew and prized so much. Before closing her eyes, before sleep claimed her, she watched the stars shine above her. She saw one fall and wished for something pleasant.

When the sun cleared the hills the next day, Mave was already awake. She had woken when the sun was just peeking over the horizon. She ran to the front door, knowing her parents would be

stepping out to get the morning paper soon. They could not keep her out of the house forever.

When her mother came out of the house to get the paper, she only spared Mave a cold sneer before turning her back on her. *At least she left the door open*, Mave thought.

Since that day, Mave lived a very lonely existence. Neither of her parents bothered to drive her to school, so she did not leave the house. Her only confidant was her grandmother, and her parents would not take her calls, would not let Mave talk to her. When Mave sneaked a call to her grandmother, she told her everything was fine, that she was okay. She could tell that her grandmother didn't believe her.

Lost in her reverie, she was startled out of it by her mother speaking to her father. "We have that party to go to tonight, George," she said. Her voice was shrill and high pitched.

"Will there be free booze there?" He answered.

"Darling, you know they always have a host bar. The party is at the Hudson's."

"Joan, sweetheart, do we have to go? You know I can't stand how that Chrissy woman natters on."

It was rare for her parents to talk at breakfast. Mave figured they were trying really hard to ignore her. She reached out and slapped her father's paper. He simply flicked it and placed it in front of him again. Her mother didn't look in her direction. Mave decided to push her luck and flung some cereal at her with her spoon.

Her mother sniffed, but ignored it. To pick the cereal out of her hair would be to admit her daughter sat at the table. Mave admired her

mother's willpower. With a small sound of rage, Mave flung her cereal bowl across the table, followed by her glass of orange juice.

Both splattered all over the kitchen walls and the glass shattered. Neither of her parents moved to clean anything up. She knew they would not do so until she left the room.

With fresh tears sliding down her cheeks, she ran from the room, a forgotten child in a cold house.



It was January before Mave finally called Grandmother. She arrived in a roaring temper. "She is your child!" she had yelled at her parents.

"I wish she weren't," her mother whispered.

Mave, listening in the next room, heard everything. She knew she would never win her parents back. She knew she would remain a secret to them, that to the outside world, they didn't have a child.

"How could you say such a thing?" Grandmother yelled at her mother. "I raised you better than this! She's only thirteen and you're letting her fend for herself!"

"She frightens us," her father whispered. "Mona, you don't understand. When she looks at us, it's as if..."

"What?" her grandmother demanded. "What?"

Mave decided she couldn't listen to anymore. She ran to her bedroom and slammed the door,

then hid underneath a pile of blankets. She knew her parents didn't want her, but she had no real wish to hear it out loud. It stabbed her heart and made her feel empty. She wiped at her face when she heard footsteps outside her bedroom door.

"I am taking you with me now," Mona said softly, through the closed door. "Pack your things. You are coming to my place."

CHAPTER TWO

~ The House ~

Mave stared at the house as they turned up the large driveway. Her grandmother lived alone in a sprawling house; it never failed to charm her, no matter how many times she had seen it.

It sat perched on top of a large hill, a white picket fence surrounding the property. The day had grown into night and darkness fell all around them, broken by the fairy lights that her grandmother had hung on the fence and the trellis that stood as an archway. The house covered the hill and consisted of over sixty rooms. Her grandmother wasn't even sure how many rooms the house had.

"I'm an old woman," Mona had replied when Mave had asked her how many rooms the house contained. "I don't have time to go up and down stairs exploring. That's your job."

"My job?" Mave said. She held the gate open for her grandmother as they passed through.

"Yes; you're the child, you get to explore. This house is yours now, as much as it is mine. It's

been in our family for generations." She paused as they neared the front steps. "Your mother was raised here, you know."

Mave looked at the house now, seeing it differently for the first time. Her mother had grown up here. Why had she never said anything?

"What do you do, Grandmother?" Mave asked.

"I do all sorts of things," she replied softly. "I make remedies, potions for the sick. Love bobs for those who need a little help."

"Are you a witch?"

Her grandmother chuckled. "Here, let us sit a while." She led Mave up the path further, and they both went up the front stairs of the house.

Made of honey colored siding, the house had a stone foundation. It seemed almost too large for the small hill on which it perched, but it was a beautiful house. The many windows reflected the evening sunlight and they seemed to be winking at her in the approaching night.

Mona bade her to sit in one of the rocking chairs that sat on the porch, and she sat in the another. They rocked in silence for a moment before she spoke. "I am not really a witch," she said. "But I guess you could call me that, for lack of a better word. It's more that I see." She looked at Mave. "Do you understand?"

Mave shook her head no.

Her grandmother chuckled again. "And I wouldn't expect you to. But the same blood that runs in my veins runs in you, darling girl. You have many things to learn yet."

"What things?" Mave asked.

"Many things. The night grows dark and the hour is late. But there is magic in you, Mave Mallory. You have only to use it."

Her grandmother led her into the house and up the winding front staircase to her usual bedroom. Mave stepped in and looked around with a small gasp.

Gone was the usual bed, with its hard mattress and wool blankets. Gone was the gray color of the walls and the stiff brown curtains that had decorated the windows. The walls were now painted a soft cream with a dark trim. The curtains were made of soft yellow cotton, and they fell to the floor, softly brushing the hardwood.

The bed had been replaced; in the center of the room now stood a large four-poster bed, with a soft canopy made of gauze. A patchwork quilt, it's red and blue windmill pattern cheerful to the eye, covered the thick mattress.

There were books, too. Stuffed into a large bookshelf that took up one wall of her bedroom were more books than she had ever read in her entire life. Mave looked at her grandmother for some explanation.

The old woman smiled. "I figured if you were going to be living here, you would need a more suitable room. I take it that it's to your liking?"

Mave smiled back, and nodded. It was the most beautiful room she had ever seen; and was the first one that had felt like home.



For a while, Mave spent her days exploring the old house. There were so many doors that she often got lost, but she eventually found her way again. There was old furniture in the rooms and old armoires, closets filled with old clothes and books. She found some old dolls that she took to her room, found a few other books on the shelves lining several rooms that she added to her collection.

There was mostly dust and old clothes, but little in the way of treasures. One thing she did find, however, was a small gold locket. The clasp was rusted shut, so Mave could not open it, but it had a small silver heart on the front. The odd thing about the locket was that it had a hole all the way through it, right in the center of the silver heart. It hung on a heavy chain. Other than the heart, there were no other markings.

Stuffing the locket into her pocket, she returned to her room and placed it on her bedside table, beside some books and the other trinkets she had found: Pebbles and pieces of leather, a large black key, a string with a bead and a feather attached to its end. Every night before bed, she would run her fingers over the locket, as if for luck.

And at night, she dreamed peacefully.



The winter with her grandmother had been a wonderful one. It had been full of magic. She

played with ghosts in the attic when her grandmother left the house. She didn't want her to know that she played with them, that she considered them friends. Her grandmother told her to focus on the mundane, not on the other. She would be furious if she knew that Mave had even befriended a ghost.

Being that ghosts are on a different plain than we are, Mave was unable to hear what the ghost said. Likewise, the ghost could not hear Mave's voice. But Mave and the ghost of a small girl communicated by writing things in chalk, or with sign language. Quiet afternoons were spent playing jacks on the attic's wooden floor, or each reading a book on a quiet afternoon. At first, it marveled Mave to see the young ghost pick up material things. Soon, though, it was commonplace and they enjoyed days in each other's company.

Spring came and now started to end, but something marred Mave's enjoyment of the warmer weather. Her friend had not appeared in the attic for over a month. She checked for her every day, but each day was a disappointment in not finding her friend present. She finally broken down and asked her grandmother about it one night.

"Mayhap she's resting," Grandmother said.

"Resting?"

"Ghosts need to rest, too, you know." She smiled at her. "It's hard work being a ghost."

"Is it?" Mave asked with wonder.

"Of course it is. It's hard work making yourself appear like that all the time, seeing the living live

around you. Ask one next time you see one. You tell me if I'm not right."

Mave wanted to ask her friend today, but she still could not be found. The only thing in the attic was a bunch of pillows, a handful of books, and a box of toys. There was a large mirror in the back of the attic that shone when the sunrays hit it. But the room that looked inviting when her friend was present, looked dull and cold with her friend gone.

Mave was about to turn around to go back downstairs when she heard a whisper from the back of the attic. Mave looked up, and the mirror, long and tall, flashed at her. She approached it slowly and looked at it.

The young ghost used it to write things on. Mave would blow upon the glass to fog it up, and the young ghost would write in the mist.

It had a gold rim that ran around its length, and it balanced on a long pole that suspended it between two pieces of wood. She could move it backwards and forwards. One of Mave's favorite things to do was to angle the mirror so it caught the sun.

She approached it and looked at it. It flashed again and seemed as if it winked at her. She heard the whispering again; a sound like a soft voice singing something pretty. She knew the tune but could not place it. It sent a shiver down her spine that turned her cold. She watched in fascination as a blue glow started to hum in the mirror's center. The hum grew louder, the song increasing in volume. It reached out to her. She wanted to fold herself inside the song, wrap it around her. She took a step toward the mirror.

"Mave!"

Mave turned her head towards her grandmother's voice. She heard the front door close loudly. Mave turned back towards the mirror. The humming and the soft blue glow were gone.

"Mave!"

"What?" Mave yelled, slightly annoyed.

"Where are you?"

"In the attic!"

"Come downstairs," Grandmother yelled. "I've brought home supper!"

With a last lingering look at the mirror, which now stood silent and normal, Mave said a final thought for her lost friend and headed downstairs.

CHAPTER THREE

~ The Warning ~

That night at supper, there was little conversation.

Both of them were so content in each other's company that they would read at dinner most nights as they ate. Tonight, her grandmother read a book on Russian art as Mave read a beaten up copy of Stephen King's, "The Eyes of the Dragon." Her copy was torn and dog-eared, but she loved it. It filled her thoughts with magic.

Mave put the book down on the table to lean in close to her soup when she caught her grandmother looking at her. "What?"

"You found something today," she said.

Mave sighed. Her grandmother had this uncanny way of knowing. Sometimes it amused her, like when they played guessing games. Sometimes it annoyed her, like tonight, when she couldn't hide things from her. She tried to block her mind so Grandmother couldn't see what she was thinking,

but she was never very successful. "Yes," she said, sulking.

"You're not in trouble, Mave," Grandmother said. "Quite the contrary. I'm just curious what you found in that attic that interests you so much."

Mave looked at her grandmother. Sometimes, even when she said that Mave wasn't in trouble, she was. "I saw this mirror," Mave said softly, her black eyes shiny.

Her grandmother's face hardened. She was in trouble. "This mirror?" Grandmother repeated. Though her tone was light, there was ice underneath.

"Yes," Mave said softly.

Grandmother leaned closer to her. "With a gold rim?"

"Yes, Grandmother."

"You must never touch it," Grandmother said simply.

Mave stared at her. "Where did it come from, Grandmother?" she whispered.

"It was a gift, from an admirer." She fluffed her gray hair. "He said I was so beautiful that I should be able to see myself completely." She looked down at Mave. "You must never touch it," she said a second time. "I had no troubles with it until I moved here. Here, where the air is so thick with them, you know who I mean."

Mave nodded to show that she understood.

"Well, I had it in my bedroom on my first night here. I swear that I could hear voices on the other side of the silver glass." She looked up toward the attic, and then looked down at Mave again, leaning in closer. "I put it up in the attic because it's not

safe. I've thrown things at it; mugs, coffee cups, spoons and things. Only to watch them disappear into it." Her grandmother paused to let Mave know that she was serious, that she wasn't joking.

Mave studied her grandmother with interest. "What happens to the things, Grandmother?"

"I do not know, so I can not tell you."

"But they must go somewhere," Mave said with some indignation. "Things just don't disappear into a mirror."

"Anything is possible, Mave." She paused. "Especially in this house." She got up from the table and blew out the candles that flickered over dinner.

She touched Mave softly on the shoulder. "I don't know where it leads, but they seem to have taken a fancy to it. I have never seen anything I've thrown in come back. *Ever*." She said the last word strongly, as if to give a verbal period to her sentence.

Her grandmother looked at her sternly. "There are many things in this world that you could not possibly understand. Though," she held up a hand to cut off Mave's protests, "you do know more than most. You are open to much more than other people. It is for that reason that the mirror is dangerous. Please, promise me, Mave, do not touch that mirror," she said for a third time.

"I promise," Mave said. Because promises are easily made, it was easy to say. And easily broken.

Her grandmother looked at her sternly and narrowed her eyes. She didn't say anything for several seconds. "I see," she said, finally. Then she smiled and took her hand away, and kissed

Mave's forehead softly. "What would you like for dessert?"

Mave had every intention of keeping her promise, but even the best laid plans could go awry.



Mave was determined to obey her grandmother. She was the only person in her life that had shown her any love or affection. She didn't want to do anything to dim the love in her grandmother's eyes. But childlike curiosity is a hard thing to ignore.

Mave woke one night to hear the wind rushing against the windows. The spring had been cold so far, and Mave dug herself deeper into her blankets to keep warm. She listened to the wind whistling and wondered for a moment what had woken her. She normally slept heavily, and little could wake her.

She listened to the rest of the house, trying as hard as she could to block out the sound of the wind. She heard the old floorboards underneath her creak in the wind, the rest of the house moving and settling. She heard the fridge downstairs in the kitchen, its low rumbling humming through the floor.

And then she heard it.

A soft whispering, so soft that it was almost engulfed by the rushing wind outside. As quickly as she heard it, it was gone.

She strained her ears and listened. Again she heard it, almost as if someone tried talking to her. The whispering filled her with an intense curiosity that became hard to ignore.

Making her decision, she pulled her blanket away and slipped her feet into her slippers and put on her housecoat. Grabbing her locket from the table and stuffing it into her housecoat pocket, she stepped out of her room and stood in the hallway.

The house sighed around her. She listened again and then heard the whispering. It seemed closer, more urgent. She could hear it better this time and wanted to find the source before it disappeared again.

She ran down the hallway towards it, careful to tread lightly so that she did not wake her grandmother. She followed the whispering down the hallway, the whispering getting clearer with every step. She stopped in front of a door, and the whispering stopped.

She stood in front of the attic door. The whispering came from the attic.

Shivering slightly, Mave wrapped her housecoat tightly around herself and opened the attic door. She looked into the darkness for a moment before slowly starting up the flight of rickety steps, closing the attic door softly behind her.

CHAPTER FOUR

~ The Mirror ~

When Mave closed the attic door behind her, the whispering started again. She could hear it tickling the floorboards around her feet. It sounded excited.

Mave cautiously made her way up the stairs. She heard the whispering build up fever as she went, as if she could hear mist forming. The whispering softened when she reached the attic proper. There in front of the mirror, floated her Ghost.

She looked angry and sullen. Her hair was mussed, and she stood in front of the mirror, screaming at something. Mave could not hear the scream, but the shape of the girl's face made this clear to her. It was shaped into a mask of pain beyond words. The Ghost turned when she heard Mave come up behind her. It motioned for her to stay back.

"What's wrong?" Mave called out to her. "Why are you crying? Is that you I can hear whispering?"

The Ghost girl shook her head and mouthed the word "No..." She looked from side to side; she didn't want to be overheard. She motioned to the mirror's surface and screamed something at her. Something glimmered in the mirror's surface, and a pale hand reached out of the silver glass.

The Ghost girl turned to face it, a look of horror on her face. The hand clasped the girl by the left wrist and, pulling with all its might, the silver surface closed over the Ghost girl, until all that remained was a ripple on the mirror's surface.



Mave stood transfixed by the mirror for several minutes. The entire scene that she witnessed had only taken seconds, but it felt like hours. She could not stand to think of what had frightened the Ghost girl so much, to put that look on her face.

The girl had clearly been afraid over what was on the other side of that mirror; that much was obvious. Mave wondered about the wisdom of being near something that could reach out and grab her. But time was of the essence. It looked as if the girl might be in trouble, and she had possibly come to her for help.

Mave had a certain awareness about the world of ghosts from her grandmother. They lived their own life, on their own terms. It was not a hazy afterlife, but a real plane of people that had their own things to do. She knew the girl looked horrified at something on the other side. Someone

had to help her; but did she want to be the one to do it? Mave wondered.

Looking at the mirror full on now, she saw what was written on the surface. The words said:

I AM MADE FROM MORE THAN BLOOD...

Mave looked at those words for a beat. Did that mean her friend could feel pain? Mave reached out with her finger and, gently, wrote on the mirror's surface:

What does that mean?

She received no reply.

Mave barely stopped to think before she felt her fingers sinking into the mirror's surface. She looked around her, only to realize that a soft, gold glow emanated from the mirror. It cast a pale light in the attic and for a brief moment, Mave saw something in the shadows.

They were the shapes of people; somehow she knew this. They were dark, no detail, and seemed to blend together and then reform into something different: more people, fewer people. A soft whispering started to grow in the attic, louder this time, more insistent. Or so it seemed to Mave.

She had barely a moment to contemplate this strange development before she felt herself slipping faster into the mirror, soft and liquid, warm and molten. She felt warmth, saw blackness and knew no more.



Mave awoken in darkness.

She felt it around her, cloaking out sound. She waited for her eyes to get used to the darkness. The walls seemed to be made of stone.

She had no idea how long she had been out. Even still, weariness clung to her. She had barely a moment to look out the window, before she lay back down on what appeared to be a nest of clothes and rags.

Mave lowered herself into them, felt sleep take hold of her once more, and her eyes closed again to darkness.



When Mave next awakened, she heard noise coming from below the window. A song woke her. Its tone was light and seemed to float up to her. Mave got up and looked around.

Though it was night, light came through the window, from outside her room. It lit the corners of her room, casting shadows over objects. She did not know how long she had been sleeping, but her body told her it had been days. She felt as if she were stirring from a long sleep.

Her eyes became more adjusted to the darkness. She saw a small dresser, and an empty bed frame.

And a broken mirror.

She approached it, as she had approached another. Was this how she had gotten here? This room did not belong to her grandmother's house. She touched a piece of the glass. There was a crack in the mirror. Her hand didn't sink through it. How did she get here in the first place?

Mave wondered vaguely where *Here*, was.

There sat a small box in the corner. Her nest of rags, some clothes spread out on the floor underneath and beside her.

In the far side of the room was a door leading somewhere, perhaps towards the music. She decided to stay and observe her new surroundings first, get what she could. Her grandmother had always told her: 'Be aware and find what you can. You never know what could be of use to you.'

She started with the pile of rags underneath her. She couldn't very well go out and about wearing nightclothes and slippers, could she? She decided to find herself something suitable to wear.

Rummaging in the pile of clothes, she found herself a motley of an outfit: dark blue jeans, for they seemed like the most sensible thing. They had stripes down the side, a bright purple stripe, running down each leg. There was a white shirt, with purple stripes, and shiny black buckled boots. Mave had never dressed so fancifully in her whole life. She had always been dressed in dirty gray dresses; her parents had not seen to buying her clothes, her dresses were always worn, threadbare and dull in color after many washings.

Having a whole new outfit, even if only second-hand, was all right with her. She grabbed a small, rose colored jacket, a size too large for her, and a

small black cap. She studied her outfit in front of the cracked mirror, wondering for a moment what those words had meant: *I am made from more than blood...*

Mave wondered where the ghost girl had gone. If she wasn't on the other side of the mirror, where was she?

She looked over her appearance as best she could in the dim light. She could hear the music outside the window, calling to her.

Cautiously, she tip-toed to the door and opened it a crack. She could hear people now, outside the house. Stepping into the hallway, she found herself on a second floor landing that looked nothing like her grandmother's house. She could see that the front door was ajar.

It looked as if the house had been abandoned years ago; it had fallen into disrepair. She stepped back inside the room and went to the box in the corner. Inside were two things: a blue feather and a small blue stone. She thought it odd for two small objects to be in such a large box, but put them into her pocket with the locket she had remembered to take from the dressing gown she had discarded.

She stood out on the second landing for a moment, and then rushed down the stairs. Dust and shadow were on either side of her. Remembering the shadows that she had seen when she crossed through the mirror, Mave chose not to linger. She opened the front door wider and stepped outside, towards the music.

Because she was in a hurry, and didn't paying attention, Mave failed to notice the *thing* that watched her from the shadows:

Its pale white fingers curled around the wood of the doorframe, the nails long and yellow. Its eyes flashed once in the darkness before it slinked away from view, withdrawing its hand from the doorframe.

It slipped back into the shadows and blended into the darkness and dust, as if it had never been there.

CHAPTER FIVE

~ The Village ~

Mave closed the front door and looked at her surroundings. She stood in front of a large house in a state of deep disrepair.

The boards underneath her feet were worn and warped in places. Boards also covered the windows, though Mave spotted broken glass that littered the boards like diamonds. She wondered how long it had been this way.

She cautiously eyed the steps leading down to the street. There were broken steps and the wood was green with mold. Gingerly stepping on them, so as not to fall through the rotting boards, Mave moved down and stepped onto a cobblestone street.

Further inspection showed that the entire street was made from cobblestone; dark and light rock pieced together with mortar. The white stone winked brightly in the grey morning light. She wondered briefly if she was in a different time.

She had seen streets like this in history books or old historical dramas on television, but never in real life.

Mave still heard the music, its soft melody flittering through the air, but it seemed to be growing softer. Taking a few more cautious steps, Mave followed the music towards its source.

Other houses lined the street, though these houses were much better kept than the one she had come from. A fountain graced the front lawn of the house nearest to her, jets of water tinkling softly from the mouth of what looked like a wood or water nymph.

A quick glance up and down the street showed that a fountain graced the lawns of each of the houses on this street, water flowing musically over stone.

Mave looked back the way she had come; a broad, red-colored brick wall stretched as far as she could see. As she approached it, the wall seemed to grow taller. The street she walked on ended at a dead end, and there did not seem to be any way of getting past the brick wall and whatever was behind it.

Going back in the other direction, Mave continued down the lane, the music she had heard earlier now silent. She wondered who had been making the music and what they had been playing. All that Mave heard now was the flowing of the water from the fountains around her.

The laneway was long, and on both sides Mave could see more fountains, each more ornate than the last one. Mave walked for what seemed like an hour, the cobblestones rough and uneven under

her feet, when she came upon something that piqued her curiosity.

There stood a large wooden archway, its curve high above her head. Past the archway, she could see empty stalls as if an open-air market had once been housed there. Dangling from the archway hung a large wooden sign. Mave stepped closer to get a better look, and saw something etched into its surface. It appeared to be an odd looking symbol that reminded Mave of water. It had three wavy lines that seemed to pulse and flow like water did.

Hesitating momentarily, Mave stepped through the archway and looked at the sign from the other side. The same symbol was etched there, too.

She had a moment to think on this before she noticed that there were three more archways, one each on the four sides of the square. The symbols etched in gold upon the dangling signs shone in the sunlight.

On the sign to her right, she could see a symbol that looked like smoke or wind; three lines like the Water symbol, only this time, they were straight as opposed to wavy.

Mave stood looking at the symbol, pondering it for a moment. The first symbol had looked like water, whereas this symbol looked like air. She looked to her left and saw the third symbol. It looked like three jagged rocks, three pointy lines that formed three peaks.

She had a strong feeling that this one stood for Earth. She couldn't be sure about the fourth sign without being close enough to read it; but she had

a strong feeling that the fourth sign would have a symbol for fire.

Mave stood, looking around her, wondering what to do next. Still unsure, she made her way over to an empty stall and took shelter from the sun under a blue and white striped awning.

She was parched from walking for so long, and wished she had stopped to take a drink from one of the fountains she had passed. She closed her eyes and thought for a moment about a cool glass of water, cooling her parched throat. When she opened her eyes, she let out a soft gasp. In front of her sat a brown leather flask that had not been there before. Mave heard her grandmother's voice ring out in her head: *"Never eat or drink anything given to you by one of the Others. Though they mean well, they are known to be tricksters. Magical lands are sometimes unsafe, remember that, Mave."*

Mave thought this very sound advice. She knew she was clearly somewhere magical, for what else could this place be if she had gotten here through a mirror? Mave picked up the flask. Though she doubted the wisdom of drinking its contents, her throat was dry, and she had not had anything to eat or drink in quite some time. Mave had no idea how long she had slept when she had come out of the mirror. For all she knew, it could have been days.

Deciding to risk it, she opened the flask and took a small sip. It was water, cold and delicious. Smiling, she took more gulps of water from the flask and thought about her situation.

She had traveled through a mirror. That in itself wasn't strange to her; after all, she could talk to ghosts. But she had no idea where she was, and appeared to be in a village of sorts that formed itself around the four Elements: Earth, Air, Water and Fire. *"These are the things that make up the body of magic,"* her grandmother had said once. *"The fifth element, Spirit, is within you. You carry it with you wherever you go,"* she said, touching Mave's chest.

Why are there four streets with signs of the Elements hanging above them? And for that matter, where is everyone? She knew it to be midday now, but she had not seen hide-nor-hair of a single person. *Is there anyone in this village?* The lawns looked too well cared for, so she supposed that the place must be inhabited. In that case, where were all the people?

Her grandmother must have noticed her disappearance by now. Mave knew she would be worried about her. She had a sick feeling in the pit of her stomach when she thought of how worried Mona would be. Mave reached into her pocket and took out the feather she had taken from the box that had been in her room. She reached further into her pocket and found the locket and the small round stone. Putting the feather and stone back into her pocket, she looked at the locket resting in her hand.

Running her thumb over the hole in its center, she stared at it, its gold filigree winking in the sunlight much like the gold on the signs. Following an impulse, she put the hole in the locket in line with her right eye, and looked through it.

Nothing looked different. Mave sighed, though she did not know what she had been expecting. She was about to put the locket away when she saw something *had* changed, but only slightly.

On the sign nearest to her, where previously there had been lines that looked like waves, the sign now said: *Water*.

Startled, Mave took the locket away from her eye. The symbol was there again. Curious, she thought. Following a hunch, she walked around the square, looking at each of the symbols in turn. Her suspicions had been correct. The signs were *Earth, Air, Fire and Water*.

Mave looked at the locket again before putting it back in her pocket. Perhaps it revealed things, she thought. She would have to test it out further.

She returned to the stall and took another drink of water from the flask. It still felt heavy, though she must have drank three quarters of its contents by now. *That's another strange thing*, she thought. She had only to think of water and the flask had appeared. Could she do the same with food? Mave closed her eyes for a moment and thought of all her favorite foods: cakes and pasta, ice cream, chocolates. When she opened her eyes, there was nothing in front of her but a small cake.

Prodding it with her finger, she found it soft. It had a glaze that looked shiny in the sunlight. Picking it up, she took a small bite from it, feeling slightly like Alice in Wonderland eating the cake with the note "Eat Me." The cake tasted wonderful, with a slight honey taste. Polishing it off in two bites, she looked around her.

Shadows were creeping along the ground. Mave looked up and realized that the sun was close to setting, maybe two or three hours away at best. But that couldn't be right, could it? The sun had been rising only hours ago; how could it already be the end of the day?

Mave looked at the other streets and wondered if she had time to explore them all before night came. She had landed in a strange place and didn't know if it was safe yet to be out during nightfall.

Making her decision, Mave went to the archway with the *Earth* symbol hanging from it. One glance down the street told her that this laneway was much different than *Water Street*.

The street was still made of cobblestone, but there were no houses. Instead, there appeared what looked like caves, carved into the surface of two small mountains that started on either side of the street and sloped gently upwards. Mave eyed the mountains warily, but nobody was moving in and out of the caves. She made her way down the street quickly, as the sun had set further still. There were no fountains, but in front of each cave dwelling, there was a small statue made of stone.

The statues differed slightly, but each of them was shaped like a person. Some stood motionless, while others looked as if they were dancing. Even though the statues were roughly done, they struck Mave as beautiful. They were primal, made from rock and Earth, but seemingly alive. If she listened closely she thought she heard a soft humming. It took a moment before she realized that it came from the stone in her pocket. Taking it

out, she held it in the palm of her hand and watched it dance and giggle in her palm. Noticing the shadows creeping further along the ground, she put it back in her pocket and looked around her.

To the right and left of her, there was only darkness. She wondered for a moment why she could not see *Water Street* or *Fire Street* from here. She pushed the thought out of her mind, however, at the need to get to safety before darkness came. Promising herself that she would explore *Earth Street* and the other laneways when she had more time, Mave made her way quickly back to the empty market and down *Water Street* to the end, where her disheveled house waited for her.

It amused Mave to think of it as her house, but since she could see no other sign of habitation, she felt she could claim it as her own.

Climbing up the front steps, she let herself in the front door and closed it behind her, just as darkness claimed the street.

Making her way carefully up the steps, she found the room with her mirror and closed the door behind her, feeling safe again now that she was not out in the open. Feeling her way carefully in the darkness, she found the box in the corner of the room. Opening it, Mave put the water flask inside, along with the stone and locket, before settling herself in her nest of clothes.

She listened to the soft tinkling of water outside her window and fell asleep within minutes. She dreamt, but in the morning she could not remember her dreams. They were filled with

shapes that moved, symbols that separated and joined each other until they formed a large wheel that turned and turned, heading where, Mave knew not. And then there was darkness.

CHAPTER SIX

~ Blood and Filth ~

When Mave opened her eyes again, she heard music.

She had no idea how long she had slept, but the music played in full force as opposed to drifting slowly away. It put a gladness in her blood that filled her with warmth. It was a happy music, and it made her want to get up and dance along with it.

Mave could see the stars through the window. They looked like diamonds in the sky. The light from outside fell upon the mirror, and Mave turned to face it. It looked like an eye in the darkness.

The mirror looked as if it were made of liquid, silver and supple like mercury. Mave got up from her nest of clothes and slowly went towards it. The crack in the mirror split Mave into two of herself; she ran a finger along one edge of the crack and pulled her hand back with a soft gasp.

Looking at her finger, she saw a pearl-shaped drop of blood that looked black in the half light. But that had not been the reason the gasp escape her lips.

When her blood had touched the mirror, it began to glow with a soft light, illuminating the room and its shadows. Mave stared at the mirror, her mouth open at what she saw: Her reflection had vanished, only to be replaced with her grandmother's attic. And in the attic was her grandmother.

"Mave?" Mona said. "*Mave, is that you?*"

Mave started to reply, but before she could, the mirror's light faded, and the room around her was dark once more.



Mave stared at the mirror for almost an hour before dragging herself away from it. She could not think how to contact her grandmother again to let her know that she was Okay. But she had seen her, and her grandmother had seen Mave. Of that she was certain. Throwing the mirror a dark glare for all the trouble it had gotten her into, Mave sighed. She had more pressing matters on her mind. If she couldn't get home, she would at least continue to explore the world she found herself in.

Mave made her way to the wooden box in the corner of the room and opened the lid to retrieve what she now thought of as her treasures; when she reached inside to grab a hold of the flask,

locket, feather and stone, she felt something else in its depths.

Pulling it out of the box, she saw another stone, roughly cut in the shape of a person. It appeared to be a carving reminiscent of the statues in front of the caves. She looked back into the box and saw something else winking up at her. Mave reached in and pulled out what looked like a small marble.

Mave held it up in front of her and looked into it. The marble seemed to shine with an inner light, and it pulsed softly in her hand. What looked like a white, pearly mist swam in the glass. She put it in her pocket with her other treasures.

This box is magic, Mave thought. She lifted the box and looked at it from all angles. It was made from light coloured wood with no markings on its surface. When she turned the box upside down, however, she received a surprise; etched into the bottom of the box were the words:

THIS BOX IS THE PROPERTY OF MAVE MALLORY

"This place just gets weirder and weirder," she said aloud.

Then, she heard the music once more, growing in intensity. Deciding to leave the mystery of the box and her treasures for another time, Mave put on her jacket and headed outside to find the music's source.

When Mave closed the front door behind her and stepped down the rickety porch steps, she saw that her new world had undergone a change while she slept.

The cobblestone street was the same, uneven and bumpy, the white stone bright and luminescent in the evening twilight. But the town had over-gone a transformation of huge proportions.

Gone were the fountains in front of the houses on *Water Street*. Instead, the street looked positively suburban in the light cast from street lamps. She looked up at her own house and saw that it, too, had changed: its walls were white-washed, and its windows were unbroken and gleaming. Mave had only a moment to reflect on this before she heard the music again. Following it, she walked on.

She could hear the voices of other people as she walked, and even saw someone leave what had to be a corner store; a bell on the door tinkled merrily as the door opened and someone came out. Mave saw a woman, and she clutched her purchases: In one hand, she carried a large cloth bag that seemed to move, its contents shifting, In the other, she carried a large glass beaker with a thin neck and corked at the top. It contained a soft amber colored liquid.

Mave smiled at the woman. The woman smiled back and seemed about to utter a greeting when she stopped, a look of astonishment on her face, and went in the other direction. Mave wondered what made the woman run away from her. *Weirder and weirder*, Mave thought again.

Looking around her, Mave let a breath escape her lips. There seemed to be more streets, almost as if this were a small neighborhood. She saw children playing in the half dark, one pointing his

fingers at the sky in front of him, a shower of sparks shooting from his finger tip. The boy laughed as his friend, a small blond girl, tried to catch the sparks before they fell to the ground.

"Hello!" Mave called out to them. They looked to be around her age. The boy, the one who had been shooting sparks from his fingers, turned around. When he saw her, he said something to his friend, and then they both turned away from her and ran inside a house. *What is it that keeps frightening people?* she wondered.

Mave walked further down the main street, seeing more streets to the right and left of her where before there had been shadow and darkness. When she reached the main square, Mave's mouth dropped open.

Hundreds of people milled about the main square, the empty market stalls now filled to bursting with goods. The noise of the people was almost deafening, and she could not hear the music here.

Mave made her way further into the market, looking at everything. There seemed to be all manner of things available: bread and cheeses, vegetables; crisp lettuce, and fresh fish on beds of ice. Meat turned on spits, filling the air with their scent. Mave could see spices for sale too: bushels of rosemary and thyme, saffron and mint, cloth sacks filled with salt and pepper.

There were clothes available for purchase, too; pants and shirts, and what looked like traveling cloaks. Mave could see jewelry glinting in the light of the lamps: chains with amulets dangling from them, large stones set in ornate rings. She could

hear the chirps and howls of animals that were for sale at the back corner of the market: birds and dogs, cats and snakes. She wondered why none of this was for sale at the corner store she had glimpsed.

She wandered further into the market. Every time someone turned to her to offer her their wares, they quickly turned their faces away. At one stall, where she attempted to trade her locket for something to eat, the man running the stall ignored her. He acted as if he didn't hear her.

At another stall, when she tried the same thing, a woman selling what looked like sandwiches in rolled up bread turned away from her muttering, "Why would I want a witch's trinket?" and refused to say another word.

Suddenly, she looked around her, noticing that she attracted quite a bit of attention. People either pointed at her as she made her way through the market, or whispered behind their hands while throwing her furtive glances. They acted the same as the woman and the children she had seen on *Water Street*. What was it about her that everyone seemed to dislike? Did they know that she wasn't from here; that she had traveled through the mirror? She walked a little further, trying to lose herself in the crowd of people, but everyone seemed to step aside for her when she walked by. It seemed almost as if they were afraid to touch her.

Feeling afraid, she turned to go back the way she came. A large woman stepped in her path. She was round and huge, like a massive hippo on its back legs. Her head was small compared to the

rest of her body, but she had jowls that shook with indignation. Her small, piggy eyes narrowed at Mave, and she had a strong smell of drink on her.

"Where do you think you're going?" the woman barked at her.

"Please," Mave said. "I just want to go back to my house. I don't mean any harm."

"You have a house here, do you?" the woman asked.

A few stall owners, and people buying wares, stopped talking, turning to listen to the altercation in front of them.

"And what house would that be? You're too young to own a house." She lowered her piggy face so it was level with Mave's. "And don't lie to me; I'll *know* if you're lying."

"It's the house at the end of *Water Street*, really, I just..."

The woman cut her off by spitting in her face. "Filth!" she said. "Nothing but filth has lived in that house. We don't want your kind here!" She spit at her again.

"I don't understand what you mean," Mave said quietly, shocked that a grown person could be so cruel to spit on her. "I only want to go home."

"Filth like you has no home. Eyes as black as sin, you have, and you think you have a home? Your kind is not welcome here," she yelled.

"Please!" Mave said. "I don't know what you mean, I've done nothing wrong."

"Breathing is enough! Didn't we teach the rest of your kind a lesson by burning them? Or were you too young to see your mother burn in flames?"

"Burn them? Who did you burn? Why would you burn people?" Tears started to slide down her cheeks. The woman's apparent hatred for her flowed like waves, and Mave could feel it filling the air around her. No one dared speak, and Mave noticed for the first time that the market had gone quiet. All she could hear was the music, its soft notes flying on the air around her. It sounded loud now, with no other sound to compete with except the fat woman's booming voice.

"Not people. Filth like you, we burned your kind, all of them. Looks like we'll have to burn one more." The woman snapped her fingers, and a tongue of flame shot out from the index finger of her right hand. "I even had witch meat once for dinner; she was wiry and tough. Though I'm sure, with your young baby fat, you'll taste just wonderful." The woman spat at her again. "Filth. Reprobate. How *dare* you come here and try to barter your worthless junk for food, *our* food. Haven't we suffered enough at the hands of your kind?"

The woman lowered her finger of flame closer to Mave's face. "How about it, dearie? Do you know what burned skin smells like? I could burn you to a crisp right now, and no one would say a thing about it." She inched the flame closer to Mave.

She felt a lick of it touch her hair, and smelled a sickening scent before she realized her hair had caught fire. Mave quickly patted out the flame, but the smell lingered.

"STOP!" Everyone turned to look where the voice came from. Mave saw a small boy working his way through the crowd, shoving people aside

to get to her. He grabbed Mave's hand and held on to it tightly. "She's with me."

The piggy woman laughed, a hard cackling sound. "You're just a street rat, Euwan Opal. Get out of my way; you're meddling in things you don't understand."

"I understand well enough you want to burn her where she stands when she has obviously done no wrong," the boy shot back. He was a little taller than Mave, with brown hair that fell in soft curls. Green-blue eyes glinted dangerously. "Has she bewitched anyone? Has food gone sour when she's been near it? The music has not stopped, has it? As long as it plays, that means there is no harm in the village, and still it plays with her here." Euwan looked around at the other villagers, daring them to disagree. "I vouch for her."

The fat woman laughed. "You vouch for her? A street rat? Why save her neck when she has done nothing for you?"

"Because she did nothing to warrant being set ablaze." He held on tightly to Mave's hand. "Come on," he whispered to her.

He pulled her away from the crowd of onlookers that had formed around them, heading towards one of the side streets. "Where are we going?" Mave asked.

"Away from them, somewhere safe," he said. "It is not wise for you to be out on your own here."

"But why?" Mave asked, her voice almost a wail. "What did I do to them? Why were they calling me a witch? What did the woman mean by 'my kind?'"

"I'll explain when we're safer," he said. He saw a look of disbelief in her eyes. "It's alright," he told her. "You can trust me."

Mave thought for a moment, and then nodded. She let Euwan lead her to safety. He seemed nice enough, and he had saved her from an otherwise grisly fate. She followed him down an alleyway, wondering where he was taking her.

Behind them, surrounded by the crowd, a pale-skinned man watched them depart. He narrowed his purple eyes that flashed darkly in the half-light. A smile touched his lips then, yet there was nothing humorous about it. Then the pale man faded into the shadows, as if he were never there.

CHAPTER SEVEN

~ *Euwan Opal* ~

Euwan pulled her through a maze of alleyways and roads. In between the buildings, there were no cobblestones. Instead, Mave felt dirt underneath her feet and saw clouds of it rise in their wake.

After what felt like hours, they stopped running. Mave knew they had only been running for a short time, but she kept looking over her shoulder, expecting to see some of the villagers following her, torches on fire. She remembered something her grandmother had said about fear: "*People fear what they don't understand, Mave. People fear what is different.*" That certainly seemed to be the case here.

Euwan led her through more side streets, people calling out to him as they saw him. They looked after her with undisguised curiosity. Euwan yelled out a hello, or waved to them with his free hand, but kept running. Finally, they came to a shabby building that looked as if it had seen better days. It reminded Mave of her house during the daytime.

Euwan pulled aside a loose board covering a window on the ground floor, its window's long gone, and motioned for her to go in before him. Mave hesitated a moment, then decided to trust him further. She eased herself through the open space and landed softly on a floor strewn with straw. There was no light, except for that let in by the open board. Euwan followed behind her, and then the board slid into place, leaving them in darkness.

Mave felt a shadow of fear fill her for a moment before asking, "Where are we?"

"My home," Euwan said quietly. There was a *chik* sound, and Euwan was holding a small flame in front of him. Like the woman in the market, the flame came from his index finger.



In the Shadows, Mr. Lavender stirred.

His pale-faced companion stood before him. "Do you feel it?"

Mr. Lavender smiled and nodded. "She is here. I can taste her in the air. She's filling it with electricity, yet she does not know it. You have been tracking her?"

The pale man nodded. "She is with that boy, Euwan Opal."

Mr. Lavender's smile widened. Instead of making him seem jovial, the smile made him look crazy, as if he were losing his grasp on reality.

"Excellent. Things couldn't be going better. Tell me, Gabriel, did she seem afraid?"

"I really couldn't say, sir. A woman in the Bazaar tried to burn her."

This made Mr. Lavender look up. "Burn her? You don't say? Was she recognized for what she is?"

"I believe so, sir."

"Yes, I think so, too. Why else would the woman want to burn the witch? Do you know who it was?"

"The woman was fat and unseemly, sir. She was large and had many chins. She could sprout flame from her fingers."

"Was there bitterness in her voice?"

"Yes, sir. She wanted to burn the girl where she stood."

"Bring her to me."

"Yes sir." The pale man made to leave.

"Oh, and Gabriel..." Mr. Lavender called out. The pale man turned to face him. "I am hungry. See that another meal is prepared for me in the White Room."

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Lavender smiled. "You may go now, Gabriel. And remember, a hard night's work brings many days of reward."

Gabriel nodded and folded himself back into the darkness of shadow.



Mave watched the flame dance at the end of Euwan's finger. "How are you doing that?" she asked.

"What?" Euwan asked. "This?" He waved the flame dancing on the end of his finger. "Everyone can make fire here."

"I can't," Mave said.

"You only think you can't. There's a difference." He smiled at her. "What do they call you?"

"My name is Mave."

"Mave is a good name. She was the Goddess of Witches."

"Was she a good woman?"

"She was lovely, and revered by all." Euwan smiled again. "One of the very best witches there ever was. Mave is a very strong name, a good name for you to have." He paused before he spoke again. "It is fitting for you."

"Why?"

"Because it is a name of power." He pointed to her chest. "Power that resides within you."

"I don't have any power."

"It creeps under your skin, whether you know it or not. You just have to acknowledge it."

Mave shivered. Her grandmother had said something similar. "I think my grandmother was a witch," Mave said. "Only she said that she wasn't, that she could see."

Euwan nodded. "A lot of witches are Seers. It is in the blood."

Mave looked around her. They stood in what looked to be a series of rooms. Mave guessed they were in the living room, though there was no television. There was only an old bookshelf filled

with battered looking books. There was a couch and a small coffee table and small oil lamps hung from the ceiling.

Past the living room, through the doorway, she could see a hallway leading to a bathroom and a bedroom. She supposed the kitchen was somewhere beyond that. "Where are we?" Mave asked again. "Do you live here?"

"Here and there, really." Euwan shrugged. "I've been here for weeks now. No one seems to live here, and none of the other street rats know about it, so I've claimed it for my own. It's not much."

Mave thought of her run down house on *Water Street*, and of her small room back at her parent's house. "I think it's beautiful." She couldn't be sure, but she thought she saw Euwan blush. "Where are your parents?" she asked.

Euwan's face became grim. "They died years ago." His mouth became a thin line, and Mave decided not to press the subject any further. "Are you hungry?"

Mave listened to her stomach rumble. She hadn't eaten anything except that small cake and the water from her flask. She suddenly realized just how hungry she was. "Famished, actually."

"I'll make us something to eat. While we eat, we can talk. I'm sure you have a lot of questions."

"What makes you say that?"

Euwan looked at her for a moment, studying her face. "You're not from around here, are you?"

"No," Mave admitted.

"I knew that. It's been at least six years since we've seen a witch. You must be one of the last ones."

"The woman at the market called me a witch, too. I don't know what she meant by that. I'm not a witch. I'm just a girl."

"I think you're more than you know. There is power inside you. Can't you feel it?"

"I suppose," she admitted.

"Sometimes it takes time to feel your power at full height," Euwan said. "Have you made anything happen while you've been here? Have you magicked anything?"

Mave thought of her water flask and the small cake she had eaten. She thought of the treasures appearing inside the wooden box that had her name on it. "I think you know the answer to that," Mave said sagely. "Why do you think I'm a witch?"

"Because you have black eyes." He shook his head. "I'm getting ahead of myself. You need to eat while I start at the beginning. Here."

Mave watched as he waved his hand, and a silver tray appeared on the small coffee table. It was filled with sandwiches, and there was a pitcher of what looked like iced tea. "I hope it's to your liking. I haven't learned many food spells, but I know a few."

"How did you do that?" Mave asked.

"Magic," Euwan said simply.

"But magic isn't real," Mave protested. "You can't just magic food out of thin air."

"You can here," Euwan said. "Magic is an everyday thing here, not just for the few and far between."

"Where *is* here?" she asked, almost in a whisper.

Euwan smiled. "So full of questions. That's good. Questions lead to answers and answers lead to wisdom."

"That's pretty. Who told you that?"

"I can't remember." A look of pain crossed his face, only for a second, and then it was gone. When Euwan spoke, his voice was normal. "Sit, eat, and I will tell you all that I can."

Mave crossed the room to sit on the overstuffed couch, and helped herself to a sandwich. While she ate, Euwan began to talk.

CHAPTER EIGHT

~ The Burning of Witches ~

Mr. Lavender looked at the small girl cowering in the corner of the White Room. Her blond hair fell in curtains in front of her face, but Mr. Lavender could still see her eyes; they were wide with fear. The girl had her arms wrapped around her knees, and she rocked back and forth. The sight made Mr. Lavender smile.

He approached the girl slowly. If Mave had been in the room, she would have recognized the girl. She had been watching her friend shoot sparks from his fingers just that morning. It was a simple spell, but it was a good trick, and the sparks made her laugh. She tried to think of them now, picture them showering down, so that she would not have to smell her own fear.

Mr. Lavender spread his fingers wide, and the girl watched as a shower of sparks shot forth. They were gold in color and they shone brightly. Instead of falling, however, they spiraled in the palm of his hand. "You like these?" he asked her. "I bet you

can only produce small bits of spark, 'eh, my little blue bonnet?" The girl did not respond, but he didn't expect her to. "How old are you, darling girl? Eleven, twelve? Too young for serious spells, I bet?"

He crept closer to the girl. She pressed herself further to the wall, as if wanting to melt into the stone and concrete. Her dirty fingers and skin looked even grimmer surrounded by so much pristine whiteness.

"Don't be afraid, blue bonnet. I won't hurt you. You have nothing to be afraid of here." The girl whimpered. Mr. Lavender smiled, licking his lips. He could taste her fear on the air, and it was like an appetizer to him, a preamble to a delicious meal. Fear always made them taste sweeter. "Did you see a girl today, in the Bazaar? She has red hair and black eyes. Did you see her?"

The girl didn't speak, only whimpered. Mr. Lavender lunged at her and grabbed her hand. The sparks that had been dancing on his palm shot all along the surface of the girl's skin, and blue shocks of electricity snaked over her body. The girl convulsed with pain and a cry escaped her lips. As fast as the pain came, it was gone. She could feel her hair standing on end, could feel the pain still pulsing in her skin.

"You will answer me when I ask you a direct question," Mr. Lavender said. "Do you understand me?"

The girl nodded. "Yes."

"And she had black eyes and red hair?"

The girl nodded again. "Yes, sir."

"Did she frighten you?" he asked, his voice soft and felt like a caress on her skin. It made her feel sleepy, as if she could curl up right there in the too white room, and sleep for a thousand years.

"She had witch's eyes. I was afraid," the girl whimpered. "I ran inside my friend's house."

Mr. Lavender made a cooing sound. "You did well today, blue bonnet. You did very well. I have a present for you. Would you like to see it?"

The girl nodded. "After, can I go home to my mother? She'll be wondering where I've gotten to."

"Of course, blue bonnet, of course," Mr. Lavender soothed. He reached out to smooth her soft blond hair and let long, hard volts of electricity flow through her before the girl knew what was happening. The girl shook and convulsed, her feet and hands slapping against the floor, until at last she lay still.

Slowly, Mr. Lavender lay the girl's head down on the white floor. He opened her mouth and stared into the dead girl's eyes. They were open and staring at him. He could see himself in them, and this pleased him. He got to his knees and looked in the girl's eyes, softly holding her mouth open with the fingers of his left hand.

"I am made from more than blood," Mr. Lavender whispered. *"I am filled with spirit strong."*

In response to his words, the air around them became thick, as if time stood still. He watched as whiteness, a soft mist, started to crawl out of the girl's mouth.

"I am made from more than flesh," Mr. Lavender continued. "I am filled with bloods pure song."

The rest of the incantation made the air thicker still. Mr. Lavender felt the mist leaving the girls mouth, felt the mist tickling his lips and teeth. He sucked softly and felt the mist enter him. When there was nothing left, the air returned to normal and Mr. Lavender felt lighter, stronger.

He turned when he sensed someone standing behind him. Gabriel, tall and pale, stood in the doorway to the bathroom, the White Room. "Thank you for her, Gabriel," Mr. Lavender said, as he got to his feet. "She confirmed that the witch is here, that she is indeed within our midst."

"Why must you always kill them, sir?" Gabriel asked. "I mean no disrespect, but why must they be dead before you eat them?"

Mr. Lavender grimaced. "It is hard to rip the soul away from a body when the body is living. It can be done, but it is tiresome and does not fill one up as much. When the body is dead, there is no resistance." Mr. Lavender studied Gabriel. "What is it you wish to speak of?"

"I have found the fat woman, sir. She is waiting in the parlor."

Mr. Lavender smiled. "Excellent, Gabriel. Let her know I will be down shortly."

"Yes, sir."



"Witches got a bad reputation from the start." Euwan said. He took a sip of cold tea and got more comfortable on the couch. "In the Beginning was light, and the world was wonderful. It was green and full of life. There were trees with fruit, and the land covered in grass. There was nothing wrong with the world in the Beginning.

"There was Magic in the Beginning. Women were called witches, for they could bewitch the elements to do their will. They could make the Elements do their bidding and profited for their magic. Many a person wanted some sort of magical aid, some sort of spell or potion that would help them. The witches were revered and honored above all others. But, there were also those witches who craved a darker sort of power, a darker sort of magic. There are two sides to everything. Black and white, good and evil, white and dark. Just as there were those who helped others with the powers the goddess gave them, there were those who sought out darker powers fueled by greed."

"What happened then? Were the dark witches stopped?"

Euwan shook his head. "There must be a balance in all things, living or dead. Where there is goodness, there must be evil and so it was. Cow's milk went sour; children died or were stolen from their beds. No one knew who was causing the harm, the mayhem. Blame was pointed at all sorts of people at first, but then the finger came to rest on those who could do magic. You see, Mave, only witches could do magic in the Beginning.

They were born with the power and normal people, mortals, could not even hope to ever do magic."

"But you can do magic and you're not a witch," Mave pointed out.

"Too true. You see, the public outcry for all the bad things that had been happening had reached a fever state. Did witches burn in your world?"

Mave nodded. "The Salem Witch Trials. Thousands were burned, though most likely none of them were witches. Women who wronged others, mistresses, even men, anyone suspected of being a witch was burned at the stake."

"It was the same here, except that the difference was that the women burned *were* witches." Euwan paused, a dark look coming over his face. "I am thankful that I was not alive to see it, but my mother was. She said it was a dark time, and there was fear running all through out the land. Witches were being burned every day. Instead of being seen as the Healers they were, they were seen as evil. Witches became hated beyond anything else, and there were fires all day, every day. In little less than a year, all the witches were burned alive."

"But if they were the only ones able to do magic, why is everyone here able to do it? How did you obtain the magic if it died with the witches?"

"I don't know if you want to hear how that happened."

"It can't be any worse than burning women alive because they were different." Mave lowered her voice to a whisper. "What happened, Euwan?"

"I don't really know, except for what was told to me. Do you know what happens when a witch burns?"

Mave shook her head negatively.

"Her soul is released from her body. While our souls fade away when we die, there is too much magic in a witch's soul to fade away; something keeps it here. You can bottle their souls, which hold their magic. When mixed with liquid, you can drink it and the magic goes into you.

"The town council decided that all who had been without magic should now have it. So, all the witches souls were brewed up and left to simmer for some time before drinking, to achieve potency. Then the town council gave the brew to each of the townspeople. They would then be able to do magic and what's more, so would their children and their children's children. For when magic enters the blood, it never leaves."

"You keep calling this place a town. What is its name?" Mave asked. "I noticed that it was different at night than it was during the day, that each of its streets was named after an Element."

"That came after, and is part of our protection," Euwan said. "The Mayor, long since dead, figured that it would be best to protect the inhabitants of the village. So, he induced a powerful magic that would cut us off from all that we had known and bring us here, so that we were safely hidden, and the secrets of magic would be safe. Think of it, Mave," Euwan said, "if everyone knew that a village like this existed, what would happen then?"

"In homage to the magic that now ran through their veins, the Council decided to name the four

streets of this village after the four Elements, and this is where the town gets its name."

"What is its name, Euwan?"

"Why, haven't you guessed, Mave? You are in the town of Element, the last magical settlement of its kind."

"But why is the town different at night than at daytime?"

"Well, with magic being so rampant here, the normal laws do not apply. In all things there must be a balance, and the balance is not observed here, as magic disrupts the law of nature. There is good and bad light, and shadow." Another dark look crossed Euwan's face before he continued. "A few years ago, people started disappearing; children. They would be taken from their beds and never be heard from again. Ten children had gone missing, taken from their beds. But the children were always taken at nighttime, when the world was dark out. So the Council had another brilliant idea: they would reverse the natural order of things."

"Is that why there was no one outside during the day?"

Euwan smiled. "Precisely. With everyone active during the nighttime, no one could disappear. Light at night keeps the shadows away. But still another child was taken, the eleventh child. So more precautions were instilled."

"The Shadows between the streets," Mave said.

"Yes, those were put in place first so that during the day the town would be safe. The town would be hidden in shadow. You can only walk the true town during the night, when the lights come on to

reveal what is inside the shadows. The Council also started using a warning system. You remember the music you heard in the town?" Mave nodded again. "As long as that music plays, there is no danger."

Mave listened and could hear the music even now. "I also noticed that the daytime is shorter than normal. I was only out in the daylight for a few hours, but night came so quickly."

"Another of the Council's ideas. Less light means less chance of them being at risk, for now that the town lived during the night and slept during the day, they were safe. Or so they thought. Another child was taken during the daylight. The twelfth child. Since that time, the number of children who have disappeared has grown in number. No one really knows how many children have gone, never to return. But each time a child is taken, the shadows during the day grow thicker, wider. And the mountains encasing the town grow with each disappearance."

"Mountains?"

"Our village is protected by more than just magic, Mave. There are mountains on all sides of us and no one has ever ventured beyond them. There are even brick walls at the end of each street to stop people from trying to go into the mountains and explore what lies beyond."

"At first, the mountains were a small ridge, just to prevent the curious from coming into the town. But now, the mountains stretch as far as the eye can see and there are shadows on the horizon. And the shadows are creeping closer."

Mave was silent for a long time, thinking about what she had just been told. It was a lot to take in, all the senseless deaths, the burning of witches. And then something occurred to her. "Euwan," she said, "If you weren't alive during the time of the witch burnings, how do you know the story?"

"Everyone knows the story," he replied. "It is common town folklore."

"Yes, but you said someone told you," Mave pushed. "Who told you?"

Euwan grimaced. "My mother," he said. "She was the last witch they burned, years and years after the witch burnings." His voice was pained and soft, and it hurt Mave to hear the anguish in it. "A neighbor saw her doing magic and she was burned the next day." A tear slid down his cheek. "She was the last witch. Until you."

Mave said nothing, but slid closer to Euwan and put her arms around him. She knew that what he needed now was comfort instead of words. Words would mean nothing to him right now. They heard the music drift slowly away, and Mave watched in wonder as the lamps hanging from the ceiling went out slowly. Daylight had come.

She thought again of her grandmother and wondered if she was alright, if she was worried about her. She felt something vibrating softly in her pocket and searched in it for what moved. It was the locket from her grandmother's house. Euwan had fallen asleep while she held him, and she lay him down on the sofa so he could sleep in peace. Following an impulse, she put her eye to the hole in the locket and looked at Euwan through it.

Mave screamed and stood up quickly, knocking the tray of tea and sandwiches to the floor with a loud clatter. Euwan jolted awake and looked around the room, his eyes focusing on Mave. "What's wrong?" he asked. "What's happened?"

Mave's eyes were wide with fear, but instead of telling the truth, she answered, "Nothing. I just tripped, that's all."

"You gave me quite a shock," Euwan said. "Maybe you should get some sleep. Tomorrow, we can go see the Oracle."

This made Mave snap to attention. "The Oracle?"

"Sure. Every town has one. They're the wise women, the people who See. She'll know what to do."

"Do you think she'll help me?"

"Even if she can't, she'll want to know that a witch still lives."

"Can we go get my other clothes? I also left a box back at my house on *Water Street*."

"You're not safe out there right now, Mave. Witches invoke fear in people. Tomorrow, we'll make our way to the *Fire Walk*."

"Is that where the Oracle lives?"

"No, it's what we have to get through to see her. I'll explain more tomorrow. For now, sleep. We'll be refreshed tomorrow."

"Alright," Mave said, knowing that sleep would never come to her. "Night, Euwan."

"Night, Mave."

Mave watched as his eyes closed again before pulling the locket back out of her pocket. She put

it to her eye and stifled another scream. It hadn't changed, what she saw before hadn't gone away.

Instead of seeing a subtle change in Euwan, like the small change in the signs hanging above the laneways in the village, what she saw chilled her. Instead of seeing Euwan sleeping before her, his arms curled under his pillow on the couch, she saw something else.

Looking through the locket, she saw Euwan dead. His skin hung loosely off his bones, and even in the darkness of the room, she could see the hallow cheeks. Through the locket, Euwan was dead, no light within him.

Putting the locket back in her pocket, she shivered and curled up on the other side of the couch. Sleep was a long time in coming; but when it did, it was filled with nightmares.

CHAPTER NINE

~

Crows and Glass ~

When the blond girl opened her eyes, she discovered herself in a small room.

Light filtered through a large pane of glass that took up one whole side of the room. More light fluttered down from the ceiling as two small candles burned. She could see eight or nine small cots littering the room, but no other furniture. In the corner of the room, staring at her, sat a girl.

This girl had dark brown hair, and it hung down to the floor in two long braids. The girl smiled and patted the cot next to her. "Don't worry," she said. "I won't hurt you. You don't have to be afraid anymore."

"Why's that?" the blond girl asked.

"Because you're dead," the brown-haired girl said. "There is nothing to fear in death."

"Have there been other children here?"

"Yes, but when there are no more of them, they go away." The girl patted the cot again. "Sit, rest. My name is Cleo."

The blond haired girl smiled slightly. "Mine's Amanda. Pleased to meet you." Silence stretched between them for a moment, and then Amanda saw something moving on the other side of the glass. "What is that?"

"It looks as if Mr. Lavender has a visitor," she said.

"Can they see us?"

"No, but we can see them. Press your face against the glass. It looks out into Mr. Lavender's parlor." Cleo smiled. "It's like being a peeping tom. It's the only excitement we have here. Don't worry," she said, seeing Amanda's worried look. "He can't see us; he doesn't know we're here."

Following Cleo's lead, Amanda pressed her face against the glass, just as a hugely fat woman with wobbling jowls made her way into Mr. Lavender's parlor.

Amanda thought for a moment before she asked a question. "If I'm dead, then where am I?"

"Inside Mr. Lavender's Mirror," Cleo said softly.



"Would you like anything to drink?" Mr. Lavender asked the fat woman, as soon as he entered the room.

"Yes, brandy, if you have it. I'm quite partial to brandy."

"I'll see what I can do." Mr. Lavender smiled at her.

"I still don't understand why I'm here."

"You are here, because I asked you to be," Mr. Lavender said, a note of warning entering his voice.

"Oh, and who are you, Mr. High and Mighty?" the fat woman asked. "Why should I listen to a great pansy like yourself, you in your lavender coat?"

Mr. Lavender looked at her with awe. No one had ever dared question him. All they had to do was to look into his eyes and see the evil that moved under them like a gleam of silver in the darkness. Usually one look from Mr. Lavender was enough to quiet people's questions.

"What do they call you?" he asked the fat woman.

"Oh-ho!" she said, her fat jowls jiggling, "Now we're on the subject of names, are we? Finally decided to show some manners, have you? Where's my brandy, you pansy-fingered fool?"

Mr. Lavender reminded himself to remain patient, even though he wanted to rip the face off of this smug woman, skin and all and eat it. He pictured her then, just a talking skull with big fat bones. Mr. Lavender smiled. "Why, it's right here." He waved his hand and a small tray with a decanter of brandy and two glasses appeared on the side table. It began to pour itself, and the woman grabbed one of the glasses before it was finished. She sucked back the brandy in one fast gulp, and smacked her lips.

"You're name, madam?" he asked, adding madam as an afterthought. "Mine is Mr. Lavender."

The woman blanched and choked on her second glass of brandy. "Mr. Lavender?" she whispered. "Not *the* Mr. Lavender, surely?"

"Ah, you've heard of me, then?" He grinned.

"Just words in passing, is all," the woman said. "Stuff of folktale and legend. Most don't believe that you exist, that you're real."

"Oh, I'm very real. Your name, please, madam?"

"I am Agatha Twiddle. I'm the baker's wife." She turned ashen-faced.

"And you seem to enjoy many of his fine pastries, by the looks of you," Mr. Lavender stated, abandoning his friendly tone.

"What do you mean by that?" Agatha stuttered. "I'm just big boned."

"You keep telling yourself that, my dear. Now, down to business. Did you see a girl in the Bazaar today?"

"I saw many girls in the Bazaar today," she replied tartly.

Mr. Lavender moved so fast, Agatha didn't see him. He moved like quicksilver. He grabbed her by the throat, and lifted her two feet out of her chair; her fat legs dangled in the air. "Don't. sass. me. It may be the last thing you do, Agatha Twiddle." He roughly thrust her back down into the chair.

"You're as mean as the legends say you are," she spat.

"Finally, we agree on something. Perhaps it would help your feeble brain if I were more specific? Did you see a girl with red hair and black eyes? Did you burn a girl's hair in the Bazaar?"

"The witch? That the girl you mean?"

Mr. Lavender nodded.

"Yeah, I saw her. I wanted to burn her there on the spot. Witches took my little Sally."

"You lost a child to the witches?"

"Of course I did, I just said so didn't I? Taken from her bed when she was but nine years old, and never saw her again."

Mr. Lavender remembered Sally. She had tasted sweet on his lips long after he had consumed her. "Such a sad thing to happen to you, Agatha."

"Nearly broke my heart."

"What little you have left of it," Mr. Lavender said.

"What do you mean by that?"

"You are dry inside. There is not much left of your heart that used to beat big and full, full of juice. Your bitterness has eaten away at it until it has shrunk to the size of a small prune."

"Do you mock me, sir?"

Mr. Lavender threw out his hand, and there came a loud thunderclap. Agatha Twiddle was lifted out of the air, and words could not escape her mouth. "Of course, I mock you, you pathetic sow," Mr. Lavender spat at her. "You are nothing to me. Do you understand?" Agatha nodded. "Nod your head for yes and shake it for no. I am going to ask you a few questions. You saw the girl at the Bazaar?"

Agatha nodded.

"She left with Euwan Opal?"

Again, Agatha nodded.

"Did you see where they went, where the boy took her?"

Agatha shook her head.

"I thought as much. You should be proud, Agatha Twiddle. You are about to make something of yourself, do something noble with your life. There is bitterness in you, and I must use this bitterness to my advantage. Up to now, you have been nothing, but now, from this day forward you will become something much more..."

Walking toward her, Mr. Lavender raised his hands again, and there came another thunderclap. Despite herself, Agatha flinched. The air around them became thick with white mist. Mr. Lavender smiled as he watched a trickle of liquid flow down Agatha's leg. She had wet herself. "Tut, tut, my dear," Mr. Lavender said. "This won't hurt very much. A few moments and then it will be over."

Reaching forward, he grabbed her face with both his hands, prying her eyes open with his thumbs. Looking into them, he said: "*Agatha Twiddle: You are made from more than blood. You are made from feather light.*"

Agatha felt a hot, searing pain run through her and wished she would die. She wished she would die right there, rather than endure what would come next. A tear slid down her cheek.

Mr. Lavender spoke again: "*You are made from more than air. You are filled with eyes of Sight.*"

Mr. Lavender stepped away from her, and watched as a dark light started to pour from the pores of her skin. As the dark light, black like smoke, started to increase in intensity, Agatha Twiddle's form started to shrink. More smoke was

pouring from her, from her mouth, her eyes; her hair started to flame until there was no more. It fell to the ground; the fire that had burned off her hair began to burn her skin, eat away at it until it was charred and black.

The dark, shrunken form of Agatha Twiddle then fell to the ground. Agatha was on all fours, her burned skin still smoking, black light still pouring from her. Though her mouth was shaped in a scream, no sound left her lips.

Faster now, she shrunk again, smaller and smaller. Mr. Lavender watched, smiling, as black pinpricks started to push through her skin, through every pore. Soon, where there had been burned, black skin, there were feathers, growing like flowers in the dirt. The dark light reached a new intensity, obscuring Agatha Twiddle from sight for a moment. Then another thunderclap sounded and the smoke and light were gone.

Where Agatha had been, there now a sat bird. A crow to be specific. It looked up at Mr. Lavender with its black, flashing eyes and cawed loudly. Mr. Lavender held out his arm and the bird flew up to him and perched on it.

"Crows can carry souls back from the land of the dead," Mr. Lavender whispered. "While I don't need you to perform this particular task, your task will be no less important." He leaned in closer to the crow, which regarded him coldly. "You will be my eyes. I have powers beyond most men, but I can not see outside of the Shadows. They bind me. I can't leave the shadows, and I cannot roam around during the daylight. You will do that for

me. You will scour the edges of the Elements for me. Now listen closely."

He leaned in closer to the crow until he could see himself reflected in its black onyx eyes. "I want you to find them," he whispered. "Find them for me, Euwan Opal and this witch child. Her soul burns brighter than any I have felt before, and with the power that runs and breathes inside of her, I may finally be able to leave here. Do you *understand*?"

The crow cawed loudly.

"Good. What you see, I can see. Find them for me. You may go."

The crow flew out the parlor window. Mr. Lavender watched it go, a cold smile stretched across his thin lips. With the witch's power inside him, he thought, he would be the most powerful being alive.

Chuckling softly, he went to the side table and poured himself a brandy.



Inside the glass of Mr. Lavender's mirror, Amanda and Cleo shivered as they watched Agatha Twiddle change shape into that of a crow. The sight scared Cleo down to the core of her very bones, but she felt an even greater emotion: she was afraid for her friend.

Amanda looked at Cleo with shock. "I had no idea he was that strong."

"Every soul he takes only increases his power," Cleo said.

"Who is the girl that he wants to go after? The last witch?"

Cleo thought of her, playing with her and spending time with her in her grandmother's house, writing things on the mirror. Then she thought of the whispering and how, after she had been pulled through the mirror, she had ended up here. "Her name is Mave," Cleo said. "Her name is Mave." And Cleo was so afraid for her friend and what the future might have in store for her.

Amanda, sensing her fear, pulled Cleo closer and wrapped her arm around her. Together they sat, watching Mr. Lavender drink his brandy and look into the glass of the mirror. "She'll be okay," Amanda whispered. "I know she will."

Cleo wished she felt so sure.

CHAPTER TEN

~ Oracles and Shadow ~

When night came again, Mave awakened. A light sweat covered her face, and her hands were clammy. She had been dreaming. Her grandmother had been shouting for her, and Mave could see her through the mirror, aging before her eyes. She had watched her grandmother turn into a mass of bones, which then became Euwan.

She thought about the day before, how she had looked at him through the locket and seen him as a mass of bones. She knew that the locket revealed things, but what did it mean seeing Euwan as a skeleton? Surely he couldn't be dead, could he? He seemed as alive as she was; and besides, did ghosts exist there?

This brought her thinking around to what had gotten her here in the first place: where was her ghost friend who had been pulled through the mirror in her grandmother's attic? Where had she gone? She had been in this village for days now, and still hadn't seen a trace of her. She began to

wonder if she would ever see her friend again. Or her grandmother for that matter.

Sighing, she got up and went to the window that they had snuck through the day before. She could hear the music in the night air, which meant that daylight had passed, and that the night had come again. Taking the locket out of her pocket, she put it to her eye again and looked at Euwan. He remained a mass of bones. She watched as the skeleton began to move, causing her to quickly put the locket back in her pocket. Mave didn't know why, but she wanted to keep the locket and her talismans, her treasures, safe for now.

Euwan yawned and smiled at her. "Sleep well?"

Mave shook her head. "No, nightmares."

"I always have nightmares. But I change them into something else."

"What do you mean?"

"I can control my dreams, to a certain extent. I just change them into something I want to watch." He waved his hand, and two steaming mugs of tea appeared, replacing the tray with the juice and half of a remaining sandwich. Mave gladly helped herself to one.

"You know," Euwan said. "There's something I didn't ask before that I've been curious about. How did you come to get here? I know you got here by magic, but how did you get to the house on *Water Street*?"

"Through my grandmother's mirror." Mave briefly explained what had happened: how the ghost girl had been taken into the mirror, and how she had made a split second decision to go after her friend. "I couldn't let her go through that

alone. I believe she would have helped me too, had she had the chance. She looked so afraid, Euwan." She closed her eyes for a moment, remembering the horrified look on her ghost friend's face. "I don't know what could have scared her that much."

Euwan remained quiet for a moment before he replied, "It sounds like The Lavender Man."

Mave looked up at this. "What do you mean? The Lavender Man?"

"It's not real, it's just a story that parents tell their children here. But what happened to your friend sounds like what happened."

"What's the story of the Lavender Man like?"

"Well, it's like urban legend, you know? The tales started springing up during the time of the witch burnings as a way for parents to get their kids to behave. My own mother used to tell me about him. He often used mirrors."

"To kidnap children?"

"According to the legends, yes. He would also snatch vain children that spent far too long staring at themselves in the mirror. A parent could often be heard telling their children, "Don't look too long in the looking glass, or the Lavender Man will get you.""

"Why was he called the Lavender Man?"

"Because his skin was tinted the color of lavender. He was said to be a most frightening individual. He also traveled through mirrors in order to snatch children."

A chill ran down Mave's spine as she thought of the hand that had shot out of her grandmother's mirror and grabbed her friend. In Mave's

experience, legends were often based on truth. "Has anyone ever seen him?"

"No, he's not real." Euwan laughed lightly. "How can you see something that doesn't exist?"

Mave didn't point out that she had seen a ghost pulled into a mirror; not everyone could see ghosts, but they existed, too, didn't they? "How do we get to the Oracle?" Mave asked, changing the subject. "Do you think she will help me?"

"She helps all and any that seek her wisdom. She will know that you are coming already."

"How will she know that?"

"Because the Oracle sees all. It is one of her powers, to know of things that happen before they do."

"Like a psychic or a fortune teller?"

"You are thinking of Gypsies or charlatans. The Oracle is much more powerful than that."

"How do we get to her?"

"We have to take a *Fire Walk*," he said. "Grab your things and I'll explain on the way."



Mave made sure she had her treasures deep inside her pocket. The locket vibrated again, but she didn't have time to take it out now. Besides, she didn't want Euwan to ask any questions. She didn't want him to know she had seen his bones underneath his skin.

Euwan held the boards over the window open for her, and she stepped out into the darkness of night. She heard the music louder now, its sweet

melody soft and lovely. It reminded her of summer days and for some strange reason, it brought her comfort.

She watched as Euwan slid the board back in place and check his pockets for something. He withdrew a long, thin-bladed knife that glinted black in the soft light from the lamps above them.

"What's that?" Mave asked. "I've never seen a knife like that before."

"It's made from black onyx. There are only three like it and the other two are no longer."

"Who gave it to you?"

"My mother, before she died. It's a witch's knife."

"Do they have magical powers?" Mave asked.

"No," Euwan said, a dark look passing over his face. "They were used to kill witches without taking their magic. Thousands of witches died at the hands of the witches knives."

"Then why do you have it?" She asked in a whisper.

"It is the last reminder I have of my mother. And we may need protection."

"From what?"

"The townspeople. They do not trust witches, and hate for you has been brewing through the day. You are feared here as you bring fear into their hearts."

"But I'm only thirteen years old! Surely they don't think I know enough magic to harm them."

"When a witch turns thirteen, her powers are just beginning to grow and change and develop. You have strong power inside you, strong magic;

you only have to use it. That is why people fear you."

Mave thought again of her grandmother, of her longing for her, before she asked, "But I don't know how to do magic."

"You do. All you have to do is think hard enough, and you can do whatever you wish. But there is training involved. Usually, a mother would train their children in the art of magic."

"Did your mother train you?"

"Boys cannot be witches, only girls and women."

"So boys can't do magic?"

"Oh, they can do *some* magic. Home and hearth stuff, starting fires, shooting sparks. Meal spells and life spells; things for every day. Everyone can do magic, but only women can be witches. A witch is born, not bred. You can't study to be witches." He pointed to her eyes. "All witches have black eyes. It is said this is because they can see things we cannot."

"How are we getting to the Oracle?" Mave asked.

"Through the back roads of the village. Don't worry. I'll protect you, Mave."

Mave blushed at his offer to protect her. "I'm not worried," she said., She leaned forward and kissed him softly but quickly on his cheek. "Thank you for all you've done for me, Euwan."

He blushed, and she could see his red cheeks even in the half dark. "You're welcome, Mave. It is my honor, and also my duty, to see you safely to the Oracle."

Mave wondered why Euwan said it was his duty, but pushed that thought aside as they began to

make their way through the alleys and back streets; towards the Oracle.



Perched on a lamp, high up above them, the Crow watched.

It saw the boy, Euwan, take the black knife from inside of his coat, saw the young girl, Mave, kiss the boy on the cheek. The crow knew that Mr. Lavender also watched this, seeing the world through her black, beady eyes, and knew that Mr. Lavender was not pleased. She felt his anger fill her with a quickness that terrified her.

Cawing softly once, it launched itself from its perch on top of the lamp, and followed them through the shadows.



Mr. Lavender did indeed see the boy, Euwan, take the black knife from inside his coat. He waited with bated breath, with intense anticipation, for the moment he knew was coming, and screamed in rage when it didn't.

Mr. Lavender bellowed so loudly that dust began to fall from the ceiling, the walls began to vibrate. He knew it had been a good idea to send that fat sow to watch over the girl and the boy, Euwan. Euwan had disappointed him.

He had been told: Use the blade to kill the girl. It had been a simple instruction. He remembered when he had taken the boy's soul from him, and Euwan had become his to do with as he pleased.



Mr. Lavender looked down at the body that rested at his feet with some trepidation.

The body was that of a young boy, no more than twelve years old. There was a small wound at the back of his head that, even now, oozed blood onto the white tiled floor underneath him. The boy was clothed in shorts and a t-shirt that had been ripped to shreds.

Mr. Lavender made a tut-tut sound and moved around, so he could see the body from another angle. It always helped to get a different perspective on things. He spared a momentary glance at his companion who stood by the doorway.

The room around them was white, almost blinding. Its cleanliness was in sharp contrast to the rest of the house. All the other rooms were filled with cobwebs and shadow, inches of dust on tabletops. Only the bathroom was sparkly white.

Mr. Lavender shuddered slightly at the cleanliness of the bathroom. He preferred the grimmer rooms; the ones filled with stacks of old books and papers that littered the floor. He could spend days pouring over the papers; stacks of obituaries, old newspapers that detailed events

past. Old things were filled with mystery. With magic.

"You found him like this?" Mr. Lavender asked his companion.

The companion, a thin man with dark, greasy hair and a pale face, nodded "He was here this morning." The man's voice was gruff compared to Mr. Lavender's soft-toned voice. "I didn't touch anything." The companion was so pale that it looked as if he were going to fade into the whiteness of the walls.

"As well you shouldn't," Mr. Lavender said. He moved around the boy again so that he could see the boys' eyes. They were still open. "Tut, tut," he whispered. "What are we going to do with you, my little popinjay?" He regarded the boy almost sadly, though his mouth did curve into a small smile. "Well, needs must." He said simply.

He crouched down closer to the boy. Carefully, he laid the boy's body on its back, so that his eyes stared skyward. Mr. Lavender opened the boy's mouth slightly, as if the boy were forming a sound of surprise.

Gently he prodded the boys' chest with the tips of his fingers. "I am made from more than blood," Mr. Lavender whispered. "I am filled with spirit strong."

In response to his words, the air around them became thick, as if time stood still. He watched as whiteness, a soft mist, started to crawl out of the boy's mouth.

"I am made from more than flesh," Mr. Lavender continued. "I am filled with blood's pure song."

The rest of the incantation made the air thicker still. The companion watched as the mist leaving the boy quickened and started to take shape. He watched as Mr. Lavender bent close to the boy and breathed in through his mouth. The mist, slowly at first as if resisting, started to flow into Mr. Lavender's open mouth.

When the mist was no more, and Mr. Lavender had closed his mouth, the air around them became whole once more.



Mr. Lavender remembered how afraid the boy had been to wake from the dead only moments later. He could see the fear in the boy's eyes as they sparkled in the whiteness of the room. "How did I get here?" the boy had asked.

"All children who die come here," Mr. Lavender said. "To my house, to my White Room."

"Where am I?" Euwan had asked. "I died, why am I here? Is this Beneath The Ground?"

"No," Mr. Lavender said quietly. "But you may wish it was after I am through with you, if you do not do as I say."

He had told the boy of a girl, a young witch that had tumbled into The Elements through a mirror. He knew that the girl was the Grand-daughter of a witch he had tried to kill previously, only to have her slip through his fingers. He had wanted that particular witch very badly, had sensed her power, even though she lived like a normal person in The

Elements. But she had escaped him, fled to a realm where he could not reach, could not live in.

And then he had felt her, that red haired girl. The moment she had fallen into the attic of his house, he had felt her.

He also knew that he could not touch her until she was dead; that was the problem with witches. He could not take their magic, could not touch them until they perished. Normal children were one thing; he could kill them without a seconds thought, take their essence to make him stronger. But witches were bound by magic even he didn't understand.

And so he had given Euwan a simple task. Befriend the witch, protect her, and feed her. Become her friend. And then kill her. She would then appear in the White Room and would be his forever.

But Euwan had failed him. The Oracle would see that he never touched a hair on the girl's pretty little head.

It just goes to show you, he thought, if you want a job done, you have to do it yourself. Or, have someone you trusted do it for you. Mr. Lavender himself could not touch the girl. But Gabriel could.

He rang a bell that lay on the side table, next to the brandy decanter. The pale man, Gabriel, came at once.

"Yes, my Lord?" he said, slipping out of the darkness into being. "What is it you wish of me?"

"Euwan has failed me," Mr. Lavender said. "Bring the boy to me and kill the girl. The crow will show you the way."

"Yes, sir," Gabriel said. And then he faded away into the darkness, leaving Mr. Lavender alone with his thoughts.



Mave was surprised when they arrived in front of the entrance to *Fire Street*.

None of the villagers looked in their direction, though she felt that each one of the villagers watched them. Word of Agatha Twiddle's disappearance had already spread, and thus, the villagers left them mercifully alone. Euwan had not needed his knife after all.

"Getting through *Fire Street* is relatively simple. Do you see the flames that are on either side of the laneway?"

Mave looked. Sure enough, there were no houses there, but only two flickering walls of flame that danced in the soft breeze to their own music. "Why are there no houses here?" she asked.

"It is the Oracle's domain. No one else lives there but her. She is at the very end of the laneway, right before the waterfall. *Fire Street* actually comprises all four *Elements*: *Water*, *Fire*, *Air* and *Earth*. She herself is the *Spirit*. But it is hard to get to her, as the ground is so hot from the fires, so few ever try to venture down the walkway."

"Then how are we going to get to the Oracle's?"

"Do you think you're ready to do your first bit of magic?"

Mave smiled. "More than ready."

Euwan laughed at her eagerness. "It's a simple spell. You're going to shoot water out of your fingers to cool the ground in front of you as you walk. All you have to do is think really hard of water. Maybe picture a sprinkler or a hose going at full force, strong enough to put out a fire. Give it a try; remember, all you have to do is concentrate."

Mave nodded and closed her eyes. She thought long and hard about water: Waterfalls and birdbaths, sprinklers and ponds. Then an image came into her mind, and she knew it was the fountains she had seen when she had first come to *The Elements*. She pictured the water falling from the nymph's fingers and felt a tickling sensation coming from her hands. She opened her eyes when she heard Euwan laughing.

Looking down at her hands, she was shocked to see great shoots of water coming out of her fingers, watering the ground in front of her. She laughed along with Euwan.

"You're a natural!" he said. "I've never seen anyone master a spell that quickly. You are a powerful witch, Mave."

"Euwan Opal!"

Both Mave and Euwan turned to look in the direction of the voice. Mave could see a man with pale, white skin pushing his way through the crowd towards them. A look of utmost horror spread across Euwan's face.

"Run, Mave!" he said urgently. Mave knew that he was afraid of the white-skinned man, terribly afraid. "Run all the way to the Oracle's! Do not

stop to look, and do not stop to look back for me. Can you do this?"

"Euwan, I..."

"Do what I tell you!" he said. The pale-skinned man drew closer. "Run as fast as you can, he can't follow you. You will know the Oracle's when you see it. NOW RUN!"

Mave nodded and ran into *Fire Street*, water shooting out of her fingers in front of her, steam rising off the cobblestone where the water hit. She kept her promise and didn't look back at her friend, though she desperately wanted to.

As she ran, she heard the long, sharp cries of a crow and felt herself shiver in spite of the heat.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

~ Lineage and Waterfalls ~

Mave ran for what felt like hours, but in reality was only minutes. Her mind raced, concentrating on making water shoot out of her fingers rather than the plight of her friend. Her only friend, in this world or her own. Tears streamed down her cheeks. She'd never had a friend before, aside from her grandmother. She had only a moment to think on this before she came upon a large, stone house. It was the only house on the entire street.

The fire licked the stone but did not burn it. Mave wondered if it was more magic keeping the fire at bay.

The front door was wooden and circular. Its hinges were red with rust and age, and the door handle wasn't a door handle at all, but a large, thick metal ring. There was no eyehole. Vines and branches had grown around the house and framed the doorframe. It gave Mave the impression that she was about to step into a large, wild forest.

Walking up to it, she stopped thinking of water, and the flow from her fingers stopped. She raised her hands and knocked three times on the wooden door. The sound echoed inside the house, loud and booming.

Mave choked back a shriek when the door opened of its own accord, and a deep female voice said, "Come in, Mave Mallory. I have been expecting you."

Swallowing her fear, Mave took a deep breath and stepped inside the home of the Oracle. When she cleared the threshold, the door closed softly behind her, and Mave was in darkness.



Euwan Opal awoke in the White Room.

He knew where he was the instant he opened his eyes, and the sight of the room around him frightened him terribly. He knew that Mr. Lavender would be coming to see him.

After leaving Mave at the entrance to *Fire Street*, he had run as fast as he could, but it was no use. Gabriel could disappear and materialize anywhere; he could not out-run him, could never hope to. Gabriel existed on Shadows. They fed him and gave him his powers. Euwan wondered why something so pale and bright could fade into the shadows, but he supposed that was the nature of being an angel.

For even fallen angels had power.

Euwan had ran, and then a hand clasped around his throat. He had known only darkness until he

had awakened here. He knew that Gabriel had him and traveled through the shadows to wherever Mr. Lavender kept his lair. He knew this room well, though; he remembered it very well.

He heard footsteps on the stairs and knew that Mr. Lavender was coming for him. He said a quick prayer to whatever gods were above that Mave had reached the Oracle alive, and that nothing would prevent her from reaching her destiny.

When Mr. Lavender entered the room, Euwan saw that he had a crow riding on his shoulder. It cawed at him loudly; its harsh voice breaking the quiet of the room. Mr. Lavender walked over to him.

"Do you like my new pet, Euwan?" Mr. Lavender smiled at him. "She will peck out your eyes if I ask her to. She is very devoted. You, however, are not."

"What have you done with Mave?"

"Ah, is that her name?" Mr. Lavender smiled. "Nothing yet, my little popinjay, nothing yet. But rest assured that once I get to her, you will be seeing her again. You made sure Gabriel could not get her by sending her into the *Fire Walk*. You know that nothing evil can walk there. Very smart thinking, Euwan. Why did you not do as I asked you to do? Why did you not kill the girl?"

"She's my friend." He replied.

"Oh, how touching! Friendship; perhaps even love? She kissed you, did she not?" He waved a hand. "No need to answer. I can smell her on you. You made sure I cannot have the girl, but that's no matter. I will have her. For the moment, I have you." Mr. Lavender smiled.

Despite himself, Euwan's lip quivered. "What are you going to do to me?"

Mr. Lavender chuckled. "There is nothing I can do. I have already taken your soul, you are already dead. All that remains is to dispose of you."

"And how are you going to do that?" Euwan whimpered.

"The same way I got rid of your mother," Mr. Lavender spat.

Euwan had only a moment to think of what this meant before he heard a soft flick of a match and felt himself catch fire.



The darkness lasted only a second before light started to glow. Mave could see soft orbs of light floating near the ceiling. When the light reached its zenith, a gasp escaped her lips.

She stood in the center of a large forest. Trees, bigger than any she had ever seen, grew all around her. She looked up to see that the ceiling was made of their leaves and branches. The orbs were hanging from the topmost branches, casting a warm glow over everything, and Mave could hear the soft twitter of birds high above her.

The ground was not of wood, but dirt, Earth and grass. She could see rocks littering the ground, and mounds of grass and flowers. The forest seemed to go on forever. It reminded her of the trees behind her grandmother's house, but they

were nothing like this. This forest was immense, beyond imagination.

"I have waited a long time to meet you, Mave Mallory."

Mave started at the voice. It was deep and pleasant, and she felt no fear. She knew that whoever spoke with that voice would never harm her. Nonetheless, she was startled to hear it come out of the trees. "Who's there?" she asked.

The voice laughed softly, creating a sound like water running over rocks. "I am here, you are here, and the birds and animals are here. But where is *here*, exactly? Even I do not know, and I am as old as time."

"Are you the Oracle?" Mave asked the trees.

"I am many things. I am wife, mother, Seer and saint. I am first of the races to grace this Earth, to walk upon this land. But I am also the last."

"Please," Mave pleaded. "I don't understand."

"Ah, but you will."

"Would you mind..." Mave asked, trying to be patient, "Would you mind showing yourself? It's hard talking to someone I can't see."

"I am right in front of you, all around you, underneath you. I am the forest, the sky, the trees I am everything. You find this frightening?"

"No." Mave blushed. "Well, maybe just a little."

"Then I will assume a form that is more to your liking. It will take only but a moment. It is easier to travel this way. And then we shall talk of urgent matters. That is why you are here."

Mave watched as the trees began to move. She heard a sound that reminded her of the whispering

of the ghost mirror, but saw no blue mist. The whispering still chilled her until she realized that the sound was slightly different. Instead of the sound of things whispering, beings in shadow that she knew not, Mave hears what sounded like the wind moving through the leaves and branches.

She watched as vines and leaves began to pour out of the forest trees in front of her. The leaves were moving of their own accord and forming something that looked vaguely familiar, vaguely human. The leaves formed arms and legs and fingers.

Mave watched as dirt and Earth from the forest floor began to drift up to cover the leaves and vines, almost as if it trying to create a shell, create a skin. Mave heard the whisper of the leaves increase as light fell from a hole in one of the branches, and a fierce wind started to rile up the forest floor. Mave had to shield her eyes from the sun and protect them from the flail of wind and leaves that now whipped around the vine creature. She closed her eyes quickly and saw only darkness. When the world around her was quiet once more, she opened her eyes.

Before her stood a woman with brown skin so soft and beautiful, it shone. Her eyes were black like Mave's, and framed by two curtains of green hair that fell to below her shoulders. Interwoven in the hair were leaves and a few flowers, as if they were sprinkled with stars.

Vines circled her wrists like bracelets, and her simple gown was made from fallen leaves of autumn colors; it looked like a patchwork dress,

but was beautiful nonetheless. It crinkled as she walked towards Mave.

"Do you like this form?" the Tree Woman asked. "I hope it will suit you. It takes so much for me to create a body these days. There was a time where I had a body all the time; but it has been so long since anyone has come to see me, that I have not bothered. You are not frightened?"

"No." Mave said softly. "What is your name?" she asked the Tree Woman.

"I have many names." The Tree Woman's voice sounded melodious. It sounded like the deep wind that ran threw tall grasses during the cooling, fall months. "I have many forms. But, for this form, you may call me Mona."

Mave started. "That's my grandmother's name."

"Yes." The Tree Woman smiled. "It was I who named her when she was born here."

"My grandmother was born here?" This piece of information awed her.

"Why yes, and so was your mother. They were both born here. Your grandmother is my daughter. Your mother is my grand-daughter. Do you see?"

Mave shook her head.

The Tree woman smiled. "I thought not, but that's okay. We do not have time for long stories, but know this: Your grandmother is far older than she looks. Magic existed here long before Elements came into being, long before a town came to rest upon its soil. Your grandmother is from that time. Your mother," the Tree Woman frowned, "well, let's just say she wishes to remain ignorant of her talents. She chooses not to

believe, not to See." She put a hand on Mave's shoulder. "It is why she is afraid of you.

"She doesn't mean you any harm, but she just does not wish to understand or comprehend. You must not blame yourself. It is your mother's wish to forget you, so that she does not have to remember."

"How come I never knew any of this?" Mave asked her.

"Your grandmother has her own reasons, I'm sure. I think she knew you were different enough without having to bear this knowledge as well." The Tree Woman looked up into the branches and frowned. "Time grows short, Mave Mallory. You will return here, soon, to study with me. Would that please you?"

Mave nodded, frowning. "It does please me, it does. But will I ever see my grandmother again?"

"You will, if you survive what lies before you. If you are strong enough to pass the trial that awaits. I know you are, for you are my great-grand-daughter." She touched Mave's cheek. "It's in your blood."

She walked to a stump and bade Mave to sit beside her. "Time grows short for what I have to tell you, but it won't take long. After this, you can return to me, and we will talk of happier things. Now, I am going to talk to you about Shadows."

"Euwan Opal told me about those."

The Tree Woman raised a brow. "Did he?"

"That the Shadows grow larger each time a child is taken away."

"Indeed. The town thinks to protect themselves with more and more magic, but it matters not.

Not while The Lavender Man is about, not while he runs free."

"Euwan told me about him, too. He said he was an urban legend."

"Ah, but even urban legends are truth, Mave. Even story can come to life. How else would a town of magic live as this one does? Magic can breathe life into almost everything."

"Why is he called The Lavender Man?" Mave asked. "Is that really his name?"

"I am his sister, and even I do not know his true name. He goes by many names, just as I do." She smiled. "Irony, isn't it? He was made the same time as me, and for a time, we lived together. But then darkness began to come into his soul, and his skin turned a purple color before it all drained away. He keeps his pigment in the coat he wears, a weave of lavender silk. It's his one vanity."

"So he is really real?" Mave asked.

"He is real, like I am real. With magic, he exists. There is no warmth in him, no fire to strike the matches that feed the human fire. For anything as evil as he is, there is no human in him. He is *too* evil."

"Why do you let him live? Why do you let him steal children?"

"As in all things, there must be a balance. *Good with Evil, Bad and Good.*" The Tree Woman looked irrepressibly sad. "It is the nature of things, Mave. It doesn't have to make sense. I have been alive longer than time, and I still struggle knowing that there is something as evil as Mr. Lavender out in the world."

"Mr. Lavender?"

"It's the name he chooses to use now." She sighed. "He tries to be human, assumes the form of one. The name is a joke to him; it instills fear those who hear it. To keep to the form of a man, he needs power. Is there anything as powerful as the soul of a child, when it is still mostly pure? He eats the dead, Mave. Eats their essence. Do you understand?"

Mave nodded.

"With such evil, there are consequences. He throws off the natural balance of things. There is more dark than light now. Soon, he will be able to eat his way through the walls between the two worlds, and your world will suffer as this one has."

"How can he be stopped?"

"Only a witch can slay him, but he can never die."

"But you could kill him," Mave said. "But why kill him if he never dies?"

"Nothing evil ever truly dies. His body will perish, but his spirit will live on. Something that has no real body cannot die. And I cannot slay him. I am not a witch. I am before the witches." The Tree Woman looked down at Mave with stern eyes. "You are the last witch, Mave, the last in your line; you are the daughter of a daughter of a witch. The power is strongest within you." The Tree Woman laid a hand on Mave's chest. "I wish that this task did not have to fall on your young shoulders. I wish you did not have to bear this, but you must if you and your world are to survive."

Mave was quiet for a moment before she asked, "How can I possibly kill him? I don't know how to do any magic."

"Ah, but you do." The Tree Woman smiled. "You carry a great deal of power inside you, Mave. All you have to do is forget your shattered self, and find the worth inside you, and the confidence. Only then will your power manifest. Often, when we are faced with danger, and there is little time to think of our shortcomings, we find our true powers."

The Tree Woman stood and held out a hand to Mave. "Come, it is growing late. There is much in store for you."



The Tree Woman led her outside and down a path in back of the house. Mave noticed that the forest grew outside the walls as well as inside, and she wondered why she hadn't noticed before. She heard the sound of more whispering, but this time it sounded like water. Lots of water. She looked up questioningly at the Tree Woman.

"Yes, that is water," the Tree Woman said, smiling. "To be specific, a waterfall. I need all of the elements around me to survive; the water cleanses and bathes the land I take nourishment from."

"How come I didn't hear the waterfall before?" Mave asked.

"No one can see or hear it until I let them." She smiled at Mave's shocked look. "How would it do to have everybody knowing that there is a waterfall at the end of *Fire Street*? They would start taking water from there instead of their wells, and I would never get any peace."

As they walked further along the path, through a large garden filled with every imaginable flower, Mave could hear the water growing louder. When they came to the end of the pathway and stood in front of the waterfall, Mave saw the massiveness of it. It was bigger than any she had ever seen. She felt the mist from the falling water from where she stood g the water's edge.

A pathway of stones led across the water, right into the waterfall. The Tree Woman pointed to it. "You must go that way."

"Into the waterfall?"

"Yes; beyond that awaits the unknown, where you must face Mr. Lavender and your fears."

"What is beyond the waterfall?"

"I do not know. He knows you will be arriving soon, so he has chosen the playground in which to face you. You have your talismans with you?"

Mave thought of the locket, feather; the marble, and the small man-shaped rock. She nodded.

"Let them guide you, Mave. You must face what is beyond the water. Already he lies in wait for you. You must prevail. If you do not, neither you, nor I, will exist."

Mave nodded. "I won't let you down," she said.

"I hope not, Mave Mallory. Go with luck, and go well, Great Grand-daughter. You will see me again." The Tree Woman bent down and kissed

Mave on the cheek. "Go now, before more children die, before it is too late."

Mave nodded, and then ran along the stones, quick as light. Before she entered the water, she turned to look at the Tree Woman one last time.

The Tree Woman smiled at her and waved. It was the last thing Mave saw as the curtain of water fell, and all she saw was darkness.

CHAPTER TWELVE

~ *Blood and Mirror's* ~

"You can't pretend I don't exist you know," Mave said to her mother. "I'm your daughter."

Her mother continued to make coffee and toast. Her mother's eyes were bloodshot and her hair was mussed. She passed a coffee and a plate to her father, who sat behind his morning newspaper. "Here's your toast, dear." Her mother said.

Her father grunted in return.

Mave made herself a bowl of cereal and poured herself a glass of orange juice. She munched on the cereal for a while, watching her parents. She could feel them not looking at her, knew that they were trying their best to pretend she wasn't there.

"We have that party to go to tonight, George," she said. Her voice was shrill and high pitched.

"Will there be free booze there?" he answered.

"Darling, you know they always have a host bar. The party is at the Hudson's."

"Joan, sweetheart, do we have to go? You know I can't stand how that Chrissy woman natters on."

It was rare for her parents to talk at breakfast. Mave figured they were trying really hard to ignore her. She reached out and slapped her father's paper. He simply flicked it and placed it in front of him again. Her mother didn't look in her direction. Mave decided to push her luck and flung some cereal at her with her spoon.

Her mother sniffed, but ignored it. To pick the cereal out of her hair would be to admit her daughter sat at the table. Mave admired her mother's willpower. With a small sound of rage, Mave flung her cereal bowl across the table, followed by her glass of orange juice.

Both splattered all over the kitchen walls, and the glass shattered. Neither of her parents moved to clean anything up. She knew they would not do so until she left the room.

"You're an ungrateful child." her father's voice boomed.

Mave looked up in shock. Her father hadn't spoken to her in weeks. "I'm sorry, were you speaking to me?" she asked.

"Of course I was, you reprobate," her father replied, without lowering his paper. "Go to your room. Your mother and I are very displeased with you, Mave."

Something in the way her father spoke to her seemed off. Aside from the fact that her parents never spoke to her; this was different; his voice different. She couldn't put her finger on it and decided not to argue. She slipped out of her chair and headed upstairs to her room.

As she passed the hallway mirror, she could have sworn she there were two girls screaming at

her from the other side of the glass. She backed up a couple of steps to get another view. When she looked back, they were gone.

When she got to her room, Mave closed the door behind her and stared into another mirror; this one full-length and attached to the back of her door. She took a moment to admire herself in the mirror's surface, then jumped back when she saw something that shouldn't have been there.

Her grandmother looked at her from the mirror, just for a split second; she seemed to be saying something.

"....more power than you know..." Mave heard, and then she was gone.

Shaking her head, Mave then felt something vibrate in her pocket. She pulled out a bunch of things: A feather, a marble, a crude sculpture of a man, a locket. Where had she gotten these? She studied them quizzically for a moment before she noticed the hole in the locket.

More out of curiosity than anything else, she put the other things back in her pocket, and then placed the hole of the locket level with her eye, and screamed. Instead of her bedroom, she saw a parlor around her, chintz armchairs sitting by a fire, side tables holding decanters with amber colored liquid.

She whipped the locket away from her eye and saw her bedroom once more. Holding the locket in her palm, she could feel it vibrate. She took a deep breath and put the locket to her eye once again, closing her left eye so that she could not see her bedroom, only what appeared through the hole in the locket.

This time she kept it there and began turning around. She could see the armchairs, and a large fireplace. Above the fireplace hung the largest mirror Mave had ever seen. It stretched from half way up the wall to the ceiling and spanned the entire width of the room. The firelight made it look like a silver mist and reflected the room back at her. She could see, in the mirror, a man behind her.

Dressed in a lavender coat of a fine cut; he smiled. But there was nothing nice about this smile. Instead, it made her feel as if her life were in danger. In the corner, behind the man in the lavender coat, stood another man. This one had long fingers and pale, pale skin. He didn't smile, but seemed all the more threatening for it.

She took the locket away from her eye again, opened her other one. Her bedroom surrounded her again. What was real and what was not? How could she be seeing these things?

Mave jumped back from the mirror on the back of the door as it started to shimmer. She saw two girls, and a boy with green eyes. They were saying something to her, but she could not hear them. They kept pointing behind her. She shook her head to show she didn't hear them.

The boy pushed the two girls out of the way and put his hands against the glass. Mave thought she could reach out and touch him, if she dared. The boy kept one hand on the glass and beckoned with the other. Mave moved closer to the mirror and, slowly, reached out and touched the boy's hand that pressed against the mirror's surface.

Two things happened at once: A large thunderclap sounded and Mave was pulled into the mirror.

She fell into the parlor she had just seen on the other side of the locket. She felt her legs give out, her breath left her, as she saw the man in the lavender coat standing on the other side of the room. She felt the locket in her hand, felt its edges digging into her skin, causing blood to leak out of the creases of her palm.

"What do you want with me?" Mave asked.

"Shouldn't it be obvious by now?" the smiling man asked her. "I want what's inside you. I want what makes you breathe, Mave."

"Then you can have it," she spat. She threw the locket covered in her blood at him and watched as, instead of hitting him squarely in the face as she had anticipated, it exploded in a flash of light, knocking her over and covering her in a shower of silver sparks.

She sat up, her vision blurry, and shook her head as a flurry of images flowed through her brain:

The Tree Woman, Euwan Opal, and the witch's knife. The blond haired girl being sucked into the mirror, what was her name? Cleo. The music playing at nighttime, it's haunting melody giving her shivers, the caw of a crow sounding as she shot water from her fingertips.

She remembered.

"You're the man who kills the children," she said.

Mr. Lavender smiled. "The very same. It's a shame I didn't think to check your pockets before I

set up that little trip down memory lane for you. Do you miss your parents?"

"That wasn't real," Mave said. "None of that was real. This is real, though. This is *very* real."

"Maybe it isn't," Mr. Lavender said, stepping towards her. "Maybe this is all in your head, too. Did you ever think of that?"

Mave doubted herself for a moment, just for a second, before she looked down at the blood that still trickled from the wound in her hand. "This *is* real," Mave said. "I know it is."

"Can't fool you, can I, my little witch? You're going to taste so sweet on my lips."

"I won't let you have me," she spat at him.

Mr. Lavender laughed. "An untrained witch against my powers? Surely you don't think you'll win, do you, my little red robin?"

Mave said nothing and watched in horror as Mr. Lavender took another step towards her. "You can't possibly win," he said. "Why don't you give up now, give yourself to me; you'll be able to see your friend, Euwan Opal. He misses you so."

"I know he's not alive anymore," she said. "I know he was yours. I looked at his bones through the locket and saw only bones."

"Euwan failed me and had to pay." Mr. Lavender shrugged. "It's as simple as that. But no matter, you're here now. Once I have your blood in my veins, I'll have this shape forever."

He took another step towards her. "I wanted your grandmother for this reason. To keep a human form. Now, in a nice twist, I get to take something that matters so much to her. Your death will cause her anguish beyond anything I

could do to her. I'll be getting two for one, as it were."

"I won't let you harm her." Mave said.

"I'd like to see you stop me." He motioned to the pale man in the corner. "Gabriel. Kill her for me."

"You're weak," Mave said, moving back from Gabriel. "You have others do your dirty work for you."

A look of anger crossed Mr. Lavender's face. "Don't you dare call me weak. I have power beyond anything you can imagine."

"And yet you cannot kill a young girl."

"You know very well I cannot touch you. Witches blood runs in your veins. But Gabriel can touch you. He's a fallen angel and made from the same cloth as you. He can touch you all he wants."

"I'd like to see him try." Mave reached into her pocket and grabbed the carved stone sculpture. She hurled it at the pale skinned man named Gabriel. It fell at his feet and exploded on impact into a thousand pieces.

Stone shards flew everywhere, but most of all, littered the front of Gabriel. Several were imbedded in his eyes, his heart, even his stomach. Mave watched as Gabriel began to bleed from his wounds and slowly fell to the ground. He got up again, only to take another step toward her.

Mr. Lavender chuckled. "You do know some magic after all. How charming. What other tricks do you have in that little pocket of yours, hmmm?" Mr. Lavender smiled.

Gabriel's steps slowed as he came nearer. Bleeding profusely now, his wounds gushed red blood onto the oriental carpet beneath his feet. Looking at his blood gave her an idea. If evil could not touch her, what would her blood do to them?

She flung her hand with the wound towards Gabriel. She watched as a shower of droplets flew through the air and hit Gabriel squarely in the face.

He screamed and clutched at his skin, pulling it away in large chunks, until his face was nothing more than bone. He fell to the ground, a mass of muscle and skeleton.

Mr. Lavender looked furious. His charming demeanor vanished, and Mave could see some of his true form. Black skin moved underneath his face, and eyes as black as night blinked back at her. "You killed him!" he said thickly. "You killed Gabriel! Do you know how hard it is to get an angel?"

"About as hard as it is for you to get a heart," Mave spat. Mave took the marble from her pocket, and without a second's hesitation, flung the marble to the ground. It shattered.

Mr. Lavender, distracted by the death of his most trusted colleague, didn't know what hit him.

A wind spewed forth from where the marble shattered on the floor and started to wail around the room. Building in force, Mave watched Mr. Lavender on the other side of what was quickly becoming a whirlwind. She saw chairs being lifted into the air, tables and lamps. Everything in the parlor started whipping around the room.

She heard a loud sound from behind her, and turned. She watched as the large mirror rippled in front of her and the witches knife fell from it. Mave lunged and caught it in one swoop. Another thump drew her gaze back to the mirror, where the following words were written:

I AM MADE FROM MORE THAN BLOOD

Mave remembered these words, had read them in the mirror when Cleo had been snatched from her grandmother's attic. Cleo must be in the mirror. Mave grabbed the witches knife in her right hand, where the wound from the locket still seeped blood. She looked at Mr. Lavender from across the room, the whirlwind raging between them.

"I AM MADE FROM MORE THAN BLOOD!" she shouted at him. "I AM MADE FROM MORE THAN BLOOD!"

"Where did you hear that?" Mr. Lavender yelled. "Stop, don't say another word!" he screamed at her. He ducked to avoid being hit with the brandy decanter he loved so dearly.

She suddenly heard her grandmother as if she stood right beside her. *"The Spirit is the strongest of all Elements, Mave. You have so much Spirit inside you. All you have to do is set it free."*

Mave looked at the fear in Mr. Lavender's eyes and continued. "I AM MADE FROM MORE THAN BLOOD, I AM FILLED WITH SPIRIT STRONG!"

Mr. Lavender looked truly afraid now. "No, Stop! STOP!" He screamed at her.

"I AM MADE FROM MORE THAN FLESH!" The words left Mave's mouth before she could stop them. She seemed to already know the incantation that came from her lips, as if it had always been there.

"I AM FILLED WITH BLOODS PURE SONG!" At this, a wonderfully vibrant music started to sound, and a light filled the room. The wind stopped and the music made the walls begin to vibrate.

The music continued to grow in intensity until Mr. Lavender's large mirror shattered into a thousand pieces.

Shards of glass impaled themselves into Mr. Lavender's face, but no blood poured forth from his wounds. He screamed, clutching at the silver glass sticking out of his skin. "*I am made from more than blood,*" Mave whispered.

She threw the blood-covered knife at Mr. Lavender. It struck him in the chest, piercing his heart.

Mave watched as her blood ate at him, ate the soft, well-cut lavender coat, until he was nothing but ashes. A remaining breeze swept the ashes out of the parlor window.

A mass of bones lay on the floor where Mr. Lavender had stood. His body burned to nothing more than what she saw, yet Mave still knew it was him. "*....you cannot silence me...*" the mass of ashes said. "*I can live...forever.*"

Mave shook her head. "Even evil has to die," she said. She closed her eyes and pictured another wind, this one stronger. She felt it brush across her face, felt it stir the air around her.

When she opened her eyes, the ashes that had been Mr. Lavender had vanished.

Mave, light-headed, turned around. She saw Cleo, a brown haired girl and Euwan looking at her. "You're free now," Mave said softly. "Mr. Lavender can't hurt you anymore."

The spirits said nothing, but smiled as they slowly disappeared. Mave watched Euwan; he took the longest to fade and her heart ached at seeing him going. He had been her only friend, and now he would be gone forever.

"Wherever the wind blows," he whispered, "you will find me."

With one last wave, he disappeared into the shadows.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

~Wind Beneath My Wings ~

Mave stood alone in the room for quite some time after Cleo and Euwan had completely disappeared.

The silence felt comforting after the noise of the wind, but she wondered briefly how she was going to get home. The ghost mirror, where Mr. Lavender had kept his spirits, was shattered. She couldn't step through there. She had no one left to guide her, no one left to show her the way.

Mave startled when she heard a loud caw from the corner of the room. She looked to see the crow, its beady eyes studying her, perched on a scone that burned brightly. She felt the hatred coming from the bird and knew. "You," Mave said. "You're the woman from the market, aren't you?"

The crow cawed again and Mave heard the bitterness. She approached the crow and held her out hand to it. "Please," Mave said. "Please, if you show me how to leave here, maybe I can find a way to make you what you once were."

Mave walked towards the bird, slowly, cautiously. "There must be some good left in you to help me," she said. "Please."

Apparently, there was no good left in what had once been Agatha Twiddle. The crow, its beady black eyes flashing, flew at Mave's hand and slashed at it with its beak. So doing, it flew out the open door to another room that was bathed in shadows, leaving Mave to clutch her injured hand.

Blood poured from the wound, but also a strange dark light. Mave watched in fascination as the wound closed itself, the blood drying on her skin to form a small black mark that looked like a wing stretched in flight.

Shivering, she sank to lay on the floor. Her mind wandered, trying to think of a way to get home. Trying to think of a way to get back to her grandmother.

Mave looked around the room, and her eyes landed on a black feather that lay a few feet from her. A feather, she thought. Reaching into her pocket, she pulled out the feather with the blue plumage that winked in the soft light. She ran it along her skin, and it felt soft to the touch.

She hoped that the feather was enough to get her home so that she could see her grandmother again.

Clutching the feather tightly in her hands and closing her eyes, she wished and concentrated with all of her might. She thought of her grandmother, with her kind eyes and her soft hands and her curly white hair.

Mave felt pain, a sharp, stabbing sensation, as if something grew from her skin. Then she saw blackness and nothing more.



When she opened her eyes, she looked up into her grandmother's eyes. Her grandmother smiled down at her.

Mave sat up and looked around her. She had returned to her grandmother's attic, and her grandmother leaned over her, a smile on her face. "Welcome back, Mave."

Mave smiled and looked up at her grandmother. "I did it."

Her grandmother smiled again. "That you did, child. That you did." She carried Mave downstairs to her bedroom and placed her on the bed.

Mave said nothing as her grandmother did this, only closed her eyes. She did not notice the scattering of black feathers that lay on the floor beside her bed.

When sleep and darkness came, it was peaceful. And without dreams.

Jamieson Wolf

Turn the page for glimpse into Mave Mallory's
next adventure:

**The Ghost Mirror Book Two:
*The Silver Glass***

Coming Soon from e Treasures Publishing!

The Three Fates

The Tree Woman looked at the women in front of her.

They were pale women. Three of them sat in front of her, prudish expressions on their faces.

The one on the far left, *Time*. She looked most unhappy. Her blond hair hung in sharp spikes that looked like sand in an hourglass. Indeed, all of her clothes were colored like the sand of an hourglass. It matched her pale beige skin.

Life, the middle woman, was the most beautiful. She had the beauty of life, and hair blonder than spun straw. She seemed the brighter of the two. She had bright blue eyes that gleamed with spirit and was smiling, even now. She wore a snappy dress in a soft purple. Her beauty was even more eerie in such a dark part of the forest.

The third woman, *Death*, wore all white. It matched her pale skin, which softly glowed. Something emanated from the woman, a pulse. Whatever it was, it put the Tree Woman on edge. Even so, she did not hesitate to look the pale

woman in her dark black eyes. They gleamed, even in the darkness of the forest.

They sat among a small circle of trees. The Tree Woman was further away from her usual home; it served the Three Fates to meet away from prying eyes.

Sometimes, even the trees had ears and mouths. They traded secrets on the wind.

Together, the three women in front of her were on their own. Each had her role in the lives of others, but together, they were the Three Fates. Together, they were the things that life was made of. It frightened even the Tree Woman somewhat, but she looked *Death* in the eyes and said, "We cannot do this."

Death shrugged. "It is already in the stars."

The Tree woman shuddered. "But she is too young. Mave has only just come into her powers. You can't expect her to fight him again."

"Needs must," *Birth* said.

"You sound just like *him*," the Tree Woman spat.

"Indeed." *Life* looked at her with a cold stare.

"Do we not all come from the same magic? Do we not all come from the same source?"

"But to send Mave into the ghost mirror again?"

"It needs to be done," *Death* said.

"She is too young," The Tree Woman said again.

"But she has more power than she knows," *Death* whispered.

Meet the Author



Jamieson has been writing since a young age when he realized he could be writing instead of paying attention in school. Since then, he has created many worlds in which to live his fantasies and live out his dreams.

He is the author of several novels and two non-fiction works. He currently lives in Ottawa Ontario Canada with his husband Robert, and his cat Mave, who thinks she's people.