

betrothed

book #6 in
the vampire journals

morgan rice

Morgan Rice

Betrothed

Серия «Vampire Journals», книга 6

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=9243345

Аннотация

In BETROTHED (Book #6 in the Vampire Journals), Caitlin and Caleb find themselves, once again, back in time – this time, in the London of 1599.

London in 1599 is a wild place, filled with paradoxes: while on the one hand it is an incredibly enlightened, sophisticated time, breeding playwrights like Shakespeare, on the other, it is also barbaric and cruel, with daily public executions, torture, and heads of prisoners impaled on spikes. It is also a time of superstition and grave public danger, with a lack of sanitation, and the Bubonic Plague spreading in the streets, carried by rats.

In this environment Caitlin and Caleb land, on the search for her father, for the third key, for the mythical shield that can save humankind. Their mission takes them through a whirlwind of London's most amazing medieval architecture, through the British countryside's most breathtaking castles. It takes them back into the heart of London, where they just might meet Shakespeare himself, and see one of his plays live. It brings them to a little girl, Scarlet, who just might become their daughter. And all the while, Caitlin's love for

Caleb deepens, as finally they are together – and as Caleb might just finally find the perfect time, and place, to propose to her.

Sam and Polly have traveled back, too, and as they find themselves stuck together on their own journey, their relationship deepens, as they each, despite themselves, can't help feeling more deeply for each other.

But all is not well. Kyle has come back, too, as has his evil sidekick, Sergei, and they are both intent on destroying everything good in Caitlin's life. It will be a race to the finish, as Caitlin is forced to make some of the hardest decisions of her life if she is to save everyone who is dear to her, save her relationship with Caleb – and try to make it out alive.

Содержание

Chapter One	14
Chapter Two	20
Chapter Three	26
Chapter Four	31
Chapter Five	42
Chapter Six	72
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	79

Morgan Rice

Betrothed

(Book #6 in the Vampire Journals)

*“Come, gentle night, come, loving, black-brow'd night,
Give me my Romeo; and, when he shall die,
Take him and cut him out in little stars,
And he will make the face of heaven so fine
That all the world will be in love with night
And pay no worship to the garish sun.”*

– William Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet

Copyright © 2012 by Morgan Rice

All rights reserved. Except as permitted under the U.S. Copyright Act of 1976, no part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed or transmitted in any form or by any means, or stored in a database or retrieval system, without the prior permission of the author.

This ebook is licensed for your personal enjoyment only. This ebook may not be re-sold or given away to other people. If you would like to share this book with another person, please purchase an additional copy for each recipient. If you're reading this book and did not purchase it, or it was not purchased for

your use only, then please return it and purchase your own copy. Thank you for respecting the hard work of this author.

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, organizations, places, events, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictionally. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

Cover model: Jennifer Onvie. Cover photography: Adam Luke Studios, New York. Cover makeup artist: Ruthie Weems. If you would like to contact any of these artists, please contact Morgan Rice.

Acclaim for the Vampire Journals

“Rice does a great job of pulling you into the story from the beginning, utilizing a great descriptive quality that transcends the mere painting of the setting... Nicely written and an extremely fast read.”

– *Black Lagoon Reviews (regarding Turned)*

“An ideal story for young readers. Morgan Rice did a good job spinning an interesting twist... Refreshing and unique. The series focuses around one girl... one extraordinary girl!... Easy to read but extremely fast-paced... Rated PG.”

– *The Romance Reviews (regarding Turned)*

“Grabbed my attention from the beginning and did not let go... This story is an amazing adventure that is fast paced and action packed from the very beginning. There is not a dull moment to be found.”

– *Paranormal Romance Guild* (regarding *Turned*)

“Jam packed with action, romance, adventure, and suspense. Get your hands on this one and fall in love all over again.”

– *vampirebooksite.com* (regarding *Turned*)

“A great plot, and this especially was the kind of book you will have trouble putting down at night. The ending was a cliffhanger that was so spectacular that you will immediately want to buy the next book, just to see what happens.”

– *The Dallas Examiner* (regarding *Loved*)

“A book to rival TWILIGHT and VAMPIRE DIARIES, and one that will have you wanting to keep reading until the very last page! If you are into adventure, love and vampires this book is the one for you!”

– *Vampirebooksite.com* (regarding *Turned*)

“Morgan Rice proves herself again to be an extremely talented storyteller... This would appeal to a wide range of audiences, including younger fans of the vampire/fantasy genre. It ended with an unexpected cliffhanger that leaves you shocked.”

– *The Romance Reviews* (regarding *Loved*)

About Morgan Rice

Morgan Rice is the #1 bestselling author of **THE VAMPIRE JOURNALS**, a young adult series comprising eleven books (and counting); the #1 bestselling series **THE SURVIVAL TRILOGY**, a post-apocalyptic thriller comprising two books (and counting); and the #1 bestselling epic fantasy series **THE SORCERER'S RING**, comprising thirteen books (and counting).

Morgan's books are available in audio and print editions, and translations of the books are available in German, French, Italian, Spanish, Portugese, Japanese, Chinese, Swedish, Dutch, Turkish, Hungarian, Czech and Slovak (with more languages forthcoming).

Morgan loves to hear from you, so please feel free to visit www.morganricebooks.com to join the email list, receive a free book, receive free giveaways, download the free app, get the latest exclusive news, connect on Facebook and Twitter, and stay in touch!

Books by Morgan Rice

THE SORCERER'S RING

A QUEST OF HEROES (Book #1)

A MARCH OF KINGS (Book #2)
A FATE OF DRAGONS (Book #3)
A CRY OF HONOR (Book #4)
A VOW OF GLORY (Book #5)
A CHARGE OF VALOR (Book #6)
A RITE OF SWORDS (Book #7)
A GRANT OF ARMS (Book #8)
A SKY OF SPELLS (Book #9)
A SEA OF SHIELDS (Book #10)
A REIGN OF STEEL (Book #11)
A LAND OF FIRE (Book #12)
A RULE OF QUEENS (Book #13)

THE SURVIVAL TRILOGY

ARENA ONE: SLAVERSUNNERS (Book #1)
ARENA TWO (Book #2)

THE VAMPIRE JOURNALS

TURNED (Book #1)
LOVED (Book #2)
BETRAYED (Book #3)
DESTINED (Book #4)
DESIRED (Book #5)
BETROTHED (Book #6)
VOWED (Book #7)
FOUND (Book #8)

RESURRECTED (Book #9)

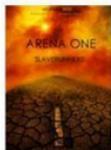
CRAVED (Book #10)

FATED (Book #11)

THE SORCERER'S RING

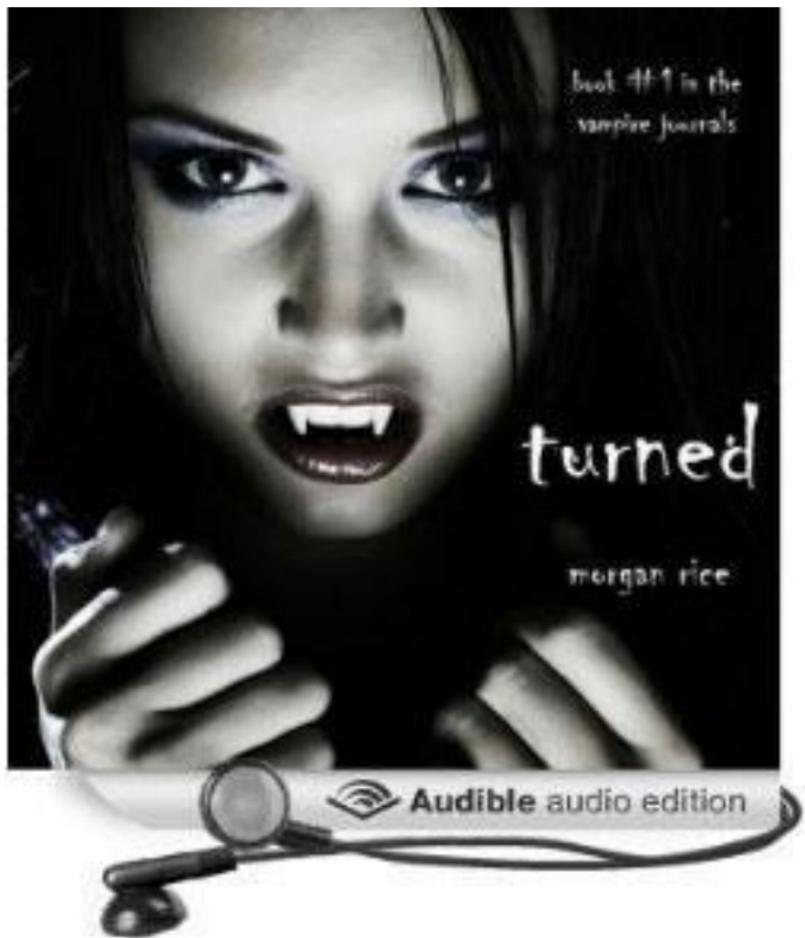


THE SURVIVAL TRILOGY



the vampire journals





Listen to THE VAMPIRE JOURNALS series in audio book format!

Now available on:

Amazon

Audible

FACT:

In Shakespeare's London, a common form of entertainment was "bear baiting." A bear would be tied to a pole while a pack of wild dogs was unleashed. Bets would be placed to see who won. The "bear baiting" stadium was right near Shakespeare's theatre. Many of the rough bear baiting crowd would then go and watch a Shakespeare play.

In Shakespeare's time, the crowd that went to see his plays was not elitist or sophisticated. On the contrary. The majority of people who went to see his plays were rough, crude people, commoners who came for entertainment and had to only pay a penny to get in. For that price, they had to stand on the ground throughout the whole play – and thus became known as the "groundlings."

Shakespeare's London was civilized – but it was also barbaric. It was common to see executions and public torture of criminals in the streets. The entrance to its most famous roadway – the London Bridge – was often adorned with pikes, on which sat the severed heads of criminals.

The Bubonic Plague (also known as the Black Death) killed millions in Europe, and struck London repeatedly throughout the centuries. It spread in places with poor sanitation and massive crowds, and hit Shakespeare's theater district the hardest. It

would take centuries until it was discovered that the carrier of the plague was fleas, hosted by rats.

Chapter One

London, England
(September, 1599)

Caleb awoke to the sound of bells.

He sat bolt upright and looked all around, breathing heavily. He had been dreaming of Kyle, chasing him, of Caitlin, holding out a hand for help. They had been in a field filled with bats, against a blood-red sun, and it had seemed so real.

Now, as he looked around the room, he tried to determine whether it was all real, or if he was truly awake and back in time. After several seconds of listening to his own breathing, of feeling the cool dampness in the air, of listening to the quiet, to his own heartbeat, he realized that it was all a dream. He was truly awake.

Caleb realized he was sitting upright inside an open sarcophagus. He looked around the dim, cavernous room and saw that it was filled with sarcophagi. There were low, arched ceilings and narrow slits for windows, through which streamed the smallest amount of sunlight. It was just enough to see by. He squinted at the glare, reached into his pocket, and applied his eyedrops, glad to find them still there. Slowly, the pain receded, and he relaxed.

Caleb jumped up and onto his feet in one motion, spinning around the room, taking stock in all directions. He was still on

guard, not wanting to get attacked or ambushed before he'd had a chance to get his bearings. But there was nothing, and no one, in the room. Just silence. He noticed the ancient stone floors, walls, the small altar and cross, and guessed that he was in the lower crypt of a church.

Caitlin.

Caleb spun around the room again, searching for any sign of her. He felt a sense of urgency as he hurried to the sarcophagus nearest him. With all his might, he scraped back the lid.

His heart lifted at the hope of finding her. But he was crestfallen to find it empty.

Caleb hurried through the room, going from one sarcophagus to the next, pushing back each lid. But they were all empty.

Caleb felt a sense of growing desperation as he pushed back the final lid in the room, with so much force that it crashed to the ground and shattered into a million bits. But he already had a sinking feeling he would find it, like the others, to be vacant – and he was right. Caitlin was nowhere in this room, he realized, breaking out into a cold sweat. Where could she be?

The thought of coming back in time without her sent a chill up his spine. He cared more for her than he could say and without her by his side, his life, his mission, felt purposeless.

He suddenly remembered something, and reached into his pocket, checking to see if it was still there. Thankfully, it was. His mother's wedding ring. He held it up to the light, and admired the six-carat sapphire, perfectly cut, mounted on a band of diamonds

and rubies. He had never been able to find the right moment to propose to her. This time, he was determined to.

If, of course, she had come back at all.

Caleb heard a noise and spun towards the entrance, sensing motion. He hoped beyond hope that it was Caitlin.

But he was surprised to find himself looking down, as the person turned the corner, and to see that it wasn't a person at all. It was Ruth. Caleb was overjoyed to see her there, to see that she had survived the trip back in time.

She walked towards Caleb, her tail wagging, her eyes lighting with recognition. As she got closer, Caleb knelt down and she ran into his arms. He loved Ruth, and he was surprised at how much she had grown: she seemed to be twice the size, and a formidable animal. He was also encouraged to find her here: maybe it meant that Caitlin was here, too.

Ruth suddenly turned and ran out the room, disappearing around the corner. Caleb was baffled by her behavior, and he hurried off after her, to see where she went.

He found himself entering another vaulted chamber, this one also littered with sarcophagi. He could see at a glance that they were all already opened, and empty.

Ruth kept running, whining, and ran out this room, too. Caleb started to wonder whether Ruth was leading him somewhere. He sped up after her.

After tearing through several more rooms, Ruth finally stopped in a small alcove at the end of the corridor, dimly lit by

a single torch. Inside, sat a lone, marble sarcophagus, intricately designed.

Caleb approached it slowly, holding his breath, hoping, sensing, that Caitlin could be inside.

Ruth sat down beside it, and stared up at Caleb. She whined frantically.

Caleb knelt and tried to push back its stone lid. But this one was much heavier than the others, and it hardly budged.

He knelt and pushed harder, using all his might, and finally, it began to budge. He kept pushing, and moments later, the lid came off completely.

Caleb was flooded with relief to find Caitlin lying there, still as could be, her hands neatly folded across her chest. But his relief turned to concern as he studied her, and saw that she was paler than he had ever seen. There was no color in her cheeks whatsoever, and her eyes did not even react to the torchlight. He looked more closely and noticed that she didn't appear to be breathing.

He leaned back in horror. Caitlin appeared to be dead.

Ruth whined louder: now he understood.

Caleb leaned in and placed both hands firmly on her shoulders. He shook her gently.

“Caitlin?” he said, hearing the worry in his own voice. “CAITLIN!?” he called louder, as he shook her with more force.

But she didn't respond, and his entire body went cold as he imagined what his life would be like without her in it. He knew

there was a danger to time travel, and that not all vampires survived every trip. But he had never really contemplated the reality of dying on the trip back. Had he made a mistake to keep encouraging her on the search, on the mission? Should he have just let it go, have settled with her in the last time and place?

What if he had lost everything?

Ruth jumped into the sarcophagi, standing with all four paws on Caitlin's chest, and began licking her all over her face. Minutes passed, and Ruth never stopped licking, whining as she did.

Just as Caleb leaned over, ready to pull Ruth off, he stopped. He was shocked as Caitlin began to open an eye.

Ruth howled, ecstatic, as she jumped off of Caitlin and ran in circles. Caleb leaned in, equally ecstatic, as Caitlin finally opened both eyes, and began to look around.

He hurried over and grabbed one of her ice-cold hands, warming it between his.

“Caitlin? Can you hear me? It's me, Caleb.”

Slowly, she began to sit up, and he helped her, reaching in, gently placing a hand behind her neck. He was so happy to see her blinking, squinting. He could see how disoriented she was, as if awoken from a deep, deep sleep.

“Caitlin?” he asked again, softly.

She looked at him blankly, her brown eyes as beautiful as he'd remembered. But something, he could tell, was wrong. She was still unsmiling, and as she blinked at him, her eyes held the look of a stranger.

“Caitlin?” he asked again, worried this time.

She stared right at him, her eyes wide open, and he saw, with a sudden shock, that she didn’t recognize him.

“Who are you?” she asked.

Caleb’s heart fell. Was it possible? Had the trip wiped out her memory? Had she really forgotten him?

“Caitlin,” he prodded again, “it’s me. Caleb.”

He smiled, hoping maybe that would help her remember.

But she didn’t smile back. She just stared at him, with a vacant look, blinking several times.

“I’m sorry,” she finally said. “But I have no idea who you are.”

Chapter Two

Sam woke to the sound of screeching birds. He opened his eyes and saw, high up overhead, several huge vultures circling. There must have been a dozen of them, and they circled lower and lower, seemingly right over him, as if watching him. As if waiting.

He suddenly realized they assumed he was dead, and were waiting for their chance to swoop in and eat him.

Sam jumped to his feet, and as he did, the birds suddenly flew off, as if startled that the dead could rise again.

He looked around, trying to get his bearings. He was in a field, in the midst of rolling hills. As far as he could see, there were more hills, covered in grass and odd bushes. The temperature was perfect, and there was not a cloud in the sky. It was very picturesque, and there was not a single building in sight. It appeared he was in the middle of nowhere.

Sam tried to figure out where he was, what time period, and how he'd arrived. He desperately tried to think back. What had happened before he'd gone back in time?

Slowly, he remembered. He had been in the Notre Dame, in Paris, in 1789. He had been fighting off Kyle, Kendra, Sergei and their people, keeping them at bay so that Caitlin and Caleb could escape. It had been the least he could do, and he owed her that much, especially after endangering her with his reckless

romance with Kendra.

Vastly outnumbered, he had used his shape-shifting power, and had managed to confuse them just enough to wreak considerable damage, wiping out many of Kyle's men, incapacitating the others, and managing to escape with Polly.

Polly.

She had been by his side the whole time, had fought valiantly, and the two of them, he remembered, had been quite a force together. They had escaped through the ceiling of the Notre Dame, and had gone searching for Caitlin and Caleb in the night. Yes. It was all starting to come back...

Sam had found out that his sister had gone back in time, and he knew, on the spot, that he had to go back, too, to make wrongs right, to find Caitlin again, to apologize, and to protect her. He knew she didn't need it: she was a better warrior than he was now, and she had Caleb. But she was his sister, after all, and the impulse to protect her was something he could not turn off.

Polly had insisted on coming back with him. She, too, was intent on seeing Caitlin again, and on explaining herself to her. Sam hadn't objected, and they had gone back together.

Sam looked around again now, staring out at the fields, wondering.

"Polly?" he called out, tentatively.

No response.

He walked towards the edge of a hill, hoping to get a view of the landscape.

“Polly!?” he called out again, louder this time.

“Finally!” came a voice.

As Sam looked out, Polly appeared, walking up over the horizon, rounding a hill. She carried an armful of strawberries and was eating one, her mouth full as she spoke. “I’ve been waiting for you all morning! Gosh! You really love to sleep, don’t you!?”

Sam was delighted to see her. Seeing her, he realized how alone he had felt coming back, and how happy he was to have some companionship. He also realized, despite himself, how much she had grown on him. Especially after his fiasco with Kendra, he appreciated being around a normal girl, appreciated Polly more than she knew. And as she got closer, and as the sun lit up her light brown hair and blue eyes, her translucent white skin, he was surprised, once again, by her natural beauty.

He was about to respond, but as usual, she didn’t let him get a word in.

“I woke up not ten feet from you,” she continued, as she approached, eating another strawberry, “and I shook you and shook you, but you wouldn’t wake! So I went off and did some gathering. I’m anxious to leave this place, but I figured I’d not leave you to the birds before I went. We have to find Caitlin. Who knows where she is? She could need our help right now. And all you do is sleep! After all, what did we come back for if we’re not going to get up and go and –”

“Please!” Sam called out, breaking into a laugh. “I can’t get

a word in!”

Polly stopped and stared at him, looking surprised, as if she had no idea she were speaking so much.

“Well then,” she said, “speak!”

Sam stared back at her, distracted by how blue her eyes looked in the early morning light; finally having a chance to speak, he froze up, forgetting what he was about to say.

“Uh...” he began.

Polly threw up her hands.

“Boys!” she exclaimed. “They never want you to talk – but they never have anything to say themselves! Well, I can’t wait around here anymore!” she said, and hurried off, strutting through the fields, eating another strawberry.

“Wait!” Sam called out, hurrying to catch up with her. “Where are you going?”

“Why, to find Caitlin, of course!”

“You know where she is?” he asked.

“No,” she said. “But I know where she *isn’t* – and that’s in this field! We need to get out of here. Find the closest city, or buildings, or whatever, and figure out what time we’re in. We have to start somewhere! And this is not the place!”

“Well, don’t you think I want to find my sister, too!?” Sam called out, exasperated.

Finally, she stopped and turned, facing him.

“I mean, don’t you want company?” Sam asked, realizing as he said it, how much he wanted to look for Caitlin with her. “Don’t

you want to search together?”

Polly looked back at him with her large blue eyes, as if summing him up. He felt as if he were being scrutinized, and he could see she looked unsure. He couldn't understand why.

“I don't know,” she finally said. “I mean, you handled yourself pretty well back there in Paris – I do have to admit. But...”

She paused.

“What is it?” he finally asked.

Polly cleared her throat.

“Well, if you must know, the last – um – boy – I spent any time with – Sergei – turned out to be a liar and a con-man, who tricked and used me. I was too stupid to see it. But I'm never going to fall for anything like that again. And I'm not ready to trust anybody of the male race – not even you. I just don't want to spend any time with any more boys right now. Not that you and I – not that I'm saying that we're – not that I think of you that way – as anything more than a friend – than an acquaintance – ”

Polly began stammering, and he could see how nervous she had become, and couldn't help smiling inwardly.

“ – but it's just that, regardless, I'm sick of boys. No offense.”

Sam smiled broadly. He loved her candor, and her spunkiness.

“None taken,” he answered. “The truth be told,” he added, “I'm sick of girls.”

Polly's eyes opened wide in surprise; that clearly wasn't the response she'd been expecting.

“But it occurs to me that we have a better chance of finding

my sister if we search together. I mean – just –” Sam cleared his throat, “ – just professionally speaking.”

Now it was Polly’s turn to smile.

“Professionally speaking,” she repeated.

Sam reached out his hand, formally.

“I promise, we’ll just be friends – nothing more,” he said. “I’ve sworn off of girls forever. No matter what.”

“And I’ve sworn off of guys forever. No matter what,” Polly said, still examining his hand, as it dangled in the air, unsure.

Sam left his hand out patiently, waiting.

“Just friends?” she asked. “Nothing more?”

“Just friends,” Sam said.

She finally reached out and shook on it.

And as she did, Sam couldn’t help noticing that she held his hand just the slightest bit too long.

Chapter Three

Caitlin sat up in the sarcophagus, and stared back at the man before her. She knew she recognized him from somewhere, but could not place where. She stared at his large, brown, concerned eyes, his perfectly chiseled face, his cheekbones, his smooth skin, his thick, wavy hair. He was gorgeous, and she could sense how much he cared for her. She felt deep down that this was an important person to her, but for the life of her, she could not remember who it was.

Caitlin felt something wet in her palm, and looked down to see a wolf sitting there, licking her. She was surprised at how caring it was towards her, as if it had known her forever. It had beautiful white fur, with a single grey streak running down the middle of its head and back. Caitlin felt she knew this animal, too, and that at some point in her life she'd had a close connection to it.

But try as she did, she could not remember how.

She looked around the room, trying to take in her surroundings, hoping it might jog her memory. The room slowly came into focus. It was dim, lit only by a torch, and in the distance, she saw adjoining rooms, filled with sarcophagi. It had a low, vaulted ceiling, and the stones looked ancient. It looked like a crypt. She wondered how she had gotten here – and who these people were. She felt as if she had been awakened from a dream that would not end.

Caitlin closed her eyes for a moment, breathing deeply, and as she did, a collection of random images suddenly flashed through her mind. She saw herself standing in the Roman Colosseum, fighting off multiple soldiers on its hot, dusty floor; she saw herself flying over an island in the Hudson River, looking down at a sprawling castle; she saw herself in Venice, on a gondola, with a boy she did not recognize, but who was also beautiful; she saw herself in Paris, walking along a river with a man who she recognized as the same man across from her. She tried to focus on that image, to hold onto it. Perhaps it would help her remember.

She saw the two of them again, this time in his castle, in the countryside of France. She saw them riding horses on the beach, then saw a falcon, circling high above them, dropping off a letter.

She tried to zoom in on his face, to remember his name. It seemed to be coming back to her; it was so close. But her mind kept flashing something new, and it was so hard to hold onto anything. Lifetime after lifetime flashed before her in an endless snapshot of images. It was as if her memory were repopulating itself.

"Caleb," came a voice.

Caitlin opened her eyes. He was leaning in close, reaching out a hand, holding her shoulder.

"My name is Caleb. Of the White Coven. Don't you remember?"

Caitlin's eyes closed again, as her mind was jogged by his

words, his voice. *Caleb*. The name rang like a bell in her brain. It felt like an important name to her.

White Coven. That, too, rang a bell. She suddenly saw herself in a city she knew to be New York City, in a cloister at the northern end of the island. She saw herself standing on a large terrace, looking out. She saw herself arguing with a woman named Sera.

"Caitlin," came the voice again, more firmly. "Don't you remember?"

Caitlin. Yes. That was her name. She felt certain of it now.

And Caleb. Yes. He was important to her. He was her... boyfriend? He felt like more than that. Fiancé? Husband?

She opened her eyes, and stared at him, and it was all starting to flood back. Hope filled within her, as slowly, bit by bit, she was starting to remember everything.

"Caleb," she said back, softly.

His eyes suddenly filled with hope, watering. The wolf whined beside her licked her cheek, as if encouraged. She looked over at her, and suddenly remembered her name.

"Rose," she said, then realized that wasn't right. "No. Ruth. Your name is Ruth."

Ruth leaned in closer, licking her face. Caitlin couldn't help but smile, and stroked her head. Caleb broke into a relieved grin.

"Yes. Ruth. And I am Caleb. And you are Caitlin. Do you remember now?"

She nodded. "It's coming back to me," she said. "You are

my... husband?"

She watched as his face suddenly turned red, as if he were embarrassed, or shamed. And at that moment, she suddenly remembered. No. They were not married.

"We are not married," he said, apologetic, "but we are together."

She was embarrassed, too, as now she started to remember everything, as it all started flooding back to her.

She suddenly remembered the keys. Her father's keys. She reached down, into her pocket, and was reassured to feel them there. She reached into another pocket and felt her journal, still there. She was relieved.

Caleb reached out a hand.

She took it, and let him pull her up and out of the sarcophagus. It felt so good to be standing, to stretch her aching muscles.

Caleb reached out and brushed the hair back out of her face. His soft fingers felt so good as they brushed her temple.

"I'm so glad you're alive," he said.

He embraced her, hugging her tight. She hugged him back, and as she did, more memories flooded through her. Yes, this was the man she loved. The man she hoped, one day, to marry. She could feel his love coursing through her, and she remembered that they had gone back in time together. They had last been in France, in Paris, and she had found the second key, and they had both been sent back. She had prayed that they would come back together this time. And as she held him tighter, she realized that

her prayers had come true.

Finally, this time, they were together.

Chapter Four

"I see you two have found each other," came a voice.

Caitlin and Caleb, in the midst of their embrace, both spun at the voice, startled. Caitlin was shocked that anyone could have snuck up on them so quickly, especially given their alert vampire senses.

But as she stared back at the woman standing before them, she realized why: this woman too, was a vampire. Dressed in all white, wearing a hood, the woman lifted her chin and stared back with piercing blue eyes. Caitlin could detect a sense of peace and harmony coming off of her, and she let down her guard. She felt Caleb let down his guard, too.

The woman broke into a wide smile.

"We've been waiting for you for quite some time," she said, in a gentle voice.

"Where are we?" Caitlin asked. "What year is it?"

The woman only smiled back.

"Come this way," she said, turning her back, and heading back out through the low, arched doorway.

Caitlin and Caleb exchanged a look, then followed her out the doorway, Ruth at their side.

They walked down a stone corridor, twisting and turning, and it led to a set of narrow stairs, lit only by a torch. They were close behind the woman, who simply kept walking, as if assuming they

would follow.

Caitlin felt a desire to ask more questions, to press her on where they were; but as they reached the top of the staircase, the room suddenly opened up into a magnificent sight, taking her breath away, and she realized they were inside an enormous church. At least that part of the question was answered.

Caitlin once again regretted not having listened more carefully in her history and architecture classes, regretted not being able to tell at first sight exactly what church this was. She thought back to all the magnificent churches she'd visited – the Notre Dame in Paris, the Duomo in Florence – and couldn't help thinking that this reminded her somewhat of them.

The nave of the church stretched for hundreds of feet, had a tiled, marble floor, and had walls adorned with dozens of carved, stone statues. It had soaring, vaulted ceilings, climbing hundreds of feet high. High up were rows and rows of arched stained-glass, flooding the church with a soft, multicolor light. At its far end was a huge, circular piece of stained glass, filtering light into an enormous, gilded altar. Spread out before that were hundreds of small, wooden chairs for worshipers.

But now, the church was empty. It seemed as if they had the entire place to themselves.

They walked across the room, following the vampire, and their footsteps echoed, reverberating in the huge, empty hall.

"What church is this?" Caitlin finally asked.

"Westminster Abbey," came the woman's voice, as she

continued walking. "The coronation seat of Kings and Queens for thousands of years."

Westminster Abbey, Caitlin thought. She knew that was in England. London, in fact.

London.

The idea of being here hit her like a wave of bricks. It was overwhelming, awe-inspiring. She had never been here before, and had always wanted to go. She had had friends who had gone, and had seen pictures online. It made sense to her that they were here, given this city's long medieval history. This church alone was thousands of years old – and she knew that this city had a lot more like it. But she still didn't know the year.

"And what year is it?" Caitlin asked, nervous.

But their guide walked so quickly, she had already crossed the huge chapel and ducked through another arched door, forcing Caitlin and Caleb to hurry to keep up.

As they entered, Caitlin was surprised to find herself in a cloister. There was a long, stone corridor, with stone walls and statues on one side and on the other, open arches. These arches were open to the elements, and through them, she could see a small, peaceful courtyard. It reminded her of so many other cloisters she had been to; she was starting to see the pattern of their simplicity, their emptiness, the arched walls, the columns, the well-cared for courtyards. They all felt like a shelter from the world, like a place for prayer and silent contemplation.

The vampire finally stopped and faced them. She stared

back at Caitlin with her large, compassionate eyes, and looked otherworldly.

"We are at the turn-of-the-century," she said.

Caitlin thought for a moment. "What century?" she asked.

"The sixteenth, of course. It is 1599."

1599, Caitlin thought. The idea was overwhelming. Once again, she wished she'd read her history more closely. Previously, she had gone from 1791 to 1789. But now she was in 1599. Nearly a 200 year leap.

She recalled how many things had seemed primitive even in 1789 – the lack of plumbing, the occasional dirt road, the people rarely bathing. She couldn't even comprehend how much more primitive things could be two hundred years further back. Surely, it would be far less recognizable than any other time. Even London would probably be barely recognizable. It made her feel isolated, alone, in a distant world and place. If it weren't for Caleb's being there, by her side, she would have felt completely alone.

But at the same time, this architecture, this church, these cloisters – it all felt so recognizable, so familiar. After all, she was walking in the same exact Westminster Abbey that existed in the 21st century. Not only that, this building, even as it was now, was already ancient, had already been around for centuries. At least that gave her a touch of comfort.

But why had she been sent back to this time? And this place? Clearly, it had some great significance for her mission.

London. 1599.

Was this the time that Shakespeare had lived? she wondered, her heart suddenly beating faster, as she imagined, just maybe, having the chance to actually get a glimpse of him, in the flesh.

They walked silently down corridor after corridor.

"London in 1599 is not as primitive as you think," their guide said, glancing at her with a smile.

Caitlin felt embarrassed that her thoughts had been read. As always, she knew she should have been more vigilant in guarding them. She hoped that she had not offended this vampire.

"No offense at all," she replied, reading her thoughts again. "Our time is primitive in many technological ways that you are accustomed to. But we are, in other ways, more sophisticated than even your modern time. We are extremely knowledgeable, and scholarly, and books rule the day. A people of primitive means, maybe, but with a very sharp intellect.

"More importantly, this is a crucial time for the vampire race. We stand at a crossroads here. You have arrived at the turn of the century for a reason."

"Why?" Caleb asked.

The woman smiled at them before entering yet another door.

"The answer to that is one that you will have to find out for yourself."

They entered another magnificent room, with soaring ceilings, stained glass, marble floors, adorned with enormous candles, and carved statues of kings and saints. But this room was different

than the others. It had sarcophagi and effigies placed carefully throughout, and at the center sat an enormous tomb, dozens of feet high, and covered in gold.

Their guide walked right up to it, as they followed. She stopped before it, and turned to them.

Caitlin looked up at the magnificent tomb: it was large, imposing. It was itself a magnificent work of art, plated in gold, adorned with intricate carvings. She also felt an energy coming off of it, as if it held some importance.

"The tomb of Saint Edward the Confessor," the vampire said. "It is a holy place, a place of pilgrimage for our kind for hundreds of years. It is said that if one prays by its side, one will receive miraculous healings for those who are sick. See the stone, by your feet: it has been worn from all the people kneeling here over time."

Caitlin looked down, and saw that, indeed, the marble platform had slight impressions around its edges. She marveled at how many people must have knelt here throughout the centuries.

"But in your case," she continued, "it holds even more significance."

She turned and looked directly at Caitlin.

"Your key," she said to Caitlin.

Caitlin was baffled. Which key was she referring to? She reached into her pockets, and felt again the two keys that she had found thus far. She wasn't sure which one the woman wanted.

She shook her head. "No. Your other key."

Caitlin thought, puzzled. Had she forgotten some other key? Then, as she glanced at the base of her throat, she realized.

Her necklace.

Caitlin reached down, and was amazed to realize it was still there. She gingerly removed it, and held the delicate, antique silver cross in her palm.

The vampire shook her head.

“Only you can use it.”

She reached out and gently took Caitlin's wrist, and guided it towards the smallest of keyholes, at the base of the pedestal.

Caitlin was amazed. She never would have even noticed that keyhole otherwise. She inserted the key, turned it, and there was a gentle click.

She looked up, and saw that a tiny compartment had open in the side of the tomb. She looked at the vampire, and she nodded solemnly back.

Caitlin reached up and slowly pulled out a long, narrow compartment. Inside, she was shocked to discover, was a long, golden scepter, its head adorned with rubies and emeralds.

She reached in and extracted it, and was amazed at how heavy it felt, at how smooth the gold was in her hands. It must have been three feet long, and made of solid gold.

"The holy scepter," the nun said. "It was your father's, once."

Caitlin looked at it with a new sense of awe and respect. She felt electrified holding it, and felt closer to her father than ever.

"Will this lead me to my father?" she asked.

Their guide simply turned and headed out the chamber. "This way," she said.

Caitlin and Caleb followed her through another door, and down several more corridors, passing the medieval courtyard of another cloister. As they walked, Caitlin was surprised to see several other vampires, dressed in white robes and hoods, walking through the halls. Most looked down, as if lost in prayer. Some swung incense decanters. A few who passed nodded their way, and continued on in silence.

Caitlin wondered how many vampires lived here, and if they belonged to her father's coven. She had never realized that Westminster Abbey was a cloister, in addition to a church. Or that it was a resting place for her kind.

They finally entered another room, this one smaller than the others, but with high, vaulted ceilings, and natural light pouring in. This room had stark, stone floors, and in its center sat one remarkable piece of furniture: a throne. Mounted high up on a pedestal, at least fifteen feet high, sat the wooden throne, a chair which was extra wide, with arms that sloped upward, and a back that angled on a triangle, coming to a point in the middle. Beneath it, on its corners, sat two golden lions, designed to look as if they were holding up the chair.

Caitlin examined it in awe.

"King Edward's chair," said the vampire. "The coronation throne for kings and queens for thousands of years. A very special piece of furniture – not only for its place in history, but

because it holds one of the keys for our kind.”

She turned and looked at Caitlin. "We have been guarding this throne for thousands of years. Now that you are here, and now that you have unlocked the scepter, it is time for you to take your rightful place.”

She gestured for Caitlin to ascend the throne.

Caitlin looked back at her, shocked. What right did she, a simple girl, have to ascend such a regal throne – a throne that had been sat on by kings and queens for thousands of years? She didn't feel right going anywhere near it, much less ascending its huge pedestal and sitting on it.

"Please," prodded the vampire. "You are entitled. You are The One.”

Caleb nodded at her, and Caitlin slowly, reluctantly, climbed up on the huge pedestal, carrying the scepter. When she reached the top, she turned and delicately eased herself into the throne.

It was made of hard wood, and didn't give. As she leaned back on it, she rested her hands on his arms, and could feel its power. She could feel the thousands of years of royalty, who had received their crowns in this very spot. It felt electrically charged.

As she looked out the room, fifteen feet higher than everyone else, she felt as if she towered over it, over the world. It was an awe-inspiring feeling.

"The scepter," said the vampire.

Caitlin looked down at her, puzzled, unsure what she wanted her to do with it.

"In the arm of the throne, you will find a small hole. It is meant to hold it."

Caitlin looked down, closely, and this time saw a small hole, just wide enough to fit its exact diameter. She reached up and slowly inserted the scepter into the hole.

It sank all the way down until only its head sat above the arm. Suddenly, there was a soft click.

Caitlin looked down and was amazed to see a tiny compartment open at the base of one of the lions' heads. Inside, sat a small, gold ring. She reached down and took it out.

She held it up, staring.

"The ring of destiny," said the vampire. "It is meant only for you. A gift from your father."

Caitlin stared in awe, holding it up to the light, watching the jewels sparkle as she moved it.

"Place it on the ring finger of your right hand."

Caitlin slid it on, and as she felt the cool metal, a vibration went right through her. She could feel the power coming off of it.

"It will lead the way."

Caitlin examined it. "But how?" she asked.

"You need only inspect it," the vampire said.

Caitlin was at first puzzled, but then examined the ring more closely. As she did, she noticed a fine, delicate engraving all around the band. Her heart beat faster as she began to read it. She felt immediately that it was a message from her father.

Across the Bridge, Beyond the Bear,
With the Winds or the sun, we bypass London.

Caitlin read the riddle again, then read it aloud, so that Caleb could hear it.

"What does it mean?" she asked.

Their guide only smiled back.

"This is as far as I'm allowed to take you. The rest of the journey is yours to discover." Then she leaned in close. "We are counting on you. Whatever you do, don't let us down."

Chapter Five

Caitlin and Caleb walked out the enormous arched doors of Westminster Abbey, into the morning light, Ruth at their heels. They both instinctively squinted and raised their hands to the light, and Caitlin was grateful that Caleb had given her the eyedrops before they'd exited. It took her a few moments for her eyes to adjust. Slowly, the world of 1599 London came into focus.

Caitlin was amazed. Paris in 1789 had not been all that different from Venice in 1791. But London in 1599 was a world apart. She was shocked at the difference 190 made.

Before her, London was spread out. But it was not a bustling, metropolitan city. Rather, it felt more like a large, rural town, with large, empty lots, still in development. There were no paved roads – everywhere was dirt – and while there were many buildings, there were far more trees. Nestled amidst the trees were crudely laid out blocks and rows of houses, many of them uneven. The houses were all built of wood, with huge, thatched, straw roofs. She could see at a glance how combustible this city was, with most everything built of wood, and with all that straw sitting atop houses, and realized how susceptible it was to fire.

She could see right away that the dirt roads made passageway tricky. Traveling by horse seemed to be the preferable way, and the occasional horse, or horse and carriage, went by. But that

was the exception. Most people walked – or rather, stumbled. The people who walked down the muddy streets all seemed to struggle to get their footing.

She spotted excrement lining the streets, and was struck by the stench, even from here. The occasional cattle walking by didn't help. If she had ever considered going back in time to be romantic, this sight certainly gave her pause.

What's more, in this city she didn't see people strolling in their finery, carrying parasols, showing off the latest fashions, as they had in Paris and Venice. Rather, they were all dressed more simply, with much more outdated clothing, men wearing either simple farming clothing, much like rags, and only a few wearing white britches up to their thighs, with short tunics that looked like skirts. The women, for their part, were still covered in so much material, they struggled to navigate the streets as they grabbed the hems of their skirts and held them as high as they could – not just to keep them away from the mud and excrement, but also from the rats, which Caitlin was shocked to see scurrying out in the open.

Still, despite everything, this time was clearly unique – and, at least, relaxed. She felt as if she were in a large country village. There was no fast-paced bustle of the 21st century. There were no cars racing by; there was no sound of construction. No horns, buses, trucks, machinery. Even the sound of the horses were muted, their feet sinking into the dirt. Indeed the only sounds that could be heard, aside from the vendors calling out, were the

sounds of church bells, ringing ever presently, like a chorus of bombs, throughout the city. This was clearly a city dominated by churches.

The only thing hinting at the built-up future to come were, paradoxically, the ancient churches – rising high over the rest of the humble architecture and dominating the skyline, their steeples rising impossibly high. Indeed, the building they were exiting from, Westminster Abbey, towered over all the buildings in sight. She could already tell that its steeple, was a beacon for the entire city to get its bearings by.

She looked at Caleb, and saw him surveying the scene, equally amazed. She reached out and was happy to feel him place his hand in hers. It felt so good to feel his touch again.

He turned and looked at her, and she could see the love in his eyes.

"Well," he said, clearing his throat, "it's not exactly the Paris of the 18th century."

She smiled back. "No, it's not."

"But we're together, and that's all that matters," he added.

She could feel his love, as he looked deeply into her eyes, and for a moment, was distracted from their mission.

"I'm so sorry for what happened in France," he said. "With Sera. I never meant to hurt you. I hope you know that."

She looked at him, and could tell that he meant it. And to her surprise, she felt that she could now easily forgive him. The old Caitlin would have held a grudge. But she felt stronger than she

ever had, and truly capable of letting it go. Especially since he had come back for her, and especially since it was clear he had no feelings for Sera.

Even more, she now, for the first time, realized her own mistakes in the past, her rushing to judgment too quickly, her not trusting him, her not giving him enough space.

"I'm sorry, too," she said. "This is a new life now. And we're here together. That's all that matters."

He squeezed her hand, and as he did, she felt a thrill running through her.

He leaned in and kissed her. She was surprised, and thrilled at the same time. She felt the electricity running through her, and kissed him back.

Ruth started whining at their feet.

They both broke away, looked down and laughed.

"She's hungry," Caleb said.

"So am I."

"Shall we see London?" he asked with a grin. "We could fly," he added, "that is, if you're ready."

She arched her shoulders back, and felt her wings there, and felt that she was, indeed, ready. She felt restored from this trip back. Maybe she was, finally, getting used to time travel.

"I am," she said, "but I'd like to walk. I'd like to experience this place, for the first time, like everybody else."

And it's also more romantic, she thought to herself, but didn't say.

But he looked down and smiled at her, and she wondered if he'd read her thoughts.

He reached out his hand with a smile, she took it, and the two of them set off down the stairs.

* * *

As they walked out of the church, Caitlin spotted a river in the distance, and a wide road about fifty yards off of it, with a crudely carved wooden sign that read "King Street." They had a choice to turn left or right. The city seemed more condensed to the left.

They turned left, heading north, up King Street, parallel to the river. As they went, Caitlin was amazed by the sights and sounds, taking it all in. To their right were a series of grand, wooden houses, great estates, built in the Tudor manor, with a white stucco exterior, brown framing, and culminating in a thatched roof. To their left, she was amazed to see, were rural parcels of farmland, with the occasional small, humble house, and sheep and cows dotting the landscape. London of 1599 was fascinating to her. One side of the street was cosmopolitan and wealthy, while the other was still populated by farmers.

The street itself was also a thing of wonder. Their feet nearly stuck in the mud as they walked, the dirt made even softer by all the foot and horse traffic. This in itself was bearable, but interlaced all throughout the dirt was excrement, from the packs

of wild dogs, or, thrown out the windows, from humans. Indeed, as they went, shutters opened sporadically, and pails appeared, with old women throwing out waste from households. It smelled far worse than Venice or Florence or Paris. She almost gagged at times, and wished she had one of those small perfume pouches to bring to her nose. Luckily, at least, she still wore the practical sparring shoes that Aiden had given her back in Versailles. She couldn't imagine ever walking down this street in heels.

Yet, intermixed with this strange mix of farmland and grand estates, was also the occasional feat of architecture. Caitlin was amazed to see, here and there, some buildings she actually recognized from pictures from the 21st century, ornate churches, and an occasional palace.

The road came to an abrupt halt in a large, arched gateway, several guards standing before it in uniform, standing at attention, holding lances. The gate was open, though, and they walked through.

A sign etched into stone read "Whitehall Palace," and they continued through its long, narrow courtyard, then through another arched gate and out the other side, and back onto the main road. They soon approached a circular intersection with a sign that read "Charing Cross," and a large vertical monument in its center. The road forked to the left and to the right.

"Which way?" she asked.

Caleb seemed as overwhelmed as she did. Finally, he said, "My instincts tell me to stay close to the river, and fork to the

right.”

She closed her eyes, and tried to feel it, too. "I agree," she said, then added, "Do you have any idea exactly what it is we are looking for?"

He shook his head. "Your guess is as good as mine.”

She looked down at her ring, and read the riddle aloud once again.

Across the Bridge, Beyond the Bear,
With the Winds or the sun, we bypass London.

It didn't ring any bells for her, and it didn't appear to ring any for Caleb either.

"Well, it mentions London," she said, "so I feel like we're on the right track. My instinct tells me that we have to proceed further, deeper into the city, and that we'll know it when we see it.”

He agreed, and she took his hand, and they forked right, heading parallel to the river, following a sign that read “The Strande.”

As they continued along this new street, she noticed that the area was getting more and more dense, with more houses built close to each other, on both sides of the street. It felt like they were getting closer to the center of town. The streets were becoming more crowded, too. The weather was perfect – it felt like an early fall day to her, and the sun shone steadily. She briefly

wondered what month it was. It amazed her how she had lost track of time.

At least it wasn't too hot. But as the streets became more and more filled with people, she was beginning to feel claustrophobic. They were definitely approaching the center of a huge, metropolitan city, even if it didn't have the modern-day sophistication. She was surprised: she had always imagined the old times to have less people, to be less crowded. But if anything, the opposite was true: as the streets became more and more packed, she couldn't believe how crowded it was. It reminded her of being back in New York City in the 21st century. People elbowed and jostled and didn't even look back to apologize. They also stank.

Adding to the scene, on every corner were street peddlers, aggressively trying to sell their wares. In every direction, people shouted out, in funny British accents.

And when the voices of the peddlers died down, other voices dominated the air: those of preachers. Everywhere, Caitlin saw makeshift platforms, stages, soapboxes, pulpits, on which preachers stood and preached their sermons to the masses, shouting to be heard.

"Jesus says REPENT!" yelled one minister, standing there with a funny top hat and a stern gaze, looking down at the crowd in a sweeping gaze. "I say that ALL THEATRES must be shut down! All idle time must be FORBIDDEN! Return to your houses of worship!"

It reminded Caitlin of the people who preached from street corners in New York City. In some ways, nothing had changed.

They came to another gateway, right in the middle of the street, with a sign that read “Temple Barre, City Gate.” Caitlin was amazed that cities actually had gates. The large, imposing gate was open, for people to pass right through, and Caitlin wondered if they closed it at night. On either side stood more guards.

But this gate was different: it seemed to also be a gathering place. A large crowd huddled around it, and way up high, atop a small platform, a guard stood holding a whip. Caitlin looked up and was amazed to see that a man, chained and barely clothed, was tied to a whipping post. The guard reached back and lashed him again and again, and the entire crowd oohed and aahed at the sight.

Caitlin surveyed the faces of the crowd, and couldn't believe how indifferent they seemed, as if this were an ordinary, everyday occurrence, as if it were a popular form of entertainment. She felt anger well up inside her at the barbarism of this society, and she nudged Caleb. He was also riveted to the scene, and she took his hand and hurried through the gate with him, forcing herself not to look. She feared that if she dwelled on it too much, she would be unable to stop herself from attacking the guards.

“This place is barbaric,” she said, as they gained distance from the grizzly sight and the sounds of the whip grew fainter.

"Terrible," he agreed.

As they continued onward, she tried to put the image out of her head. She forced herself to focus her attention elsewhere. She looked up at a street sign, and saw that the name of the street they were walking on had changed, to "Fleet Street." As they walked, the streets became even more crowded, more condensed, and the buildings and numerous rows of wooden houses were built even closer to each other. This street was also lined with various stores. One sign read: "Shave for a Penny." Before another shop dangled a blacksmith's sign, with a horseshoe hanging in front of it. Another sign read, in large letters, "Horse Saddles."

"Need a new horseshoe, Miss?" a local shopkeeper asked Caitlin as they walked by.

She was caught off guard. "Um... no thanks," she said.

"How about you, Sir?" persisted the man. "Want a shave? I've got the cleanest blades on Fleet Street."

Caleb smiled back at the man. "Thank you, but I'm okay."

Caitlin looked at Caleb, and realized how clean-shaven he looked, all the time. His face was so smooth, it looked like porcelain.

As they continued down Fleet Street, Caitlin couldn't help noticing how the crowd had changed. It became more seedy here, with several people openly drinking from flasks and glass bottles, stumbling about, laughing too loudly, and openly leering at women.

"GIN HERE! GIN HERE!" yelled out a boy, hardly older

than ten, holding a crate filled with small green bottles of gin. "GET YOUR BOTTLE! TWO FARTHINGS! GET YOUR BOTTLE!"

Caitlin got jostled again, as the crowd grew increasingly thick. She looked over and saw a group of women, with too much makeup, dressed in heavy clothing with tons of fabric, and with their shirts pulled down low, revealing most of their breasts.

"Want a good time?" one of the women yelled out, clearly drunk, wobbling on her feet. She approached a passerby, who roughly pushed her off.

Caitlin was amazed at how rough this part of town was. She felt Caleb instinctively come closer, putting his hand around her waist, and she could feel his protectiveness. They picked up their pace and continued quickly through the crowd, and Caitlin looked down and checked that Ruth was still by their side.

The street soon ended in a small foot bridge, and as they walked over, Caitlin looked down. She saw a large sign that read "Fleet Ditch," and was amazed at the sight. Below them was what looked like a small canal, maybe ten feet wide, completely flowing with murky water. Amidst this water bobbed all sorts of garbage and refuse. As she looked up, she saw people urinating into it, and saw others throwing pots of excrement, chicken bones, household refuse, and all sorts of debris. It looked like an immense, flowing sewer, carrying all the waste of the city downstream.

She looked to see where it lead, and saw that, far off in the

distance, it led into the river. She turned her head away at the smell. It was probably the worst thing she had ever smelled in her life. Toxic gases rose up, and made the awful smell of the streets seem like roses in comparison.

They hurried over the bridge.

As they crossed to the other side of Fleet Street, Caitlin was relieved to see that the street finally opened up, and became a little less condensed. The smell, too, faded. And after the horrific smell of Fleet Ditch, the everyday street smells no longer bothered her. She realized that that was how people lived happily with these conditions: it was all about what you got used to, in context of the time you lived.

As they walked, the neighborhood became nicer. They passed a huge church on the left, and etched into the stone edifice, in neat calligraphy, were the words: "Saint Paul's." It was a massive church, with a beautiful ornate façade, reaching high into the sky, towering over all the buildings around it. Caitlin marveled at how beautiful its architecture was, that such a building could still fit in perfectly in the 21st century. It felt so out of place, towering above all the small wooden architecture around it. Caitlin was beginning to see just how much churches dominated the urban landscape of this time, and just how important they were to its people. They were literally omnipresent. And their bells, so loud, were always ringing.

Caitlin paused before it, studying its ancient architecture, and couldn't help but wonder if perhaps some clue lay for them inside.

"I wonder if we should go in?" Caleb asked, reading her mind. She studied her ring's inscription once again.

Across the bridge, Beyond the Bear.

"It mentions a bridge," she said, thinking.

"We just crossed a bridge," Caleb answered.

Caitlin shook her head. It didn't feel right to her.

"That was just a foot bridge. My instinct tells me this is not the place. Wherever it is we need to go, I don't feel it is here."

Caleb stood there and closed his eyes. Finally, he opened them. "I don't feel anything either. Let's move on."

"Let's get closer to the river," Caitlin said. "If there's a bridge to be found, I assume it would be by the river. And I wouldn't mind some fresh air."

She spotted a side road leading down to the riverfront, with a crudely marked sign that read "St. Andrews Hill." She took Caleb's hand and led him towards it.

They walked down the gently sloping road, and she could see the river in the distance, bustling with boat traffic.

This must be London's famous Thames River, she thought. It had to be. She remembered at least that much from her basic geography class.

This street ended in a building, not taking them all the way down to the river, so they turned left on a street that ran close to the river, parallel to it, only fifty feet away, aptly named "Thames Street."

Thames Street was even more genteel, a world apart from

Fleet Street. The houses were nicer here, and to their right, along the riverside, sat more grand estates, with huge plots of land sloping down to the riverfront. The architecture was more elaborate and more beautiful here, too. Clearly this part of town was reserved for the rich.

It felt like a quaint neighborhood, as they passed many twisting and turning side streets with funny names, like “Windgoose Lane” and “Old Swan Lane” and “Garlick Hill” and “Bread Street Hill.” In fact, the smell of food was in the air everywhere, and Caitlin felt her stomach growl. Ruth whined, too, and she knew she was hungry. But she didn't see any food for sale.

“I know, Ruth,” Caitlin sympathized. “I'll find us food soon, I promise.”

They walked and walked. Caitlin didn't know exactly what she was looking for, and neither did Caleb. It still felt as if the riddle could lead them anywhere, and they didn't have any concrete leads. They were getting deeper into the heart of the city, and she still wasn't sure which way to turn.

Just as Caitlin was beginning to feel tired, hungry, and cranky, they came to a huge intersection. She stopped and looked up. A crude, wooden sign read “Grace Church Street.” The smell of fish was heavy in the air here.

She stopped in exasperation and faced Caleb.

“We don't even know what we're looking for,” she said. “It mentions a bridge. But I haven't seen a single bridge anywhere. Are we just wasting our time here? Should we be thinking about

this a different way?"

Caleb suddenly tapped her on her shoulder, and pointed. She slowly turned, and was shocked at the sight.

Grace Church Street lead down to a massive bridge, one of the biggest bridges she had ever seen. Her heart soared with new hope. A huge sign above it read "London Bridge," and her heart beat faster. This street was wider, a major artery, and people, horses, carts and traffic of all kind funneled onto and off the bridge.

If a bridge was truly what they were looking for, clearly they had found it.

* * *

Caleb took her hand and led her towards the bridge, merging with the traffic. She looked up, and was overwhelmed at the sight. It was unlike any bridge she had ever seen. Its entrance was heralded by a huge, arched gate, with guards on either side. At its top were multiple spikes, on which sat severed heads, blood dripping from their throats, impaled on the spikes. It was a gruesome sight, and Caitlin averted her gaze.

"I remember this," sighed Caleb. "From centuries ago. This is how they always adorned their bridges: with heads of prisoners. They do it as a warning to other criminals."

"It's horrific," said Caitlin, as she lowered her head, and they walked quickly onto the bridge.

At the base of the bridge, booths and vendors were selling fish, and as Caitlin looked over, she could see boats pulling up, and workers carrying the fish up the muddy banks, slipping as they went. The entryway to the bridge stank of fish, so much so that she had to hold her nose. Fish of every type, some still moving, were laid out on small, makeshift tables.

"Snapper, three pence a pound!" someone yelled out.

Caitlin hurried past, trying to get away from the smell.

As they went, the bridge surprised her again, as she discovered that it was filled with shops. Small booths, vendors, lined the bridge on either side, as foot traffic, livestock, horses and carriages squeezed in the middle. It was a chaotic, crowded scene, with people calling out in every direction, selling their wares.

"Tannery here!" someone yelled out.

"We'll skin your animal!" yelled another.

"Candle wax here! The finest candle wax!"

"Roof thatching!"

"Get your firewood here!"

"Fresh quills! Quills and parchment!"

As they progressed further, there were nicer shops, some selling pieces of jewelry. Caitlin couldn't help but think of the gold bridge in Florence, of her time with Blake, of the bracelet he had bought her.

Momentarily overwhelmed with emotion, she drifted off to the side, held onto the railing, and looked out. She thought of all

the lifetimes she'd already lived, all the places she'd been, and felt overwhelmed. Was this all really true? How could one person have lived so many lives? Or would she just wake up from all of this, back in her apartment in New York City, and think that this had all just been the longest, craziest dream of her life?

"Are you okay?" Caleb asked, coming up beside her. "What is it?"

Caitlin quickly wiped back a tear. She pinched herself, and realized that she was not dreaming. It was all real. And that was most shocking of all.

"Nothing," she said quickly, putting on a forced smile. She hoped he hadn't been able to read her thoughts.

Caleb stood beside her, and together, they looked out, right down the middle of the Thames. It was a wide river, and completely congested with traffic. Sailboats of every size navigated their way through, sharing the waters with rowboats, fishermen's boats, and every type of vessel. It was a bustling waterway, and Caitlin marveled at the size of all the different craft and sails, some climbing dozens of feet into the air. She marveled at how quiet the waters were, even with so many vessels in it. There were no sounds of engines, no motorboats. There was just the sound of the canvas flapping in the wind. It relaxed her. The air up here, with the constant breeze, was fresh, too, finally free of smells.

She turned to Caleb and they continued strolling back down the bridge, Ruth at their heels. Ruth started whining again, and

Caitlin could feel her hunger, and wanted to stop. But everywhere she looked, she still could not find any food. She was getting hungrier herself.

As they reached the middle of the bridge, Caitlin was shocked, once again, at the sight before her. She didn't think that there'd be anything left to shock her after seeing those heads on the pikes – but this did.

Right there, in the center of the bridge, three prisoners stood up on a scaffold, nooses around their necks, blindfolded, barely clothed, and still alive. An executioner stood behind them, wearing a black hood, slits for his eyes.

"The next hanging is at one o'clock!" he screamed out. A thick and gathering crowd huddled around the scaffold, apparently waiting.

"What did they do?" Caitlin asked one of the crowd members.

"They were caught stealing, Miss," he said, not even bothering to look her way.

"One was caught slandering the Queen!" an old lady added.

Caleb led her away from the gruesome sight.

"Watching executions seems to be a daily sport around here," Caleb commented.

"It's cruel," Caitlin said. She marveled at how different this society was from the modern day, at how much tolerance it had for cruelty and violence. And this was London, one of the most civilized places of 1599. She could hardly imagine what the world was like outside of a civilized city like this. It amazed her

how much society, and its rules, had changed.

They finally finished crossing the bridge, and as they stood at its base, on the other side, Caitlin turned to Caleb. She looked at her ring, and read aloud again:

Across the Bridge, Beyond the Bear,
With the Winds or the sun, we bypass London.

"Well, if we're following this correctly, we've just 'crossed the bridge.' Next would be 'Beyond the Bear.'" Caitlin looked at him. "What could that mean?"

"I wish I knew," he said.

"I feel as if my father is close," Caitlin said.

She closed her eyes, and willed a clue to come along.

Just then, a young boy, carrying huge pile of pamphlets, hurried past them, shouting as he went. "BEAR BAITING! Five pence! This way! BEAR BAITING! Five pence! This way!"

He reached out and shoved a flyer into Caitlin's hand. She looked down, and saw, in huge letters, the words "Bear Baiting," with a crude picture of a stadium.

She looked at Caleb, and he looked at her at the same time. They both watched the boy as he began to disappear down the road.

"Bear baiting?" Caitlin asked. "What's that?"

"I remember now," Caitlin said. "It was the big sport of the time. They would put a bear in a circle, and tie him to a stake,

and bait him with wild dogs. They take bets on who wins: the bear or the dogs.”

"That's sick," Caitlin said.

"The riddle," he said. "Across the bridge, and Beyond the Bear. Do you think that could be it?"

As one, they both turned and followed the boy, now off in the distance, still shouting.

They made a right at the base of the bridge and walked along the river, now on the other side of the Thames, heading down a street named "Clink Street." This side of the river, Caitlin noticed, was very different from the other. It was less built up, less populated. The houses were also lower here, more crude, this side of the river more neglected. There were certainly fewer shops, and thinner crowds.

They soon came upon a huge structure, and Caitlin could tell, from the bars on the window and the guards standing outside, it was a prison.

Clink Street, Caitlin thought. *Aptly named.*

It was a huge, sprawling building, and as they passed, Caitlin saw hands and faces sticking out of the bars, watching her as she went. Hundreds of prisoners were crowded in there, leering out at her, yelling crude things as they passed.

Ruth growled back, and Caleb came closer.

They walked further, passing a street with a sign that read "Dead Man's Place." She looked to her right and saw another scaffold, with another execution being prepared. A prisoner,

shaking, stood on a platform, blindfolded, a noose around his neck.

Caitlin was so distracted, she almost lost sight of the boy, as she felt Caleb grab her hand and guide her further down Clink Street.

As they continued, Caitlin suddenly heard a distant shout and then a roar. She saw the boy, in the distance, turn the corner, and heard another shout rise up. She then was surprised to feel the earth shake beneath her. She hadn't felt anything like that since the Roman Colosseum. She realized that there must be a huge stadium of some sort just around the bend.

As they turned the corner, she was astonished by the sight before her. It was a huge, circular structure, looking like a miniature Colosseum. It was built several stories high, and closed off from view, but in each direction there were arched doors leading into it. She could hear the shouts, louder now, clearly coming from behind its walls.

Before the building milled hundreds of people, some of the most seedy people she had ever laid eyes upon. Some were barely dressed, many had huge bellies sticking out, unshaved and unbathed. Wild dogs roamed amidst them, and Ruth growled, the hairs on her back standing up, clearly on edge.

Vendors pushed carts in the mud, many selling pints of gin. From the looks of the crowd, it seemed most people partook. The crowd jostled each other roughly, and most of them looked drunk. Another roar rose up, and Caitlin looked up and saw the

sign hanging over the stadium: "Bear Baiting."

She felt sick to her stomach. Was this society really so cruel?

The small stadium seemed to be part of a complex. There, in the distance, sat another small stadium, with a huge sign which read "Bull Baiting." And there, off to the side, set apart from these two, was another large circular structure – although this one looked different from the others, classier.

"Come see the new Will Shakespeare play in the new Globe Theatre!" yelled out a passing boy, holding a stack of pamphlets. He walked right up to Caitlin, and shoved a pamphlet into her hands. She looked down and it read: "the new play by William Shakespeare: The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet."

"Will you come, Miss?" the boy asked. "It's his new play, and it's going to be performed for the first time in this brand-new theater: the Globe."

Caitlin looked down at the pamphlet, feeling a rush of excitement. Could this be real? Was this really happening?

"Where is it?" she asked.

The boy chuckled. He turned and pointed. "Why, it's right over there, Miss."

Caitlin looked to where he was pointing, and saw a circular structure in the distance, with white stucco walls and a Tudor wooden trim. The Globe. Shakespeare's Globe. It was incredible. She was really here.

In front of it, thousands of people were milling about, entering from all directions. And the crowd looked just as rough as the

crowd entering the bullbaiting and bearbaiting. That surprised her. She had always imagined Shakespeare theatergoers to be more civilized, more sophisticated. She had never really considered that it was entertainment for the masses – and the crudest type of masses at that. It seemed to be right up there with bearbaiting.

Yes, she would love to see a new Shakespeare play, love to go to the Globe. But she felt determined to fulfill her mission first, to solve the riddle.

A new roar arose from the bearbaiting stadium, and she turned and focused her attention back on it. She wondered if the answer to the riddle lay just beyond its walls.

She turned to Caleb.

"What do you think?" she asked. "Should we see what it's about?"

Caleb looked hesitant.

"The riddle did mention a bridge," he said, "and a bear. But my senses are telling me something else. I'm not quite sure – "

Suddenly, Ruth growled, then took off, sprinting away.

"Ruth!" Caitlin yelled.

She was gone. She didn't even turn back to listen, and she sprinted for all she was worth.

Caitlin was shocked. She had never see her behave that way, even in times of utmost danger. What could possibly pull her so much? She had never known Ruth not to listen.

Caitlin and Caleb broke into a sprint after her at the same time.

But even with their vampire speed, it was slow going through the mud, and Ruth was way faster than them. They watched her turn and weave through the masses, and they had to jostle their way to keep sight of her. Caitlin could see, in the distance, Ruth turn a corner, and sprinted down a narrow alleyway. She picked up speed, as did Caleb, pushing a big man out of her way as she did, and turned down the alleyway, after her.

What on earth could she be after? Caitlin wondered. She wondered if it were a stray dog, or if perhaps she had just reached a tipping point with hunger, and was chasing after a meal. She was a wolf, after all. Caitlin had to remind herself of that. She should have searched harder for food for her, and sooner.

But when Caitlin turned the corner and looked down the alley, she suddenly realized, with a shock, what it was.

There, at the far end of the alley, sat a young girl, maybe eight, in the dirt, cowering, crying, shaking. Towering above her was a large, beefy man, no shirt, his huge belly sticking out, unshaven, his chest and shoulders covered in hair. He wore an angry scowl, revealing his missing teeth, and he reached back with a leather belt and whipped the poor girl in her back, again and again.

"That's what you get for not listening!" the man screamed in a vicious tone, as he raised his belt again.

Caitlin was mortified, and without even thinking, she prepared to burst into action.

But Ruth beat her to it. Ruth had a head start, and as the man reached back his arm, Ruth sprinted and leapt into the air,

opening her jaws wide.

She clamped down on the man's forearm and sunk her teeth all the way in. Blood sprayed everywhere, as the man shrieked an unearthly shriek.

Ruth was furious, and would not be appeased. She snarled and shook her head to and fro, tearing more deeply into the man's flesh, and would not let go.

The man swung Ruth to and fro, only able to do so because of his considerable size and because she was still not yet a full-grown wolf. She snarled, and it was a sound scary enough to raise the hair even on the back of Caitlin's neck.

But this man was clearly used to violence, and he swung his big beefy shoulder around and managed to slam Ruth against the brick wall. He then reached over with his other hand and whipped his belt down hard on her back.

Ruth shrieked and yelped. She finally let go, dropping to the ground.

The man, a look of hatred in his eyes, reached back with both hands, ready to bring his belt down with all his might on Ruth's face.

Caitlin sprang into action. Before the man could bring it down, she lunged forward, reaching out with her right hand, grabbing his throat. She drove him back, by the throat, lifting him up, off the ground, higher than her, until she slammed him into a wall, bricks crumbling.

She dangled him there before her, his face turning blue,

choking. She was much smaller than he was, but he didn't stand a chance in her iron grip.

Finally, she let him drop. He reached up, scrambling for his belt, and Caitlin leaned back and kicked him hard across the face, breaking his nose.

She then leaned back and kicked him in the chest, a kick so forceful that she sent him flying back several feet. He hit the wall with such force that he left an indent in the bricks, and finally slumped down to the ground, a mess.

But Caitlin could still feel the rage bursting through her veins. She thought of that innocent girl, of Ruth, and she hadn't felt such rage in she didn't know when. She couldn't stop herself. She walked over to him, yanked the belt from his hand, reached back, and cracked him hard, right across his huge belly.

He lurched up, gripping his stomach.

As he sat up, she kicked him hard, right in the face. She connected with his chin, and sent him backwards fast, slamming the back of his head on the ground. Finally, he was unconscious.

But Caitlin still wasn't satisfied. The rage in her wasn't easily summoned these days, but when it was, she couldn't turn it off.

She stepped up, placed a foot on his throat, and prepared to kill this man on the spot.

"Caitlin!" came a sharp voice.

She turned, still pulsing with rage, and saw Caleb standing beside her. He shook his head slowly, with a reprimanding look.

"You've done enough damage. Let him go."

Something about Caleb's voice got to her.

She grudgingly lifted her foot.

In the distance, she spotted a huge tub filled with sewage. She could see the thick dark liquid spilling over its edges, and could smell its stink from here.

Perfect.

She reached down, hoisted the man above her head, even though he easily weighed over 300 pounds, and walked him across the alley. She threw him, headfirst, into the vat of sewage.

He landed with a splash. She saw him stuck, up to his neck, in all the excrement. She enjoyed the idea of his waking up, realizing where he was, and finally, she felt satisfied.

Good, she thought. It is where you belong.

Caitlin immediately thought of Ruth. She ran over to her, and examined the belt mark on her back; she was cowering, and slowly regaining her feet. Caleb came over, too, examining her, as Ruth placed her face in Caitlin's lap and whined. Caitlin kissed her on the forehead.

Ruth suddenly shook them off and darted across the alley, to the girl.

Caitlin spun, and suddenly remembered. She hurried over to her, too.

Ruth ran to the girl, though, licking her on her face. The hysterically crying girl slowly stopped, distracted by Ruth's tongue. She sat there in the mud, in her soiled, dirty dress, covered with belt marks on her back, blood oozing through, and

looked up at Ruth in surprise.

Her wet eyes opened wide as Ruth kept licking her. Finally, she reached up, slowly, hesitantly, and petted Ruth. She then reached up and gave her a hug. Ruth reciprocated, coming in close.

It was amazing, Caitlin thought. Ruth had detected this girl from blocks away. It was as if the two had known each other forever.

Caitlin came over and knelt down beside the girl, reaching out a hand, and helping her sit up.

"Are you okay?" Caitlin asked.

The girl looked at her in shock, then at Caleb. She blinked several times, as if wondering who these people could be.

Finally, slowly, she nodded yes. Her eyes were open wide, and she looked too afraid to speak.

Caitlin reached out and gently stroked the matted hair from her face. "It's okay," Caitlin said. "He won't hurt you anymore."

The girl looked as if she were about to start crying again.

"I'm Caitlin," she said. "And this is Caleb."

The girl looked at them, still not speaking.

"What's your name?" Caitlin asked.

After several seconds, the girl finally answered: "Scarlet."

Caitlin smiled. "Scarlet," she repeated. "Such a pretty name. Where are your parents?"

She shook her head. "I don't have any parents. He is my ward. I hate him. He beats me every day. For no reason. I hate him.

Please don't make me go back to him. I don't have anyone else."

Caitlin turned to Caleb, and saw him look at her, both thinking the same thing at the same time.

"You're safe now," Caitlin said. "You don't have to worry anymore. You can come with us."

Scarlet's eyes opened wide in surprise and delight, and she nearly broke into a smile.

"Really?" she asked.

Caitlin smiled back, reached out her hand, and Scarlet took it, as she helped her to her feet. She saw the wounds on her back, still oozing blood, and from somewhere deep within herself, Caitlin suddenly felt a power overcome her. She thought of what Aiden had taught her, of the power of being one with the universe, and deep within herself, she suddenly felt a power surging that she'd never known. She had always felt her power for the rage, but she had never felt a power like this. This was different, a new power, tingling up from her feet to her legs, through her torso, through her arms, to her fingertips.

It was the power to heal.

Caitlin closed her eyes and reached out, and gently placed her hands on Scarlet's back, where the marks were. She breathed deeply, and summoned the power of the universe, summoned all the training Aiden had given her, and focused on sending white light to the girl. She felt her hands grow very hot, and felt an incredible energy coursing through her.

Caitlin wasn't sure how much time had passed when she

opened her eyes again. She looked up, slowly opening them, and saw Scarlet staring back at her, eyes wide in amazement. Caleb stared at her too, also amazed.

Caitlin looked down, and saw that Scarlet's wounds were completely healed.

"Are you a magician?" Scarlet asked.

Caitlin smiled wide. "Something like that."

Chapter Six

Sam flew over the British countryside, Polly at his side, but keeping her distance. Their wings were spread out but they were not close to touching, as they each wanted space from each other. Sam preferred it that way, and he assumed she did, too. He liked Polly, he really did. But after his debacle with Kendra, he wasn't ready to get close to anyone of the opposite sex for a long time to come. It would be a while before he could trust someone again. Even someone who had been close to his sister, as Polly seemed to be.

They had been flying for hours, and as Sam looked down in the morning light, he saw endless stretches of farmland, with occasional small houses, smoke rising from their stone chimneys, even on this beautiful fall day. He saw the occasional person out in their yard, tending to clothing, hanging sheets on strings. There were not many houses, though. This countryside seem so entirely rural, he began to wonder if cities even existed in this time – whatever time and place they were in.

Sam had no idea where to go, and Polly hadn't been much help. They had both used their keen vampire senses to tune in, to try to use their close connection to Caitlin to sense where she might be. They had both intuited that she might be in this general direction, and they had been flying for hours. But since then, they had seen no clues or direct leads. Sam's instincts told him

that Caitlin was in a large city. But they hadn't passed anything remotely like a city for hundreds of miles.

Just when Sam was beginning to wonder if they'd chosen the right direction, they rounded a bend, and as they did, he was shocked at what unfolded in the distance. There, on the horizon, sat a sprawling city. He couldn't recognize what city it was, and he wasn't sure that he'd be able to recognize it at all, even up close. His geography was pretty bad, and his history was even worse. It was the result of being moved one too many times, of falling in with the wrong friends, of not paying attention in school. He had been a C student, although he knew he had the potential to get A's. But with his upbringing, it had just been too hard for him to find a reason to care. Now, he regretted it.

"It's London!" Polly called out, in delight and surprise. "Oh my God! London! I can't believe it. We're here! We're *really* here! What an amazing place to be!" she yelled, excitedly.

Thank God for Polly, Sam thought, feeling stupider than ever. He realized there was a lot he could learn from her.

As they got closer and buildings came into view, he marveled at the architecture. Even from this great distance, he could see church steeples rising into the sky, punctuating the city like a field of lances. As they came even closer, he saw just how grand and magnificent all the churches were – and was surprised that they already looked ancient. Beside them, all the other architecture was dwarfed by comparison.

As he began to take it all in, he sensed keenly that Caitlin was

here. And the thought of that excited and thrilled him.

"Caitlin's down there!" he yelled out. "I can feel it."

Polly smiled back. "So can I!" she yelled.

For the first time since landing in this time and place, Sam finally felt grounded, felt a strong sense of direction, and of purpose. Finally, he felt as if he were on the right track.

He tried to sense whether she was in any danger. Try as he did, he was coming up blank. He thought of the last time he had seen her, in Paris, right before she'd fled the Notre Dame. She had been with that guy – Caleb – and he wondered if they were still together. He'd only met Caleb once or twice, but he'd liked him a lot. He hoped that Caitlin was with him, and that he was taking care of her. He got a good feeling from their being together.

Polly suddenly dove lower, without warning, getting closer to the rooftops. Either she didn't care about Sam following, or she just assumed that he would. It annoyed Sam. He wished she'd given him some warning, or at least cared enough about him to signal that she was diving down low. And yet, a part of him sensed that she did care. Was she just playing hard to get?

And why did he even care, either way? Didn't he just get through telling himself that he wasn't interested in girls right now?

Sam dove down lower, to her level, and they flew just feet above the city. But he also made a point of veering off to the left, so that they flew even further apart. *Take that*, Sam thought.

As they approached the city center, Sam was blown away. This

time and place was so different, so unlike anything he had ever seen or experienced. He was so close the rooftops, he felt as if he could almost reach down and touch them. The majority of buildings were low, just a few stories high, and were built with slanted roofs, topped with what looked like huge piles of hay or straw. Most buildings were painted a bright white, with brown lines framing them. The churches – huge, marble, limestone – rose up out of the landscape, dominating entire blocks, and here and there were a few other large structures that looked like palaces. Probably, he guessed, residences for royalty.

The city was divided by a wide river, over which they now flew. The river was bustling with traffic – boats of all shapes and sizes – and as he looked over at the streets, he saw that they were bustling, too. In fact, he couldn't believe how packed they were. There were people everywhere, hurrying to and fro. He couldn't imagine what they could possibly have to hurry about. It wasn't like they had internet, or e-mails, or faxes, or even phones.

Still, other parts of the city were relatively peaceful. The dirt roads, the river, and all the boats provided a tranquil feeling. There were no racing cars, buses, horns, trucks or motorcycles revving. All was relatively quiet.

That is, until a sudden roar rose up.

Sam turned his head, and so did Polly.

There, off to the side, they spotted a large stadium, built in a perfect circle and rising several stories high. It reminded him of the Roman Coliseum, although much smaller.

From his bird's-eye view, it looked as if there were some sort of large animal in the center of it, running around, with many other small animals running around it. He couldn't quite figure out what it was, but he could see that the stadium was packed with thousands of people, all standing, on their feet, cheering and roaring.

He suddenly felt a tingling in his body as he watched. Not because he could tell what it was. But because he suddenly sensed Caitlin's presence there. Strongly.

"My sister!" he yelled out to Polly. "She's there," he said, pointing. "I feel it."

Polly looked down, and furrowed her brow.

"I'm not so sure," she said. "I don't feel anything."

She turned her head in the other direction, and pointed at the bridge looming before then. "I sense that she's there."

Sam looked, and saw a huge bridge spanning the river. He was surprised to notice that it was covered with shops of all sorts, and even more surprised to see, as they flew over it, that there were several prisoners standing there, on a scaffold, nooses around their necks, hoods around their heads. It looked as if they were about to be executed. And large crowds gathered around them.

"Okay," Sam said, and suddenly dove down low, right for the bridge. He figured he would pre-empt her, and be the first one to dive down this time.

Sam landed on the bridge, not turning around, and moments later, he sensed Polly land several feet behind him. She caught

up to him, and the two of them walked side-by-side, keeping their distance, he not looking at her, and she not looking at him either. He was proud that he was keeping their relationship purely professional. There wasn't even a semblance of closeness, which was clearly what they both wanted.

Sam was amazed at the sights on the bridge. It was overwhelming, with so much stimulation coming at him from every direction.

"Tan your leather, son?" a man asked him, holding a piece of rawhide up in his face. The man's breath stank, and Sam dodged out of his way.

"Now where?" Sam asked Polly.

She scanned the bridge, looking everywhere for Caitlin, as did he. But there was no sight of her anywhere.

Polly finally shrugged. "I don't know," she said. "I had sensed her here before, but now... I'm not so sure."

Sam turned and looked off at the horizon, back towards that stadium.

"I sensed her back there," he said. "In that stadium we flew over."

"Okay," Polly said, "let's go that way. But let's walk – just in case she's on the bridge."

As they walked across the bridge, through all the vendors, Polly seemed to cheer up again, to slowly become her jolly self. "Look at the fashions of all these people!" she said. "I mean, look at what they wear! It's amazing, isn't it? I don't think I would ever

be caught dead wearing something like that. But I can see the functionality of it. I wonder how these fashions even come to be. I mean, how do they just change from generation to generation? So crazy, isn't it? And I was thinking, if I lived in this time, if I was one of these people, what color would I wear..."

Sam sighed. Polly had begun talking again, and he knew there was no stopping her now. Inwardly, he tuned her out.

As they walked, Sam scanned all the faces on the bridge, looking for any sign of Caitlin. He kept thinking he saw her, for a second, only to be disappointed. At one point, he saw a girl from behind that looked just like her, and grabbed her shoulder.

"Caitlin!" he exclaimed.

But the girl turned, and he was embarrassed to realize it wasn't her; she gave him an odd look and walked away.

Soon they were over the bridge, standing on land, and Sam spotted a huge sign which read "Southwark." He turned right, in the direction of that stadium.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.