

THE BOOKS OF
ELSEWHERE
volume two
SPELLBOUND

by Jacqueline West

illustrated by Poly Bernatene



DIAL BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS
an imprint of Penguin Group (USA) Inc.

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For Danny and Alex—with ten thousand good memories

—JW



EVERYONE WHO LIVED in the big stone house on Linden Street eventually went insane.

That was what the neighbors said, anyway. Mr. Fergus told Mr. Butler about Aldous McMartin, the house's first owner, a weird old artist who wouldn't sell a single painting and who only came out of the house at night. Mrs. Dewey and Mr. Hanniman whispered about Annabelle McMartin, Aldous's granddaughter, who had kicked the bucket right there inside the house at the age of 104, with no friends or family to notice she was dead except for her three gigantic cats, who may or may not have begun nibbling on her head.

And now there were these new owners—these Dunwoodys—who appeared to have already bought their tickets for the crazy train.

Since the beginning of the summer, the neighbors up and down Linden Street had gotten used to seeing a quiet, gangly girl playing or reading in the yard of the big stone house. The girl was usually alone, but every now and then a man with thick glasses and thin hair would mosey out, take the ancient push mower from the shed, and cut one or two crooked rows of grass before stopping to stare up at the sky and mutter to himself. Then he would rush back into the house, leaving the mower on the lawn. Sometimes the mower stood there for days.

At other times, a middle-aged woman came out of the house and wandered around the lawn, absently watering the weeds. The woman was also prone to leaving bags of groceries on the roof of her car, which sent bouncing cascades of oranges and onions down Linden Street each time she pulled out of the driveway. The neighbors watched all of this and shook their heads.

Then, on one bright July morning, the quiet, gangly girl walked out to the mailbox carrying two cans of paint. Behind her trotted a splotchily colored cat with a fishbowl over its head. The house loomed over them, its windows blank and dark, watching. While the cat waited, the girl stood on the curb and painted over the name *McMartin*, which was still scrawled along the side of the mailbox, and spelled out *DUNWOODY* on top of it in big green capitals.

Mrs. Nivens, who lived next door and who was pretending to spray her roses, kept a close watch on the pair. Her face was completely enclosed in the shade of her big-brimmed sunhat, but if anyone had gotten a good look at her, they would have seen that her eyes were sharp and interested.

“Ready to return from orbit?” Mrs. Nivens heard the girl whisper to the cat. “Preparing to reenter Earth's atmosphere in five, four, three, two . . .”

Both the cat and the girl sprang forward, charged up the porch steps, and zoomed through the heavy front door, slamming it behind them with a resounding thud.

Everyone on Linden Street agreed: The Dunwoodys might be an improvement over the McMartins but they were still clearly insane.

The quiet, gangly girl was named Olive. Right now, she was eleven years old, but she would turn twelve in October. For her last birthday, her parents had given her a pile of books, a box of paints, and a fancy graphing calculator that Olive still hadn't used for anything except playing games. And she wasn't very good at the games, either.

The man with the forgotten push mower and the woman with the forgotten groceries were Olive's parents, Alec and Alice Dunwoody, two mathematicians who taught at a college nearby. Their hands

were often smudged with ink. When they moved, chalk dust floated softly from their clothes. Unfortunately, the math gene had not quite reached Olive's twig on the family tree. The only time Olive ever earned an A on a math test, Mr. and Mrs. Dunwoody had taped the test smack in the center of the refrigerator door and then stood in front of it, holding hands, beaming at the paper as if it were a window into some magical, mathematical world.

Olive didn't know much about math. However, since moving to Linden Street, she had learned a few things about magic.

For instance, Olive knew that by looking through a pair of old spectacles the McMartins had left in the house, along with everything else they owned (their paintings, their dusty books, their three talking cats, their ancestors' gravestones embedded in the basement walls) a person could make Aldous's paintings come alive. A person could climb into these paintings and explore. A person—perhaps a quiet, gangly, lonely person—could even bring the portraits of Annabelle and Aldous McMartin to life and let them out into the real world, putting herself and everyone she cared about in terrible danger.

Although Olive had managed at long last to get *out* of danger again, she had also managed to break the spectacles. (If Olive had been half as good at math as she was at breaking things, her parents would have been very proud.)

Of course, Olive kept the things she had learned to herself. If her parents knew that she believed their house had been besieged by dead witches—witches who came out of paintings, no less—they would probably have taken her straight to the mental hospital. The neighbors up and down Linden Street already looked at Olive a bit strangely, as if she had some creepy, contagious rash that they didn't want to catch. They gave her tight little smiles, glancing out of the corners of their eyes at the big stone house all the while. Olive certainly wasn't going to confide in *them*.

There was another reason Olive didn't tell anybody about the cats or the paintings or the McMartins. She always put this reason second, even in her own head, but the truth was that her secret would be a lot less *fun* if she shared them with anyone. Sure, a candy bar tasted good if you ate one half and let your dad have the other, but it was much, much nicer to eat the whole candy bar by yourself.

So Horatio, Leopold, and Harvey worked very hard to behave like normal cats when Mr. and Mrs. Dunwoody were around. Olive never mentioned the spectacles or climbing in and out of paintings. And every single day, she stood for a while in the upstairs hall, pressing her nose against the painting of Linden Street, thinking about Morton, the small, once-human boy who was stuck inside, and thinking about herself, still stuck out here.

As Horatio had once said, the painted version of Linden Street was as close to home as Morton could get. Without a family, a heartbeat, or a body that could grow up, Morton didn't belong in the real world anymore. But as someone who used to have all those things, he didn't quite belong in a painting, either. Olive was still hoping to find the place where he *did* belong, but in spite of all her thinking and nose-pressing, she hadn't found a way to get inside the paintings on her own—or a way to help Morton out for good.

And so, eventually, everybody in the big house on Linden Street settled down into a quiet routine, like a bunch of friendly but distant planets orbiting around each other.

Olive waited for something interesting to happen. She didn't know it, but the house was waiting for something too.

BY THE END of July, the weather had turned hot and muggy. Mr. and Mrs. Dunwoody spent most weekday afternoons in their offices at the college, where there was air-conditioning. They invited Olive to come along, but Olive didn't like her parents' office, where people talked in numbers instead of words, and where there was nothing to do but find patterns in the bumps on the ceiling.

On one of these long afternoons, Olive had the house to herself. Because it was made of stone and surrounded by a thick canopy of old trees, the house never quite got hot inside, but it felt humid and still and very quiet, like a bottle full of fog. The afternoon sun pushed blurry swathes of color through the stainedglass windows. Shadows spread beneath heavy antique armchairs. The picture frames on the walls glimmered faintly. Standing in the silent, stuffy living room, Olive looked at the painting of a couple at a sidewalk café in Paris and imagined wandering through narrow French streets, eating a croissant, tossing crumbs to the pigeons. That sounded like fun. Then she sighed, and, for the thousandth time, touched the spot where the spectacles had once hung around her neck.

She trailed up the carpeted staircase that led from the foyer to the upstairs hall. The painting of the little lake where Olive had found Annabelle McMartin's locket gleamed softly on the wall halfway up the flight. Annabelle had once tried to drown Olive in that same little lake, but today the water looked harmless, peaceful, even refreshing. Olive blew a puff of air through the wisps of hair that kept getting stuck to her forehead and imagined dabbling her toes in that cool water. Then she remembered the sensation of the lake swirling around her, black and oily, while her kicking feet brushed against cold, slimy things, and the waves closed over her head . . .

She hurried the rest of the way up the stairs.

In the upstairs hallway, Olive stopped at the painting of Linden Street. She had stood in this same spot so many times that the carpet had a little divot where her feet pressed it down. Inside the painting, a misty green hill rolled away toward an old-fashioned version of Linden Street, where the same wood and stone and brick houses occupied by Olive's neighbors stood in an unchanging twilight. Even without the spectacles, things that had once belonged in the real world—things that Aldous McMartin had hidden or trapped—could sometimes be seen moving inside of their paintings.

Squinting hard, Olive examined the row of houses. Perhaps she was just wishing, but she thought she could see a few small, pale figures bobbing and shifting in the distance. Maybe Morton was one of them. Olive pressed her nose to the canvas, and then jumped backward in surprise when the painting shifted with her touch. When the Dunwoodys first moved into the old stone house, all the paintings had been magically stuck to the walls. Now, with the McMartins out of the way, they could be nudged and moved just like ordinary paintings, and Olive hadn't quite gotten used to this. She straightened the painting of Linden Street. Then she sighed again and shuffled into her bedroom.

Horatio was asleep on Olive's vanity. His long body was balanced along the narrow shelf, and his gigantic feather duster of a tail wound delicately through Olive's collection of old pop bottles. Annabelle's locket, emptied of its portrait and its powers, was wrapped around the neck of one of Olive's favorite pop bottles: the bright green one covered with bumps that felt like Bubble Wrap. Once, the locket had been wrapped around *Olive's* neck, and she'd thought she would never get it off again. But now that the McMartins were gone, the locket was just one more magical thing that had faded into something normal.

“Horatio?” said Olive.

The cat didn't move.

“Horatio?” said Olive, more loudly.

“Mmmph,” the cat grunted.

Olive wriggled her toes against the floorboards, steeling herself. “Will you please take me to visit Morton?” she asked, keeping her voice as un-whiny as she could. “It's been days and days since I've seen him.”

Horatio didn't reply.

“I said, would you please take me to—”

“I heard you, Olive. Even though I was *asleep*, I heard you.” Horatio turned his head very slightly, and Olive saw one green eye glaring at her from the reflection in the mirror. “Go ask someone else to take you.”

Olive gave a giant sigh. Then she trudged out of the room, glancing up at the painting of Linden Street and hurrying past the bare spot at the head of the stairs where the painting of the moonlit forest used to hang, and which still felt a bit more menacing than a bare bit of wall had any right to. She thumped down the steps, along the high-ceilinged hall, and through the empty kitchen, all the way to the basement door.

Although Olive had gotten used to the basement, she hadn't grown especially fond of the place. It was always shadowy and dirty, and full of spiders, and even if she couldn't see them, she knew that the ancient gravestones were there, embedded in the chilly walls.

Olive opened the door and switched on the first light. Its weak glow revealed a rickety wooden staircase dwindling away into the darkness. “Leopold?” Olive called, venturing down the steps. “Are you there?”

At the foot of the staircase, she groped for the next lightbulb's hanging chain, but it seemed to have disappeared. Wasn't this where it should be, right at the bottom of the steps? She waved both hands through the air. The darkness of the basement seemed to thicken, the stone walls exhaling cool, damp breaths that tickled the back of Olive's sweaty neck. She was just about to give up, turn around, and bolt back up the stairs when her palm struck the chain. She pulled it so hard that the lightbulb rattled.

A pair of bright green eyes flickered in the corner. Even though she expected to see them, the sight still made her heart give a shuddery little jump. Then a gruff, familiar voice said, “At your service, miss.”

Olive tiptoed across the gritty basement floor and into the shadows. The gigantic black cat was poised on the trapdoor just as he had been when Olive first met him, as rigid as a statue, his fur as dark and shiny as an oil spill. Long ago, Annabelle McMartin had hidden the urn of her grandfather's ashes under that trapdoor. Then, not so very long ago—and with Olive's unwilling help—Annabelle had taken the urn back out again.

Standing at the edge of the trapdoor, Olive could almost feel the wind of the painted forest where Aldous's ashes had whirled up, blotting out the sky, whispering across her skin like a million black insects as she and Morton had raced toward the safety of the picture frame—

She shook her arms, brushing both the memories and the imaginary insects away.

“What are you doing, Leopold?” she asked, crouching down beside the trapdoor and trying to force her heartbeat to return to normal.

“Standing guard,” answered the cat, puffing out his chest. “The price of safety is eternal vigilance, you know.”

“But there isn't anything down there anymore.”

Leopold opened his mouth as though he might be about to argue. Then he shut it again. He cleared his throat, lengthily and elaborately, before speaking. “A soldier doesn’t question his orders.”

“But who *gave* the orders?” asked Olive.

There was a long pause. Leopold, standing at attention, stared straight ahead so hard that his eyes began to cross.

“Never mind,” said Olive quickly, worried that Leopold might hurt himself if he thought any harder. “I just wondered if you would take me into the painting to visit Morton.”

“Hmm,” said the cat. “That would mean leaving my post, miss. It’s against regulations.”

“I see.” Olive nodded. “Well, what if instead of leaving your post, we just stayed here, and maybe . . . went through the trapdoor?”

Leopold gave his head a violent shake. “Absolutely impassible, miss. I mean astutely imparsible. I mean *NO*.”

Olive knelt down on the chilly stone floor and scratched Leopold between the ears. Slowly, his head began to tilt toward Olive’s hand. “Come on,” Olive wheedled as Leopold’s eyelids slid down to half mast. “You would be with me the whole time. I just want a peek. A little, teeny-tiny peek. Please?”

Leopold caught himself. “Simply impossible, miss,” he announced, jerking back into his soldierly pose. “I am prepared to do a great deal for you, but I will not allow you to go underground. And I’m afraid I cannot go AWOL.”

“Go A wall?”

“Absent Without Leave,” Leopold enunciated, obviously pleased to have to explain. “If you’d like, at fifteen hundred hours we could engage in a game of Clue here at my base of operations. As long as you get to be Colonel Mustard,” he added.

“Fifteen hundred hours?” repeated Olive. “Noon is twelve, plus one is thirteen, plus two is . . .”

“Three o’clock,” Leopold whispered helpfully.

“And we’d have to play down here?”

“I’m afraid I can’t leave my station, miss. Not while you’re home alone.”

Olive glanced around at the stone walls pooling with darkness in the corners. A small carved skull in the stonework gazed back at her from the vicinity of the washing machine. “No offense, Leopold, but I don’t like it down here.”

“No offense taken,” said Leopold. He appeared to think for a moment. “Where is Harvey?”

It was a good question. Olive hadn’t seen Harvey all morning, and this was generally a bad sign. The last time Harvey hadn’t been seen for two days, Olive and Horatio had finally found him in the garden shed, wearing a dented pirate’s hat and helplessly tangled in an old hammock, which Harvey insisted was ship’s rigging. “Captain Blackpaw will never surrender!” he had yowled as Olive extracted him.

Now Olive clumped up the basement stairs, feeling frustrated and a bit mopey, and looked around the empty kitchen. “Harvey?” she called. “Harvey?” But Harvey wasn’t there, or in the dining room, or the parlor, or sleeping on the cool tile in the upstairs bathroom.

Olive walked along the hall into the pink bedroom, where the air smelled like dust and mothballs, and where the entrance to the attic was hidden by a painting of an ancient stone archway. It had taken Olive ages to find the attic’s entrance, even with the spectacles. Without the spectacles, she couldn’t get in at all. With a huff of frustration, she put her lips as close to the canvas as she could without actually touching it, and yelled, “Harvey!” at the top of her lungs. There was no answer.

Olive trailed back down the staircase and stepped out onto the front porch. The warm, dewy air felt almost stifling, like a stranger’s breath on the back of her neck. She glanced around the overgrown

lawn. The thick ferns swayed in their hanging baskets, releasing their spicy scent into the air. The old porch swing shifted lightly on its chains. Nothing else moved. Frowning, Olive turned back toward the door. And that was when she spotted it.

On the scuffed gray boards of the porch, the green print of a cat's paw stood out like a traffic light. Olive knelt down and touched the paw print. It was made of paint—paint that was still fresh enough to smear on her fingers. She stood up and took a careful look around. At the bottom of the porch steps, her box of birthday paints was spilled in a pile. The tube of green paint was open and oozing a trail that wound through the long grass toward the backyard.

Curiosity bumped the boredom and frustration right out of Olive's mind. As far as she knew, the cats never went far from the house. Even when Olive brought them outside, they zoomed back toward the doors like furry magnets. If Harvey had wandered away, there was no telling what sort of trouble he would find. The only thing that was certain was that he *would* find it.

"Harvey?" Olive called.

No one answered.

It was difficult to find traces of green paint on a green lawn. Olive had to get down on her hands and knees and squint, but here and there, she spotted a green splotch on a dandelion, or half of a paw print on a dry leaf.

The trail of clues led to the end of the Dunwoodys' backyard, where the ancient maple trees layered their thick shadows over the mossy ground. Still crawling, Olive noticed a streak of bright green on the leaves of the lilac hedge that separated the Dunwoodys' property from Mrs. Nivens's. Olive peered between the leaves, making sure that Mrs. Nivens's sunhat-topped figure was nowhere to be seen, and wriggled through the branches.

"Harvey?" she called, under her breath. But there was no cat to be seen on Mrs. Nivens's perfect lawn, or in her flowerbeds, or in the branches of her neatly pruned trees.

Olive skulked across Mrs. Nivens's yard, where tall shrubs and a fence divided the lawn from the alley. Mrs. Nivens, clipping coupons in her living room, noticed a pale blur moving through her hydrangeas, but reached the window too late to see anything but a telltale tremor from the borderline of Mrs. Dewey's birch trees next door.

Olive crouched in the knot of papery birch trunks, looking around for the next clue. If mystery books had taught her anything (and they had taught Olive much of what she knew), there was always another clue to find, if the detective knew how to look. And, as it happened, the next clue was hanging right in front of Olive's face.

A long green tail, with blotches of many-colored fur peeping through, twitched in the leaves above her. Olive looked up. Perched in the branches was the rest of a green-painted cat.

"Harvey!" Olive exclaimed. "What are you doing?"

The cat glanced over his shoulder. "Shh," he hissed. "Don't blow my cover. Call me by my code name: Agent 1-800."

Olive lowered her voice. "What's going on, Agent 1-800?"

"Climb up, and I'll give you a quick briefing."

Olive pulled herself onto the lowest branch of the birch tree. Harvey moved aside to give her room and left a few more streaks of green on the tree's white bark.

"It's going to take forever to get that paint out of your fur," Olive whispered.

"Camouflage was necessary," Harvey replied in an accent that was faintly British, turning his streaky green face toward Mrs. Dewey's backyard. "Sometimes a secret agent must do unpleasant things in the line of duty." He ran one paw across his nose, smearing away a drip of paint. "Here's the

info. Top secret. Classified. For your ears only.”

“Understood,” whispered Olive.

“A foreign element has infiltrated the home territory.”

Olive thought of the table of elements that hung in the science classroom at her last school. Were any of them foreign? She supposed a lot of them came from other countries. “What do you mean?” she asked. “Like Lithuanium?”

“Like *this*,” said Harvey, pushing aside a leafy branch so that Olive could peek through.

Below them, in Mrs. Dewey’s shady backyard, a boy sat at a wooden picnic table. Both the picnic table and the boy looked rather tired and dirty. The boy was smallish, thin, and long-limbed, with dark brown hair that curled and stuck up in various directions. He wore wire-frame glasses and a gray T-shirt with a picture of a dragon on the front of it. He was painting a model castle with a miniature brush, and frowning a little, the way people frown when they’re trying to thread a needle.

“Who is that?” Olive asked.

“That’s the foreign element. The infiltrator. The *spy*.”

The boy put down the first paintbrush and picked up an even tinier one. He dabbed carefully at the edge of the castle. Olive noticed that both the boy and the picnic table were spattered with dots of paint, but the castle was immaculate.

“What makes you think he’s a spy, Agent 1-800?” she whispered into the cat’s ear.

“Just look at him!” hissed Harvey. “The devious smile. The shifty eyes.”

Olive leaned forward, trying to get a better look at the boy. And, at that moment, the boy realized he was being watched. He stopped dabbing at the castle. Slowly he looked up into the green-gold leaves of the birch tree, where Olive and Harvey sat, staring straight back at him.

“Rutherford!” hooted a voice.

Mrs. Dewey’s round body, looking extra snowmanlike in a snug white sundress, came trotting quickly across the lawn.

“Rutherford Dewey,” Mrs. Dewey huffed, “just look what you’re doing to my picnic table! And to your shirt!” Mrs. Dewey tugged the tiny paintbrush out of the boy’s hand. “What did I tell you about spreading newspapers on the table? Now go rinse your shirt before the paint sets in.”

The boy took one last, silent look at the tree. His eyes met Olive’s. For what seemed like a long time, they stared at each other, each trying not to be the one who blinked. Then Mrs. Dewey grabbed the boy by the shoulder and hustled him toward the house.

Harvey let out a breath. “That was close, Olive,” he said. “Next time, you’d better paint yourself before going undercover.”

HARVEY, STILL GREEN and forbidden to come inside until he wasn't, spent the night on the porch steps. The next morning he was nowhere to be found.

Olive knew he was probably hiding nearby, postponing a bath for as long as possible, so she lay on the back porch trying to read a Sherlock Holmes book while Horatio dozed on a windowsill and Leopold patrolled the basement. She would rather have been exploring than reading, but once again, both nongreen cats had made excuses when she asked them to take her Elsewhere.

She didn't like having to ask them in the first place. Olive was the type of girl who would rather climb a teetering stack of chairs up to a high shelf than ask for help, perhaps because she had a lot more practice at falling down than she did at talking to people. Back when she had the spectacles, she could go wherever she wanted, whenever she wanted, without having to ask anyone's permission. Now she had to beg three moody cats for the favor. It made her whole body itch just to think about it.

It was another humid, lazy day. Linden Street was soaked with sun, its green lawns sparkling and gardens blooming. Behind the big stone house, however, the yard was dim and murky. Towering trees cast a net of shadows over the jumbled garden. In one far corner, near the compost heap, a patch of bare dirt marked the spot where Olive had buried the painting of the forest, with a howling Annabelle McMartin still trapped inside. It looked like a fresh grave. And no matter where Olive moved to try to find a patch of light, the shadow of the house seemed to follow her. Once or twice, she nodded off in the sun and woke up in the humid shade, with her face stuck to the book's pages.

She was just peeling her cheek off of *A Study in Scarlet* for the third time when she noticed a flurry of movement across the backyard. She crawled to the edge of the porch. At the back of the lawn, deep in the overgrown dogwood shrubs, a branch rustled.

Olive left her book on the steps and tiptoed across the grass.

"What do you have to say for yourselves now?" a voice hissed from the dogwoods—a voice with a faintly British accent. Olive crouched down next to the shrubs.

"So, you refuse to talk, do you?" she heard Harvey say. "Well, we have ways of encouraging you. Perhaps we will chip your lovely paint—like this!" There was a little *tink* sound of a claw hitting metal. "Still not talking? Oh, you're a stubborn bunch, aren't you? But we have a few more tricks up our sleeves—"

"Aha!" shouted Olive, thrusting the dogwood branches apart with both arms. "Found you!"

"Gah!" shouted Harvey, so startled that he toppled over backward.

"What on earth are you doing, Harvey?"

"*Agent 1-800!*" the cat spluttered, struggling back to his feet. His paint-splotched fur had dried so that it stuck up in some directions and was smooshed flat in others. Little leaves and twigs clung to it like Christmas ornaments. "I was interrogating these enemy spies, but they refuse to give up their secrets." Harvey turned back to his captives with a burning glare.

Olive followed Harvey's eyes. Among the dogwood twigs stood a row of little metal figurines. They were models of knights, some on horseback, others holding raised swords. The models had been carefully painted, right down to the teeniest details. Harvey was right about one thing: They weren't talking.

"Where did you get these?" Olive asked, although she already had a pretty good idea.

“They were captured on enemy territory,” said Harvey. He inched closer to Olive, his eyes wide. “Who knows what dangerous secrets they are keeping?”

Olive looked down at the figurines. They stared back at her innocently.

“Excuse me,” said a voice.

Now it was Olive’s turn to topple over backward. Harvey leaped out of the dogwoods and caromed toward the branches of a nearby maple tree.

Olive looked up. Beside her stood the boy from Mrs. Dewey’s backyard. He was slightly cleaner than yesterday, but he still looked as if he’d been hustled out of bed a few hours too early. His brown hair stuck up in confused, curly tufts. He was wearing a different T-shirt. This one had a dragon on it too.

“I think your cat took my models,” said the boy in a rapid, slightly nasal voice.

“I guess . . . I mean . . . you mean these?” Olive scooped up the figurines and held them out to the boy between her fingertips, being careful not to actually touch him. “Sorry.”

“I’m an expert on the Middle Ages,” the boy blurted. “Well, on the Middle Ages in Western Europe, primarily Britain and France. I’m a semi-expert on dinosaurs. My favorite right now is the plesiosaur. I used to like the brachiosaurus—that was the largest of the sauropods—but now I’m more interested in aquatic dinosaurs. Have you ever heard of the coelacanth?”



Those were the words the boy said. He said them so quickly, they sounded more like this to Olive: “Used to like the brakiosorist that was the largest of the soreopods—
but now I’m more interested in aquatic dinosaurs have you ever heard of these alocanth?”

“The seal what?” said Olive.

“Coelacanth,” the boy repeated. He jiggled back and forth on his feet while he spoke. “A living fossil. A coelacanth was caught by a fisherman near South Africa in 1938, when everybody thought they’d been extinct for millions of years. I have a theory that there are lots of other surviving species of dinosaurs, still living deep in the ocean, and we just haven’t found them yet.”

“Okay,” said Olive very slowly.

“What about you?” said the boy. “What are your interests?” Behind their smudgy lenses, his wide brown eyes blinked at Olive expectantly.

Olive thought fast. She liked to read scary stories while eating Tang straight from the can. She liked to collect bottles from kinds of pop no one had tasted in forty years. She liked to decorate smooth rocks with fingernail polish. But all of these things sounded strange, somehow, when she said them aloud. So, instead, because the boy was still staring straight down at her, she said, “My house used to be owned by witches.”

Immediately, she couldn’t believe she had said those words. Aloud. Out of all the words in the world. If the universe had had a rewind button, Olive would have definitely pushed it. In fact, she would really, really have liked to rewind past the point when the boy had said “excuse me” and she had fallen over onto her behind.

The boy straightened his smudgy glasses. “Interesting,” he said. “What kind of witches?”

“What kind?”

“White witches, green witches, dark witches . . .”

“Dark,” said Olive with certainty.

“How did you find out about them? Were there record books or journals? Did you have an expert occultist examine the house?”

“No . . .” said Olive. “They left all their stuff here.”

The boy stopped jiggling. He looked hard at Olive, and his eyes were large and very dark brown. “Interesting,” he said again, but more quietly. “Have you found their grimoire?”

“Grimoire?” Olive repeated.

“Their book of spells.”

Olive blinked. “No.”

“You should look for it,” said the boy. “Every witch has one. It might provide some very important information.”

“Maybe,” said Olive, feeling a bit angry that she hadn’t thought of this before.

Meanwhile, the voice in her brain was shouting, *OF COURSE!* If she knew the McMartins’ spells, maybe she could find a new way into Elsewhere! Maybe she could even make her own magic spectacles. Maybe there would be some hint about how to help Morton. Olive’s heart began to pound.

The boy held up a knight figurine, turning it in the patchy sunlight. “This one seems to be chipped,” he said. “I’d better go repair it.” Abruptly, he turned and headed toward the lilac hedge. Then he stopped and looked back at Olive. “My name is Rutherford,” he said.

“Like the president?” Olive asked. Olive had memorized all the presidents when she was six, after her parents had bought her a placemat with the presidents’ names and pictures printed on it. Rutherford B. Hayes (number 19) had a bristly beard, and he was right next to Ulysses S. Grant (number 18), who had a slightly less bristly beard.

“No. Like Ernest Rutherford. The father of nuclear physics. He won the Nobel Prize in 1908. My parents are scientists. They’re in Sweden, doing research.”

Something in Olive’s mind flashed with recognition. “My parents are mathematicians,” she said. And before she could stop herself, she smiled at the boy. It was a crooked, slow, grimace-y sort of smile, but it was a smile nonetheless. “My name is Olive.”

The boy smiled back. “I know,” he said. Then he pushed through the lilacs and disappeared.

“TRAITOR!” shrieked a voice from the maple tree. Harvey’s greenish head popped through the leaves. “Traitor! Turncoat! Benedict Arnold!!”

Olive stood up and brushed off the seat of her shorts. “Harvey—”

“AGENT 1-800!!” the cat yowled. He stormed along the branch above Olive’s head. “How could you betray us to the enemy like that? How could you turn your back on your own countrymen?!”

“Harvey—I mean, Agent 1-800—come down. We can talk about this, but not out here. What if someone hears you?”

“What if someone hears *me*?” Harvey’s eyes boggled. “What if someone hears *you*? You could be courtmartialed! Exiled! Imprisoned for life!”

“For giving model knights back to the boy you stole them from?”

“Back to the master *spy*, you mean.” Harvey hunkered down on the branch and stared at Olive intently. “Listen to me. *Do not trust him*. Don’t believe anything he tells you. And don’t trust that woman he is staying with, either.”

“Mrs. Dewey?”

“She is not what she seems,” the cat whispered. “Neither of them is.”

“Harvey, this is crazy. Come down right now and take your bath.”

Harvey stared down at Olive for a moment. Then he bolted toward the trunk and clambered up into the higher branches.

Olive rolled her eyes and turned back toward the house. Her book still lay open on the porch, but the breeze had moved its pages around, and she had completely lost her place. She didn’t feel like reading Sherlock Holmes right now anyway.

She felt like reading something else.

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