

*Silent
&
Echoes*

CARLA JABLONSKI



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Also by Carla Jablonski

Thicker Than Water

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Silent Echoes

RAZORBILL

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*For Soline,
for her patience and humor while listening to each strange and
obscure nineteenth-century fact I uncovered and all the possible
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One

What a pack of fools, Lucy Phillips thought as she smiled serenely at the sitters around the séance table.

The twittering, fluttering overstuffed guests at Mrs. Van Wyck's soiree made Lucy think of chickens.

Ooh, don't think about food, Lucy warned herself. A loud gurgle would not give the appropriate ethereal impression of the spirit-contacting medium Lucy was posing as tonight. She placed a hand on her stomach, pressing against her corset as if she could squeeze the hunger out of herself.

If only Mrs. Van Wyck were less fashionable, then the dinner would have been served first. Instead, it wasn't until ten o'clock. At least Lucy knew that if she and her father weren't formally included in a meal, his way with serving girls would certainly gain them a couple of plates. But dinnertime was still several dead spirits away.

There was a lot riding on the success of this evening.

Peabody, her father's weasel-faced friend who had set up the séance, had intimated that if they performed well, this could turn into a regular moneymaker. That would be a relief. After their bad turn of luck over the last few weeks, Lucy

and her father had been forgoing regular meals. In Harrisburg—or was it Hamilton? The locations were all blending together—the town fathers had taken their strongbox of cash when they'd confiscated their bottles of Dr. Poffle's Curative Elixir as evidence. In their haste to quit the town, Lucy and her father didn't have the chance to pack food or redeem their pawn tickets; they'd even had to leave behind a cameo of Lucy's dead mother, which her father dearly regretted.

Until Lucy was twelve, she had believed her father was a rich man. Lucy was born right after the War between the States, when so many families were missing members or had lost fortunes and were forced to find new ways to scrape together a living. Staying with one's grandparents, as Lucy did, was not an unusual circumstance. Her mother had died in childbirth, and when Lucy was small, she felt her mother's absence as just another thing that other children had but she was denied, like a porcelain doll or candy apples. When Papa came around, he seemed to have a never-ending supply of treats and toys. Obviously, he must be very rich indeed.

Now that she'd been on the road with him for the last four years, she knew different, ever since he'd arrived at the farm for her twelfth birthday and determined that an innocent-looking girl could be an asset in his various confidence games.

In Mrs. Van Wyck's drawing room, the air was filled with ladies' sighs, elicited by Colonel Phillips's charming, flirtatious manner. Corpulent gentlemen strained their silk-covered

buttons laughing at Lucy's father's wisecracks and made sly glances at Lucy as they sucked their cigars. She kept her eyes downcast, her expression demure, her smiles soft, remote, and mysterious, all the while assessing the jewels, the dresses, the vases, even the floral arrangements. She might not be able to read, but she knew how to figure what things cost.

Her eyes came to rest on her father. Colonel Phillips was entertaining with card tricks, easy sleights of hand that still wowed the ignorant. This was the introduction, Lucy knew. Preparing the audience, loosening them up, softening their suspicion, warming them to the handsome, debonair Colonel and his lovely daughter. He was letting the wine work its wiles, getting them in the mood to believe.

A bead of sweat trickled its way down Lucy's spine. The room was close, the air heavy with cigar smoke. *Why are the wrong people rich?* Lucy wondered, not for the first time. If she had Mrs. Van Wyck's money, she wouldn't crowd her rooms with such musty furniture, cover the walls with dark tapestries and darker paintings, fill the space to claustrophobic tightness with curios that gathered dust.

Nor, she thought, sneaking peeks at the guests from under lowered lashes, would I entertain such a stuffy group of pretentious bores. Or if I had to, they would be more attractive.

Her father was by far the best-looking man there, a fact he was using to full effect. She'd seen him work his charm before, turning his lake blue eyes on each of the ladies present, eyes

that twinkled when he was planning a con. *Maybe he's hoping to marry into this circle*, Lucy suddenly thought, watching him lean in close to each of the ladies as he asked them if the queen of hearts was their card. She scrutinized the women with new interest. This might be a scheme she could encourage.

Mrs. Van Wyck had pinned her thick, graying hair in a low bun and wore loose, flowing garments, not at all the fashionably seamed, tucked, and flounced attire Lucy would have expected from a wealthy society matron. Her double chin wasn't *too* pronounced, Lucy thought charitably, and she had a sweet, heart-shaped face that was probably once quite pretty.

There didn't seem to be a Mr. Van Wyck, and, significantly, he was not the person Mrs. Van Wyck wanted to contact in the spirit world. *Could my father . . . ?* No, it didn't matter how wealthy she might be; with her high-pitched laugh, her buxom, uncontrolled shape, her amateur dramatic gestures, Mrs. Van Wyck wasn't at all his type—Lucy stifled a giggle at the very idea.

The bohemian Miss Carlyle was also unlikely. Considered something of a poetess by the group, the middle-aged spinster was nearly as wide as she was tall. Gloria Buren, on the other hand . . . Miss Buren was in her twenties and dangled so many jewels she blazed when she passed the candles. She was blond, terribly thin, and perfectly coiffed, but she was not at the soiree alone. Her escort was Jeffrey Von Clare, who had

the reddish complexion of a drinker. He clearly thought Lucy and her father were frauds.

She sensed no trouble from portly Mr. Hanover, a professor of ancient languages who smelled of tobacco and dust. Mr. and Mrs. Holden were a matched pair, full of breezy chatter and name-dropping, and were a good deal younger than Mrs. Van Wyck. A Mr. Grasser rounded out the group. He called himself an impresario, and his sharp, pointed features reminded Lucy of a much more elegantly dressed Peabody.

Candles in chandeliers flickered, and Colonel Phillips used the stray breeze to remark, "Why, I do believe the spirits are eager to speak with us. Perhaps they sense the presence of my daughter. They are so terribly fond of her."

Lucy fluttered her eyelashes shyly. *About time*, she thought.

"Will there be manifestations?" Mrs. Van Wyck asked tremulously. "Oh, I do hope so. Sara Schyler's medium produced the most glorious spirit manifestation!"

Her father's friend Peabody had warned them about this: because this was such a last-minute event and since they had no prior experience as mediums, they weren't equipped with the latest devices that produced the more-spectacular effects.

Colonel Phillips was prepared. He shook his head solemnly. "My Lucy would not writhe about in such an unseemly fashion, nor could I allow ectoplasm to defile her innocent flesh."

Mrs. Van Wyck looked aghast and blushed all the way

down her cleavage. A murmur rippled through the group, who were clearly surprised by the audacity of Colonel Phillips's reprimand and intrigued by his suggestion that other mediums were not so innocent.

"The dead speak to her and through her," Colonel Phillips explained, "but have enough respect for her purity that they dare not touch her. But have no fear—the spirits will indeed make themselves known."

Lucy's heart started pounding. Showtime. There was a lot at stake here tonight. "Shall we begin?" Colonel Phillips asked.

"Oh yes, please do," Mrs. Van Wyck gushed.

"Lucy, are you ready?" Colonel Phillips asked.

She felt eight pairs of eyes on her, their attention warmer than the candle flames. *Yes*. She nodded.

"What do you want us to do?" Mrs. Van Wyck asked.

"Lower the lights," Colonel Phillips instructed.

Mrs. Van Wyck pointed, and a servant girl adjusted the gas lamps. It took Lucy's eyes a moment to adjust to the darkness.

"Everyone shut your eyes," Colonel Phillips instructed.

"If we shut our eyes, how are we to see the spirits?" Miss Carlyle complained. "I want to be able to capture the proper atmosphere in my next poem."

"You've already been told that there won't be any manifestations," Mr. Von Clare said. "So I'm wondering what the point of all this is."

Lucy hated his disdainful tone, despite the fact that she and her father *were* shams.

“Oh, there will be things to see, if the spirits choose to visit,” Colonel Phillips assured him airily. He wasn’t troubled at all by the man’s challenge. “But they need the proper atmosphere. I’ll tell you when to open your eyes again. First we must harmonize our energies, focus, and concentrate on opening the door between the worlds.”

Mrs. Van Wyck shivered beside Lucy.

Mr. Von Clare let out a snorting laugh. “Yes, let’s fling open those doors.”

This is going to be very satisfying, Lucy thought, gazing at Mr. Von Clare, who leaned drunkenly on one elbow.

Peabody had dug up a little gossip about Mr. Von Clare, nothing *too* scandalous, just slightly embarrassing. It seemed a certain “lady of the evening” had earned a sizable return on a stock tip given her by a gentleman customer—one who bore a remarkable resemblance to Von Clare.

“Now, everyone shut your eyes,” Colonel Phillips instructed, walking around the table behind the sitters to be certain they were following his instructions. He nodded at Lucy, indicating they had. She then positioned the stick she had hidden in the folds of her dress between her knees so that it hooked into the edge of the tabletop.

“Join hands to create the energy impulse of the circle. The spirit will be drawn here.”

Mrs. Van Wyck's plump little fingers gripped Lucy's so hard Lucy winced, the woman's many rings digging in. Lucy wondered if she could manage to slip one off onto her own finger.

"Oh, spirits of the departed," Colonel Phillips intoned. "Join us here on the earthly plane. Make your way from the realm of shadow and mystery."

"Come to me," Lucy whispered, as they had rehearsed. "Please, speak to me. Let me know you're here among us."

Lucy wiggled the stick with her knees, careful to hold her upper body still. She tilted the tabletop this way and that, never releasing her hands from those of the people next to her. Gasps went around the table.

"Whoopsie!" Mr. Von Clare said, his elbow sliding off the edge of the table.

Table-tilting was considered standard spirit behavior, though why anyone would want to invite such clumsy spirits was beyond Lucy. But what the rich wanted, the rich got.

"Is that you, spirit?" Lucy asked. "Will you speak to us?"

"Oh, who do you think it is?" Mrs. Van Wyck asked.

"Can we open our eyes yet?" Miss Carlyle begged.

"Yes, the spirits are here. You may open your eyes."

Lucy went into trance mode. Her eyes shut, her body went limp, and her head rolled around. She made soft sighing sounds, then fluttered her eyes open. She stared blankly, as if she were seeing into the realm beyond.

“Will you speak to me, spirit?” Lucy asked. Using the stick, she rapped sharply on the underside of the table.

“That means yes,” Colonel Phillips said with excitement. “Oh, this is a receptive group. Very welcoming. I knew that the moment I walked in.”

“Is there someone here you’d like to speak to?” Lucy asked.

One rap.

Lucy listened to the ladies shifting in their seats, the men’s anxious coughs. She had her audience enraptured; she could feel it.

“Is it . . .” Lucy paused, building tension. The sitters nervously glanced at each other. Mr. Von Clare had a superior-looking smile, as if he were above it all. *Just you wait*, Lucy thought. But first, she knew she needed to satisfy her hostess.

“Is it Mrs. Van Wyck?”

One rap.

Mrs. Van Wyck took in a sharp breath. “Oh, my,” she whispered.

Lucy didn’t react, as if she could only hear the unseen spirit. “Will you speak through me?”

One rap.

Colonel Phillips stood behind Lucy’s chair. “Just a precaution,” he said softly. “I must always be ready to protect my darling daughter.”

She knew her father did that to heighten the drama,

letting the audience believe that something dangerous or shocking might happen.

“Auntie Coraline?” Lucy said in a small child’s voice.

Mrs. Van Wyck gasped again. This time there was a deeper, rasping sound to it, as if her breath was catching on her heart.

“Oh, Amelia, is that you?”

Gotcha.

“Auntie Coraline, please don’t be sad,” Lucy said. “Thank you for the rocking horse. It was my favorite Christmas present ever. I’m only sorry I couldn’t ride it more before I was called away.”

“Oh, my dear girl,” Mrs. Van Wyck said, her voice shaking with tears.

Lucy’s brow furrowed; she was startled by the intensity in Mrs. Van Wyck’s voice. She forced herself to keep her expression blank.

“I’m here with Mama and Granny Mayweather,” Lucy continued in the little girl’s voice. “So I’m not all alone as you feared.”

“Thank God, I’m so glad,” Mrs. Van Wyck said.

Peabody’s Blue Book was dead accurate, Lucy thought. The book was a very useful collection of facts and anecdotes passed among those plying the medium trade. Several of the party guests were listed in it, so Peabody and Colonel Phillips had drilled all the information into Lucy. Peabody said there was a Blue Book for nearly every city these days. Other items were

usually picked up through eavesdropping and saloon gossip.

Mrs. Van Wyck's hand trembled in Lucy's, and tears rolled down her chubby face.

"I want you to be happy, Auntie Coraline," Lucy said. "There is no reason to cry for me." Lucy hadn't rehearsed this bit, but the woman's emotions were so genuine, so raw, Lucy wanted to give her some kind of comfort. "This is a very happy place."

"I'll be happy from now on, dear heart," Mrs. Van Wyck promised tearfully.

"Goodbye, Auntie Coraline," Lucy said, making her voice fade.

Lucy collapsed against the back of her chair as if the effort had exhausted her. She opened her eyes and looked around in confusion. "Was someone here?" she asked in her normal voice.

Mrs. Van Wyck sobbed beside her. Lucy released her hand and shrank back in her chair. She hadn't known she would have such an effect.

"Papa?" Lucy asked, wanting him to get things under control, uncertain if they should proceed as planned.

"Yes, my dear, a spirit did speak through you," he said, offering Mrs. Van Wyck his handkerchief. "I do believe you gave our lovely hostess some comfort from beyond the grave." He placed a reassuring hand on Mrs. Van Wyck's trembling shoulder.

"Oh yes, oh yes, *indeed!*" Mrs. Van Wyck gushed, blotting her face.

“Shall we see if there are other spirits hovering? Or have you had enough?” he asked Mrs. Van Wyck gently.

“I’m fine, just fine,” Mrs. Van Wyck assured him. She reached up and clutched his hand. “I’m sure others have those they wish to contact.”

“I’d like to see what else you’ve got,” Mr. Von Clare said. “I don’t imagine there’s a spirit who wants to talk to me.” Under his breath he muttered, “I’m not a foolish, excitable woman.”

Lucy’s jaw tensed. *All right, Von Clare, you’re next.* This was going to be good.

“Lucy?” Colonel Phillips said. “Are you up to having another go?”

Lucy nodded. “I’ll try,” she said weakly.

She shut her eyes and went back into her trance routine. She threw in a few moans to cover the rumbling of her empty stomach.

“Is anyone there who would like to make contact?” she called out. “Spirits! Speak to me!”

“Help me,” a voice replied.

Lucy sat bolt upright in her chair, her skin suddenly cold with shock.

“Help me,” the voice repeated. A voice not her own. A girl’s voice, a voice that didn’t belong to anyone in the room. “Why won’t anyone help me?”

The world spun around and went dark as Lucy fainted dead away.

Two

“Help me,” Lindsay Miller whispered. She hugged her knees close to her body. Her limp dark hair fell around her face, blocking her already-narrow view as she rested her forehead on her knees.

CRASH!

Lindsay cringed and dug her nails into her legs, counting that as the fifth broken glass. Outside the closet door a battle raged. Lindsay was hiding in her bedroom, like a soldier in a foxhole. Two weeks ago she had installed the latch on the inside of the door. Without uncurling her body, she ran her hand up the wall and reassured herself that it was locked.

How could Melanie do this to us? Lindsay slid her face between her knees and rubbed her cheek against the rough fabric of her blue jeans. The truth was, though, this wasn’t the first time her mother had done something outrageous and stupid.

Lindsay startled, jerking up her head as she heard another crash. She pushed a coat away from her face. *Plate*, she thought, covering her ears to block out the shouting, the deep, booming voice resonating throughout the apartment. A voice

she still had to get used to hearing, a voice that had grown louder over the past few weeks.

Somehow while Lindsay was up in the Catskills, working at a summer camp, her mother had managed to get herself *married*. A courtship, a marriage, and a move to Manhattan had all been related to Lindsay in one rush of insane chatter at Port Authority bus station the moment she had disembarked.

CRASH!

Lindsay bit her lower lip. *An object's position, velocity, and acceleration can be plotted as functions of time. But, Lindsay reminded herself, there are a number of variables to consider. The glass and the plate have different mass, which would affect speed. Without knowing the mass . . .*

She's worse, crept into Lindsay's brain, interrupting her physics problem. *She got worse while I was gone*. Her face suddenly felt hot, and she wished the closet were bigger. She squirmed, trying to find a more comfortable position, her long legs having nowhere to go. *She's worse* because *I was gone*. She shoved the clothes dangling over her head away from her face.

Lindsay had gotten off the bus and steeled herself in her mother's bearlike hug. She had instantly smelled the sweet-sour combination of alcohol and sweat, and the disappointment rolled up through her like a wave of nausea. Before Lindsay had left for camp, her mom had vowed to clean up her act, had hung the brochure for AA meetings on the fridge, and had

thrown out her stash of pot and booze without any prompting.

But apparently the change hadn't lasted. It was then that Lindsay noticed the man with the square face and the thick build standing awkwardly behind her mother.

"We met at a meeting," Melanie had gushed, clutching his arm and dragging him a few steps forward.

Lindsay had tried to piece it together. *She picks up a guy at an AA meeting and goes back to drinking. What is wrong with this picture?*

Somewhere in the blur of words, statements so ludicrous they could hardly be believed, was information that Lindsay knew she had to understand, to process quickly. She had to put aside the clanging in her head, the hollowness of her stomach, the cloud of confusion swallowing her. The news that Melanie had already packed up their one-bedroom apartment in Brooklyn and had moved them to her new husband's place in Greenwich Village, where Lindsay would start a new school, and *wasn't it all exciting?*

CRASH!

A parametric equation of a downward spiral is plotted using both sine and cosine where t equals time and—

CRASH!

The fight was escalating. It could take hours before they exhausted themselves. Lindsay shut her eyes, wondering if she should risk dashing out to retrieve her MP3 player, her physics textbook. No, it would be more productive if she

grabbed her history notes. They were studying nineteenth-century politics, and all those dates and names and various forms of corruption got jumbled inside her head. Elections and newspaper editorials were—

CRASH!

Lindsay slumped against the back wall of her closet, boneless and weary. She reached up and clutched the sleeve of her winter coat, pretending there was someone to hold on to.

“Help me,” she moaned. “Why won’t anyone help me?”

Lucy heard her father saying her name and a woman nervously asking, “Is she all right? Oh, dear, how could this have happened? This never happened at Sara Schyler’s!”

“That’s not strictly true,” a man said. “Although it wasn’t the *medium* who fainted, but one of the sitters.” He chuckled. “You would too if your dead husband berated you in front of your friends for taking up with a younger man!”

Lucy swallowed. She was terribly thirsty. There was a cold, wet sensation on her head. *Who are these people, and what are they talking about?* Her eyelids fluttered open, and only then did she realize that the reason it was so dark was because her eyes had been shut.

“She’s come to!” a very short and sturdy woman announced to the room.

“Dearie dear,” Colonel Phillips said, removing the cold compress from her forehead. “You gave us all a fright.”

“Did I?” Lucy’s brow furrowed. She felt very odd—like there was empty space in her head and she was moving in slow motion. Something important had just happened, but she wasn’t sure what it was.

“You fainted!” Mrs. Van Wyck exclaimed.

‘Did I?’ Lucy repeated, then blushed, hearing how dull-witted she sounded. “I suppose I did.”

“Perhaps if she could have a little sustenance, get up her strength.” Her father’s blue eyes were dark with worry; he obviously thought she had fainted from hunger. Lucy was relieved that he wasn’t angry that she had spoiled the *séance*.

The *séance*! Lucy sat up very straight. That was what made her faint! She had heard a voice—an actual voice! A real, honest-to-goodness voice from the spirit realm!

“Yes,” Mr. Von Clare said. “Let’s all have some sustenance. I believe I smelled duck?”

“Oh, dear,” Mrs. Van Wyck fretted. “I’d expected our spirit circle to go on longer. I don’t believe Cook will be ready to serve.” She bit her lip, and Lucy could see she was on the verge of tears. Speaking to dead children and having her party spoiled seemed to have equal impact on the woman.

“No—I don’t need any food,” Lucy said. “Please, let’s resume the *séance*.”

“Why did you faint?” Miss Carlyle asked.

“It—why—it must have been the force of my contact

with the spirit that caused me to lose consciousness,” Lucy explained, thinking quickly.

“Yes, yes of course,” Colonel Phillips said, covering the lower half of his face with his hand to mask his grin. He stroked his chin, obviously impressed by Lucy’s improvising. He clasped his hands behind his back and rocked on his heels. “The impulses coursing through my dear daughter’s veins,” he said sagely, “through her very being, her soul, are quite taxing, even with the weakest and mildest of spirits.” He knelt beside her chair and took her hands in his own. “Are you certain, dear child? Do you truly want to proceed?”

Then, with his back to the group, he winked and twisted his features into a ridiculous, grotesque expression. Lucy sucked in her cheeks to keep from laughing. When her father was very certain of their success in ruling the crowd, he’d play these pranks on her. She sometimes did it to him too, and they’d engage in a contest to see who could make the other laugh and find a plausible cover for the outburst.

But this was different. This time something *real* was happening, and Lucy didn’t want to play games—she wanted to find out exactly who it was who had contacted her. Later she’d worry about how and why.

“Please, Father, before the spirit leaves, I *must* go back into my trance!” Lucy insisted.

Colonel Phillips stood slowly and faced the circle of onlook-

ers. “You heard my daughter. At great personal risk, she is determined to discover what message this spirit has for us.”

“If you’re sure . . .” Miss Carlyle said uncertainly. She searched Lucy’s face and Lucy lowered her eyes, not wanting to meet her gaze. Lucy had had experience with women like Miss Carlyle before, do-gooders who worried that Lucy was being pressured by her father and didn’t want to see her exploited.

“I am absolutely certain,” Lucy said firmly.

“Oh, this is terribly exiting!” Mrs. Van Wyck exclaimed, her face dimpling as she realized her party was going forward as planned.

Everyone settled back into their seats and Lucy shut her eyes, concentrating. She breathed deeply and slowly, trying to remember what she’d been doing when she heard the voice.

Lucy sat a few moments, listening. She could tell the partygoers were growing restless.

“Lucy, my dear,” her father warned, “perhaps you shouldn’t wait for the spirit to come to you. You should reach out yourself.”

“Can you hear me, spirit?” she called out.

Nothing.

“It’s all right. Don’t be afraid. I’m waiting to hear from you. You have nothing to fear.”

She waited, her muscles taut. It felt as if the whole room was holding its breath. Everyone was waiting for her to speak.

Her shoulders sagged. It wasn't going to happen, and now she'd have to come up with something to say. Perhaps this was the time to reveal the juicy nugget about Von Clare? He was drumming his fingers impatiently on the table. Yes, it would serve him right. She was about to speak when—

“Who are you?” said a voice in Lucy's head. “*Where* are you?”

A bolt of energy surged through Lucy, making her start in her chair, frightening Mrs. Van Wyck, who instantly dropped her hand.

Lucy gripped the edge of the table and caught her breath. Her heart pounded in her ears. “I did it!” she exclaimed.

“Lucy?” her father prodded.

Lucy cleared her throat. She had to answer before the connection was broken. “I am Lucy Phillips, and I am in Mrs. Van Wyck's home on Clinton Street.” She was amazed by how calm she sounded. “Do you have a message for me?”

“You're the one who called to *me*,” the voice said, rather petulantly. “What do you want?”

Lucy was at a loss. She couldn't tell the truth: that she was a fake medium at a sham séance and was stunned it had actually worked. Lucy had always assumed there was no such thing as ghosts—what could she possibly want from one?

“I heard you call for help,” Lucy explained.

“Tell us what the spirit is saying!” Mrs. Van Wyck whispered urgently.

“Yes, every word!” Miss Carlyle agreed.

Mr. Von Clare snorted. “You gullible females. Don’t you see? It’s all just playacting!”

“Hush,” Gloria Buren scolded. “Don’t spoil the fun.”

Lucy held up her hand to silence them. She was afraid she’d miss the spirit’s response amid all their chatter.

“No one can help me,” the unseen speaker said softly.

“*No* one can help you?” Lucy repeated. The spirit sounded so sad, it nearly broke her heart. “Tell me what’s wrong. Maybe I can. At least, I’ll try. What’s your name?”

“Lindsay.”

“Lindsay,” Lucy repeated. “Are you in pain?”

“No—that’s not it.”

“Are you . . . lonely?” Lucy thought she’d be lonely if she were dead.

“Yes. I’m all alone.” Now the voice was tight, as if holding back a sob.

Lucy wondered if being dead was really awful, even if you did go to heaven. But of course, *that* was why the girl was so upset—she hadn’t made it to heaven yet! Most mediums claimed that spirits were restless because they were tied to this realm for some reason and that the goal was to release them. So this spirit, this girl, was trapped between the worlds. All by herself. How horrible.

“You’re not alone,” Lucy said. “I’m here.”

“I’ve never told anyone this but . . . my mother. She—she isn’t like other mothers.”

“I don’t have a mother,” Lucy replied, hoping this would help the spirit feel she was speaking to someone sympathetic. Colonel Phillips startled beside her. She felt his eyes on her, but she needed to keep her attention on the spirit.

“Oh. I’m sorry,” the voice said. “I mean, I guess my mother is better than no mother. At least some of the time.”

“Is she the reason you . . . why you . . . ?” Lucy wasn’t quite sure how to phrase the question delicately. How did you ask a ghost if her own mother had been the cause of her death?

“Yes,” the girl responded. “She ruined everything.”

Lucy licked her lips nervously. Perhaps the girl was trapped between worlds to bring her mother to justice? Or seek revenge? If so, what would Lucy have to do to help her?

“What is the spirit saying?” Mr. Holden demanded.

“We’re not hearing anything,” Mr. Grasser said.

“Because no one’s there,” Mr. Von Clare grumbled.

“At Sara’s, the spirit spoke *through* the medium and not simply *to* her,” Mrs. Van Wyck complained. “The way my darling Amelia did earlier.”

“Tell us what the spirit is saying, dear,” Miss Carlyle urged.

“I can’t,” Lucy whispered. She swallowed and raised her voice so that the spirit would hear her clearly. “Please,” she said, “tell me more about your mother. Maybe then I can do something.”

“This is very frustrating,” Mr. Grasser grouched.

“Hush,” Colonel Phillips ordered. “We’ll have Lucy relate all the spirit told her after the connection is severed.”

“Why did she have to bring that freak into our lives?” the spirit said, her voice rising in pitch. Lucy winced at the pain, the near hysteria she was hearing. “He’s going to kill her one day. If the alcohol doesn’t do it first. I can’t—I can’t take it anymore. I can’t take care of her. She—she’s supposed to take care of *me*. And my SATs are coming up, and I have to concentrate and study.” The spirit’s words all came out in a rush. “He’s going to do something bad to me too. I know it.”

“He already has,” Lucy said sadly. She didn’t know what “es-ay-tees” were, but the situation the girl described was an all-too-familiar one. The drunken mother, the brutish suitor. Lucy had seen quite a bit in her young life.

Lucy felt sorry for the terrified spirit, who clearly didn’t realize that the worst had already happened—that the mother’s suitor had already murdered her. Lucy would need to handle this carefully—the girl didn’t know she was a ghost.

“Now school seems so stupid,” the spirit sobbed. “And I used to love it. But *really!* Why should I care about all these names and dates? That Jay Gould and Roscoe Conkling got their candidate to win the nomination? That Governor Cooper was defeated?”

These were names that sounded familiar to Lucy. “Governor

Cooper defeated? By Jay Gould and Roscoe Conkling?” Lucy repeated.

A gasp went around the room, but Lucy ignored it; the spirit was speaking again.

“I mean, I know it’s all supposed to be oh so very relevant, with elections coming up and everything,” the spirit complained bitterly. “But right now, the only thing relevant to me is staying out of their way.”

“I understand,” Lucy said.

“Yeah, I feel like you do,” the spirit replied. Lucy heard a yawn in her head. “I—I think I can sleep now. They’re sleeping already.”

“I’m glad,” Lucy said.

“Good night,” said the spirit. “Um, thanks for keeping me company.”

Lucy felt as if a door shut. The connection was closed.

Leaning back in her seat, Lucy took in a long, deep breath, then let it out again.

She felt exhilarated, not at all spent the way she’d seen other mediums pretend to be after contacting a spirit. She didn’t feel as if she’d been “possessed” by the spirit, simply as if she’d been having a conversation with someone she couldn’t see.

Colonel Phillips stepped beside Lucy and placed a hand on her shoulder. “We thank you, spirit guides, for being with us and delivering me back my daughter safe and unharmed.

We now ask that you return to your realm and leave life to the living.” He held out his hands to the sitters. “And thank you for being such a receptive, spiritually aligned group.” He walked to the wall sconce and turned up the gas so that the room brightened.

“Oh, marvelous!” Mrs. Van Wyck clapped. “That was so exciting!”

“Tell us what your spirit said, dear,” Miss Carlyle asked.

Lucy did her best to explain what she’d heard. No one else knew what es-aye-tees were either, but the mention of the upcoming election had certainly stirred a great deal of interest. Finally the guests went in to dinner. Lucy was so astounded by her experience, she completely forgot she was hungry until Bridget, the housemaid, led Lucy and her father into the kitchen for a meal with the staff.

“That was splendid, just splendid!” Colonel Phillips said as they walked home. “Mrs. Van Wyck was so thrilled by the success of her séance that she tipped us above the fee Peabody negotiated.” He popped a chocolate into his mouth. “I must say, you had me on the run when you deviated from our script. You know I don’t like it when you do that, but it did work to our advantage. Yes, dearie dear, you outdid yourself tonight. Let’s not tell Peabody about the extra cash. Let’s get you new shoes instead. Would you like that?”

“What?” Lucy asked, realizing that she’d been too pre-occupied with trying to understand what had happened to

hear much of her father's conversation. "Shoes? Oh yes, that would be lovely."

"Coraline Van Wyck is the center of a very important, very wealthy group," Colonel Phillips continued as they walked east, toward the less-fashionable section of town. "Infiltrating that world would be quite the coup—and a useful enterprise, for us both."

Lucy barely heard his scheming. She was picturing the sad, crying girl trapped between worlds.

They climbed the cabbage-scented stairs of the boarding-house. "You get your rest," Colonel Phillips instructed as he unlocked the door to their room. "I'm going to run round to Bleecker Street and find Peabody."

"All right," Lucy replied.

The door closed behind her father, and Lucy changed into her nightclothes. She sat on her narrow cot, choosing to leave the lamp on.

"Spirit?" she called tentatively. "Are you there?"

The sounds of an argument, a scream, singing, horses neighing, dogs barking floated through the thin walls and up from the street. But nowhere in the sounds of the night did she hear the plaintive voice, the girl with the dreadful mother and worse stepfather.

"Spirit?" Lucy tried again. No use. The girl was not going to respond.

Lucy stared up at the peeling ceiling and pulled the thin,

moth-eaten blanket up to her chin, trying not to think about who had used the very same blanket before her, about how many lives had been lived in this room.

Then it hit her. The spirit must live in Mrs. Van Wyck's house, haunting it. That was why she wouldn't answer now.

That settled it. Lucy would go back to Mrs. Van Wyck's and speak to the spirit again. For once, her father's schemes and her own interests coincided.

Three

Oatmeal with four pats of butter and three tablespoons of thick molasses. *Now that's breakfast*, Lucy thought. The smell of fried bacon warmed her to her toes, which were no longer pinched. Her father had given her a new pair of shoes that morning.

"You did a mighty good show last night," Colonel Phillips said, draining the last of his coffee. "You did me proud."

Lucy smiled but didn't speak—she was too busy making up for all her missed meals. She lifted spoonful after spoonful of the rich, sweet porridge to her mouth, savoring every satisfying bite.

"I'm certain Mrs. Van Wyck will put the word round," Colonel Phillips said. "The others too. All but that wastrel Von Clare. Though I think your performance impressed even him."

"Papa, we should make a call on Mrs. Van Wyck immediately," Lucy said. "Tell her that the spirit I spoke with is actually haunting her house! I can try to make contact again."

Colonel Phillips leaned back in his chair and smiled in admiration. "Why, Lucy, I believe you will outshine your father someday. That's an excellent angle."

“No, you don’t understand, Papa.” She shook her head. “I really did it! I really spoke to her.”

Colonel Phillips raised a dark eyebrow, studied her a moment, then burst out laughing. He slapped the table and hooted. “Oh, you had me going there for a minute, dearie dear. You are a natural actress.”

“But—”

“To think that my clever girl could believe such nonsense.” He stirred some sugar into his coffee, chuckling. “Those society types deserve every penny we take from them. They’re too gullible to manage their own funds.”

His eyes narrowed. “Though you played a very dangerous game last night, taking a gamble like that. We’d had everything worked out beforehand.”

Lucy swallowed. Obviously her father wasn’t going to believe the truth about what had happened and thought that only a fool would. “I had to make up for fainting, didn’t I?” she said, attempting to cover.

“You should never have mentioned the election,” Colonel Phillips scolded. “It’s far too risky. All the papers predict it will go the other way. Once the results come in today . . .”

Lucy hadn’t even remembered the bit about the election. She shrugged. “Other mediums have made mistakes, haven’t they? You’ll just come up with an explanation.”

Colonel Phillips nodded slowly, stroking his stubbly jaw. Then he grinned. “Well, you have a fifty percent chance of

being right. And yesirree, we should strike immediately before there's a chance that you're wrong."

They made quick work of the rest of their breakfast, then walked to Mrs. Van Wyck's house in Greenwich Village. Now that Lucy had proper shoes, she didn't mind.

The housemaid answered the door. "Why, sir, I didn't expect to see you again so soon," she said, her hand fluttering up to smooth her red hair.

"Hello, Bridget," Colonel Phillips said warmly. "My daughter and I would like to thank you for the gift of butter and molasses we enjoyed this morning." He nudged Lucy.

"Yes, ma'am, thank you," she said.

Bridget ignored Lucy, keeping her eyes on the Colonel. "So pleased you liked it." She lowered her voice. "Cook never noticed anything was missing, and we did Mrs. Van Wyck a favor—she's getting awfully plump."

She glanced behind her, checking to see if she'd be overheard. "But you really shouldn't be coming to the front door. Come round the back and I'll let you in the servants' entrance."

Lucy bristled. "We're not servants," she declared.

Bridget's eyes flicked to her. "Pardon?"

"We're here to see Mrs. Van Wyck, actually," Colonel Phillips said apologetically.

Bridget flushed a deep scarlet. “I—that is—of course you are. Come in.”

She whirled around so fast her petticoats fluttered, and her short, quick steps made angry little clicking sounds on the marble floor as she led them inside.

“Poor girl,” Colonel Phillips whispered to Lucy.

Lucy shook her head. It meant no more stolen treats from Mrs. Van Wyck’s larder, but what did Lucy care? She was certain they would have a ready supply of cash now that she had a true ability to speak with the dead! Whether her father believed her or not.

“Stay here,” Bridget snapped, leaving them in the salon room.

“What do you think, dearie dear?” Colonel Phillips paced, rubbing his hands together. “Offer a weekly sitting? I’ll have to thank Peabody for this—maybe bring him in to find fresh tidbits.”

Lucy wandered the room, excited to be there again. The table had been removed, so she plopped onto the sofa. Shutting her eyes, she tried to recapture the sensations she had experienced the previous night.

Mrs. Van Wyck bustled in, nervously fiddling with the lace trim of her dressing gown. “Colonel Phillips, I wasn’t expecting a caller at this hour,” she complained.

Lucy stiffened. What if Mrs. Van Wyck didn’t allow them to stay? Lucy’s hands balled into fists. She didn’t want to be

thwarted now. Speaking with the spirit, helping the sad soul pass over, and, most of all, understanding this bizarre new ability were all she cared about. "Please—" she began.

"My dear Mrs. Van Wyck," Colonel Phillips said, stepping forward. "You are a radiant vision." He kissed Mrs. Van Wyck's dimpled hand. Her frown instantly vanished, and she suddenly looked very young and girlish despite her gray hair and lined face.

"Why . . . why, Colonel!" she said. A strange little giggle erupted from her voluminous form.

Lucy hoped no man would ever make her behave so foolishly.

"We have called on you at this terribly inconvenient hour because my daughter has something to tell you," Colonel Phillips said, his voice like honey.

Mrs. Van Wyck looked at Lucy with widened eyes. "Do you have another message from my darling Amelia?" Her expression was an odd mixture of hope and apprehension.

Lucy had forgotten all about Amelia. "No, it's far more serious than that," she explained. "I believe . . ." She paused dramatically. "I believe that the spirit I made contact with last night is living here in your home. In this very room."

"My word!" Mrs. Van Wyck put a hand on her ample bosom. "Do you mean to tell me that my house is . . . haunted?"

Colonel Phillips led Mrs. Van Wyck to the settee and helped her sit. "Have no fear, dear lady," he said soothingly.

“We have come because we believe we can help. We would never open the door to the other realm and then leave you on your own with the spirits of the departed.”

“Spirits?” Mrs. Van Wyck repeated. “Do you think there are more than one?” She glanced around the room nervously.

“The only way to find out is to contact the other side again,” Colonel Phillips said.

“The sooner the better,” Lucy added. “I think we should try right now.”

Her father looked startled. “Is that wise, child?” he asked.

Lucy swallowed to gather courage. She was going against his plan, and he never liked that. His intention was to set up another séance in order to charge another fee and be introduced to more potential clients.

None of that mattered. Lucy itched to contact the spirit. “We must, Father!” she insisted. “Just think of what might happen to Mrs. Van Wyck if we postpone!”

“What could happen?” Mrs. Van Wyck’s voice trembled.

Lucy shuddered. “Oh, Mrs. Van Wyck, a restless spirit, a soul that has not yet crossed over! They can be terribly dangerous! What I’ve seen . . .” She shook her head as if it was all too horrible to relate. She saw her father’s expression struggle between irritation and amusement.

“Dishes flying through the air,” Lucy elaborated. “Moans, shrieks all night long. Skeletal fingers reaching for you, desperate for your help, their owners furious that you live while

they have perished . . . Oh, Mrs. Van Wyck, I do not envy you.”

Mrs. Van Wyck clutched Lucy’s hands, frantically searching both Lucy and the Colonel’s faces. “We must do something! You must help me!”

“Exactly,” Colonel Phillips said firmly. “Another séance.”

“No, no,” Mrs. Van Wyck moaned. “We must do something this instant. I can’t spend another night here if these spirits are going to come after me. You must do something now!”

“It may take some time to rid you of their presence,” Lucy warned. “They may not go when first asked. They may want us to help them in a variety of ways—set things right. But I will intercede for you and beg them not to harm you.”

That should satisfy her father. Lucy knew he was interested in stringing this out as long as he could, and as long as she kept the fish on the line, he would be fine with whatever she did.

“Please, I beg you.” Mrs. Van Wyck squeezed Lucy’s hands harder. “Contact the spirits now.”

“I’ll do my very best,” Lucy vowed solemnly. “Let’s begin.” She shut her eyes.

Nerves she hadn’t noticed before twitched in her face, set her toes tingling. Now that she’d gotten what she wanted, she wasn’t sure if she could pull it off. What would she do if she couldn’t rouse the spirit?

How did I make contact before? Then she remembered—it was when she called out in a commanding tone.

“Don’t be afraid,” Lucy declared. “I won’t hurt you. I just want to talk to you some more. I want to help you.” She squeezed her eyes tighter, trying to remember details from last night that might help her now. “Lindsay!” she called forcefully. “Lindsay, please—speak to me!”

Lucy waited a moment, then heard a stunned, “What?”
She smiled. Contact.

Lindsay startled awake, banging her head against a wall behind her. “Wh-what?” she sputtered. She shifted her knees, and clothes dropped into her lap. *Closet*, she remembered. *I’m in my closet.*

She rubbed her face, waking herself up. *Did someone call me?* The voice sounded so close—as if it was in the closet with her. A voice she didn’t recognize.

She heaved herself up, about to unlatch the door.
Wait, she thought. *I heard that voice before.*

Last night. It was the same voice last night too. Lindsay’s forehead crinkled as she remembered an entire conversation with an unseen speaker—a girl about her age, it sounded like. She shut her eyes to recapture the feeling. It had felt good to talk, to complain, to cry to another person.

Only it wasn’t another person.

Lindsay shook off the creepy feeling, reminded herself she had dozed off mid-sentence practically. *Just a dream*, she thought. *Same thing this morning. I was still dreaming.*

Mystery solved, she reached for the door again. School beckoned, and to get there, she had to first make it out of the house.

She listened cautiously for a moment. Melanie and the Husband were probably still asleep, but she didn't want to be ambushed. All was quiet. Ready, set—

“I want to help you.”

The voice! She rocked back on her heels. “Who’s there?” she whispered.

She held absolutely still but felt her insides trembling. For a moment she flashed onto the idea that someone was on the other side of the door. Maybe someone heard the knock-down, drag-out between the Husband and her mom last night and hauled them away. Now they were here to rescue her. It could happen, right?

She shook her head, deflated. She must have heard a voice outside her window, someone offering someone *else* help.

“It’s all right,” the voice said. “I can be your friend. I will do all I can to help you. To rescue you from this dark place.”

A wave of terror rippled through Lindsay. The voice was clear—and clearly in her own head. A voice speaking to her, a voice not her own, coming from inside her brain.

She burst out of the closet and raced to the window. *I’m hearing someone outside, that’s all.* Only her window was closed and the sounds distant and blurred.

Music blared from somewhere, making Lindsay jump,

then laugh with relief. *Of course! The walls!* She must have heard someone in the next apartment. The building had been divided and redivided over the years, breaking what once had been a single-family home into apartments with paper-thin walls. Reassured that she hadn't gone crazy, she started getting ready for school.

“Please don't be afraid. Please talk to me. I want to help you.”

With a shriek, Lindsay ran out of her room.

Four

“Please don’t be afraid. Please talk to me. I want to help you,” Lucy called. The spirit had certainly been chatty enough last night. Why not now? Lucy heard something that sounded like a squeal and then nothing. “Hello?” she said. “Are you still there?”

Time ticked on; the chimes rang the hour. It was a full thirty minutes before Lucy admitted defeat. She avoided looking at her father. She knew what he expected of her: satisfy the customer. But she couldn’t playact—not now that it was *real*.

“I’m sorry,” she said. “She was here—I heard her. But she didn’t want to speak this time.”

“Oh no!” Mrs. Van Wyck moaned. “What will I do?”

“Lucy will just keep trying,” Colonel Phillips said.

“But if the spirit won’t speak to her—”

“I’m certain the spirit will communicate with Lucy at a later time,” Colonel Phillips said. “It was probably too soon after such an extensive visit through the veil to make an attempt. I told Lucy that we should wait and set up another séance.” Lucy shivered as her father turned his cold smile on

her. "But my daughter is headstrong and doesn't always listen to reason."

"I—I just wanted to help Mrs. Van Wyck," Lucy said. "I was worried about her."

"Thank you, dear girl." Mrs. Van Wyck patted Lucy's knee. "I'm relieved that I have someone who will help me."

"And she will," Colonel Phillips insisted. "But under the proper conditions. Come along, Lucy."

Lucy stood, wishing she could think of some way to postpone her father's anger.

"You're not going to leave me, are you?" Mrs. Van Wyck pleaded.

Was this her way out? "Would—would you like us to stay?" Lucy asked.

"Please," Mrs. Van Wyck said, rising quickly. "Until we get the spirit out of here."

Colonel cocked his head sharply. "Do you mean you'd like Lucy and me to . . . board with you? Until such time?"

Lucy blinked several times, astonished by her father's audacity. But if Mrs. Van Wyck took the bait, if she moved them out of the boardinghouse and into the mansion, there would be no penalty for Lucy, only praise. She might even be able to claim that had been her game all along.

"Oh, would you?" Mrs. Van Wyck said, her face brightening. "I don't believe I could stay here one more day on my own, surrounded by spirits. I've shut up the house in

Newport, so I can't retreat there. After all, the season in New York has already started."

"Yes, I can see how it would be inconvenient for you to vacate now," Colonel Phillips said sympathetically.

"I'd be terribly grateful if you wouldn't mind staying here."

"If it would give you comfort, dear lady, of course Lucy and I will oblige," Colonel Phillips said.

"Oh, thank you." Mrs. Van Wyck looked enormously relieved. "We'll send for your belongings later. But now would you join me for breakfast?"

"Delighted, madam," Colonel Phillips said.

They went into the vast dining room. A row of chandeliers hung above a mahogany table large enough to seat twenty people. At one end, Lucy saw a place setting—they had obviously interrupted Mrs. Van Wyck's breakfast. Lucy wondered if she was lonely, eating there at that giant table all alone.

Mrs. Van Wyck pulled a cord just inside the doorway and gestured for Colonel Phillips and Lucy to take seats. As Mrs. Van Wyck settled herself at the head of the table, a housemaid entered.

"Colonel Phillips and his daughter will be joining me for breakfast, Clara," Mrs. Van Wyck said.

"Yes, ma'am." Clara brought plates, cups, and saucers and then served from the platters sitting on the sideboard. That morning Lucy had thought she had never smelled anything

as good as their rasher of bacon. But this was heavenly! Sausages, eggs, toast, and fruit all competed for her attention.

Another maid entered the room. There seemed to be a never-ending supply of them. "Ma'am, I beg pardon for the intrusion," she said. "But there is a Mr. Grasser asking to see you."

"Really?" Mrs. Van Wyck said. "What a day! Well, send him in."

The housemaid went into the salon and returned with Mr. Grasser, the impresario from last night's séance. "Mrs. Van Wyck, I am so sorry to disturb you—" He broke off when he saw Lucy and her father. "I don't believe it! You are the very reason for my call!"

"How providential," Colonel Phillips said, buttering a piece of toast.

"How did you do it, young lady?" Mr. Grasser said, addressing Lucy.

"Do what?" Lucy asked.

"I'm sorry, I've forgotten my manners in my excitement," Mr. Grasser said. "Please, may I sit?"

"Of course," Mrs. Van Wyck said, gesturing to the chair beside Lucy. "Will you take breakfast?"

"No, nothing for me," Mr. Grasser said. "I've eaten already. I've been up for hours. With the newsboys, as a matter of fact."

He dropped a newspaper onto the table in front of Lucy.

She glanced at it idly; unable to read the headlines, she was far more interested in the food on her plate.

“You said my daughter and I were the reason for your call upon Mrs. Van Wyck,” Colonel Phillips said. “May I ask why?”

“I wanted to find out how to contact you. And here you are!” He peered at Lucy with squinty eyes. “So, young lady, who told you?”

“Told me what?” Lucy asked. What had she said in the séance last night that had Mr. Grasser so worked up?

“The election,” he said. He tapped the paper. “Every single newspaper in New York City predicted that Cooper would get the nomination. That Jay Gould’s machinations would come to nothing. And then you—” He shook his head. “You called it exactly as it happened. And I want to know how you knew.” Now he looked at Colonel Phillips. “Or perhaps it’s you I should be asking. Who’s in your pocket?”

Colonel Phillips languidly reached over and turned the newspaper around so he could read the headline. “Well, dearie dear,” he said mildly. “Seems Mr. Grasser is in a dither because your spirit rightly predicted the outcome of the election.”

“She did?” Lucy said. A surge of excitement welled up in her.

“My word!” Mrs. Van Wyck said.

“So how’d you know?” Mr. Grasser pressed.

“The spirit told me,” Lucy explained.

“No, really,” Mr. Grasser said. “I don’t care if it’s a scam; I just want to be sure it’s repeatable.”

Lucy felt Mrs. Van Wyck’s sudden alarm the moment the word *scam* left Mr. Grasser’s lips.

“Do you impugn my daughter’s honesty?” Colonel Phillips demanded.

“The spirit told me,” Lucy insisted, astonished that for all the times she’d lied, it was much harder now to convince Mr. Grasser of the truth. It certainly hadn’t worked with her father. “She said that she didn’t care about it at all but that others thought it was . . .” She paused, trying to remember the spirit’s exact word. “Relevant.”

“Really?” Mr. Grasser said, an eyebrow raised.

“If my daughter says it’s so, it’s so,” Colonel Phillips said. Lucy recognized the hardness in her father’s voice. He was determined to protect his opportunity, and in this case that meant defending Lucy.

“Well, well, well.” Mr. Grasser drummed his fingers on the table. “Well. Well, well.” He stood and paced.

“Please, do sit down, Ben,” Mrs. Van Wyck said. “You’re making me terribly nervous. And my nerves are already frayed, hearing that this spirit is haunting me! Here in my own house.”

“Is she, now?” Mr. Grasser glanced sharply at Lucy, then at Colonel Phillips. He sat back down and stroked his pointy

chin thoughtfully for a moment. He swiveled in his seat to face Lucy directly. “Do you think you can contact the spirit again?”

“I intend to,” Lucy said firmly. “I called to her this morning and she responded, but then the connection closed.”

Mr. Grasser started to rise, then sat back down. He crossed one leg over the other, his foot bouncing. Finally he pointed a finger at her. “If you can guarantee contact, young lady, I can make you famous.”

Lucy’s eyes widened. She didn’t need a spirit to predict that her fortunes were about to change.

Five

Lindsay shoved her backpack into her crammed locker. She kept everything that mattered at school now. She had the creepy suspicion that the Husband went into her room and rummaged through her stuff.

“Hey, Lindsay, have you decided on a topic for Nunez?” She turned and saw Karin Muller leaning against the opposite wall of lockers, a pile of books clutched to her chest. Karen sat next to her in history of science.

“Not sure yet.” Lindsay closed her locker and spun the lock.

Karin fell into step beside her as they made their way to class.

“I can’t believe school’s barely started and we already have to propose a term paper,” Karin complained.

Lindsay had felt lucky when she’d walked into history of science the first day and been told to sit next to Karin. Karin was the cool, popular kind of girl Lindsay assumed would ignore her and the other brainiacs, but Karin seemed to like her. Still, Lindsay was aware that this friendship was new and as precarious as life on a fault line.

“Uncertainty,” Lindsay said, following Karin into the classroom and settling into her seat. “I’m going to write about Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle. Not sure what, though.”

Mr. Nunez strode into the classroom. “Okay, today we’re going to talk about objectivity and probability.”

“*Objectively* speaking, there is a strong *probability* this is going to be on the test,” Lindsay whispered to Karin.

“Ya think?” Karin pulled out a notebook and pen. “But I believe what we’re going to find out is that there is no objective reality. Or is that Philosophy 101?”

“I object to *this* reality,” Lindsay joked.

She shifted in her seat, trying to accommodate tight muscles cramped from the night spent in her closet. She pushed the memory of the dark space and the raging fight from her mind.

“We were discussing the complications introduced by Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle,” Mr. Nunez said, erasing the French on the blackboard left over from the previous class. “The difficulty for scientists is that the position of a particle and its momentum cannot be described simultaneously. Today we’ll talk about Schrödinger and his equally uncomfortable thought experiment that called into question the very notion of scientific objectivity.”

Nunez had a little smile on his face. Lindsay had already learned that this meant a particularly exciting discussion was about to take place.

“For all you sci-fi fans out there—and you *know* who you

are . . .” He paused and looked them over with a smirk. “An oversimplification of Schrödinger’s famous cat-in-a-box thought experiment supports the theory of those parallel universes taking up so much space in film and television today.”

Cool, Lindsay thought. She’d have to tell her best friend, Tanya—who’d been a hard-core sci-fi freak since kindergarten. But when? Since the move to Manhattan and the switch in schools, it had been hard to find time to get together.

“Think we’ll get tips on how to move into alternate universes?” Lindsay whispered to Karin.

Karin smirked and doodled a picture of multiple universes as Venn diagrams.

Lindsay listened as Mr. Nunez discussed Schrödinger’s thought experiment in which a cat in a box is either dead or alive and its aliveness or deadness is determined only once the scientist opens the box. At that moment of observation, the universe forks: in one universe, the cat is alive, with the consequences of that fact (“needing to buy litter, getting cat food, finding the proper allergy medications”), and in the other, the cat is dead (“tearful goodbyes, vet bills, accusing stares as you walk down the hall”).

“Some believe that the implications of this experiment support the existence of alternate universes, like in those episodes of *Star Trek* where the crew returns to a world in which Hitler won or evolution went a different way,” Mr. Nunez continued. “This is called the many-worlds

interpretation. What I'd like us to do now is find all the arguments these scientists would have been having among themselves at the time."

"Shoot." Karin dropped her pen onto the desk. "That would have been a great term paper."

Lindsay allowed herself to get caught up in the discussion, getting into a heated debate with Justin Michaels over the need to stay with observable and verifiable data instead of going off into "Loopy Land."

The bell rang, and Lindsay felt like she had grown a few inches since she entered the room. "Quantum totally rocks," Karin said as they headed down the hallway. "It's just so goofy. Who knew scientists had a sense of humor?"

"I think they must have all been high," Justin said. "Only someone in an altered state of consciousness would have come up with those theories. Or could understand them." He nodded toward a classroom. "This is me." He ducked inside.

"I've got to go conjugate verbs," Karin said. "See ya." She turned down a corridor, the sea of students parting for her.

Lindsay walked into her civics classroom and settled into her chair, feeling ready to take on any subject, even boring history. *How come it's so easy to remember equations and formulas, but I have such a hard time with names and dates? All this stuff about the electoral process. Who cares?*

Lindsay recognized that most of the kids in her school would think just the opposite, that memorizing physics equations and

calculus rules was torture and far less relevant than historical events. But people were too unpredictable, far more corruptible than an equation. Like the most recent assigned readings—all about the ways elections could be manipulated. All they did was depress her. It was kind of interesting that all the papers had gotten it wrong and predicted Governor Cooper would win, despite the financier Jay Gould's scheming. But still . . .

“Okay, class,” Ms. McLain said from the front of the room. “We all take the right to vote for granted. Let's take a look at the hard, long struggle getting it actually was.”

Lindsay dutifully took extensive notes, knowing that if she didn't, she wouldn't remember the rapid-fire list of names and dates flying out of Ms. McLain's mouth.

“What we're going to discuss are the competing interests of various groups—all of whom were striving to gain the vote. Various movements dovetailed, and I'd like you to write an essay on a particular group that supported the ideal of universal suffrage and was also engaged in other social causes. For example, in the nineteenth century, many in the early women's movement participated in campaigns for temperance and abolition. Many were part of the spiritualist movements that swept the nation from time to time.”

Once school ended, Lindsay went to the library. She had signed up as a physics tutor, but today there weren't any takers, so she started preliminary research for both history of science and civics. A stack of books surrounding her, she

happily took notes, cross-referenced, and made lists of ideas until the librarian turned off the lights.

As she headed for home, Lindsay's pace slowed once she'd crossed Sixth Avenue. The closer she got to her building, the more her feet dragged, the more her shoulders hunched. *I should sign up for some more clubs*, she thought, arriving at the building. It was an old strategy—for years Lindsay had found ways to disappear: into libraries, after-school groups, geometric dimensions, Cartesian planes, physics equations, word problems; places where there were rules, cause and effect, logic. Avoiding her mom during her binges had brought Lindsay right up to the top of her class, into advanced calc and quantum. Now there was a hulking new reason to vanish.

Or to stay home. She had to find a way to snap her mom out of it, orchestrate an intervention. Melanie had gone wild for guys before, but they never lasted all that long—either they got fed up or she did.

But she never got married before. What is up with that?

The Husband's apartment was on the ground floor, so people came and went as she stood listening at the front door. A neighbor left with his dog, and when he returned, he glanced at her curiously. "Lose your key?" he asked, smiling.

"What? Oh. No." Lindsay pulled out her key. "I guess I was spacing."

She put the key in the lock and stepped inside, her back rigid. She snuck down the hall, noticing how dark the apartment was,

wondering why no one bothered to turn on the lights now that the sun had gone down. A lump in the shape of Melanie lay on the sofa.

Lindsay held very still in the doorway to the living room, listening for clues. She heard sounds from the street and music from next door, but the apartment was quiet. Maybe this was a chance to talk to her mom.

Lindsay crossed to the sofa, eyeing her mom. Where was she on the inebriation scale? Lindsay knew all the stages, the subtleties, the benefits and risks of each degree of drunk. She couldn't waste this chance to talk to her alone—they'd had pretty much zero time that didn't include the Husband.

Lindsay lowered herself to the edge of the couch, jostling her mother just enough to wake her.

"Wh-what?" Her mom's eyes fluttered open. She inhaled deeply and shut her eyes again. "Hi, kiddo."

Lindsay studied her mom's face. She looked older. For the first time there were gray roots contrasting with the brassy red of her uncombed hair. She wasn't even forty yet.

Her mom's eyes opened again and she frowned. She rubbed her face, smoothed her hair. "What are you staring at?" When Lindsay didn't answer, Melanie wriggled up into a sitting position. "What's with you?"

"Nothing. Just, you know, wanted to . . . say hi."

Melanie smiled. "Hi."

Lindsay shoved her hands into the pockets of her hoodie. “Uh, so, Mom.” How to start? “How’s the store?” Melanie worked part-time in a boutique in a trendy section of Brooklyn, full of kids with tattoos and dyed hair.

Melanie sighed. “I thought because the commute was better from here, it would be less of a hassle. But it’s such a drag trying to get out there on the weekends for the long shifts. There’s always track work screwing up the subway.”

Warning sign. Melanie started complaining about her job at the start of a bad patch. She’d quit or get herself fired, all to have more time to drink or smoke pot.

“I thought Katherine was going to start selling your earrings,” Lindsay said. “Aren’t you still making them?”

“Nah. When you think about how much time I spend on each one, plus having to pay for the materials up front, it’s not really worth it. Carl thinks I should go back to bartending. It pays so much better than the store.”

Lindsay swallowed, pushing down the sour taste. “But—but then you’ll be out really late.”

“I’ll be here when you get home, though,” Melanie offered. “And if I work in a place with live music, maybe I could get back into singing. You really should hear Carl on keyboards.”

“I have,” Lindsay said flatly. “Look, Mom, about this married thing. I . . . I—”

“I know this is a big adjustment,” Melanie interrupted. “But give it a chance.” She ran a hand through her hair.

“We’re all giving it a chance,” she said much more quietly. Almost in a whisper.

Alert to the possibility that her mom wasn’t so thrilled about being married, Lindsay took a breath. “Yeah, but Mom, how long do you stick it out? The guy—” Lindsay stopped short of saying “hits you” when her mother’s eyes narrowed in anger, as she clearly prepared to fight whatever came next.

Melanie stood. “Lindsay, you’re a very smart girl, but you don’t know everything. Carl and I, well, we—”

The front door opened, and Melanie’s head whipped around. The Husband was home.

“Hi, honey,” she called. Her voice was chirpy, but her eyes glared a message easy for Lindsay to read. She knew to back off.

For now.

“Man, I’m beat,” the Husband said. He dropped a briefcase on the chair just inside the living room. He looked from Melanie to Lindsay and back again. “What’s up?” he asked. Even at a distance, Lindsay could smell the whiskey.

“Nothing,” Melanie said. “Lindsay’s here.”

“Yeah, I can see that.” He pulled off his tie and unbuttoned the top button of his shirt. “Is there going to be something to eat anytime soon?”

“Sure,” Melanie said. “Lindsay, have you eaten?”

“I’m not really hungry,” Lindsay answered. “I just want a yogurt.” She hurried out of the living room and into the kitchen. She heard her mother and the Husband following her.

“God, I hate that damn job,” he said. “They’re such a bunch of idiots.”

“It’s being in an office,” Melanie said. “The nine-to-five thing. You’re too creative for that.”

“Yeah, but now there are new bills I gotta stay on top of,” he said. “Someone has to be responsible around here.”

Lindsay reached into the fridge and pulled out a yogurt.

“Is that going to be enough?” Melanie fretted.

“I had a snack before the library,” Lindsay said.

“Are you sure? I’m going to make us some spaghetti; do you want some—”

“The kid knows if she’s hungry,” the Husband interrupted, reopening the refrigerator. “Hey—what happened to all my beer?” He slammed it shut and faced Melanie. “Did you finish all my beer?”

Melanie put her hands on her hips. “If you had come home on time, when you said you would, instead of going to KC’s—”

Lindsay scurried to her room and shut the door before the inevitable fight began.

Sitting at her desk, she reached for the phone to call Tanya, then stopped herself. How could she talk to Tanya? Chitchat would be impossible and asking about everyone at her old school too depressing.

Yelling began down the hall. Lindsay didn’t wait for things to escalate; she just got up, walked into her closet,

shut the door, locked it, and slid down into her now-familiar crouch.

“Don’t be afraid,” a voice said. “Let me help you.”

Lindsay’s mouth dropped open and her back slammed against the closet wall. The voice! It was the same voice!

“I want to try to help you, but you must talk to me,” the voice said. “It’s all right. I’m on your side. I won’t harm you.”

Lindsay slumped, wishing it was true, wishing there was someone she could talk to, spill it all to, someone to come and fix everything.

“I wish someone would help me,” she murmured. “But how?”

“By talking to me,” the voice replied.

If only . . . The voice was so soothing, so calm, it drowned out the shouting and chaos outside the closet door. “You really don’t mind?”

“Of course not,” the voice answered. “I’m here to listen.”

Lindsay leaned against the wall of the closet and shut her eyes, letting herself give in.

“She’s falling apart, and I don’t know what to do,” Lindsay said, the truth of her own words hitting her hard.

“Your mother?” the voice asked.

“Yes,” Lindsay whispered. “I’ve seen her bad before, but not like this. Usually she gets it together before she goes totally out of control. But this time . . .”

“Because of this new man she married?” the voice asked.

“Because of me.” Lindsay’s voice was tight. “I went away. I’d never been away from her before. I think . . . I think she can’t be alone or something. I was gone for more than two months, and I guess she couldn’t hack it. So she hooked up with him.”

“Do you . . . Is it your mother you’d like to reach? To talk to?” the voice asked gently. “Is that what you’d like me to try to do?”

“You?” Lindsay snorted. “Yeah, right. That would be perfect. Get in her head and say, ‘Dump the guy!’” She laughed bitterly. “Maybe she’ll listen to you, ’cause she sure isn’t listening to me.” She wrapped her arms around herself. “I have to get her away from him. I just don’t know how.”

“If she loves him . . .”

“How could she love a guy like that?” Lindsay demanded. Then she remembered the stories her mom had told her about her dad. Her mom didn’t have the best judgment when it came to guys. “I guess I’ll have to be around more. But what’s that going to mean about school? And science club? I just don’t know. . . .” Her voice trailed off. The only way she could think of to get her mom away from Carl was to spend more time with her herself. “Does that mean I won’t be able to go away to college?”

“I—I don’t know,” the voice replied.

“She’s blaming the subway for why she doesn’t want to go to work. As if that were the real problem.”

“Subway? What’s that?”

“You don’t know what a subway is?” Lindsay asked. “The New York City subway. You know, trains, only they go underground. My mom is bugged because there are always service interruptions on the weekends. I wish she would go back to making jewelry. She’s really good at it.”

“Your mother is a jeweler? That’s extraordinary!”

Lindsay shut her eyes, letting some of her anger, her fear drain away and allowing the empty space to fill up with memories of the soldering iron, the twisting metal, the geometric designs she’d draw and that her mom would turn into brooches. When she was younger, most kids thought her mother was the coolest. And sometimes she even was. Lindsay began to talk, to make it real, those moments she and her mom had shared. The adventures they used to have together—at least when the drinking was under control. Maybe she could still save her mom. Maybe this was just a phase. . . .

“I wish we’d stayed in Brooklyn,” Lindsay said. “I liked it better there.”

But she knew the issue wasn’t simply a matter of geography. And no matter how hard she worked the problem, she couldn’t figure out an equation that didn’t have impossible results.

Six

“Get off me,” Lindsay murmured, pushing at the weight crushing her. “It’s so hot.”

She shifted and came fully awake. The shark she was wrestling in her dream was her coat, the tropical surroundings created by the hot, close space. She had fallen asleep in her closet again.

She opened the door and crawled out. What was she thinking? She was too old to have imaginary friends, yet she’d spent the night cramped in her closet, making herself feel better by talking to some pretend person.

Hang on. Chills rushed through her when she remembered she hadn’t been the only one talking—she had heard the voice talking back. Clearly enough to know it was a girl—probably about her age, with a southern accent and named Lucy.

She whirled around, frozen in the center of her room, gaping at the open closet. What did it mean to hear voices? Didn’t it mean something bad—seriously bad? Either she was talking to a ghost, as in, those things that didn’t really exist, or she must be—

No. She put the thought out of her mind and dressed for school.

Lindsay walked briskly to school, running equations in her head, letting $a + b$ take up all available space. She left the house so quickly she arrived long before the first bell. Her feet took her straight to the library.

History of science or civics, she thought, standing in front of the stacks, trying to decide which aisle to pick. She smirked. *How Schrödinger's cat of me. One aisle or the other, one universe or another.* She glanced at the clock. *One hour. Get going.*

She moved down an aisle, running her fingers across the book spines. She slowed down en route to the history section, pausing in social sciences. Her hand hovered over a psychiatry reference book.

She quickly turned away from the shelf full of titles like *Common Signs of Mental Illness* and *The Schizophrenic in the Family* and scurried away as if she was being chased. She turned down another aisle, momentarily disoriented despite her intimate knowledge of the Dewey decimal system.

The religion section. *Talking with Angels* appeared at eye level. She slid the gold-and-blue book off the shelf, ran her hand over the faux-illuminated cover, looked at the beatific faces, the halos, and lowered herself to the floor.

Lindsay read hungrily about people hearing the voice of God, about conversing with angels, and remembered suddenly

Joan of Arc and *Joan of Arcadia, Touched by an Angel*, and the holiday perennial, *It's a Wonderful Life*.

Is that what's happening to me? she wondered. *Am I having a religious experience?*

She returned the book to the shelf, uncertain. The voice she had heard didn't seem like that of an angel, more like that of a kid like her. Their conversation hadn't been very spiritual—mostly Lindsay had vented and rambled; the voice had agreed and sympathized. Sometimes the voice asked for clarification, like when Lindsay ranted about the subway system or talked about hanging out in Central Park or the boring crap she was studying in history class.

She knew the bell was going to ring soon. She went back to the psych section and stared at the books. Her heart pounded as she pulled out a reference book of symptoms and found a listing for *hearing voices*.

Under *schizophrenia*.

Her body went cold.

A patient may experience hallucinations, both visual and auditory. Voices may give instruction, berate the patient, control the patient's behavior.

Lindsay slammed the book shut.

“Lindsay?”

Lindsay's head whipped around. The librarian, Ms. Winston, stood at the end of the aisle.

“Didn't you hear the bell ring?” Ms. Winston asked.

“You need to get to homeroom or you’ll be marked absent.”

“Right,” Lindsay said shakily. “Right.”

After school, Lindsay returned to a blissfully empty apartment. She didn’t know where Melanie and the Husband were, but she welcomed the time alone—the quiet to try to figure things out.

She stood in the center of her room, holding her jacket, staring at the closet. It loomed before her, threatening and huge.

“Ridiculous.” She strode the few feet and flung open the door. Grabbing a hanger with shaky hands, she hung up her jacket. “It’s just a stupid closet.”

“Hello? Can you hear me? I can hear you.”

Lindsay froze, then stumbled backward out of the closet. She slammed it shut, then pushed a chair in front of it. Heart pounding, she ran into the living room and flung herself onto the sofa.

Shaking, she forced herself to take long, deep breaths. “It didn’t happen,” she murmured. “I imagined it.”

Pressing her hands onto her tense, tight stomach, she crossed to the phone and dialed.

“Hey, Tanya. It’s me, Lindsay.” Her voice was almost normal, a little pinched, but the tears rolling down her face would never be suspected—the nausea was well hidden.

“Lindsay! I’ve been meaning to call, but start-of-school stuff kinda got in the way, you know?”

Lindsay squeezed her eyes shut. “I know.” It came out as a whisper.

“My computer fried itself, so I couldn’t even IM,” Tanya complained. “I feel so unplugged. Sorry if you’ve tried to e me.”

“That’s okay.” Good, she had more voice now. “Listen, it’s Friday. How about I come over and we can really catch up? I bet I can get Melanie to let me spend the whole weekend.”

Need, desperation, hope—they all collided inside her. She pressed even harder on her stomach, willing it to unclench.

“Oh, man! I can’t this weekend,” Tanya said. “I have a debate team meet tomorrow, so I have to go to a practice tonight, and then the girls are hanging after.”

Lindsay nodded, even though Tanya couldn’t see it, but she didn’t trust herself to speak.

“Lindsay? You there?”

Lindsay cleared her throat. “Uh, yeah.”

“You can come to the meet if you want, but I thought I’d spare you.” Tanya laughed.

“Nah, I’ll skip it.”

“Lindz. Everything okay?”

“Sure. I—”

“Oh, hang on.” Lindsay heard noise in the background, then Tanya came back on. “Sorry, I gotta go. Gotta get to practice.”

“Later.” Lindsay hung up quickly, then sat for a long time, just holding the phone.

Seven

“That color is simply beautiful on you, my dear.” Mrs. Van Wyck tugged at a ruffle on the green silk gown Lucy was modeling in the upstairs sitting room, part of her suite in the Van Wyck mansion.

“Gorgeous,” Colonel Phillips agreed.

Lucy gazed at her reflection in the full-length mirror. The dress fit her perfectly, and the hair ornaments in the elegant coiffure designed by none other than Madame Lily sparkled in the lamplight. *Finally*, she thought. *A wardrobe that truly suits me.*

Bridget bustled in, carrying a large bouquet of yellow roses. “For Miss Phillips,” she announced.

“Put them with the rest,” Lucy said, gesturing toward the credenza overladen with floral tributes, testimony to her triumph.

Astonishing how a world can change overnight. True to his word, Mr. Grasser had taken out a tasteful ad in the newspaper, describing a new sensation, the charming—and *discreet*—medium offering sittings in the privacy of the home of the respected society matron, Mrs. Van Wyck. He’d carefully

and effectively leaked the word that Lucy had predicted the surprising outcome of the election, a rumor substantiated by Miss Carlyle, Mr. Hanover, and Mr. and Mrs. Holden. Mr. Von Clare and Gloria Buren's arguments at fashionable dinners and cocktail parties over whether or not Lucy was a fraud intrigued the younger set and only furthered the cause.

Lucy hadn't been able to contact the spirit again, but she had such a good memory of their two long conversations, she was still able to provide ample and exciting material. She was a little worried about how long she'd be able to keep doing it, though.

The first night, there were ten people—noteworthy either for their wealth or their connections, all handpicked by Mr. Grasser. These first sitters were allowed to experience the genteel southern belle's spirit contact without charge.

The second night, there were fifteen.

The last five nights it was standing room only in Mrs. Van Wyck's séance room, despite the new charge of admission, split between Mr. Grasser and Colonel Phillips. The last four mornings, invitations to parties, to balls, to dinners arrived. Dressmakers sent their cards, offering their services if Lucy would agree to wear their gowns in public places; presenters invited Lucy to attend their productions. The last four afternoons flowers and gifts appeared. Mr. Grasser advised Lucy on how to respond—which, to Lucy's frustration, was always with a polite refusal. All the while, Colonel Phillips chortled, charmed, and schemed.

A knock sounded at the door, and Mr. Grasser stepped into the suite. "You look lovely," he told Lucy.

"Thank you." Lucy fluffed the soft tendrils around her face.

"Your audience awaits," Mr. Grasser said.

Lucy and her father followed Mr. Grasser and Mrs. Van Wyck downstairs to the séance room, brilliantly lit with candles. Mr. Grasser had gained Mrs. Van Wyck's permission to decorate the room to better enhance the ethereal nature of Lucy's performance, so chiffon and gauze were draped over the dark portraits, and fresh flowers bloomed around the room like a garden.

Lucy still began the séance with table-rapping, for, as Colonel Phillips had warned, there was danger in deviating from the formula. But the table used now was quite small, and the sitters didn't join her there. Chairs were placed in rows so that the séance room seemed more auditorium than salon.

Mr. Grasser opened the tall double doors and a wave of sound washed over Lucy; dozens of people talking. As Mr. Grasser strode to the front of the room, the din diminished to rumbling murmurs. "Ladies and gentlemen," he said. "Welcome to an evening you'll never forget. I present Colonel Phillips and his extraordinary daughter, Lucy."

Colonel Phillips crooked his elbow, and Lucy slipped her arm through his. They walked down the aisle together. As always, she didn't look at the sitters; she simply glided

serenely forward as if angels were guiding her. Indeed, that had been how her entrance was described in a newspaper yesterday by “an unnamed source” who sounded remarkably like her father’s pal Peabody. Peabody had become Mr. Grasser’s helper, setting up seats, researching potential sitters, dropping off cards, even arranging flowers and candles. Colonel Phillips had gotten him the position in order to thank him for the introduction to Mrs. Van Wyck. Neither had foreseen what a success that evening would turn out to be.

The attention of the audience warmed her. She was aware of how the candlelight enhanced her looks, set the gown shimmering, the jewels glittering. Thankfully, in the last week of three meals a day, her skin had already lost its sallow color and her hair had new luster. She settled herself at the small table in front of the room as her father took his position standing beside her. Only now did she allow herself to view her audience.

Lucy’s heart hiccuped as her eyes landed on a handsome face in the front row. The young man looked to be around her own age, perhaps a few years older, with the sheen of someone born to wealth and privilege. His light hair glowed golden in the flickering light; his soft mouth was like something she’d seen on a Cupid in a romantic painting, his eyes deep-set and knowing. He held her gaze directly, and she felt her cheeks flush. She dropped her eyes to her lap.

What brought him to the séance? Lucy glanced back up and saw

that there were men on either side of the handsome stranger: one was around his age, also good-looking, though less expensively dressed, and the other was an elderly gentleman who was already asleep. *Don't snore*, Lucy warned the old coot silently.

“My friends,” Colonel Phillips crooned, “I’d like first to dispel the idea that we are doing anything evil by beginning this evening in prayer. Please, everyone shut your eyes and take the hand of your neighbor. This will help create the energy needed to summon the spirits here.” He clasped his hands behind his back as Peabody lowered the lights.

Lucy demurely ducked her head so that everyone in the room might follow her lead. Once she felt the lamps lower, she snuck a peek at her father from under her lashes.

His fingers crossed, signaling that everyone had done as instructed. She gripped the stick hidden in her dress.

“Heavenly Father, thank you for your guidance as we delve into mysteries only you can understand. Accept our humble awe and allow us this night to speak only to the good and God-fearing, and protect us from any that may intend us harm. Amen.”

Using the group’s rousing “amen” to cover the sound, Lucy quickly positioned the stick under the edge of the table.

“What you will hear, through my daughter,” Colonel Phillips said, “are words from the other side. Perhaps a message to one of you, perhaps a description of the Summerland,

perhaps some nugget of information about the past, the present, or even . . ." Here he paused dramatically. "The future. What you do with this information is your own concern." He let those words hang in the air, with the subtle suggestion that there might be profit in coming to see the latest sensation. "If time, and the spirit, permit, we may be able to take specific questions, but I cannot make any promises." Colonel Phillips still received information about the sitters from the Blue Book and from Peabody, just in case such a display should prove useful. "And now, we must have absolute silence."

That was Lucy's cue to go into her trance.

"Hello? Are you there?" Lucy called out. She waited, her breath held, hoping, yearning, straining for a response. Again, just as she had the last week, she felt some door open, experienced a rush of air, thought she heard a murmur, a "what?" or a "no" or an anguished "oh no." She knew she was connecting to something not of this world, making contact with what spiritualists called "the other side." Of that she had no doubt. She had complete certainty of her reach, but she had no control over the response.

To her crushing disappointment, that was all. The spirit wouldn't talk to her. Lucy had to resort to the rehearsed routine, using bits and pieces from their two conversations.

"Can you hear me?" Lucy said, giving the spirit one last chance. When there was still no response, she rapped the table with the stick. As usual, a gasp circulated around the room.

“Spirit, is that you?”

One rap.

“Is there anyone here you would like to speak with?”

Two raps.

Lucy sensed equal parts disappointment and relief in the crowd. That was usual—people only *thought* they wanted to contact their dear departed.

“Perhaps your words will be instructive to the assembly gathered here. Will you speak through me?”

One rap.

Lucy made her body go limp, her eyes rolling up in her head. Then she remembered the handsome face in the front row. She arranged herself in a more ladylike position and blinked, settling finally on a slightly vacant but dewy expression.

“I wish we’d stayed in Brooklyn,” Lucy said, giving her voice an airy, breathy sound. “I don’t like all the tall buildings in Manhattan. They make me feel so small.” She paused, letting the words settle over the audience. “I miss Brooklyn,” Lucy said, repeating the spirit’s words from their second conversation. “I know Manhattan and Brooklyn are the same city, but they feel so different.”

Murmurs rolled through the room like a fog. “Is she talking about the annexation of Brooklyn?” a male voice asked. “It’s really going to happen?”

“Hush,” a woman scolded.

“It takes forever to get back out to see my old friends in Brooklyn,” Lucy said. “Don’t tell anyone, but I hate going under the water in the subway. Is that silly?”

“What?” someone in the audience blurted. “A ‘subway’ to Brooklyn?”

“I guess I should study,” Lucy continued, still imitating the spirit. “You’re in school?” she then asked in her own voice.

“Of course! I want to get into a good college and then go on for a PhD. I’m going to be a physicist and work in a lab. Or maybe an engineer. Or just do research. I like research.” Lucy giggled, just as the spirit had. She tried to convey the excitement in the spirit’s voice about the future, even though the poor creature hadn’t lived long enough to fulfill any of her hopes. “I want to go to MIT. Or Columbia. Or Yale.”

Now there were whispers, gasps—even a few laughs.

“Are you sure there isn’t anyone here the spirit would like to communicate with?” Colonel Phillips interjected.

Lucy startled hearing her father’s voice. She’d been concentrating so hard on remembering the spirit’s exact words, on her performance, that she hadn’t thought about the impact what she was saying might have on the audience. She must have gone too far with talk of attending those colleges. A girl going to school with boys—shocking.

Lucy nodded, showing her father that she understood that she needed to get back to the routine. “Is there anyone here

tonight you might give a message to?” she asked in her own voice.

“Tell Laura Saunders that her son rests comfortably with me. Tell Michael Cunningham his father has forgiven him—he knows for what; we don’t need to mention anything of their quarrel here. Tell Mrs. Van Wyck that we are grateful for the opportunities she has provided and that I am looking out for her dear Amelia. She is a delightful, happy child.”

Lucy slumped. The session was over.

The gas lamps were relighted, and Colonel Phillips stood beside Lucy. “Did I do well, Father?” she asked tremulously. “Were spirits among us?”

“Yes, my dear. And now, my friends, please join us for refreshments in the outer room.”

Colonel Phillips helped Lucy stand. She allowed her eyes to linger a moment on the handsome young gentleman in the front row. When he smiled, she dropped her gaze but couldn’t stop her own smile from spreading across her face.

Colonel Phillips and Lucy joined Mrs. Van Wyck near the refreshments table. After each séance the guests were offered champagne and petit fours and an opportunity to speak to Lucy. Colonel Phillips guarded these exchanges carefully: the intention was to identify a possible source of income, additional sponsors, and potential news to relate from the “other side.” It was *not* an opportunity to ask Lucy loaded questions or try to worm a free reading out of her. But he didn’t have

to worry. Lucy was equally adept at deflecting suspicion or attempts to get something for nothing.

Usually Lucy resented the receiving line, finding it terribly dull, an unwelcome chore. Not tonight. She scanned the crowd, searching for the two good-looking young men, particularly the golden-haired one.

There he was. Heading her way, flanked by his friend. She watched, puzzled, as his approach was delayed several times by people stopping to greet him.

He walked right past her and took Mrs. Van Wyck's hand. "Mrs. Van Wyck, what a pleasure to see you. You're looking well."

"Bryce Cavanagh, so glad you could attend," Mrs. Van Wyck gushed. "I am sorry that neither of your parents could make it."

"I don't think this is really their cup of tea, do you?" he replied with a wry smile. "They're so much less . . . experimental than you are."

Mrs. Van Wyck blushed at what she was certain was a compliment; Lucy wasn't as sure.

"I'd like to present Alan Wordsworth," he said, indicating the young man beside him.

Lucy forced herself not to look at Bryce, battling her indignation that he was ignoring her. Instead she smiled at people waiting to speak with her.

"Thank you so much for including me in your delightful

evening, Mrs. Van Wyck,” Alan said. He glanced at Lucy and added, “It was quite charming.”

“Now you’re being coy, Alan,” Bryce said with a laugh. “What you mean to say is that the medium was quite charming.”

Lucy felt her cheeks grow warm, but she hid her feelings better than Alan. His face flushed scarlet, a few shades lighter than his reddish brown hair. “I—I . . .” he stammered.

Bryce clapped a hand on his friend’s back. “Sorry to have let the cat out of the bag, Alan.” He grinned at Lucy. “Mrs. Van Wyck, would you do the honors?”

Mrs. Van Wyck smiled, her little eyes twinkling. “Of course,” she said. “Lucy, Colonel Phillips, I’d like to present Bryce Cavanagh. He is the son of my dear friends Betsy and William Cavanagh and has recently graduated from Harvard. Bryce, please meet Colonel Phillips and his daughter, Lucy, of the Georgia and Kentucky Phillipses.”

“And this stuttering fool is my friend Alan,” Bryce said. “We were at Harvard together, but he graduated before I did. He’s so smart he was there on full scholarship, though you’d never know it right now.” He took Lucy’s hand and kissed it. “He may be a fool, but he has an excellent eye. You are very lovely.”

Lucy tingled to her toes, but she kept her face neutral, as if impossibly handsome college men complimented her every day. His lips hovered above her hand, his eyes burning into hers. She refused to back down from the gaze.

“We are delighted to make your acquaintance,” Colonel Phillips said, breaking the moment between Bryce and Lucy. She was grateful for her father’s interruption. From what she had observed at Mrs. Van Wyck’s soirees, young ladies of good breeding did not hold staring contests with young men. “Are you one of the Cavanaghs of Washington Square?”

Bryce released Lucy’s hand. “The very same.”

Lucy’s knees wobbled beneath her. So Bryce wasn’t just gorgeous; he was also astonishingly wealthy. Luckily, layers of petticoats covered her shaky legs.

“I’ll enjoy seeing your parents tomorrow night at the dinner,” Mrs. Van Wyck said. “They’re hosting a party to reintroduce Bryce to New York, now that he’s graduated and returned from summering in Newport,” she explained to Colonel Phillips and Lucy.

“You should come too,” Bryce told Lucy. His dark eyes flicked to Colonel Phillips. “With your father, of course.”

Lucy looked up at her father, willing him to say yes. She had no reason to worry—he would never turn down a chance to enter the heady world inhabited by the Cavanaghs.

“We’d be delighted,” Colonel Phillips answered. “Lucy has lived a sheltered life, and it would be an opportunity to introduce her to some appropriate people. As long as it isn’t an imposition on your parents . . . ?”

“Not at all,” Bryce said. “What are two more guests in that

huge house? Tomorrow at nine, then.” With that he vanished out the door.

“Terribly nice to meet you,” Alan mumbled, then took off after Bryce.

My, oh, my, was all Lucy could think.

If Mrs. Van Wyck was an example of what it would be like to have a mother, Lucy was glad she didn’t have one.

Will she ever stop fussing? Lucy thought as she endured one more inspection by Mrs. Van Wyck.

“Oh, my dear!” Mrs. Van Wyck gushed. “To think that Bryce Cavanagh specifically asked for you to come to the party. What a coup it would be for you to make such a match. And that your first meeting happened under my roof—and I made the introduction!”

“Yes, Mrs. Van Wyck.” Lucy rearranged the flowers her benefactress had just rather ungently pinned in her hair. She’d heard quite enough on this subject from her father already—she was beginning to feel like a prize cow being brought to a county fair.

“Are the ladies ready?” Colonel Phillips asked, striding into the room, gripping a brand-new derby. His pomaded hair gleamed, and his new suit was nearly as shiny. He paced the room, twirling the hat in his hands.

Lucy watched him wander from the window, to the mirror, to the settee, to the credenza, fiddling with his buttons

and hat. She was fascinated—she'd never seen her father nervous before.

They rode the few blocks to Washington Square, joining a crowd of identical shining black carriages. The clip-clops of the horses' hooves echoed noisily on the cobblestones, the full moon nearly making the gas lamps at the corners and in front of the door unnecessary. As Mrs. Van Wyck chattered about other parties she'd attended at the Cavanaghs', Lucy took in every detail: the elegant liverymen opening the carriage doors, helping down the ladies who lifted the hems of their furs and velvet cloaks. Peering through the glass of the carriage, she felt as if she were watching a marvelous magic lantern slide show. She'd always imagined herself stepping into those magical scenes, and now she was about to do just that. The sounds of the horses stomping and snorting, the men calling to each other as they tipped their hats, helped her know it was real.

Hats. Lucy glanced at the scene outside the carriage window, then at her father's derby. All the other men wore tall top hats. His coat was wrong too—the lapels too broad, the cloth thinner, brighter than the subdued heavy wools entering the mansion. Her father was the *approximation* of a gentleman, not the real thing.

She licked her lips, which seemed suddenly to have gone dry. Her hand trembled slightly as her father helped her down

from the carriage. She did her best to calm herself as they approached the looming mansion.

Once inside, Lucy fiddled with the ribbons of her cloak, sweat beading on her upper lip. *This dress simply cannot be wrong.*

Lucy couldn't delay handing over her cloak one more minute. Mrs. Van Wyck had already been relieved of her evening coat, and she and Colonel Phillips stood waiting. *If I am embarrassed tonight, I will never forgive them,* she thought, practically flinging her coat at the waiting housemaid. She straightened her back, held up her chin, and took in a deep breath to prepare herself for whatever lay ahead.

She had been so focused on her concern about her dress that she hadn't even noticed the extraordinary entryway: the soaring ceiling with a painted mural, the alcoves adorned with bronze statues, the marble floor. Mrs. Van Wyck was wealthy, but *this!* *This* was a home for royalty. Did real people live like this?

Bryce Cavanagh does, she reminded herself.

A uniformed servant ushered them into a ballroom where dozens of round, linen-covered tables had been set up. At the far end an orchestra played and a few couples danced. "The Cavanaghs decided on a casual dance," the servant explained. "There will be no entrance into dinner, so please feel free to go in."

"This is a small party," Mrs. Van Wyck commented.

“About fifty, I’d guess. Very exclusive. Usually the Cavanaghs host several hundred.” She squeezed Lucy’s arm, her excitement for Lucy making her giggle like a schoolgirl.

Lucy nodded mutely as she observed the partygoers milling about. She absently slipped out of Mrs. Van Wyck’s grip and stepped deeper into the vast room. As far as she could tell, there was nothing amiss with her outfit. In fact, judging by the turning heads, the questioning glances, and the occasional glares as they wound their way to their table, Lucy assumed she looked as beautiful as her father claimed.

At the table, Lucy saw that little cards were set at each place. Her pulse raced slightly.

“Mrs. Van Wyck,” Colonel Philips said, pulling out a chair, “how thoughtful that they put you on my right side and Lucy to my left.” He smiled pointedly at Lucy. She walked quickly to her place, and a servant pulled out her chair.

Mrs. Van Wyck reached for the place card at the setting beside her. “‘Miss Carlyle,’” she read. “That will be nice. I haven’t seen her since the first *séance*. Who’s beside you, Lucy?”

Lucy stared at the place card at the next setting, uncertain. Should she pick it up and then claim the handwriting was too difficult to read?

“Hello again,” a deep voice said.

Lucy looked up to see Alan Wordsworth standing above her.

“Good evening,” Lucy replied as he settled into the chair

beside her. Her sense of relief lasted only a moment. Had Alan been seated at her table because he had specifically asked for her company? Could Bryce have only invited her to make Alan happy? They were college friends, after all. What had Bryce said? That Alan was there as a scholarship student. That meant he hadn't been able to pay.

"Everyone looks so beautiful," Lucy said, using the comment as an excuse to look around the room for Bryce. She spotted him at a table near the orchestra, flanked by an older couple she assumed were his parents. He leaned back against his chair in a languid pose, a bored look on his handsome face.

Lucy watched as Bryce's eyes roamed the room. She willed them to turn toward her, vowing that if he looked at her, she wouldn't look away. Dark eyes found her. She smiled very slowly, determined not to let those eyes go, to keep his unwavering focus.

They held the gaze across the room for longer than Lucy imagined possible; then Bryce's father said something that made Bryce turn away.

The connection broken, Lucy felt herself relax.

"Isn't that so, child?" Mrs. Van Wyck said.

"Lucy?" Colonel Phillips added somewhat sharply.

"I—I suppose so," Lucy guessed.

Mrs. Van Wyck laughed. "Don't be so modest, dear." She turned to Miss Carlyle. "You were at the *séance*. Tell them how marvelous it was!"

“Not if it will embarrass Miss Phillips,” Miss Carlyle protested.

“Oh, that’s all right,” Lucy assured the rotund Miss Carlyle, relieved to have re-entered the conversation so easily. She recognized the couple across from her as also having been at the first séance. Hannigan? No, Holden. The gentleman with the enormous whiskers was new to her, and the other, younger couple was also unfamiliar.

“I’ve been to séances before,” Miss Carlyle said, “but Miss Phillips was quite different from any medium I’d ever seen.”

The whiskered gentleman’s eyes widened beneath his extravagant eyebrows. “You are *that* Miss Phillips?”

The unfamiliar woman observed Lucy with new interest. “Why, I’ve heard of you! You’re the one who predicted the election.”

Lucy smiled. “I had no idea I was doing such a thing. All I cared about was relating the spirit’s words faithfully.”

The woman turned to her companion. “I told you about her, Horace. Mabel Farnsworth had heard from Gloria Buren that this girl could speak to spirits!”

Horace peered at Lucy through his pince-nez glasses. “Well, well, if the old commodore were still alive, I bet he’d be first in line!”

“Commodore?” Lucy asked.

“Commodore Vanderbilt,” Colonel Phillips explained.

That was a name Lucy recognized—he had been one of the wealthiest men in New York. “He always said he did so well in the market by consulting with the spirits.”

“And can you help us acquire such wealth, young lady?” Horace asked.

Miss Carlyle laughed. “You don’t need any more wealth, Horace. Your family already owns half of Fifth Avenue!”

Horace grinned. “But that isn’t the same as owning it *all*, now, is it?”

“Some of us are more interested in the spiritual possibilities than the financial gain,” Mrs. Van Wyck scolded.

“All those spiritualists have their heads in the clouds,” Horace argued. “I’m interested in nuts-and-bolts reality.” He tipped his head at Lucy and added, “No offense, young lady.”

Lucy only smiled: she knew that at this table, Horace’s opinion was that of the minority. Her father had trained her to recognize when she had an audience enraptured. This was just such a moment.

“Not everyone considers the spiritualist movement to be populated by dunderheads,” Alan said.

“Horace didn’t mean to say *that*,” the woman beside Horace quickly interjected. “Did you, dear?”

“Of course not, Charity.” He patted his companion’s hand. “I take it you have such an interest?” he asked Alan.

Alan squirmed slightly in his chair. Lucy wondered if he

was uncomfortable because if he said no, he'd be insulting Lucy, and if he said yes, Horace might think he was a fool.

"Many people have come to see me," Lucy said. "They have seemed to me to be of quite high intelligence."

Horace smirked. "I'm sure they were."

Colonel Phillips picked up his knife and tapped it on the table absentmindedly. "The list of visitors is quite impressive."

"A number of my colleagues and scientists in many fields are all interested in exploring the spiritual realm," Alan said. "I myself have become quite curious about how much of our identities are retained after we die."

"That's natural, in your work," Mr. Holden said. "Being so close to death as a doctor . . ."

Mrs. Holden leaned toward Lucy. "What is it like? When you make contact, I mean."

Lucy took a moment to gaze around the table. A good performer knew how to prolong a moment, to wait until the audience was hooked. Each face shone with expectation, eager to hear what she had to say. Even Horace's superior expression had melted into a careful neutrality. Inwardly Lucy smirked. He had been beaten, and he knew that she knew it. Her father beamed, then gave a tiny nod, giving her the go-ahead to rope them in.

"Well," Lucy began, basking in the shining eyes, the glitter surrounding her. She glowed as brightly as the crystal chandeliers. "I go very still inside. . . ."

Eight

By the time the dessert plates were cleared, Lucy had won over even Horace Schmidt. He might not have become a believer, but it was clear that Lucy had charmed them all. Horace and his companion got up to dance. Miss Carlyle and Mrs. Van Wyck had left the table to visit with a friend on the other side of the room. Now that Lucy's audience was dispersing, she began fretting over Bryce's lack of attention, until she saw that he and his parents were strolling through the tables, greeting their guests.

Three tables away.

Lucy smoothed her skirt.

Two tables away.

Lucy patted her hair ornaments, straightened her necklace.

One table away.

Lucy took in a deep breath and released it just as she heard Bryce's voice behind her. *I will not look at him until he speaks to me*, she ordered herself.

"Father, Mother, I believe you know everyone here," Bryce said. "Oh, except for Colonel Phillips and his daughter, Lucy."

Lucy swiveled slightly so that she could face Bryce and his parents.

“Very kind of you to include Lucy and me in your party,” Colonel Phillips said as he stood and tipped his head in a modified bow.

“Bryce was rather insistent,” Mrs. Cavanagh said with a breathy laugh. Lucy could feel the woman appraising her, evaluating her father. “But he was terribly unclear as to how he knows you.”

“Colonel Phillips and Lucy are staying with Mrs. Van Wyck. Alan and I had called on her and met them there,” Bryce explained.

“And it was most generous of you to include me as well,” Alan said.

“You’re at Riverview Hospital now, isn’t that right?” Mr. Cavanagh asked. “The charity wards?”

Alan nodded. “An intern.”

Mr. Cavanagh barked a laugh. “Well, then the least we can do is feed you, dear boy. That place is notorious for its long hours and meager pay.”

“And what brings you to New York?” Mrs. Cavanagh asked Colonel Phillips.

“A multitude of interests,” Colonel Phillips replied. “But I don’t care much for discussing business in the presence of such loveliness.”

Lucy sat in silence, wondering why Bryce wasn’t speaking

directly to her and why he didn't explain that she was *the* Lucy Phillips, the medium everyone was talking about. The celebrity who had impressed this tableful of snobs.

"Have you been enjoying your stay?" Mrs. Cavanagh asked, her voice no less chilly despite Colonel Phillips's attempt to charm.

"Oh, very much," Lucy said, before her father could respond. "Mrs. Van Wyck is too kind. But I've been kept so busy I've barely been able to see anything of New York. Or go to parties like this. Or anything."

"If you're not going to parties, then what is keeping a young girl like you so busy?" Mr. Cavanagh asked.

"Dancing with me, I'm afraid." Alan stood and pulled out Lucy's chair. "The orchestra is playing the dance you promised me."

Everyone at the table looked at Lucy. She had no choice but to stand and allow Alan to escort her to the dance floor.

Lucy fumed, but she couldn't refuse him; it would have been far too rude. *Who does he think he is? Bryce will get the wrong idea!*

"That was rather abrupt, don't you think?" Lucy said indignantly. "I barely had a chance to speak with Bryce's parents."

Alan put his hand on Lucy's waist and took her hand. He began to move her through the dancing couples.

"I was helping you," Alan said quietly. "You were about to tell them about your special abilities, weren't you?"

“Of course. It would impress them to know that I’m famous!”

“If you want to make an impression on Bryce’s family, you won’t mention such things,” Alan warned. “Proper young ladies don’t charge fees to people eager to speak to the dead. It would be considered terribly inappropriate. In the same category as being an actress. Worse, actually.”

“Oh.” Lucy allowed herself to be guided around the floor. She kept her eyes on the top button of Alan’s shirt. Finally she looked up at his face. “I suppose I should thank you, then.”

“The Cavanaghs are part of a society that takes itself, and its members, very seriously. Rules, unspoken and otherwise, guide them at all times. One of those rules is that young women do not call attention to themselves.”

“But—” Lucy stopped herself. If what Alan was saying was true, had she ruined her chances at entering this world by all the bragging she had just done at the table? Her shoulders slumped. She had thought she’d been doing so well at fitting in.

The song ended, and Alan returned her to the table. Bryce and his parents were now across the room. As everyone else at the table chatted, Lucy sat staring into her lap, wondering how soon they could leave.

“You look as bored as I feel,” Bryce whispered into her ear, his hands on the seat back, his lips in her hair.

Lucy’s eyes closed. His warm breath very gently fluttered her curls, and his smooth voice enveloped her. Before she

could think of a response, he pulled out her chair. "Dance with me," he commanded.

Lucy was aware that their progress onto the dance floor was being watched, that people were trying to figure out who she was. She had studied the other couples all night long, so she was fairly confident she would be able to dance as if a society ballroom were her natural habitat.

"I'm sorry I couldn't rescue you earlier," Bryce said, his hand on her waist, his mouth near her cheek. "Parents, you know."

"I understand," Lucy replied.

"I hope you didn't find your company too tedious," he continued, easily moving her between couples. "My mother was rather irked at having to add you and your father to the guest list on such short notice. So I added Alan and the others too. I told them that this way, we could simply add another full table rather than try to squeeze you and your father in somewhere."

"But Mrs. Van Wyck had already been invited," Lucy said.

"Yes," Bryce said, "but Mother hadn't yet decided where to put her. Or Miss Carlyle. She feels an obligation because of their family lineages, but they are both a bit bohemian for the Cavanaghs."

Lucy tried to think of something to say, something to hold his attention. Luckily Bryce seemed eager to talk, so she let herself simply enjoy what it felt like to be held close to this handsome man, to listen to his velvety voice, to hear about the places he'd been, the places he intended to go.

As he twirled her around the dance floor, she imagined herself dancing with him in Vienna, accompanying his mother to Paris to order new gowns each season. To be part of a family that determined who was in and who was out.

Lucy felt as if the world were holding its breath, every creature, plant, and tree waiting for Bryce to kiss her.

She perched on her seat, alert in all her senses, as Bryce's carriage took a plodding pace around Central Park. The clip-clop of the horse's rhythmic, rocking walk was far slower than the racing in Lucy's veins.

It was a week since the dance, and Bryce had called for her several times. This was the first time they had been alone in his carriage. Bryce had slipped his arm across her shoulders, and so far both were pretending that neither noticed this contact. He continued pointing out the various statues dotting the landscape, and she continued to murmur, "How lovely" and, "How interesting."

The carriage took a winding turn, and Bryce used it as an opportunity to press closer to her. Lucy didn't move away. Seeming to take this as permission, Bryce clutched her waist and yanked Lucy even closer, his lips suddenly firm on hers, his hands strong and certain.

Lucy let the kiss overwhelm her, trying to ignore the question in the back of her mind: would a "proper young lady" allow him to touch her so freely?

Her satin skirts rustled as his hands caressed her. She caught his faint scent: far more delicate than that of any of the boys who'd flung themselves in her direction in the boardinghouses and saloons she'd traipsed through on her way to Greenwich Village and society.

Society. Lucy remembered herself, her goals. She pushed Bryce away, wiped her mouth, and very effectively feigned socially acceptable indignation. "Please take me home now."

Anger flashed on Bryce's face, but it quickly vanished. He gave the order to the coachman, then sat gazing out the window. For a moment Lucy worried that she had gone too far, but when he slid his hand to cover hers on the seat, she knew she had played it just right. When they arrived at Mrs. Van Wyck's, Lucy let her goodbye kiss linger just a bit, a promise of what might come if he behaved himself. He was smiling when he drove away.

"Mr. Grasser is waiting for you with your father in the front parlor," the housemaid told Lucy when she stepped inside.

"Thank you, Bridget." Lucy untied the ribbons of her new bonnet. She smiled at the hat that Bryce had called "fetching" before handing it to Bridget. She wished Mr. Grasser hadn't arrived so early; she had hoped for time alone to relive her afternoon with Bryce and to plan the next.

"You're repeating yourself," Mr. Grasser stated coldly, without so much as a hello. "You're losing your audience. If

things don't improve, I will cancel these performances. I, too, have a reputation."

Lucy was so startled by Mr. Grasser's hostility she was speechless. She had noticed that there were fewer people attending her nightly séances this past week, but she hadn't realized Mr. Grasser was ready to drop her. She called to the spirit every opportunity she had—morning, afternoon, evening, even late at night—but there was still no response.

"I—I'll do better," Lucy stammered.

"See that you do," Mr. Grasser said. "I'm staying for tonight's performance."

"Give us time to get ready," Colonel Phillips said, his tone making it clear that Mr. Grasser was dismissed and that Lucy was about to get a talking-to.

"You've been spending a great deal of time with that Cavanagh boy," Colonel Phillips said after Mr. Grasser left the room.

"Yes," Lucy replied warily. Why would that bother her father? He was as pleased as Mrs. Van Wyck about this potential match with a wealthy family.

"Don't let your fancies get in the way of the game," he warned. He looked at her sharply. "Or are you losing heart? I understand your performances don't meet his high-and-mighty approval." He took a few steps toward her, his expression hard. "As your father, I could forbid the attachment. Find a more pliable mark."

"Bryce isn't the problem!" Lucy exclaimed.

“Then what is?” Colonel Phillips asked.

Lucy shrugged. “Perhaps the spirit doesn’t enjoy being turned into a parlor game.”

Colonel Phillips grabbed Lucy’s shoulders so roughly one of her hair bobs flew to the ground. “Don’t take that tone with me, dearie dear. Don’t try to kid the kidder. Why aren’t you playing the game right?”

Lucy shrank inside her dress. “She won’t speak to me anymore,” she blurted. “I don’t know why.”

Colonel Phillips’s blue eyes searched Lucy’s face. She felt as if she were being probed for lies, peeled for the truth. His grip loosened, but he still didn’t let go as surprise crossed his face. “You really believe this.”

“It happened,” Lucy insisted. “I can’t explain it. But she spoke to me. Everything I told you, she told me. She’s real. *I’m* real. I mean, I *was* real. She just won’t respond. Not anymore.”

The Colonel released her. He backed up a few steps, his eyes never leaving her face. Then he turned and gazed out the window, his hands clasped behind his back.

Lucy waited, uncertain. She couldn’t tell which angered him more—that the spirit was real or that she could no longer make contact.

“Well, well, well.” Colonel Phillips turned slowly. “I did wonder at that imagination of yours. Some of those things you were saying . . .”

“Everything I said was something she told me.”

He nodded. "She knew about the election!"

"I don't know how—but yes."

He leaned against the wall, one leg crossed over the other, studying her. "Let's say you really did make contact with the great beyond. The question is now—how do we continue to draw the suckers in?"

"I don't know," Lucy whispered.

Colonel Phillips stroked his chin. "It is a more satisfying show the way you do it now—speaking the girl's words as if you're repeating them."

"Why can't I keep doing that?" Lucy asked.

"Because this is a small community. People talk. And if you don't keep wowing 'em, they'll move on to something else."

"So what should I do?" Lucy asked.

"Keep doing what you've been doing for now and I'll talk to Peabody. We'll need to resort to flashier tricks to keep those seats full and our pockets heavy. And keep trying with that spirit." He looked at Lucy again. "Go get yourself ready. You look . . . I don't know what, but you don't look right."

Lucy nodded. She hurried out of the room and up the stairs. Did her father suspect how she and Bryce had spent their time in the carriage? She made straight for the looking glass when she stepped into her suite and examined herself carefully. No, as exhilarating as the kisses had been, they had left no permanent mark on her.

She fingered the expensive satin walking dress. Ever since

she and her father went into partnership with Mr. Grasser, Lucy had dresses for every time of day, every possible event. She would not go back to her tattered, made-over frocks.

What if Mr. Grasser made good on his threats and stopped presenting her? What then? Back to the boardinghouse. Back to scrounging. Back to hunger, and anger, and fear.

Lucy gazed at her reflection, her lips pressing together, her jaw tightening. She had come so far. If the spirit truly had deserted her, she would have to find another way.

Nine

“Where is it?” Lindsay fumed, grabbing a pile of sweaters and tossing them aside. Kneeling in the middle of the mess in her room, she shoved papers, jeans, shoes away from her as she crawled across the floor. She slumped against the wall, then, realizing that she was leaning against her closet door, stumbled to her feet and charged to her bed.

She flung herself down, covered her face with her hands. She was so tired. For the last two weeks she had slept with the lights on. Well, tried to. It was hard to fall asleep with three one-hundred-watt bulbs glaring down at you.

She usually left the TV on too. That way, any voices she might hear she could dismiss as coming from the television. Just an actor, just an infomercial, just normal stuff.

Normal.

Her door opened and she sat up quickly. She relaxed slightly when she saw it was her mom in the doorway. Not the Husband.

“What the hell . . . ?” Melanie picked up her feet high and carefully placed them in the few patches of floor still visible. “What is going on in here?”

Lindsay scanned her room. Two weeks ago, after she'd spoken to the voice again, she'd emptied out her closet and left the door shut. Sometimes she couldn't help opening the closet door just to check, and most times the voice called out.

"Lindz?" Melanie said, swiveling her head to take in all the crap strewn around the room. "I thought *you* were the neat freak and I was the slob."

Lindsay focused on a stack of books half buried under her winter coat. *There it is.* She got up and carefully made her way across the mess, the piles of T-shirts, jeans, sweat-shirts, shoes, sneakers, and books. She picked up her coat and dumped it in the corner, then grabbed the textbook she'd been searching for.

"Lindsay, I mean it. What is up with you?"

Tears stung Lindsay's eyes. *Can I tell her?*

"Don't let Carl see your room like this," Melanie scolded. "He'll be seriously pissed. Jeez."

Hearing the Husband's name froze the tears that had welled up. "I'm reorganizing," Lindsay said. "I didn't like how my closet was set up." She turned and faced her mom. She quickly looked away again.

I had a plan, she thought. I was going to pry her away from Carl and get her back to meetings. But the beer in her mother's hand at this hour of the morning told her that the window of opportunity had passed. She'd been so caught up in her freak-out over hearing the voice, she'd missed her chance.

Her mom had always managed to make it till lunch before hitting the booze—until now.

“Are you going to clean this up anytime soon?” Melanie asked.

Lindsay kept her eyes on the curtain. “You know it always looks worse before it gets better.”

“Huh.” Melanie seemed to assent. “Whatever. Just keep your door shut.”

No worries there, Lindsay thought. “Did you want something?” She sat on the floor and pulled on a nearby sock.

Melanie’s brow furrowed. “Oh, right. I heard you in here and I thought you had already left for school. Aren’t you usually gone by now?”

Lindsay’s heart revved. Lately she kept missing her alarm because she had so much trouble falling asleep.

“Yeah,” she said, grabbing another sock and pulling it on. It didn’t match, but she didn’t want to take the time to look for the other. Who’d notice, anyway? She stood and picked up her backpack, eager to get out of the room. “You’re right, thanks.”

Melanie hovered in the doorway. *Why won’t she move out of the way?* Lindsay rummaged through her pack, making sure she had the right notebooks, the library books, her wallet.

“Lindz.”

Lindsay stared into the dark folds inside her pack, her hand stopped by the sound of her mother’s voice. Soft. Caressing. Reaching.

If I talk, what will happen? She felt a wail rising inside her. If she talked, would everything explode? What would the first words be?

“Melanie!” the Husband bellowed from somewhere.

“Just a goddamn minute,” Melanie hollered over her shoulder.

Lindsay stood and slung on her backpack. It was still warm for fall, so she didn’t bother with a coat. She moved toward the door.

“Lindsay,” Melanie said quietly. “This has been a lot of adjusting for you. I get that.”

“Mmm.”

“So . . . so if you want to talk to me about . . . things . . .”

“Melanie! Get your ass in here!” the Husband shouted again.

“Shut up!” Melanie shouted back. She sighed, then glanced at Lindsay. Her eyes had changed: they were shaded, shifting. “We can talk later. Don’t want to start the day badly.” She peeled herself off the doorjamb and slouched away.

Lindsay shut her eyes. She counted to ten, then she counted to twenty. Enough time to let them be so wrapped up in screaming at each other they didn’t bother to notice her as she slipped out the door.

Gotta make headway on the history-of-science paper, Lindsay vowed. She began making a to-do list in her head. She’d blown a pop quiz in calc yesterday, screwed up equations she

could write in her sleep. *Talk to Johnson about a makeup quiz. Study stupid French and catch up on the homework. Set up an inter-library loan account to get additional research material.*

Library. Damn. She'd been in the library every day before and after school for the last two weeks and still couldn't manage to get the overdue books back. *Do laundry. Stop being crazy.*

Her pace picked up. There weren't any kids hanging around outside; the bell must have already rung. She'd been late every morning this week.

She slid into her seat and slumped down as if she'd been there all along. The second bell rang. *Safe.*

"Glad to see you could make it, Lindsay," Mr. Chu, her homeroom teacher, commented.

Lindsay shrugged. She recognized the warning, but she had bigger things to worry about.

As she walked the crowded halls from one class to another, she reminded herself not to hear the voice. Not now, not ever. So far the voice hadn't been anywhere but in the closet. Lindsay didn't understand why that was true, but it was. She consoled herself a little with that. But she intended to stay vigilant.

In classes she didn't raise her hand, afraid she'd yawn, and besides, it had been two weeks since she could really pay attention. She'd lost track of subjects, hadn't done her usual exhaustive investigation of discussion topics.

At lunch she decided to not go to the library. She'd been spending every lunch period there researching her symptoms. She had found out hearing voices was just one aspect, one bit of evidence, one of several elements conspiring to make a diagnosis. The books shouted out to her that she was at the age schizophrenia often first appears; big emotional stressors could bring it on, triggers like, gee, maybe a monster of a surprise stepfather?

She got her food and then found Karin at their usual table. She stood there a moment before realizing there weren't any empty chairs. Should she put down her tray and go grab one?

Finally Karin glanced over her shoulder. "Oh, hey, Lindsay," she said. She went back to her yogurt.

Lindsay blinked several times. *Am I not supposed to sit here anymore?*

"Lindsay!" Pamela Martin from science club called from a nearby table. She hurried over. "Are you okay? You haven't been to a meeting for the past two weeks."

Lindsay looked at the back of Karin's head and then at Pamela. "What?"

"Where have you been? Did you drop out of the club? I hope not."

That's right. Science club. Tuesdays. Tuesday was a night that the big social sciences library stayed open late. Lindsay shook her head. "No, I had a research project."

That satisfied Pamela. Brains understood extracurricular studying—it was what they did. She nodded and smiled, but she didn't walk away.

“So . . .” she said, “should we go grab a seat?”

Lindsay looked at Karin again, but she just leaned across the table and said something to Justin. He laughed.

Does Karin hate me now? Lindsay felt herself grow cold. *She knows there's something wrong with me.*

Wait. Lindsay recognized another symptom from the list she'd memorized. Was that thought an example of paranoia?

Focus on Pamela. She just asked you something.

“I'll try,” Lindsay said.

Pamela looked confused, which must mean that was the wrong answer.

“I mean, sure, whatever,” Lindsay tried again, figuring that response should cover a lot.

“Okay, how about over there?” Pamela walked past Lindsay, heading for a table full of kids from science club. Mutely, Lindsay followed.

She went over the last two weeks in her head. When had things changed with Karin? They still sat next to each other in history of science and honors calc, but now that she thought about it, Lindsay realized she hadn't been as chatty as usual.

When history of science rolled around, Lindsay slid into the seat beside Karin and flashed a big smile. “So, what's up?”

Karin raised an eyebrow. “What do you mean?”

“Well, it’s just, uh . . .” Lindsay scanned her brain, looking for something reasonable to say. “Have you come up with a paper topic?”

Karin shrugged, then her eyes traveled over Lindsay. “I should ask *you* what’s up.”

Lindsay flinched. “Wh-why?”

“You’ve been really out of it.” Karin shook her head, her long earrings twisting. “Word is you’re getting high.”

“What?” Lindsay stared at Karin.

Karin lowered her voice. “That’s how it adds up. I mean, you’re different in class. And what’s with this getup? You trying to piss off your mom or something?”

Lindsay glanced down at herself, heat rising in her face. With everything in her closet on her floor, she couldn’t keep track of what was clean, much less what looked good. She had stopped caring. Today, not only didn’t her socks match, her red hoodie had holes in the pockets and clashed horribly with her orange long-sleeved tee. She realized she’d been in such a rush to get out, she hadn’t bothered to put on makeup.

Her stomach soured. *Self-neglect. That’s another symptom*, Lindsay remembered. “No,” she blurted. “That’s not it.”

Karin seemed to be waiting for more explanation, but Lindsay didn’t have one she could give her. She wasn’t going to say those words out loud.

Ten

Lucy gazed at the dismal scene outside the carriage window. Dug-up earth, shacks, chickens, scrubby men, and grubby women.

Are we lost? Lucy wondered. She couldn't imagine what could possibly bring Bryce and his parents up to this part of New York. The other carriages rattling beside them provided the only clue that perhaps this expedition wasn't completely off track.

The driver continued alongside Central Park. At Seventy-seventh Street he made a sharp turn, and then Lucy saw the imposing, five-story brick building rising like a lone mountain in the flat, torn-up ground surrounding it.

"They've made real progress with the grounds," Mr. Cavanaugh said, peering out the window.

"This wasteland is progress?" Bryce asked, echoing Lucy's unspoken thought. She remembered the spirit telling her about wealthy people living all around Central Park, not just on Fifth Avenue but also on the West Side. Now that she was seeing the desolate area, she guessed the spirit had her facts wrong.

“These things take time,” Mr. Cavanagh said. “Anything done correctly does.”

Lucy considered it a coup—and something of a relief—to be included in this outing with Bryce and his parents. She had been concerned that her responsiveness to his amorous advances over the last few days might have marked her as unsuitable. That and his increasingly frequent, barely disguised disapproval of her life as a medium. But unless she had a ring on her finger, she couldn’t risk giving it up.

Still, I have to be careful, she reminded herself. *If I want to be accepted in society, I have to behave as the girls in his circle do.*

Bryce grinned at Lucy. He sat opposite her with his father, while she was squeezed in beside Mrs. Cavanagh.

“Have you ever been to the American Museum of Natural History?” Mrs. Cavanagh asked Lucy.

“No. I’ve never been this far north before.”

“Mr. Cavanagh is a trustee of the museum,” Mrs. Cavanagh said. “There is a new campaign to raise money for the endowment.”

“Father is an amateur naturalist,” Bryce explained. “Though what he sees in those cases of stuffed birds is beyond me.”

“Perhaps you’d prefer to go on expeditions,” Mr. Cavanagh said. “More excitement.”

“And leave the comforts of home?” Bryce laughed. “Not a chance.”

“You need to do something with your time,” Mrs. Cavanagh

scolded. "I won't have you wasting yourself on—" She cut herself off with a quick flick of her eyes to Lucy, then back to Bryce. "Now that you've graduated, do you have any interests you'd like to pursue?"

"Yes," Bryce said, with a sly smile at Lucy.

Lucy blushed. He shouldn't make innuendos like that in front of his parents, but she couldn't help enjoying it, particularly after that barely concealed dig of his mother's.

"Perhaps you'd like to get involved with the endowment campaign for the museum with your father," Mrs. Cavanagh suggested.

"We'll see."

"If the museum doesn't interest you," she continued, impatience edging into her well-modulated voice, "perhaps Alan Wordsworth's work at Riverview Hospital is something you could become involved in."

"Are you actually holding Alan Wordsworth up to me as someone to emulate?" Bryce complained.

"Alan is rising above his . . . antecedents . . . rather admirably," Mrs. Cavanagh said.

"Not only is he dull as dishwater, he is horribly lacking in any of the skills needed to succeed in society."

Lucy was surprised by Bryce's assessment of Alan. She had thought they were friends. She hadn't found Alan dull when they sat together at the dinner dance. He seemed nice, if a bit obsessed with his work.

“You have advantages he does not,” Mrs. Cavanagh reminded Bryce.

“Yes, Mother, I know. You remind me every few minutes.”

Try as she might, Lucy couldn’t care much about Bryce’s debate with his parents. What a luxury to pick and choose a way to spend your time, to be so wealthy that a profession was merely an optional pursuit! Lucy had real fear that she was losing her means of support. The last few séances had been noticeably lack-luster. She had to find some way to get the spirit back again.

She was so preoccupied with her own concerns that she had no idea how the argument between the Cavanaghs was resolved. All she knew was that as they entered the museum, Mrs. Cavanagh’s face was a stone mask, Mr. Cavanagh was highly excited about seeing some rare stuffed bird, and Bryce was explaining that he wanted to show Lucy the bison on the first floor. If Mrs. Cavanagh hadn’t been so annoyed, she probably would never have allowed Bryce to take Lucy off alone.

“You seem a bit distracted,” Bryce commented.

Should she tell him her troubles—indirectly, of course?

She thought back to all she’d heard about spirits and mediums. She remembered that many spirit guides were of other cultures. Maybe she could reach the spirit if she knew what her background was.

“What kind of name do you think Lindsay is?” Lucy asked. She’d never heard that name before—perhaps it was foreign.

“What was that?” Bryce asked.

“Lindsay,” Lucy repeated.

“Lindsay,” Bryce said. “Hmm. It *is* unusual.”

“Lindsay.” Lucy said again, rolling it over her tongue. “What kind of girl would be named Lindsay?”

“Okay, kids. Let’s go over the assignment one more time before we split up,” Mr. Nunez told the class.

Lindsay hovered at the edge of the group, clutching her notebook. They were on a field trip at the Museum of Natural History. She had to do well on this assignment. All of her grades had been slipping, and she’d gotten her first ever C on a calc test.

I’m so tired. She’d had another sleepless week, to add to all the other nights. She leaned her head against one of the towering marble columns in the entry hall. She caught herself drifting and snapped up her head. *Pay attention.*

“Today we’re looking at two different things.” Mr. Nunez’s voice echoed across the marble, jarring Lindsay’s jangled nerves. “We’re looking at how to use a museum as a resource, and we’re using that resource to examine evolutionary adaptation. Often species that have the same way of life—the same environmental pressures—can evolve almost exactly the same way no matter how different they actually are from each other. What you’re looking for . . .”

Lindsay had trouble focusing. She tried keeping Nunez in sight—his squat, solid form disappeared as he paced in front

of the taller kids in her class. Kids like Karin and Justin. Who no longer spoke to her.

“So, you’ve got the floor plan. We’ll meet back up at the Blum lecture room in the Education wing just through the Northwest Coast Indian exhibit.” He scanned the group. “Any questions? No? Well, if you come up with any, Mrs. Cohen and I will be sitting in the café at the Seventy-seventh Street entrance overdoing the caffeine. Just behind the war canoe.”

The class scattered and Lindsay listened to their pounding feet, their voices jumbling together like a snarled skein of yarn, echoing in the vast marble hallway.

“Lindsay?” Mr. Nunez said, walking over to her. She hadn’t noticed he was still there.

I’m so tired, she thought again. *Will I ever sleep?* She was someone else now, someone she didn’t know. Someone who got Cs on exams, who couldn’t keep up, who had no friends, who couldn’t concentrate at all but still spent as much time as she could in libraries, anywhere away from the voice. She poked the column with her pen, wishing she’d never heard that stupid girl talking to her.

“Lindsay, is everything all right?” Mr. Nunez asked.

“Yeah. Fine. Just tired.” She straightened up and stared down at her notebook.

“Is something going on you want to talk about?” he asked. “You’ve seemed a bit . . . *different* in class.”

Lindsay roused herself to respond. “Just, you know, stuff.” She wiggled her notebook at him. “Time to go investigate!”

He fiddled with change in his pockets; she saw him making some kind of decision. “Well, you know where I’ll be if you want to talk to me.”

Lindsay nodded. “Café. Drinking too much coffee.”

He smiled. “No such thing.”

Lindsay looked at the floor plan. “So how do I get to the Hall of Biodiversity?”

An hour later, back on the first floor, Lindsay managed to find her way to the Northwest Coast Indian hall. She passed around a huge canoe filled with mannequins made to look like Native Americans, noticing Nunez at a little metal table with four paper coffee cups in front of him. She pushed through the glass doors into an area that looked much older than the exhibits she’d just been in. She checked her map again, looking for the auditorium.

“Lindsay.”

She froze in front of a dimly lit case holding miniatures. Tiny little figures. Tiny little houses. Tiny little trees. Her head whipped around—there wasn’t anyone else in the room.

Where is everyone? She glanced at her watch. She was early.

“Lindsay,” a girl said. “What kind of girl is named Lindsay?”

Lindsay’s stomach rolled over. The voice. It had followed her out of the closet. Found her here—in public. It had figured out how to follow her.

“Lindsay.”

Lindsay covered her ears. “Shut up!” she shrieked. “Stop calling me! Leave me alone!”

Life-size Indian figures stared impassively ahead from the cases lining the walls.

“Lindsay.”

She collapsed in front of the case, huddled crouching on the patterned marble floor. “Stop talking to me!” she pleaded. “Stop!”

A whisper of a breeze indicated the glass doors opening, chatter of kids entering, heading for the lecture hall.

Lindsay let out a wail.

Someone rushed over, knelt beside her. “Call Mr. Nunez. She’s totally freaking out.”

“That chick’s on crack,” someone said. “She’s such a weirdo.”

“Shut up,” someone else said. “She’s sick or something.”

“Leave me alone!” Lindsay shrieked again. She flopped over, curling into a ball on the floor. She kept her hands over her face.

“Get away from her.” Mr. Nunez broke through the crowd of kids and squatted beside her. He gripped Lindsay’s wrist. “It’s all right, Lindsay,” he told her. “We’re going to take care of you. Go find Mrs. Cohen and a security guard,” he said over his shoulder. “Tell them we have a medical emergency.”

Lindsay had the strangest sensation that the only part of

her that was real was the skin under Mr. Nunez's surprisingly small, plump hand. Every muscle in her body went limp as she realized that her secret was out. Everyone knew she was crazy.

Lucy froze in front of the exhibit case. The spirit was screaming at her. Why now, of all times, was she finally responding?

"Looks like we've got company," Bryce said, nodding toward his parents.

Lucy smiled tightly, ignoring the raging in her head. She was afraid that if she opened her mouth, the spirit's voice might somehow come out.

The shrieks finally subsided. Lucy slowly massaged the sides of her head and did her best to collect herself. Had the spirit followed her here? Lucy was shaken. She couldn't fathom what she might have done to offend her.

"Are you all right?" Bryce asked Lucy.

Mutely, Lucy shook her head. She couldn't risk speaking and provoking the spirit again.

"My dear, you look like you're about to faint," Mr. Cavanagh said. He took her elbow. "Perhaps the journey or the crowds are too much for you."

Lucy allowed Mr. Cavanagh to bring her over to a marble bench. *Interesting*. Being weak was an asset in this world. On the farm it was strength, and on the street it was a wily, survivor's nature that was valuable. If frailty seemed respectable in this world, then frail she would be.

“I—I do feel somewhat light-headed,” Lucy said softly.

“It’s looking at all these stuffed dead things. That’s enough to give *me* the vapors,” Bryce said. “Let’s get out of here.”

Mrs. Cavanagh didn’t seem convinced. “Perhaps if Lucy just rests a moment, she’ll recover.”

“I should take her home,” Bryce insisted. “I’ll take the carriage and come back to collect you.”

He wants to get out of here as much as I do, Lucy realized. “No, that’s all right,” she said weakly. “I don’t want to spoil your visit here. Please, I’ll just sit for a while.”

“Nonsense. Bryce will take you home,” Mr. Cavanagh said.

“You see, Mother,” Bryce said. “I’ll bring the carriage around.”

Lucy shut her eyes and hid her smile. “Well, if that’s what you think is best.”

The moment they were alone in the carriage, Bryce was kissing her. Lucy allowed it, enjoyed it, until his hands began exploring her curves. She pulled away.

Bryce gazed out the carriage window while Lucy straightened her dress. “There’s something you should know,” he said. “Your father has returned to your lodging house.”

“What?” Lucy froze.

“Your father is leading you down the wrong path. He puts you up to this spiritualist nonsense, doesn’t he?”

Lucy was stunned. “I don’t understand.”

“I thought it was best if Mrs. Van Wyck asked your father

to leave. He moved out today. At least, I hope he has.”

“That’s why you took me with you to the museum? So I wouldn’t be at home when he left?” She fought back the powerful desire to slap Bryce. Who did he think he was—to interfere so completely in her life?

But just as she was going to tell him off, Lucy realized something: why would he bother interfering if he didn’t want to make her into the kind of girl he could . . . marry?

Still . . .

Her father was not going to be happy about this, not at all. She hoped he wouldn’t think she had anything to do with the decision.

“But Mrs. Van Wyck adores him,” Lucy protested. She didn’t mention that Bridget and several others of the house staff also had fallen for her father’s charm.

“Precisely. I told her that to allow an unmarried man to live with her could create scandal.”

It was hard to imagine being at Mrs. Van Wyck’s on her own. Her father watched out for her. He was her ally. What would she do without him?

She looked at Bryce’s handsome face, his silk cravat, his luxurious carriage, and remembered that her father also put her to work, took her earnings, taught her to lie and cheat. Perhaps Bryce wasn’t that far off. Maybe her father was dragging her down.

Eleven

Lindsay shivered in her faded hospital gown as she followed Dr. Mousif along the corridor. *I can never go back to school again*, she thought. Shame-filled tears jumped into her eyes.

She had ruined the class trip. Mr. Nunez had sent everyone into the lecture hall with Mrs. Cohen, and then, to her utter humiliation, he had accompanied her to Riverview Hospital. He only left when they took her back to be examined.

“We’re still trying to locate your mother,” Dr. Mousif explained. “But rather than wait, we’d like to get you admitted and out of the emergency room.” She was a short, plump woman with a slight accent, dark hair, and darker eyes that made her look like she was wearing eyeliner, although she probably wasn’t.

“Okay.”

Lindsay’s feet made funny shuffling noises along the corridor in her slipper socks. They had taken away her clothes and her backpack and given her the slipper socks and two gowns to wrap around herself. She had clung to her notebook so hard they’d had to pry it out of her hands. She had hoped to calm herself writing proofs, equations, and formulas. “Like

meditation,” she had tried to explain, but no one seemed to be listening. Maybe that was because she had been sitting in a small curtained area between a psycho screaming about Satan and a woman shouting expletives at a police guard.

Lindsay hoped they were telling the truth when they promised she’d get everything back in a couple of days.

A couple of days. Was that how long she’d be here?

She’d already heard terms like “psychotic break” and “hysterical” and “observation” as interns, nurses, and attendants bustled around during her examination. She told them that she’d been hearing a voice, that she’d freaked out because it was the first time she heard it in public. They spoke to her as if she were very young, which actually felt comforting. Like someone was going to take care of her. Like she could rest.

Lindsay floated along the hall, the “mood stabilizer” beginning to do its job. She felt fear, but it was at a distance; she was nervous, but the nerves belonged to someone else.

She and the doctor twisted and turned, up this hallway, down that, until they came to a door. Dr. Mousif slid a card in the electronic lock and the door clicked open.

That’s when it sank in: this was really serious. A locked ward. Once she stepped over that threshold, she would only be leaving with permission—or a guard.

The room was full of artificial cheer. There were vivid colors everywhere—painted trim, posters, drawings, paintings. Even the nurses behind the large desk wore bright

patterns. Nothing could hide that it was a hospital, though.

“We have community meetings in there,” Dr. Mousif said, nodding toward an open area with a circle of chairs. The TV blared, and some kids sat staring at it, while others chatted loudly. One boy kept jumping up from his seat and plopping back down again. A thin girl wandered the room, knocking books out of kids’ hands and giggling, until an adult sat her in a corner chair and talked quietly to her. A few glanced up as Lindsay walked by; Lindsay stopped looking.

“This is your room,” Dr. Mousif explained, arriving at a small white room with two narrow beds, two dressers, and a window that looked like it had some kind of wire mesh in it. The door had a little window in it too. “You’ll have it to yourself for a while; all the doubles are full, so until there is a new admittance or someone leaves, you’ll be on your own.”

Lindsay nodded, relieved.

“Do you understand what’s happening, Lindsay?” Dr. Mousif asked.

Lindsay examined the doctor’s face. She was around her mother’s age, Lindsay guessed, but looked more like a mom than Melanie.

“Lindsay?” Dr. Mousif repeated.

“You think I have schizophrenia because I hear voices,” Lindsay said. “Well, a voice, anyway. That’s okay. I already knew that. I did research.”

“That’s right,” Dr. Mousif said. She looked like she’d be softer to hug than Melanie.

“I’m not going home, right?” Lindsay asked.

“Not for a little while,” Dr. Mousif said. “We want to figure out the best way to help you, so we need to keep you here with us.”

Lindsay nodded. She wanted to throw her arms around Dr. Mousif and thank her for not making her go back to that house. She wanted to beg her to make her better. Then she could get help for her mom, get her away, if they could just make the voice stop.

“Why don’t we introduce you to Ruth, the therapist on duty, and she’ll help you get settled? That sound all right?”

Keep nodding.

Dr. Mousif waved over a woman who didn’t look much older than Lindsay. “Ruth, this is Lindsay.”

Ruth shoved her glasses back up her nose and smiled. “Hi, Lindsay. I’m sure this is very disconcerting for you.”

“Um, yeah.”

“I’m going to just talk with Dr. Mousif for a bit, and then you and I will get to know each other better. In the meantime, why don’t you grab a seat in the common room?”

“Okay.”

Ruth and Dr. Mousif conferred at the nurses’ station, and Lindsay found a seat as far away from everyone else as she could.

A Hispanic girl plopped down next to her. "I'm Trina. So, why are you here at lovely Riverview?" she asked.

How much should she tell her? "Observation," Lindsay replied. That seemed fairly neutral.

Trina laughed. "Well, yeah. That's what they always say when you arrive. Observation of what? Suicidal behavior? Inappropriate sexual conduct? Violence toward others? Hearing voices?"

Lindsay cringed. "Just, you know, observation."

"Fine. Be that way." Trina stood and stomped away. Two boys whispered, their eyes on Lindsay. Ignoring them, she crossed to the pitiful pile of books on a shelf in the corner. She pulled a dog-eared copy of Shakespeare's collected works from the shelf and sat back down.

"Screw you!" someone shouted.

"No, screw you!" someone replied. There was a rush of adults around a corner and the shouting stopped.

Nearby, a girl was weeping, and Lindsay heard a deep moan somewhere. She shut the book and closed her eyes, wondering if this was how the rest of her life was going to be.

Has it always been so dirty and crowded? Lucy dashed across the street, nearly getting trampled by a brewer's dray as she crossed under the Third Avenue elevated rail.

It had taken two days for Lucy to find an opportunity to visit her father. Bryce had requested that Mrs. Van Wyck become

more of a chaperone to Lucy, and he seemed to have suggested that Lucy be kept from her father. Today Lucy watched Mrs. Van Wyck leave in the carriage and then set out for the East Side.

Now it chilled her, knowing that this overcrowded, desperate world still loomed as her possible future. *Be smart*, she reminded herself. Unless she managed to make a match with Bryce, her abilities as a spiritualist were all that would keep her from this ragged, hardscrabble existence.

Perhaps her father could help her understand what had happened two days ago. Lucy had not heard or even felt the spirit since the museum. She knew she had to come up with some satisfactory substitute in the séances, but what troubled her most was that she couldn't fathom why the spirit had abused her so. The screams had frightened her, made her feel she was a villain torturing the poor dead creature.

"Miss, a penny, please?"

Lucy yanked her skirt out of the filthy hands of a small child. "No," she snapped. "Get away."

"Please, miss," the child persisted. He latched back onto her skirt. This time his grip was so tight Lucy feared she'd tear her skirt if she yanked it away again.

An older child stepped out of the alley. He was a scrawny boy in a ragged sweater and stained pants tied with a rope. Although he was probably only twelve, his face looked much older. "Go on," he said to Lucy, stepping up closer. "Give the lad a penny. You can afford it."

Lucy looked into the face of the small boy still hanging on to her skirt. She wished she had hired a carriage, but she hadn't wanted to spend her money; she was too uncertain how long it would last.

"No," she said to the older boy.

He drew even closer. "Then give us that frippery hat of yours, girlie, and we can make a pretty penny with it. That'll do us."

"It's mine." Lucy's jaw set. She wasn't going to let the boy intimidate her. The only trouble was, in this corseted dress and heavy skirts it would be hard for her to defend herself.

"Listen, guttersnipe," she snarled, holding her ground. "You're not going to bulldoze me. Now back off before I chew you into dishcloths!"

Startled by her ferocity, the small boy released her skirts and stumbled backward. The taller boy also looked surprised but recovered quickly. "Sheesh," he said. "Don't go cat-womptious. Didn't know it was like that."

"Like what?" Lucy demanded.

"Didn't know you was one of us. You needn't be so high and mighty."

"Go on with you," she ordered. "Bother someone else."

The two boys slipped back into the shadows of the alley and Lucy resumed walking, shaken by the confrontation. She used to be able to stroll these streets unnoticed. Now her fashionable attire marked her as an outsider. Made her stand out. It was a kind of attention she didn't enjoy. It made her a

target for people like . . . well, people like she and her father used to be.

As she climbed the rickety steps of the boardinghouse, smells and sounds assaulted her from all directions. She knocked at her father's door, hoping he'd hear her over the din.

"It's about time, Peabody," Colonel Phillips barked as he flung open the door. His surprised expression quickly transformed into a cold, steely mask. "Well, well, well. What brings you to this side of town?"

Lucy took a tiny step back, as if his cold eyes were pushing her. "I had to wait for Mrs. Van Wyck to go out," she explained.

"And . . . ?"

Lucy shook her head, puzzled. "And what?"

"Won't your fancy lad disapprove of your being here?"

Lucy gazed down at her gloved hands. She didn't know what to say to that.

"You have a nerve, dearie dear," her father said, his voice dripping with venom. "You've decided to make this game go all on your own. To cut off your ties. So what are you doing here? Need some advice on how to snare a rich husband? You have your own wiles, I discovered too late. You have no need for my help."

With that, he shut the door in her face. Stunned, Lucy gaped at the mottled wood for a few moments. She reached

out and touched the door, its rough surface bumpy under the soft kidskin of her gloves.

“Is he in?” A woman’s frantic voice made Lucy turn.

She was thin and had the grayish pallor of someone who was ill. She was dressed more expensively than the others in the neighborhood, but the vivid blue dress only served to make the woman inside it appear more sickly.

“Is he there?” the woman asked again.

“Yes, yes, he’s there.”

The woman reached past Lucy and knocked loudly on the door. “Beau! Beau! It’s me, Nellie.”

The door opened, and before Colonel Phillips could say anything, Nellie grabbed his hand. “You have to come with me. It’s Katie. Something’s wrong.”

Lucy shrank into the corner of the landing as Nellie dragged Colonel Phillips along the hall. “I don’t know what to do,” Nellie said, tears cracking her voice. “You have to help me.”

“Of course,” Colonel Phillips said. “What’s happened?”

Lucy followed them to a room a few doors down. The woman must have moved in after Lucy had left. A girl dressed much like Nellie lay moaning on a rumpled bed. The smell of vomit and alcohol nauseated Lucy, and she stepped back, hovering in the doorway. She pulled a perfumed handkerchief from her sleeve and held it to her nose.

Nellie knelt on the floor and gripped the stricken girl’s

hand while Colonel Phillips sat on the edge of the bed. “So what seems to be the problem here?” he asked. Lucy knew his calm voice was a sham; his eyes told her that he was worried.

“She was feeling poorly,” Nellie explained. “So I gave her a dose. I went out to . . . make some calls. When I came back, she was like this.”

“What did you dose her with?” Colonel Phillips asked.

Nellie stood and went to the washstand. “This.” She held out a small bottle. From the elegant lettering and pretty colors on the label, Lucy recognized it as a bottle of patent medicine, quite similar to the kinds of remedies she and her father had been run out of towns for selling.

Colonel Phillips took the bottle and examined it closely. Nellie gingerly sat on the bed on the other side of Katie, who lay limp and unmoving.

“I’ve taken it myself and it’s done me good,” Nellie said nervously.

“What did she take it for?” Colonel Phillips asked.

“Female problems,” Nellie said, not looking at him.

“Ah.” He nodded. “How much did you give her?”

“Just a spoonful,” Nellie insisted. She stood and paced the room. “I should never have left her. But if I hadn’t gone, Tom would have had my hide. And we’d have nothing to eat for a week.”

“It’s all right. You did what you thought best.” He held the bottle up to the light. “There’s hardly anything in here.”

“There was half a bottle when I left!” Nellie exclaimed. “Oh no! That’s what’s wrong.” She flung herself to the bed, clutching Katie to her. “Oh, Katie, why’d you do it?”

“Perhaps she felt the medicine wasn’t working,” Colonel Phillips offered, “so she took more.”

Nellie looked up at Colonel Phillips. “Yes, yes, that’s possible.”

“Maybe we can still help her,” Colonel Phillips said.

“You should get her to a hospital,” Lucy said.

Colonel Phillips and Nellie stared at her; they’d obviously forgotten about her.

“We should get her up and try to get her to walk,” Colonel Phillips said, ignoring Lucy. “Splash water on her face.”

Lucy took a step into the room. “I really think you should get her to a hospital.”

“We can’t!” Nellie exclaimed.

“Why not?” Lucy asked.

The woman looked evasive. “We just can’t.”

Lucy stared at the stricken girl on the bed. She could die if they didn’t get her to a doctor. She had an idea. “Riverview Hospital!” she exclaimed, remembering that Bryce’s friend Alan was a student doctor there. “It’s a charitable institution. You won’t have to pay.”

“That’s not it.” Nellie glanced at Colonel Phillips, then looked at the ground. “A lady such as yourself wouldn’t understand these things.”

“Ha!” Colonel Phillips barked. “She’s only recently become a lady, no matter what she pretends. She’s still my daughter, ain’t she?”

“Oh.” Nellie looked at Lucy, then at Colonel Phillips. She frowned. “We can’t go to the hospital. Not girls like us. I’m . . . known in the courts. Katie too. If I showed up anywhere official, they’d have us arrested. And if they knew she tried to kill herself with the drops, they’d do much worse. She’d be sent to Blackwell’s Island with the lunatics.”

“We don’t need a hospital and we don’t need your help,” Colonel Phillips told Lucy.

“She’s going to die here,” Lucy said. “I know someone who works at the hospital,” she told Nellie. “You remember him, Papa. Alan Wordsworth. He sat with us at the Cavanagh dance.”

“You think he would help?” Nellie asked eagerly.

Lucy nodded firmly. “I’m sure he will.” *If he’s there, if he remembers me.* She shook the doubts out of her mind. “He’s a friend.”

“I—I don’t know. . . .” Nellie looked at Colonel Phillips. “Will he do as you ask?”

Colonel Phillips shrugged.

“I think he will if *I* ask him,” Lucy said.

“You’ll go with us? You’d be seen with—” Nellie swallowed. “Thank you.”

“This is a good thing,” Colonel Phillips told Lucy. “I guess you’re not so selfish after all.”

“Why would you think that?” Lucy blurted. “I didn’t try to cut you out. I had nothing to do with it. It was all—”

“We can have this talk another time,” he interrupted. “Now we must get this girl to the hospital.”

Colonel Phillips lifted Katie off the bed and carried her down the narrow stairs. Lucy wished she’d brought money with her so that they could hire a carriage. She could see her father struggling with Katie’s weight after just a few blocks.

As they finally approached the hospital, Lucy slowed down, the redbrick buildings intimidating her. Would Alan actually help them? And where would she find him?

Her father must have noticed her hesitating. “The central pavilion is probably the main entrance.” He shifted Katie in his arms. “Lucy, you run ahead and ask for Alan.”

Lucy nodded and dashed to the entrance. She halted at the doorway as a screaming man was carried past her, blood soaking the linens on the pallet.

“Excuse me, miss,” said a matronly woman in a dark dress and a white cap. “Are you looking for someone?”

“I’m looking for Alan Wordsworth,” Lucy explained. “He—he’s a particular friend of mine.”

A smile dimpled the woman’s chubby face. “Well, that will disappoint a few on my nursing staff.”

Lucy ignored the nurse’s insinuation. “Please, I am here with a sick woman who needs to see Alan right away. He told me if there was ever anything he could do, he’d be happy to

help.” He hadn’t actually said any such thing, but Lucy would worry about that another time.

“He’s on rotation in the women’s pavilion this month.”

“That’s handy,” Lucy said. “My friend is a woman.”

“Take the small hallway to the left. The ward nurse will find Dr. Wordsworth for you.”

“Thank you!” She turned and saw her father entering with Katie. Nellie followed, keeping her eyes down, looking very nervous.

“Here.” Lucy unpinned her hat and gave it to Nellie. She quickly put it on and pulled the veil over her face.

“Thank you,” Nellie said. Once covered, she straightened up.

“Follow me,” Lucy said, and led them to the women’s pavilion.

The ward nurse rushed toward them. “You can’t bring her in here,” she insisted. “She has to be admitted by a doctor!”

“She’s a patient of Dr. Alan Wordsworth,” Lucy said. She could always count on her father’s training whenever she needed to think quickly of a lie.

“She took ill so suddenly we didn’t have time to contact him,” Colonel Phillips explained. “But we knew he would want to see her right away.”

“Oh, well, in that case . . .” The nurse glanced around. “There. That’s a clean bed. Lay her down there and I’ll fetch the doctor.”

“Tell him Lucy Phillips is here,” Lucy instructed.

The nurse vanished through thick double doors, and Colonel Phillips gently laid Katie on the bed. Nellie wrung her hands. “This is all my fault,” she murmured over and over.

Alan strode into the room. When he saw Lucy, he stopped. “I thought you were ill,” he said, confused.

“Oh, I’m sorry,” Lucy said. “It’s not me; it’s . . . my friend.”

“This young lady is the patient,” Colonel Phillips said, indicating Katie.

“Please,” Nellie begged, clutching Alan’s arm. “You have to make her better. I’d never forgive myself if—” She burst into tears and turned away. Lucy pressed her scented handkerchief into the distraught woman’s hands.

Alan looked even more confused as he looked at Nellie, then Katie. He grabbed a nearby chair and sat beside Katie’s cot. “Do you know what’s wrong with her?” He took up Katie’s wrist and felt for her pulse.

Colonel Phillips cleared his throat. “We believe that she may have taken an accidental overdose of Dr. Montgomery’s Merciful Elixir.”

“They give it to babies!” Nellie wailed. “It says right on the bottle that you can give it to an infant to help with teething! I thought it would be safe for Katie.”

Alan opened Katie’s eyes and peered into them. “Do you know what the complaint was that caused her to take the drops in the first place?”

“Female trouble,” Nellie said in a small voice.

Alan glanced up sharply. “What kind of female trouble? It won’t help your friend if you are overly delicate.” Then he looked at Lucy. “Miss Phillips, I believe it best if you leave the room.”

“No,” Lucy insisted. “I want to stay.”

“Are you certain?” Now he looked at Colonel Phillips. “I will need very explicit information.”

“Lucy,” Colonel Phillips said. “I think the doctor is right.”

“No.” Lucy wanted to know what they were all so worried she’d hear.

“She . . . well, she . . .” Nellie twisted the handkerchief Lucy had given her. “Her stomach was bothering her. And she was terribly tired. . . .”

Alan looked at her. “Is she pregnant? Did you dose her so that she would lose the child?”

Nellie stiffened, and Lucy knew the woman was grateful for the veil. “All I know is she wanted something for relief. I didn’t know she would take so much.”

“Is she diseased?” Alan said. “That is also a hazard of your profession.”

Nellie took a step backward.

“I don’t condemn you,” Alan said, more gently. “I simply need to know as much as possible so I can treat the young lady. If I give her an emetic, I need to know if there is an underlying condition.”

Nellie nodded, and Lucy could hear her tears even though she couldn't see Nellie's face clearly through the netting of the hat. "She—she was terrified. Tom would put her out if he knew. She'd be of no use to him. He pays for our lodgings, you see? He treats his girls right unless they cross him. She couldn't have a baby. But I don't think she's poxy."

Lucy felt faint, shocked to be discussing such things in front of her father and Alan.

Colonel Phillips cleared his throat. "Lucy, I do believe you should leave."

"Actually," Alan said, "I will need to have you both leave so that I may examine her properly. Oh—one last question. How old is she?"

"Sixteen," Nellie replied.

Colonel Phillips looked stunned. "She appears older."

"Their profession ages them," Alan said. "If only their patrons understood that, perhaps these girls would fare better," he added pointedly.

He thinks my father—Lucy couldn't complete the thought.

"Oh, sir!" Nellie exclaimed. "I can't have you thinking such things about the kind Colonel! He has never, never availed himself. He has been like a brother or a father to us girls."

"It's all right, Nellie," Colonel Phillips said. "Dr. Wordsworth meant me no disrespect. Just doing his job."

"Colonel Phillips, will you take Lucy to my office? It's

through those doors. Nellie, I'd like you stay with me in case I have any other questions. You seem to know the girl best."

"Thank you," Colonel Phillips said.

"Yes, thank you," Lucy added.

She followed her father through the heavy doors and into a small office.

"She's so young," Colonel Phillips murmured, gazing out the window toward the East River.

"She's not young," Lucy replied. "She's my age."

"Precisely." He turned to face her. "Perhaps it's for the best that you stay at Mrs. Van Wyck's on your own." He shook his head. "I did you a disservice, dearie dear, and I apologize for it. You didn't ask Mrs. Van Wyck to put me out, did you?"

"Of course not," Lucy said. "It was Bryce. I had no idea until after you were already gone."

"He is a presumptuous pup," Colonel Phillips warned. "You must take care there, Lucy. He has a will of his own, and he will see it satisfied."

"I guess. . . ."

"His interests are not necessarily yours," Colonel Phillips said.

Lucy laughed. "That's quite obvious," she said. "He's dead against the séances. But," she added, "those are *mine*. Ours. He has no say there."

Colonel Phillips smiled and nodded. "That's my girl."

“She spoke to me again,” Lucy said suddenly. “In the museum.”

“Who spoke to you?” Colonel Phillips asked.

“You know.”

Colonel Phillips cocked his head. “What did she have to say for herself?”

Lucy sank into the heavy leather chair behind the desk. “She was so angry at me. All she did was shout at me to leave her alone.”

“That could mean the end of your budding career. Bryce could have his way after all.” He studied her face for a moment. “You truly believe you are speaking to someone from the other side, don’t you?”

“What else could it be?” Lucy asked.

“Don’t rightly know,” Colonel Phillips admitted. “I guess spirits could truly exist after all.”

He sat on the small settee in the corner, staring up at the ceiling. “Do you think—if perhaps you placate this spirit somehow—do you think she would help us speak to your mother?”

He turned to face her, and his eyes were a blue she’d never seen before.

He misses her, she realized. He has missed her all this time.

She’d seen him angry, seen him belligerent, but she’d never seen him lonely and sad before. Lucy had never known her mother, so she had no one to miss. But her father . . .

“I don’t really know how to raise a daughter,” Colonel Phillips said. “That was to have been your mother’s bailiwick. I didn’t do too badly in leaving you with Pappy and Memaw on the farm, did I?”

“No,” Lucy said, knowing that was the answer he needed to hear.

“Lord, I missed her with every inch of me. We grew up together—did I ever tell you that?”

Lucy shook her head. He had only rarely spoken of her mother. Now she realized it had been grief that kept him silent.

“Do you think . . . Can you try to speak with your spirit again? I would so love to hear from your mother. Tell her I miss her. Tell her I’m sorry.”

Lucy didn’t ask what he was sorry for. Instead she answered, “I’ll try. I don’t know if it will work here—but she seems to be moving about, following me. It *could* work.”

Lucy shut her eyes and concentrated. “Please speak to me, Lindsay. I am sorry for any harm I’ve done to you. I never meant to upset you. Will you speak to me? Please, Lindsay?”

Lucy waited. She wanted to reach Lindsay more this minute than ever before, for her father. “Lindsay, please. Just tell me what I must do to apologize and I will do it. But please—speak to me.”

“You’re here too?” a voice in Lucy’s head said.

Lucy's eyes opened. She nodded at her father. He came and sat beside her, took her hand.

"Yes, it's me, Lucy. Oh, Lindsay, I never wanted to upset you. I don't know how I wronged you."

"Are you everywhere now?"

The girl sounded strange, much more distant, and her speech was slightly slurred.

"I—I'm at Riverview Hospital with my father."

"You're here? I'm here too! Because of you!" The spirit laughed.

"Were you looking for me?" Lucy asked.

"God, no. I was trying to get away from you."

"Oh. I'm sorry. I mean you no harm."

"Yeah, I guess you can't help being in my head."

"You're . . . in my head too."

"Interesting."

"I have something I want to ask you. I hope you don't mind. I was wondering if you could tell me anything about my mother."

"Your mother? She's dead, right?"

"Yes." Lucy was pleased that the spirit had remembered. "We'd be so happy if perhaps we could talk to her through you. Her name was Annabella Phillips. She died in 1866. Um, giving birth to me."

There was a silence, then the spirit named Lindsay said, "This is seriously freaky."

Twelve

Why resist? Lindsay thought. *The voice will always find me.*

Something floated across her mind like seaweed. Chemical imbalance. Brain chemistry. Medication.

Shouldn't the voice stop if I took the drugs they gave me?

It was hard to keep the idea in her brain as others rolled in with other tides. How could she know anything about someone who died back in 1866? And if that was when Lucy was born and she was around Lindsay's age, then wouldn't the girl be talking to her from. . . Lindsay felt sick at how hard it was to do something as simple as subtraction. Drugs didn't enhance mathematics. That was a definite drawback. Equations would be impossible. Breathing out a sharp, sudden breath to try to push aside the seaweed clogging her head, Lindsay thought, 1882. That would be when a sixteen-year-old girl would be living if her mother died in childbirth in 1866.

Lindsay pressed her fingers on her forehead, hoping to keep the space clear. "Your mother died when you were born," she said.

"Yes," the voice said.

“What’s your name again?” Lindsay asked.

“Lucy. Lucy Phillips.”

“And you were born in 1866.”

“Yes.”

The puzzle this presented energized Lindsay. It wasn’t at all the kind of conversation she’d read about in the books on schizophrenia or that the kids in group described. Those voices were cruel, taunting, giving orders. She got her notebook, knowing she was likely to forget details if she didn’t write them down. She wrote *Lucy Phillips* on top of the page.

“How old are you?” Lindsay asked.

“Sixteen,” she replied, exactly what Lindsay had guessed.

“Me too.”

“Can you contact my mother for me?” Lucy asked.

“I—I don’t think I can. I might be able to get information for you if I know more about her. Where did she die?”

“In Kentucky. On a farm near Corbin.”

Lindsay took a deep breath. “What year is it, Lucy?”

“Why, 1882, of course.” Lucy sounded surprised.

A theory began to present itself, a hypothesis to test. Lindsay needed more quantifiable evidence. “When we spoke last time, where were you?”

“At the American Museum of Natural History,” Lucy replied.

“And you’re in Riverview Hospital now?”

“Yes.”

“And before—”

“In Mrs. Van Wyck’s home in Clinton Place.”

Lindsay tapped her pencil on the page. That part didn’t fit. She’d never heard of Clinton Place. But the other two . . .

Her head jerked up as a nurse opened her door. “Who are you talking to?”

“No one.” Lindsay closed the notebook and slipped it under her blanket.

“I’m sorry, dear.” The nurse shook her head. “I heard you. If you want to get better, you’ll have to admit what’s happening.”

“Lindsay?” Lucy said.

“We can’t help you unless you let us,” the nurse continued.

Lindsay squeezed her eyes shut. It was confusing to hear them both at the same time.

“Is something wrong?” two voices asked.

Lindsay shook her head.

“You’re hearing the voices again, aren’t you?” the nurse said. “It’s all right. They won’t hurt you here.”

“It’s just one voice,” Lindsay explained. “She’s nice.”

The nurse nodded. “Thank you for telling me.”

She left the room.

“I don’t think I can talk to you anymore right now,” Lindsay said to Lucy. “But—but will you talk to me again later?”

“I’ll try,” Lucy said. “Thank you for saying I’m nice.”

“Talk to me tonight. You need to be in the same place you are now. Promise.”

“I don’t know if I can.”

“I might have word from your mother,” Lindsay added, hoping that would convince her.

“Then I will do my best to get back here.”

An unfamiliar doctor walked into the room, followed by the nurse. “I understand you’re still hearing the voices,” he said. They must have switched shifts, and Dr. Mousif had gone home.

“Just one,” Lindsay said.

The doctor smiled. “That’s still one too many. But don’t worry. Sometimes it’s just a matter of adjusting the medication.” He wrote something on a little pad and handed it to the nurse. “We’ll keep her on this a bit longer, but we’ll up the dosage. Don’t worry, Lindsay, you’re in good hands.”

The nurse returned with the extra medication, and she and the doctor both watched as Lindsay took it.

“And now let’s go join the others,” the nurse said, waiting at the door.

Lindsay unfolded herself from the bed. *Oh, joy.*

In the common room the television blared, as usual. There were about a dozen kids ranging from twelve to seventeen milling around. “They’ve just come back from school,” the nurse explained. “You’ll probably be joining them tomorrow.”

“School?” Lindsay asked. She couldn’t imagine studying, feeling the way she did—so spaced out and underwater.

“What, did you think you got to get out of school by going crazy?” said a tall boy with a buzz cut and a tattoo of a skull on his neck. “No such luck.”

An argument broke out on the other side of the room. A small boy grabbed a chair and flung it. Kids scattered and nurses rushed in as the boy knocked over chairs, cursing at the top of his lungs. Lindsay stood and stared as if she were watching a movie, a still, fuzzy center in the swirling wild storm.

Almost as quickly as it had started, the outburst stopped. A security guard gripped the boy tightly, and a nurse spoke to him quietly but firmly. Only when the other nurse came up to her did Lindsay realize she had pressed herself into a corner.

“Lindsay, it’s all right. We have everything under control,” said the nurse, Maria.

“He was really mad,” Lindsay said.

“Ricky has some anger issues, and we’ll be talking about this incident later in group. Right now, though, you have a visitor. Your mother is here.”

Lindsay stiffened. When they’d finally found her mother that first day, she’d shown up drunk with Carl glued to her side. The doctor had explained to them that Lindsay was hearing voices and had to be admitted for an indeterminate amount of time. Despite the utterly surreal nature of the moment,

Lindsay could have sworn that after a flash of surprise, both her mother and Carl looked relieved. Carl had done most of the talking, repeating over and over that they should keep Lindsay for as long as they thought necessary. What they had told the doctor in private, Lindsay could only guess.

“Is she . . . is she alone?” Lindsay asked.

“Yes. I’ll bring you to the visiting room.” Maria led Lindsay down the brightly decorated hallway.

“I hate you all!” Ricky shouted as they passed his room.

“Ricky, you know what will happen if you don’t calm down,” an orderly was saying. They arrived at the visiting room.

“Here she is, Mrs. Clancy,” Maria announced, opening the door.

Melanie glanced up from the chair by the window.

“Hi, Melanie,” Lindsay said.

Melanie’s eyes flicked to Maria, then to Lindsay. “Hello.” Was she embarrassed because Lindsay had called her “Melanie” instead of “Mom” the way she always did?

“Do you have to be here for this?” Melanie asked Maria.

“That’s up to Lindsay,” Maria said.

“It’s okay,” Lindsay said. “You can go.”

“I’ll be just outside. I’ll have to escort you out when you’re ready to leave, Mrs. Clancy.” Maria left the room, shutting the door with a little click.

“I think that’s the first time I ever heard anyone call you that,” Lindsay said.

Melanie nodded, studying Lindsay's face. "So, you okay here?"

Lindsay shrugged.

Now her mother stood and started to pace, her arms crossed over her chest, her fingers tapping. *She forced herself to stay sober for this*, Lindsay realized. *So she's jumpy.*

"I know how this shrink stuff goes," her mother said. "It's all the mother's fault, right?"

"I don't know," Lindsay said. "What I have . . . What they think I . . . What's going on isn't anybody's fault, exactly."

Her mother stopped and looked out the barred window. "So what do you tell them about me? About me and Carl?" she asked, her tone challenging.

Understanding crept into Lindsay's muffled brain. Her mom wanted to make sure she wasn't going to tell anyone the truth about what was going on at home. She turned and opened the door.

"Maria," she said. "I'm feeling really tired. I think maybe Mrs. Clancy should go now."

That night the bright fluorescent glow from the corridor seeped into Lindsay's room from the observation window in the door. Lindsay heard sobbing somewhere but couldn't identify the source or even the direction. She felt disoriented, floating, the extra medication making her limbs leaden.

"Are you there?" a voice called. The voice named Lucy.

The voice that had brought her here to this place, this moment.

“I am,” Lindsay said. “So I guess you are too.”

“Do you have something to tell me?”

“About what?”

“Do you have a message from my mother?” the voice asked.

Lindsay put a hand to her forehead. Right. Lucy had wanted information about her dead mom. For some reason, she thought Lindsay could do that. Weird.

“I might be able to find out about her, but I don’t think I’ll be able to do that in the hospital.”

“Oh.”

Lindsay could almost feel the invisible girl’s disappointment. Or maybe that was just another side effect of the meds.

“It’s just my father misses her so much,” Lucy said. “I never really thought about how he felt. I never knew her.”

“I never knew my father,” Lindsay said. “He dumped my mom before I was born.” She sighed. “From what my mother tells me, I’m better off this way.”

“Oh. Well . . .”

Through the drug haze, Lindsay sensed Lucy withdrawing, pulling away, as if she were about to say goodbye.

“Could you—would you stay and talk to me?” Lindsay blurted. “I’m so lonely.”

The wavering attention was replaced by a warming, cocoon-like sympathy. “You must be. I’m terribly sorry about everything that’s happened to you.”

“Thank you,” Lindsay whispered. It was hard to keep forming coherent sentences, but she had to do something to keep the lifeline active.

“I’m not sure how long I can stay,” Lucy warned. “I claimed my doctor friend told me to wait in his office for news of one of his patients, but once he comes in, I’ll have to leave.”

“That’s okay. Just . . . a while longer. Thanks.”

“I’m feeling alone too,” Lucy confessed. Lindsay thought she sounded sad. “My father moved back to the boardinghouse, but I’m staying at Mrs. Van Wyck’s. I have to be so careful. There’s no one I can really be myself with now that my father isn’t around.”

“I know what you mean,” Lindsay mumbled. “Being yourself can be dangerous.”

“And with Bryce—I have to be really on my toes.”

“Who’s Bryce?”

“He’s my suitor. Well, I think he is.”

“What do you mean?”

“He treats me as if he’s courting me, but my father doesn’t think his intentions are serious. And I . . . Well, I’m afraid he’s only interested in me because his parents don’t approve.”

“I’ve seen that before,” Lindsay said.

“You sound funny,” Lucy said. “Are you all right?”

“It’s the pills they gave me,” Lindsay explained.

“I should let you rest—”

“No! Please. Keep talking to me. Just don’t get mad if I fall asleep on you, okay?”

“Okay. So . . . what do you want to talk about?”

“Tell me about your father. What’s that like, having a dad?”

Lindsay pulled the covers to her chin and curled up, listening to Lucy describe her charming, troublesome father, as if she were a small child being told a bedtime story.

“I see that Dr. Greene upped your medication yesterday,” Dr. Mousif said, reading a page in Lindsay’s file.

“The voice I hear . . .” Lindsay said. “Could it be anything except schizophrenia?”

“I know it’s hard to hear such a scary-sounding diagnosis,” Dr. Mousif said. “And I won’t pretend it isn’t serious. But there is hope that it can be managed.”

“But what if—what if I take the medicine and I still hear the voice? Wouldn’t that mean there’s a different reason I hear it?”

Dr. Mousif looked at her sharply; then her expression softened. “Is that what’s happening, Lindsay? You still hear the voice even on the new dosage?”

Lindsay flicked her eyes to the floor, angry at herself for her obvious mistake.

“Lindsay, don’t feel bad. There is a period of adjustment. Every individual is different. We’ll find the best fit for you.”

She scribbled on a prescription pad. "We'll try this instead." She looked up and smiled. "Now you can join the others and go to class."

"Okay."

She left Dr. Mousif's office, and as she turned the corner, she saw two orderlies wheeling a writhing girl strapped to a stretcher.

"Better here than emergency, they decided," one of the orderlies said.

"Your teeth!" the girl shrieked. "I see them! I know who you are!" She strained against the straps. "They're here! They're everywhere!"

"Guess the shot didn't take," the other orderly said.

"Give it a minute," the first orderly said. They rolled the stretcher into one of the rooms and shut the door.

Lindsay hovered at the end of the hallway. She could still hear the girl screaming.

"What's all the noise?" Trina asked, coming out of her room with her roommate, Susie.

"Someone new," Lindsay said.

"Come on, girls!" Ruth, the therapist, called from the common area. "We're working on structure, remember? Time to get to class."

"Schizo," Trina announced as they passed the door.

"Definitely," Susie agreed.

Lindsay glanced sharply at them. "How do you know?"

Trina shrugged. "Typical behavior. It's the voices that she's screaming at. Seen it before."

"You said you wouldn't tell," Susie whispered.

"I wasn't telling, dodo, I just said I'd seen it."

Susie gripped Lindsay's arm. Her fingers were icy cold. "I was never that bad. The voices, they were just mean to *me*. They never told me to hurt anyone else. But I'm a lot better now."

"Yes, you are," Ruth said to Susie, motioning them toward the door. "Now let's go."

Even chaos theory couldn't be used to predict the activity, movement, and general disorder in the classrooms. Lindsay figured there were probably about fifty students moving down the halls into the classrooms. Her class had only fifteen kids, but she didn't understand how anyone could keep track of them all. Interruptions, outbursts, and nervous energy filled the room to bursting.

In a white-hot surprise, something hurtled so close to Lindsay's face she felt its breeze. She was under the table, heart pounding, before she even heard the crash. She peered through the legs of the table and saw that Ricky had thrown a chair at a computer terminal. The kids all went wild.

"Man, what's with the chair throwing, dude?" a tall boy named Conner shouted above the general melee.

"Everyone calm down," Mr. Madison kept saying over and over as orderlies rushed in and dragged Ricky out.

Lindsay curled up under the table. Mr. Madison continued to fight a losing battle to restore order until finally it was time to go back to the ward. Lindsay thought she'd wait before heading out to the swarming corridor. She already felt jangled. Finally she crawled out from under the table and suddenly realized: she was alone in the room. Could she . . . make a run for it?

The door burst open and a panicked nurse stood in the doorway. "What do you think you're doing?" she demanded.

"Nothing," Lindsay said.

"Come. Right now," the woman ordered.

"I didn't do anything wrong," Lindsay protested.

"Yeah, right. Move it."

The nurse led Lindsay back to the locked ward. "Here she is," she announced. "I noticed one was missing when I did the head count."

"What were you trying to do?" Ruth asked.

"Nothing," Lindsay protested. "I hid under the table. I didn't want to get hit in the head with something."

"No lie," Conner said. "Ricky went whack again."

Ruth nodded. "Yes, he's in the quiet room."

Lindsay knew that meant Ricky was in the small dark room, empty except for a bare mattress. The door went from open to shut to locked and the person inside could end up in restraints.

Ruth gave Lindsay a sympathetic smile. "Sorry, Lindsay.

I know it must have been a frightening first day of class for you.” She put her hand on Lindsay’s shoulder. “Time for your new meds and then we’ll head in for lunch.”

In the dining area Lindsay was stunned to see the girl from the stretcher sitting at a table, eating calmly. She was carrying on a conversation with her one-on-one nurse.

Lindsay slid into a seat at a nearby table, fascinated. Trina plopped down beside her. “Told you,” she said, nodding toward the new girl. “Schizo. Drugs kicked in and the voices all evaporated.”

“Does it always work like that?” Lindsay asked. “You don’t hear the voices when you take the meds?”

Trina shrugged. “I don’t hear voices. But it was like that with Susie too.”

Lindsay lifted her juice container, and her hand just stopped in front of her, halfway to her mouth. Sweat beaded up on her forehead, and she felt queasy. She stood, wobbling, and went out to the nurses’ station. “I don’t feel so good,” she said.

The nurse looked at something in Lindsay’s chart, felt Lindsay’s forehead, and nodded. “It may be a reaction to the new medication. Why don’t you lie down and I’ll make sure Dr. Mousif checks on you?”

“Thanks.”

Lindsay went into her room, and as soon as she lay down, she heard the voice call to her. “Lindsay, I came back, like you asked.”

Interesting. No matter what drug she took, she still heard the voice.

Lindsay blinked, trying to allow the suspicion, clouded by medication, to come to the surface. Something else was going on, something stranger than schizophrenia.

“Don’t talk to me,” Lindsay whispered. “Not here.”

“But you asked me to come back. I thought you wanted company again,” Lucy’s voice replied.

Lindsay pressed her fingers to her forehead, trying to unscramble her thoughts. “I can’t risk it,” she said. “Not good. Not here. Something is happening.”

“I don’t understand.”

“Me either,” Lindsay admitted. “I just know I can’t take any chances right now. Not with this.”

“But—”

“I mean it!”

A nurse opened the door. “You all right?”

“I feel pretty sick. Is Dr. Mousif going to see me?”

“I’ll check.” The nurse shut the door again.

“I’m sorry you’re not feeling well,” Lucy said. “That’s why you’re in the hospital. I won’t trouble you here.”

Lindsay felt like a door in her brain just shut.

And then she started making plans.

Thirteen

Nurse Maria has a thing for Therapist Mark, she wrote in her notebook the next evening. When he's around, she pays a lot less attention. Eager Edgar the Intern is the worst at remembering about locking doors after him. Useful.

She'd figured out how to fake taking her meds as well as mimic the dazed "lack of affect" described in her chart. Her mind was clearing as the drugs left her system. She'd managed to avoid two doses so far.

"You writing your memoirs?" Trina asked, sitting down next to Lindsay in the common room. "Am I in them?"

"No," Lindsay said, refusing to look up. *Repairmen working on the electronics room. Sometimes leave door open. Ruth yells at them, but they still do it.* She tapped her pencil on the page.

If Eager Edgar, Nurse Maria, and Therapist Mark were all scheduled at the same time that the workmen were in, she might be able to get out.

She was in luck. Two days later, just after two o'clock, Eager Edgar was talking to Ricky, who was in the quiet room again,

this time in restraints. Maria was flirting with Mark, and one of the workmen started cursing.

“I think Susie is making out with Conner,” Lindsay said to Trina, knowing Trina had a crush on the guy.

“What?” Trina raced down the hallway. “Where are you, bitch?” she screamed.

Maria glanced away from Mark and watched Ruth and an orderly tear after Trina. Lindsay edged closer to the room that was having electrical work done. “I’ve got to go all the way down to the fifth floor to get the specs,” one of the workmen snarled.

“Sorry,” the other workman said meekly. He turned away and busied himself with a tangle of wires.

The cursing workman stalked out of the room and flung open the door. Before it could catch, Lindsay shoved her foot into it. She counted: *One, two, three*, and ran out.

Into a stairwell, out onto another floor, another stairwell. As she ran, she tugged on the plastic wristband that identified her as a ward on the loony floor. Down another corridor, but now she walked slowly, with confidence, as if she were a visitor. She had no idea where the exit was in the maze of rooms, halls, locked and unlocked corridors, but she knew she had to keep going.

Giving up on breaking the plastic band, she yanked her sleeves as far down as she could and held her notebook so that her wrist was covered. She stepped into an elevator filled with

young-looking interns and a few visitors, her heart pounding. *Look calm, she ordered herself. You aren't doing anything wrong, aren't going anywhere you shouldn't. You were just here visiting. Time to go.*

And then she was out. Onto the street. Into real air.

Lindsay kept her head down as she hurried toward the nearest subway. As she hurtled down the steps, she realized she had no money. She stopped on the landing, surrounded by kids of all ages; school must have just let out.

“Hey,” she said to a short boy. “Do me a huge favor and swipe me in?”

The boy looked at her blankly.

“I forgot my card,” Lindsay said.

The boy shrugged. “Whatever.”

They waited until there was a mass of kids blocking the token booth guy and together they slipped through the turnstile.

“Thanks,” Lindsay said. She decided it was safest to go to the very end of the platform, attract the least attention. Studying the map, she traced the connections, memorized the route at her fingertip.

Tanya will believe me, Lindsay told herself. Even if I don't quite believe it myself.

Lindsay wondered where they'd look first, how soon they'd call her mother. Tanya's could be the first place her mother would check, though Melanie knew that Lindsay hadn't seen Tanya since the move, so maybe not.

Lindsay emerged from the subway and relaxed in the familiar surroundings of the video store on the corner, the newsstand with the huge selection of candy in the middle of the block. It seemed strange to Lindsay that her old neighborhood could be so completely the same while her world had so completely changed.

She walked the five blocks to Tanya's building, a tidy brownstone. She charged up the steps and pushed the buzzer for Tanya's apartment. She crossed her fingers for luck and waited, staring through the etched glass windows in the front door.

A few minutes later, Tanya clomped down the stairs. Her dark eyes widened when she saw Lindsay, and she grinned as she yanked open the door.

"Lindz! Awesome!" Tanya grabbed Lindsay in a bear hug. Tanya towered over Lindsay, and she was a bit on the chunky side. The weight difference nearly toppled them down the stoop. Giggling, Tanya re-balanced them. "Come on in!"

Lindsay followed her friend up the stairs.

"I can't believe it's been so long. It totally sucks. Why didn't you call me? I'm so glad I was home!"

Tanya's chatter filled the hallway, filled the hollow in Lindsay's chest.

They tromped into Tanya's familiar bedroom. Tanya plopped on the bed. "What's been going on?" she asked. "Didn't Melanie tell you I called? Are you so busy you can't call me back?"

How can I tell her? Fear flash-flooded into Lindsay. Turning away from Tanya, she focused on the calendar hanging on the wall, each space filled with scribbled notes about activities, project deadlines, after-school events. Life.

“Lindz?”

“I—something horrible has been happening,” she said toward the wall. “Only it might not be as horrible as I thought. I need you to listen to everything, okay? Because if I stop, I won’t be able to start again.”

Lindsay heard Tanya get up from the bed and stepped away before her friend could embrace her. “No. Don’t. I won’t be able—” A sob, hot and itchy, fought to get out. Lindsay crossed her arms over her chest, trying to stop it, but it was too big. Leaning her head against the wall, she cried and cried.

She wiped her face with her fingers, and as she raised her arm to use her sleeve to wipe her nose, a box of tissues appeared.

“Thanks,” she said, taking the box from Tanya. “Oh, man.” She shakily sat down in the desk chair. “Tanya, I’m in so much trouble.”

“With Melanie?”

“With the whole world.”

“Not with me,” Tanya said. “So it can’t be the whole world.”

Lindsay snorted. “You may not say that after you hear . . . after you find out. . . .”

Tanya knelt beside the chair. “Okay, now you have to look at me.”

Reluctantly Lindsay forced herself to meet Tanya’s serious, nearly black eyes.

“If you don’t tell me what’s wrong, I *will* be mad at you. Because it’s like you don’t trust me.”

Lindsay nodded and looked down. “I was in the hospital. I ran away.”

Tanya rocked back on her heels. “Are you sick?”

“I’m pretty sure I’m not.” Lindsay pulled out a fresh tissue. “I was there because . . . because . . . I kind of freaked out.” She swallowed hard, calculating how much force was required to push her voice through the lump in her throat without it turning into a scream. “I’ve been hearing this voice.”

“What?” Tanya settled onto the floor cross-legged. “Like in the movies? Like . . . crazy people hear voices?”

Lindsay nodded. She stared at the tissue, crumpling it.

Tanya blew a puff of air. “But you’re not crazy!”

“I—I don’t know. I did some research, and it all seemed to add up to me being nuts.”

“Why didn’t you tell me? And Melanie never said a word.”

“I think she’s embarrassed. She’s mostly relieved that I’m not her problem anymore. That *I’m* the screwed-up one, not her and the Husband.”

“But Lindsay. This voice thing. That’s something serious, isn’t it?”

“They told me in the hospital that it’s a symptom of schizophrenia.”

Now Tanya let out a little whistle. “So that’s what you have?”

“At first I thought that was the only possible answer, but now I’m not so sure.”

“So what *do* you think?”

Lindsay took out another tissue and started tearing tiny holes in it. “Okay. This is going to sound even crazier. But I think the voice is real. I think someone really is talking to me.”

Worry made furrows appear on Tanya’s smooth, dark forehead.

Lindsay threw up her hands and stood. The shredded tissue fluttered to the floor. “I know! That’s probably what every schizo says.”

“Well, do you have evidence?”

Lindsay smiled. *Thank goodness for geeks.* “Yes. The meds didn’t stop the voice—and they definitely stopped the voices other kids heard. And what Lucy said—”

“Lucy?”

“That’s her name. Well, Lucy doesn’t say what the typical aural hallucination says. In group everyone described the horrible things the voices said, told them to do. She mostly asked me questions. Or talked about her life. And I only hear her in certain places.”

Tanya sat back down on the bed, making tiny nodding motions.

“But Lindsay, what could the explanation possibly be?”

“Just go with me on this, okay? I think it’s possible that somehow I’m talking to the past. To a girl our age, who goes to a lot of the same places I do. Only she’s living in the New York City of 1882.”

Tanya’s mouth dropped open. Then, eyes sparkling with excitement, she said, “Awesome!”

Fourteen

Lindsay felt better than she had in ages, despite the fact that she was sitting in a closet again. The door opened and a nervous Tanya ushered her out. "I'm a terrible liar," Tanya said.

"You didn't lie," Lindsay reminded her. "It's not like your mom asked about me."

"No," Tanya admitted, "but I've never kept a big secret from her before. Actually," she added, "I've never kept a little secret from her either. God, I'm such a dork."

"Well, you're going to have to learn how to lie pretty fast," Lindsay warned.

"Are you sure you can't talk to your mom?" Tanya asked.

"No way." Lindsay hadn't told Tanya much about what had been going on at home, only that it had been hard ever since they moved in with the Husband. Confessing to hearing the voice had been hard enough. "And you can't tell your mom either. She'll just call Melanie."

"Okay," Tanya mumbled.

"Swear," Lindsay insisted.

"Swear. On our future Phi Beta Kappa keys."

"So where should I meet up with you?"

They had already worked out that Tanya would go into Manhattan and get stuff out of Lindsay's school locker—most importantly, her ATM card. That would give her access to her camp-counseling money, which she would seriously need.

"I wish it wasn't Glory's day to clean," Tanya fretted. "Otherwise you could just lay low here. What are you going to do?"

"I shouldn't hang around in this neighborhood," Lindsay said, thinking aloud. "Too many people will know me. Somewhere near my new school but not too near . . ."

"Isn't there a park in the East Village?" Tanya suggested. "That would be an easy walk from your school, and probably no one would notice kids hanging out there."

"You are as brilliant as your IQ suggests," Lindsay said. They linked pinkies, just like they did when they were twelve. "It's a plan."

Lindsay felt herself grow smaller as she trundled down the subway stairs. The exhilaration she had felt knowing that she wasn't crazy and that she was no longer alone in this nightmare diminished the deeper underground she went.

What was she going to do all day? Was she going to get into trouble for not being in school? Up until now, Lindsay, like Tanya, had been a goody-two-shoes dweeb. Now she was on the lam, a runaway.

What do kids do when they cut class? Lindsay wondered.

The subway car emptied out some, and most of the kids her age exited. The good thing was no one paid attention to her. They read, they dozed, they listened to iPods, they came, they went, but they didn't make eye contact.

She tucked her notebook under her arm and shoved her hands into Tanya's jacket, which was huge on her. She reassured herself by feeling the sandwich and twenty-dollar bill there and the lightness of her wrist now that she had cut off the bracelet.

Melanie is going to freak when she hears I booked out of the hospital.

Lindsay jerked her head sharply to the window, not wanting the tears that suddenly appeared in her eyes to fall. Melanie probably just wouldn't care. Or notice. *Now she and the Husband can live heinously ever after without having to worry about me.*

Lindsay spent most of the morning riding all the subway lines she'd never heard of—it took her several trains to get from the Q she was on to the mysterious M and then the G train. She couldn't quite figure out how to hook up with the Z, so she finally wound up on the L train. Wanting a Coke to go with her sandwich, she got out on Fourteenth Street and First Avenue—near the park where she and Tanya had agreed to meet.

She slumped along the street, not wanting to attract attention. The clock in the deli showed it was only about one

o'clock—Tanya wouldn't be out of school for two hours, and then she'd still have to take the subway from Brooklyn.

When Lindsay got to Tompkins Square Park, she saw that it was bigger than she thought, and she worried Tanya wouldn't be able to find her. *I guess I'll just have to start patrolling at three thirty and keep my eyes open.*

There was a playground full of little kids and their supremely hip moms. She moved away from those benches; it might occur to a mom type that she was supposed to be in school.

She passed chess players, an eclectic mix of hunched men with thick Eastern European accents, young black guys with do-rags and lightning-quick moves, and one middle-aged professor type playing against himself. On the benches along the periphery were more moms with strollers, some tattooed and smoking, some looking as conventional as Tanya's mother. Even farther in were random people on benches reading or listening to headphones. A couple on a blanket in a grassy section lay twined together. Their CD player was blasting. A skinny Hispanic boy perched atop the back of a bench holding forth for an audience of two other boys, both wearing skintight jeans and muscle shirts despite the chill in the air.

"Yo, Flip," one of the boys said. "Can you spot me some?"

The boy on the back of the bench shook his head. "Sorry. I was hoping to get something off you."

Lindsay kept moving, wondering if the boys were talking about drugs or money. She glanced up and realized she was back where she had started, at the playground. She turned and did the walk in reverse.

The skinny boy was now alone on the bench. The couple had stopped making out and were sharing a soda. She walked by a guitar player she'd heard but hadn't seen before. A dog walker passed her, then another mom with a stroller.

How much longer?

A man leaned against one of the black wrought-iron railings that ran along the perimeter of the grassy sections. Lindsay noticed he was wearing a watch.

"Excuse me," she said, crossing to the man. "Can you tell me what time it is?"

The man smiled slowly at her, looked her up and down. "Sure thing, sweetie." He made an exaggerated gesture to look at his watch. "Right now is good."

"What?" Lindsay asked. "I asked you the time."

"I saw you cruising through," he continued. "Are you sure you just wanted to ask me what time it is?"

"Yeah, positive. So what time is it?"

"How much time do I get for, say, twenty bucks?"

Lindsay's mouth dropped open. *He thinks I'm a hooker!* She started laughing.

"Glad the talk of cash lightened your mood, doll." He grabbed her arm.

Startled, Lindsay let out a shriek and shook off his hand. “Get away from me.”

Up close she could smell the alcohol—cheap rum, she thought.

“Leave her alone, perv.” A blond teenage girl appeared behind the man. A younger black girl stood beside her. Lindsay was pretty sure that these two actually *were* hookers, with their tight short skirts, heavy makeup, and seriously tough stances.

The man snorted a laugh. “Whoa. Now, you two are much more my type. I’ll double the price if you both come with me.”

The black girl looked up at the taller blonde. The blonde seemed to be considering it, then spat. Literally. “Back off, perv,” she snarled. “You are too gross for words.”

“Listen, bitch . . .” the man began threateningly.

“Ooh, I’m so scared,” the blonde said in a fake high voice, and the black girl giggled. “You *do* know that a john soliciting is just as illegal as the pro, right? Oh, and we *are* underage. How ’bout we call some nice friendly officers to *make* you back off?”

The girls strode right past the man and up to Lindsay. “Come on,” the black girl said, “let’s get out of here.”

Lindsay obediently fell into step with them, wondering what on earth was going to happen next.

Fifteen

“So Mitch was totally into me,” Flip bragged. “Totally dissed that loser Kyle and told me we could definitely hook up later tonight at the Dregs.” He took a long drag from a lipstick-tinged cigarette. “Haley, you would have so loved to see Kyle’s face.”

He handed the cigarette to the tall blond girl, Haley. “About time Kyle’s smug ass got whipped down.” She inhaled deeply on the cigarette and then handed it to the black girl, Blair, who puffed on it quickly, then gave it back to Flip. So far, Blair hadn’t said a word other than an initial “hey.”

“Can you get us into the Dregs?” Haley asked.

Flip looked at Haley, then at Blair and at Lindsay. “All of you?”

“Not me,” Lindsay said hastily. She knew she would never fit in at a place called the Dregs. These kids were as different from Lindsay as a distant species. She listened, fascinated by their incomprehensible speech; she watched, intrigued by their jittery gestures, their dramatic poses.

Flip cuddled up to Haley, kissing her neck, which was weird to Lindsay because he was so clearly gay. “Get us some Baileys, pretty please,” he murmured.

“No dinero,” Haley said. She cast a glance at Lindsay. “You got any money?”

The bills and coins left over from buying a soda felt heavy in Lindsay’s pocket. Should she offer to buy them their booze? Haley had bailed her out of a pretty tense situation and then introduced her to her friends. They might be on the freaky side, but they were being nice to her, and besides, they knew a lot more about ditching school, not getting caught, and hiding out than she did.

Tanya’s going to come with my ATM card, she thought. I’ll have plenty of money then.

She pulled out the ten-dollar bill. “I don’t know if this is enough.”

Haley grinned. “It’s a start.”

Flip clapped. “Oh, thank God!” He grabbed Lindsay’s hand and kissed it. “I mean, thank goddess. Don’t mean to be sexist.”

Blair giggled and picked at a scab on her elbow. Lindsay noticed a number of ragged scars on her scrawny arm. Haley’s skin was rough and flaky, and her dirty blond hair tangled and matted, but Lindsay’s overall impression was that the girl would be considered hot, particularly with her tight clothes and all that makeup.

Flip dropped back onto the park bench and spread his arms, studying Lindsay. “We should do a makeover on you, girl. You aren’t taking full advantage of your assets.”

Lindsay couldn't tell if he'd insulted or complimented her.

"That perv dude thought her assets were just fine," Haley said.

"Hey," Blair said. She jerked her head toward a policeman walking along the perimeter of the park.

"Time to move," Haley said. She slung her arm over Blair's shoulders. Flip stood and composed himself. Uncertain, Lindsay walked with them, wondering if the cop was going to stop them, search them. Were they circulating her photo? Did the kids have drugs on them? Her heart thudded hard and she kept her eyes on the ground as she heard blood throbbing in her ears.

"Now that the yuppies have taken over the neighborhood," Haley explained, "the park is safer, but we have to move around more."

"We need to not be loi-ter-ing," Flip added, drawing out the word dramatically. "But I'd rather hang in the park than on the pier. That scene is so tired."

Haley looked at him sharply. "But you still get over there, right?"

"Oh yeah." Flip sighed.

They settled on a grassy spot, and Lindsay noticed kids piling into the park. School must be out. At least now they'd be less conspicuous.

It also meant that it wouldn't be much longer before Tanya arrived.

“So, uh, where do you guys . . . live?” Lindsay hoped this wasn’t a terrible question. “I’m kind of in between places myself.”

“Well,” Flip said, “if you ask my caseworker, I live in the group home over on Avenue A. But I wouldn’t call that a life.”

Haley snorted. “Please. You got eighty-sixed out of there two weeks ago.”

Flip shrugged. “I can go back whenever I want.”

“Ya think?” Haley sounded dubious. “Whatever.”

“What about you?” Lindsay asked Haley.

Haley eyed her. “Wherever. You know. Around.”

“Me too,” Blair said. “Around.”

This didn’t sound too promising—they weren’t going to be much help in finding a place to stay.

“Hey, Lindsay!”

Lindsay looked up and saw Tanya approaching with a broad smile on her face. As she got closer and her eyes scanned the group, her smile faded.

Lindsay stood. “Hey, Tanya. This is Haley, that’s Blair, and this is Flip.”

“Hi,” Tanya said uneasily.

“Well, you’re a big piece of gorgeousness,” Flip said.

“Huh?” Tanya looked from Flip to Lindsay. Lindsay shrugged.

“You have a cigarette?” Haley asked.

“I don’t smoke,” Tanya said.

“Good for you,” Haley replied.

“Haley and Blair helped me out when a creep was bugging me earlier,” Lindsay explained.

“Big perv. Thought she was a hooker and didn’t want to take her word for it that she wasn’t,” Haley explained.

Tanya’s expression went from uncomfortable to shocked. “Are you okay, Lindz?”

“I’m fine,” Lindsay said. “I’m just really glad Haley and Blair showed up when they did.”

“Yeah, you owe us,” Haley said. Lindsay couldn’t tell if she was joking or not.

“Oh, enjoy that Baileys,” she replied. That should remind Haley that she had kind of repaid her.

“We’ve got to get going,” Tanya said. “We have to be at the library.”

“Library?” Lindsay looked at Tanya. “Right.” She turned to Haley and the group. She didn’t want Haley and her friends to think they were purposely ditching them, even if they were. “We’re working on this problem I have, so we have to do some research.”

“Whatever. See you around,” Haley said. “Watch out for pervs.”

“You bet I will. Thanks again.”

They had made it a few steps away from the group when Tanya said, “Your mom called.”

Lindsay's heart tightened. She could actually feel it squeeze in her chest. "And . . . ?"

"The hospital told her you were missing, and she thought you might have contacted me."

"Well, we figured she would, right?" Lindsay worried that now that parents were involved, Tanya would revert to her more-normal "good girl" behavior.

"She sounded really, really worried about you," Tanya said. "Like out-of-her-mind scared."

"Or just out of her mind," Lindsay muttered. She kicked a bottle out of her path; it rattled along the pavement until it clanked against a park bench.

"No, really," Tanya said. "She was crying."

"She wasn't mad?" Lindsay asked.

"Not even a little. I mean, she might get mad after she stops being terrified, I guess. My mom's like that. You know, the 'you had me so worried and now I'm going to kill you' syndrome."

"Yeah." Lindsay shoved her hands deeper into Tanya's over-size coat pockets. Could she do it? Try talking to her mom?

"What else did she say?" Lindsay asked.

"Not much. She had to get off the phone." Tanya's eyes flicked to Lindsay and away again.

Tanya didn't have to elaborate; Lindsay knew exactly what had happened. The Husband came home or started yelling or something. *He's probably thrilled I skipped out of the hospital. Any way to get me out of the picture.*

“Maybe . . . maybe this is a good sign,” Tanya offered. “Things might be different. Maybe you should try going home.”

Lindsay stopped walking. “I can’t.” She lowered herself to a bench, and Tanya dropped down beside her. “You know that!”

“I know it sucked that they put you in the hospital, but now that you know—”

“Know *what*?” Lindsay demanded. “That the voice isn’t a hallucination but some weird ghost or someone I can talk to across time or something?” She shut her eyes and leaned back against the bench. “They’ll still say I’m crazy. I mean, that sounds crazy to *me*.”

“But what if you tried to get your mom to believe you? She has a pretty open mind. Remember she was into that paranormal stuff for a while?”

Lindsay opened her eyes and stared at the fancy electric streetlight designed to look like an old-fashioned gas lamp. *It’s going to get dark earlier and earlier*, she realized.

“We could put all the proof together first, and then you can go to your mom and—”

“I can’t!” Lindsay was surprised by the shout that came out of her, by the way her hands smacked the bench on either side of her. “I can’t go home. The Husband. He hits her. She hits him too.”

“Oh, man.” Tanya let out a long, slow sigh. “And your mom’s drinking is worse?”

Lindsay sat back up and nodded. “I can’t tell if she’s drinking more because he hits her or if he hits her because she’s drinking more.”

“Lindsay, you have to tell someone. Some grown-up. There are places to go. People to help you.”

Lindsay stared at her. “Are you kidding me? First, I have my little hospital stay on my record. They’ve already diagnosed me, and no matter what our theory is, they’re still going to go with their own. And second, I ran away. Which makes me a problem kid. Oh yeah, and three? If they take me away from Melanie, where am I going to go? If it’s not the hospital, it’s what, foster care?” Lindsay shuddered. “No way.”

The long silence between them made the sounds in the park sharp, pointed. “I guess you’re right,” Tanya finally said. “But what’s your plan? I mean, if you can’t go home . . . where are you going to go? What are you going to do?”

“I don’t know.” Lindsay shivered. Tanya made the bare facts way too clear. Lindsay hadn’t been able to think past the first step—running away from the hospital. Now she was going to have to figure out some kind of plan.

“Hey, did you get my ATM card?” Lindsay asked.

“I got you the card, I got you some books, I got you some socks, and I even got you clean underwear. Tomorrow I’ll try to find some stuff of mine that might fit you. You’re going to get awfully tired of those jeans and that sweatshirt.”

“You totally rock,” Lindsay said.

Tanya stood. “So let’s get to the library.” She slung her backpack over her shoulder. “We have a freaky mystery to solve.”

A few minutes later Tanya and Lindsay sat at a large table surrounded by books of old maps, histories of New York City, rolls of microfilm, and Lindsay’s notes.

“Every time I heard Lucy, it was in someplace that existed in her time too,” Lindsay said. “Riverview Hospital was already there in 1882.”

“I wonder why she was at the hospital,” Tanya commented.

Lindsay shrugged. If the girl was a ghost, then being at a hospital wasn’t a big stretch. She ran her fingers across the grainy black-and-white photo in front of her, then studied a floor plan in another book. “And it looks like I was in the old part of the Museum of Natural History.”

Tanya leaned across her to take a closer look. “The museum looks so weird without its turrets.”

“What’s weirder are the sheep and goats all around it,” Lindsay said. She leaned back in her chair, imagining what it must have been like back then. “People were still farming on the Upper West Side.”

Tanya nodded. “And it’s not like it was that long ago.” She grinned.

“So, why did I hear her in my closet, like, *all* the time?”

Tanya opened an enormous architectural guide to New York City. “Where did she say she lived?”

“Clinton Place. I have no clue where that is.”

Tanya flipped through pages. “That’s because it doesn’t exist anymore,” she said excitedly. “It vanished when Sixth Avenue was extended near Eighth Street. But there used to be a whopping big mansion there. And guess what it was called.” Her dark eyes twinkled, her whole body radiating the same kind of energy Lindsay felt when she was closing in on the solution to a physics problem.

“The Van Wyck mansion?” Lindsay whispered.

Tanya didn’t answer. She picked up the book, held open to a photo of a very familiar building.

“Th-that’s where we moved to,” Lindsay stuttered.

“Instead of being demolished, it was broken up into apartments,” Tanya said.

“The closet must have once been a room she spent a lot of time in,” Lindsay said.

Tanya nodded very slowly. “Or maybe *still* spends a lot of time in,” she said.

Lindsay cocked her head. “What do you mean?”

“This could be evidence of that theory you told me about. The many-worlds interpretation.”

“Alternate universes,” Lindsay remembered. “The past and the present coexisting.”

Tanya was so excited Lindsay could see it was a struggle for her to stay in her chair. “I’ve seen this in movies all the time! You’ve done it, Lindsay! You’ve broken through!”

Lindsay stared at Tanya. “You act like this is a good thing,” she said. “This ‘breakthrough’ has me totally, thoroughly, completely *screwed!*”

Several pairs of eyes landed on her. She hadn’t meant to speak so loudly. She got up and sat at a computer terminal, not wanting to be anywhere near Tanya.

“I’m sorry,” Tanya said, coming up behind her quietly. “You’re right. It totally sucks to be you right now. I got carried away with how amazing it is. But doesn’t it feel better to know that this really *is* possible? That you aren’t crazy?”

“I guess. . . .” Lindsay leaned on her elbows, holding her forehead. “But what good does it do me?”

“What if we can prove it?” Tanya suggested. “Then they’ll have to believe you.”

“Who’s ‘they?’” Lindsay asked.

“Seriously. If we can prove this, you’ll be famous. Rich. Scientists will want to talk to you. Study you. Historians too. I mean, Lindsay! What an amazing discovery!”

“Yeah. . . .” She swiveled to face Tanya. “But how can we prove it? I’m *not* going back to the apartment. And I’m not going back to Riverview.”

“There was something in your notes. . . . Hang on.” Tanya rushed back to the table and returned with Lindsay’s notebook. She flipped the pages. “You wrote down that she lived in a boardinghouse on Fourteenth Street before she moved

into the Van Wyck place. Her father was living there again. She was wondering if maybe she should have moved back in with him.”

Lindsay nodded, dimly remembering the conversation that the drugs had made nearly impossible. “She felt guilty about it. And nervous about not having him around.”

“It could still exist,” Tanya said. “Did she tell you the name?”

Lindsay shook her head. “Just that it was on Fourteenth Street near the El.”

“The Third Avenue rail.” Tanya smiled. “Once a train was over there.” She twisted around and faced the other computer, her fingers flying over the keys. “This has to be it.”

Lindsay scooted her chair over to look at Tanya’s screen. She had loaded one of the microfilms, and there was an advertisement for a “conveniently located” and inexpensive “lodging house.”

Tanya hit a few more keys, doing a reverse lookup, and sat back in her chair when *Belleclair Hotel* popped up. “That address is still a hotel. You might be able to contact her there.”

Tanya called the newspaper up again. “Okay, on this day in 1882, that hotel was called Thorton’s. If you do manage to get her to talk to you, make sure to ask her if that’s where she is. It could help us prove . . . *something*.”

“Okay.”

Tanya scrolled through the newspaper. “These ads are hilarious. Check this one out. It’s for a séance.”

Lindsay looked at the screen and gasped. “That’s her! The girl who’s talking to me. Lucy Phillips!”

Sixteen

Tanya and Lindsay stared at each other a long moment.

“Aren’t séances for contacting the dead?” Tanya whispered. “We—we’re not dead, are we?”

Lucy blinked a few times, then burst out laughing. “You’re going to have to give up your future membership in Mensa if you keep coming up with questions like that. How could someone in the past call ghosts from the future?”

“It could happen,” Tanya said huffily. “I saw a movie once—”

“You watch waaay too many movies for a smart girl.”

“Okay, so maybe that was dumb. But maybe it’s because she’s a medium that she can reach you. Some kind of occult power.”

“That’s why she keeps calling me spirit!” Lindsay realized. “She thinks I’m dead! That’s why she thought I could talk to her dead mom. Because she figures all the dead hang out together.”

“She’s living in the right year for that kind of thing,” Tanya said. “The spiritualist movement was still going strong.”

Lindsay’s body sagged.

“What is it?” Tanya asked.

“Nothing. It’s just—” She couldn’t explain why an unwritten civics paper on the relationship between women’s rights and the spiritualist movement had her close to tears. She smiled weakly. “She’s going to be awfully surprised to find out *she’s* the one who’s dead.”

“For almost a hundred years.”

“Let’s make copies of the newspapers off the microfilm,” Lindsay suggested. “She may take some convincing.”

“Good idea.” Tanya dropped coins into the slot.

“She asked me to find out about her mother. Is there any way to do that?”

“Possibly. Where did she die?”

“Kentucky.”

“Hmm. We probably won’t have access to Kentucky birth and death records from that long ago from here, but we could try genealogies.”

“You think?”

Tanya nodded as she typed, checking Lindsay’s notes. “A lot of people are into doing genealogy research and posting it online. Hopefully someone in that family in the last hundred years got interested in their family history.”

Lindsay leaned back in her chair, grateful she had Tanya’s help.

“Aha!” Tanya read from the screen. “Annabella Phillips, formerly Martin. Daughter of Hope Sweetzer Martin and

Franklin Martin. Married to Beau Phillips. One daughter. Lucy.” She looked at Lindsay. “There’s more. In both directions.”

“She’s real,” Lindsay murmured, as if it took this final piece of evidence for her to lock it into place. “This is really happening.”

Lindsay couldn’t bring herself to look at the screen, afraid of seeing the names in print, giving them the strange reality of being both alive and dead. *It’s Schrödinger’s cat all over again.*

“Oh, man, I have to go!” Tanya stood quickly. “I didn’t realize it was so late. My mom is going to freak!”

Lindsay’s stomach clenched. “Right.”

“Are you sure you won’t come with me?”

Lindsay shook her head. “Can’t risk it. Melanie probably talked to your mom too.”

Tanya shifted her weight, bit her lip, uncertain. Then she glanced back up at the clock. “What are you going to do?”

“Don’t worry about me.” Lindsay waggled her ATM card at Tanya. “I can go find a decent place to stay.”

“If you’re sure . . .”

“Let’s meet back here again tomorrow after school.”

“Deal.” Tanya ran the zipper up and down her jacket. “Call me, right? When you go to sleep and when you wake up so I know you’re okay.”

“What if your mom answers?”

“Oh yeah.” She frowned. “Wow. This is really, really serious, isn’t it?”

“Let’s just meet up here tomorrow, okay?” Lindsay said.

Reluctantly Tanya turned to go, and Lindsay refreshed the page to bring the newspaper back up. She kept her back to the door, unwilling to watch Tanya walking away.

Don’t bother with the old stuff, she told herself, scanning the microfilm images—corset ads, steamship arrivals, an entire column that seemed to be devoted to what buildings had burned down that day. *Go online and find a place to stay*. Her hand reached out, then stopped in the air a moment. She gathered her print-outs, stuffed them with her notebook into the backpack Tanya had brought her, and headed for the Belleclaire Hotel.

Lindsay mounted the narrow staircase to the room she’d rented for the night. If Lucy wasn’t here, there was no point staying any longer than that. The place gave her the serious heebies: it was smelly, dirty, noisy. The manager was an enormously fat balding man in a stained T-shirt. He’d barely looked up at her, just grunted the price and taken the money.

As creepy as the place was, Lindsay felt pretty secure that no one was going to bother asking why a teenager was there on her own.

As she climbed a flight of stairs, she could hear a couple arguing in a foreign language, music blasting. Shuddering, she opened her door and stepped inside.

Could be worse, she told herself. A bed that at least seemed to have clean sheets. A dresser. A working lock on the door.

What more does a runaway need? She looked around. *Hang on. Where's the bathroom?*

Lindsay stuck her head back out into the hall and saw a door at the end marked BATHROOM. That answered that. Walking out into the hall, she began her search.

"Lucy?" she called, thinking that if anyone asked, she could claim she was looking for a friend. "Lucy, are you here?"

She went up another flight. "Lucy," she called. "It's me, Lindsay. Are you here?"

Lindsay walked along the hall, listening at the doors. "Lucy? Lucy!"

"Is that you, Lindsay?" came faintly from inside room 14.

Lindsay stared at the door. *I did it. I found her.* "Yes, I'm here. You're visiting your father's boardinghouse, aren't you?"

"Yes," Lucy said on the other side of the door. "I'm waiting for him. How did you know?"

"Wait there until I get back," Lindsay said. She dashed down the hall and took the stairs two at a time. A few minutes later she returned, having convinced the manager that she needed to switch rooms.

"I'm back," she called as soon as she entered the room. "And *boy*, do I have something to tell you."

"Yes? Is it about my mother?"

"Oh. Well, not exactly. I did find her name. Is your father's name Beau?"

“Yes.”

Lindsay flipped open her notebook. “And your mom’s maiden name was Martin?”

“Yes. I stayed on her parents’ farm when my father was away.”

“And you’re Lucy Phillips, the medium.”

“Yes.”

“Okay, I hope you’re sitting down. This is going to be a big shocker. You believe you contacted me because I’m dead, right?”

“Well, yes.” Lucy’s voice sounded slightly surprised.

“You’re right that I’m not in your world. Well, I am, but not exactly. But I’m definitely no ghost. In fact, it’s really you that’s . . . Lucy, I’m talking to you from the future. Over a hundred years into the future.”

Lindsay heard a tiny gasp, then an even tinier, “Oh, my.”

Seventeen

“That can’t be possible,” Lucy protested. “It’s just too incredible.”

“How is it any more impossible than thinking that you’re talking to the dead?” Lindsay demanded.

She told Lucy everything she and Tanya had discovered: that every place she and Lucy had contact existed in both centuries. Then Lindsay pulled out her ace in the hole—the newspapers.

“Here’s the test,” she told Lucy. “I’m going to read to you from tomorrow’s newspaper. Tomorrow in your time, I mean. Then you come back to your father’s boardinghouse and tell me if what I’ve told you came true.”

“I suppose we could try that. . . .”

Lindsay read the headlines of the next day’s newspaper in 1882: about an ocean liner’s arrival, full of society and famous people, about a fire, gossip about the actress Lily Langtry, some business news. “I could read you reviews. That might be more interesting. Hey, I know this one. Well, I saw the movie.”

“Movie?”

“Something that’s going to be invented.” She tried to

remember when people started going to movies. “I think they began as nickelodeons. Thomas Edison had something to do with it.” *Tanya should be the one having this experience*, Lindsay thought. *She’s good at history.*

“What’s the play?” Lucy asked.

“Around the World in Eighty Days.”

“Oh! Read that one!” Lucy sounded excited.

“Well, it’s not really a review, more of an announcement.” Lindsay started giggling. “This sounds *crazy!* Listen to this: ‘Every seat was occupied at Niblo’s Garden last night. The play was handsomely mounted, and the music was good. The costumes were gaudy, and the ballets are presented in admirable style. The really startling feature of the exhibition was the presence of a live elephant on the stage. It was a good-size elephant, an elephant inclined to be exceedingly familiar with the damsels round him and with an undue ambition to exhibit his lung power.’” Lindsay was having a hard time talking because she was laughing so hard. “Man, I wish I could have seen that. It sounds like that elephant was trying to get frisky with those dancers!”

Lindsay heard a little intake of breath. “It’s getting late. I need to go. I guess my father isn’t coming after all.”

“Promise to come back tomorrow and talk to me. You’ll see. It will all come true.”

“I promise.” Lindsay felt a connection close. Lucy must have left the boardinghouse.

Lindsay was so excited she couldn't sit still. She wished she could call Tanya, but she didn't want to risk it. Besides, she'd have so much more to tell tomorrow.

How peculiar, Lucy thought, slowly making her way down the narrow stairs, pondering the impossible. The spirit sounded so certain. No, the poor girl must be delirious or simply desperate not to admit the painful truth that she had died and was speaking to Lucy from the beyond.

She stepped outside into the dim street. Too early for the lamps to have been lit, but the sun had dipped low. She'd have to hurry to get back to Mrs. Van Wyck's and get ready for her evening with Bryce.

"Lucy!"

Lucy turned and saw Nellie approaching. Nellie's dress was a startling orange-and-pink brocade, her corset tightly cinched, emphasizing her curves, and the top of her dress very low cut. Lucy could actually see the tops of the woman's breasts. She looked bright and lively; all the fear and grief afflicting her when they'd first met had vanished.

"Here to see your father?" Nellie asked.

Up close, Lucy could see that Nellie's face was thickly coated with some kind of pale powder and that there were dark circles under the woman's eyes. She wondered how old Nellie was; she'd been as shocked as her father to discover that Katie was just her age.

“I seem to have missed him. How is Katie?” Lucy asked.

“Much improved! I can’t thank you enough for what you did for Katie and me.”

“I’m glad I could help.”

“I came here to get some clothes for Katie so I can bring her home. I need to get her away from that doctor friend of yours.”

Lucy’s eyes widened. “Has he an . . . interest in her?”

Nellie laughed so hard she bent over at the waist. “No,” she said straightening back up. “Not the kind of interest you mean.” She stifled her giggles and readjusted her garish hat. “No, his interest is in getting her to stop working at Harry Hill’s and go back home.”

“Oh,” Lucy said.

“He’s very kind, of course,” Nellie added hastily. “And we’re ever so grateful. It’s just, well, he shouldn’t interfere. See?”

“But wouldn’t she be better off going home?” Lucy asked.

“What’s for her to go home to?” Nellie demanded. Lucy could see the woman was quickly losing her gratitude and starting to get peeved. “And won’t Tom get on me if he thought I had any hand in her leaving.”

“Oh.”

Now Nellie looked at her shrewdly. “Your doctor can’t be of much help, but you can.”

“Me? How?”

“You managed to better yourself,” Nellie said. “You didn’t start any higher than me or Katie.”

“My father—” Lucy began, uncertain how to stem this particular tide of conversation.

“I know all about your father,” Nellie said. “He’s got the gab, that’s certain. He could convince a body it was summer-time in a blizzard. I’ve seen him do it. But once you were set, you dropped him, didn’t you?”

Lucy shook her head. “That’s not—”

“Let me in on the game. Girls need to stick together. We could make a great act of it.”

Lucy’s eyes narrowed. “I don’t work with a partner. My father taught me that. Partners can’t be trusted.”

Nellie hooted. “You’re a bright little thing.” She nodded slowly. “No reason I can’t attend one of your little soirees, is there? Introduce myself around. That’d be a help at least. A better class of custom.”

Lucy fought to hide her rising panic. Nellie at Mrs. Van Wyck’s? Her presence would destroy the impression she and her father had worked so hard to cultivate. “There is an admission charged,” Lucy said, hoping having to spend money might dissuade Nellie.

Nellie shrugged. “Perhaps you can arrange a ticket for me.”

“I don’t have anything to do with it. I have a manager.” Then she added, “Talk to my father. He would know better

than I how to go about it.” Lucy knew he would make sure Nellie steered clear from now on. Her father would not risk his hard work establishing them as a genteel family fallen on hard times.

But she’d still have to be careful. It was likely she’d see Nellie again when she came to visit her father. Or Lindsay. She couldn’t go back on her promise to return the next day. Not when she’d tried so hard to make contact.

“I’m expected back,” Lucy said.

“I’ll be seeing you soon, I’m sure,” Nellie warned.

Lucy clung to Bryce’s arm, terrified she’d lose him in the swirling crowd and reveling in being at his side. Everyone seemed to know him: distinguished gentlemen, dashing young men, and the envious young ladies who glared at Lucy. The ornate Niblo’s Garden was the perfect setting for such a dazzling evening. Lucy couldn’t decide which thrilled her more: the extraordinary sights they’d seen onstage or being the object of so much attention.

“That was a silly little spectacle,” Bryce commented, guiding Lucy expertly through the throng. “Though I did enjoy the elephant.”

“It was enchanting!” Lucy protested. “I’ve never seen anything like it. Though,” she added, remembering the words of the article Lindsay had read, “the costumes were a bit gaudy.”

“We’ll never get a carriage here,” Bryce said. “Not with everyone else trying. Let’s walk a bit.”

Bryce led them down Crosby Street. Lucy noticed two women farther ahead standing in the circle of yellow light cast by the tall lamp. Seeing them, Bryce steered Lucy nearer to the street, as if he wanted to give the women a wide berth. As she got closer, Lucy recognized them: Nellie and Katie, both heavily painted and wearing low-cut dresses and feathered hats.

Lucy quickly looked down at the sidewalk, willing them not to notice her. If those women approached while she was with Bryce—

“Miss Lucy!”

Lucy’s heart sank and her ears felt warm. She kept walking, but Bryce pulled her to a stop.

“Oh, Miss Lucy,” Katie said breathlessly, rushing up to her. “Oh, Miss Lucy. I never had a chance to thank you proper.”

Lucy took a step backward, shrinking away from the girl.

Katie looked perplexed, but very quickly her expression changed.

“Sorry to have troubled you,” she said curtly, whirling around and rejoining Nellie under the lamplight.

“You know that creature?” Bryce demanded, yanking Lucy away.

“No,” Lucy said.

“She knew you by name,” Bryce said.

“I—I—” Lucy didn’t know how to explain any of it in a way that would be acceptable to Bryce.

“What on earth did she want to thank you for? Good God. To be approached by a streetwalker—” His indignation cut off his words. He put up a hand, and a carriage came to a stop. “I sincerely hope no one I know saw that exchange.”

He helped Lucy into the carriage and this time, rather than sitting beside her as he usually did, he sat facing her.

“Answer me, Lucy.” His voice was hard. “How did you help that woman?”

Lucy took in a deep breath. “It was because of Alan,” she said.

Bryce looked at her sharply. “Alan Wordsworth? What have you been up to with Alan Wordsworth?”

“Nothing!” she insisted. “My father discovered this girl was ill, and I remembered what Alan had said at the ball. You sat me with him, remember?” she added, getting in a little dig. “That night he told me all about his work at the hospital.”

Bryce’s expression began to lighten. A small smile played on his full lips. “He does go on.”

Lucy nodded. “So I helped my father take her to Riverview and got Alan to take care of her. I had no idea she was . . . she was . . . Just that she was sick. Possibly *dying*.”

“I see.” He tapped his gloved fingers together.

“What was I supposed to do?” Lucy snapped. “Let her die?”

Bryce's jaw tightened, and he pressed back against the tufted leather upholstery. For a long moment the only sound Lucy could hear was the clip-clopping of the horse's iron shoes against the cobblestones. Then Bryce shrugged. "You're right. You were trying to do a good thing by helping someone less fortunate." He gave a strange, sharp laugh. "A do-gooder. Just like my mother."

The carriage came to an abrupt stop. Loud clanging and shouts startled Lucy, and Bryce leaned forward to peer out the window. "Fire," he said; then, his face still close to Lucy's, he added, "Don't look so serious."

He kissed her lightly on her lips. All was forgiven.

Bryce slid onto the seat beside her, draped his arm across her shoulders. "My parents think that Alan is such a good example," he complained. "How he has done so well for himself despite his low beginnings. That his work among the poor is so kind, so selfless." He shook his head. "I just hope he hasn't bewitched you as well."

"Not a chance," Lucy assured him.

"I'm afraid I'm going to be busy most of this week," Bryce said, playing with strands of her hair. "Lady Wilhelm is arriving tomorrow on the *Arizona* with her irritating family, and I'm expected to hang around and be entertaining." He laughed. "The one thing I'm looking forward to in this visit is attending Lily Langtry's American debut. But first I'll have to hear about all of the evil she represents. Lady Wilhelm will

feel herself an expert since they will have traveled across the ocean on the same ship.”

Lucy felt a strange twisting in her gut. She ignored it, turning her head slightly so that if Bryce wanted to kiss her, he could. He did.

They were startled apart when more shouting and clanging assaulted them through the window. The entire carriage seemed lit up, and Lucy realized it was the flames from the building they were passing.

“Too bad,” Bryce said, peering out the carriage window. “There goes Josiah’s Dry Goods. I wonder if he can afford to rebuild.”

Lucy straightened, recognition driving her into a tense, alert position. Josiah’s Dry Goods. Lady Wilhelm arriving on the *Arizona* with Lily Langtry. Those were bits of news Lindsay had read to her from the newspaper.

Tomorrow’s newspaper.

Eighteen

Lindsay floated in darkness, enveloped in shadows cut sharply by garish neon flashes. At the tip of sleep she was startled by a pounding on the door, forcing her awake.

“Didi! You open this damn door!” a woman shouted. She pounded again. “Didi!”

“No Didi here!” Lindsay shouted back.

Lindsay watched the tiny sliver of light seeping in under the door, dimming and brightening as the woman moved. “You don’t sound like Didi,” she said uncertainly.

“I’m not,” Lindsay replied. “There’s no Didi here.”

“Well, where is she?” the woman demanded, kicking the door with a low thwack.

“I don’t know,” Lindsay yelled. “Go away. Leave me alone!”

“You don’t have to be *that* way about it,” the woman muttered, her footsteps trickling away and clicking down the stairs.

Lindsay dropped her head. She was exhausted but wide awake. She got up and peered out the window. It was still dark, but there were people on the street, starting their day.

She didn't have any towels, so she wasn't sure about taking a shower. She put on her shoes and opened the door, checking both directions. The coast clear, she hurried to the bathroom. The strong bleach smell told her someone had cleaned it pretty recently. The shower curtain was matted with mildew, but as long as she didn't let it touch her, she could handle it.

I can pick up towels at Kmart or borrow some from Tanya, she decided. *Doable.* Then she discovered the broken lock. There was no way she was going to stand in this room naked.

She splashed water on her face to wake herself up and went back to the room. While she wasn't sleeping, she had come up with a new idea on how to test her theory. She just had to wait long enough for the library to open. She picked up her notebook and her wallet, then went out to a diner where she could have breakfast and use a bathroom with a lock.

Lindsay felt like she had stepped back in time when she pushed through the heavy doors of McSorley's Old Ale House. Sawdust was strewn across the floor, and newspapers, photos, and pictures dark and dusty, dating to the 1850s, covered every inch of the rich brown walls. Strange objects hung from the ceiling and perched along the back bar. A few scattered patrons sat drinking beer from clear mugs at wooden tables. A white-haired man stood behind the bar, far from the door, reading a newspaper and drinking coffee. He glanced up when he saw her and frowned.

Lindsay shifted uncomfortably. She had timed this all wrong—the place was too empty and she stood out in the all-male environment.

“Yes, young lady?” the bartender asked.

“Does a guy named Tom work here?” she asked, quickly coming up with an excuse for being there.

“I’m Tom.”

Oops. Lindsay laughed nervously. “This Tom isn’t you.”

John grinned. “A bit younger, perhaps?”

“Well, yeah. I thought he said he worked here. I must have gotten it wrong.”

“Guess so.”

“Uh, can I get a Coke?”

“Sure.”

Tom turned and opened an ancient-looking refrigerator that looked more like an oversize chest of drawers. He put the bottle and a glass of ice in front of her.

“That doesn’t look like any fridge I’ve ever seen,” Lindsay said, pouring the Coke into the glass.

Tom patted the refrigerator. “This beauty has been here since the beginning. It started out as an icebox and then got refitted as a fridge. Never even moved it—just added all the works with it still in place.”

“Wow.” Lindsay thought, an idea forming. “So that’s, like, the oldest thing in the whole bar?”

“Pretty much. Even older than me.”

A patron at the end of the bar held up an empty beer mug, and the bartender ambled back down to the other side.

Lindsay sat at the table in the front window and sipped her Coke. She noticed a space between the wooden casing and the wall. If she slipped her packet behind the fridge, it was really unlikely anyone would notice it. For maybe a century.

Lucy stared up at the boardinghouse, shading her eyes against the sunlight. It was a bright October afternoon, but Lucy felt chilled. It wasn't just that she didn't want to run into Nellie or Katie after last night; she wasn't sure she wanted any more contact with Lindsay.

I could know the future. My own future. The future of the entire world.

"In or out," a gruff voice behind her demanded.

"Sorry." Lucy gripped her skirt and hurried up the stairs.

She knocked on her father's door, and when she got no answer, she let herself in with her key. "Lindsay?" she called tentatively. "Are you here?"

"Oh, good," Lindsay answered. "I was afraid I missed you."

The spirit—no, the *girl*, Lucy corrected herself—sounded excited. Lucy felt her own pulse racing. Could someone really be talking to her from the future? Wasn't that truly the realm of the spirits?

"Listen," Lindsay said. "I have a new test for us. My friend

Tanya and I saw this in a movie. *You* know,” she added, laughing. “That form of entertainment that hasn’t been invented yet.”

Lucy lowered herself to the bed. For some reason, her legs didn’t seem to want to hold her up.

“In this movie, see,” Lindsay continued, “these people found a way to send things back and forth through time. I thought we should try to do that too.”

Lucy pressed her fingertips to her forehead.

“Lucy? Are you there?”

Lucy heard the anxiety in the girl’s voice. *I could end this now*, she thought. *I could just not answer.*

“Lucy?”

The voice had changed, the anxiety transformed into pleading. The palpable need for a response touched Lucy. How could she abandon her now? Hadn’t Lucy herself been trying for this very contact?

“Yes,” Lucy said softly. “I’m here.”

“Oh, good!”

Odd. Lucy had the distinct impression that she could *feel* Lindsay’s relief. *Our connection is growing*, she thought.

“I went back to the library this morning as soon as it opened,” Lindsay said. “I made copies of a bunch of newspapers from your time. Up to a week ahead. And guess what I did?”

The glee was unmistakable. Lindsay was thrilled by this plan, this development. Lucy pushed her palms against her

temples, feeling as if a headache were growing. Perhaps in the future talking through centuries would be less daunting. “What—what did you do?” she asked.

“I found a place that existed in both of our times and hid the newspapers there for you to get!”

“Really?” Lucy stood and paced, a twinge of curiosity, a tingle of excitement glimmering brightly within the darkness of her fear and confusion.

“So—you in?”

Lucy stopped and steadied herself by placing her gloved hand on the window frame. “I suppose. . . .”

“Great! There’s this old bar not too far from your boardinghouse. It’s called McSorley’s. It’s been there since, like, 1830 or something, and it’s still here now. I don’t think it’s ever been renovated.”

The torrent of words from the “other side” felt like a wave. Lucy stumbled backward and settled onto the bed.

“Right up front, when you first walk in, there’s a fridge—”

“A what?” Lucy asked. Lindsay had the oddest way of speaking.

“Sorry. An icebox. I slipped the papers behind it. All you have to do is go get the papers and read them. You’ll see that everything comes true!”

Lucy’s heart panged. “I—I can’t read.”

“You’re kidding me!”

“What need would I have to learn?” Lucy snapped. “I worked

on a farm. I had no idea I'd ever be in the city. In this situation."

"Hey, look, sorry. It's just, pretty much *everyone* learns to read in my time. In fact, you have to go to school until you're sixteen. It's the law."

"What a stupid law," Lucy said. "How would farming get done? And factory work?"

There was a pause. "Do you want to learn?"

Lucy had never cared before about reading. But since moving in Mrs. Van Wyck's circle and spending time with Bryce, she realized it was a skill she needed. "Yes, but there's no one I can ask to teach me. My father is too busy. And anyone else . . . It needs to be a secret."

Another pause. Lucy wondered what Lindsay looked like, what her expression was while these pauses occurred. "I could teach you," Lindsay offered.

"You?"

"Sure! I've tutored lots of kids. Usually in math or science, but I bet I could teach you to read."

"But how?" This . . . *friendship* . . . was getting stranger and stranger.

"Do you know the alphabet?" Lindsay asked.

"Well, yes. And I know some words. I can write my name," she added quickly. She didn't want Lindsay to think she was a total dolt.

"Okay, then. Here's what we can do. Can you get hold of, let me think, a Dickens novel? Yeah, his stuff was published

already back then. I'll get the same book and read it out loud to you while you follow along in your copy."

"I suppose." Mrs. Van Wyck's library was full of books. She certainly wouldn't mind if Lucy borrowed a volume.

"So we have a plan," Lindsay said, sounding much more, well, *alive* than Lucy had ever heard her. "You get the newspapers and the book and come back to talk to me."

"It will have to be quite a bit later. I can't stay away from Mrs. Van Wyck's that long."

"Oh." Lindsay sounded disappointed. "So, what time do you think?"

Lucy's brow furrowed. "Sometime this evening. Say, six? I'll find an excuse to get away. A dinner engagement or something."

"Oh. Okay. In that case, I think I'll take off. This place is kind of creepy." She gave a sad little laugh. "And I don't want the smell in here to stick to me permanently."

"All right." A moment later, Lucy felt as if a door had closed. She sat staring at the wall for a moment, no thoughts even entering her head, as if there were no more room in her mind to accommodate all of the strange twists of the last few days.

"Well, hello, dearie dear, you gave me a fright, all still and solemn."

Lucy was so adrift that she never heard her father come in. He planted a kiss on her forehead, dislodging her hat. "What brings you to see your dear old dad?"

Lucy repinned her hat, trying to find a place to begin. There was so much to tell him. And, she realized, she needed him. She was certain she would not be allowed into the barroom unaccompanied, if at all. Besides, her reading lessons had not yet begun. Who else she could trust to read the newspapers?

“The spirit, Lindsay, has been talking to me again.”

Colonel Phillips dropped onto the chair and stuck his booted feet onto the bed. “Really?” He slowly rolled a cigarette. “Any word from your mother?” His voice was neutral, but Lucy noticed he didn’t raise his eyes from the tobacco pouch.

She’d forgotten about his desire to contact her mother. If Lindsay was truly what she said, then there wouldn’t be any such messages. “Well, it turns out, she’s not a spirit in the way we usually consider one. She says—” Lucy paused and swallowed, hoping he’d believe what she herself had found so unfathomable. “She says she’s from the future. And Papa—I think she may be telling the truth.” She explained about last night’s fire and Lady Wilhelm’s visit and Lily Langtry’s arrival. “She has devised a final proof,” Lucy continued. “She has left newspapers from the future. She wants to see if we can send things back and forth.”

Colonel Phillips’s blue eyes were as big and round as soup bowls. The tobacco pouch dropped to the floor, and he slapped his thigh and let out a hoot.

“Don’t that beat all!” he crowed, leaping up from the

chair. "What a moneymaking scheme this can be!" He gripped Lucy's shoulders, shaking her. "Don't you see? With these newspapers, we can make *real* predictions. We can't lose."

Lucy wondered how he could so easily believe what she found so impossible. She felt as if a weight had been lifted off her chest. They were a team again.

"With this inside track, dearie dear, Mr. Grasser will have nothing to complain about. There will be no more doubts about your abilities."

"True." Still, something nagged at her. Did she really want to know what was to come next?

"I'll take out a big advertisement listing all the predictions." Colonel Phillips paced the room, rubbing his hands together. "We'll book the Lyceum. Once the news has come true, as it must, people will clamor to see you." He settled a moment, perched on the windowsill, but was instantly up again, his excitement too large to be contained. "So, where do we find out the future?"

"McSorley's. Behind the icebox," Lucy replied. "She said it was open in our time."

"McSorley's. McSorley's." Colonel Phillips's eyes narrowed. "Oh, she must mean the saloon the Old House at Home. I believe old John's last name is McSorley." He smirked at Lucy. "Afraid you'll have to wait outside, dearie dear. No ladies are allowed in that venerable institution."

Lucy nodded, relieved that her father would be the one to hold the future in his hands.

Not sure what to do with herself, Lindsay wandered over to a fairly deserted Tompkins Square Park. Haley, Flip, and Blair didn't seem to be around, but she recognized the musician playing the guitar from yesterday; this must be his regular spot. She leaned against a lamppost and listened. He had a pleasant, sad voice; it reminded her of the music her mom liked—moody and melodic.

“You're back!” a girl shouted.

Lindsay looked up to see Haley flying toward her, a huge grin on her face. She threw her arms around Lindsay. “I'm so glad to see you!” she gushed.

Lindsay was startled by the girl's intensity, but it felt nice for someone to be glad to see her. Haley released her and pushed her tangled hair out of her face.

“I was looking for you.” The minute Lindsay said the words, she realized they were true. She had come to Tompkins Square Park in search of Haley.

“Well, you're in luck! You found me!” Haley linked her arm through Lindsay's. “Shall we promenade, sweet cakes?”

“I'd much rather amble.” Lindsay giggled.

Haley had Lindsay skipping, two-stepping, and twirling along the paths. Lindsay knew they looked ridiculous and were acting like little kids, but she didn't care, pulled along

by Haley's giddy, intense energy. They tumbled together onto the grass at Flip's feet, laughing.

"I want some of what you girls are having," he said.

Lindsay sat up and wiped her eyes. *God, it feels good to laugh.*

"Don't be stingy. Share," Flip whined.

Haley sat up and slung her arm across Lindsay's shoulders. "Sorry to disappoint you, but we're just high on life!"

"You girls are loco," Flip said.

"Come on, baby, do the locomotion," Haley sang. She scrambled back up to her feet. "Flip, hang here. I've got cash-a-roni, and so Miss Lindsay and I are going shopping!"

"Ooh, get me some goodies, please please please."

Haley kissed him on the lips. "Would I forget you?"

Flip lay in the grass. "I'll be here waiting."

Haley led Lindsay out of the park and into a deli on the corner of Avenue B.

"Where's Blair?" Lindsay asked, trailing Haley down a narrow aisle.

Haley shrugged. "Around." She moved to the refrigerator case. "I love this stuff," she murmured, picking up a pack of string cheese. "What do you like?"

"Pepperoni sticks," Lindsay said. "I haven't had those in forever."

Haley grinned at her. "Spicy!" She pulled a skinny package from a hanger. She continued along the case, grabbing packages

of smoked turkey breast, bright yellow American cheese, and mixed deli slices. At the end of the case she slipped into an aisle of cookies and crackers. “Back here,” she called.

Lindsay turned into the aisle at the back of the store, and suddenly Haley yanked up her sweatshirt. “Hey! What—”

“Shut up,” Haley hissed. She shoved the cold meat and cheese packets into the waistband of Lindsay’s jeans and quickly tugged the sweatshirt back down. It all happened in seconds, and if the cold plastic hadn’t been digging into Lindsay’s bare skin, she would have sworn she’d imagined it. “Go to the front of the store and wait for me. Now.”

“But—”

Haley gave her a little push, and Lindsay stumbled forward. “I’m just going to grab some sodas,” Haley said loudly. “Find us a loaf of bread. I think they’re up front.”

Lindsay moved her feet forward, the packages digging into her, her face hot. The man at the counter flipped through a newspaper. He glanced at Lindsay, eyes full of suspicion, she was certain. He brushed his mustache and then went back to reading the sports page.

“Wow,” Haley said, giggling, struggling to place two giant bottles of Coke on the counter. “These are heavy.” She smiled at the counterman, then looked at Lindsay. “The bread is right behind you.”

“Oh, right.” Lindsay picked up a loaf of bread from the pile.

Haley pulled some bills out of her jacket pocket and grunted when she took the bag from the counterman. She jerked her head toward the door. "Done," she said.

Lindsay hurried out the door, terrified that the minute they left, the cops would swoop down and arrest them.

Back in the park, Haley knelt beside Flip, unloading stolen goodies from under her shirt, her pockets. He giddily ripped open a bag of cookies. She laughed as she yanked up Lindsay's sweatshirt and pulled the packets from Lindsay's waistband.

"I can't believe you did that to me!" Lindsay exclaimed.

"What?" Haley looked up at her, uncomprehending. "What'd I do?"

Lindsay stared down at Haley's caked makeup and Flip popping cookies into his mouth one after the other. "You planted that stuff on me. What if we got caught?"

Haley stood, her eyes hard. "We didn't, did we? So just shut up about it."

Stung, Lindsay took a step backward.

"Listen, rich girl," Haley snarled, her voice low and thick with threat. "Maybe you have the bucks to buy this stuff. We don't. And if you don't want to play by my rules, then get the hell away from me."

"Fine." Lindsay turned and walked away, unaccountably disappointed. As she rounded the playground, she heard Haley calling her. She slowed down.

Haley rushed up to her, panting. Tears made her thick

mascara and eyeliner smudge and streak. "I'm sorry, Lindsay." She flung her skinny arms around Lindsay, gripping her tight. "I'm so sorry. I didn't mean it." She pulled away and looked imploringly into Lindsay's face. "Say everything's okay now. Please? I—I was just so hungry. And Flip too, even though he'd never say. I didn't know any other way to get the food."

"Okay," Lindsay said slowly. "Just—I just don't want you to do that to me ever again. It freaked me out."

"I promise." Haley took Lindsay's hand. "Now come back with me and show Flip you're not mad. He's really upset."

"Okay." Lindsay walked back with Haley, who never let go of her hand, as if she was afraid Lindsay would take off again.

"Oh, good," Flip said. "You made up."

Haley dropped down on the grass beside him. "Did you save us any cookies?" She rummaged in the bag, then threw it at him. "Piglet!"

"You know me and my chocolate, girl. It's your own fault for leaving me alone with my secret vice."

"You're going to get fat."

"No chance."

Lindsay sat listening to their easy banter. "How long have you known each other?"

"I think we were brother and sister in our past lives," Flip said, reaching for the turkey. He held it out in offer to Lindsay. She shook her head.

“Reincarnation?” Lindsay asked. She couldn’t bring herself to eat any of the stolen food, even though her stomach was growling. She took a piece of bread. That was paid for.

“Definitely. I was an amazing successful designer, and Haley was my muse.”

Haley snorted. “No way. We must have been really bad in our former lives. Otherwise we wouldn’t have these sucky ones now.”

“I wish I could go back in time,” Flip said.

“How far back would you go?” Lindsay asked.

“Not too far. The eighties would be cool—all those clubs and fabulousness.”

“I’d go back and make sure my mother didn’t marry my father,” Haley said. She took a long swig of the Coke. “Then I’d make sure I got born into a better family.”

Lindsay picked holes in the bread. It was so soft she could squish it into little balls. “I forgot about changing history,” she murmured.

“Wouldn’t that be cool if we could?” Flip asked. “I’d so make Antonio Banderas gay!”

“And I’d make the bouncer at Axis straight!” Haley laughed. “He is hot.”

Flip made a face. “You have the worst taste.”

As Flip and Haley debated degrees of hotness, Lindsay considered the implications of what she was doing. By giving Lucy newspapers from the future, was she changing history?

Then again, she thought, reaching for the pepperoni sticks, the snack she and her mom always had when they watched videos until the Husband appeared, there's a lot of history that could use some changing.

Nineteen

“Lucy!” Lindsay called as soon as her hotel room door shut behind her. “Are you here?”

“It’s just not possible!” Lucy cried. “How can it be possible!”

Lindsay smiled. “So I take it you found the newspapers?”

“The advertisement!” Lucy exclaimed. “How did you know what my father planned to do?”

“What ad?” Lindsay asked. “I must not have noticed it.”

“My father was beside himself,” Lucy said. Lindsay thought the girl sounded nervous, agitated. “I’d never seen him so thrilled. It was as if he were delirious!”

“Sounds like something good happened,” Lindsay said.

“There it was, big and bold. Three columns wide. ‘Lucy Phillips predicts.’ Big block letters. He hadn’t even been to the newspaper offices yet. Somehow the advertisement appeared anyway.”

Lindsay felt somehow satisfied that the tables had turned and it was Lucy who was freaking out. For a change.

“I’m to appear at the Lyceum on Friday night and make more predictions. My father believes everyone in New York City will be there because the predictions must come true.”

“Well, it’s what happened. At least according to the newspaper.”

“My father wants to know if I am a success,” Lucy asked.

“How can you not be? You’ve kind of got the inside track.”

“He wants more newspapers. The performance is scheduled for tomorrow evening. He wants me to make more predictions so that people will come back every week.”

Lindsay stared out the window, her arms crossed over her chest. This was the thing Tanya had worried about when they met up at the library yesterday. Changing history. She and Tanya had gone around and around in dizzying circles until they were both so confused they gave up trying to figure out what was right and what was wrong. But if there was an ad about Lucy in a newspaper from the future, then didn’t the future include giving her the next batch of newspapers?

“Okay,” Lindsay said. “I’ll go back to the library. Then I’ll leave them in McSorley’s tonight.”

“Thank you,” Lucy said softly. Lindsay had the distinct impression the girl was on the edge of fainting.

It was only six o’clock. She had plenty of time to get to the library, but she had a long night ahead of her. “Hey, did you get that Dickens book?”

“Oh, I nearly forgot. Mrs. Van Wyck gave me *Oliver Twist*. Is that all right?”

“That’s great!” Lindsay opened her backpack. She dug

through the change of clothes Tanya had brought her and pulled out the four volumes that made up the *Collected Works of Charles Dickens*. Picking up the one containing *Oliver Twist*, she settled onto the bed. “I have it right here. Do you want to start your lessons?”

“Well, all right. But I can’t stay long. Neither can you.”

“I know. I have to get the newspapers. Don’t worry. Just a half hour or so.”

“What do I do?” Lucy asked.

“To start, just open the book to the first page and follow along while I read.”

Lindsay propped the book up on her knees and began. “Chapter one. Treats of the place where *Oliver Twist* was born, and of the circumstances attending his birth.”

Lindsay read for nearly an hour, with Lucy stopping her frequently to ask a definition, then exclaiming indignantly, “Well, why didn’t he just say so?” Lindsay had a feeling teaching Lucy to read wasn’t going to be as easy as she had thought, partly because Lucy wasn’t that interested.

“We should stop,” Lucy said with a yawn. “All these words are giving me a headache. And don’t you have to get to the library?”

“Oh, right,” Lindsay reluctantly agreed. Even though she couldn’t see Lucy, she was certainly a presence, and Lindsay welcomed company in that dingy, lonely room. “Come back after the performance. I want to hear everything that happens.”

“All right,” Lucy promised. “But I really must go now.”

“Okay. Bye for now,” Lindsay said. She felt their connection close, then sighed. Knowing Lucy would return made the emptiness between their visits bearable.

The next day, Lindsay felt ready to face anything. She was clean, clean, clean! As soon as she arrived at her old school in Brooklyn, she and Tanya went straight to the gym so that Lindsay could shower. She didn’t even care that she had to use Tanya’s gym clothes to dry off or that she had to shampoo her hair with crusty old leftover bar soap. Seeing her old teachers, her old friends, even eating the tasteless cafeteria food filled her with an extraordinary sense of well-being. She knew she was taking a huge risk being at the school, but she just didn’t care. She couldn’t spend another whole day just sitting around waiting for Lucy.

After the last class of the day, Tanya and Lindsay entered the library. “What are we looking for here?” Lindsay asked. “The school doesn’t have the old newspapers I need for Lucy.”

“Today we’re not researching the past,” Tanya declared. “Today we’re researching the present.”

“What do you mean?” Lindsay sat at the computer terminal next to Tanya.

“You can’t live like this for the rest of your life, Lindz.”

All the good work the shower had done that morning

started to unravel, as if fear and anger were dirtying her skin and clogging her pores.

“Your money isn’t going to last that long,” Tanya continued. “Then what? And it’s going to get cold soon. And what about college?”

Lindsay covered her ears.

Tanya’s face clouded. “Lindz, I’m not saying this stuff to scare you.”

“Then stop.” She stared at the blank computer screen.

“Listen, I’ve played it your way so far. No parents. No adults of any kind. Lindsay, I’m so worried for you I can’t sleep,” Tanya whispered.

“All I can do is get through each day.” Lindsay’s effort to keep herself from shouting at Tanya for her complete stupidity made her feel like she was being strangled. She coughed a few times in the barbed silence that rose between them.

“Don’t be mad,” Tanya said quietly.

“It’s just hard,” Lindsay said finally. “Your life is still normal. Mine’s all . . .” She searched for a word and couldn’t find one. “I just don’t know what could help me.”

As if given permission, Tanya started clicking the computer keys. She opened web pages, read, frowned, opened more. Lindsay got up and wandered into the science section, pulling down old favorites, rereading familiar paragraphs the way other girls might cling to teddy bears.

Hearing the bell, she rejoined Tanya. She didn’t like the

discouraged look on her friend's face. "So it's all as dire as I thought, right?"

"Well, according to these agency web sites, if you told a teacher or someone about the violence at home, they wouldn't let you go back. You'd be up for foster care."

"I've heard enough about that to know I don't want that to happen."

"You were right about the hospital thing too. Once you've been diagnosed, they'd send you back until they feel you're stabilized."

"Oh, joy."

"But Lindsay." She turned and looked at her with pleading dark eyes. "What if you went back and explained—"

"No!" Lindsay barked.

"Right." Tanya looked down at her lap.

Lindsay and Tanya sat in silence for a moment. Outside, Lindsay noticed, the setting sun turned the parked cars into hulking ominous shadows, the basketball hoop a strangely elongated shape on the still-rain-damp pavement.

Tanya's face brightened. "Next time we'll figure out who you can tell about Lucy. Some paranormal society or something." She faced Lindsay and grabbed her wrist. "We will make this better, I swear."

Lindsay nodded but didn't turn her head.

Finally Tanya stood, gathering her papers. "I'm really sorry, but I have to go. My mom is taking me to the dentist."

She slung her backpack over her shoulder and shifted her weight to one tapping foot. Lindsay knew this wasn't impatience; it was what she did when her brain was whirring. "You could probably hang here for a while," she suggested.

"Yeah, I think I'll do that," Lindsay said. "It's not like I'm on a schedule or anything."

"Right." Tanya still stood there.

"Go," Lindsay said. "Your mom will freak if you're late."

"True." Tanya started to go, then turned back. "Oh, shoot. I forgot to tell you. I won't be around this weekend. We're going to Philadelphia. Some stupid family thing."

"Ah." Lindsay forced herself to shrug. "So, I'll see you Monday?"

"You bet. I'll meet up with you at that library again. The minute I get out of school."

"Deal," Lindsay said.

Worry flickered across Tanya's face, but she pulled herself away. At the door she turned and gave a little wave, then vanished into normal life, where Lindsay couldn't follow.

Twenty

Lucy peeked out through a sliver in the heavy velvet curtains. Just as her father predicted, the Lyceum was packed. The tantalizing predictions he'd selected from the newspaper had of course come true. The discovery of gold in Alaska, the top ticket price sold at auction for Lily Langtry's American debut, the young scion of a prominent family named correspondent in the divorce case of an older socialite, and the death toll in a terrible accident when a Harlem Railroad train struck a New Haven train in the Hudson River tunnel. "Death, money, and scandal," her father had said gleefully. "Gets 'em every time."

Lucy scrunched the curls created by Madame Ogilvie, then smoothed the front of her simple cream silk gown. She would have preferred a more-colorful dress with bows and flounces, but her father insisted on something ethereal, and Mr. Grasser concurred.

Colonel Phillips strode up beside her. "Ready?" he asked.

Lucy nodded, too nervous to speak. This wasn't like her audience at Mrs. Van Wyck's or the crowds she and her father would drum up to sell their patent medicine to. This was

several hundred staring eyes, many wishing her to fail or to be caught out as a fraud.

And somehow, now that she was able to know the future, a terrible sense of dread accompanied her all the time, made her self-conscious, as if her every movement, every utterance, could affect the entire world in unseen, unknowable ways. Normally she'd be eager to step out onto the large stage, the gas lamps illuminating her to her best advantage, rows of glittering eyes all trained on her. But something had changed. Maybe being forced to contemplate the future made the present carry more weight.

Colonel Phillips appraised her coolly. "This is the big time, dearie dear. This is not the time to falter."

"Are you *trying* to make me nervous?" Lucy asked, annoyed.

"You can't miss, you know that," Colonel Phillips assured her. "Not with your special source. Now all you have to do is put on a smashing show."

Lucy nodded.

"Here we go!" Colonel Phillips said. He helped Lucy up onto the small platform where a velvet armchair and a harp stood. The harp was rigged below the platform with rods so that at pertinent moments it would seem to play by itself, thanks to the enterprising Peabody. The chair was set for the moment in the show Lucy would grow faint.

"Remember our codes?" Colonel Phillips whispered.

“I do,” Lucy said. “Do you?”

He grinned. “Nerves make you a mite snappish, don’t they?” He kissed her forehead and carefully replaced the dislodged curls.

Lucy flushed, shut her eyes, and took in a deep breath. *Concentrate*, she told herself.

Somewhere behind the scenes Mr. Grasser gave the signal to raise the curtain. Lucy knew that stagehands all around her were hoisting ropes, Peabody was probably pacing and cracking his knuckles, and the men who handled the lighting effects were standing about waiting for their cues. She and her father, however, stood in perfect stillness, she on the platform, he just beside it, his hand on her shoulder.

They held for a moment, and Lucy felt all eyes upon them. She’d learned from her father to allow the audience a moment to take her in, to give them the chance to gape, to whisper to their neighbors.

As the room quieted—and before anyone began to stir or cough—Colonel Phillips stepped forward.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” he announced in his most ingratiating voice. “I am pleased to see so many of you in attendance.”

Of course you are, Lucy thought, fighting a smirk. *We get nearly a dollar for every one of those backsides crammed into those seats.*

He ambled across the stage, taking care to stay in the pools

of the most flattering light, seeming at ease. "You are all here, no doubt, because you were amazed when the visions my daughter, Lucy, had of the future did indeed come to pass. Truth be told, so was I." He gave the audience one of his warm, conspiratorial smiles. The audience responded with laughter. "But let's not dwell on the past. We're interested in the here and now. And the *future*."

Lucy straightened up, as if hearing the word "future" had captured her attention.

"First," Colonel Phillips said, "I'm sure you wonder at my daughter's abilities, want demonstrations of her skills."

A low murmur began. Lucy quickly ran over the code again in her head.

"I believe, as I'm sure many of you do, that my daughter's gifts come to her from the realm of the spirits. That she has guides in all things, that these visitors, shall we say, reveal to her all that she then repeats to us mere mortals. But I know there are skeptics, doubters. Mr. Grasser, please."

Mr. Grasser stepped out of the wings and with a flourish brought a black handkerchief out of his pocket.

"To prevent any doubt, Mr. Grasser, can you ask that lovely lady in the front row in the fetching blue costume to examine the handkerchief?"

Mr. Grasser crossed to the front of the stage and held out the handkerchief to a buxom woman in the front row. She took it quizzically.

“Please, my dear,” Colonel Philips instructed, “place the handkerchief over your eyes as if you were about to play an innocent game of blindman’s bluff.”

The woman, aided by the gentleman at her side, did as the Colonel instructed.

“Now tell me, dear lady, can you see anything?”

“Not a thing,” the woman replied in a loud voice.

“Thank you. Mr. Grasser?”

Mr. Grasser took the blindfold from the woman and crossed the stage. He tied it around Lucy’s eyes.

“Now we shall begin. First, we must call in my dear daughter’s spirit guides. Please, I ask for complete silence.”

An anticipatory hush settled over the large theater.

“Lucy, my dear,” Colonel Phillips intoned. “Reach out your mind, your very soul, to the far corners of existence. Call before you those dear departed, those who move amongst the angels, to aid you in your vision.”

Lucy fluttered her fingers and let her head roll slightly back and forth. “Spirits,” she said, her voice soft but audible. “Oh, spirits, join me in this good company. I ask for your help to see what is hidden. To learn what may be.”

On cue, Peabody worked his invisible magic under the stage. A gasp went up in the audience as the harp seemed to play by itself.

Colonel Phillips strode to the edge of the stage. “They’re here among us,” he said in a hoarse stage whisper. Lucy knew,

in spite of her blindfold, that he held a finger to his lips, indicating that he wished for silence.

“To demonstrate the presence of my daughter’s unseen helpers,” Colonel Phillips said, “we shall ask her to identify objects from the audience. This is not an act of mind reading,” he added as he trotted down the little steps at the side of the stage so that he could move along the aisles. “She will be informed by those you and I have not the privilege to see.”

Lucy heard him come to a stop.

“Honey,” he said. “What am I pointing to?”

Lucy cocked her head as if she were listening to someone. *First word, “Honey.” First letter: H.* “A hat?” she said.

A general murmur went up.

“What if she’s peeking?” a challenging voice demanded.

“Lucy, turn around so that your back is to the audience. Then there will be no question.”

Lucy obliged.

“And let *me* give you the object instead of *you* picking it,” the voice insisted.

“Ah, a skeptic. Very well. Try to tell me this one, Lucy,” Colonel Phillips said.

“Tie,” Lucy said quickly, thanks to the *t* at the beginning of that sentence.

“You see!” another voice shouted. “She’s real.”

“We’ll do one more!” Colonel Phillips offered. “Believe me, Lucy, this is one you’ll appreciate.”

"A book," Lucy responded. She turned and untied the handkerchief. "Oh, Father, the voices of the spirits were quite clear. Were they correct?"

"Your friends did not fail you," Colonel Phillips said, charging back up onto the stage. He faced the audience. "And now, if we can prevail upon your spirit friends, we all would like to know what the future may hold. Is that correct?"

The audience shouted, "Yes."

Lucy wavered on the platform. "Have you the strength?" Colonel Phillips asked.

"I—I think so," Lucy replied. She shut her eyes and acted as if she were going into a trance. The harp played again.

"Are you there?" she asked. "Will you give us a glimpse of what is to come?"

The harp played again, more energetically.

"Tell us what you see," Colonel Phillips asked.

"I see . . . I see . . ." Lucy made her voice breathy, and she peered into the distance. She gave a little gasp.

"I see . . . danger. I see disappointment. There is something to do with a park? *The* park?"

Colonel Phillips had instructed her to make the visions seem confused. She needed a delicate balance of verifiable fact with enough vagueness that she wouldn't be accused of creating the very events she was predicting. She was about to tell this audience that the famous Lily Langtry would not appear in her American debut because the theater would burn

down the very day of the performance. She couldn't risk being accused of starting the fire—or of having it set for her just to make her predictions come true.

“I see a beautiful lily surrounded by flames. A glorious English lady holding a Lily. Lily. A famous Lily.” She paused just as her father had rehearsed with her. Then in a clear, strong voice she declared, “Lily Langtry will not debut.”

There was a roar in the theater, and just as Lucy had hoped, a woman fainted in the front row.

“More!” someone shouted. “What else do you see?”

Lucy pushed the air in front of her face as if she were parting curtains or pushing aside tall grasses. “What's this? The city of Boston may steal something from the worthy citizens of New York? They hope to capture a lady. A French lady? All because the lady has nothing to stand on.”

This was perhaps a bit too cryptic, but when the story appeared in tomorrow's newspaper—that there was a committee of Bostonians appealing to the French to move Bartholdi's statue of Liberty Enlightening the World to *that* city because of the long delay in raising the funds for a pedestal in New York—then all would become clear.

“Embezzler!” she suddenly shouted. She had to stifle her laughter when she saw how badly she startled her father. She had revealed this prediction far more dramatically than she had in rehearsal. “Thief!” She raised her arm and pointed at the audience. Slowly she moved her arm from one side

of the theater to the other as if she were going to accuse the blackmailer right then and there. "Mr. William Morton has vanished, taking with him ten thousand dollars of the firm's money!" There was a gasp in the theater. She lowered her arm. "Have no fear, the company is still solvent."

She then lowered herself into the chair as if she no longer had the strength to stand.

Colonel Phillips stood beside her. "Are there departed spirits who have messages to convey?" Peabody worked the harp; from the wings, a stagehand released a bit of fog to the stage.

"Yes . . ." Lucy said faintly. "Oh yes . . ." Now she went into the usual routine of using the information her father had picked up in the Blue Book and gossip to give messages to several of the people he had been assured would be in attendance. Judging from the reactions in the audience, she knew he'd been perfectly on the mark.

Finally the performance came to a close. Lucy had kept the audience enthralled for over an hour.

At Mr. Grasser's signal, the stagehand covered the fog-making device so that it would stop.

Colonel Phillips stood beside Lucy. "It's time to release the spirits," he said gently.

"Goodbye, my friends," Lucy said a little sadly. "Thank you for coming. We will meet again."

Peabody plucked the harp again, the light effects man

brought the lamps back up, and Lucy slumped in the chair. After a moment, she opened her eyes. “Were they here?” she asked in an alert, clear voice.

“Yes, my dear.” Her father helped her stand, then helped her off the platform. “And I believe everyone here would agree that the spirit world was well represented by you this evening.”

The room burst into raucous applause, along with shouts and hoots. People were calling out questions, yelling her name, demanding to know how she knew such things. Colonel Phillips pulled her backward a few steps and raised his arm to make an exaggerated bow—this was the signal to lower the curtains.

“They’re as rowdy as any Bowery audience,” he commented with a laugh. “Oh, dearie dear, this is one rum show! In fact, we’d better make our getaway before they storm the stage.”

Throwing his arm around her, he hurried her into the wings as Mr. Grasser crossed in front of the curtain to address the still-cheering audience. “Colonel Phillips and his remarkable daughter, Lucy, will be appearing on this stage every Friday evening.”

“Hear that?” Colonel Phillips gloated. “You’ve settled in for a long run. In a much finer venue than Mrs. Van Wyck’s stuffy salon.”

The stagehands stared at Lucy with awe, stepping aside to allow her father to guide her through the tangles of ropes and stored scenery. Lucy sank into a chair in the dressing room,

and Colonel Phillips checked his reflection, straightening his cravat. A moment later, a beaming Mr. Grasser entered, followed by Peabody. Mr. Grasser counted out bills, then handed a stack to Colonel Phillips and a few to Peabody. When he returned the money roll to his pocket, Lucy stood.

“What about me?” she asked.

“What do you need money for, little lady?” Mr. Grasser asked. “Aren’t all your needs provided for by your daddy? And Mrs. Van Wyck?”

“I earned it,” Lucy said, indignant. “It’s me they come to see.”

Mr. Grasser, Peabody, and Colonel Phillips exchanged bemused looks, as if Lucy were behaving like a petulant child. Colonel Phillips peeled a bill from his wad and held it out to Lucy. “You do deserve a treat.”

Lucy put her hands on her hips. “I deserve far more. Peabody barely did a thing, and he earned more than this.”

“Now, Lucy,” Colonel Phillips said.

She ignored the warning in his voice. “It’s not fair. I’m the one who brings them in. You couldn’t do any of this if it wasn’t for me.” She picked up her cloak and draped it over her arm. She grabbed her hat and evening bag. “So I guess you’ll just have to see how well you do next week when I’m not here.”

She made for the door. Her father stopped her, gripping her arm so hard she winced. “Don’t get high and mighty,” he

growled in a low, guttural voice. "If you recall, this couldn't come off without me either."

"But—"

"This is not the way," Colonel Phillips said. "Not like this."

Lucy's heart pounded, and her corset felt tight and constricting, as if it were cutting off all her air. "All right," she mumbled. "I'm sorry."

He released her, and she stumbled backward. She rubbed her arm, trying to get the blood flowing again. Her eyes darted among the three men. Peabody's rodent-like face showed concern, but Mr. Grasser simply glared at her.

A knock interrupted the tense moment. "Come in!" Mr. Grasser said.

A small boy stepped in. He held out a card. "Gentleman wants to see Miss Lucy," he said. "Mr. Alan Wordsworth."

"Ah, the young doctor!" Colonel Phillips said, taking the card. "Send him in, lad, send him in." He rubbed his hands together. "I believe we've concluded our business," he told Mr. Grasser and Peabody. Mr. Grasser touched the rim of his derby, and Lucy watched with a sinking sensation as he and her father exchanged some kind of silent message between them. Peabody avoided looking at her as he followed Mr. Grasser out the door.

"Hello again, Miss Phillips, Colonel Phillips," Alan said as he entered the room. "I was quite impressed with this evening's . . . events."

Lucy peered over his shoulder. "Did Bryce come with you?"

"Well, no, actually," Alan said. "I didn't see him."

"Young Cavanagh is not a believer, Lucy," her father said. "You know that." He put out his hand to shake Alan's. "Can I take your presence here tonight as indicating that you are among the believers?"

"I'd have to say I have questions. But I do find it intriguing."

"An open mind," Colonel Phillips said. "That's all we ask."

"Well, I was certainly raised to have that," Alan replied with an odd laugh. He looked down at the hat in his hands. "I was wondering if Lucy would join me for dinner," he said. "And you too, of course." He gave Colonel Phillips a little nod.

"I'm expected elsewhere," Colonel Phillips said. "But Lucy has my permission, if she'd like to go."

Was this her father's attempt to placate her after their altercation? Or, she thought, her eyes narrowing, *is this how he intends to avoid me?*

Lucy welcomed the admiring look Alan gave her. *I put on a good show. I deserve to celebrate.*

"I'd be delighted," Lucy said, and was rewarded with Alan's warm, happy smile. At least *he* appreciated her.

Lucy walked along the narrow backstage corridor flanked by her father and Alan. "Thank you again for your help with Katie, Doctor," Colonel Phillips said. "She looks as fit as ever."

“You’ve seen her?” Alan asked as they stepped outside into the brisk night air, welcome after the stuffy fog-and-dust-filled theater.

“Oh, I’ve seen her about in the neighborhood,” Colonel Phillips explained with a casual wave of his hand. “We only cross paths now that I am no longer lodging with Mrs. Van Wyck.”

They stopped at the curb, and Colonel Phillips turned to face Alan squarely. “Where do you plan to take my daughter?” he asked.

“I thought we’d return to Greenwich Village so that she’d be closer to home. There is a pleasant café not far from Mrs. Van Wyck’s that I think Miss Phillips will enjoy.”

“And you’ll not keep her out too late,” Colonel Phillips instructed. “She has had a very full day.”

“Of course, sir,” Alan said gravely.

Lucy rolled her eyes. Her father’s concern was such a well-played performance, she fought the urge to applaud.

“Well, then, all to the good.” Colonel Phillips stepped away and hailed a passing carriage.

He’s feeling flush, Lucy observed resentfully as the carriage clip-clopped away. *Thanks to my earnings.*

“I, er, I hope you don’t mind taking the stage to the café, Miss Phillips,” Alan stammered. “A student physician’s wages don’t stretch very far, I’m afraid.”

“Fine,” Lucy responded.

They walked the few blocks to the spot where they could board one of the many horse-drawn omnibuses. Alan dropped their fares into the coin box, and they settled onto lumpy seats running along the sides of the stage car. There were many other passengers, and the air in the stage was thick. Lucy feared the straw covering her feet was harboring mice, but it was better than walking, she supposed.

It wasn't long before Alan was helping her off the stage. If Bryce had been here, they would have alighted from his elegant private carriage; she would have been handed up into the coach by his smartly uniformed livery driver. But Bryce wasn't here—he had not attended her performance. What did that mean? She knew he didn't take her mediumistic skills seriously, but this absence felt more like a condemnation than mere skepticism.

“Here we are,” Alan said, ushering her into a cheerful café. It was crowded, probably with people just coming out of nearby theaters.

“Hello, my doctor friend,” called a short, dark man with an extravagant mustache. He pumped Alan's hand hard and enthusiastically. “You must be here for my Cecelia's torte!”

Alan smiled. “You read my mind.”

“Come, my friend, and your charming companion.” The little man led them to a small, round table near the fireplace in the back. “I shall provide the very best slices for the excellent doctor and his friend.” He rushed away with an urgent air.

“I heard you stopped by Riverview twice,” Alan said.

“Oh yes,” Lucy said. She had nearly forgotten that she’d gone back to the hospital to speak with Lindsay and that she had pretended to be there to see Alan. “I wanted to check on Katie. And to thank you for your kindness.”

Lucy squeezed her eyes shut in frustration. She had forgotten. She’d promised Lindsay to tell her what happened at the Lyceum tonight.

“Is something wrong?” Alan asked.

Lucy opened her eyes. “No, no, it’s nothing. I just remembered something I was supposed to do.” She didn’t really want to think about the future for the moment. Besides, there was no way she wanted to go back to the boardinghouse with her father after that scene in the dressing room. “It’s fine. I can take care of it tomorrow.”

“You know, that girl’s life was saved because you brought her to the hospital. Others might have turned a blind eye to a girl of her . . . profession.”

“She needed help,” Lucy said. She hoped, however, she wouldn’t come to regret giving Katie aid. Nellie’s threat was all too real.

A waiter came to the table with a tray of beautiful desserts and a pot of steaming tea. He placed them with great ceremony on the table.

“I hope you don’t mind,” Alan said. “I never order. Antonio just sends over what he thinks is best. He’s never wrong.”

“You come here frequently?” Lucy asked, lifting the heavy

teapot. Mrs. Van Wyck always poured the tea if there were gentlemen present, never allowing them to touch the pot.

“It’s a favorite of mine,” Alan admitted. “Antonio is very kind to me.”

Lucy looked around the cheerful room. It wasn’t elegant, like the places Bryce took her, but it was far homier. The other patrons were a range of ages, and though none wore the expensive finery of those in Bryce’s circle, they were an attractive crowd, engaged in lively debates and sparkling conversations. Frequent laughter punctuated the deep rumble of the many voices—and many accents—in the café.

As if he had heard his name mentioned, Antonio appeared at their table. He clapped Alan heartily on the back. “This is an excellent fellow,” he declared in his thick Italian accent. “Most kind! Most brilliant!”

Alan looked down at his teacup and blushed to his reddish hairline. Antonio laughed. “I embarrass the young doctor, I see.” He ruffled Alan’s hair as if he were a small boy. “I leave you alone now.”

“He’s rather fond of you,” Lucy observed after Antonio had vanished again into the crowd.

“I helped his family. His daughter had some . . . troubles. He has been treating me like a son ever since. I suppose I enjoy his attention so much because my own family is far away.”

“Where do your parents live?” She took a delicate bite of the dark chocolate cake.

Alan studied her with a guarded expression on his face. “Bryce never told you about my parents?”

“No,” Lucy said. “Why would he?” She did recall Bryce’s condescension about Alan, but that was all. She had come to understand that Alan and Bryce weren’t true friends, just two young men who’d attended the same university and had some kind of competition between them.

“Oh. Well, my parents live north, upstate. Near Oneida.” He kept his eyes on her.

He was looking for some reaction, but since she’d never heard of Oneida, she wasn’t sure what he was expecting. “Oh,” Lucy said.

Alan smiled with relief. “Is the cake good?” he asked.

“Delicious.”

“Your father said he’d seen Katie,” Alan said. “Have you seen her too?”

“In passing,” Lucy said. She concentrated on the cake. He would rather discuss a fallen woman with her than his own parents. How strange.

“I assume she’s gone back to the trade,” he said with a sigh. “I think she’d be willing to find a different line of work to improve herself, but Nellie keeps her under her thumb.”

“Nellie is a hard one, all right,” Lucy said. “If she wants to keep Katie with her, I’m sure she will.”

“And truthfully,” Alan said, stirring his tea, “these girls don’t have a lot of incentive to change.”

Lucy leaned back against her chair and stared at him. Was he really suggesting that the women should stay prostitutes?

“That’s what infuriates me about the purity reformers,” Alan went on, still contemplating his tea. “They think it’s all about sin or animal appetites. They don’t look at the reality. At the economics. There are many who turn to the trade as a sideline, supplementing their meager wages simply to put food on their tables. Until there is true labor reform, there can be no so-called purity reform.”

He picked up his teacup and looked at Lucy, and once again his face flushed.

“I’m so sorry,” he said. “I hope I didn’t offend you.”

“N-no.” Lucy wasn’t sure exactly what she felt. She sensed an impropriety in discussing such subjects with a gentleman, but something about his ideas intrigued her. “What do you mean, ‘labor reform’?”

He leaned his elbows on the table and rested his chin on his hands. “Careful. You’ll get me up on my soapbox.”

“I’m interested.”

He gave her a funny look, as if he were trying to decide if she were joking or baiting him.

“Truly. I’d like to know,” she said.

“In my studies and my work as a doctor, I’ve dealt with a large number of women with certain kinds of problems.” He seemed to be watching her to see when he’d gone too far. “And it seems to me we’re going about things all wrong. Girls

work, but they aren't being paid a living wage. So what must they do? Find additional ways to earn. If that's not degrading enough, simply due to economic inequities, they find themselves in even worse trouble because society insists on keeping girls—and boys, for that matter—ignorant on . . . certain subjects.” He gave her another one of his odd glances, waiting for a response.

“If a girl earns money,” Lucy asked, “does her father have the right to keep it?”

Alan shrugged. “I don't know the law on that, but most fathers do. I do know that when a woman marries, at least in most states, her husband gains control of her property. That's beginning to change, however.”

Lucy stared at Alan. What was the point of working if she didn't get to keep her own money?

“This doesn't sit well with you,” Alan commented.

“No. I don't see how anyone can think this is fair!”

“There are people fighting against these laws,” Alan said. “My parents, for starters. Actually, some of the spiritualists are working to change marriage and property laws.”

“What would you do for Katie?” she asked. She wasn't afraid of these topics, though she knew Bryce would be stunned if he knew she was discussing such things. Particularly with a man.

He cocked his head. “What would I do for Katie if I ran things and the world were an entirely different place?” There

was an angry edge to his voice, as if he took this problem very personally. "Or what would I do tomorrow with things as they are? If she let me."

"Both," Lucy said.

"Let's assume that the trade is never going away," he said. "It's been here long before we were and will undoubtedly continue long after we're gone. Why that's so is a debate for another time. But if I were running things, I'd make it less . . . *necessary* from the girl's standpoint. I'd pay her a wage that would enable her to survive without having to sell herself. Then, for those who have 'fallen,' I'd provide a way to pick themselves up but without forcing religion down their throats. A place to train girls, educate them, give them clothing if they need it. A place to shelter them from . . . influences."

"There's nothing like that now?" Lucy asked.

"Well, there's the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children," he responded. "But for girls over thirteen or fourteen, there is very little to protect them."

"And what would you do for Katie in *this* world? The one you're not in charge of?"

"I can offer her no real alternative," he said glumly. "The economics are against it."

"So there is no solution?" Lucy asked.

"I already lectured her on the dangers. I would teach her ways to protect herself, though her compatriots have more knowledge than I do, most likely. I suppose the most helpful

thing I could do would be to wean her off laudanum and steer her away from the more poisonous of her washes and tonics. Actually,” he added, his eyes narrowing as an idea occurred to him, “I’d introduce her to Harriet Embers.”

“Who?”

“She does good works. She’s on all kinds of charitable boards. But she’s not afraid to really get involved. Probably more involved than is good for her—and her reputation.”

He spoke of Harriet with such admiration, Lucy wondered if he and Harriet were sweethearts and what she might look like. She found herself imagining Alan in a romantic setting and was surprised at how easy it was. His lips were not as soft and enticing as Bryce’s, but they had a nice shape, and his high cheekbones were dramatic in the gaslight.

“. . . It’s her frankness about understanding their own health and systems that has people so offended. Well.” He laughed, his eyes crinkling at the corners. “That’s mostly why they’re offended.”

Is Harriet as pretty as I am? Lucy wondered, surprising herself with her curiosity.

“She is always in need of volunteers,” Alan said. “If you’d like to help, I can make the introduction.”

Still looking at Alan, wondering what kind of girl he found most attractive, she reached out to spear another piece of cake, only to look down and realize she’d eaten the piece already.

“Would you like another?” Alan asked with a teasing grin.

Now it was Lucy's turn to blush. "No. No, really."

"I suppose I shouldn't keep you out much later," Alan said reluctantly.

"I suppose you're right."

After much fuss by Antonio, they left the café and walked the short, twisting streets to Mrs. Van Wyck's, where they said good night.

Lucy opened the door and glanced at the silver tray where callers left their cards. It was empty. Bryce had never been there.

Twenty-one

Lucy dressed and went down to the dining room, hoping Mrs. Van Wyck wouldn't scold her for being so late for breakfast. The older woman sat at the long, highly polished table, still in her dressing gown. Lucy couldn't leave her suite without being fully dressed for the day, a habit instilled in her from years of boardinghouses and shared lodgings.

Mrs. Van Wyck glanced up from her newspaper and smiled, her heart-shaped face lighting up. "Oh, my dear, you were a marvel last night!"

"Thank you," Lucy said, settling into a chair beside her.

"You must be famished." Mrs. Van Wyck rang a bell for Bridget.

Lucy observed the maid curiously as she took the order for breakfast and then returned with a tray. *I wonder what she's paid?* She didn't think Bridget was one of those girls Alan described, forced to find additional income on the side. After all, she boarded with Mrs. Van Wyck; how high could her expenses be? Then, angrily, she remembered that had been the reason Mr. Grasser and her father felt justified in not paying her.

“I’m so pleased I waited to buy tickets for the Lily Langtry performance,” Mrs. Van Wyck said. “What a disaster it would have been if I’d purchased them only to have the debut canceled.” She leaned in conspiratorially, her face pinched with the expectation of gossip. “So, my dear, what is the reason? Does she—”

A commotion outside the dining room startled them both. The door suddenly swung open, revealing an extraordinary man. He was stout but gave Lucy the impression of fragility, his perfectly round stomach emphasizing how thin his arms and legs were. His face was dwarfed by an enormous pair of white muttonchops, a bushy white beard, and a wild mustache. Other than that he was entirely bald. Well, not entirely. He had several white wisps above his ears.

“I’m terribly sorry, Mrs. Van Wyck,” Bridget said.

“Who on earth are you?” Mrs. Van Wyck demanded, her hands grasping the collar of her dressing gown, pulling it closed.

“Oh!” The man froze the moment he laid his bright, sparkling eyes on Lucy. “Oh, to be in your presence,” he gushed, clasping his tiny gloved hands together.

Lucy stared at him, fascinated by his strangeness.

“I ask you again, sir,” Mrs. Van Wyck said, rising. “State your business. Or shall I ring for the police?”

The mesmerized man seemed to shake off whatever spell Lucy had cast over him and looked at Mrs. Van Wyck. “Why, Coraline,” he exclaimed. “Don’t you remember me?”

Mrs. Van Wyck stared at him, her brow furrowed. "Do I know you?"

The man looked stunned. "The lecture on mesmerism? And then again the tea at Sara Schyler's? We discussed ectoplasm and manifestations. I told you several remedies for ridding yourself of unwanted ghosts!"

Mrs. Van Wyck slowly began to nod. "Why, of course! Hugh, isn't it? Hugh . . . Smithton."

The man's eyes smiled. What his lips were doing under that bushy beard and mustache, Lucy had no idea.

"After your extraordinary demonstration last night," Mr. Smithton said to Lucy, "I made inquiries. When I discovered you had been taken under the wing of this lovely patroness, I could not believe my luck! But of course, it wasn't luck—it was divinity guiding my path. For here you are!"

"Yes, here I am." He was odd, but he was certainly enthusiastic. There was something sweet about him and his funny round form. He reminded Lucy of Humpty Dumpty.

"We must have a very serious conversation," Mr. Smithton told Lucy. "But it must happen before eleven o'clock, for after that the sun's aspect will be far less favorable."

"Would you like to have this serious conversation now?" Lucy offered, knowing the answer.

Mr. Smithton beamed. "Oh, you see! All signs are aligned." He wheeled to face Mrs. Van Wyck, who was still standing protectively at the head of the table. "Is there someplace, er,

private where this young prodigy and I might converse?”

“I suppose you could use the study,” Mrs. Van Wyck said reluctantly. Lucy could tell the woman was dying to be part of this conversation.

“Excellent! Oh, excellent. Lead on, fair lady!”

Lucy led Mr. Smithton into the study, wondering what he wanted. To contact his dear departed wife? Peer into his future and see if he would have a long and prosperous life? From the looks of him, food wasn't scarce, and obviously he could afford to encase his tubby little body in expensive finery.

“I have a very serious business proposal for you. Very serious.” He took off his silk hat and yellow calfskin gloves and dropped them on the desk. He pulled a lace handkerchief from inside his cuff and mopped his pasty forehead. “I've eternally been eclipsed by the Vanderbilts, the Fisks, and the like.” He looked down at the handkerchief as if this were a situation that shamed as well as frustrated him. He sighed and looked back up at Lucy. “You see, I always arrive just a moment too late. It's been a sad truth all my life.” He made an elaborate shrug. “I was even late to my own birth, or so my mother told me. I didn't marry the girl I loved because I asked her too late. I have good ideas, but someone always beats me to it.”

“And you'd like me to help you.”

He smiled broadly. “How quickly you comprehend my meaning!” He dashed to her with far more agility than she'd

expected of a man of his size, gripped her hand, and yanked her down beside him on the settee. He glanced over his shoulder as if to assure himself that they were alone and no one would overhear them. When he leaned toward her, for one awful moment Lucy feared he'd attempt to kiss her, but instead he whispered, "My dear, if Commodore Vanderbilt consulted the spirits, then why shouldn't I?"

He straightened up again and released his grip on Lucy's hand. "And as you seem to be able to actually see the future, what better business partner can I have? I shall never be late to the table again!" He looked sheepish again and gazed down at his fine leather shoes. "Well, I probably shall still be late to dinner, and Cook will be angry with me, but you know what I mean."

There was something endearing about the silly, round old man. "I do," Lucy said. "I know exactly what you mean."

He squeezed her cheeks with both hands as if she were a very young child, then leapt off the settee. "Oh, I just knew you would understand!" He tapped his fingertips excitedly. "Now, I confess, I am extremely well off, but why shouldn't I be truly wealthy? Screamingly, fantastically wealthy?"

"Why not indeed?" Lucy replied.

"Oh, don't mistake me for one of our greedy robber barons." Mr. Smithton flung himself back onto the settee and gazed at her imploringly. "I give to charity, and I do have many dependents."

“You have children?” Lucy asked.

“Oh, dear lord, no!” He shuddered. “Can’t abide children. But I have fourteen cats, and I donate regularly to the ASPCA.”

Lucy wondered how on earth such an eccentric could survive in the world of business and if he were really as well off as he claimed. She’d have to make inquiries of her own; Mrs. Van Wyck would certainly have that information.

“What do you propose, Mr. Smithton?” Lucy asked.

“I have a good deal of money I’d like to invest, and I’d like you to tell me what to invest in. That’s how old Vanderbilt did it! I’m so tired of my dull, steady, and reliable investments. I’d like to make a splash! And then another! Splash, splash, splash!”

Lucy stood and gazed out the window, not wanting him to see her calculations. If he was willing to pay for her advice, wouldn’t there be others? She turned to face him. “And what will you pay for this information?”

He wagged a stubby finger at her. “Smart girl! Very shrewd! Business is business. I will pay you one hundred dollars a week.”

Hearing this extraordinary sum—easily ten times what Bridget or a factory girl earned—Lucy forced herself to keep her expression neutral. “And what if one of your colleagues would also like such advice?”

Mr. Smithton’s little eyes grew huge and his round cheeks

reddened. “No! That will not do. That will not do at all!”

Lucy shrugged. “Perhaps if you are willing to offer an incentive for an *exclusive* relationship . . . ?”

Now his eyes narrowed, and Lucy hoped she hadn’t pushed him too far.

“I feel an . . . affinity between us,” Lucy said, using the syrupy sweet voice she affected during the shows. “One believer to another.”

He mopped his forehead again. “Yes, yes. You’re right. That’s smart business. Exclusive arrangements are always more costly, and this must be information for me and me alone.” He whacked the handkerchief against his palm. “Done! Did you have a sum in mind?”

“Two hundred dollars a week,” she replied quickly, before she lost her nerve.

Mr. Smithton’s mouth opened and closed, opened and closed, as if he were a fish trying to breathe. “All right,” he said in a meek voice. Lucy bit the insides of her cheeks to keep from whooping in triumph.

“Well, then,” she said, her voice loud and bright. “When would you like to get started, and how often shall we consult?” After agreeing to such a sum, she figured he had a right to make some decisions about this arrangement.

“I shall come to you every day. I may also want you to contact some of my old friends.”

Oh, dear. Lucy didn’t want her father to know anything

about this new deal, and she wasn't really in a position to do any research on Mr. Smithton or his friends. "I think it's best if we stick to seeing the future. I don't want my spirit guides confused as to what we're asking them."

He looked disappointed but nodded. "Quite right, I suppose. Perhaps that's why Esmeralda was so useless at guiding my investments."

"Esmeralda?"

He rolled his eyes. "She was quite successful in ridding me of two troublesome spirits who had been haunting my home. But she gave the worst advice. She vanished after I invested in a dancing chair."

"A what?" Lucy asked, wondering if she'd heard correctly.

"It allows Methodists to dance," he explained. "No mingling of the sexes, you see. It gives support to the dancer and acts as a partner. Of course, now I see how clumsy it must have been to strap the thing on. . . ." He trailed off, distracted.

"So when shall we meet?" Lucy asked, steering the conversation back to the far more important subject of their deal.

"What's wrong with now?" Mr. Smithton asked. "It's still before eleven a.m."

"I'm afraid that's not—"

"This afternoon?"

Lucy bit her lip to prevent smiling. "Mr. Smithton, I appreciate your eagerness, but I do have other commitments." And she needed to have a consultation of her own with her special

source. "I cannot see you before Monday at the very earliest."

Mr. Smithton pouted like a petulant, whiskered child. "Is that the best you can do?"

"I'm afraid so. Perhaps I can come to your offices?"

"Certainly! Far more convenient for me. I'll give you the address."

"And you'll have the first payment at that time."

"Oh, by all means. Shrewd girl. Smart girl." He pulled a pearl-encrusted case from his vest pocket and held out a heavy, cream-colored card.

He gave her a little formal bow. "Till Monday. I am delighted."

Lucy led him out of the study and to the front door. She hurried him out before he could tell Mrs. Van Wyck about this new arrangement.

"Oh, did Mr. Smithton leave?" Mrs. Van Wyck asked as she came down the stairs in a burgundy-and-rose-striped walking suit and pulling on her gloves.

"Yes," Lucy answered, slipping the card quickly into her pocket.

"What did you talk about?" Mrs. Van Wyck asked.

"The future, of course."

Twenty-two

What am I going to do all day? Lindsay stared out the window at the dismal scene; the gray weather perfectly reflected her mood. Tanya was out of town until late Sunday night, and she couldn't risk contacting any of her other friends. *What am I going to do for the rest of my life?* She flopped onto the lumpy bed and pulled the pillow over her head.

"Are you there, Lindsay?"

Lindsay sat up. Lucy's voice came loud and clear, cutting through her gloom. "What happened last night?"

"Oh, Lindsay, I wish you'd been there. It was a triumph!"

"I wish I'd been there too." She snorted. "You have *no* idea."

"I have a new patron," Lucy continued. "He wants me to advise him on his investments. So I think I may need papers farther into the future."

"Oh. Sure."

"And . . . do you think you can tell me what's in them so that I can relay the information?" Lucy asked. "Until I have really perfected my reading I'll—I'll need help."

"I thought your father did that," Lindsay said.

There was a pause. “He can’t with this particular person.”

“Oh.” Lindsay found herself growing curious about this patron. Maybe Lucy’s father had offended him. Maybe this patron was a secret lover, and if Lucy still had designs on that rich dude, Bryce, the patron had to be kept secret. Lindsay grinned. *I’m so starved for TV I’m making up my own soap operas!*

“I can only come here when my father is out,” Lucy warned. “I believe he’ll be gone most of today and tonight. Tomorrow, too, I think. He has some scheme going dealing faro on Saturdays and Sundays at a nearby tavern.”

“What’s faro?” Lindsay asked, wondering if it was a kind of drug.

“A card game,” Lucy explained. “Mostly, though, it’s just a way to cheat people.”

“There are lots of those, I guess.”

“That’s certainly true.”

“Hey, listen,” Lindsay said. “The library won’t open till noon today, so do you want to try some more reading?”

“That’s a good idea.”

Lindsay got her copy of *Oliver Twist*. “Do you have your book?” she asked.

“What’s it like?” Lucy asked. “Where you are?”

“You mean *when* I am,” Lindsay corrected with a laugh. She sat on the bed and leaned her back against the wall. How could she describe the twenty-first century to a

girl who had never watched a movie? Used a computer? Spoken on a telephone, much less a cell? “What do you want to know?”

“Girls do many more things in your time, don’t they?”

“Yeah,” Lindsay admitted. “I guess we do.”

“And if you work, do you get to keep your own money?”

“Mostly, I guess. Not all the time.”

“And when you marry, does your husband control your property?”

“That’s what prenups are for.” Lindsay laughed. “Why all these questions about money? Are you getting married? Aren’t you awfully young?”

“I’m sixteen,” Lucy replied. “Old enough.”

Lindsay’s eyes widened. “Well, I may be wrong, but I don’t think that’s even legal these days.”

“Truly?” Lucy sounded stunned. “So girls are much more . . . protected in your time. Till they’re older.”

Lindsay snorted. “Not *even*. If girls were protected,” she said, the words coming out as a rushing stream, “I wouldn’t be hiding in this stupid hotel.” She shut her eyes and sighed, thinking of Blair and Haley too. “It’s not like the laws take care of everything. Bad stuff happens all the time.”

“Oh.”

“I always thought girls were protected when *you* lived,” Lindsay said. “There were so many rules back then. I mean, a girl could hardly do anything at all.”

“Rich girls,” Lucy replied. “For poor girls, well, there are few options, and no one seems to really care.”

“That’s *still* true.” Lindsay sighed a long, slow sigh. “I guess it will always be true.”

“That’s why it’s so important that I please this patron,” Lucy said. “I will *not* go back to being so dreadfully poor. If only I could count on Bryce.”

“The suitor? The one your father doesn’t really go for? He’s the reason you’re asking all the questions about marriage?”

“Yes.”

“That’s so romantic! You must really love each other if you’re both going against your parents.”

There was a pause.

“You *do* love him, right?” Lindsay pressed.

“I . . . Well, I haven’t really thought about it.”

Lindsay laughed. “It must be really different back then. When it comes to guys, all anyone my age ever talks about is who they’re hot for or who they’re in love with. But no one talks about getting married!”

“How do you know if you’re in love?” Lucy asked.

“That’s a biggie,” Lindsay said. “I’m not the person to ask. I’ve never had a real boyfriend. Tanya says that love is what you feel when you’re with a guy who totally gets you, who makes you tingle but also makes you feel safe, all at the same time.”

“Who’s Tanya?”

“My best friend. We tell each other everything. We used to, anyway. Now it’s a lot harder to do that. . . .”

“That’s what girls in your time do?” Lucy asked. “Tell each other everything?”

“Don’t you have best friends in 1882?” Lindsay asked. “In novels and movies about your time, there are usually really close girlfriends. Though I guess sometimes it’s actually sisters and cousins who are so close. I’ve always wished I had more relatives. But it’s just me and Mom.”

“Me too,” Lucy said. “I had cousins on the farm, but they were older and boys. And because of my life with my father, I’ve never stayed anywhere for very long. We always have to keep to ourselves.”

“Wow. That must be lonely. I mean, my life totally sucks, but I’ve always had my best buds. Someone to turn to.”

“That sounds nice,” Lucy said.

“Yeah . . . it is.”

They sat silently, each in her own time, each with her own thoughts, not needing words, but glad to have the other there.

Monday morning, Lucy and Mrs. Van Wyck sat in the parlor, each with an embroidery hoop. Mrs. Van Wyck kept up a steady stream of chatter while deftly piercing the fabric with her little needle while Lucy struggled and poked herself. This

ladylike activity was making Lucy want to unleash some very unladylike curse words.

“Mr. Smithton seems a very interesting gentleman,” Mrs. Van Wyck said.

“Yeow!” Lucy dropped the embroidery hoop and stuck her pricked finger in her mouth.

Mrs. Van Wyck glanced up and smiled sympathetically. “It just takes time, dear.”

Lucy nodded and frowned, her finger still in her mouth.

“It was odd that at first I didn’t remember Mr. Smithton,” Mrs. Van Wyck said, returning to her embroidery. “Then I realized when I last saw him, he hadn’t all those whiskers. He was far more attractive without them.”

Lucy’s eyebrows rose. Could Mrs. Van Wyck have an interest in Mr. Smithton? *Is she lonely?* Lucy wondered, looking at Mrs. Van Wyck, whose gray head was bent over her sewing. *Is that why she welcomes the idea of spirits?*

“Perhaps my spirit guides can suggest that he shave,” Lucy teased.

Mrs. Van Wyck glanced up, startled, then laughed. “Oh, you’re joking,” she said, her eyes twinkling. “Your spirits would never be so trivial.”

“Is Mr. Smithton as wealthy as he seems?” Lucy asked.

“Oh, dear, yes,” Mrs. Van Wyck assured her. “He was left a good estate when his father died, and then he invested wisely. I believe he spent quite a bit building that monstrosity on upper

Fifth Avenue, but he should be able to make it all back again.”

“Ah.” Lucy put her embroidery hoop aside and crossed to the table where the morning’s newspaper lay. *He’ll have the proof today of how easily he can make it all back again—with my help.* She fingered the pages and realized that thanks to the lengthy reading lesson with Lindsay over the weekend, many of the words made themselves known to her. They weren’t just strange marks on a page; she recognized the letters, built them into words.

She picked up the paper and sat by the window, eager to test her new skill. There was the announcement of the successful stock transaction that would bring Mr. Smithton a threefold return on his investment, and there was the patent approval of a new kind of lighting implement that would also make enormous profits. She turned the pages, scanning headlines, marveling that it was no longer a jumble of letters, but facts and opinions.

She came to a society page and smiled. Now she could read gossip about Mrs. Van Wyck and her friends. She also might be able to glean information to help her with Bryce and his parents.

“A benefit dance was held Saturday night to raise funds for the endowment of the American Museum of Natural History,” Lucy read under her breath. That topic sounded familiar. She ran her finger along the line of names listed as the committee and found the name Cavanagh. Of course—the museum was one of Bryce’s family’s pet causes.

Her eye was drawn past the description of the ballroom, the music, the food, and the gowns to the list of attendees.

Bryce Cavanagh attended with his charming companion Katherine Kingston, of the Chicago Kingstons.

Lucy stared at the page. She squeezed her eyes shut and hoped that when she opened them again, the letters would have rearranged themselves.

They hadn't.

She carefully put the newspaper down on the side table and sat staring into space for a moment. He hadn't come to the performance on Friday, and he hadn't called on her all weekend. Now she knew why.

She stood. "I'm going out."

Mrs. Van Wyck glanced up. "To see Mr. Smithton?"

Lucy studied the older woman's face. Did she know about the charity ball and Bryce? Lucy decided she wasn't up to discussing it. "Yes," she said. "To see Mr. Smithton."

"Do send him my regards, dear," Mrs. Van Wyck said. "Perhaps you can invite him to tea."

"Perhaps," Lucy muttered as she left the room.

A short carriage ride later she arrived at the imposing Cavanagh mansion in Washington Square. Only after waiting in the chilly marble entry hall did it occur to her that perhaps it was unwise to simply appear. She hadn't set foot in the extraordinary house since the dance; Bryce always met her at

Mrs. Van Wyck's. She had forgotten how the statues in their niches all seemed to look at her; that her footsteps echoed ominously in the cavernous space.

What is taking so long? she fretted. If Bryce wasn't at home, the houseman would have told her and not asked her to wait.

The houseman finally reappeared. "This way, please, miss."

"Thank you." She followed the uniformed man down a hallway, and then another, and finally into a dark green room. Cases filled with trophies lined the walls, several stuffed animal heads hung above her, and in the center was a billiards table. Bryce aimed and hit one of the balls with the stick with a sharp crack.

"Miss Phillips, sir," the houseman announced.

Bryce moved gracefully around the table and hit another ball. *Thwack*. Still bent over the table holding the stick, he glanced up. "Thank you, Howe. That will be all."

The houseman left, and Lucy stepped deeper into the room.

"So what brings you here, Lucy?" Bryce asked. He hit another ball. It rolled across the table and dropped into a corner hole.

How to start? Lucy took another step closer to the table, reached out, and tapped it lightly with her fingertips.

Bryce glanced at her, then straightened up. "Well? You must have a reason for dropping by."

His handsome face didn't look angry; in fact, he seemed slightly bored.

"I . . . Well, I was sorry that you weren't able to attend my evening at the Lyceum," Lucy said. "I was concerned that perhaps you were ill?"

Her voice sounded unnaturally high.

"I'm fine." He held out his arms. "You see? Perfectly fit."

"Oh."

He leaned against the wall and crossed one leg over the other, twirling the billiard cue. "Lucy, I didn't go to the Lyceum because I didn't think I'd enjoy watching you making a spectacle of yourself."

Why had she mentioned the Lyceum? She knew he disapproved.

"There were many respectable ladies and gentlemen in attendance," she pointed out.

"I'm sure there were. I just wasn't among them."

His airy tone irritated her. "I suppose Katherine Kingston would be too good to attend as well?" she snapped.

He looked startled for the briefest moment but quickly turned his surprise into a superior smile. "Why, you're right. I believe that sort of thing doesn't interest her."

"But a charity ball does."

"That ball was organized by my mother and her friends. My behavior reflects upon the family. I cannot be seen escorting a woman who does tricks onstage as if she were a trained monkey."

Lucy's mouth dropped open. "Th-that is not what I am doing!"

"Lucy." He shook his head. "Think about it. You prance around onstage communing with the dead. Taking money from people so misguided they actually believe you. Even worse, I think perhaps *you* believe it."

"But—but it . . . But I . . ." Lucy stammered.

Bryce shrugged. "I'm sorry if you're disappointed, but as much as my parents are an annoyance, I do have some obligations."

Lucy's shoulders slumped, and she gazed down at her hands. Her father had taught her to walk away from a fight she couldn't win. Was this one of those moments?

"Lucy." Bryce's voice was gentler now. He sighed and crossed to her. He lifted her chin with a finger and kissed her lightly on the lips. "This is a disagreement we have. You must understand that."

Lucy nodded mutely. He hugged her close and then released her. "Let me walk you out," he said, slipping his arm around her waist. He ushered her down the hallways and to the door. It was only once she was outside, standing on the pavement staring up at the door, that she realized that he had very kindly, and with several kisses, thrown her out.

"Oh, my dear! Oh, my dear!" Mr. Smithton practically jiggled as he pulled Lucy into his office. "My prodigy! My providential prodigy!"

Lucy couldn't help smiling despite her foul mood. "I take it our spirit friends were correct?"

"Brilliantly! That stock you suggested I purchase, why, this morning it went through the roof! The very roof!"

Lucy untied the ribbons of her hat and smoothed her hair. "I'm pleased."

"You and your spirits have just made me several thousand dollars overnight!"

She cocked her head. "Did we?" Perhaps Mr. Smithton could provide a solution to her Bryce problem. If she could earn a great deal of money through her connection with Mr. Smithton, maybe she'd be willing to give up being a medium. Of course, her father would be furious.

"Now, do you think your spirits would be so kind as to offer some suggestions for the long term? You know, things to carry me into my old age?"

How much older does he plan to get? Lucy wondered. He seemed fairly ancient to her as it was. Still . . .

"I'm sure I can ask. But remember, sometimes these things take time. Shall we get to work?"

"Oh yes, yes, yes!" Mr. Smithton said. He whirled around, sending his coattails flying, and grabbed a stack of papers from the soft leather chair near the little stove in the corner. Dropping them onto the desk, he then pulled over the ottoman. "Please," he said, gesturing to the chair. "Sit."

Lucy sat in the chair and Mr. Smithton perched on the

ottoman, leaning toward her, his elbows on his knees, his whiskers quivering with anticipation.

Lucy quickly went into her “trance.” “Are you there, spirits? Will you speak to me?”

“Are they?” Mr. Smithton whispered. “Will they?”

Rolling her head, letting out tiny moans, Lucy went over all the predictions she was to make. She had to be careful not to confuse them with the predictions she planned for the Lyceum; Mr. Smithton was paying mightily for this exclusive information.

“Oh, spirits,” Lucy said in a breathy voice. “Do you have knowledge of politics? You do? Can you help Mr. Smithton decide who to back in the upcoming elections? He’d truly like to back a winner. How do you feel about this gentleman who has an eye for the governership—a Grover Cleveland? Ahhh, I see.” She nodded. “You like him. He’d be very popular and perhaps even president someday. Thank you.”

She rattled off a few more stock tips and patents and then moved into more-dangerous territory. “What is that you say? No, no, that’s not possible. Oh no, I couldn’t.” She let out a large, dramatic sigh. “Do you really mean to say that Mr. Smithton must open an account in my name? And as I am the vehicle, the vessel through which you speak, I deserve a percentage of his profits?”

Mr. Smithton recoiled. Had she gone too far?

“It is too much,” she protested. She cocked her head as if

she were listening. "What's that you say? No, you can't!"

"What! What's happening?" Mr. Smithton was growing frantic.

"If you insist, I will tell him that you will give no more advice unless he agrees."

"My word!" Mr. Smithton rose from the ottoman.

"I don't like to do this," Lucy said. "But I will ask him."

"On top of the fee?" Mr. Smithton muttered. He pulled out his handkerchief and mopped his forehead. "A portion of everything I earn from the investments? My word."

"If that's how you feel," Lucy said to the unseen spirits. "I can't force you to reveal what you know. . . ."

"Oh, all right." Mr. Smithton sank onto the ottoman.

"Oh, spirit!" Lucy called. "He has agreed. How much, you ask?"

"Ten percent," Mr. Smithton said glumly. "For every dollar you earn me, I shall invest ten percent in the name of Lucy Phillips."

Lucy collapsed in the chair. A moment later she blinked. "Were they here?" she asked.

"Oh, they were here, all right," Mr. Smithton replied. "They drove a very hard bargain."

"Did they?" Lucy asked. "What could they possibly want? They have long left this world."

Mr. Smithton gripped Lucy's hands. "Now I understand!" he exclaimed. "Of course! They have no needs of their own,

but they love you! They want to make sure that you are well cared for. How could I not have seen it? They are quite right.”

“Whatever you think is best. I know nothing about finance.”

“Oh, my dear.” Mr. Smithton cupped her face in his hands. “I’m glad your spirits are looking out for you.”

“Yes, well . . .” She stood. “When would you like me to come again?”

Mr. Smithton stood more slowly. “Tomorrow?” He smacked himself on the forehead with the flat of his hand. “I completely forgot to ask your spirits if this Caleb Alonso would make a good assistant.”

“That’s all right,” Lucy said. “We can ask them tomorrow.”

She said goodbye and went out to the street. She’d accomplished one thing—means to an independent fortune. But she still wanted to create the impression of being a truly respectable society woman. Bryce’s reference to her as a “trained monkey” smarted.

What would win his approval? Lucy wondered.

Charity work. Bryce’s mother did charity work—in fact, that was what the stupid ball was for. Lucy knew exactly who to talk to about that!

Twenty-three

Lindsay didn't like the worried look on Tanya's face.

"What's up?" she asked as she climbed the steps of the library Monday afternoon. "Is it my mom? Did she call you again?"

Tanya shook her head. "Nothing like that. I, well . . ." Her mouth twisted as if it didn't want to allow the next words out. "It's just, if I keep skipping debate club, I'm off the team. Same with yearbook."

"Oh."

"You can come with me to the meetings," Tanya offered.

"No, I can't." Lindsay shoved her hands into her pockets.

"Why not?" Tanya asked. "Your mom hasn't called again. No one at school knows what happened."

"I can't risk it," Lindsay argued. "I have no idea who might be looking for me. I ran away from a hospital. I think cops get involved in things like that."

Tanya looked down at the steps. "I guess. . . ."

"Go," Lindsay said. "You're probably late already."

Tanya shifted her weight, shifted it back.

"Go," Lindsay ordered.

Tanya flinched. Lindsay hadn't meant to bark at her; it had just come out that way.

"I have to do some research for Lucy." Lindsay pushed past Tanya and went into the library. When she glanced back, Tanya was gone.

Lindsay paced the small hotel room. Lucy still hadn't responded—they had planned to meet over an hour ago. Wasn't she coming?

"Lucy?" she tried again. Nothing.

"I hate this!" She kicked her backpack and it toppled over, spilling the books, papers, and clothes all over the floor. She slumped against the wall, her greasy hair falling in front of her eyes; she shuddered as she tucked it behind her ears. It had been days since she'd showered.

She shut her eyes, debating. She'd gotten used to using the toilet by pressing her feet against the door. But standing in that shower totally naked . . .

If only she could shed her skin like a snake. But that was not an option. She opened her eyes and noticed the chair. *That's it!* She picked it up and hurried to the bathroom at the end of the hall. She shoved the chair under the doorknob.

She quickly peeled her clothes off her sticky body and stepped into the shower. She didn't have any soap or shampoo, but just rinsing off felt amazing. After a few minutes she actually managed to relax a little.

She used Tanya's sweatshirt to dry off and put her clothes back on, realizing she'd feel even better if she did laundry. Shopping for towels and soap. Laundry. All things that took up time. And if Lucy finally showed up . . .

Getting back to her room with her chair and backpack, she tried calling again. This time it worked.

"I'm glad you're there," Lucy said. "I'm sorry I was delayed. This day has been . . ." She trailed off.

"Mine too."

"I can't stay," Lucy said. "I just wanted to let you know that everything went brilliantly with Mr. Smithton. And," she added, and Lindsay could hear the glint in the invisible girl's eyes, "I've convinced him to not only pay me the extraordinary fee, but now I get a percentage of all he earns with my financial tips!"

"My tips," Lindsay corrected.

"So I'll need a few more suggestions," Lucy continued. "Oh—he asked about hiring this fellow Caleb Alonso. Whether or not he's trustworthy. Also about some stock investment. I believe it's called the Carmichael Enterprises."

"I'll check."

"Perfect. I must dash. I have an appointment. Can I get the answers to these questions tomorrow morning?"

"Sure. I don't have anything else to do."

"Oh, you're a love. Tomorrow, then. Around eleven?"

"I'll be here." Lindsay sighed. "Where else would I go?"

• • •

The smell hit Lucy first: rotting garbage, sweat, filth. Next was the crush of objects, people, and animals in cramped, dark quarters. After that was the confidence with which Alan Wordsworth and Harriet Embers entered the dilapidated tenement and spoke with the inhabitants while she hung back, ill at ease.

It wasn't that she'd never seen such conditions—she had seen many such sights while traipsing about the Northeast with her father. It was a splash of cold water on this bright, chill Tuesday morning, a reminder of what could be that sent quivers along her spine, that this was a fate still looming before her.

No, she told herself as she stepped over a heap of rags on the stoop. *Not with Mr. Smithton.*

This was the third building she, Alan, and Harriet had visited this morning. In each, Harriet had spoken only with women and girls, often asking Alan to step outside. Lucy learned far more about the workings of the female body, relations between men and women, the ways conception might be prevented and health preserved than she had ever known. The responses Harriet got ranged from shock, revulsion, and outrage to gratitude, interest, and even some dialogue debating the merits of various devices, methods, and compounds. All of these reactions mirrored Lucy's own constantly changing feelings.

Harriet Embers seemed to be the least likely person to

have knowledge of such things. She was nothing like Lucy had imagined. She had pictured Harriet as someone Alan might be courting, but the woman was old enough to be Alan's mother and was, in fact, a friend of his parents.

Her willowy form was unadorned by fashionable tight lacing or pads; her light brown hair was streaked with gray and worn in a simple twist, and stray hairs often fell into her face. She was friendly but brusque, and although she could be reassuring and motherly, she clearly had no patience for squeamishness and even less for the men who tried to throw her out and keep her from speaking with their wives, daughters, and mistresses. Lucy knew that many of these girls were probably selling themselves, but in this environment she was uncertain who was who.

They entered the dimly lit hallway and headed toward the back of the narrow building. "Flora?" Harriet called. "It's Harriet Embers to see you."

A skittering sound and a sudden movement around her ankle made Lucy clutch Alan's arm. He looked down and patted her hand. "I don't like rats either," he said.

A door up ahead opened a sliver. "Can't see you, Harriet," a hoarse voice whispered.

"And why's that, Flora?" Harriet demanded.

"Ill."

Alan stepped forward. "I'm a doctor. I'd be happy to examine you."

The door suddenly closed, then reopened. A thick, broad-shouldered tough in a stained shirt and tattered pants stood there. “Get out of here,” he shouted. “We don’t need the likes of you coming round, putting ideas into Flora’s head.”

Lucy was surprised to see Alan step forward. The glowering man in the doorway could smash him easily.

“I’m a doctor,” Alan said. “If Flora is sick, perhaps I can help her.”

“Don’t need your help.” The door slammed shut.

Alan and Harriet exchanged a look, and Harriet shrugged.

“Aren’t we going in?” Lucy asked.

“It could do more harm than good if we persisted,” Harriet said. “We’ll try again another day.”

Alan crouched down and slipped a card under the door. “You never know,” he said as he stood back up. “At least they’ll have the hospital address if they need it.”

“They probably can’t read it,” Harriet pointed out.

That reminded Lucy—her father hadn’t been by to see her. She wondered if he had picked up the papers to use in the next batch of predictions at the Lyceum.

They returned to the street, which wasn’t much cleaner than the tenement but wasn’t as suffocating. “I’m feeling peckish,” Harriet said. “Let’s have tea and a bite.”

They walked several blocks to Harriet’s office. The room was small but very tidy—everything had a place. It was so well

organized Lucy wasn't sure where to put her hat and coat. Nor did she know where to look—everywhere she turned, her eyes landed on some pamphlet, object, or diagram that made her horribly aware that she was a female and that Alan, as a doctor and as someone who worked with Harriet, had at least a general knowledge of every inch of her.

Alan seemed to feel no such awkwardness. She saw an entirely different side of him with Harriet. He was relaxed and even witty.

He tossed his gloves into his hat and placed it on the window-sill. He turned and stretched a hand toward Lucy. She took it and squeezed lightly. His hand was strong and much larger than hers. Larger than Bryce's too. Bryce had slim, elegant fingers; Alan's hand felt as if it belonged to a man who had known work.

He looked surprised, then said, "Would you like me to take your hat and coat?"

Lucy dropped Alan's hand as if it had burned her. *What is wrong with me?* Lucy blushed far redder than Alan ever had. "Thank you," she said in a strangled whisper.

Graciously ignoring her discomfort, he took her things and hung them on the corner of the crammed bookcase.

"What did you think of your first day in the trenches, Lucy?" Harriet asked as she tended to the tea.

"It was most interesting," Lucy said.

"You handled it well," Alan said. "Other girls might not have lasted after that first building."

“Or my first lecture!” Harriet laughed and handed Lucy a cup of tea. “Lucy, why don’t you take the chair?” she added, gesturing to the worn chair behind the desk.

“Are you sure?” Lucy asked gratefully. Her boots pinched after all the walking they’d done today. If she continued working with Harriet, she’d have to find more-comfortable shoes.

“Of course, dear,” Harriet said, giving Alan his tea. “Alan and I are old soldiers, used to the conditions out there.”

“Thank you.” Lucy sat in the chair, relishing the moment she took the pressure off her feet and looking forward to taking off her corset and stays. She glanced enviously at Harriet’s unencumbered figure. Of course, Bryce would never approve. Going without a corset would really be too much.

Harriet perched on the edge of the desk while Alan sat on the windowsill.

“I’m going to need some more supplies,” Harriet mused.

“I’ll see what I can do,” Alan promised.

Harriet shook her head. “No. You can’t keep purchasing these things for me through the hospital.” She laughed. “I know how meager a student doctor’s salary is. At this rate, you’ll never be able to buy your own place and support a wife, much less a family.”

“She’s worse than my own mother,” Alan said to Lucy.

“Your mother trusts me to keep an eye on you,” Harriet scolded.

Alan shook his head, smiling. “Why is it that two women

who reject the notion of marriage, who believe laws surrounding matrimony are terrible, antiquated, and nearly the worst evil ever perpetrated, are intent on marrying me off?"

"I wouldn't go *that* far," Harriet protested. Then she smiled wickedly. "Well, perhaps I would."

Lucy's eyes widened. Did this mean Alan's mother and father weren't married?

"I'm not the only one in need of funds," Alan reminded her. "The income from your father's trust can't last forever, no matter how much you water down the tea."

"Don't insult my tea, young man," Harriet scolded. "Or I won't give you a slice of cake."

Lucy sipped her tea, enjoying the banter between them.

Harriet sighed and frowned. "But you're right. The Women's Help Committee could use some help of its own."

"I may be coming into some funds soon," Alan said.

Harriet's eyebrows raised. "Alan, are you planning to inherit from some newly discovered relatives?"

"Nothing like that. Bryce Cavanagh has a line on an investment that should pay off handsomely."

"Bryce?" Lucy asked.

"Of *the* Cavanaghs?" Harriet asked. "The boy you were at school with?"

Alan nodded and put his teacup down beside him on the windowsill. "He's been learning the ins and outs of Wall Street." He gave Lucy a glance, then looked away. "His father

insisted he do some kind of work, and I guess this stock trading suits him.”

“Stocks are just another form of gambling,” Harriet warned.

“Not with someone like Bryce.” Alan sighed. “Golden boys tend to stay golden—and turn dross into gold. Besides, this way my money can work in the stock market while I’m working all those long hours at the hospital.”

Lucy tried to remember whether Bryce had ever mentioned this Wall Street pursuit. He didn’t really talk to her about work. In fact, much of his life was a mystery to her.

She made a note to ask him more about himself, the way she did with Alan. Take more of an interest in his activities and routines. She lifted her teacup to her lips to blow on it, but the contents had already grown cold.

Twenty-four

Lindsay walked out of a movie theater, blinking in the strange twilight. Everything looked surreal after being in the dark, underground cave of the theater. Unable to take another day alone, with no one to talk to, she'd withdrawn cash out of the ATM and gone to the first showing. She discovered no one noticed if she slipped from one movie to the other. Three movies for the price of one—and she'd filled up nearly six hours.

The sun was pinking and purpling; the library wouldn't stay open much longer, and she had to make photocopies for Lucy's dad. She climbed the shallow stairs slowly, her feet weighing more with each step she took. She hadn't realized how much she'd been hoping to see Tanya standing there, waiting for her.

Pushing aside the disappointment before it could overwhelm her, she sat down at a computer. She'd become adept at doing keyword searches in newspaper databases, and she quickly found the answers to Lucy's questions. This experience could turn her into a history major after all.

She dropped off the papers at McSorley's and headed to

Tompkins Square Park. She just wasn't ready to go back to her room, and Lucy had warned her she'd be late this evening.

She spotted Flip balancing on one leg on a bench, Haley sitting, shoulders slumped, beside him.

"Hello, beautiful bird," Flip called as Lindsay approached. "I'm a flamingo; what are you?"

"Shut up, Flip," Haley said. Her makeup was caked, and her hair was so greasy it didn't even move when she tossed her head. "So where have you been?"

"I've been by a few times, but you guys have never been around."

Flip leapt off the bench and flopped beside Haley. He leaned into her, nearly knocking her over. "I'm always around," he said, giggling. "And Haley sure *gets* around."

Haley shoved him away from her and he rolled onto the pavement, still laughing. "You're just mad because I didn't share," he said.

Haley rolled her eyes. "He's so stupid when he's stoned." She crossed her legs, her top foot fidgeting. She bit her nails, finger by finger.

Letting out a frustrated breath, she stood and stepped over Flip, who lay on his back on the pavement, staring up at the sky. "Get up," she hissed. "You're going to get hauled off."

"It's so sweet how she worries about me." Flip pulled himself up onto the bench.

"Come on," Haley ordered Lindsay, and without even

thinking, Lindsay fell into step beside the tall girl.

“Are you still in that hotel?” Haley asked.

“Yeah,” Lindsay said.

Haley glanced back over her shoulder at Flip, then slipped her arm through Lindsay’s.

“Listen,” Haley said. “I didn’t want to ask you in front of Flip, but can I come up to your room? I just want to take a shower. I totally stink. I can’t stand it.”

“I don’t know. . . .”

“Please? I’m so rank I can’t even believe you’re willing to stand this close to me.” She smiled. “I mean, I’m glad you are, but . . .”

Lindsay remembered how incredible showering had felt, how much it changed everything. “Okay,” she relented.

Haley grinned. “I’d hug you, but I’ll spare you the smell!”

Up at her room Lindsay pulled out the brand-new towels, soap, and shampoo she bought last night.

“Is that for me?” Haley asked.

“Yeah.” Lindsay handed her one of the towels, then the soap and shampoo. “Just don’t leave them in there.”

“You are awesome,” Haley said. “Totally five-star treatment.”

“There’s no lock,” Lindsay warned her.

“As long as there’s water, I don’t care.”

When Haley returned, Lindsay barely recognized the girl standing in front of her. Gone were the raccoon eyes, the streaks of bronzer and blush, the dark lipstick. Just out of the

shower, Haley could be one of Lindsay's classmates. A basically pretty girl with not-great skin; just another kid.

"What?" Haley demanded, handing Lindsay the soap and shampoo. She strode into the room and picked up her bag. Still wearing the towel wrapped around her head, she crouched, pulled out her makeup, and started lining her eyes with black pencil.

"Nothing," Lindsay said. "Hey, I'm going to take a shower too." She picked up the other towel and the chair, struggling to not drop the soap and shampoo.

Haley glanced up at her, her penciled eyebrows raised. "You gonna shower sitting down?"

Lindsay laughed. "No," she said. "This is how I lock the door."

Haley shrugged. "Whatever." She went back to her tiny mirror.

In the bathroom, Lindsay shoved the chair under the doorknob, wondering how old Haley really was. All this time, Lindsay had assumed Haley was at least eighteen, maybe older. But now . . .

She turned on the shower, thrilled beyond belief that it was still steamy hot. She soaped up luxuriously, reveling in the bubbles, the fresh scent, the lather. She made ridiculous styles with her shampooed hair the way her mother used to for her when she was little.

All too soon, someone pounded on the door. "Someone in

there?” a gruff male voice demanded. “I really gotta go.”

“Sorry!” she called. “I’ll be out in a sec.”

She shut off the water, toweled off quickly, and stepped into her clean clothes. It was time to get out anyway, and Haley was waiting for her back in her room.

“You know, I think cleanliness really is next to godliness,” Lindsay declared as she opened the door.

But the room was empty.

“Haley?” she called stupidly. The room was tiny, and there was no closet. If Haley wasn’t instantly visible, she wasn’t there.

Lindsay pulled the chair into the room, letting the door slam behind her. *I guess she had someplace to be.*

Disappointed that she had to kill time alone, Lindsay rubbed her head with the towel, then draped it over the back of the chair to dry. She picked up the towel Haley had dropped on the floor and laid it over the chair seat. It was still damp, and there was smeared makeup all over it. Lindsay would have to do laundry again.

It was still another hour before Lucy was due to arrive, and despite all the popcorn she’d eaten at the movies, Lindsay was hungry. She went to get her wallet out of her backpack, and that was when she realized—her pack was in a different place. She had shoved it in the corner. Now it lay on her bed. Her heart pounded; nerves made her ears burn. *She can’t—She didn’t*—Lindsay couldn’t even complete the thought.

Frantically she tugged, pulled, yanked, threw everything out of her backpack. She sank to the floor, staring into space.

The wallet was gone. Her money, her cash card, school ID. Everything.

“I’m so stupid,” she whispered. She slapped the floor, stomped her feet. “I don’t believe it!”

She pushed herself up off the floor and grabbed her coat, vibrating with rage, her stomach sour, her face hot with shame that she had trusted Haley.

She strode into Tompkins Square Park, shouting as soon as she spotted Haley.

“Where’s my wallet?” Lindsay shrieked. “My money?”

Haley tottered on high heels.

“Hey, Lindsay Lou,” Haley drawled. “My shower superhero.”

“I want my money. Now.” Lindsay shook she was so angry. And Haley was smiling all sweet and vague.

“What money?” Haley licked her lips, and her eyes rolled a bit.

She’s really, really high, Lindsay realized. “Haley. You took my wallet. I want it back.”

Flip sat up on the bench behind Haley. Lindsay had been so focused on Haley, she’d never noticed him lying there. “All the screaming. Bad karma.”

“I don’t have your stupid wallet,” Haley said. She shut her eyes and wobbled.

Lindsay stalked to Haley's bag, sitting beside Flip. She grabbed it and dumped it out. The wallet fell onto the grass.

Lindsay snatched it and whirled around. She held it up to Haley.

"Get out of my stuff!" Haley shrieked.

"This is mine," Lindsay said, hating the tears springing into her eyes. "Why did you take it from me? I was nice to you."

"That's mine!" Haley tried to grab the wallet, but Lindsay sidestepped her and Haley stumbled into the bench. "You stupid bitch! Look what you made me do!"

Haley's fierce expression startled Lindsay. Her dark-rimmed eyes were full of hate. She no longer had the vague, glassy-eyed look of someone high; she looked venomous. She pressed against her scraped knee, and Lindsay saw blood trickling down her leg under the fishnets.

"I—" Lindsay faltered.

"Bitch!" Haley spat again. She stood, and Lindsay realized Haley was seriously far gone. Fear replaced anger, and Lindsay turned and ran away.

She took off down the path, then twisted and turned up another. Rounding the playground, she slowed down. Haley wasn't following. Lindsay dropped down onto a bench to catch her breath.

Slumped, stunned, betrayed, Lindsay opened her wallet. Money, gone. ATM card, gone. IDs gone. Even her library card. All gone.

Lindsay leaned against the back of the bench, willing its solidity to hold her up, keep her together. *I will not cry*. Out here, her tears would just freeze anyway.

Lindsay carefully stood, every muscle hurting as if she'd been beaten up. Betrayal had a physical side she'd never known before. She shoved her wallet into her pocket, not sure why she was even keeping it.

She hurried past the manager's office, hoping she'd be able to come up with a plan before he asked her for the next payment. Once she was in her room, she flung herself onto the bed, but she didn't cry. All she felt was . . . nothing.

"Lindsay? Lindsay, are you there?" Lucy called.

Lindsay rubbed her face and sat up. "Hi, Lucy."

"Oh, good! I have had quite a day!"

"Me too," Lindsay said glumly.

"Did you get the information for Mr. Smithton?" Lucy asked.

Lindsay got up and picked up the notebook from where it had skidded under the chair. She moved slowly, as if despair made her muscles heavy.

"The next batch of newspapers is at McSorley's," Lindsay said.

"Wonderful! The performance at the Lyceum is coming up in a few days. It's bound to be even more packed than last week. This time I swear I'm going to get my father to give me a portion of the profits."

“Yeah, you do that.” Lindsay flipped through the pages.

“Of course, I’ll never breathe a word about my deal with Mr. Smithton. That golden goose is all mine. So did you find out anything about Caleb?”

Lindsay rubbed her face, then cleared her throat. “Yeah, this Caleb guy seems to be okay,” she said, her voice flat. “I mean, I don’t find any scandals or arrests. But Carmichael Enterprises is really bad news. Total rip-off. A bunch of rich speculators offered really overvalued stock and then sold their own shares at inflated prices, just before the company’s patents were rejected. It went bankrupt, and all the stock was worthless.” Lindsay snorted. “I guess insider trading happened back then too.”

“So yes to Caleb but no to Carmichael. But Lindsay, I need something he can use to make another killing! That’s how I get my percentages. Don’t you have something I can tell him?”

Lindsay flung the notebook onto the floor. “You know what? Why don’t you do all this predicting on your own?”

“What’s wrong?”

“What’s wrong?” Lindsay shrieked. “This is all your fault. All of it!” Tears streamed down Lindsay’s face; she couldn’t see, blinded by everything that had happened, by a life that had spun out of control. “If I had never heard your stupid voice, it all would have been different! I wouldn’t have thought I was going crazy. I would have made my mother see

what bad news Carl is. But instead, all I could do was freak out. Because of you. And then the hospital . . .”

“Lindsay, I—”

“And now all you do is use me! Making loads of money off me. Getting rich. And the whole time . . .” She swallowed and tried again. “The whole time my life is destroyed more and more. Every day it’s more horrible.”

“But Lindsay—”

“Shut up! Why did you ever have to talk to me in the first place? My life was over that minute! Well, I’m done. You can talk all you want. I’m not listening!”

Lindsay slammed out of her room and into the street, letting the blaring car radios, the shouts, the laughter, the traffic, the chatter drown out any other voices in her head.

Twenty-five

“Lindsay?” Lucy called. “Lindsay, are you still there?”

She sat in her father’s boardinghouse room, listening. Was Lindsay right? Had Lucy done something terrible to her?

One thing was undeniably true: Lucy’s circumstances had vastly improved, while Lindsay’s seemed to have worsened—and that wasn’t fair. Just as Lucy was furious that her father kept the money she had earned for him, it wasn’t right to give Lindsay nothing. Without Lindsay, there would be no Lyceum performances, no Mrs. Van Wyck, no Mr. Smithton.

But how could Lucy share the wealth with a girl living in the future?

The door opened and Colonel Phillips walked in. “You’re here so often I wonder why you board with Mrs. Van Wyck,” he commented.

“I was just speaking to Lindsay,” Lucy explained.

“I thought we were just using the newspapers,” Colonel Phillips said. “Is she giving you other information?”

“She’s lonely,” Lucy explained, knowing it was always safest to stay as close to the truth as possible. “And she’s been helping me learn to read.”

“Really?” Colonel Phillips tossed the day’s paper at her. “Give it a go.”

Lucy picked up the paper. “Lily Langtry’s debut postponed due to a fire at the Park Theater,” she read. She looked up at her father. “Well, that should satisfy our audience.”

He grinned at her. “I’ve had people stopping me in the street all day. You are on top, dearie dear. Everyone wants you to read their future.”

With an exaggerated flourish, he pulled a money clip from his checkered vest pocket. “So I have decided you were right.” He peeled several bills from the roll. “You deserve a greater stake.”

Lucy stared at him, not even looking at the bills he placed in her hands. This was the perfect moment to ask for money for Lindsay.

“Thank you,” she said. “This is—well, thank you. And as you seem to be in a generous spirit—”

Colonel Phillips held up a warning finger. “Don’t get greedy. It’s unseemly. And might make me change my mind.”

“It’s not for me,” Lucy explained quickly, before his mood shifted. “Lindsay is in trouble and needs money. Don’t you think she deserves a cut too? After all, without her, none of this would be possible.”

“Well, it would be *possible*,” Colonel Phillips teased. “It just wouldn’t be accurate, and we’d be moving from town to town after every show.”

Lucy smiled. If he was joking, he wasn't angry. And if he wasn't angry, he might be persuaded. "So . . .?"

"Really, now, Lucy, how many ways do you want to cut this pie? There's you, me, Mr. Grasser, Peabody, and now Lindsay."

"What if she stops giving us the newspapers?" Lucy warned. "She's really upset today."

He stroked his chin. "I suppose it's better to keep our source happy." He nodded sharply. "All right. After all, I always play fair and square."

Lucy snorted—an entirely unladylike sound.

Colonel Phillips wagged his dark eyebrows. "At least I do when I have to. Eventually. For the most part. But how do you propose we give this little lady her fair share?"

"If we can get newspapers from the future in that hiding spot," Lucy said, "why can't we leave money for her there from the past?"

He turned to face her, his eyes focusing and growing bright again. "Worth a try," he said with a grin. "In fact, I'd like to see if it's possible myself."

"She said she left the newspapers already," Lucy told him.

"Then I'd best get over there. I'll need to pick some good stories for you to predict. And I promise, I'll leave her a share."

"Good," Lucy said. *I just hope it does the trick.*

As soon as Lucy woke up the next morning, she hurried to her father's boardinghouse. She had to tell Lindsay there was money for her at McSorley's. She hoped this would repair their relationship.

She pressed her ear to her father's door and heard his loud snoring. She didn't want to wake him, but she didn't want to delay—the money could vanish, and worse, without Lindsay's cooperation she'd have nothing to tell Mr. Smithton at their meeting today and no windfall providing her with her lucrative percentage.

Turning the knob as quietly as she could, she crept into the darkened room. "Lindsay?" she whispered.

Her father stirred, groaned, and turned over. Lucy froze, but he didn't wake.

"Lindsay," she whispered again. She sensed Lindsay's presence. "Lindsay," she said a little louder.

"Who's there!" In a flash, Colonel Phillips stood over her, knife at her throat.

"It's me!" Lucy cried, flinging up her hands to grip his strong arms. "It's just me!"

Colonel Phillips released her and stumbled a few steps back. "Dearie dear, you know better than to sneak up on a body while he's sleeping!"

"I'm sorry," Lucy said. "I didn't want to wake you."

Colonel Phillips laughed. "And instead you nearly give me a heart attack and get yourself killed." He sat back down on

the bed and ran his hands through his thick dark curls. "So what brings you here so bright and early?"

"I wanted to talk to Lindsay. Ask her if she got the money."

"Checking up on me?"

"No, I didn't get a chance to tell her we were leaving her money in the hiding place. I want to make sure no one else finds it first."

"Mmm. Good point." He yawned.

"Lindsay?" Lucy called. But she no longer felt the girl there. Odd. She was there a minute ago. *Or maybe she's avoiding me.* Lucy sighed. "She's not responding. I guess I'll have to come back later."

"Ask her for some more newspapers," Colonel Phillips said. "There's nothing very dramatic in the ones we have so far."

"All right." *If she's still willing to help us,* she added silently.

Colonel Phillips stretched out on the bed. "What are you up to these days?" he asked. "Still throwing yourself at that Bryce Cavanagh?"

"I'm not!" Lucy said. "He comes around all on his own."

"Mrs. Van Wyck seems to think it would be a good match. I'm not so sure."

"Really?" Lucy wondered why her father kept expressing reservations about Bryce. "Most fathers would want

their daughters to keep company with boys from prominent wealthy families.”

“I’m not most fathers, am I?” He rolled over onto his side, propping himself up on an elbow. “Prominent families don’t generally like outsiders marrying into their circles. Take care. He may be the smitten swain now, but that doesn’t mean he intends to marry you.”

“Who said anything about marriage?” Lucy said.

Colonel Phillips laughed. “You may not say it, but I believe you’ve been thinking it.” He sat back up. “I don’t want you to be disappointed or to make mistakes you’ll regret later.”

“What do you mean?”

“I’ve seen his type before,” Colonel Phillips said. “He’s not for you.”

“How can you say that?” Lucy said. “You’ve spent no time with him.”

“Don’t need to.” Colonel Phillips flopped back down onto the bed. “Now let me get some sleep.”

Lucy gaped at her father. “You can’t just—”

He pulled the blanket up over his head and turned his back on her.

Irritated, she flounced out of the boardinghouse. The streets were already busy with traffic and street peddlers. “I hope all the noise wakes him up,” she muttered, glaring back up at her father’s open window.

“Why, it’s Miss High and Mighty.” Nellie stood with one

hand on the street lamp for balance, the other fiddling with her shoe. She seemed to have lost a heel. She had obviously been up all night. Everything about her—from her feathered hat, past her painted complexion, to her flounced hems—drooped and dragged. Giving up on her shoe, she straightened. “I’d ask you if you have any snuff, but I already know the answer. Besides,” she added, taking an unsteady step toward Lucy, “your daddy made it very clear that I wasn’t to go anywhere near you. I guess he thinks you’re too good for the likes of me. Just like you do.”

“I don’t think that,” Lucy protested. She could smell the alcohol on the woman’s breath and took a tiny step backward. “I just can’t be the kind of help you want me to be.”

Nellie pulled her wrap around herself more tightly. “I don’t need you. I’m doing fine.”

In the bright cold morning Lucy could see dark circles the cosmetic paint couldn’t hide. “Where’s Katie?” she asked.

Nellie shrugged. “Tom got tired of her causing trouble. She hasn’t been around.” She stared at the ground and shivered in her thin dress and shawl.

She’s worried, Lucy realized. “Well, if you see her, tell her I hope she’s all right.”

Nellie rolled her eyes. “I’ll be sure to do that.” She pushed past Lucy and went into the boardinghouse.

On the Third Avenue elevated railroad, Lucy wondered about Nellie. Did she wish for a way out? An alternative to

what she was doing, how she was living? But as Alan had pointed out, those opportunities were hard to find.

Lucy shifted in her seat and stared out the grimy window. Down below, the streets were growing more narrow, more crowded, more dismal the farther she went downtown. She could see the ragpickers, the newspaper boys, the flower girls starting their day—or maybe just ending it. Their meager existence barely kept them clothed or fed.

Is Lindsay heading down the same path as Nellie? For all the marvelous promise of the future, it sounded as if Lindsay's options were just as limited, as if she too lived in the shadow of that insurmountable wall of hopelessness. How could Lucy keep it from crushing Lindsay?

"We didn't scare you off yesterday!" Harriet smiled warmly and, clutching Lucy's arm in a strong grip meant to be a handshake, ushered her into the tiny office. "I'm so pleased!"

"I do have an appointment later, so I'm not sure how long I can stay," Lucy said. She wanted to speak to Lindsay again—to see if she was still upset and with luck get some information to give to Mr. Smithton.

"I'm happy with any time you can give me and the girls," Harriet assured her.

The sound of whistling from the hallway startled them both, and a moment later Alan walked in.

Harriet looked at him, surprised. "I didn't expect you," she said.

His eyes flicked to Lucy, then back to Harriet. "I'm on the night shift for the next six weeks," he explained. "I haven't gotten used to sleeping during the day, so I thought I'd make myself useful. Good morning, Lucy," he added. "Glad to see you."

"Good morning," Lucy said. "You seem cheerful."

"Some days, I just can't help it." He shrugged. "If you like, I could be dour and depressed." He twisted his lips into an exaggerated grimace.

"No, that's all right," Lucy said, laughing. "That's too dreadful an expression."

They made their way to a row of tenements, and despite the grim surroundings, Lucy felt better. The day had started off oddly. Lindsay's lack of response, her father's disparaging remarks about Bryce, and the encounter with Nellie had all balled up her stomach, but the day was improving. She found herself relaxing in Harriet and Alan's easy presence.

"What's our mission today?" Lucy asked.

"The usual," Harriet replied. "To give what help we can."

"I've a patient who lives here that I need to check on," Alan said as they came to a dilapidated building with worn, gray laundry hanging from most of its windows. Lucy could smell the stench of the place even from the street. Her nose wrinkled; she hoped Harriet and Alan didn't notice.

"She's going to have a baby soon but is afraid of going to the hospital. I want to convince her that it's safe."

“Lucy, why don’t you go with the doctor?” Harriet suggested. “It might help if another woman was there.”

“All right.”

“While you two talk to the mother-to-be,” Harriet said, “I’ll see if there are girls in this building who might prefer to avoid that particular state of affairs.”

“We’ll meet you outside, unless you need help,” Alan said.

Harriet grinned. “Don’t worry, I’ll holler loud and clear if I need you.”

Lucy followed Alan up the stairs. “Why does she have to go to the hospital?” Lucy asked.

“She’s lost three other babies before this one. She couldn’t tell me why or what happened. There may be complications that would be better handled in the hospital.”

“Oh.”

“This way,” he said.

They walked past open doors, and Lucy could see the filthy, crowded conditions in the rooms. In one, Lucy saw three women, all stooped and aged, sewing gentlemen’s collars while three little girls sat at their feet and sorted buttons.

Alan knocked on a doorjamb and stepped inside. “Claudia,” he called. “It’s Dr. Wordsworth.”

A small, weak voice responded from a back room.

He crossed to the doorway. “I have a friend with me. May

she come in too?" He cocked his head, listening, then nodded to Lucy.

A woman lay on the bed, enormous with child. As Lucy got closer, she could see that the woman was sweating and pale. It was impossible to guess her age.

"How are you today, Claudia?" Alan asked.

"F-fine," Claudia responded.

"You're feverish," Alan said. "I think it's time you come with me to the hospital."

"No," Claudia murmured. "No, please, I don't want to die there."

"You won't die there. We'll be there to help you."

"No!" She rolled away from him. "No!"

Alan rubbed his face, exasperated. "Why won't she listen to reason?"

Lucy stepped toward the bed. "Claudia? My name is Lucy. I hate hospitals too. They're awful and scary."

Claudia looked at Lucy and gripped her hand. "They do things to you there." Her eyes were rolling around, like a spooked horse's.

Lucy winced—Claudia was a lot stronger than she looked. "But they can also help. Dr. Wordsworth saved the life of a girl I know. She would have died if he hadn't taken such good care of her. I'm very glad we took her to the hospital."

Claudia shut her eyes. "But I can't pay—"

“I told you,” Alan said. “There is no charge.”

“He’s a good doctor,” Lucy said. “And the nurses will take care of you. And your baby.”

“I don’t know,” Claudia whispered. “I don’t know.”

“Wouldn’t it be nice to be in a warm, clean bed where you can rest?” Lucy said.

“I suppose. . . .” Claudia looked at Alan. “When would I have to go? I need to tell Charlie.”

“I’d like you there as soon as possible. How’s this? I’ll send an ambulance by to come get you. And I’ll get a message to your husband. He won’t have to try to get you there himself or take the day off work. Is that all right?”

Claudia shut her eyes and nodded.

“Good. Then I’ll be seeing you later today. Will you be all right until then?”

“Yes. My sister is on her way here.” Claudia released Lucy’s hand and gave her a weak smile. “Are you sure he’s a good doctor?”

“I’m certain,” Lucy said. “Good luck.”

She and Alan headed down the stairs. “This really matters to you,” Lucy said. “Why?”

“These things matter to all doctors,” Alan said.

“But the girls and the babies,” Lucy pressed. “They’re special to you.”

Alan gave her a sidelong look, then gazed forward again. “I guess they are important to me. My sister . . . my sister died

in childbirth. And I watched my aunts wear out their bodies with pregnancy after pregnancy. Babies and miscarriages and stillbirths. My mother had . . . methods.”

“Do you think Claudia will really be all right?” Lucy asked as they stepped out onto the street.

“She has to be,” Alan said, smiling down at her. “I can’t make you a liar, can I?”

Lucy smiled back. “That’s true.”

“You were very good with her,” Alan said. “I don’t know if she would have agreed without your help.”

“I’m glad.”

“What matters to you?” he asked suddenly, seriously.

Lucy stared at him. No one had ever asked her that before. She looked away and spotted a familiar girl sitting on the next stoop. “Isn’t that Katie?”

Alan glanced over. “I think it is.”

“This must be where she lives now,” Lucy said.

They went over to the stoop. “Katie?” Lucy asked.

The girl started and looked up, terror on her face. Lucy gasped. Katie had been badly beaten. When she recognized Lucy and Alan, she ducked her head.

Alan knelt beside her and gingerly examined her face. “What happened?”

Katie yanked her face out of Alan’s hands. Then, quicker than Lucy imagined possible, she jumped up and raced down the street.

Lucy gaped after her. "Why did she do that? We just wanted to help her."

"She's probably afraid that if whoever beat her saw us, she'll be worse for it."

Harriet came back out to the street. "I left a lot of pamphlets," she said. "But I didn't talk to too many people."

Alan pulled a watch from his pocket. "I need to go."

"I thought you were on the night shift," Lucy said.

"I am. But I have a paying client to see. I can't just wait for Bryce's investment plans to come through. Lucy, can you describe Katie to Harriet? I'd like her to keep an eye out for her."

"Of course."

"We'll talk soon," Harriet said.

Alan turned and walked away.

"I'm out of pamphlets," Harriet said. "I'll need go back to the office and fold some more."

"I can do that for a while," Lucy volunteered. They headed back toward Harriet's office. "I didn't realize he had clients too."

Harriet nodded. "One wealthy private client. She likes having a young doctor at her beck and call. I've seen it before. She goes through them quickly. Either she grows bored or they can't stand her demands any longer and leave." She shrugged. "He needs the money and she needs the attention. He's trying to wean her from her laudanum, but it's a struggle. Oh, don't look shocked," she added when she saw

Lucy's expression. "Laudanum use is as prevalent among society ladies as it is among the prostitutes. It's another thing they have in common."

"What do you mean?"

"Society men are among the steadiest of the prostitutes' clients."

They arrived at Harriet's office and folded stacks of paper—the pamphlets Harriet handed out giving women information about conception, proper health care during pregnancy, and how to find her.

"Dr. Wordsworth hardly talks about himself—just his work, his ideas," Lucy said.

"Alan?" Harriet asked. "Well, there are some things he's private about." She moved a stack of pamphlets to a bookshelf and brought another batch to the table.

"His parents were friends of yours?" Lucy asked, reaching for a fresh sheet.

"Still are. Good people. Occasionally misguided, but they mean well. They lost most of their money, so Alan has always worked." She smiled, gazing somewhere distant. "They are so proud of his schooling. All on special scholarship and help from friends." She gave Lucy a sharp glance. "His only fortune is the one he'll earn. So any woman will need to believe in him and his own worth—because nothing is coming from his family."

Lucy blushed. "I—I have no family money either," she said. "But I'm earning my own way."

Harriet smiled. "By being a medium of some sort? Alan told me. How certain is that as a profession?"

"I don't intend to do it forever," Lucy said. "In fact, that reminds me. I have an appointment to get to."

Lucy returned to the boardinghouse. Her father wasn't home, so she let herself in. "Lindsay," she called. "I'm here. Are you here?" She held still, listening carefully.

"I can feel you," she said after a moment. "Can you feel me? Please talk to me. Listen, I agree with you. It's not fair that I make this money while you get nothing. So my father left you some in the hiding place."

"He did what?"

Lucy's body relaxed with relief. "He hid money in McSorley's for you."

"Really?"

"Yes. I don't actually know how much, but it's something."

"Oh. Well, thanks."

"So . . . will you still get me newspapers? And give me advice for Mr. Smithton?"

There was a long pause; Lucy bit her lower lip, waiting.

"Yeah, all right," Lindsay said. "It's so boring otherwise."

"Thank you," Lucy said.

"God. I *hate* this," Lindsay suddenly blurted. "I spent the whole day in this stupid room because I'm afraid someone

will see me. I don't have enough money to pay the hotel bill. If he kicks me out, I don't know what I'll do."

"Don't you have anyone who can help you? Anywhere to go?" Lucy asked.

"I can't talk to any of my old friends because I could get caught."

"What do you mean?"

"I ran away from a mental hospital," Lindsay confessed, her voice breaking. "The only reason I was there was because I was talking to *you*. That made everyone think I was crazy. *I* even thought I was crazy for a while. If anyone finds me, they'll send me back."

Lucy didn't know what to say. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean for this to happen."

"I know." Lindsay's voice was shaky.

"I'll try to think of some way to help you," Lucy promised.

"How?" Lindsay demanded, her voice rising in pitch, in volume. "You're back in 1882!"

Lucy paced, her arms crossed over her chest, her hands gripping and releasing. "I don't know. But I will." She stopped and pushed her hair away from her face. "Won't it help if we keep leaving you money?"

Lindsay sighed. "I guess. But you don't understand—I'm only sixteen. I'm supposed to be in school. I was supposed to go to college. I'm really smart. I had a future. It's gone. All gone."

Lucy could hear Lindsay's sobs, each wave of grief tugging at her.

"Because of me," Lucy whispered.

"I guess it's not your fault," Lindsay said. "I mean, I don't know if I can hear you because of something *you're* doing or something *I'm* doing."

"I don't understand it either. There must be some reason."

Lindsay let out a strange, hollow laugh. "To make you rich and torture me? I mean, my life was horrible before, but now it's so much worse. And I didn't think that was possible."

"I wish it wasn't so," Lucy said helplessly. "I don't know how to change it."

She heard a long sigh. "Yeah. Well, I guess I should go to McSorley's and make sure that money is still there."

Lucy felt the connection close. She drifted down onto her father's hard and lumpy bed and sat for a long time, thinking about how unpredictable and uncertain the world was.

"You were *where*?" Bryce demanded after the waiter had left their table. They were dining at the fashionable Delmonico's restaurant, and because of the glittering couples around them, Lucy could see that Bryce was making an effort to keep his voice down. Though she couldn't fathom why he was so shocked.

"I was making visits for the Women's Help Committee. I told you about this." She felt the slight tension in her body that she

always experienced around Bryce as she tried to stay one step ahead of him, tried to make the right impression. She watched Bryce for clues on which silverware she was supposed to use, but he didn't pick up a single utensil; he just stared at her.

"When you said charity work, I imagined you'd be doing what my mother does. Planning balls, raising money, that kind of thing. Not actually going and cavorting with the depraved slum dwellers."

Lucy gaped at him. "It's not like that," she protested.

Bryce raised an eyebrow. When she didn't respond to the implied challenge, he shook his head. "It's not safe."

"I don't go alone," she assured him. "I'm with Harriet Embers and Alan Wordsworth."

Bryce rolled his eyes and laughed nastily. "Of course! It's clear now." He slapped a hand on the table, then quickly glanced around to be sure no one had noticed. "This just gets worse and worse," he said in a lower voice.

"What do you mean?" Lucy couldn't understand why this was such a problem for him. She was doing good, wasn't she? And Bryce's own parents held Alan up as an example.

"Harriet Embers is notorious. She has been arrested for obscenity."

Lucy's mouth dropped open. She couldn't picture motherly, no-nonsense Harriet being arrested for anything. "For what?"

“I can’t describe it to you. What she does, the lectures she gives. The . . . materials she distributes.”

“Oh.” Lucy recalled the reactions of some of the tenants in the places they’d visited—and her own initial response.

“Good God, Lucy, is that what you’re helping her with? This will not do. Not at all.”

“But Alan says—”

“Alan.” Bryce sneered. “He’s just as bad. Yes, he has made something of himself, become more respectable with his work as a physician. But of course he sees nothing wrong with Harriet. Not with *his* parents. His background.”

“What do you mean?”

“This makes complete sense.” Bryce drummed his fingers on the table, making the glasses and plates vibrate. “Harriet Embers was part of that whole group. No wonder they’re working together.”

Lucy grabbed her water glass before Bryce’s tapping sent it crashing to the floor. “I don’t understand.”

“Hasn’t he told you?” He waved a hand at her. “No, why would he? He’s ashamed. Or should be. His parents—once respectable in the New York community—are shunned now.”

“What did they do that was so terrible?” Lucy clutched the glass with both hands.

Bryce leaned toward her and lowered his voice. “They were part of that scandalous Oneida community. The free-love, experiment-in-living upstate. They had group marriages and

claimed to be ordained by God to create a heaven on earth.” He leaned back in his chair and shook his head. “They disbanded a number of years ago in scandal, but the damage to their reputations was done.”

Lucy set down her water glass, grappling with this new information, this sudden window into Alan’s private life.

“Those performances of yours are bad enough,” Bryce said. “But to associate with—to be seen—to be among the filthy, depraved—” He shuddered.

“They’re just poor,” Lucy protested.

Bryce took her hand and patted it. “I’m not really angry with you. You have a kind heart; you’re just misguided. You’ve had no one to teach you. That’s it.”

Lucy looked at his soft, elegant hand covering hers and didn’t think that was it at all.

Twenty-six

Lindsay hoped Lucy's father had left her enough money to buy something to eat but wasn't counting on it. Prices back then were seriously different, and what Lucy might feel was generous probably wouldn't pay for a sandwich, much less her hotel room.

She hurried into McSorley's, ducked down, and slipped her hand in behind the refrigerator. She pulled out a brown paper envelope. When she opened it, she realized it was money, all right, but it didn't look like money she'd ever seen.

She started laughing. Of course—money was different back then! If she hadn't been so freaked she would have remembered and told Lucy not to bother.

She stared at the two silvery bills in her hand, knowing that they were extremely valuable. In fact, they could be college tuition valuable. The problem was—the money was totally useless to her. She couldn't spend it, and how could she sell it? There'd be all those questions; besides, wouldn't any dealer—if she even knew how to find one—assume she'd stolen it?

She slipped the bills into her pocket. Maybe Tanya would know what to do. She'd ask her as soon as she figured out how to talk to her again.

Lindsay walked back to the hotel. Her pace slowed when she spotted Haley and Flip hanging around out front. Her heart pounded, and she ducked behind a newsstand.

She peeked around the side. They were still there. Glancing up and down the street, she scanned the storefronts. Was there anyplace she could go until they left? She stamped her feet and shoved her hands into her pockets. It was getting cold. Without money she couldn't go get a coffee or sit in a movie theater.

What if they never went away? She couldn't just stay out all night.

Bracing herself for a confrontation, she stepped away from the newsstand.

"Lindsay! Hi!" Haley called while Lindsay was still half a block away.

"Hey, girl," Flip said as Lindsay stepped up to them.

"Hi." Lindsay eyed them warily. "Well, see ya." She turned to go inside.

"Have you seen Blair?" Flip asked.

Lindsay looked at him. "No."

Flip glanced at Haley, who shrugged. "You sure?" he asked. "We haven't seen her for a coupla days. She's never been gone that long."

“Whatever,” Haley said. “We probably won’t be seeing her anymore.”

“Shut up,” Flip said.

“You know how it goes out here,” Haley said. “You’re here and then you’re gone. Life. It’s like that.”

Lindsay took a step backward, eager to get away. As she turned to go inside, Haley grabbed her arm.

“It’s cold,” Haley said. “Can we stay with you?”

“Please, pretty please,” Flip whined. “We’ll be your best friends.”

Lindsay gaped at them. Were they nuts? Did they think she was stupid? She shook off Haley’s hand. “No.”

Flip grabbed her. “It’s not nice not to share,” he said. “You have a room.”

“Let go!” Lindsay yanked her arm away from Flip.

Haley stepped right up to her. “We need a place to sleep.”

“Get away from me,” Lindsay said. She pushed Haley, who smacked her across the face. Lindsay stumbled backward.

“You get out of here!” the hotel manager shouted from the doorway. “I’ll call the cops.”

Like wisps of smoke, Flip and Haley instantly vanished.

“Th-thanks,” Lindsay said, still feeling Haley’s slap, the skin tingling.

“This is your only warning, kid,” the manager growled. “You cause any more trouble and you’re out. Got that?”

“Yes,” Lindsay mumbled.

He squinted at her. "Ain't your rent due?"

Lindsay swallowed and cleared her throat. "Tomorrow."

"Watch your step," he warned. "Because I am."

Lindsay nodded and walked past him into the hotel. She charged up the stairs, unlocked her door with shaking hands, and threw herself onto her bed.

"I can't do this," she wailed. "I can't. I can't."

Curling up into a little ball, she held her hand on her cheek where Haley's palm had landed. She lay there a long time, rolling gently from side to side as if she were a little baby being rocked to sleep. Finally she stood and went to the pay phone on the stairway landing.

Her fingers pressed the buttons, and she didn't breathe while the phone rang on the other end. She only exhaled once her mother answered the phone.

"Mom?"

"What?"

"I mean, Melanie, it's me."

"Lindz? Oh my God, is that you? I can't believe it. Lindsay. Oh my God."

Lindsay's muscles tightened and she shut her eyes. She could hear the alcohol, practically smell it over the phone.

"Yeah, it's me."

"Are you okay? You had us all so scared. I was so worried!"

"I'm . . . well, I'm not so good."

“Oh, sweetie pie. Of course not. You should never have left the hospital. You weren’t ready. Not ready at all.”

Lindsay felt the tears coming, willed them to halt. “That’s not it. I didn’t belong there.”

“I felt terrible. I know I haven’t been the greatest—but they can look after you.”

“I told you, I don’t belong in the hospital.”

“The hospital is what’s best. You go back there. I’ll come see you every day, I promise.”

“I can’t.”

“Where are you? Should I come get you?”

“No, that’s okay.”

“Carl’s coming in. Tell me where you are, and we’ll come get you.”

Lindsay hung up and stared at the phone. She pressed her hand against her stomach. She never knew you could be nauseous without any food in your stomach.

She kept one hand on the wall, feeling like she’d fall over if she didn’t as she made her way down the hallway. Once in her room, she wrapped herself in the blanket and stared out the window.

She watched the traffic lights change, then change back again. She didn’t know how much more of this she could take.

Twenty-seven

Lucy rushed to Mr. Smithton's office in a panic. When she'd gone to the boardinghouse to see if the money transfer worked, Lindsay had alternated between monosyllabic and weeping.

"Hello, my dear. Why, whatever is the matter?" Mr. Smithton stood behind his desk. "Have you a dire message for me?" He lowered himself, his hands clutching the arms of his chair. Then he stood up again. Sat again. Stood. He looked like a jack-in-the-box.

"No, nothing like that," Lucy assured him. "But I do have something very serious to discuss with you."

"Is there a problem among the spirits? I've heard they can sometimes squabble among themselves. Am I to have a visitation?"

"It's me. It's for me."

Mr. Smithton's face wrinkled into an enormous smile. "Ah, well, then." He waved a hand at her. "Tell. Do tell."

"I want to . . . to help. Girls. Young women."

"You want to help them do what?"

"To live. Survive. I want them to have a place to go

where they will be safe. So that bad things don't happen to them."

"You mean like an orphanage?"

"Yes, well, not exactly. For older girls. Like me. My age. Where they can eat and stay warm and if evil people are looking for them, they can't find them." Lucy paced the room. "If they want to learn a skill, so that they can have proper employment. Where they can learn to be respectable. And . . ." The vision was formulating, becoming clear.

"A building. Any of the money you would pay me or that I would earn in the investments, I want you to use it for this place. Where they can just . . . be." She shook her head, then faced him. "Does that make any sense?"

Mr. Smithton came around his desk and kissed her forehead. "I see why the spirits speak to you."

"What do you mean?"

"Your generous soul. To use all of your substantial earnings for such a goal." He kissed both her cheeks this time, then clapped in delight. "Oh, I know just how to set it up. We'll create a trust. That way all your earnings can earn even more."

"It needs to last into the future," Lucy said. "That's a must. It has to be around in more than one hundred years."

"The first step is to form the trust; the next step will be to purchase the building."

“I need to start right away. It can’t wait.”

Mr. Smithton gave her a searching, sympathetic look. “This is personal. You know a girl who needs this, don’t you?”

Tears sprang into Lucy’s eyes. “I know many,” she whispered.

Mr. Smithton picked up a pen and began to scribble notes. When forced to operate on the earthly plane, he could be quite businesslike. “Have no fear, dear child, all will be well.” He looked up at her again. “Yes, the spirits chose you well as their representative.”

“Thank you, Mr. Smithton.”

“By the end of business today, you shall have a foundation, and I will begin inquiries to purchase an appropriate location for your . . . What do you want to call this enterprise?”

Lucy thought a moment. “The Phillips Girls Center.”

Mr. Smithton nodded as he wrote. “We will ensure that it will be so carefully managed, it can continue to do its good work for future generations.”

“I hope so,” Lucy murmured. “It has to.”

“Your spirit seems to have gotten a bit confused,” Colonel Phillips said. He tossed strange-looking copies of newspapers onto the vanity in Lucy’s suite at Mrs. Van Wyck’s.

“What do you mean?” Lucy asked.

“Those dates are too far ahead. For the show this Friday,

we need to predict things that will come true in time for the next show. And then the next one. See what I'm saying?" He waved at the copies. "Those are papers for six months from now. The public won't wait that long to see if you're right about the future."

No, but Mr. Smithton will. Lucy picked up the paper and checked the date. Lindsay must have left the papers she was reading for Mr. Smithton's investments instead. "I'm sure we can get others," Lucy said.

Colonel Phillips sprawled on one of the dainty chairs, looking absurdly out of place. "At least the world is still spinning in six months."

"I'm not sure how much longer we'll be able to keep getting messages from Lindsay," Lucy said.

"Why? We're paying her now, aren't we?"

"The money—she couldn't use it. And she's having a terribly difficult time. I don't think we have any idea of how hard this has been on her. It's so odd," Lucy said, frowning. "My ability to hear her has benefited me—us—enormously. But hearing me seems to have destroyed her life."

"That's not your fault," her father said. "Times must have changed."

"I suppose. But I wouldn't count on this lasting much longer."

"Are you *telling* me something or are you merely speculating?"

Lucy shrugged. "It's just a feeling."

Colonel Phillips grinned. “And we all know what special powers you have.”

Lucy laughed. “I’m serious. I think we need to start thinking of alternatives.”

“Don’t worry, dearie dear. I always land on my feet. And don’t think I haven’t taken full advantage of what I’ve been reading in those papers. And now—” He stood and picked up his hat. “There is a lovely lady waiting for me to take her to Tony Pastor’s Variety.” He kissed Lucy on the top of the head and left.

Lucy looked at the paper. Using her finger to guide her along the lines, she sounded out the letters. Some words were easy now. They just popped into meaning in her mind. Others still took a little work.

A headline grabbed her attention because there were several words that looked familiar. “Stocks” she got instantly. “Fr-au-d” she sounded out. “Carmichael” she remembered because Lindsay had her write it down so she could advise Mr. Smithton not to invest. This must be the story that revealed the scheme.

Another set of letters sang out to her. “Bryce Cavanagh.” She read the paragraph. She read it again and then once more. She couldn’t make out every single word, but one thing was clear: Bryce Cavanagh was one of the organizers of the stock fraud! According to the article, the primary financiers earned their money and anyone else lost everything. Although there

was an outcry, it didn't seem that there was to be any sort of investigation.

She dropped the paper. This had to be what Alan was going to invest in—on Bryce's advice.

She grabbed her coat and raced outside. Flaggering a carriage, she hurled herself inside. "Riverview Hospital," she ordered the driver.

The carriage began making its way uptown. Now that she was sitting still, reality, the enormity of what she was about to do slowly crept into her consciousness. At the intersection of Fourteenth Street and Fifth Avenue, she started to panic.

If I warn Alan, he won't invest. He might even tell Bryce the reason he's decided to pull out is because of me.

That's when what truly nagged at her became crystal clear: if she breathed a word of this knowledge to anyone, it was over forever with Bryce. There would not be even the slightest whisper of a hope that she would ever become Mrs. Bryce Cavanagh.

She had no idea what to do. She went around and around: Tell. Don't tell. Tell. Don't tell.

The carriage driver pulled to a stop. Lucy peered out the window at the redbrick buildings of Riverview Hospital.

The horse neighed and stomped the cobblestones. The driver climbed down from his perch and opened her door. "Are you getting out?" he asked.

She stared at him, frozen. She twisted her purse strings.

“Well?” the driver demanded.

“I’ve changed my mind,” she told the driver. “Please, take me to the Thorton boardinghouse at Fourteenth Street and Third Avenue.”

She leaned back against the seat. *I can talk it all out with Lindsay. She’ll help me know what I should do.*

Lindsay huddled on the floor of her room. She was hungry, and she hadn’t showered—she was afraid to leave her room because she didn’t want to run into the manager. Besides, all she could do was cry, so staying put seemed like the right thing to do.

She wished Lucy would come and talk to her. Lucy was the only person in the whole world who truly understood what was happening, the only one who made her feel like she wasn’t all alone.

“Lindsay! Are you there?” Lucy’s voice called.

Lindsay’s head popped up. Had their connection grown so strong that Lucy could sense Lindsay wishing? “I’m here,” she replied.

“I’m so glad. I need someone to talk to. A friend.”

“Really? Me too.” Lindsay wiped her face on her sleeve. “What’s going on? You sound upset.”

“Oh, Lindsay, I just don’t know what to do. I see now why you have been concerned about my knowing the future.”

Lindsay sat up straight. “What happened?”

“That stock fraud—the one you warned me about. Well, I’ve discovered that Bryce is involved. And my friend Alan plans to invest—maybe has already! It’s all due to come out in about six months.”

“Ooh, that’s bad,” Lindsay said. “I hope Alan can afford to lose the money.”

“He can’t! He’s struggling as it is. And worse—he trusts Bryce.”

“Wait a sec—this is the same Bryce who’s ‘courting’ you?”

“Yes.” Lucy’s voice sounded very weak, as if admitting this was difficult. “If I warn Alan, I’m sure Bryce will find out I was the one who told him. Which means it will be over forever between us.”

Lindsay frowned. “Lucy, you can’t actually want to stick with Bryce after knowing he’s willing to cheat his friend!”

There was a pause. “Well, they’re not friends. Not exactly.”

“You’re kidding me.”

“Don’t be angry, Lindsay,” Lucy pleaded. “You, of all people, you should understand how hard I’ve worked to secure financial means. If I could marry Bryce, well . . . Bryce isn’t just rich, he’s one of the wealthiest young men in New York! His family is prominent, connected. I’d never have to worry about being poor ever again!”

Lindsay shut her eyes. Lucy was right; she did understand. Being without money, without options—it changed everything.

“Lindsay? Are you there?”

“Well, what do you want to do?” Lindsay asked.

“That’s just it; I don’t know. I just don’t know.”

“When you first read the news, what was your very first reaction?”

“To warn Alan.”

“Then I think that’s what you’ve got to do. That was your instinct—and that’s what’s usually right.”

“Then it’s over forever with Bryce.”

“I guess so.”

“I—I just don’t know. . . .” Lucy’s voice trailed off.

“What happens if you don’t tell?” Lindsay asked.

“Alan invests and loses his money, and Bryce and I can go on as if this never happened.”

“Can you do that? Go on like you never knew? I think I wouldn’t be able to hang out with Alan anymore.”

“That’s probably true. It would be too difficult to be around Alan and not say something. Or to watch him as his investment fails.”

“I guess you have to decide which would be worse: giving up Bryce or giving up Alan.”

“Yes,” Lucy said, an odd sound in her voice. “I guess it all does come down to that.”

Lucy walked along the river. The wind from the water made the already-cool evening quite cold, but she welcomed

its bracing effect: she needed it to clear her head.

She had just left Riverview Hospital. Without telling Alan how she knew, she'd warned him to not invest in Bryce's Carmichael plan.

She turned away from the river; the wind was making her eyes tear. What should she do about Bryce? Turn him in? Try to stop him? Her pace picked up, and she rubbed her arms, trying to get warm. Her face felt frozen. *Maybe he has no idea. Maybe Bryce is just as much a victim as everyone else.*

Astonishing. Neither she nor Lindsay had ever entertained the idea that Bryce was innocent.

The sight of the impressive Cavanagh mansion, looming ominously in the dark, made Lucy nervous. Always intimidating, it now seemed positively malevolent.

The houseman had her wait in the hallway, then finally led her to a parlor.

"Lucy, you seem to be developing a rather inconvenient habit of simply turning up," Bryce complained. "I'm due to meet some of my college chums."

"I won't take long. I'm here to tell you that I have information—crucial information—about the Carmichael stock deal."

"Oh, really?" He smirked. "Don't tell me—your spirits have forecast a windfall. Well, I could have predicted that!"

"No, Bryce, the prediction is that it is all a fraud."

His expression shifted from smug to wary. “Take care what you say.”

“I know all about it.” She tried to remember details from the article. “A Mr. Von Clare is involved. Why do I know that name?”

“He was at your séance. He’s how I came to be there.”

Of course, Lucy thought, *that superior little man who mocked me*. “It was Von Clare’s idea and he brought you into it,” she said. “Have you gone in with him yet?”

Bryce smiled. “Certainly. It’s a delicious plan.”

That told her all she needed to know. Bryce understood every element of this scheme: every angle, every heartbreaking theft of hard-earned funds.

“You and your cronies inflated the value,” Lucy said, dredging up every sentence of the article. “But your little group sold out just before it came to light that—”

“How do you know all this?” Bryce demanded. “And why are you talking about it as if it’s already happened?”

“I know. That’s enough.”

“You’re ridiculous. You know nothing about business.” He laughed. “Besides, only suckers get taken.”

“I know about cheats,” Lucy fumed. “You are no better than any of the con artists I’ve known—and I’ve known plenty. You just have nicer clothes, are well fed, and have pretty manners. At least the cons have a reason to cheat—they need some way to survive. But you! You’re already

richer than most people. And you're cheating people just because you can."

Bryce grabbed her arm and flung her out of the parlor, slamming the door on her. She stood and stared at the mahogany, so highly polished she could see her blurred reflection, knowing the door was closed to her forever.

Twenty-eight

Shouldn't I be upset? Lucy examined her face in her vanity mirror. Yesterday she'd ruined her chances with Bryce Cavanagh and at a life in high society. Yet for the first time in two days, she had a powerful appetite. No, she wasn't upset at all. Far from it.

Tossing down a handkerchief, she stood and gazed out the window onto Washington Square. Would Mrs. Van Wyck ask her to leave now that Lucy had fallen out of favor with the Cavanaghs? Lucy traced the fog on the window with her finger, drawing a snaking pattern. *Unlikely.* Mrs. Van Wyck enjoyed Lucy's company and was convinced it was her presence that kept any ghosts or poltergeists at bay.

Lucy rang the bell for Bridget.

"Yes?" Bridget asked as she entered. "Ready for your lacing?"

Lucy nodded and turned so that Bridget could tie the laces for her corset. "Gentleman was here to see you," Bridget said, tugging the cords.

Lucy felt a tightening in her stomach that had nothing to do with the whalebone-and-cotton corset. *Bryce?* she worried. Had he come here to berate her? To beg her forgiveness?

She had no idea what she would say to him.

“A queer old fellow,” Bridget continued, giving another yank. “Little round man.”

“Oh,” Lucy said. “Mr. Smithton.” Bridget patted her on the hip, and Lucy turned around and raised her arms. Bridget lowered the dress onto Lucy. “Is he still here?” Lucy asked from within the fabric folds. She pushed her head through the opening.

Bridget arranged the dress around Lucy’s form, flouncing, straightening, and fluffing as Lucy worked the many buttons. “No, he said he didn’t want to disturb you and to just give you a note.” She pulled a piece of paper from her pocket.

“Thank you, Bridget.”

Bridget left, and Lucy perched on her bed to read the note.

As you instructed, I have bought a suitable property for your very worthy enterprise. We can build on your endowment through subscriptions, like any other charity. I would like to be your first benefactor and have therefore increased the amount of money invested with a contribution of my own. The spirits are well served by your good and kind nature, dear girl.

Lucy’s eyes welled with tears. “I’m not that good,” she murmured. “But maybe this will help fix all the harm we did to Lindsay.”

She tucked the note into her bag and hurried to finish getting ready. She had things to do.

“I’m surprised to see you again so soon.” Alan gestured for Lucy to take the chair in his office. “I hope there hasn’t been any . . . unpleasantness with Bryce. I assume you did tell him that you had warned me off the investment.”

“Yes. And he and I are no longer keeping company.”

“Ah. I hope that isn’t too disappointing to you.”

Lucy smiled. “I’ve discovered that I don’t actually seem to mind.”

Alan smiled back. “I’m glad. I’d hate to be the cause of any pain to you.”

Lucy looked at him, thinking how happy she was that she wouldn’t have to end her friendship with him. He flushed under her scrutiny, and she realized she’d been admiring the curve of his lips, noticing the shape of his eyes. Now she also blushed.

“There’s something I want to talk to you about,” Lucy said, breaking the moment. “I would like your help with a . . . project of mine.”

“I don’t know what help I’d be communicating with the spirit world,” Alan said. “I often have difficulty communicating with the people right in front of me.”

“I have done something, something big,” Lucy said. “I hope it’s going to work. I can’t do it myself. I don’t . . . know enough. Maybe Harriet will help me too.”

“What is it?”

“I have invested well,” Lucy explained. “And I’ve asked my adviser to use all my money to create a place for girls.

Girls like Katie, who have nowhere to go but don't want to go to a mission. Everything you talk about. And Harriet talks about. Well, I've done it!" Excited laughter poured out of her. She was having trouble sitting still.

Alan stared at her. "You what?"

Lucy tried to catch her breath, but her words came out as gasps. "I have opened the Phillips Girls Center! Well, not exactly opened it," Lucy said, finally breathing properly. "I've bought the building, and now I need people to actually help the girls."

"How extraordinary!" he cried.

Lucy laughed again, and now Alan laughed with her.

"I can't believe . . . It's just astonishing. I would never have guessed . . ."

"That I could be so charitable?" Lucy asked, but her eyes twinkled.

"No, no. Well, yes." Alan grinned at her. "I'm terribly glad I was wrong. I had a feeling about you. From the start. You were . . . are . . . different from anyone I've known. Much more surprising."

"Will you help me? I don't know if I can pay you—I'll have to ask Mr. Smithton about things like that."

"Of course I'll help you. And I'm certain Harriet will too."

"I'm so glad. I don't think I would have considered it without knowing you and hoping you'd be on my side."

“I’m honored.”

“Now I have a very strange favor to ask you,” Lucy said.

“Name it.”

“First you must promise not to ask me any questions.”

Alan’s forehead furrowed as he looked at her, puzzled. “All right,” he said slowly.

“Do you know the saloon on Seventh Street? It’s known as McSorley’s?”

“It’s a favorite among students.” He grinned. “So I’ve heard.”

“That’s all right; I won’t ask you any questions either,” Lucy teased. She pulled a card out of her pocket with the address for the future Phillips Girls Center. She held it out to Alan. “I need you to go to that saloon. Put this card in an envelope and slip it between the icebox and the wall. Make sure it is near enough to pull out but not visible. Don’t let anyone see you.”

Alan took the card. “You’re right. This is a strange favor. But I’ll do it.”

“Thank you.”

Now all she could do was hope that the Phillips Girls Center still existed in Lindsay’s time.

“I know you’re in there!”

Lindsay covered her ears, trying to block out the sound of the pounding on the door, the hotel manager’s gruff voice. It didn’t work.

“Pay up today if you want that room any longer!”

Lindsay rolled over on the bed, huddling into the nest she'd made of her spare clothes. It had grown colder and colder the last few nights, a real autumn cold snap. At least her stomach had stopped growling. This was the second day she'd gone without eating.

What was she going to do? Lindsay was certain Tanya would lend her money, but that meant risking a call to the house or showing up at the school. Her mom might have called Tanya again, knowing that Lindsay was still out on her own.

“You're in or you're out, kid,” the manager shouted. “Just like everyone else in this place.”

Lindsay stood slowly to keep from getting too dizzy.

“Lindsay!”

She startled. “Lucy?”

“Lindsay, you have to go to McSorley's. I left you an address. I want you to go there.”

“What?”

“I told you,” the manager shouted. “Pay up or get out!”

“They might be able to help you. I hope they can. Go to the address on the card.”

“I can't talk now,” Lindsay said. She didn't want the manager to think she had someone in the room with her.

“Oh. Well, don't forget. And tell me what happens.”

Lindsay opened the door.

“Do you have someone in there with you?” the manager demanded.

Lindsay opened the door wide, stepping aside so he could peer in. “Nope.”

“So, are you going to pay for the next week?”

“I—I have to go get the money. Give me until the end of the day, all right?”

The manager looked at her, then shrugged. “Till the end of the day. But that’s it.”

“Thank you.”

The manager trundled down the hall, and soon Lindsay heard him pounding on someone else’s door upstairs. She grabbed Tanya’s coat and headed for McSorley’s.

How would Lucy have an address for anything in the twenty-first century? And what had happened last night with Bryce Cavanaugh and Alan Wordsworth? What had Lucy decided to do?

Inside, the place was nearly empty. She dropped down and reached into the dark, dusty space between the fridge and the wall. She pulled out an envelope and inside found a card.

“‘Phillips Girls Center,’” she read. The address was on Saint Marks Place, around the corner. Why would Lucy want her to go there? Then she realized. Phillips. That was Lucy’s last name. *This just gets stranger.*

Lindsay stood unsteadily and slipped the card into her jeans pocket. She had nothing to lose; might as well check it out.

A small plaque on the door told her the address was still the Phillips Girls Center. Little bells jangled as Lindsay walked into the compact four-story brownstone.

A girl with a nose stud and pitch-black hair streaked with magenta and midnight blue glanced up from a messy desk. She put down a magazine and smiled. "What can I do for you?"

"I don't really know," Lindsay admitted. "I don't know what you do here."

"How'd you hear about us?" the girl asked.

Lindsay fingered the card Lucy had sent her from the past. "A friend."

"I think you should talk to intake." The girl picked up a phone, pushed a button, and said, "Newbie." She hung up and smiled. "Don't look so scared. We've all been there. Most of us, anyway."

Lindsay nodded, still not understanding where she was, what Lucy had in mind, but it was better than being outside.

"Sit if you want," the girl said, nodding toward a worn sofa. "Molly will be out in a minute."

"Who's Molly?" Lindsay asked.

"She runs the place. I'm Chandar, by the way."

"Lindsay."

"Settle, Lindsay," Chandar said. "Nothing here to freak you."

"Okay." Lindsay sat on the sofa and leafed through a three-

month-old magazine. She glanced at Chandar. “So, what is this place?”

Chandar laughed. “Wow. You just go wherever your friend tells you? Don’t go all huffy,” she added, waving a hand. “It’s just that most people arrive here with a list of demands.”

“What kind of demands?” Lindsay asked.

“Give them money, let them live here, fix the ozone layer. Stuff like that.”

“So what *do* you do?”

“You hungry?” Chandar asked.

“Yes.”

“Well, here’s one thing we can do.” Chandar got up and went to a large fridge. “How’s a chicken burrito? We just got a donation from a neighborhood Mexican restaurant.”

Lindsay had to restrain herself from grabbing Chandar in a bear hug. “That would be great.”

Chandar popped a packet into a microwave, and in three minutes Lindsay was scarfing down a cheesy burrito.

A short, slightly chunky woman in her twenties appeared in the reception area. Lindsay had been so focused on her burrito that she never noticed the woman approach. It was as if she simply appeared by magic.

“Hello, I’m Molly Skinner,” the woman said. She had long, thick wavy hair she held clipped back from her face with little rhinestone-studded combs. Her wide face made Lindsay think of full moons and smiley-face icons. “What can we do

for you?” She plopped down beside Lindsay on the sofa.

“I don’t know,” Lindsay admitted.

“I see Chandar has given you something to eat. That’s a start, right?”

“I guess. . . .”

“You’ve never been here before. Let me give you the tour.”

“Okay.”

Lindsay followed Molly as she guided her through the building. “Down here we have the community rooms for group events. The kitchen, some offices.” They climbed a flight of stairs, and Molly kept up a nonstop patter. “We have girls ranging from young teens, say, thirteen, to young women in their early twenties who need a helping hand. There are some rules, but we don’t think they’re too hard to live with.”

She led Lindsay out onto the next floor. “These are all private offices for medical exams”—she glanced at Lindsay—“which I recommend, and the one-on-one counseling rooms. We have a gynecologist on staff—she’s in with someone right now, so I can’t introduce you—and there’s a GP on call. We have two psychologists and a social worker, other than me, and they all have offices here.”

She brought Lindsay to another floor, which had several rooms set up with computers, with girls sitting at the keyboards. “This is for tutoring, studying. Girls getting their GEDs, learning computer skills, stuff that will help them get jobs, even go to college, use these rooms.”

On the next floor, Lindsay peeked into a dorm room.

“Short-term only,” Molly said. “This may be a haven—that’s how I think of it—but it’s not a shelter. We try to find housing, jobs, all that, but there’s only so much we can do. This is a place where girls who want better than what they’ve got can come and we do all we can to help them.”

“Wow,” Lindsay murmured. “She really was worried about me.”

“Who?”

“The person who sent me here.”

“Let’s do an official intake,” Molly said.

Inside Molly’s office it was small and crowded but full of homey touches: a comfy armchair with a soft afghan, a small sofa with mismatched pillows, stuffed animals on the shelves, and lots of books. Molly sat behind the desk and gestured for Lindsay to take the armchair.

On the wall behind Molly was an oil portrait of a young woman in an old-fashioned dress. A little bronze plaque on the bottom of the dark frame read *Lucy Phillips Wordsworth*.

Molly smiled. “You’re looking at our founder.”

Lindsay’s eyes stayed riveted on the face. *That’s her. She’s totally real.*

The painting was cracked, giving the youthful face wrinkles, and seemed to be slightly coated with years of grime. The painter had made the skin luminous against what had probably been a dark background even when fresh. The girl

looked straight at the viewer, and even though her mouth was serious, she seemed to have a glint in her blue eyes, as if she thought posing for a portrait was absurd but amusing.

She chose the truth, Lindsay realized, and she wound up marrying Alan.

“So, what can we do for you?”

Lindsay finally stopped staring at the painting and looked at Molly. “I have no idea,” she confessed.

“Well, would you like to shower?”

Lindsay’s throat tightened, so she just nodded.

“Come on,” Molly said, standing. “I know I always think better after a nice hot shower. In fact, it’s where I do my best thinking.”

She led Lindsay back upstairs to a locker room. She opened a locker and pulled out towels, then another one full of clothes. “If you’d like to change, these are all clean. You should be able to find something your size.”

Lindsay clutched the scratchy, bright white towel, smelling the bleach.

“Soap and shampoo are in the showers.” Molly looked at her. “Do you think you’ll be able to find your way back to my office?”

“Yes,” Lindsay said, wondering why she was whispering.

“In a few.” Molly went out, and Lindsay stood staring at the open lockers, already imagining how the water would feel.

A few minutes later, Lindsay sat facing the painting. She had transferred the card into a pocket of the new pair of jeans.

“So, I’m guessing you’re in trouble,” Molly said. “Maybe on the street. Possibly using—”

“No,” Lindsay said, shaking her still-damp hair. “I hate drugs.”

Molly looked at her. “Well, all I wanted to say was if you are and you want to get off, we have resources, But there are things we don’t actually pry into. The girls we help have to be proactive. We have rules and boundaries, but we don’t tell you which of our programs to utilize.”

“I hate drugs,” Lindsay insisted. “Alcohol too.”

“So, Lindsay, what do you want to tell me about yourself? That will give me an idea of what we might be able to do for you.”

Lindsay nodded. Nodded again. She looked up to Lucy’s portrait. Her eyes never leaving Lucy’s face, the words suddenly came out in a torrent. Her mother’s drinking. The Husband. The fights. Molly asked questions so gently and unobtrusively that Lindsay barely registered them as questions. She just kept talking.

“I ran away from a hospital.”

When she said that, the words stopped.

Molly nodded. “What had you been hospitalized for? An injury?”

“I called my mom day before yesterday,” Lindsay said.

“She doesn’t want me to come home. She wants him more than she wants me. I can’t go there.”

“No, it sounds like that isn’t a safe place for you.”

“I never finished my paper for Mr. Nunez.” Lindsay started to cry. “It was my favorite class. But he thinks I’m crazy now, and I’m not. I’m not.”

Molly’s face remained neutral.

“I know that’s what crazy people always say,” Lindsay continued. “But I swear. Really.”

Molly tapped her pencil on the pad. “Do you want to tell me what happened?”

Lindsay swallowed and slumped in her chair. *I should have kept my mouth shut.* She cleared her throat. “Someone stole my money and my ATM card,” she said. “I was afraid to go into the bank and I didn’t have any ID. So I can’t pay the hotel bill.”

“Any girl staying here must be seen by Michael. He’s the psychologist. We have to be sure we aren’t putting the other girls in danger.”

“They said I was schizophrenic, but I’m not!” Lindsay blurted. “They tried different pills and they didn’t work; they just made me really dopey and stupid. The other kids—I saw how it worked for them. But not me.”

“What brought you to the hospital?” Molly asked.

“I freaked out. I—I thought I was hearing voices, and I know that’s a really bad sign. But I don’t anymore.” She kept

focused on Molly and avoided Lucy's painted eyes.

"Hmm. Thank you for telling me this, Lindsay. But you're still going to have to see Michael if you want to stay here. And it's only a temporary fix. Because you are underage, there are also certain legal requirements we must follow."

"Okay." Lindsay figured it was a good sign that Molly didn't just automatically toss her out.

Molly picked up the phone and hit some numbers. "So how busy are you?" she said into it. "Great. I'm sending someone in to see you."

Lindsay woke up in a dorm-style room listening to two girls arguing about Ludacris versus 50 Cent. Someone snored, and someone else shushed the two music critics. She stretched, a long, catlike, contented stretch, and gazed up at the ceiling.

As soon as she'd been given permission to stay, Lindsay had gone back to the hotel for her stuff and to tell the manager he could have his smelly old room back. Still, it had been tough saying goodbye to that room, as horrible as the hours spent there had been. *Not all of them*, she reminded herself. There were times she had felt safe, even if only for a little while, and there were the soothing hours of teaching Lucy to read.

Lucy. How was she going to talk to Lucy? She had called to her while she was in the room, but there had been no answer. *We can find another place. Maybe even here*, she thought, sitting up on the cot. *Lucy must spend time here.*

But she couldn't risk anyone overhearing her ever again. She'd find some other way to contact Lucy.

A bell rang and the girls filed down to breakfast. There were six, including Lindsay, ranging from an Asian girl who spoke no English to a pushy, talkative nineteen-year-old named Jillian who reminded Lindsay of Haley. Lindsay sat by a girl with multiple piercings and tattoos who very quickly told Lindsay she'd been clean for a whole month, didn't want it, didn't need it, and was Lindsay gonna eat that toast?

After breakfast the girls scattered, some to school, some to jobs, and Lindsay was left alone with Chandar, the receptionist.

"The first day Molly and Michael want you to hang out while they work with you on your 'life plan,'" Chandar explained. "Some of that is going to be seriously boring, and sometimes it seems like a big waste of time, but give it a shot. I did."

"You came here too?" Lindsay asked.

"Oh yeah. I was hard-core twisted up. But the wack thing with Molly is that even though she looks like a cupcake and sometimes sounds like Dr. Phil in a dumpy dress, she's actually cool. On a super-deep level."

"She seems nice," Lindsay said. "Michael too."

Chandar shrugged. "He's okay, I guess. I hate all that shrink stuff. All that 'tell me your *feelings*' crap."

"I know what you mean. I kind of got sick of talking about myself yesterday."

“Well, today you’re going to be doing just as much talking, but you’re also going to have to be filling out loads of forms. Molly’s cool, but she’s still a bureaucrat.” She laughed.

“Are you complaining about me again?” Molly said, coming into the building.

“Of course! Just warning Lindsay she better warm up her writing muscles.”

“Sad but true,” Molly said, taking off her coat. “You look good,” she added, scanning Lindsay.

“Thanks for letting me stay here.”

“Michael in yet?” Molly asked, flipping through the messages on Chandar’s desk.

“Before me, even.”

“Come on,” Molly said to Lindsay. “Let’s go talk to Michael.”

“Good morning, Lindsay,” Michael greeted her as she entered his office. He was quite tall, with a sharp, beaklike nose. “Sleep all right?”

“Yes, thank you.”

“So we’d like to start setting up a plan for Lindsay,” Molly said. “Which means starting with Michael’s assessment,” she added to Lindsay.

Lindsay’s stomach clenched. *Here goes.*

“Just one conversation isn’t enough for me to really know what’s going on,” Michael said. “What I’d like is for Lindsay to agree to see me on a regular basis and to sign some forms

that would give me permission to discuss her case with the doctors who saw her at Riverview.”

“I know what they’re going to tell you,” Lindsay said. “So I guess I can’t stay here.” She stood.

“Why does every girl who comes in here think she can read my mind?” Michael asked Molly. “And predict the future?”

“It’s a symptom of being a teenager,” Molly said.

“Lindsay, why don’t you sit down and listen?”

Lindsay sank back down into the chair.

Michael leaned back, hands clasped behind his head. “What I actually think is that you were misdiagnosed. So I’d like to see what meds they had you on, get more-detailed information about your sessions from them, and also get to know you better.”

“You believe me?” Lindsay asked in a hoarse whisper. “That I’m not really crazy?”

“I’m not going to make the mistake of giving you a quickie diagnosis, and I will say that given the circumstances, they did everything right. But I think if you’d been there longer or were able to move into an outpatient setting away from your mother and stepfather, they might also have come around to a different conclusion.”

“You see, sometimes for a girl in an extreme home situation like yours,” Molly added, “stress can create all kinds of behaviors. Symptoms. Cries for help or just coping skills that look really strange to outsiders. It is possible *that’s* what your

voices were. A way to deal with what was going on at home that you felt you couldn't tell anyone else."

"So I heard her because I needed her?" Lindsay asked, the words coming slowly as their significance became more and more clear. There was a reason she and Lucy had made contact after all.

Twenty-nine

Lindsay and Tanya sat at the computer terminals in the East Village library. Lindsay had filled Tanya in on everything she'd found out at the Phillips Center—that she might be able to get reclassified, that they would help her become an emancipated minor if that's what she wanted to do. They also said they'd help her try to track down relatives on her father's side if she wanted to go that route while looking into foster care.

They had given her permission to stay a full week as long as she let them inform her mother. Because Carl had never hurt her, they weren't required to report him to the police, although they did say that if Melanie ever needed help, they could hook her up with the appropriate agencies. Lindsay wasn't going to hold her breath on that.

"They're calling her now," she told Tanya. "And once I have a game plan, I'll call her myself. You won't have to feel like I'm your big secret anymore."

"I'm just glad you're okay," Tanya said. "And it's so cool that you saw a picture of Lucy Phillips."

"You should come check it out," Lindsay said. "I'm allowed visitors during certain hours."

“Definitely. And she married the doc, not the rich dude.”

Lindsay nodded. “She took a big risk. I guess it paid off.”

“Ooh—let’s see if she had kids!”

Tanya pulled up the genealogy site they had used to try to find out information about Lucy’s mother.

“Check this out!” Tanya exclaimed.

Lindsay leaned over her friend’s arm to look at the screen. “She named her girl Lindsay!”

Lindsay’s eyes welled up. “That’s awesome.”

“They named one of their boys Alan,” Tanya read. “Makes sense. One Beau—”

“That’s her dad,” Lindsay interrupted.

“But here’s a weird name. Smithton. Poor kid. I bet he got beat up every day at school for that one.”

Tanya scrolled through lists of names, and Lindsay noticed that as the years grew closer to their own, little bios were included.

“Hey, see if it tells who’s been on the board of the Phillips Center. Molly said that there’s always a member of the family on the board.”

“Sure.”

Lindsay watched the list of names, all leading back toward Lucy. A name appeared and she gripped Tanya’s arm. “Slow down,” she gasped. “Go back.”

“Are you okay?” Tanya asked.

“Oh my God,” Lindsay said. She pointed to the screen.

“That’s my so-called dad’s mother. And right there is my so-called dad!”

“And there’s you,” Tanya whispered.

Lindsay gaped at the computer, then turned and faced Tanya, whose eyes were huge with wonder. “That means Lucy Phillips is my great-to-the-third-power-granny!”

Lucy paced outside the Old House at Home saloon, better known as McSorley’s. She just had to know if Lindsay had retrieved the card. She had tried over and over to reach Lindsay at the boardinghouse but had never gotten a response.

Alan came out with a perplexed expression on his face. “How strange,” he said. “There was a note, just as you hoped. But also this.” He held up the oddest piece of paper. It was an ornate bill of some sort, a grayish green. “It seems to be some sort of currency,” he said, “but not like any I’ve ever seen. It must be a kind of joke.”

Lucy looked at the note in her hand. She wished she could share this amazing secret with Alan but knew it was better not to, though perhaps someday, when she understood it all better, she could.

Dear Lucy,

Thank you. I went to the Phillips Girls Center, and it is wonderful. It is still up and running. You obviously left it in very good hands.

I now know why we were able to communicate,

but in the interests of science-fiction fans everywhere . . .

Lucy looked up at Alan. "Science fiction?"

Alan shrugged. "I have no idea."

She went back to reading:

. . . in the interest of science-fiction fans everywhere (and because my best friend, Tanya, made me swear), I'm not going to tell you. There is all this worry about changing history. You changed mine, but for the better. It is safest to just leave it at that.

I've sent you money from my time. You won't be able to use it; in fact, you shouldn't show it to anyone.

Lucy glanced at Alan guiltily, then back at the paper.

Think of it as a souvenir of your visits to the future.

Love, Lindsay

Lucy smiled as she slipped the note into her pocket. She had a feeling this was the very last contact she was going to have with Lindsay. It was like Mr. Smithton said: the spirits contacted her for a reason. The first thing Lucy ever heard Lindsay say was "Help me." She'd done just that. Lindsay didn't need her anymore.

"You look like the Cheshire cat, grinning so mysteriously," Alan teased. "Twice now I've been your accomplice in

something. It would be nice if you would tell me what.”

Lucy smiled at him. “Yes, it would be nice. But I’m not going to. Not right now, anyway.”

“Perhaps I’ll worm it out of you eventually.”

Lucy shrugged. “Perhaps. Even I can’t always predict what’s going to happen.”

“Well, thank goodness for that!” Alan said, slipping his arm through hers. “It would be terrible if there were no surprises.”

