**Elsie**

"I saw them again" said Elsie breathlessly, almost afraid to hear her self speak.  
  
"You saw no such thing, besides you mustn't make up stories, are you trying to scare Addie" said Susan  
"I'm not scared" said Addie the youngest, and blondest of the three sisters, "why would i be scared even if it wasn't make believe?"  
  
  
Then more quietly she followed up quickly with" where did you see them at?" Then looked around nervously, a few minutes ago the late fall afternoon had seemed full of color and beauty, but now the evening shadows creeping over the forest made her slide closer to Susan  as a tinge of fear creeped up her spine.  
  
"Well" elsie started then paused looking out at the small creek running swiftly by them, " it was" she stopped again Well go on" said Susan, in a rather Adult sounding tone.  
  
Well elsie began again reluctantly then , suddenly spilled out in a torrent, blurted out "past Lana's glen in the pine forest above it."  
  
"Elsie grace Simmons!" Susan burst out "above the glen? You went to the cairns again after father told you not too" you know better then that! What were you thinking!"  
  
"Fathers not going to find out" Elsie responded with a pointed look at her older sister. "It's not like I'm a baby I can take care of myself and I wanted to take a picture of them so that everyone will stop teasing me and saying i make up stories."  
  
people in Sunday school can talk about something else besides crazy Elsie" Elsie Simons sitting in a tree kissing..  
First comes love then comes marriage The come a psychiatrist  
 to take away the baby carriage  one cause shes crazy  
  
"What a stupid song it doesn't even rhyme. "  
  
"Just ignore it he made it up to get your attention, and it is a little bit funny"  
  
"Well they are just teasing and besides it's your fault your the one always bringing it up. If you didn't insist on acting like you believe your wild tales you wouldn't get teased." Susan said  
  
Elsie tried to hold her tongue but couldn't, "there not wild tales I saw something up there i know it."  
  
Anyways you shouldn't go up there I don't believe your stories at all but it's dangerous up by the cairn thats where the potter boy disappeared a couple years ago. And there Are lots of other strange stories and legends about that place" said Susan  
  
"Oh please, it's perfectly safe that's just a rumor and besides I've seen them and they are beautiful and friendly." She paused unwilling to go on.  
  
Elsie bit her lip as she sat thinking and gazing out at the soft evening sunlight that filtered through the autumn leaves. making patches of sun and shade That played with each other on the surface of the creek  
That danced upon the ground.  
that seemed to be playing with each other on the surface of the creek and upon the ground around them.  
  
The three girls sat in silence only broken by the gentle creek tumbling slowly down to the sea and the light evening breeze that caused the leaves to gently bend and twist (in the evening sun) causing a kaleidoscope of shadow and sun. trying to hold into their summer glory when they were strong and green.  
  
Eventually Susan looked over at her sister not quite sure what to say her imagination was maybe a little too active, but she really seemed to believe her latest stories.  
  
She decided to change the subject and ground it back in reality, "of course Some people say the potter boy just ran away to sea, and i wouldnt blame him id run away too if father had as much ear hair as mr potter. All the girls laughed.  
  
  
  
I suppose we should feel sorry for him Elsie said.  
Yes that's true said Susan feeling bad about her joke... I have only seen him twice but he sure looked mean all hunched over and dressed in black with his cane and top hat. She shuddered at the thought of the Mean looking old man she had seen in the city.  
  
Even hunched over he towered over me.  
  
I bet he would have tried to hit me with his cane if I had gotten close enough Susan said. He looks like the kind of old man that would swing his cane at kids.  
  
  
i heard he was strict and cold always demanding."and his father was into the dark arts  
  
Mother said that their boy was strikingly good looking almost beautiful she said she never did see how he was related to old mr potter.  
  
Yes and he was wild I heard, young Bacchus was his nickname.  
  
I tried to ask her more about him one night but she wouldn't say anything else about it.  
  
Well Susan said trying to convince herself, "Everyone  knows he ran away to sea" so there is nothing to worry about"  
  
Hmm Elsie said pensively i dont know what to believe but that does make more sense then some of the more wild stories and besides I don't think anything up at the cairn is dangerous just beautiful and strange so if he went some where he probably wanted to."  
  
"That's n, n, not what you said when you saw them the last week before October last year All Hallows' eve when you said you saw them right by our house on the way home, you said they were dark shadows that glided beneath the trees you heard them whisper" Addie said as she slipped her nervous hand into Susan's.  
  
You said you saw shadows gliding beneath the trees.  
  
  
"maybe we should head home it's getting late and chilly. " Susan said not wanting to show she too was getting nervous.  
  
Yes let's said Elsie feeling the skin on her neck prickle with fear "Yes but that want Them it was the Others did day that but I think it was my imagination, and we should get home remember father said he was gonna make us a treat"  
  
I hope it's lavender ice cream Addie said, ohh interjected Susan I hope it's fudge with chocolate sauce  
"I hope it's not burnt" Elsie said and the girls all laughed at the memory of smoke pouring out the kitchen into the house at their fathers last attempt at backing.  
  
They remembered the last time he made them a treat and cooked it an hour too long both the other girls laughed at the memory of the smoke pouring from the kitchen. Yes I suppose mothers a better cook  
  
Move up in story  
Susan put on her light blue woven sweater, brrr she said it is getting cold faster.  
  
Yes and it's getting darker quicker Elsie said looking out at the sun as it seemed to be hurrying across the sky to hide behind the mountains. I wish summer would go on for ever everyone could live in the woods and hills like the elves and the fairies.  
  
I don't think you'd like that Susan said. Don't you like the fall and carving jack I lanterns and what about winter? don't you like the snow and sledding and night hikes with father through the snow as the bright moon turns the whole evening world to a strange light.  
  
As the moon Sets the whole evening aglow with strange lights.  
  
I don't think you'd like that Susan said. Don't you like the snow? And fall and carving jack o lanterns and sledding and seeing night hikes with father through the snow as the bright moon turns the whole evening world to a strange light.  
  
Yes I suppose your right Elsie said.  
  
And besides Susan said reverting back to a slightly superior tone, those stories about elves are not very realistic, a bunch of elves always feasting in the woods.  
  
It's not very practical said Susan.  
  
Think of the economics the whole picture of elves is all demand no supply. Prices would sky rocket.  
  
Ughh Elsie said your always so practical. Who cares about supply and demand when all you have to do is dance beneath the twilight and feast with the king.  
  
I suppose I have been reading too much economics and math lately. Have you ever heard of a giffen good? It's a bit fanciful but scholars think the Irish potatoe might in fact be one quite wondrous to dream about.  
And besides Susan said reverting back to a slightly superior tone, It's not very practical. I was reading my economic theory book about the role of governmental restrictions and their affect on production  
  
Elsie rolled her eyes as she  cut her sister off  
  
oh su, really?  
  
We have 24 days and she paused thinking, and fourteen hours tell school can we try really hard not to learn anything until then.  
  
Because I'd rather dunk my head in the toilet then read boring economics.  
  
Well that seems a little dramatic Susan said. What would even p you make you say that or think that.  
Then smiled a mischievous smile as she replied is that how you do your hair in the morning get it wet in the toilet then frizz it up like a wild man?  
  
Wild woman Elsie corrected her and what if i do it still looks better then the unruly mess you have.  
  
Addie giggled as Susan responded  
  
Elsie smiled well we all know you have the best hair.  
  
  
And besides she said her voice rising a little you tease me for dreaming of fairys and elves and forgotten kingdoms and then you talk about a legendary potatoe, please!  
  
Ok Susan laughed. When I'm a lord in the House of Commons I just might let you come visit me. Or maybe ill give you a job, someone will have to keep my house tidy. She laughed at her own joke.  
  
Elsie replied I can see it now on the front page of every newspaper, the world waits in awe as dignitaries and scientists wait for a glimpse of the the long thought legendary potatoe which has been discovered.  
  
Addie giggled at her older sisters, and Susan said I'm just kidding else, she slipped her arm around her younger sister. She thought maybe she was teasing her a little too much she knew how tender hearted and caring and sensitive Elsie was thought she hid it well.  
  
They heard something in the bushes and all looked nervously, suddenly remembering their precious conversation. I suppose we should be getting going Elsie said.  
  
It's just a deer Elsie said see it over in the bushes.  
  
The three sisters stood up and began to walk up the grassy bank away from the gentle stream with its small pebbles that the water endlessly  danced and played around as it slowly tumbled to the sea. By the time they got back to the dirt path that lead to their house the twilight was over taking the gentle autumn sun and casting longer and darker shadows across the woods.  
  
 They hurried through the twilight  
Back home along the small path that winded through the woods.  
They all felt relieved when they saw the soft (warm and gentle) light of the windows in their house up ahead.  
There father was out pretending to work but it was obvious he was just waiting for them to get back when he saw them he burst into a big smile,  
  
Hello my little button he said, scooping up Addie into a great big hug.  
And what were my three big girls up to today?  
"We went up to the creek" "we saw a fish!" "We found a grassy meadow with a stream in it!" "I saw a unicorn!" They all burst out at once.  
  
"A unicorn"there father said to Addie who he was now carrying up to the house in a piggyback ride.  
Well it might not have been a Unicorn Susan said we didn't exactly see a horn."  
Maybe it was a white horse their father replied  
Yes well it was a little larger then a horse Elsie added.  
And it wasn't quite as graceful as a horse Susan added  
it said moo, it was a cow" Addie finished  as they all Laughed.  
  
"Well you never know what strange creatures you might see roaming about, the world is a big wide place, why just the other night I was outside paddys pub and,"  
"father!" Susan cut in  
"And I saw a great big dragon their father finished clearly changing his story and smiling at Susan.  
  
Susan had heard a story going around school about something a visiting and very drunk sailor had got up to outside the pub. He was locked up over night and when he sobered up he was quite remorseful. (I'm afraid if I told you what he was up to your parents might not let you read this book).  
  
Their father was a tall good looking man with dark hair and a kind disposition.  He had a rugged youth and though now a wealthy gentleman he never forgot his humble beginnings. He loved his girls and if he had a weakness it was that he spoiled them. But it hadnt gone to their heads and since they stayed grounded he saw no reason to stop.  
Their parents could not have been in anymore love and Susan could see why her father was so on live with their mother she had never seen anyone so pretty. As she had gotten older she began to notice some secret buried between the two of them it showed itself on rare occasions as a faint sadness that punctuated thier joy  but it was moments few and far between usually quickly ending with their father engaging in some roguish behavior and their mother smiling "oh Charles"  
  
She thought the secret was something sad but she had never been able to figure out much.  
  As father and the girls walked (or rode) up to the house he asked them  
  
"So you saw a fish up in the creek?"  
"Yes it was a big one!"  
Addie said, she always got more talkative around her father. She also talked a lot around her sisters but she was so shy she almost never spoke to anyone else. There was a rumor at school that she couldn't speak at all.  
  
"Well I think it's time we took a trip to the ocean maybe we could see a shark!" The father Said.  
  
I think the weekend after this ill  
Be free and we can all plan a trip  
Down to the seashore.  
  
Yay! The girls all Cheered Elsie skipped around her father in excitement.  
  
I'm gonna catch a shark and ride it.  
  
Id love to catch one and ride it Elsie said all the sailors would think I was a goddess of the sea an omen of good luck.  
  
Oh would you now their father laughed. If you tried to ride one it would gobble you up in one bite.  
  
And spit you back out I'm sure you probably taste like skin and bones... And dirt, Susan added giving Elsie a smug look.  
  
Elsie rolled her eyes. I took a bath this morning thank you very much.  
  
By this time they had reached their house and gone inside.  
  
There house was quite large and nice the kind you find in the wealthy parts of England, perhaps you've seen pictures or been able to visit one. Or maybe you are even lucky enough to live in one.  
  
Their house was warm and inviting though, not cold and stern like some of them can be. Like some of the large English estates can be. It felt like you could break something and that would be ok. Which was a good thing Because the girls did break things (usually Elsie) when they were rough housing.  
  
But there father was the biggest culprit he loved to rough house with his girls and usually crashed or blundered into tables chairs lamps walls and the occasional portrait. Who needs a portrait of stern great uncle Winston be had said on a particularly rainy day when they were playing tag as they all stood around looking at the broken glass and damaged picture lying on the floor as the girls tried not to giggle.  
  
And by the way he said Your mother doesn't need to know about this.  
It's not my fault that picture was hanging where I wanted to kick the football.  But maybe we best not play indoor soccer.  
  
 It's not my fault that wall was so close to where I was falling.  
  
He had played football at university, not american football but the kind you play with your feet, and seemed to forget to be careful at times but he was always gentle with the girls.  
  
  
As they took off their coats and hung them in the closet Elsie said  
  
"Oh it smells good what is that?"  
  
I made us some brownies I figured we should spoil ourselves while mother is away.  
  
"Yay, we can have them after dinner" Susan said what did you make for dinner?  
  
Dinner? well i guess, Brownies... Their father said slowly I suppose I made us brownies simply because I forgot to make us anything else.  
"That sounds fine to me" Elsie said  
"We can't just have brownies Susan said we could will feel sick all night we could have some of the bread we made yesterday  
  
"Or go down to the village and eat at the landing Elsie said  
  
Oh ho you have expensive taste their father responded, what do you think Addie  
  
I think we should play a game and eat brownies Addie said and I love whatever we have"  
  
Well we sailed all over the bright big world the orient, the South Pacific the eastern coast of Russia, we landed in Portland Oregon I liked it there.  
  
Did you see any indians? Elsie asked  yes I met some, they were very kind to me, there seemed to be more hidden behind his words but he smiled and the smile hid his thoughts  
  
It's easy to believe in anything when your walking home in the dark he responded with a laugh  
Come here he grabbed Addie in a big hug and sat her in his lap  
  
Well the winter nights are long and you can only gossip about so many times before  
  
He was gone for a year in the great and terrible war when men kill men because of the color of their coat or worse the color of thier skin and when he came back he didnt talk or smile much but time brought healing and with it joy returned that was many years Ago when  was a small baby  
  
It is true that all wars are evil But not all who  Fight in them are evil. In fact some are noble and quite good They're fighting to defend the weak from the violent And when the war is over they take no delight in violence anymore In fact they never enjoyed it in the first place the menories haunt them; hangs about them dogs they steps like a violent memory They did what was right and for some as their bodies heal The scars in their minds will never fade away  
  
But it's a fact that while there bodies heal the scars that haunt their mind will follow like a faithful friend until their  
  
But lets not talk of such things at least now  
  
She awoke with a start and padded barefoot to the window, fear creeping over her. She pressed her hands against the glass and in the night saw something dark a dark figure that filled her heart with terror she felt stricken dumb, rooted to the spot. She felt she was sinking into a dark pit. She saw a vision of a great city sinking into the ocean and knew she had caused it. How long she stood there she didn't know it could be minutes or ages of this world. She woke again in her soft bed with autumn sunlight gently streaming in the window, the nightmare almost forgotten  
  
She awoke with a start and padded barefoot to the window, fear creeping over her. She pressed her hands against the glass and in the night saw a dark cowled figure that filled her heart with terror it raised its hand toward her and she was stricken dumb rooted to the spot. She felt she was sinking into a dark pit. She saw a vision of a great city sinking into the ocean and knew she had caused it. How long she stood there she didn't know it could be minutes or ages of this world. She woke again in her soft bed with autumn sunlight gently streaming in the window, the nightmare almost forgotten  
  
She awoke with a start and padded barefoot to the window, fear creeping over her. She pressed her hands against the glass and in the night saw a dark figure that filled her heart with terror she knew it saw her -it raised its hand toward her- and she was stricken dumb rooted to the spot. She felt she was sinking into a dark pit. She saw a vision of a great city sinking into the ocean and knew she had caused it. How long she stood there she didn't know it could be minutes or ages of this world. She woke again in her soft bed with autumn sunlight gently streaming in the window, the nightmare almost forgotten  
  
She looked down and in the grass two footprints and in them the grass was withered and faded  
  
The dark was coming on fast as they hurried home  
  
Elsie  was bored she sat as the rain pounded the Window everyone was gone and wouldn't be back tell evening. She had wanted to go out side yesterday had been a crisp fall day but overnight the clouds had blown in and quickly after came the first drops of rain, tap tap taping on the roof. The light rain turned quickly into a storm as the angry wind tried to blow the autumns leaves off and leave the trees bare and desolate for the long winter.  by which turned into  
As the wind did its best to blow the autumn leaves from the branches of the summer trees.  
  
"Susan, are you still awake Elsie quietly whispered.  
  
"I am now" Susan responded trying to pretend like she had been sleeping  
  
"I am too Addie" said "I like the storm it's cozy"  
 We should go downstairs and get a snack" Elsie said I'm hungry  
  
"What, your not full from the brownies and ice cream? Your gonna be as big as a barn if you keep eating so much" said Susan and none of the boys will like you ill come back from university and they will have put you out to pasture with the cows and the sheep!  
  
Oh please the brownies were two hours ago and I'm a growing girl  
  
I'm growing girl Elsie responded  
  
"Oh I'm sure your growing plenty" Susan said In a sarcastic voice even though Elsie was little more then a slip she liked to tease her  
  
"Well I'm sure the boys won't like you you might be pretty but your idea of a good time is doing your homework and not getting in trouble"  
  
I'd rather be wild and free Elsie replied.  
  
  
  
  
 Remember at the church picnic you tried to study Aabd  
  
I'm hungry to said Addie lets get a snack and tell stories in bed.  
both her older sisters adored Addie she was sweet and shy. They also knew she was very kind hearted and sensitive so they teased each other a lot but were careful to make sure they never said anything that might made her sad.  
  
Oh fine said Susan trying to sound exasperated but secretly pleased .  
  
Lets tell scary stories, I know one I can tell about the little girls in a lighthouse!  
  
You will not tell that story I know that one I hate it it scares me"  
 It's just pretend kind of like how a boy would ever like someone who thinks homework and staying out of trouble is fun!"  
  
It's just pretend kind of like a boy asking you out for a date it didnt happen and it never will  
Addie and elsie both laughed at her big sister  
  
They didnt mind teasing Susan because she was quite stunning and more and more she was beginning to realize it so they felt it their duty to keep her in her place  
  
Even though it was a joke Addie and Elsie had both been sad as Susan had spent less time going out traipsing through the woods with them. She wanted to study at the university of edingburouhh and had increasingly  more studious.  
  
They snuck quietly down the stairs careful not to make a sound the moonlight played shadows on the walls and gave the downstairs a feeling  
  
What should we get Addie asked?  
  
Their father sat at the table his normally joyfyl face seemed lined With concern. His face broke into a smile when he saw his girls. Hello he said warmly but Elsie could tell his voice was strained.  
  
He stood up abruptly and looked around distractedly Elsie walked over ti him and hugged him from the side.  
  
What is it she asked?  
  
Well he said then stopped and tussled Elsie's blond hair  
  
I suppose soon you'll be getting to old for that he laughed.  
  
Never Elsie replied back.  
  
He smiled and started again well perhaps we should go sit down on the couch.  
  
I wasn't sure if I should tell you this he went on slowly. I kept it to myself about a week now. But I thought I should tell you. It's strange I don't think it means much in fact I'm confused about it and what it means, probably noting mind you.  
  
There was a young lad he was shy and often spent his time daydreaming about a girl when he should have been studying. Try as be might he couldn't talk to get he got too tongue tied.  
  
  
Oh father Susan said.  
  
  
  
The girls crowded around and hugged him.  
  
  
Chapter 4  
  
  
She woke, it was dark, with a start she realized she must have fallen asleep, the pine trees seemed to crowd around her and the silent cairn seemed cold and remote. The forest felt angered like she had disturbed something sacred something she had no business being around in the first place.  
  
  
She got up and stood for a minute to gather her thoughts, she felt light headed. Angry crows gathered thick in the trees above her, scolding her  
"Intruder, intruder, leave!"  
At least that's what she imagined they sure seemed unfriendly.  
  
As her head cleared she began to hurry down the now darkening path. She felt scared and tired and confused. It was a cold night so she knew father would have a large fire going in the fireplace. The thought of warm cocoa by the fire made her feel a little less scared as she picked up the pace; the wind blowing through her thin blue dress and light sweater.  
  
The windy forest path was a couple miles from her house and she began to hurry to make it back before it was totally dark. The great trees stretched all around her and swayed in the wind.  
  
The evening shadows grew darker and as fear settled over her  
She thought to her self "I'm just being silly it's just as safe now as when I started out up here in the bright autumn daylight .  
  
Dark thoughts and faded scratchy memories pressed around her as she stumbled home on the darkening path.  
  
Those were strange dreams i had she thought to her self.  
  
As she approached the house she realized that something wasn't right, when she had left the grass was trimmed and everything was and the garden and grounds were well tended. She began to walk faster and thought it was probably just a trick of the twilight. She pulled her coat closer and shivered as a cold wind blew across the path.  
  
Everything was covered in dust and spiderwebs it looked like no one had lived there for years  
  
He was handsome and charming every bit a gentleman but Elsie was troubled by him. He was haughty and superior but hid it under a layer of false personality.  
  
She also felt he was capable of not doing terrible things but of making others do them as he sat in the distance holding his followers in disdain.  
  
He had a beautiful girlfriend  but Elsie felt she might be good just fooled by his supposed kindness. He seemed very controlling of her. It made Elsie smoulder I wouldn't let any man .. Or. Women treat me like that.  
  
  
Elsie sat on her bed biting her lip and pondering. She wondered if she had misjudged him. As the others had been leaving her room and conversing in the hall he had slipped it briefly I'm on your side I'm gonna get you out of here.  
  
  
Psst Susan.. Susan Elsie whispered I'm worried about that bear it could gobble us up with one paw. Susan was also concerned, too concerned to point out that bear don't eat with their paws. Instead she said me too I'm glad it's gone, but well I couldn't help feeling safer with it here it did drive away those soldiers.  
  
I know said Elsie but what if it was just lucky it went after them and not us. I'm worried it comes back for us, and what do you think of Addie saying its our friend?  
  
Everybody knows Addie's a sweetheart Elsie thought and she is inside and out and they think I am too but if they could see what I'm thinking sometimes they might change there mind They laughed as Ashe smiled at the joke  
  
Long ago when the world was wrapped in shadow  
In the ages of the endless moon  
A folk walked the land  
  
Come along she said curtly as she roughly grabbed her arm  
  
Ouch that hurts Elsie said  
  
She wanted to talk back but instead bit her lip as a small tear forced its way down her face. She felt hollow  
  
Ahh what are you doing she gasped and jumped away  
  
Your a strange one and no doubt and I'm gonna see you locked up proper with  
  
  
She stared out the window as thy drove through the dirty London streets, the rain steadily came from a dull gray sky, all the color seemed to be bleached from the world Just different shades of black and gray each more forgettable then the next. She bit her lip trying to hold back the tears, she wouldn't let them see her cry. But everything shook her nerve the tall dirty buildings the trash on the unkept sidewalks, the drawn faces of the strangers as they hurried about their sad business. The stern sallow faced woman up front and the over weight driver with his dark eyes. The way everyone kept handing her so roughly and talking about her in dark whispers.  
  
Elsie leaned back into the motor coach seat and clinched her eyes shut hoping this was all a dream. She tried to put the pieces together but they made no sense.  
  
Where had she been for the last six months? Maybe she was crazy like the doctors and psychologists of the last three days all said.  
  
Beyond the end of the world  
  
Katie Whitney  
  
  
She didnt like him but she wasn't sure why he was charming and carasmstic. He was good looking almost too good looking and it was obvious he knew it.  
  
Ms acted sickeningly sweet to Elsie around him and it made Elsie cross,  
  
Elsie sat on her hard bed and stared through the bars covering the small window; through the window she saw gray sky that matched her mood. She was in a small room with a hard bed two chairs and a wood table.  the bed was old and dirty and she didnt wanna sit on it let alone sleep in it. eventually exhaustion overcame her worries and she fell fitfully asleep that first night. She had checked herself for bug bites the next morning and was relieved not to see any.  
  
They had kept her in this room now for a week without telling her much. As far as she could tell the place was a juvenile detention center her boredom was punctuated by visits from stern people in suits or police officers who questioned her harshly. "Where are your parents?" Where have you been hiding? Sometimes they didnt question her sometimes they told her things. "It's gonna be much worse at your trial if you don't talk now"  
"Your a strange child no doubt" "you might be pretty but don't think thatwill get you any sympathy from the jury"   You better enjoy your room now you won't be living in such luxury soon!"  
  
Luxury? She thought a bare room with a bed a table and and stale bread water and something that resembled meat for most her meals.  
  
 She never cried when they were in the room but she always cried when they left. She also cried her self to sleep at night.  
  
She asked them questions to, where was her family where were her sisters she wanted to see them! We're they ok where had she been and why were they keeping her here.  
  
Yesterday a kinder policeman had come in. He was a bit over weight and spoke with a thick Irish accent. "I got a daughter just like you at home your age and all, I don't think your dangerous, he looked at the ground a lot when he talked like he was ashamed to be a part of keeping her locked up.  
Your a nice girl he said i bet this will turn out ok and youll end up in a nice orphanage" he said he meant it kindly but it brought her little comfort. She could tell he felt Sorry for her.  
  
He reached across to pat her back comfortingly then stopped with a jerk and pulled it back awkwardly back.  
  
Instead he just sighed and said I got a young one at home just like you. You done look like you'd do the things they say about you. All the same is there anythin ye want te get off yer chest.  
  
No I'm afraid not Elsie said unless you can answer some of my questions.  
  
I'm not allowed to tell you much well anything me dear. I'm sorry couldn't even if you were my own little one locked up in here.  
  
Why were you afraid to touch me Elsie asked.  
  
Afraid?!  
  
He looked surprised I'm not afraid your a priso, err I mean a resident and it's against protocol.  
  
Elsie could tell he was lying and it made him uncomfortable.  
  
Also he said quietly there are some rumors ye see I didn't even want to come up here and question you but I had to and I was presently surprised your a nice well mannered young one. In another life I bet you and my little one could be right friends and I'm sorry for what your going through but there are rumors and they told me to be careful around yea.  
  
What kind of rumors Elsie persisted.  
  
Elsie pushed the small bed to the far wall and climbed up to state out the small dirty window through the metal bars. She looked up and could see the sun in the bright blue sky. It gave her hope.  
  
The next day was rainy and misty. She looked out the window at the gray world and sighed the hope had fled far away. Days went on and she seemed to lose count of time.  
  
 Today she had had no visitors and while she hated the visits the day had stretched on tell she was bored more bored then she had ever been before. Without a clock she had no idea of the time just dark and light were the only two tangible aspects of her life right now and emotions: worry sadness boredom occasionally hope but that was growing less each long day. The room was completely bare, nothing to write on, no books nothing to break the monotony.  She decided to exercise.  
  
She guessed it must be after six because of the fading twilight but wasn't sure. She had just finished exercising and was sitting on the bed red faced and out of breath.  
Tap tap tap. She heard a light knocking on the door.  
  
Come in she said timidly.  
  
No one had knocked before as they came in; they had simply barged. suddenly she and it made her nervous that someone would.  
  
The door opened and a kindly and eccentric looking gentleman walked in. Her worries disappeared almost entirely.  
  
Hello she said are you a professor? the man looked like a professor, with his worn tweed coat was a dead giveaway she thought: he had the look of a man that had spent long years buried in manuscripts and books deep tucked away in libraries in the quieter parts of the world.  
  
Professor he said? And how did you know that, your a smart one and no doubt about it very perceptive but They always like the smart ones if I do say so myself.  
Please sir she said, who are They?   What, whats that he responded, I suppose were getting a little ahead of ourselves he said and smiled at her.  
  
I've been following a long with your case extraordinary, quite extraordinary. He said, he had a curious habit of repeating his words  
  
Elsie felt a small glow of joy returning that she hadnt felt in months was this a possible friend who could help her?  
  
The professor went on "yes yes it's all quote extraordinary, when I was a young lad everyone thought me a bit balmy" he said leaning back in his chair. And look at me now.  
A small smile creeped over Elsie's face as she looked At the eccentric old professor with his over sized tweed coat.  
"A perfect picture of gentility" he said as he leaned back and put his hands together by placing the tip of each finger against the tips of his fingers on his other hand  
"why I'm quite sure my students must mistake me for the university president what with my suit and genteel manners"  
I got a chance to explore the Egyptian pyramids he rambled on abruptly changing the subject. I've got a picture actually, magical places those pyramids, people just don't understand, not at all, no not at all, it's such a shame. He paused staring off into space suddenly serious from he's earlier lighthearted manner.  
As Elsie looked at him she saw a hint of something deeper (but also elusive and difficult to pinpoint, was it nobility?) just beneath the surface of his eccentric appearance she also saw keen intelligence in his bright eyes.  
  
"About that picture though, here let me find it That picture though here look here he began to rummage through his leather carrying case. He seemed to be having trouble as he kept rummaging around and pulling out random and odds documents, old books and tattered papers that  looked like students homework all in A disheveled pile. After a few unsuccessful attempts to locate it he dumped  The whole thing out on the table. Let's see let's see it's got to be around here somewhere He moved papers around this way and that,  
  
There it is!  
  
he pulled out an old black-and-white photograph that had been weather beaten and faded by the sun. He handed it over to Elsie.  
  
"Oh my" Elsie said you were quite handsome when you were a young man.  
  
Were!  
  
He said quite indignant Let us be careful with our verb tenses young lady. Clearly you must not have learned this yet but the verb were implies past tense, you were intending to use "are" the present tense, My looks age like a fine wine. And let's be honest there's twice as much of me to be as good looking now. He said before letting out a chuckle And patting his round belly.  
I'm sorry Elsie said not meaning to offend the man.  
Oh don't mention it he said beaming a smile at her  
 Elsie knew she really liked the scatter brained old professor. She was a perceptive girl and knew his playful batter was an attempt to cheer her up.  
  
Well you're probably wondering why I came here Would you like a cup of tea? When do the serve  tea at in this blasted place. Not exactly Buckingham palace now is it?  
  
No maybe if the palace has a basement with an old dungeon in it and I don't think they serve tea Elsie said.  
  
Oh quite right,  quite right well Let's go over to the café across the street.  
I don't think they'd allow that Elsie said  
  
Bah Nothing of the sort they'll  do what's good for them the professor said  
  
I've had first-hand experience with a situation similar to yours. It actually was in Egypt near that pyramid that's why I showed you that picture of it. I was in the regiment back then of course. At the time I wasn't a  scholar I hadn't found my true calling Not that being a soldier doesn't have its perks like Getting to wear the same thing every day, and not have people make snide comments he looked fondly at his old tweed suit coat and Elsie got the feeling he wore it quite often, possibly everyday.  
  
"Maybe you should try carrying your gun again like when you were a soldier that might prevent snide comments" Elsie teased back  
Yes quite right and my students might give me a little more respect too, no more silly excuses for late papers. You see professor my great aunt twice removed d again. Third time this term, rotten luck, so I'm sure you quite understand why my papers not done And You won't be docking any points"  
  
I bet your students like you Elsie said to him.  
  
Yes probably more then they should I'm getting soft in my old age, and did you know I heard there is a rumor going about the college that you can get me to go off on tangents if you ask me questions about my flower gardens , preposterous! my lectures cover just what they are supposed to.  
Do you have a flower garden Elsie asked?  
Starts talking abou garden  
  
Elsie struggled to hold back a giggle as she realized he was going off on a tangent right now.  
  
Where were we he said, ah yes those curious Egyptian ruins. There are lots of strange places, magic if you will, around this world the ancient Druids and Egyptian priests might have been more in tune with these types of things  then we have them credit for.  
 As I was saying we were in Egypt at the time quite a wonderful place we were stationed near by and took a weekend trip to see the pyramids. It was Jamison, Charles myself and Charles sister and her friend who had come up to visit.  We really though it was going to be a grand weekend and brought our cameras and everything.  
  
We took the train out to Cairo and then got a guide to take us with camels out to the ruins.  
  
Blast it all where the d did Jamison get off too!  
  
At first we thought it was a prank we searched tell late afternoon and then became really worried. We alerted the authorities and the British consulate got involved too.  
  
Now here's the strange part the professor went on.  
He had been missing for ten years and we decided to go back I don't really know why we were all kind of horrified of the places for years but we decided to go back.  
  
Well we had a lot of delays and ended up getting back to the pyramids close to dusk. We see a man walking at us out of the desert we all thought it was a specter, lady whitmore normally so poised and proper clutched my arm in fright.  
Well I'd it had been a specter that would have been less strange. It wa Jamison I'm quite sure I turned deathly white.  
  
"Where have you been he joked with his charming smile" I've been looking for you the last 6 hours! Jolly rotten to leave a fella like that if you didn't want my company you could have just said something he said with a roguish laugh.  
  
Lady anne shrieked and last out my knees gave and I buckled to the ground.  
  
Jamison lady whitmore said in a voice as quiet as death is that you? Where have you been?  
  
What do you mean well looking around this tall triangle then I crawled in for a look around, I must have been tired then I thought I think I fell asleep for a spell maybe an hour then I came out and have been looking for all of you. " he had said  
  
well I'm sure I don't need to tell you that you could have cut the tension and shock with a knife  
  
He went on "I feel maybe I got a touch to long of sun maybe we can get back, you all seem more struck by the sun then me"  
  
Jamison, lady anne went on in. Quiet whisper "that was ten years ago, you disappeared ten Years ago, where have you been and she began to sob quietly."  
  
If this is a Prank he went on you really have got me but it would be nice to all have our laugh and get back for a meal.  
  
I remember the next moment like it was this morning he took a step towards us and we all backed up in fear,.  
  
  
  
When we are exploring it one of my mates went missing he was AWOL for 8 years then he shows up again one day and hadnt aged a day. Good luck and good genes they all said As they locked him away for desertion. Not the kind of good luck I would want to have mind you.  
They agreed to lower his sentence to a year and a dishonorable discharge if he would agree to be studied. Which he did. I met up with him again and he told queer stories some of them were fascinating but some would make your blood run cold. We didnt believe him at all of course he became quite a hermit and a recluse.  
  
Of course I stayed in touch with him over the years, eventually he recanted said he made the whole thing up but I didn't believe one word of it.  
  
Didnt believe one word if what Elsie asked?  
  
Oh his recant the whole story I believe he was telling the truth and then later said it was a lie but that was a lie if that makes sense?  
  
Um I think so you believe he was telling the truth about his mysterious disappearance then later changed his story but that was when he lied.  
  
Quite right quite right the professor agreed.  
  
But Why would he do that, asked Elsie?  
  
Well it was before he shut himself off from the world I think he wanted to just go back to having a normal life.  
About a year after he was found, right after he got out of prison he started to tell outlandish tales. At this point his life was still fairly normal he came from a wealthy respected English family, his father had been knighted and everyone seemed to want to put the whole affair behind them.  
  
He started at the university in Cambridge studying physics and  history, Celtic folklore and theoretical Physics to be precise of course the choices are quote obvious what he was going after now and even then I think everyone knew the odd combination had something to do with his disappearance.  
  
I think it made his father angry he didn't study economics or business and take over the family empire. I always heard his father was a cold and distant man.  
  
We spent quite a bit of time together, I was his best mate at the time, but I was studying engineering. Everyone thought his choice was a bit odd but he began to develop far more wilder and odder traits.  
  
He still managed to put up a good front, dashing cheery a perfect English gentleman and he was quite popular.  But we spent a lot of time together and I began to see the psychological tears forming in his mind.  
  
 What kind of things Elsie said?  
  
Well he disappeared again twice right mid semester, failed all his classes. he also started to tell stories about dark shadows haunting him shortly after he started to break into people's houses he did it three times and his family managed to get him out of it each time but the third time, well that's when he got committed.  
  
When he got out after all that he renounced all his old stories and moved out into the woods, it's quite sad rally.  
Why do you think he spirited himself away?  
  
Why? The professor responded, it's difficult to say, the mind is a delicate and complicated thing. Why does anyone do the things they do? But in his case I think I know a few pieces of the puzzle. Some of them are quite obvious I think he got tired of being disbelieved he was always a very truthful man, I also think he didnt want to disgrace his family anymore. Over Time  his younger brother took his place and his family was slowly pushing him out. I also think he had grown quite sad and felt isolated. I also think he had a secret or secrets to hide. He also firmly believed his life was in danger and also anyone around him.  
  
Did you believe that, said Elsie?  
  
Hmm, I'm not totally sure and well to be honest my feelings now are that he might just be a troubled young man whose star shown to bright and he descended into madness.  
  
You think he's out of his mind? Whispered Elsie suddenly seeing her life descending down a dark and lonely path.  
  
Well yes and no the rumors made him far crazier then he was and i suppose  I'm guilty of believing them just like everyone else it's hard to separate the fanciful from the real and as he isolated himself we slowly lost contact.  I never once had a conversation with him that I wouldn't swear he was as normal as any man can be, which mind you is not saying all that much.  
  
But some of the things he said were and still are hard to swallow.  
  
And your case is much different then his what i want for you is to find your parents And let you all go back to being a family with your sisters!  
  
I think by helping you I also may learn things and after speaking here now i just want to help you.  
  
At the point the professor paused, Elsie could tell he was troubled.  
  
Well Elsie said is the story over, that's how it ends a man with such promise simply fading away?  
  
No, no not if I can help it and that's part of the reason I'm here I believe his story well I want to believe it I suppose I contradict myself. To speak plainly he always struck me as a sane man but his tales were not the tales of a same man. i also have found other stories and legends that lend credence to what he claims but I couldn't sit here and tell you I have proof and for that reason the evidence points to a crazy man.  
I have been searching for evidence and I think that you are evidence that strange things can and do happen.  
  I want to find evidence that it's true.  
  
Well Elsie said trying to take everything in, I have been known to tell stories too, but I believe them. Well I also made them up when I was younger which makes it harder for people to believe me know.  
  
How much younger the professor asked?  
  
Well Elsie replied smilingly weakly last year but that's a long time ago and they were just fairy tales but then when I really saw things I stopped making things up.  
  
Quite right, what types of things did you see? Asked the professor.  
  
Well Elsie said she suddenly felt very shy especially now that she was locked up which made her feel like maybe she was crazy.  
  
Just well I heard whispers in the forest twice and one night, well it could have been a dream but I woke and looked out the window and I saw something dark, a shadow it terrified me I woke the next morning and had forgotten all about it but the next day when I went to play the grass was withered were I had seen it, father said it was normal for their to be dead spots in the grass.  
  
Hmm did you tell him about your dream? Asked the professor  
  
No I didn't at the time it seemed silly, I just asked why the grass might be dead and he just laughed and said it was fall and that's what grass does after a long summer.  
  
Yes it is rather curious, the professor responded.  
  
What do you make of it all asked Elsie?  
  
I don't rightly know, I have some theories of course but there all rather wild. But what we need is some immediate action you shouldn't be locked up in here like this.  
  
Right then the door burst open it was the driver from the car with his sneering smile, visiting times up.  
  
Could we possibly have a few more minutes the professor asked politely  
  
No, he responded in a blunt manner. Elsie saw two policeman outside they both walked into the room, time to go one of them said roughly.  
  
Yes yes let me just gather my papers.  
  
No none of that one of them grabbed his arm roughly it's time to go the professor began to frantically gather his papers then accidentally spilt some in his haste, one of the officers grabbed a handful and shoved it it in the bag.  
  
Please the professor  pleaded some of these are priceless.  
  
They ignored his pleas, shoved the rest of the papers in his bag and pushed him roughly for the door, goodby Elsie he said dont give up hope  
  
  
 well you did to missing for seven months and that's hard to make up. You really don't remember anything?  
  
No nothing I was up by the cairns playing and then things are a little foggy but I woke up hurried home and saw the house all empty. She paused as the emotions got to her and tried to hold back the tears.  
  
I think it's time we went and visited him and I want you to come.  
  
  
  
  
  
  
Ms Cornelius came in all in a titter like a young (but quite annoying) fickle teenager going to a dance.  
She  was wearing far to much make up and perfume and barely seemed to notice Elsie as she flitted absent mindedlee  about the room.  
  
She suddenly seemed to realize Elsie was in the room and grimaced, here put this on and be quick about it she said as she went to check her self in the small round mirror on the wall.  
  
Elsie contemplated being stubborn and refusing but realized it wasn't worth the fight.  
  
  
  
  
  
  
There was another man wearing a black suit that didnt fit quite right. He clearly considered himself a charming gentleman.  
  
My dear girl she said in a sickeningly sweet voice, so good to have you back.  
  
Elsie glared back at her biting her tongue in anger.  
  
I understand your confusion she sad patting her on the head like a child, at that moment another man walked in it was a policeman.  
  
We're all glad your safe of course I'm on my way to the London grill, she paused as if she Expected that name to mean something To Elsie.  
  
Instead elsie just looked at the faces of the policeman ms Cornelius and the other gentleman with them.  
  
You see my dear she said youve been taken advantage of. It appears that your father had discovered some sort of a treasure and quite a bit of unscrupulous people are after it.  
  
I'm afraid that Mr. Professor took You for a fool along With his associate. Apparently he showed you some old photo of a man that never ages. Come we all know you have an overactive imagination but even that must be to preposterous for you she said Reverting back to her superior tone Which Elsie  preferred to the sweet fake one. She laughed shrilly and the other two men laughed with her.  
  
That photograph was taken recently and made to look old. They wanted to gain your confidence everybody thinks that perhaps your father showed you where that treasure is.  
  
  
Chapter 4  
Oh Addie she burst out into tears at how thin and gaunt her little sister looked. Her pretty face seemed to be lined with sadness and worry, but her face lit up as she threw herself on Elsie. Elsie hugged her tightly back happy but worried about how thin and frail she felt. Elsie realized she was crying but that Her warm tears were tears of joy now at hugging her little sister again.  
  
They sat down on the cold hard chairs at the mean little table, Elsie looked around the room which was more like a prison an realized she had it better off then her younger sister.  
  
 They sad you were dead Addie whispered quietly as if even saying the words was too terrible.  
  
No Elsie said I'm not and Susan's not either.  
  
They both sat in silence for a while Elsie's arm wrapped tightly around Addie's frail shoulders.  
  
I love what you've done to the place Elsie joked sarcastically.  
  
Elsie looked at the tight beds stacked 3 high with little room along all the walls. Do you sleep in those yes do you want to see my bed?  
  
Sure Elsie replied they went over to Addie's bed it was on the top bunk they climbed up and Elsie looked around.  
  
There was s small picture if there family smiling and happy mother and father both alive and happy fathers handsome face and mothers gentle beautiful face kind and gentle.  
  
 her smiling kind eyes and beautiful blond hair.  
  
Elsie felt chocked up and hugged Addie as she tried it stop the Tears. You look a lot like mother she said I always thought mother was the most beautiful person in the world but you might be just as pretty when you grow up she said to Addie. They leaned back in the cramped space with their backs against the wall and there heads almost touching the low ceiling which crowded down on them from atop the third bunk.  
  
Well Addie said smiling faintly I think you and Susan are both very beautiful and kind like mother.  
  
We're gonna get you out of here she whispered.  
  
I miss  
  
What do they feed you in this place Elsie asked her motherly instincts coming out.  
  
Mostly stale bread and water that tastes far to much like minerals. Sometimes some wilted vegetables.  
  
Oh Elsie Addie burst out I wish you could stay. She higher her sister tighter.  
  
Don't give up hope Elsie said. She knew they were being watched and didn't want to give anything away but she knew Addie needed something to hold into. She leaned close and whispered ever so quietly in Addie's ear "soon".  
  
Addie have her a strong smile.  
  
She knew Addie was fragile an the hopeless months had been hard  in her.  
  
So what happened to father Elsie said?  
  
Well it was terrible Addie replied.  
  
You don't have to talk about it if you don want to Addie said.  
  
No it's ok and seeing you gives me hope we can find him.  
  
We all got home and couldn't find you. Father was growing increasingly worried as the minutes stretched on. We searched the whole house over and over. Susan was terrified you should have seen her we had to stop for a few minutes for father to calm her. She was sobbing and couldn't catch her breath, it makes me ache inside just to remember. Elsie hugged her closer as she went on.  
  
Father asked me to stay with Susan in case you came back then hurried out and saddled shadow he said he was going to the cairns but he never came back oh it was terrible Addie sobbed.  
  
Susan and I sat holding each other waiting, waiting the world felt desolate and empty. Some how the sun rose as dawn spread its pale cold light over the world.  
  
We didnt know what to do so we went down to the police station. There was a Massive search but nothing turned up.  
  
  
They came and took us away.  
  
  
Well I'm here now Elsie smiled and were gonna all be together soon, you me father Susan. I'm sure Susan will become insufferable with out me teasing her and keeping her in line she teased.  
  
Addie smiled.  
  
Oh Elsie she said I keep remembering all the nice times we used to have. I feel like I'm too young to reminisce she smiled. Yes Elsie said I guess it's ok though it's portably just easier for you.  
  
Addie giggled.  
  
I miss the seasons, well celebrating them with everyone father tilling the fresh soil in the spring  
  
  
  
The thing is they found her ring, her wedding ring or at least one very similar to it her and fathers initials are engraved in it.  
  
Oh wherever did they find it Addie exclaimed!  
  
 Well that's the Curious part some scholars found it in Antarctica  
  
Antarctica?  
  
I don't understand Addie replied  
  
  
CHAPTER  
  
  
  
We know about the dark creatures following you were trying to keep you safe.  
 Walks in the evening with mother and father as the days grew longer the bright summers as the grass and hills become golden swimming and playing in the river.  
  
  
Oh yes Elsie said and then the fall my favorite season of them all the brilliant leaves gathering in the harvest pumpkins and  apple cider.  
  
Yes and then the winter the cozy evenings by the fire sledding and romping through the white snow covered hills, I do wish we got more snow in England.  
  
The world really can be a beautiful place.  
  
Yes, when you have those you love beside you Elsie said.  
  
And we're going to get them back she said firmly.  
  
I don't want to give you false hope but James told me something curious. You know how I  disappeared but was fine? Well she paused well he thinks that we should try to find mother.  
  
Oh Elsie! You mean it?! Addie exclaimed her  eyes shining bright with hope.  
  
Yes but it's a small chance but well I thought you should know. We all need to cling to hope.  
  
  
  
Dragon civilization  
Shape shifters  
Elves  
Dwarves  
Trolls  
 goblins  
  
Three worlds  
Real world aliens future  
Real world fantasy world  
Maybe these two the same  
  
Pure fantasy world  
  
  
The two worlds are tearing apart but they are bound together the dark matter between the two works like a form of gravity. The danger is that we fear the pull is forcing the earth out of its orbit and towards the sun we also fear that it is not an accident but is an intentional act to destroy this world.  
  
Who would do that Elsie whispered.  
Who? Whom? what? We're not sure we think it may be a dark entity that was banished from this works ages ago. A god if you will, but that being set up this tragedy and we fear others are continuing it.  
  
Why would they do that? Well we think they feel they are helping they want to let out those being imprisoned eons ago in the depths of time.  
  
  
  
  
They think there doing good to save the world from expiation.  
  
She felt they were sailing through space and time the air felt strangely charged. Everyone was quiet lost in there own thoughts.  
  
  
CHAPTER  
He pulled out a curious looking case with a look of reverence written across his aged face. Elsie looked nervously over at the professor, he too sat enraptured.  
  
Professor smith sat quietly staring at the curious and ancient box. It was covered in strange runes and heliographs. There also appeared to be some sort of ancient writing on it. The wood was dark and aged looking.  
  
It could have been her imagination but Elsie felt a strange sense of electricity in the room. She also felt drawn to touch the box but also terrified at the idea of touching it. The box seemed to fill the whole room and she couldn't take her wyes away from it.  Something inside her was being strongly drawn to the box.  
She wasn't sure how long she sat gazing at the box and it quickly had filled her mind, everything else seemed to have vanished from her attention.  
  
It was in this reverie that She felt a gentle hand on her arm and realized she was leaning out towards it, about to touch it, professor smith was gently holding her back, please forgive me he said it does have a curious draw and I am not totally convinced of its safety.  
  
Elsie sat back red faced and embarrassed by her impudence. I'm sorry she said I really am that was rude of me, she couldn't believe she had almost touched such a rare and valuable artifact.  
  
Don't mention it he said with a smile. I know you meant no harm and I don't show the case often; and anyways you helped confirm what I already suspected.  
  
What do you suspect the professor asked,  
  
well many things but the one to which i was just referring had to do with the draw the artifact and its contents have on people, some individuals seem to be more drawn to it then others but everyone seems to be pulled in by it also the pull seems to increase the longer your around it.  
  
I spend time researching it but feel that it May be risky to engage in prolonged research that involves directly handling or viewing the item.  
 Do you think it's dangerous Elsie said?  
  
I do he said but not for short periods of time. I still run experiments on it about an hour a week and I usually have one of my students keeping on eye on things.  
  
Have you found out anything curious the professor asked?  
  
Sadly I don't feel that I have found anything conclusive. It's not radioactive during one experiment we thought that we had potentially detected a gamma with around a 663 Kev energy deposition. We thought that night be a cesium isotope which emits at 662 Kev but the next times we ran the experiment  
Nothing turned up.  
  
but I think that be  
  
 physical contact greatly increases the draw. I think that's the  the ms  may have negative effects on the mind. Unfortunately my sample size is one, me.  
  
Smith went on, For that reason I never handle it with my bare hands. I did at first a number of times but it burned itself into my mind I couldn't stop dreaming and thinking about it. I would wake in a cold sweat strange visions haunting the fringes of my memory.  It began to worry me an I grew concerned I was losing my mind.  
And it's not just the box but the writing and the contents of the box that seemed to cause these strange effects.  
  
It is a good thing I was teaching that term I missed there straight lecture and one of my graduate students found me almost past out clutching the box. He said I was muttering something in a strange language. I asked him what it was and he said he didn't write it down he called the paramedics. Grad students these days are rather worthless, didnt wrote down what I was saying bah.  
Smith covered the box and leaned back in his chair and smiled. Of course the other scholars all screamed it was a ridiculous hoax.  
  
Ok I asked them then can I let some undergraduate students come in and touch it as part of an experiment.  
  
Preposterous the administrators in their  
  
  
You didn't mention this before the professor said, everyone said it had been a medical condition.  
  
Well yes I'm sorry for misleading you regrettable but necessary smith and really if you think about it did I mislead anyone? Should I tell the dean my condition arises from a curious box? And if you believe that i mislead you that would mean you believe this box was capable of something extraordinary, magical in fact. Do you believe that?  
  
Hmm yes I see your point the professor replied it is a bit far fetched. So what do you believe this box is?  
  
Hmm well I don't like to talk about it, I am rather enjoying my tenure and wouldn't my stayin around as an emeritus but I don't think they would keep a lunatic or a scientific fraud about the place.  
  
I do believe it is otherworldly.  
  
I understand said the professor. How did the box come into your possession?  
  
Ah yes it was an expedition to the Artic, we were studying diatoms,  of course I'm a physicist turned archaeologist so diatoms are not of particular importance to my research the expedition was mostly biologists and one chemist interested in the composition  of ice cores.  
  
Why did you choose to go james asked?  
  
It was a manuscript that I had the fortune of analyzing I think the two are related, can we see it james cut in.  
In his excitement he always became blunt but his glowing face and eager manner made it impossible to be offended by him, he clearly meant no harm his brain just lost touch with social graces.  
  
And what do other scholars say?  
A hoax.  
What about the effects?  
A placebo.  
  
CHAPTER  
Scholars fairly skel  
Artic expedition find one trapped in ice  
  
Elsie felt nervous and excited in the predawn glow of the chilly morning. The airfield was bustling as last minute preparations were made for the dangerous artic expedition. Elsie pulled her hood tighter feeling pale and self conscious she hadnt had time to properly do her hair. And not getting enough sleep always made her feel pale. She looked at herself in the mirror that morning and thought I need to get out in the sun more often.  
  
Susan came in looking beautiful and wide awake like she was going to a fancy wedding, Elsie rolled her eyes and tried to think of something smart to say but couldn't she was far too tired.  
  
She quickly got over it as she watched all the excited energy and bustling of the expedition about to leave.  
  
Addie stumbled sleepily into the hangar, she looked like a beautiful pale ghost hidden beneath her great overcoat.  
  
Hi addie Elsie said did you get breakfast.  
  
Oh I don't feel hungry quite yet Addie replied.  
  
Some of the expedition leaders wrte talking they all looked brave and strong. They were mostly from Oxford and edingvrugh university.  
  
  
A young dashing looking gentleman came over he was tall and skinny but muscular and had the look of an English gentleman. He moved with careless ease and was smartly dressed and looked wealthy. He also looked cold and haughty as he focused intently on the loading of a large wooden case.  
  
Lord Byron so glad you could make it! The professor embraced him warmly.  
  
Lord Byron spoke in a thick English accent and moved with athletic and careless ease. Ladies do glad you could make it he shook there hands all warmly and beamed a wide dashing smile at them.  
  
Elsie felt a little nervous hello she said my name is Elsie nice to meet you. Elsie though maybe he was nicer then she imagined he seemed very friendly and his smile made him seem much more approachable.  
And I'm Susan she said pleasure to meet you.  
  
Addie sat quietly in the folds of her great cloak, this is Addie Elsie said.  
  
Lord Byron someone called, got to run I'm sure will be fast friends soon will be spending a lot of time together.  
  
So, Elsie said your a lord? That does sound rather fancy its a shame your nit a night sir Byron has a nice ring to it.  
  
Elsie Susan said he is a knight he was  knighted last year the prof told me.  
  
Titles are meaningless he joked. They all boarded the airship and were soon off soaring above the English Channel. Lord Byron came over with some scones and milk any one hungry he asked cheerfully.  
  
I am Elsie said what about you she asked Addie?  
  
Oh yes please I'm very hungry now. These are delicious Susan exclaimed so fresh.  
  
Yes I picked them up this morning from my favorite bakery, unfortunately we won't have that conscience for long.  
  
A slim and beautiful lady waked in. She looked elegant and delicate  as soon as she noticed them she quickly turned and left.  
  
I tried to talk to her earlier but she didnt seem to want to have anything to do with me.  
  
What Elsie blurted out how could anyone not want to talk to you! She was really starting to like the English gentleman  
  
Well give it a few days he joked I'm sure you'll be quite sick of me.  
  
I do have quite a bit of energy, I was quite the terror as a youngster My parents didn't know what to do with me.  
  
Where are the professor joked. When did this change. I heard about the recent prank you pulled. You really Are quite the ringleader when it comes to making trouble.  
 That is true he laughed, my father was glad ill be up in the artic, Byron stood up doing his best to look stuffy and dignified.  
  
The artic. What the dither are you doing in the artic.  
He stood with his arms folded behind his back.  
  
Well he went on imitating his father At least you'll find it difficult to cause trouble up there nothing but snow and blasted ice. I don't know why you won't be reasonable and settle into banking like your older brothers.  
  
The professor laughed that is a good impression of your father.  
  
The girls all laughed too though they didnt know his father they could imagine a dignified English  banker.  
  
The funny thing is, he went on in his normal voice.  
  
My grandfather was quite the rouge and adventurer. He made out fortune but in his youth he was in and out of prison, lost his temper at a commanding officer and, plunk picked him up and tossed him into the sea.  
He was dishonorably discharged and ended up in a military prison.  
  
I love him though he wasn't a bad sort or a criminal just fiery and full of pasison. My mother says I take after him, but I have yet to end up in prison and I hope to keep it that way.  
  
It was a nice night for sailing, the dead were calm and it was a surprisingly warm night, they sat on the deck bundled in blankets and sweaters Talking and drinking warm cocoa and tea. The professor came out with a plate of warm cookies and freshly cut apples.  
  
Anna backed these he said for us he said.  
  
Is she coming out? Lord Byron asked perhaps a little too quickly no one caught it but susan who cast a knowing glance at Elsie who was too busy with her own love interest, the  
Plate of cookies.  
  
Oh my those do look delicious she said.  
  
No james said she said she had some reading to do and was going back to her bunk.  
  
Ah righto Byron said trying to hide his discouragement those do smell delicious your quite right.  
  
Well if you all going to be polite I'm gonna help mylsekf Elsie said grabbing one with a smile.  
  
Everyone else took one too. Oh my these are delicious Elsie said.  
  
I quite agree Susan said. What do you think Addie Susan said.  
  
Good Addie said with a smile. Elsie knew she would say more if there were less people around.  
  
I could see why being a professor would be nice Susan said. Going on cruises summers off not worries.  
  
Oh hold up a minute james laughed. You might not be paid for the summer but that doesn't mean you won't be working a lot or faculty want a 11 month appointment.  
  
  
Yes and don't forget those frayed students sleeping in your class and forgetting thier homework Benjamin said with a sigh.  
  
  
And piles of data  
  
Mountains of data  
  
And trying to get tenure said Jonas the youngest member who was still only a year into his post doc.  
  
I wouldn't change it for the world though James said.  
  
Me neither they all quickly agreed.  
  
What's that Addie said she pointed to the night sky where a strange blue light was glowing in the distance.  
  
  
  
  
  
They think there doing good to save the world from expiation.  
  
She felt they were sailing through space and time the air felt strangely charged. Everyone was quiet lost in there own thoughts  
  
The girls snuggled into their bunks. The seas were relatively calm and peaceful. As Elsie came in from brushing her teeth Addie was already curled up covered in blankets.  
  
Oh you look cozy Elsie said Addie smiled at her I am and the blankets are perfect it does get cold up in the artic.  
  
Well I don't think we're to the artic yet I imagine its going to get much colder.  
  
Susan walked in hi su Elsie said. Hello Susan said as she flopped down on Addie's bed. You sure look comfortable Susan smiled.  
  
We were just talking about that Elsie said when we are camping out on the ice it's going to get very cold.  
  
I know I'm a little worrie Susan said but I am glad we wi be with such seasoned explorers.  
  
Oh guess what Addie said poking her face out from under her covers. Her blond hair was wild and beautiful.  
  
I talked to Anna I helped her back the cookies.  
  
What! Susan and Elsie both exclaimed.  
  
What's she like  
  
Is she nice  
  
She hasn't said one word the whole trip.  
  
Ya I thought she was a snob who thinks shes to smart for everyone else.  
  
I went to Harvard Elsie said drawing out her words and trying to look conceited.  
  
Yes Susan said she thinks she is too good for lord Byron.  
  
And I don't think you can find anyone more handsome them him.  
  
Except for father Elsie put in.  
  
Yes that's true Susan chimed in.  
  
No she is really nice Addie said I think she is shy.  
  
How did you meet her Elsie asked. Ell I went I to the Kitchen to get a snack and she was starting I back them.  
  
We didnt say anything at first then she said that she thought I was lucky to have two older sisters. She said she was an only child and her parents were both old when she was born and she was raised by her grandma.  
  
Now I want to talk I get Elsie said I wonder if she is still awake.  
  
When I walked by her room it looked like her light was still in susan said.  
  
Well that settled it elsie said jumping out of bed.  
  
Come on Addie she said as she went over to her little sister.  
  
Ok let me out on a sweater I'm cold. Addie grabbed a sweater and Elsie and Susan did too. As the ship sailed further towards the artic the nights were becoming increasingly chillier.  
  
Ok everyone ready susan said.  
  
Well maybe we shouldn't Elsie replied suddenly feeling shy.  
  
Will be fine Susan said.  
  
Maybe we could bring her something Elsie mused that way it's no like we're just barging in.  
  
Something like what, a pony Susan said with a faint smile she tried to hide.  
  
Elsie rolled her eyes yes lets being her a pony I'm sure there all out grazing on the upper deck.  
  
I was thinking more along the lines of a nice snack.  
  
I would love some warm cocoa with whip cream Addie said.  
  
They patterned out into the ships narrow halls as they made their way Aup to the galley.  
  
It sure is quiet in here tonight elsie said everybody must be upstairs riding the ponies.  
  
It's not called the upstairs on a ship susan said.  
  
Elsie rolled her eyes again then went on mischievously all I know is were in the basement and we need to go upstairs to the kitchen.  
  
Susan ignore her come on let's go.!  
  
Elsie knocked timidly on the door she wasn't feeling so bold anymore.  
  
Come in a pretty voice said from the other side of the door.  
  
Elsie timidly opened the door I hope we didnt wake you?  
  
Oh know she laughed im a night owl.  
  
Then she added quickly who is we?  
  
Oh Elsie said just me and my two sisters.  
  
Oh come in come in anna stood up and opene the door. Hi Addie she said warmly.  
  
We brought you some coca Addie said.  
  
Oh you girls are too sweet she said.  
  
Elsie and everyone sat at the ships rails staring out at the frozen artic town. People live here she asked incedullouslly?  
  
Yes professor james replied. They get around with sleds but it is a very remote village the island can only be reached by ships. But even though it's remote it's a fairly large little city and there are some fun shops we can visit.  
  
As you can see its a fairly busy port for gold miners adventures and cargo ships.  
  
Elsie felt a little nervous about getting off with all those rough people who might be living there. She realized the ship was starting to feel a little like home with their cost little bedroom.  
  
At that moment Addie came up on deck looking like a little blond Eskimo with her thick fur coat surrounding her face like a mane.  
  
Hi Addie Elsie said. Addie smiled Back what a strange city that is. Where are we?  
  
Susan said I'm not sure but somewhere getting closer to the artic.  
  
  
Ya and I think we are going to go ashore soon Elsie said. Some of the crew were working to ready the bit as it approached the rustic looking harbor.  
  
Lord Byron came over looking dashing and adventurous. Wanna go ashore and look around be asked?  
  
Yes the girls all exclaimed.  
  
It is safe right Susan asked a little timidly.  
  
Oh of course he laughed. Well I suppose it can get a little rough but wi be fine he smiled. They climbed aboard the smaller boat and two of the crew rowed them to to dock. They then climbed up the ladder to the large and aged wooden peor. The city spread out before them wooden bushes and shops that sheltered in the small valley. Steep mountains covered in pine and fir forest towered around the little port town. Higher up the trees were wreathed in clouds and mist that rose to the gray skyline. Quite a site Elsie said taking it all in as they stood atop the pier they turned and looked ou  at the sheltered bay full of ships and boats.  
  
I can't believe anyone lives here Susan responded it seems so remote but is awfully pretty.  
  
Yes I think there is some charm for some people in being Away from things, the pioneer spirit as the Yankees would say. I find it a bit appealing but i think ok more of an expeditionary person, it's nice to get out in the solitude but it also feels good to get back.  
  
So and you should see it in the winter lord Byron said. They get a lot of snow here.  And it's very isolated also for a couple months it's dark all year round.  
  
Oh I don't know if I'd like that much dark Elsie said.  
  
Yes but they also get about a month of sun.  
  
Well at the sake of sounding difficult I'm not sure id like that either Elsie laughed.  
  
I agree Byron said its fun to experience though. We're going have some long dark nights before were safely on the other side of our adventure. And even if you prepare dr it it's still a bit rough. Good companions are critical to keeping your spirits up.  
  
They headed off the dock and into the interesting town. It reminded Elsie of a fort somewhat with it's remote location.  
  
It was fun looking at all the strange buildings and shops and adventurous looking people.  
  
There is actually  a really delicious restaurant here that we can go to when we get hungry.  
  
I hope that's soon laughed Elsie I should have eaten more breakfast Byron pulled out his watch well it is 1 already definitely lunch time. Who else is hungry?  
  
I am both Susan and Addie jumped in. Well that makes four of ya said Byron it's off to lunch!  
  
They made there way up a street that wound up the hill. They shops were surprisingly well kept up be brightly panted  
  
It's pretty nice here susan said.  
  
Ya I'm. Little less worried about food poisoning now Elsie laughed.  
  
You'll love this place Byron said trust me he smiled.  
  
Then he tried to nonchablty say so when you asked anna to come what did she say.  
  
Susan gave Elsie a quick sly smile.  
  
Then said she had some reading to finish to finish and said she would come later.  
  
Quite right.  
  
Ah did she say would want to meet us , I oh don't want her to feel left out.  
  
She didnt say Elsie said feeling a bit bad.  
  
Well no matter Byron said Elsie thought it seemed like he was trying to seem cheerful but she couldn't tell.  
  
The best minute he was back to his normal self as he began to describe the food choices they had. There stew is amazing especially on a cold artic day like today.  
  
Oh that sounds delicious Susan said so they have good bread?  
  
Oh yes Byron said enthusiastically the best all made fresh. They reached the place it was warm and inciting. They sat at a nice booth in the back.  
  
They ordered the stew and fresh warmed bread for everyone.  
 After the meal they went looking at some of the other shops on the street, they were full of all kinda of interesting things.  
  
Addie found a small beautiful telescope that she couldn't put down, look at this Elsie she said.  
  
Susan and Elsie crowded around oh that is wonderful. It's a shame it's so expensive.  
  
Yes Addie sighed I think I'm gonna save up and get one.  
  
You'll have to save you allowance for Elsie scrunched her face trying to concentrate two and a half years.  
I think it would be worth it Addie said.  
We could look at the stars. There so lovely and far away.  
  
I know Elsie said I've always loved the idea of them.  
I think I'm gonna try to save up and get one Addie said thoughtfully.  
  
Talking about there allowance made them all realize they missed there father. I hope we find father soon. Me too Susan said.  
  
Think of how much fun it would be he gather were with us.  
  
Elsie sighed. Will find him again I'm sure of it.  
  
Addie carefully set the telescope back and they walked over to where Byron was browsing the apparel.  
  
I think I'm gonna buy this he said, holding up an enormously  ugly flannel shirt.  
  
Eww Elsie said without thinking.  
  
Elsie! Susan jumped in, mind your manners  
  
You don't like it Byron laughed here's the thing, he lowered his voice in a conspiratorial manner. Where were going there's not a lot of people or ladies but there is a lot of cold and this is just the type of thing I would want for that.  
  
He smiled broadly holding it up.  
  
What do you think he said holding it up to Susan. Well she said, it is rather, er lovel well it does look like it would keep you warm.  
  
Warm and single Elsie laughed.  
  
Even Susan tried to hold back a laugh.  
  
What about anna Elsie burst out with out thinking then clapped her hands over her mouth.  
  
Susan grabbed her Elsie you brat!  
  
Addie tried to hide a giggle.  
  
That settled it Byron said I'm buying it for sure. Like I said no one I need to impress.  
  
They went up to the shopkeeper a rather burly women, oh my that is lovely she said.  
  
Thank you Byron said.  
  
They went out side and Byron said oh wait one second. He went back in the shop. And came out with a package. He handed it to Addie.  
  
What's this Addie asked her heart rising at the shape of the long circular package. P  
  
Open it Byron beamed with joy.  
  
Oh no you don't have to buy us anything both Elsie and Susan exclaimed.  
  
We can share it! Addie said  
  
No no he laughed I got this lovely coat and Addie got something we all need a surprise besides I won't be able to buy anything for mounts I gotta get it out if my system.  
  
Well that is very kind of you Elsie said.  
  
Great it's settled he said as he put on his new flannel coat. How's it look. He was so handsome and dashing he looked good in anything. Well Elsie said its a little better then I expected.  
  
As Susan and Elsie went about the store exclaiming in joy he leaned over to Addie and whispered can you keep a secret  
  
Yes she said.  
  
Well I know it's really quite hideous, a monstrosity of fashion. Which is why I plan to wear it around my father at all times especially at fancy events.  
  
Addie giggled I think I'm starting to like it.  
  
They might the girls talked  
  
Oh look at this Susan Elsie called from across the store holding up a beautiful globe. With this will never be lost again. Susan laughed yes and you could for it nicely in your back pocket.  
  
Hmm yes that's true Elsie said maybe I should look for something practical for the trip.  
  
Oh I know what I am going to get Susan said holding up a beautiful coat that looked both stylish and warm.  
  
I like that Elsie said. I think I wanna get the same thing but in this color she said holding up anothe style of one.  
  
Lord Byron Susan called I think we found what we want.  
  
Are you sure it's ok?  
  
Oh yes he said in fact I insist.  
  
And now I say we should head to the markets  and load up on some fresh provisions and snacks.  
  
They all piled into their bunks for the evening,  well that was a fun day  Susan said. They were all sitting on Addie's bed curled up in their warm blankets and snacking on the candy they had purchased in the market.  
  
This chocolate is really good I think it has orange in it, hey we should see if anna would like some.  
  
That's a good idea Addie replied enthusiastically.  
  
Ill get her Elsie said my jumping up by with her blanket still earlier tightly around her.  
  
She hurried lightly out the door and down the hall padding with her bare feet on the cold ships floor. I should have grabbed my slippers she thought to herself. She was quickly at Anna's door and the might was on. She knocked quietly.  
  
Come in her soft and beautiful voice rang out.  
  
Hello Elsie said shyly she still wasn't totally comfortable around anna, she seemed so stylish and quiet and intelligent. But she felt of she got to know her, maybe she had misjudged her. She seemed so kind the last time they had spoken.  
  
Elsie gathered her courage,  do you like candy? We got some in the town and wanted to share it with you do you wanna come down to our cabin?  
Addie and is cabin Susan had her own side rolls but she is with us she blurted out all at once.  
  
Anna smiled oh thank you I'dive to. They both quickly padded back down the cold hall into their room.  
  
Hi girls anna said cheerfully.  
We missed you today Susan said you should have joined us!  
  
Yes I should have she laughed I got ashore for a little while.  
  
What! You should have joined us Elsie exclaimed.  
  
I looked for you she said I want ashore very long though.  
  
Want some chocolate  Addie said. We have orange flavored, caramel, mint dark chocolate all kinds.  
  
Anna's face lit up oh yes please she smiled I love candy it's my weekness.  
  
Ya lord Byron bought them for us. An he bought me this Addie said pulling ou a cloth case and showing anna her telescope.  
  
Are you sleeping with it Elsie asked.  
  
Yes Addie said I'm rather excited about It.  
  
Oh your adorable Elsie said giving Addie a hug.  
  
Anna smiled I wish I had sisters growing up.  
  
Well it's not all fun and games Elsie said giving a knowing look towards Susan.  
  
Susan caught the look why you little brat she laughed.  
  
Is he stuck up he seems rather conceited.  
  
Oh no he is really nice and kind. He bought us all really nice gifts today.  
  
Look at that james stood looking in awe at the bright green landmass towering above them.  
  
I don't believe it Byron mumbled this is impossible.  
  
This isn't on any of the maps Anna said. This is just supposed to be ice and ocean but look how green and rugged a everything is.  
  
It looks like a another world Elsie whispered.  
  
Yes I've never seen anything like it Susan said.  
  
Are we going to land there Elsie asked.  
  
Yes yes we have to james said.  
  
The ocean became treble lent and the waves choppy.  
  
Some people get caught between the two worlds and disappear for a whole and some forever.  
  
Big attack on city  
  
Sanctuary where connect  
  
Why would they do that Elsie whispered.  
  
  
Chapter 5  
She was nervous as they drove up the bumpy dirt road to mr potters house. It was a nice night even though it had been quite hot that day, uncomfortably warm in fact the kind of late fall day where the summer tries to flex it's muscles a few last times afraid of being forgotten as the months (days slowly) fade to winter. Now it was cooling off, the sky was mostly blue but scattered clouds were drifting in from the west she stared as the setting sun set them to brilliant shades of pastels pinks and whites.  
  
I wish we were going to a wedding she broke the silence with.  
  
A wedding he replied?  
  
Yes with lanterns hanging from the trees and dancing late into the night. And everyone would comment why miss Elsie what a fancy car your arriving in, and I would reply thank you very much it belongs to my chauffeur mr professor.  
  
The professor laughed you can call me by my last name or first name if you would like  
  
Ok she said, and this is my chauffeur mr Charles she joked using his last name.  
  
Yes weddings are lovely he said quite lovely i also like graduations I like to see all the students in their fine robes and all the lovely family's so proud and happy and everyone dressed up.  
  
Oh yes  , Elsie said and the best part of weddings and graduations the punch and the cake! I think I love sparkling raspberry punch the most.  
  
Elsie paused suddenly serious again I do hope everything goes ok, he's not, not dangerous is he?  
  
No, no I don't think so, i hope not, strange, cracked, sad eccentric but dangerous no  all though I haven't seen him in quite sometime in fact maybe you better wait in the car he said.  
  
Oh no your not leaving me out of the action! she responded  
  
Ok well all the same I do hope we get there soon id rather we speak to him while it's still light out  
  
Why is that she said?  
  
Well mostly because the night can play games on us and our fears can make us see what isn't there.  
  
All the same, oh would you look at that here is our turn. He slowed abruptly and turned up an overgrown looking lane dense on both sides with trees and bushes and thick undergrowth. At one point they passed what looked like the remains of an overgrown garden. It looked sad and lonely in fact the whole area had a forlorn and forgotten feel to it.  
  
Elsie peered out the window as they bumped up the road it felt like they were leaving civilization all together.  
A wild forest began to grow around them and  after about 15 minutes  of climbing and bumping up the road it opened up to a meadow with a worn out looking house. Overgrown blackberry bushes grew all over one side and the whole place had an air of disrepair.  
  
Elsie reConsidered the offer to stay in the car.  
  
Well the professor said, doesn't look to promising now does it?  
  
No Elsie said and the dusk is creeping upon us fast I hope he is quite sane. She doubted anyone sane would live by themselves in the old house they had arrived at.  
  
The professor opened the car door and Elsie heard the crunch of gravel as he stepped out into the rocky driveway.  
Elsie opened her door and together they walked with trepid steps up to the house. A cool evening breeze blew around them as They ascended the rickety stairs to the yellowish house with its faded and peeling paint, at the top they both stopped.  
  
Ohh my the professor said, look at the view,  
Elsie turned and over the tops of the woods saw the great ocean stretched out before them. It's beautiful she whispered, just think what wild lands lay out there so far away.  
  
Yes the professor replied  
  
They stared quietly at the view the setting sun lit the ocean and hung glowing orange setting both the sky and ocean alight with shades of orange reflecting and  
  
You know Elsie said, I always wanted to have an adventure but I pictured it quite different then this.  
  
Yes the professor agreed a wise author once said that  
  
Yes and i suppose being locked up is hardly an adventure but right now I'm nervous and I'm scared but theirs also beauty.  
  
They sat in silence as the sun touched its feet slowly into the great ocean. It seemed to shake them both out of their reverie as they turned slowly on the creaky front porch. The professor knocked on the door, once twice, three times and waited. No response.  
  
Nothing  
Silence  
  
The professor tried again, this time louder  but still no reply.  
 They waited and waited it felt like an eternity,  
  
  
Well i suppose ill give it one more go, we may have wasted a trip up here.  
  
Elsie felt relieved but also faintly disappointed she wanted to meet the man who shared such a similar experience but was also afraid of what she might learn.  
  
The professor knocked loudly for the last time and they both waited.  
  
Well the professor started then they heard a cranky muffled voice, I'm coming!"  
  
 The rusty door handle turned and the door opened slowly to a dark interior.  An aged man slowly opened the door his movements were slow and fit his aged appearance.  
  
"Mr potter!" she exclaimed in a whisper  
  
Well I see you know me at any rate though I don't know you he said gruffly.  
  
She barely noticed his gruff manner what she did notice were his eyes,  
Alive bright piercing even beautiful all the more shocking given the wrinkled skin and decrepit appearance of the man before them. He was dressed in an outdated  black suit and had a old rifle in his hand.  
  
Elsie hung nervously back behind the professor she had grabbed ahold of his coat without even realizing it as she tore her eyes away from his gaze she noticed how decrepit and ran down the place was.  
He was still clutching his rifle, begone He said in a heavy English  accent ill call the constable this is private property. His voice sounded tired and aged.  
  
You know him the professor said?  
  
  
But James the professor said don't you recognize me?  
  
Ehh he said taking off his glasses, why if it isn't Charles the rumors running out, need to come up here and stir up some more?  
  
No no nothing of the sort james I never meant you anything but happiness and I've always tried to believe you, even when I feel you had lost faith in your self.  
  
James stood staring at them, oh i recognize you your that Simmons girl aren't you?  
  
Yes sir Elsie replied still clutching the professors suit coat.  
  
Your sister  doesn't seem to think much of me she scare easy?  
He broke into a harsh laugh that sounded quite insane.  
  
Well Elsie said pausing for time as she tried to decide how to go on without offending him. Susan can be bit shy around her elders she said.  
  
James, the professor broke in with (a calm authority in his voice) more authority then she had ever heard from him. The girls been through a lot her and her whole family, in fact that's the reason for this whole visit.  
  
James stared at them intensely with his bright piercing eyes.  
  
I'm sorry but I don't want to talk and now if youll excise me, bang! He slammed the door.  
  
Well I think that went rather well the professor said with a slight hint of sarcasm.  
  
James he called aloud, I know your a good man and not time or loneliness could ever take that from you. This girls lost her family and been through a lot and If there is any decency left in you you'll give us a few minutes of your time and will be in our way.  
  
They waited. The door slowly turned on its rusty hinges, well blast it come in he said.  
  
Chapter 6  
I suppose you'll be wanting tea he said gruffly?  
  
Elsie shared a quick look with the professor that seemed to agree that they wouldn't want any food or drink that he would have in this old place.  
  
They walked out of the parlor through a dim dark and dirty hall. The carpet was old and brown and dirty and the walls were grimy with dirt and use. She could only imagine how dirty and decrepit the place would look if it wasn't so dark and dismal.  
  
They got to the back of the house (which was quite large) and sat down at a small dirty farmhouse table. There were two windows that were grimy with what looked like years of  
Dirt and filth. The curtains were pulled shut and with the setting sun their was very little light.  
  
I'm not sure i want any of his tea Elsie whispered to the professor the second he was gone.  
  
I don't blame you the professor said ill se what I can do if anything just leave the tea cup in front of you, I feel like he would be offended easily.  
  
He sure is a strange one Elsie whispered back,  
  
Dont worry the professor replied seeming to grasp the deeper meaning and fear in her whisper. You two are quite different he said. But inside the professor felt Aa slight twinge of doubt. He saw more alike in the two then different both bright, attractive and likable. He vowed to himself to do everything in his power two keep Elsie from ending up like James; and if possible to help james recover some of the life and promise that had slipped away from him leaving him isolated and forever alone.  
 As he was thinking these thoughts  
He tottered back in with three cups  
  
He sat down wearily. Well I suppose I should tell you the full truth, I'm afraid you won't find it nearly as adventurous or engaging as the long years have made it seem, or for that matter my own embellishments.  
  
I've made some mistakes, he began slowly while playing with the handle on his tea cup; spinning it one way the slowly turning it back on the small saucer.  
 I often think about what drive me to them. I think that the root of it was that I always wanted attention, my father was a hard man and he drove me relentlessly when I was young.  I could never earn his approval I was just a piece of flotsam drifting about and underfoot. I never really felt like I fit in.  
But James Charles interrupted, you were always the most popular person growing up everyone adored you! Think of the fun all of our friends the adventures we had. We were all so close.  
 James paused for a while, "You can develop curious habits as a child that stay with you your whole life. "  
Anyways I have better things to do then talk to you to so ill hurry up my story and then I'm afraid you need to leave.  
 At that moment Elsie heard a Strange tap on the window, she turned to look and also Noticed  an anxious look from James. She also noticed something else his movement was quick and rapid. She was surprised by his sudden movement.  
  
He continued to stare out the window then carried on with his story it was obvious he was trying to act like nothing had happened.  
  
Like I said I was young and stupid and quite frankly tired of the military.  
I came up with a wild plan to disappear I felt like it would solve all my problems. I could get away from the military,  and I felt it would make my father and family realize they loved me and wanted me around.  
  
Would you like some more tea he said? Elsie realized with horror she had been drinking from one of his dirty cups. What was even stranger the tea was some of the best she had. She quickly thought well if I'm gonna get sick I mylse well have some more.  
  
Yes please that would be kind of you she said.  
  
She noticed the professor had been drinking his too.  
  
And I suppose you'll be wanting more to he said gruffly to James. But Elsie sensed a slight pleasure in his voice she though maybe he was glad they liked his tea.  
  
Yes please James replied. If its not to much trouble.  
  
Of course it's too much trouble he replied again crankily but your here so I can't very well turn you out like a bunch of beggars.  
  
As James left the room she whispered, half joking were both Gonna die I bet he has never washed those cups.  
  
Yes Charles joked back but the tea is good I suppose their are worse ways to go though I would have preferred something a little more heroic myself but all and all it seems rather fitting for an Englishman, or woman .  
  
So basically i set the whole thing up, I hadn't planned to but the opportunity presents itself in Egypt and in a Heath pounding moment that was both freeing and terrifying I slipped away.  
  
When you weren't paying attention I snuck out the back I had a guide put a camel. I rode back to the city and caught a steamer for America. I sailed west and spent time gold mining, as you can see from my place I didn't have much luck he said wryly. I planned to come back after a year but I ran into some legal trouble and spent 9 Years in jail. I found out through some friends you planned to go back to visit the pyramids and decided to show up. It was all a big joke to me but my time in prison had been rough and I had grown jaded  I had 9 long Yeats in jail to make up my stories.  
  
  
But I was homesick, not they the states are a bad place  
Prof asks. Question and catches his lie  
 There are words for people like me and I'm still sane enough to know there not nice.  
  
Well that's the whole truth and now if you'll excuse me I'm rather busy this evening.  
He stood up and walked them to the front door and out to their car. He hobbled on his came but made it down the steps then shuffled alongside them to their car.  
  
He hovered around them Elsie also noticed he was clutching something in his right hand and that he seemed rather tense.  
  
No one said anything as he walked with them.  
  
the professor opened Elsie's door for her and she settled into the nice comfortable car.  The car felt familiar and safe especially given the woods around the house which now seemed more foreboding in the dark.  
  
As Charles got in on the driver side  James said, i would stay in the car tell your long past the woods, and  Charles I do hope you can forgive me? I never meant any harm to anyone I'm an d tried man who still hasn't seen the folly of his ways.  
  
James the professor responded I've always admirer you ever since we were kids and that hasn't changed, good night to you will be safe and I think we will be in the car tell we get back to London, I don't particularly fancy a night stroll this evening.  
  
Right james responded, well Good evening to you both he said to them both and then, bang. The door closed abruptly and they were out of the cold chilly air. Safe and snug in the car.  
  
Once the doors were closed they started their bumpy trip down the dirt road. Elsie looked in the rear view mirror and saw him watching them from the porch. Then they rounded a sharp curve and the pine trees abruptly hid him from view.  
  
They were both silent with their thoughts both thinking through what has just occurred.  
  
Eventually the professor said, what did you make of all that?  
  
It was very strange Elsie said pensively. His talk about the woods and not getting out made me a bit scared. Though everything is scary in a dark forest. When will we reach the main road? Elsie said trying to keep her voice steady. She knew she was being a bit silly but the long day and visit had left her a little jumpy.  
  
I think any minute he responded  Ah yes here comes the turn up ahead now.  
  
When they were back on the main road and had picked up some speed Elsie brought up something that had been bothering her, Did you see how quickly he turned when their was that noise on the window?  
  
Yes I did the professor said.it was very strange it didn't fit his decrepit appearance, I also noticed something else  
  
What was that said Elsie?  
  
Well his left ear had no hair on it, I'm sure Susan would have been rather disappointed  
  
Elsie laughed yes she is rather fond of ear hair.  
  
The laugh quickly turned to a sharp stab of homesickness she suddenly wanted to cry she missed her sisters and father and mother so much.  
  
The professor, who was always more perceptive then his absent minded mannerisms let on quickly said we are going to get them back  
  
Thank you Elsie said, they were quiet again until they had driven a ways, now they were passing quickly by the lights of a small village .  
Then something suddenly came back to her did you notice his eyes? So bright so alive, they didnt match him either!  
  
Oh definitely they stood out to me the second he opened the door. they seem to be growing brighter and more piercing with age. No, i feel there is something more about James then he is letting on.  
  
I'd love to get the truth out of him. But it's hard i have a had a number of meetings with him over the last twenty years and he has always been very closed off, tonight was the most open he has ever been. Well since before he disappeared he was very open to me when we were younger.  
  
They were back on the main highway and traveling at a good pace on the nice smooth pavement. Elsie leaned her head against the window and stared at the passing scenery her mind full of thoughts.  
  
Finally she brought up another question that had been bothering her, I wonder what he is so afraid of?  
  
Yes the professor said it could very well be that his mind is slipping, there are a lot of signs that he is not quite right so some paranoia and delusions  would be a rather unsurprising outcome from that.  
  
Elsie could tell something was going through the professors head.  
  
What are you thinking about she said?  
  
Well hmm,  well it's rather uncharacteristic  of me I don't know if I should say he smiled a conspiratorial smile.  
  
Oh tell me Elsie said I won't judge.  
  
Ok well I used to be quite a huntsman back in my youth, only for.  
  
Your gonna shoot him! Elsie jumped in with.  
Oh no no good gracious no, is that what you think of me?  
  
Elsie laughed I was kidding but come on you did kinda set yourself up for that.  
  
So the professor went on, what I was going to say was I was thinking of setting up a deer stand down at the edge of his driveway to see if I notice anything suspicious.  
  
I have some graduate students that would probably love a break from collecting algae blooms.  
  
That's a good idea Elsie said normally I wouldn't approve of spying but I feel this is a rather unique situation and I feel he is up to something too.  
  
Nothing for a solid week. He was about to give up when one of his grad students arthur had some exciting news.  
  
Well arthur said I was sitting there eating some cold bangers and mash I don't recommend it. He said. Well the boredom was pretty bad I had a penny dreadful by it was a bit dul too. Well I see a great limousine pulling up the driveway. I hopped on mu moped and waited.  
I followed them to the airport very carefully and watched the gentleman get out.  
What did he look like Elsie said?  
Oh a cranky old man too hat cane ya know the like.  
  
  
James sat hunched over he looked like a defeated man.  
  
Elsie felt a little sorry for him. He seemed both shy and reticent and rubbed his hands on his trousers in a nervous manner. While nervous his movements were swift and sure; not the movement of an elderly man.  
  
I do ask your forgiveness he said in a strong clear voice, strong And yet somehow faltering. What I intend to tell you is the total truth, the truth as I know it or at Least as I perceive it to be.  
I will be totally open i just ask for your understanding. I an to tell you everything I know and also what I suspect. I will also fill you in on what i have learned.  
Like I said some of this is conjecture from my research.  
  
The first thing is my disappearance. No matter what I have said throughout the years is what I will say is the total truth according to my perception of the events. The tome between when I disappeared and when I was found again seemed no more to me than at most a could hours. I remember clearly falling asleep and I thought that at most an hour had gone by. I remember thinking it was strange that I had fallen asleep I had just sat down for no more then what I thought was a few minutes to rest my eyes.  
  
When I came back out and saw everyone I was still feeling a bit Groggy but totally clueless as to what had happened.  
  
I used to wonder if I had imagined the whole thing. But things have happened since then that Leave no doubt that something did and is still happening,  
  
 That day I had no more recollection of time passing I thought an hour or two at most had gone by. I was shocked and terrified when the reality I had been missing ten years hit me. Not only that but I knew no one believed me. I began to question my own sanity. Where had I been that whole time? I still do question my sanity.  
  
Sitting in that military prison was one of the darkest times of my life  
  
Elsie was surprised by how intensely he talked and by how young he looked at times.  
  
So all of that is true at least according to my own understanding. At the time I had no idea where I had been even know I don't fully know but I do have some strong guesses.  
  
When I got out I felt my life was in shambles my father had been a military man himself, served in India and had risen to colonel before leaving to join the family business.  
  
The first thing I did when I got out of prison was to go back home but my family wanted nothing to do with me. I think my mother would have reconciled but my father believed me a coward and a disgrace, I was about to be deployed on a rather dangerous assignment and the rumors were that I was a coward. I've still got four white feathers sitting besides my bed; my life goal to get them taken back. But I've rather failed at that.  
He paused and sighed running his hands through his long hair. Elsie noticed the roots of his hair were dark black.  
  
She realized james had come out of his stupor and caught her looking so she quickly looked away.  
  
I think that something, he paused searching for the right words, I think that something happened while I was away. I believe I may have slipped away from the chains of mortality.  
  
He paused with a far away look on his face  
  
I don't believe this chains anymore bind me. For how long I don't know but something has happened to me.  
  
Elsie took the moment to share a look with the professor that seemed to say, he's mad, quite mad.  
  
All the comments more alarming Elsie thought since he has moments of such clarity and sanity.  
  
The place that we would call Atlantis and their angry they believe that by severing the ties to our world  
  
Have you heard Cortez he went on?  
  
James paused seeming to be most in his own thoughts. Elsie looked out the window at the Oceanside in the distance.  
  
  
  
Gil Pérez  
Have you heard of Perez? He said abruptly changing the subject.  
  
Noboth Elsie and the professor responded.  
  
Well it's a very curious story, a myth and a legend but fairly well documented and very strange I've looked into it extensively and believe it to be the truth.  
  
He was a Spanish solider he slipped out of time and space oh and this was a while ago the 16th century.  It started out as a normal evening for Perez. It was the night of October 24, 1593 and he was guarding the Governor's palace in Manila .  
  
Something significant had happened the night before. The Governor Gómez Pérez Dasmariñas had been assassinated by Chinese pirates.  
  
Wait interjected Elsie so then why were they guarding the palace?  
  
Oh James went on because it was still a government building and the soldiers and garrison would still function as normal well mostly normal I don't quite know how the soldiers felt of they were happy he was gone or mourning his loss but either way they still maintained military protocol. It was a major event but news traveled more slowly in the 16th century.  
  
Oh that makes sense Elsie said.  
  
Well Perez began feeling ill he became dizzy and exhausted he closed his eyes to rest and when he opened them he had no idea where he was obviously he was panicked and he had potentially just deserted his post,  
  
That sounds familiar said the professor,  
  
Yes James said falling through time can have rather negative consequences on ones personal life.  
  
Well he was obviously disoriented and confused and was found by some guards on Mexico City who did not recognize his uniform. As they questioned him he frantically tried to make them understand he had been on the Philippines a few minutes ago.  
  
Well everyone was confused at first but eventually he was arrested for desertion of his post and he was also suspected of dark arts.  
  
He had told the soldiers and other people about the assassination of the governor which had happens the day before so it was impossible he would have known and been able to travel that far by the next day. Naturally when news reached Mexico City everyone was shocked. Eventually he was freed and he faded into obscurity.  
  
What do you think that has to do with you or Elsie the professor asked.  
  
  
  
He was stationed in the Philippines and in the blink of an eye was transferred to the Plaza Mayor in Mexico City. Of course no one believed him or that he had come from the Philippines.  
  
He was  
  
 they can recover what they lost.  
  
  
Also Elsie burst in I didn't believe one word about his story I'm not sure what happened to him but I don't think he sailed to america.  
  
No the professor said and when I asked him about  
  
One other thing that stood out said the professor.  
I'm bit buying one but of it, did you notice his left ear?  
  
  
Oh Addie she burst out into tears at how thin and gaunt her little sister looked. Her pretty face seemed to be lined with sadness and worry, but her face lit up as she threw herself on Elsie. Elsie hugged her tightly back happy but worried about how thin and frail she felt. Elsie realized she was crying but that Her warm tears were tears of joy now at hugging her little sister again.  
  
They sat down on the cold hard bed, Elsie looked around the room which was more like a prison an realized she had it better off then her younger sister. She pulled Addie tight and wrapped her arm around her delicate little shoulders as they both sat in happy silence at being reunited.  
  
 They sad you were dead Addie whispered quietly as if even saying the words was too terrible.  
  
No Elsie said I'm not and Susan's not either.  
  
  
I love what you've done to the place Elsie joked sarcastically.  
  
What do they feed you in this place Elsie asked her motherly instincts coming out.  
  
Mostly stale bread and water that tastes far to much like minerals. Sometimes some wilted vegetables.  
  
Oh Elsie Addie burst out I wish you could stay. She higher her sister tighter.  
  
Don't give up hope Elsie said. She knew they were being watched and didn't want to give anything away but she knew Addie needed something to hold into. She leaned close and whispered ever so quietly in Addie's ear "soon".  
  
Addie have her a strong smile.  
  
She knew Addie was fragile an the hopeless months had been hard  in her.  
  
So what happened to father Elsie said?  
  
Well it was terrible Addie replied.  
  
You don't have to talk about it if you don want to Addie said.  
  
No it's ok and seeing you gives me hope we can find him.  
  
We all got home and couldn't find you. Father was growing increasingly worried as the minutes stretched on. We searched the whole house over and over. Susan was terrified you should have seen her we had to stop for a few minutes for father to calm her. She was sobbing and couldn't catch her breath, it makes me ache inside just to remember. Elsie hugged her closer as she went on.  
  
Father asked me to stay with Susan in case you came back then hurried out and saddled shadow he said he was going to the cairns but he never came back oh it was terrible Addie sobbed.  
  
Susan and I sat holding each other waiting, waiting the world felt desolate and empty. Some how the sun rose as dawn spread its pale cold light over the world. Susan and I cried  and cried we decided to go out looking to but couldn't find anything.  
  
in the morning We didnt know what to do so we went down to the police station. There was a Massive search but nothing turned up.  
  
CHAPTER  
  
  
CHAPTER  
  
The two worlds are tearing apart but they are bound together the dark matter between the two works like a form of gravity. The danger is that we fear the pull is forcing the earth out of its orbit and towards the sun we also fear that it is not an accident but is an intentional act to destroy this world.  
  
Who would do that Elsie whispered.  
Who? Whom? what? We're not sure we think it may be a dark entity that was banished from this works ages ago. A god if you will, but that being set up this tragedy and we fear others are continuing it.  
  
Why would they do that? Well we think they feel they are helping they want to let out those being imprisoned eons ago in the depths of time.  
  
  
  
  
They think there doing good to save the world from expiation.  
  
She felt they were sailing through space and time the air felt strangely charged. Everyone was quiet lost in there own thoughts.  
  
  
CHAPTER  
He pulled out a curious looking case with a look of reverence written across his aged face. Elsie looked nervously over at the professor, he too sat enraptured.  
  
Professor smith sat quietly staring at the curious and ancient box. It was covered in strange runes and heliographs. There also appeared to be some sort of ancient writing on it. The wood was dark and aged looking.  
  
It could have been her imagination but Elsie felt a strange sense of electricity in the room. She also felt drawn to touch the box but also terrified at the idea of touching it. The box seemed to fill the whole room and she couldn't take her wyes away from it.  Something inside her was being strongly drawn to the box.  
She wasn't sure how long she sat gazing at the box and it quickly had filled her mind, everything else seemed to have vanished from her attention.  
  
It was in this reverie that She felt a gentle hand on her arm and realized she was leaning out towards it, about to touch it, professor smith was gently holding her back, please forgive me he said it does have a curious draw and I am not totally convinced of its safety.  
  
Elsie sat back red faced and embarrassed by her impudence. I'm sorry she said I really am that was rude of me, she couldn't believe she had almost touched such a rare and valuable artifact.  
  
Don't mention it he said with a smile. I know you meant no harm and I don't show the case often; and anyways you helped confirm what I already suspected.  
  
What do you suspect the professor asked,  
  
well many things but the one to which i was just referring had to do with the draw the artifact and its contents have on people, some individuals seem to be more drawn to it then others but everyone seems to be pulled in by it also the pull seems to increase the longer your around it.  
  
I spend time researching it but feel that it May be risky to engage in prolonged research that involves directly handling or viewing the item.  
 Do you think it's dangerous Elsie said?  
  
I do he said but not for short periods of time. I still run experiments on it about an hour a week and I usually have one of my students keeping on eye on things.  
  
Have you found out anything curious the professor asked?  
  
Sadly I don't feel that I have found anything conclusive. It's not radioactive during one experiment we thought that we had potentially detected a gamma with around a 663 Kev energy deposition. We thought that night be a cesium isotope which emits at 662 Kev but the next times we ran the experiment  
Nothing turned up.  
  
but I think that be  
  
 physical contact greatly increases the draw. I think that's the  the ms  may have negative effects on the mind. Unfortunately my sample size is one, me.  
  
Smith went on, For that reason I never handle it with my bare hands. I did at first a number of times but it burned itself into my mind I couldn't stop dreaming and thinking about it. I would wake in a cold sweat strange visions haunting the fringes of my memory.  It began to worry me an I grew concerned I was losing my mind.  
And it's not just the box but the writing and the contents of the box that seemed to cause these strange effects.  
  
It is a good thing I was teaching that term I missed there straight lecture and one of my graduate students found me almost past out clutching the box. He said I was muttering something in a strange language. I asked him what it was and he said he didn't write it down he called the paramedics. Grad students these days are rather worthless, didnt wrote down what I was saying bah.  
Smith covered the box and leaned back in his chair and smiled. Of course the other scholars all screamed it was a ridiculous hoax.  
  
Ok I asked them then can I let some undergraduate students come in and touch it as part of an experiment.  
  
Preposterous the administrators in their  
  
  
You didn't mention this before the professor said, everyone said it had been a medical condition.  
  
Well yes I'm sorry for misleading you regrettable but necessary smith and really if you think about it did I mislead anyone? Should I tell the dean my condition arises from a curious box? And if you believe that i mislead you that would mean you believe this box was capable of something extraordinary, magical in fact. Do you believe that?  
  
Hmm yes I see your point the professor replied it is a bit far fetched. So what do you believe this box is?  
  
Hmm well I don't like to talk about it, I am rather enjoying my tenure and wouldn't my stayin around as an emeritus but I don't think they would keep a lunatic or a scientific fraud about the place.  
  
I do believe it is otherworldly.  
  
I understand said the professor. How did the box come into your possession?  
  
Ah yes it was an expedition to the Artic, we were studying diatoms,  of course I'm a physicist turned archaeologist so diatoms are not of particular importance to my research the expedition was mostly biologists and one chemist interested in the composition  of ice cores.  
  
Why did you choose to go james asked?  
  
It was a manuscript that I had the fortune of analyzing I think the two are related, can we see it james cut in.  
In his excitement he always became blunt but his glowing face and eager manner made it impossible to be offended by him, he clearly meant no harm his brain just lost touch with social graces.  
  
And what do other scholars say?  
A hoax.  
What about the effects?  
A placebo.  
  
this I've washed ashore in the artic he held up a curios glass ring. It was enshrined in a small see though case the scholar who found this decided to wear it. He also kept a journal.  
  
He paused and stood to go stare out the window. Class had just gotten out and the students were hurrying across the windswept quad as much to get out of the blustery wind as to make it to class on time. Shreds of pale blue sky could be seen through the ragged clouds. We think There is a group trying to steal these artifacts which is not surprising because they clearly possess some great powers.  
  
  
  
Elsie was not expecting such s nice house whoever they are they must be very wealthy she thought.  
  
I do hope there nice she whispered to Susan  
  
Yes Susan replied I'm glad Byron is here he seems to fit in with wealthy people.  
  
  
  
CHAPTER  
Scholars fairly skel  
Artic expedition find one trapped in ice  
  
Elsie felt nervous and excited in the predawn glow of the chilly morning. The airfield was bustling as last minute preparations were made for the dangerous artic expedition. Elsie pulled her hood tighter feeling pale and self conscious she hadnt had time to properly do her hair. And not getting enough sleep always made her feel pale. She looked at herself in the mirror that morning and thought I need to get out in the sun more often.  
  
Susan came in looking beautiful and wide awake like she was going to a fancy wedding, Elsie rolled her eyes and tried to think of something smart to say but couldn't she was far too tired.  
  
She quickly got over it as she watched all the excited energy and bustling of the expedition about to leave.  
  
Addie stumbled sleepily into the hangar, she looked like a beautiful pale ghost hidden beneath her great overcoat.  
  
  
Hi addie Elsie said did you get breakfast.  
  
Oh I don't feel hungry quite yet Addie replied.  
  
Some of the expedition leaders wrte talking they all looked brave and strong. They were mostly from Oxford and edingvrugh university.  
  
  
A young dashing looking gentleman came over he was tall and skinny but muscular and had the look of an English gentleman. He moved with careless ease and was smartly dressed and looked wealthy. He also looked cold and haughty as he focused intently on the loading of a large wooden case.  
  
Lord Byron so glad you could make it! The professor embraced him warmly.  
  
Lord Byron spoke in a thick English accent and moved with athletic and careless ease. Ladies do glad you could make it he shook there hands all warmly and beamed a wide dashing smile at them.  
  
Elsie felt a little nervous hello she said my name is Elsie nice to meet you. Elsie though maybe he was nicer then she imagined he seemed very friendly and his smile made him seem much more approachable.  
And I'm Susan she said pleasure to meet you.  
  
Addie sat quietly in the folds of her great cloak, this is Addie Elsie said.  
  
Lord Byron someone called, got to run I'm sure will be fast friends soon will be spending a lot of time together.  
  
So, Elsie said your a lord? That does sound rather fancy its a shame your nit a night sir Byron has a nice ring to it.  
  
Elsie Susan said he is a knight he was  knighted last year the prof told me.  
  
Titles are meaningless he joked. They all boarded the airship and were soon off soaring above the English Channel. Lord Byron came over with some scones and milk any one hungry he asked cheerfully.  
  
I am Elsie said what about you she asked Addie?  
  
Oh yes please I'm very hungry now. These are delicious Susan exclaimed so fresh.  
  
Yes I picked them up this morning from my favorite bakery, unfortunately we won't have that conscience for long.  
  
A slim and beautiful lady waked in. She looked elegant and delicate  as soon as she noticed them she quickly turned and left.  
  
I tried to talk to her earlier but she didnt seem to want to have anything to do with me.  
  
What Elsie blurted out how could anyone not want to talk to you! She was really starting to like the English gentleman  
  
Well give it a few days he joked I'm sure you'll be quite sick of me.  
  
I do have quite a bit of energy, I was quite the terror as a youngster My parents didn't know what to do with me.  
  
Where are the professor joked. When did this change. I heard about the recent prank you pulled. You really Are quite the ringleader when it comes to making trouble.  
 That is true he laughed, my father was glad ill be up in the artic, Byron stood up doing his best to look stuffy and dignified.  
  
The artic. What the dither are you doing in the artic.  
He stood with his arms folded behind his back as he paced regally Doing his best imitation of his father (which if you know his father you'll realize is quite good)  
  
Well he went on imitating his father At least you'll find it difficult to cause trouble up there nothing but snow and blasted ice. I don't know why you won't be reasonable and settle into banking like your older brothers.  
  
The professor laughed that is a good impression of your father.  
  
The girls all laughed too though they didnt know his father they could imagine a dignified English  banker.  
  
The funny thing is, he went on in his normal voice.  
  
My grandfather was quite the rouge and adventurer. He made out fortune but in his youth he was in and out of prison, lost his temper at a commanding officer and, plunk picked him up and tossed him into the sea.  
He was dishonorably discharged and ended up in a military prison.  
  
I love him though he wasn't a bad sort or a criminal just fiery and full of pasison. My mother says I take after him, but I have yet to end up in prison and I hope to keep it that way.  
  
It was a nice night for sailing, the dead were calm and it was a surprisingly warm night, they sat on the deck bundled in blankets and sweaters Talking and drinking warm cocoa and tea. The professor came out with a plate of warm cookies and freshly cut apples.  
  
Anna backed these he said for us he said.  
  
Is she coming out? Lord Byron asked perhaps a little too quickly no one caught it but susan who cast a knowing glance at Elsie who was too busy with her own love interest, the  
Plate of cookies.  
  
Oh my those do look delicious she said.  
  
No james said she said she had some reading to do and was going back to her bunk.  
  
Ah righto Byron said trying to hide his discouragement those do smell delicious your quite right.  
  
Well if you all going to be polite I'm gonna help mylsekf Elsie said grabbing one with a smile.  
  
Everyone else took one too. Oh my these are delicious Elsie said.  
  
I quite agree Susan said. What do you think Addie Susan said.  
  
Good Addie said with a smile. Elsie knew she would say more if there were less people around.  
  
I could see why being a professor would be nice Susan said. Going on cruises summers off not worries.  
  
Oh hold up a minute james laughed. You might not be paid for the summer but that doesn't mean you won't be working a lot or faculty want a 11 month appointment.  
  
  
Yes and don't forget those frayed students sleeping in your class and forgetting thier homework Benjamin said with a sigh.  
  
  
And piles of data  
  
Mountains of data  
  
And trying to get tenure said Jonas the youngest member who was still only a year into his post doc.  
  
I wouldn't change it for the world though James said.  
  
Me neither they all quickly agreed.  
  
What's that Addie said she pointed to the night sky where a strange blue light was glowing in the distance.  
  
  
  
  
  
They think there doing good to save the world from expiation.  
  
She felt they were sailing through space and time the air felt strangely charged. Everyone was quiet lost in there own thoughts  
  
The girls snuggled into their bunks. The seas were relatively calm and peaceful. As Elsie came in from brushing her teeth Addie was already curled up covered in blankets.  
  
Oh you look cozy Elsie said Addie smiled at her I am and the blankets are perfect it does get cold up in the artic.  
  
Well I don't think we're to the artic yet I imagine its going to get much colder.  
  
Susan walked in hi su Elsie said. Hello Susan said as she flopped down on Addie's bed. You sure look comfortable Susan smiled.  
  
We were just talking about that Elsie said when we are camping out on the ice it's going to get very cold.  
  
I know I'm a little worrie Susan said but I am glad we wi be with such seasoned explorers.  
  
Oh guess what Addie said poking her face out from under her covers. Her blond hair was wild and beautiful.  
  
I talked to Anna I helped her back the cookies.  
  
What! Susan and Elsie both exclaimed.  
  
What's she like  
  
Is she nice  
  
She hasn't said one word the whole trip.  
  
Ya I thought she was a snob who thinks shes to smart for everyone else.  
  
I went to Harvard Elsie said drawing out her words and trying to look conceited.  
  
Yes Susan said she thinks she is too good for lord Byron.  
  
And I don't think you can find anyone more handsome them him.  
  
Except for father Elsie put in.  
  
Yes that's true Susan chimed in.  
  
No she is really nice Addie said I think she is shy.  
  
How did you meet her Elsie asked. Ell I went I to the Kitchen to get a snack and she was starting I back them.  
  
We didnt say anything at first then she said that she thought I was lucky to have two older sisters. She said she was an only child and her parents were both old when she was born and she was raised by her grandma.  
  
Now I want to talk I get Elsie said I wonder if she is still awake.  
  
When I walked by her room it looked like her light was still in susan said.  
  
Well that settled it elsie said jumping out of bed.  
  
Come on Addie she said as she went over to her little sister.  
  
Ok let me out on a sweater I'm cold. Addie grabbed a sweater and Elsie and Susan did too. As the ship sailed further towards the artic the nights were becoming increasingly chillier.  
  
Ok everyone ready susan said.  
  
Well maybe we shouldn't Elsie replied suddenly feeling shy.  
  
Will be fine Susan said.  
  
Maybe we could bring her something Elsie mused that way it's no like we're just barging in.  
  
Something like what, a pony Susan said with a faint smile she tried to hide.  
  
Elsie rolled her eyes yes lets being her a pony I'm sure there all out grazing on the upper deck probably cold to I'm sure they would love to share your bed with you tonight.  
  
They probably wouldn't kick worse then you do Susan quipped back.  
  
Whatever you say miss blanket Steeler.  
  
Well at least for now we all  
Have out own beds. They all giggled.  
  
I was thinking more along the lines of a nice snack.  
  
I would love some warm cocoa with whip cream Addie said.  
  
They patterned out into the ships narrow halls as they made their way Aup to the galley.  
  
It sure is quiet in here tonight elsie said everybody must be upstairs riding the ponies.  
  
It's not called the upstairs on a ship susan said.  
  
Elsie rolled her eyes again then went on mischievously all I know is were in the basement and we need to go upstairs to the kitchen.  
  
Susan ignore her come on let's go.!  
  
Elsie knocked timidly on the door she wasn't feeling so bold anymore.  
  
Come in a pretty voice said from the other side of the door.  
  
Elsie timidly opened the door I hope we didnt wake you?  
  
Oh know she laughed im a night owl.  
  
Then she added quickly who is we?  
  
Oh Elsie said just me and my two sisters.  
  
Oh come in come in anna stood up and opene the door. Hi Addie she said warmly.  
  
We brought you some coca Addie said.  
  
Oh you girls are too sweet she said.  
  
Elsie and everyone sat at the ships rails staring out at the frozen artic town. People live here she asked incedullouslly?  
  
Yes professor james replied. They get around with sleds but it is a very remote village the island can only be reached by ships. But even though it's remote it's a fairly large little city and there are some fun shops we can visit.  
  
As you can see its a fairly busy port for gold miners adventures and cargo ships.  
  
Elsie felt a little nervous about getting off with all those rough people who might be living there. She realized the ship was starting to feel a little like home with their cost little bedroom.  
  
At that moment Addie came up on deck looking like a little blond Eskimo with her thick fur coat surrounding her face like a mane.  
  
Hi Addie Elsie said. Addie smiled Back what a strange city that is. Where are we?  
  
Susan said I'm not sure but somewhere getting closer to the artic.  
  
  
Ya and I think we are going to go ashore soon Elsie said. Some of the crew were working to ready the bit as it approached the rustic looking harbor.  
  
Lord Byron came over looking dashing and adventurous. Wanna go ashore and look around be asked?  
  
Yes the girls all exclaimed.  
  
It is safe right Susan asked a little timidly.  
  
Oh of course he laughed. Well I suppose it can get a little rough but wi be fine he smiled. They climbed aboard the smaller boat and two of the crew rowed them to to dock. They then climbed up the ladder to the large and aged wooden peor. The city spread out before them wooden bushes and shops that sheltered in the small valley. Steep mountains covered in pine and fir forest towered around the little port town. Higher up the trees were wreathed in clouds and mist that rose to the gray skyline. Quite a site Elsie said taking it all in as they stood atop the pier they turned and looked ou  at the sheltered bay full of ships and boats.  
  
I can't believe anyone lives here Susan responded it seems so remote but is awfully pretty.  
  
Yes I think there is some charm for some people in being Away from things, the pioneer spirit as the Yankees would say. I find it a bit appealing but i think ok more of an expeditionary person, it's nice to get out in the solitude but it also feels good to get back.  
  
So and you should see it in the winter lord Byron said. They get a lot of snow here.  And it's very isolated also for a couple months it's dark all year round.  
  
Oh I don't know if I'd like that much dark Elsie said.  
  
Yes but they also get about a month of sun.  
  
Well at the sake of sounding difficult I'm not sure id like that either Elsie laughed.  
  
I agree Byron said its fun to experience though. We're going have some long dark nights before were safely on the other side of our adventure. And even if you prepare dr it it's still a bit rough. Good companions are critical to keeping your spirits up.  
  
They headed off the dock and into the interesting town. It reminded Elsie of a fort somewhat with it's remote location.  
  
It was fun looking at all the strange buildings and shops and adventurous looking people.  
  
There is actually  a really delicious restaurant here that we can go to when we get hungry.  
  
I hope that's soon laughed Elsie I should have eaten more breakfast Byron pulled out his watch well it is 1 already definitely lunch time. Who else is hungry?  
  
I am both Susan and Addie jumped in. Well that makes four of ya said Byron it's off to lunch!  
  
They made there way up a street that wound up the hill. They shops were surprisingly well kept up be brightly panted  
  
It's pretty nice here susan said.  
  
Ya I'm. Little less worried about food poisoning now Elsie laughed.  
  
You'll love this place Byron said trust me he smiled.  
  
Then he tried to nonchablty say so when you asked anna to come what did she say.  
  
Susan gave Elsie a quick sly smile.  
  
Then said she had some reading to finish to finish and said she would come later.  
  
Quite right.  
  
Ah did she say would want to meet us , I oh don't want her to feel left out.  
  
She didnt say Elsie said feeling a bit bad.  
  
Well no matter Byron said Elsie thought it seemed like he was trying to seem cheerful but she couldn't tell.  
  
The best minute he was back to his normal self as he began to describe the food choices they had. There stew is amazing especially on a cold artic day like today.  
  
Oh that sounds delicious Susan said so they have good bread?  
  
Oh yes Byron said enthusiastically the best all made fresh. They reached the place it was warm and inciting. They sat at a nice booth in the back.  
  
They ordered the stew and fresh warmed bread for everyone.  
 After the meal they went looking at some of the other shops on the street, they were full of all kinda of interesting things.  
  
Addie found a small beautiful telescope that she couldn't put down, look at this Elsie she said.  
  
Susan and Elsie crowded around oh that is wonderful. It's a shame it's so expensive.  
  
Yes Addie sighed I think I'm gonna save up and get one.  
  
You'll have to save you allowance for Elsie scrunched her face trying to concentrate two and a half years.  
I think it would be worth it Addie said.  
We could look at the stars. There so lovely and far away.  
  
I know Elsie said I've always loved the idea of them.  
I think I'm gonna try to save up and get one Addie said thoughtfully.  
  
Talking about there allowance made them all realize they missed there father. I hope we find father soon. Me too Susan said.  
  
Think of how much fun it would be he gather were with us.  
  
Elsie sighed. Will find him again I'm sure of it.  
  
Addie carefully set the telescope back and they walked over to where Byron was browsing the apparel.  
  
I think I'm gonna buy this he said, holding up an enormously  ugly flannel shirt.  
  
Eww Elsie said without thinking.  
  
Elsie! Susan jumped in, mind your manners  
  
You don't like it Byron laughed here's the thing, he lowered his voice in a conspiratorial manner. Where were going there's not a lot of people or ladies but there is a lot of cold and this is just the type of thing I would want for that.  
  
He smiled broadly holding it up.  
  
What do you think he said holding it up to Susan. Well she said, it is rather, er lovel well it does look like it would keep you warm.  
  
Warm and single Elsie laughed.  
  
Even Susan tried to hold back a laugh.  
  
What about anna Elsie burst out with out thinking then clapped her hands over her mouth.  
  
Susan grabbed her Elsie you brat!  
  
Addie tried to hide a giggle.  
  
That settled it Byron said I'm buying it for sure. Like I said no one I need to impress.  
  
They went up to the shopkeeper a rather burly women, oh my that is lovely she said.  
  
Thank you Byron said.  
  
They went out side and Byron said oh wait one second. He went back in the shop. And came out with a package. He handed it to Addie.  
  
What's this Addie asked her heart rising at the shape of the long circular package. P  
  
Open it Byron beamed with joy.  
  
Oh no you don't have to buy us anything both Elsie and Susan exclaimed.  
  
We can share it! Addie said  
  
No no he laughed I got this lovely coat and Addie got something we all need a surprise besides I won't be able to buy anything for mounts I gotta get it out if my system.  
  
Well that is very kind of you Elsie said.  
  
Great it's settled he said as he put on his new flannel coat. How's it look. He was so handsome and dashing he looked good in anything. Well Elsie said its a little better then I expected.  
  
As Susan and Elsie went about the store exclaiming in joy he leaned over to Addie and whispered can you keep a secret  
  
Yes she said.  
  
Well I know it's really quite hideous, a monstrosity of fashion. Which is why I plan to wear it around my father at all times especially at fancy events.  
  
Addie giggled I think I'm starting to like it.  
  
They might the girls talked  
  
Oh look at this Susan Elsie called from across the store holding up a beautiful globe. With this will never be lost again. Susan laughed yes and you could for it nicely in your back pocket.  
  
Hmm yes that's true Elsie said maybe I should look for something practical for the trip.  
  
Oh I know what I am going to get Susan said holding up a beautiful coat that looked both stylish and warm.  
  
I like that Elsie said. I think I wanna get the same thing but in this color she said holding up anothe style of one.  
  
Lord Byron Susan called I think we found what we want.  
  
Are you sure it's ok?  
  
Oh yes he said in fact I insist.  
  
And now I say we should head to the markets  and load up on some fresh provisions and snacks.  
  
They all piled into their bunks for the evening,  well that was a fun day  Susan said. They were all sitting on Addie's bed curled up in their warm blankets and snacking on the candy they had purchased in the market.  
  
This chocolate is really good I think it has orange in it, hey we should see if anna would like some.  
  
That's a good idea Addie replied enthusiastically.  
  
Ill get her Elsie said my jumping up by with her blanket still earlier tightly around her.  
  
She hurried lightly out the door and down the hall padding with her bare feet on the cold ships floor. I should have grabbed my slippers she thought to herself. She was quickly at Anna's door and the might was on. She knocked quietly.  
  
Come in her soft and beautiful voice rang out.  
  
Hello Elsie said shyly she still wasn't totally comfortable around anna, she seemed so stylish and quiet and intelligent. But she felt of she got to know her, maybe she had misjudged her. She seemed so kind the last time they had spoken.  
  
Elsie gathered her courage,  do you like candy? We got some in the town and wanted to share it with you do you wanna come down to our cabin?  
Addie and is cabin Susan had her own side rolls but she is with us she blurted out all at once.  
  
Anna smiled oh thank you I'dive to. They both quickly padded back down the cold hall into their room.  
  
Hi girls anna said cheerfully.  
We missed you today Susan said you should have joined us!  
  
Yes I should have she laughed I got ashore for a little while.  
  
What! You should have joined us Elsie exclaimed.  
  
I looked for you she said I want ashore very long though.  
  
Want some chocolate  Addie said. We have orange flavored, caramel, mint dark chocolate all kinds.  
  
Anna's face lit up oh yes please she smiled I love candy it's my weekness.  
  
Ya lord Byron bought them for us. An he bought me this Addie said pulling ou a cloth case and showing anna her telescope.  
  
Are you sleeping with it Elsie asked.  
  
Yes Addie said I'm rather excited about It.  
  
Oh your adorable Elsie said giving Addie a hug.  
  
Anna smiled I wish I had sisters growing up.  
  
Well it's not all fun and games Elsie said giving a knowing look towards Susan.  
  
Susan caught the look why you little brat she laughed.  
  
Is he stuck up he seems rather conceited.  
  
Oh no he is really nice and kind. He bought us all really nice gifts today.  
  
Look at that james stood looking in awe at the bright green landmass towering above them.  
  
I don't believe it Byron mumbled this is impossible.  
  
This isn't on any of the maps Anna said. This is just supposed to be ice and ocean but look how green and rugged a everything is.  
  
It looks like a another world Elsie whispered.  
  
Yes I've never seen anything like it Susan said.  
  
Are we going to land there Elsie asked.  
  
Yes yes we have to james said.  
  
The ocean became treble lent and the waves choppy.  
  
Some people get caught between the two worlds and disappear for a whole and some forever.  
  
Big attack on city  
  
Sanctuary where connect  
  
Why would they do that Elsie whispered.  
  
  
  
  
Chapter 7  
The first thing she noticed about him was how sad his eyes looked, not hollow or empty they had a fire and a spark of life hidden deep down but sadness seemed caused them to be buried deep down. He was tall and looked to be powerfully built but it was difficult to tell with his flowing robes.  He looked handsome but it was also hard to tell with his long hair and beard. He also looked ageless his long beats made him look older but he looked like younger features could be hidden beneath.  
L She knew at once he was a wizard  
  
Chapter 8  
Id never been there but my father had. He said it was a land touched by the gods. They built an advanced civilization  
Strange and beautiful trees and creatures, great gardens and tall cities all shining white, vast libraries and scholars.  
Deep magic ran through their whole civilization some say they are descended from the gods there are other rumors that the land existed in different worlds at once  
  
Chapter 9  
Her voice seemed deep and powerful everything stood still and lightning seemed to fill the air but then there was an exhausted pause Her voice became less deep but far wilder the electricity seemed to gather around the ground she caught a glance of get beautiful face and was shocked by the exhaustion written so plainly  
Then it felt like the gathering of a wild storm compressed into endless seconds  
  
She raised her staff and lightning split the air and then time seemed to return to its normal pace fur everyone  
  
I normally like to use my magic for growing and healing things  
  
  
  
  
Egypt! Everything felt so strange and different the smells in the air the warm sun and the stalls full of vendors it was like a whole nother world. The crowds ebbed and flowed through the open air market place as traders merchants and shoppers all haggled and bargained over merchandise.  
  
Elsie couldn't contain herself from pointing out all the unique and interesting things she saw.  
  
Oh look at that is he selling chickens she grabbed Addie's arm, look at that he is selling chickens.  
  
Chapter  
  
He pulled out a strange and ancient map it glass case and beautifully designed.  
  
Elsie gasped my what a pretty map!  
  
He smiled yes it's one of my prized possessions.  Lord Byron and James both crowded around.  
  
It looks like a map of the Artic with an ocean and a large landmass drawn in green in the ocean.  
  
Well that can be right james said the artics been fairly well mapped and everyone agrees that there is nothing but snow and ice and glaciers up there.  
  
What language is that written in james asked.  
  
The legends say that the machine will cause the end of the world.  
  
Chapter  
  
They sat in lord Byron's cozy Oxford apartment and watched the rain drizzle down the window pains. Elsie was curled up in a big oversized chair next to the warm fire.  
  
On the table was an assortment of goodies hot cocoa and cookies.  
  
After all they had been through it felt good to just unwind and try to forget for a little. Addie grabbed some cookies. Come sit with me Elsie said and Addie plopped down on the couch  elsie wrapped the blanket around her and snuggled next to her little sister. You sure are warm she laughed as she began pulling the blankets back over them. wrapped three large blankets over themselves.  
  
Susan yawned lazily and reached over the Plate of cookies, nearly upsetting her milk which woke her up a little from her drowsy stupor. She pulled the blanket off her head and grabbed a brownies from the tray.  
  
You sure look beautiful Elsie said with a straight face.  
  
Susan looked at her suspiciously I'm not sure if your being serious.  
Well your hair has seen better days Elsie continued seriously maybe your past your prime.  
  
Susan rolled her eyes  
  
At least I had a prime she said haughtily.  
  
Elsie! Act your age!  
  
I am acting my age she said impudently  
  
Ok well the act older then your age Addie never acts out like you.  
  
That's cause she knows I will do it. If I was gone one of you would have to act out.  
  
Lord Byron sat in his chair looking regal like a rogue prince with his unshaven face and wold hair.