

THE FOXES OF CAMINUS



LAURA BURROUGHS

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For Mama and Daddy.

Thanks for my wildly colorful family, for teaching me to think, and for loving me unconditionally.

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CHAPTER I

THE MAP

“We’ll be fine. We’ll be fine,’ you said. Harlie, you’re a moron!” Anya huffed.

“Do you see it?” he asked, ignoring his sister’s barb.

“Hard to see anything now, isn’t it?”

The twins stared at the imposing wrought-iron gate, their bodies drenched and knotted with fatigue. All they carried were their backpacks and a map.

The drizzle ran down Harlie’s back like a line of little bugs, mixing with his sweat before soaking into his waistband. His eyes followed the massive twisted metal upward, into the fringes of the faint undulating light cast by the torches on either side.

“It’s got to be here,” Harlie replied. “Keep looking.”

~

It had started innocently enough over dinner the night before, as Anya remembered it. Her mother had suggested the twins conclude their family vacation in Bermuda by taking an excursion to an uncharted island.

“It has some of the best scuba diving in the Atlantic. I wouldn’t even know about it, but a friend invited me when I was about your age. His name is Stephen Quinn. He runs the school on the island, and he’s suggested you come for an overnight trip. Think of it as an early birthday present.” The twins, avid divers, were itching to get under the water.

“Great,” Harlie said. “What time are we leaving?”

“You are leaving tomorrow,” their mother had replied.

“Aren’t you coming?” Anya asked.

“No, you’ll be in good hands, though. I know Joe, the pilot, and Stephen Quinn will pick you up at the airport. I just want to sit on the beach and relax. Besides, you’ll have more fun without me.” The next morning, their mother had sent them off in a twin-engine plane to explore this “enchanted island.” Her only suggestion for them had been to bring their hiking gear—and to grab the fluffanutters and water from the fridge.

She’d escorted her fourteen-year-olds to a small plane and handed the pilot some papers as other passengers boarded. He inspected the papers and smiled, “Everything seems to be in order. Climb aboard.”

“Just stick together once you’re on the island—it’ll be fun.” But something in her mother’s voice had unsettled Anya, who had been bothered by her mother’s mercurial disposition during the last few months. Every time she’d asked her about her odd moods, her mother had a ready explanation: she was worried about getting funding for her project; she was tired; she was stressed about a deadline. The family had planned two weeks in Bermuda to enjoy some scuba diving and kayaking before school started, but they hadn’t done any diving since they’d arrived in Bermuda, and Sicily hadn’t joined them on the kayaking expeditions as she

usually did. Anya didn't know how she knew it—call it intuition, or maybe she just knew her mother too well—but she was certain that her mother had an ulterior motive for sending her teenagers on this excursion *sans matre*.

Sicily had tried to hug Harlie, but he'd squirmed away. When she'd kissed Anya's forehead, Anya had felt her arms close a little tightly around her shoulders. "Keep Harlie out of trouble." Then Sicily Fox had straightened, turned, and walked stiffly back toward the terminal.

As Anya had watched her mother leave, she had remembered a 2 a.m. phone conversation she'd overheard three weeks earlier. Her mother had been positively apoplectic: "I know what I told you, but they're not ready—I'm not ready! I can't come; people know me there. I'd be putting them in danger—don't you dare tell me what I can and I can't do! I've trusted you before, Chancellor, and we both know how that turned out!" After that, her mother's moods had followed a more predictable pattern of false levity punctuated by tearful moments, which Sicily had attributed to sand or allergies.

Anya hadn't taken her eyes off her mother until she'd felt a soft pressure on her shoulder.

"This way," Joe had said, as he guided Anya up the stairs behind the other passengers. "You've got the last two seats, but they're in first class." The co-pilot, a stout, barrel-bellied man took their backpacks with a grunt and a nod.

~

"First class" meant seats at the front of the plane. For Harlie, an airplane enthusiast, it was hard to contain his excitement. He sat forward on the edge of his window seat crowding his sister beside him as to look through the open cockpit door. He yelled over the engine noise to Joe, "What kind of plane is this?"

Joe was checking off his list, but he answered without hesitation. "It's a Dornier 328. This one was custom-built fo—"

"Harlie, leave him alone and let him do his job; besides, I need to talk to you." Anya pulled Harlie back into his seat. He resisted at first, but then noticed the look on his sister's face. She wasn't crying, but she looked like she might. He sat back. "What? You're not scared, are you?"

"Of course not, but—it's just that—how does Mom know the pilot? And she told me to take care of you. She never says that; something's up, Harlie. I just feel it."

Crap. Anya's *feelings* gave Harlie the creeps sometimes. For one thing, she never seemed to get these feelings about anything good or fun; for another, she was rarely wrong. Still, it wouldn't do any good to encourage her.

"You worry too much, Onion. Just relax. Let's have some fun. In an hour, we'll be suiting up to take a dive."

Once they were in flight, Bermuda slowly dissolved into ocean until it disappeared altogether. After two hours in the air, Harlie began to wonder if Anya's creepy premonition was right after all. Joe had closed the door to the cockpit before takeoff. All Harlie could see out his window was ocean. He judged that the shadows cast by the morning sun meant they must be headed into it. "We're going east. Get your phone and we can use the GPS to find out where we are," he said. Anya fished around under her seat for her backpack before remembering that the co-pilot had taken it.

An older couple behind them was engrossed in conversation. Harlie didn't recognize the language. It sounded like Spanish, but different. The man looked up and smiled at Harlie.

“Sir, do you know where we’re going?” Harlie asked.

The man just smiled and said something Harlie didn’t understand.

“Doesn’t *camino* mean ‘walk’ in Spanish?” Anya asked, “That doesn’t help. We can’t exactly *walk* anywhere from here. You must’ve misheard him.”

~

Anya looked around the cabin. The other passengers all looked perfectly content. A business man in a charcoal suit sat engrossed in his computer. An olive-skinned prunish woman smiled benignly back at her.

“Do you know where we’re going?” Anya asked.

“Eu não falo ingles.”

Great. Now Anya was really worried. Maybe her mother was going through menopause or having some sort of nervous breakdown. Counter to her mother’s usual cavalier attitude toward summer vacations, she’d given the twins a long, seemingly useless packing list that she’d personally inspected before they’d left home. Anya was still mad because the airlines had lost their bags and they hadn’t heard back for a week now. But, to Anya, the most convincing evidence of her mother’s crumbling mental health was her insistence that the twins celebrate their fifteenth birthday in Bermuda two weeks early, instead of throwing their much-acclaimed annual pool party with their friends. Sicily was usually one of the most sensible mothers in the world, but this just didn’t make any sense. And now, they were flying to an uncharted island to meet a man their mother had never mentioned to them before yesterday. Anya wished she’d asked her mother more questions last night, but now she’d get answers wherever she could get them.

She stood, adjusted the hem of her T-shirt, then stepped to the cockpit door and knocked. The co-pilot cracked it and peeked out.

“May I speak to Joe?” she asked.

The co-pilot shook his head and closed the door. Anya’s heart sank. She made her way back to her seat and slumped beside Harlie, leaning forward to see out their window and twirling her hair between her fingers like she always did when she was anxious.

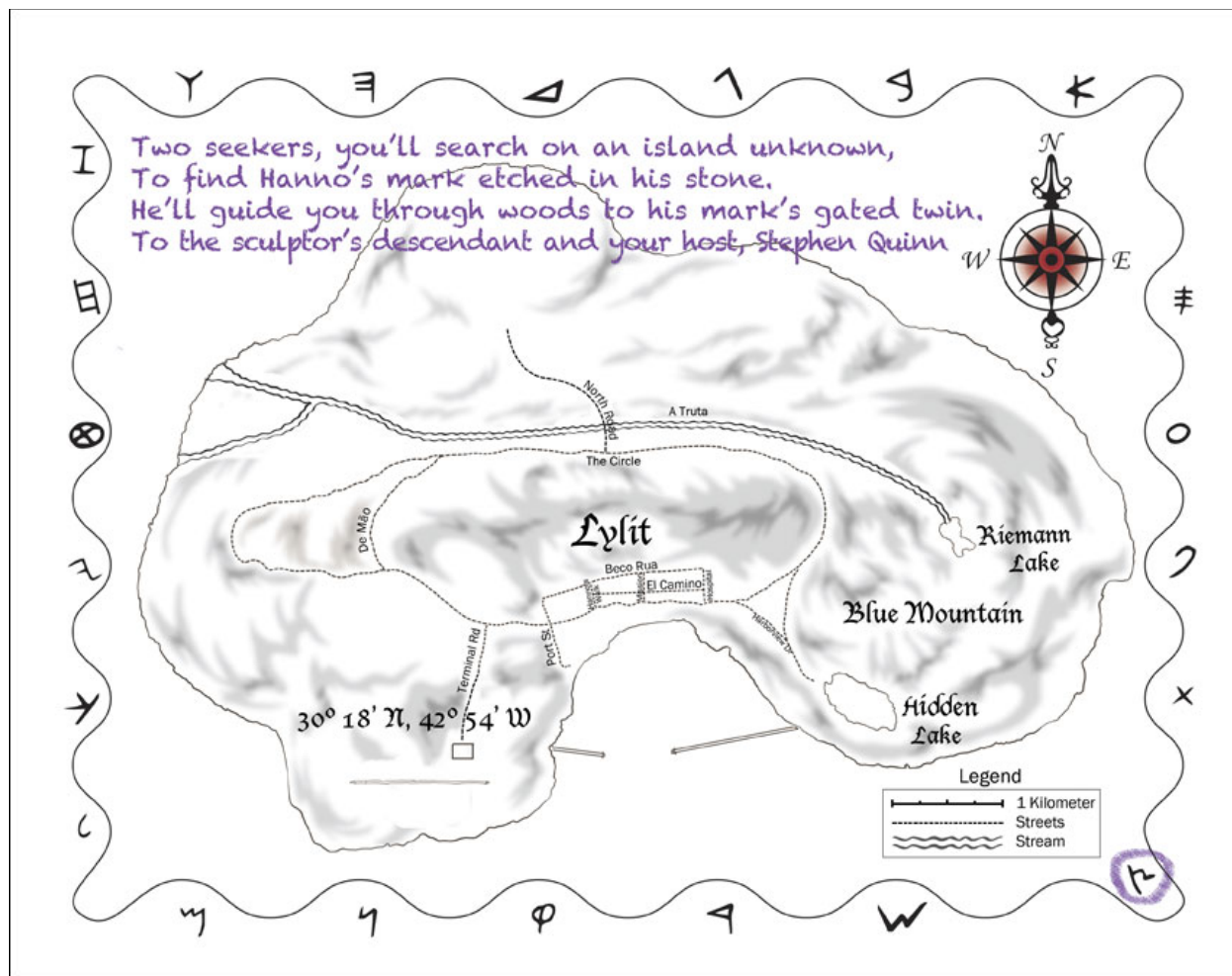
She was relieved when Joe slipped into the cabin. He bent down in front of them and handed them an envelope. “Mr. Quinn told me to give you this. Said you’d have no trouble finding your way to him as long as you followed his directions.”

“But he was supposed to meet us at the airport,” Anya retorted.

“You mean, he’s not picking us up?” Harlie asked.

“Looks like he wants you to find him,” he said, nodding toward the envelope. “I gotta get back to the cockpit. We’ll talk more once we’re on the ground.”

Harlie took the envelope and broke the seal. He slid a folded paper from it and handed the envelope to Anya. As he unfolded the paper, he held it out so that both he and Anya could see it clearly.



It was an odd-looking map. Some things on it looked very old; it looked hand-drawn, but the map was new, judging by its crisp edges. The island was roughly crescent-shaped, with a mountain to the southeast, protecting a natural harbor to its west. The street names seemed to be a mixture of English and Spanish, or maybe Italian. The twins had only taken Spanish twice a week at Oak Knoll Middle School and could do little more than count to twenty and ask where to find a bathroom, so the Spanish names were unsettling. It would be a stretch to try to find their way around the island if no one could speak English.

Maybe Quinn's sending this Hanno guy to be our guide," Harlie suggested.

"I doubt it," Anya answered. "It says, 'Two seekers.'"

"But maybe we'll find Hanno when we find his mark in the stone," he answered.

"Maybe, but I wouldn't hold my breath."

~

Harlie examined the map again, straining to remember his longitude and latitude lessons from Social Studies. The port town of Lylit lay just northeast of an airport with bearings of $30^{\circ} 18' N, 42^{\circ} 54' W$.

“Atlanta’s at 33° N, 84° W,” he said, recalling the longitude and latitude coordinates for his hometown, “and if Atlanta’s at 84° West and the prime meridian’s 0°, we compare those figures to the island on our map, which is 42° West, then the island must be half way between Atlanta and the prime meridian.”

“We know more than that, Harshly,” Anya teased, employing her pet name for her brother. “Where is the prime meridian located?”

“It’s in England—right?” Harlie answered.

“Then that means...”

“The island’s right in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean! But there isn’t an island I know of there! How about you?” Harlie asked, hoping his sister would have an answer.

Well, Mom did say it was uncharted.” They fell silent again. Harlie noted that Lylit, the only town on the map, was tiny, with just three streets running parallel to the harbor. In the upper left corner in violet ink was a handwritten verse:

*Two seekers, you’ll search
on an island unknown,
To find Hanno’s mark
etched in his stone.
He’ll guide you through woods
to his mark’s gated twin,
To the sculptor’s descendant
and your host, Stephen Quinn.*

~

While her brother’s eyes were trained on the verse, Anya examined the familiar symbols along its border. One symbol in the lower right corner was circled in the same violet ink as the verses. She pointed to it and Harlie nodded. She traced the shape with her finger. She wanted to be sure she had it etched in her mind. Closing her eyes, she imagined it: ♡.

“Maybe this symbol is Hanno’s mark. Maybe it’s some sort of ancient alphabet,” Anya surmised. “Maybe Hanno is a sculptor and this mark is on one of his sculptures somewhere on the island.”

As the twins passed the map back and forth, Anya wondered if they would be able to find Hanno or this mysterious ♡. She worried herself with practical details she knew Harlie wouldn’t think of: *How much money*

did they have in their backpacks? Did they even accept American money here? And passports! They didn't have their passports. How were they going to get out of the airport terminal? Why hadn't her mom given her Mr. Quinn's cell number? Suddenly Joe's voice came over the intercom. "We will be landing in ten minutes. Please make sure your seatbelts are fastened."

"Put the map back in here," Anya said to Harlie, opening the envelope. Inside was something she hadn't noticed before: a small white business card with red lettering.

"What's this?" she asked absently.

She took it out and read it: Caminus Youth Hostel, 831 Beco Rua, Caminus. On the back, written in violet scrawl were the words: *In case you need it.*

~

"Well, I guess we have plan "B" taken care of," Harlie said, trying to hide the queasy feeling in his stomach. He told himself there was nothing to worry about, and even if there was, he had to play it cool, so Anya wouldn't get upset. After a few minutes, the plane descended noticeably and passengers on the left side began to look out their windows and point, but all Harlie could see from his window seat was water. A coat closet and the door of the plane obstructed his view to the north. Only when the plane was about twenty or so yards from the ground could he see the island just beneath his window.

His first glimpse of it was not encouraging. The southern edge of the coastline ran raggedly into the ocean with no trees or scrubby vegetation to soften its appearance. He did make out a small beach as they passed it, just west of the runway, but otherwise the coastline seemed forbidding. Waves pounded the rocks, spraying water several feet into the air. Harlie ran the day's events around in his brain. *Mom doesn't do anything without a plan, and she planned this—or at least she planned for us to meet Mr. Quinn. That means she trusts him.*

~

Only after the plane touched down and turned north, taxiing off the runway, did Anya get her first glimpse of Lytil Harbor. In spite of her welling anxiety, she found the scenery breathtaking. Fishing boats, yachts, dinghies, and catamarans rolled lazily in the horseshoe harbor. The town north of it was a mix of dark gray stone, white washed walls, and red shutters. Flowers dotted the harbor side. Rooftops rose above the main street as they climbed up the ridge to the north. A mountain that was almost the color of the sky rose up on the opposite side of the harbor.

"It's beautiful. Did you see that mountain?" Anya asked.

Harlie nodded. "Yeah. They got the name right. It's called Blue Mountain on the map."

"Harlie, I don't like this. Mom said he'd meet us at the airport. He's obviously changed plans without telling her."

"Come on, Onion, lighten up. We'll be fine."

Anya knew Harlie wasn't as comfortable with this situation as he let on, but him calling her *Onion* like he had been—that was a dare. He always used this moniker when he wanted to provoke her in some way. Somehow, it made her braver, and she allowed herself to believe this was normal—like just the two of them—fifteen almost—traveling on a beautiful island was just some wild adventure.

“You’re on, Harshly!” Her stomach fluttered wildly, but she stuck up her chin and flipped her hair back, trying to appear confident.

When the plane stopped, the co-pilot entered the cabin and reached into the coat closet, pulling out their backpacks. He handed them unceremoniously to Harlie before opening the door for the departing passengers.

“What do you have in your pack?” Harlie asked Anya.

“My purse, five dollars, and thirty-two cents, my binoculars, cell phone—but it doesn’t work—journal, pencil and pens.”

“I’ve got my iPod, wallet with a dollar in it, iTunes gift card, and a ticket stub to *The Avengers: The Azimuth Compass*,” Harlie added.

“Did you pack a lunch like Mom asked you to?” she asked.

“I thought she asked you.”

“You thought wrong. I guess we can buy lunch and split it if they’ll take our money.” The rest of the passengers filed past as she repacked her belongings. As she stepped out the door of the small plane, she caught a glimpse of two teenage boys in purple polo shirts at the front of the line of passengers strung out between the door and the terminal. She was about to point them out to Harlie when Joe extended his hand to help her down the steps leading to the tarmac. Joe pointed to a sign over a tiny terminal that read: “Welcome to Caminus.”

“This island is named Caminus?” Anya asked.

“I don’t know what you mean,” Joe grinned. “My charter instructions are clear. I am to take you to 30° 18’ North, 42° 54’ West. Look on any world map and you will find nothing but water at these coordinates. You certainly won’t find an island named Caminus.

“Too bad you didn’t get to see it from your seats, but once we descend to three thousand feet, the island just appears out of thin air. The first time I saw it, I thought I was hallucinating.”

“Sorry, we missed it,” Harlie said.

“Do you know what Mr. Quinn looks like?” Anya interrupted.

“I’ve never met Mr. Quinn, but I’ve brought loads of people to him. Most come in August. I pilot three double circuits a year in August, December, and May. I always see them on a return flight.”

“Joe, we don’t have our passports,” Anya said in a voice that she hoped was steadier than she felt. But Joe waved her question off as if it were a gnat.

“Why would you need a passport to get into a place that doesn’t exist?”

Without another word, Joe climbed back into his plane and closed the door.

CHAPTER II

HANNO'S GATE

When the automatic doors of the airport terminal slid open, a sultry female voice announced, “The temperature is currently twenty-nine degrees.” She continued to make pronouncements in several other languages.

“Feels like ninety,” Anya commented, glad for the breeze that carried through the gray stone, open-air facility.

“That’d be twenty-nine times one point eight plus thirty-two, equals eighty-four point two. You were pretty close,” Harlie replied.

There were no rental car counters, restaurants, vending machines, or baggage carousels. Other than a unisex public restroom sign on a bathroom door, there were no signs pointing anyone in any direction whatsoever. A silver-blue tram waited in front of the terminal. The only worker there was the tram driver whose nametag read: “Alonzo.” As the other passengers scrambled for a place in line, Alonzo scanned their luggage with a wand, and loaded it in one of several large compartments under their seats.

Anya was about to give him her backpack for inspection, but Harlie called from behind her. “Sorry, but I gotta pee.”

Anya stepped back and slung her pack back over her shoulder, pouting as she watched Harlie disappear into the restroom. With nothing to do but wait, she scanned the tram for the teenagers in the purple polos. She figured they must be from the school Mr. Quinn was running. She caught sight of them as they sat just in front of the businessman in the gray suit who took the last seat just before the tram jerked forward and left the terminal. She sighed and checked the schedule. The next tram was due in twenty minutes.

“Way to go, peanut bladder!” Anya said when Harlie got out of the restroom. “The tram’s gone.”

“It was full, anyway. We can walk,” he suggested. “It’s a mile and a half—two tops—from the airport to the edge of town.” Harlie slid his finger from the airport symbol to the word *Lylit*. “We’ll take Terminal Road to The Circle. That’ll take us into town.”

“Alright,” Anya answered, “but hurry up, I’m hungry!”

~

Once they passed the airport gates and turned onto The Circle, Harlie assessed the slow steady incline toward the main street of the harbor town.

“Easy hike,” he said, pulling out the map. “Maybe we can split some fries at the harbor.”

One of the first buildings they came to—a large two-story stone building with fat white columns and a slate porch—was a bank. Next to the hours listed was a line that read: “Closed Bank Holiday, August Seventeenth.”

Anya sighed, “Well, at least they speak English on the island.”

Anya pointed to the map. “Look! There’s Hanno’s Walk! We’re just two blocks away. Second street on the left.”

The twins continued on The Circle, passing a fire station on the harbor side and then Très Imprimer, a warehouse that specialized in 3-D printing to their north. Bicycles, scooters, and a few utility vehicles dotted the street, but no cars. They found Hanno’s Walk and took a left. The narrow cobblestone street was lined with wide sidewalks and bike racks. Café tables and chairs sat empty outside of darkened shop windows. Purple and gold confetti lay strewn over the pavement. But only a few stragglers graced Hanno’s Walk. Two men descended a steep hill ahead of them, talking as they ambled toward town. One was dressed in seersucker and smoked a pipe. The other, looking somewhat disheveled, sweated in his greasy white tank top as he walked his golden retriever.

A little closer, a couple of shopkeepers talked across the empty street. One of them, an older, bearded gentleman, not much taller than Harlie, laughed at the other, a small-framed woman, as she swept around her storefront and fussed over the confetti.

“Hello,” Harlie said tentatively, as he approached. “Uh, do you know where we can find something to eat?”

The woman’s mouth twitched slightly before she said, “Monsieur, you have found the place, but, ah—unfortunately, the shops are closed today.”

“Not all of the shops, Olivia. I am open.” The man’s voice was deeper than Harlie had expected, and reminded him of his Brazilian divemaster.

“Unless they eat oars, I doubt you’ll be of much help to them,” Olivia observed. She ran her thin fingers through her sable curls. She was pretty, but uninviting. “I need to get some work done, excusez-moi.” She turned toward one of the shops. The sign above the door read: The Tea Leaf. There was a silhouette of two women with teacups beneath the name.

“Don’t mind Olivia. Her Parisian manners haven’t been eroded by island living yet. She’s peevish because everyone’s having too much fun to pay her any attention,” he said playfully.

“I’ll pay her some attention!” bellowed the man in a seersucker cap as he and his dog-led companion sauntered toward them.

The bearded shopkeeper grinned. “Phyllo! Watch your manners, there are guppies present!” “How are things over the ridge?”

“Lovely, as usual, old man. On my way to Evie’s.”

Harlie didn’t know what to make of the odd mix of accents, but he was relieved that everyone spoke English. Most of the signs on the streets were English, too, but many were subtitled in another language that he guessed was Portuguese. Anya had kneeled to pet the retriever and was talking in that high-pitched voice Harlie noticed women, mostly, reserved for babies and animals.

The man with the retriever eyed Harlie and Anya curiously. “And who do you be?”

“I’m Harlie, and this is Anya.”

The man grunted, scrutinizing Harlie’s wavy hair. Harlie thought he saw a smile form at the edges of his lips, but it faded as his eyes rested on Harlie’s face and was quickly replaced by a hard expression that Harlie took for dislike. Anya must have noticed it too because she stopped petting his dog, stood, and took a step back.

“I was just about to invite them in for some tea,” the bearded man said. “Care to join us, Gebel?”

“Takin’ Adam to my hidey-hole. We got some work to do.”

“But it’s a holiday.”

“Somebody’s gotta work while you’re playin’!”

“See you later, then,” the bearded man said before turning back to Harlie and Anya. “My partner, Gebel. We’re in marine salvage. He brings it up—I clean it, price it, and sell it.”

“What’s the confetti for?” Anya asked.

“It’s Hanno Day today. The parade ended about two hours ago, so everyone is either at home or at East Beach! Personally, I prefer the beach.”

Harlie felt Anya touch his sleeve. She pointed to the shop opposite The Tea Leaf. A sign reading Hanno’s Nautical Supplies and Antiquities hung above the awning. A barrel of cheap compasses sat just outside the door.

“I give them to the guppies at the parade. Good for business, eh?” he said, pointing to the barrel.

“So aren’t you Hanno?” But Harlie knew the answer before he asked the question.

“Oh, no, no, no!” the man laughed. “My name is Emile. I just own the shop.”


Harlie was bursting with questions, but he didn’t want to get off on the wrong foot with someone they’d only just met, someone he hoped might be able to give him some answers.

Emile’s shop was more a nautical museum than a store. There were pieces of sunken ships and ballast stones, old maps covering the back wall, drawings of ancient explorers, and photos of recent ones. An old wooden clock indicated it was 4:22. The high ceiling was obscured by two big sails, one with an equal-sided cross and the other with a purple sail with an angel embroidered on it. There were instruments for navigating and ships’ wheels—some encrusted with barnacles and instruments that looked like big drawing compasses.

“Sit down and relax. I’ll make some tea.” Emile pointed to a heavy rectangular table covered in glass. There were three tall stools around it and the twins took the two on the far end. The third stool had a mug in front of it. Emile descended the stairs to the left of the table, his head bobbing out of sight.

“It’s all coming together, isn’t it?” Anya whispered.

“What do you mean, it’s all coming together?”

“This can’t be a coincidence! We arrive on Hanno Day, at Hanno’s Walk, and go into Hanno’s Shop. Come on! We’ve got to be on the right track! Hanno must be someone important to the island and Emile’s named his shop for him so he has to know something that’ll help us.” Anya could hardly contain her excitement. “Let’s ask Emile if he knows what this symbol means,” she said, pointing to the .

“We don’t know anything about Emile. He might not be as nice to us once he finds out we aren’t here for Hanno Day.”

Emile walked up the stairs, carrying a tray with two cups of tea, sugar, and a half dozen small muffins and plunked it on the big table. Harlie surveyed his muscular arms and calloused hands; this man did not spend all of his days inside the shop. He had tanned olive skin and a little black was visible through his mostly gray hair.

“Drink up!” Emile smiled. Harlie complied, still appraising Emile; he lifted his tea to his lips.


Harlie almost choked on the hot liquid, burning his mouth and tongue. He was used to hot tea, but this tea was a bit too hot and it smelled of spices and oranges.

“It is the best tea I’ve ever tasted,” said Anya between sips.

“Looks like your friend disagrees with you,” Emile chortled.

“No, no, it’s great!” Harlie sputtered. He didn’t want to be rude. Besides, he hadn’t had anything to eat or drink for almost six hours. He took a bite of the muffin and washed it down with a second swallow of tea before deciding it wasn’t too bad.

“So what brings you two to *this* island?” Emile asked, glancing in Harlie’s direction.





Harlie’s insides squirmed. He didn’t know if he trusted Emile. “We’re supposed to be scuba diving, but the guy who invited us didn’t pick us up from the airport. He sent us on a scavenger hunt instead. The pilot gave us this map with instructions to find this.” Harlie took out his map and pointed to the . Emile snatched the map from his hand and bolted to a stand. Harlie went numb, then hot, watching as Emile held the map toward the window and stared at it. When Emile looked back at them, his face relaxed and he handed the map back to Harlie.

“See the copyright in the lower right corner of the map? I made this map for our governor years ago.” Anya and Harlie read the note:

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“I printed only fifty copies with strict orders not to reproduce any more without permission from the governor’s office. This is one of those copies. Haven’t seen one since I made them. Hold it up to the light,” he said.

Harlie raised the map toward the window. He saw a faint watermark on the map: a cross like the one on the ship’s sail in the shop. Inside the cross were the symbols    . Two columns topped with burning torches flanked the cross.

“That watermark is our state seal. That’s how the governor authenticates the maps.”

“But why is it such a big deal? I mean, why does a map need to be authenticated?” Harlie asked.

Emile looked at him gravely. “There are no other maps of this island. It’s no accident that you have never heard of Caminus. You won’t find Lylit Harbor on a world map anywhere. You’ll figure it out for yourself if I’m right; it isn’t for me to tell you the secrets of Caminus.” He pointed to the map in Harlie’s hand. “I’d keep that out of sight if I were you; Caminusians do not use maps and they’d be suspicious of any stranger who does.”

Harlie laid the map on the table and waited. He wondered if Emile would help them now.

Emile took another sip of tea. “We have a mystery on our hands then, don’t we?” he said, more than asked. “The governor issued a map, so she knows you’re here, and at least two others.”

“What makes you say that?” Anya, inquired.

“Just procedure. The person who requested the map would know, and the governor’s assistant would actually process the approval and issue the map,” he answered, tapping the note in the top corner. “I didn’t write this note. Whoever requested it probably did. I’m not sure what they mean by ‘Hanno’s mark.’ But”—he pointed to the decorative edge of the map—“these are the letters of the Phoenician alphabet. I put the alphabet on there to honor Hanno as our rightful founder. Why that particular letter is circled, I don’t know.”

“What do you mean, ‘rightful founder?’”

“This city used to be called La Salle, after Caminus’s founder of record at the time. La Salle found this island while his partner, Jean Betancourt, left him in the Canaries to make a deal with the King of Castille. He

named the island Caminus. My grandfather told me stories about how he used to climb on a statue of Gadifer de la La Salle that stood at the harbor. But the statue was removed a long time ago. The name of the city was changed to honor Hanno because records and artifacts proved that Hanno had discovered the island and his descendants had already been here hundreds of years, minted their own coins, and established their own government when La Salle found it in the 1400s.

“Then why isn’t this City named Hanno?” Harlie asked.

“Because Hanno named it Lylit. It’s even etched on a huge stone that claims this island for the great Phoenician City of Carthage.”

“Where is that stone now?” Harlie asked.

“It is in Governor’s Hall. But it’s closed today.”

“If Hanno was Phoenician, why do Caminusians speak English and Portuguese?” Anya inquired.

“Caminus is a melting pot of languages. Most of the sailors on La Salle’s ship were French or Spanish, but English explorers have left stragglers on our island too. Portuguese became our most widely spoken language when Portugal captured the city and controlled the harbor for about fifty years. They abandoned it after the earthquake in 1656 sent a mudslide into the city, destroying half of it and the harbor. The Caminusians just cleaned up the mess and went on with their lives, but we kept the Portuguese. English has been everyone’s second language for over two hundred years.”

“Well, that’s something,” Harlie said picking up the bookbag and the map. “We’ll check it out.”

Anya beamed, “Thank you, Emile!”

“Happy hunting to you!” he replied, slapping a compass into Harlie’s hand. “To help you find your way around the island.” Harlie remembered the compass his mother had given him on his tenth birthday and hoped that it would soon be recovered by the airline who had lost their luggage.

“Thanks,” Harlie said.

~

The explorers headed back down Hanno Walk toward the harbor. The sky had lost its deep blue and threatened rain. Anya twisted her hair absently before checking her reflection in a shop window to see if she looked too American. Warp Tour t-shirt, blue jeans, and Converse—*decidedly American*. Neither she nor Harlie spoke about the possibility that they might not find what they were looking for. She didn’t ask out loud where they would sleep tonight. Instead, she checked the backpack on her brother’s back to assure herself that the side pocket containing the map and the card for the youth hostel was zipped up tight. It was as if they had made a silent agreement to keep working on the puzzle, to trust that things would work out if they just kept moving. The five-minute march to the harbor seemed longer, but Anya saw the statue as soon as they rounded the corner of Hanno’s Walk and The Circle.

She hadn’t even considered what Hanno might have looked like, but Anya wouldn’t have imagined this statue in her craziest dreams. His face was fierce, almost wild. A skullcap covered most of his head, but long ringlets of hair flowed from beneath it. His clothing was even more bizarre—an odd mix of Egyptian and Greek. Anya’s eyes skipped across the trinkets and jewelry on Hanno’s body. His right hand extended to a low point in the northern sky. On his index finger he wore a wide ring. A snake bracelet wrapped his left

bicep twice. He carried a shield with an owl perched on crossed staffs. His bare legs were thick and muscular. At his feet, shells and coins were scattered among clay jars. Anya inspected the square base of the statue, only a foot shorter than her. She read the inscription out loud:

*“Before the Portuguese or the Spanish, before La Salle and his men,
Hanno of Carthage sailed the waves past the Pillars of Heracles
and into the Unknown Sea. He found this land and left his mark.
And brought our future with him.”*

~


Harlie walked around the statue and read the opposite inscription aloud:

*“Dedicated on this the Seventeenth Day of August in the Year of our Lord
Nineteen-Hundred and Sixteen by the Citizens of Caminus”*

Harlie eyed the flower garland someone had placed around the slightly larger-than-life statue. “Looks like someone takes their national holiday seriously.”

“Yeah, that couldn’t have been easy to get it over his head.” Anya observed.

“Not that hard, once you get up on the base. Do you see Hanno’s mark?” he asked.

“No,” she replied, pulling her journal out of her bag. She began jotting down the inscriptions and taking notes about the statue. She listed the artifacts and symbols depicted, noting that the woman on the shield might be a representation of Athena and the amphora would have carried olive oil or fresh water. But Anya never saw the . She and Harlie walked around the statue several times, carefully examining all sides of the monument.


“See it yet?” she asked Harlie.

“Nope, I’ve searched around this statue at least four times—nothing.” Harlie replied.

“Another dead end,” Anya sighed, sitting on the grass. “We’ve been looking for at least fifteen minutes.”

~

“Maybe we’re looking at it the wrong way,” Harlie said, climbing onto the statue. From his new perspective, he dictated details for Anya to record: “Face of a woman inside Hanno’s shield; hand-shaped amulet around his neck; and—” His eyes followed Hanno’s extended arm all the way out to his fingers. Harlie gasped!

“The ring! It’s on the ring!” Harlie jumped, missed his footing, tumbling to the ground next to Anya. He lay there allowing the anxiousness that had been slowly building inside of him to seep into the ground. He’d found it! 

“But what does it mean?” Anya asked.

“Remember the riddle, ‘He’ll guide you through woods to his mark’s gated twin.’” He mimicked the statue’s pose perfectly, extending his index finger toward the northern horizon. “It means that what we are looking for is *this way!*” Then, smiling broadly, he took the compass out and checked it: Hanno pointed due north.

“Are you sure it’s the right mark?” Anya asked.

“Yes, I’m sure. It looks just like this,” he said, pointing to the circled symbol on the map.

~

Anya inspected the statue one last time. She searched for the sculptor’s name. She couldn’t find one, but inside a large jug at Hanno’s feet she saw some scratches. She couldn’t make them out in the shadows of the jug, so she ripped out a piece of paper, put it against the jug, and rubbed it with the edge of her pencil. Satisfied with the results, she folded the paper neatly, stuck it between the pages of her journal, and stowed it in her bag. Harlie got out the map. “The statue points to a single road on the other side of the island. Remember the men came down the hill to Hanno’s Walk from that direction?”

“Yeah, I remember. What’s the next part of the riddle say?”

“He’ll guide you through woods to his mark’s gated twin,” Harlie read. “That

ridge is covered with trees—and look, here’s a road leading north.” We can take the path from Hanno’s Walk straight up that ridge to the road. If I’m right, we’ll find a gate with the same symbol on it,” he said.

She and Harlie retraced their footsteps back toward Hanno’s Walk. They didn’t get one block before the sky thundered and poured torrents of rain on them, soaking them to the skin in a matter of seconds. They broke into a run and didn’t stop until they reached Emile’s shop, only to find it dark and locked. Taking shelter under Olivia’s awning, Anya wiped her fine, straight hair out of her face. She resisted the urge to tug on a dripping strand of Harlie’s hair that hung in ringlets below his ears.

“The rain’s letting up,” Harlie said. “Let’s go.”

They trudged up the ever-steepening hill until they reached the back of Hanno’s Walk at its intersection with Beco Rua. Purple and gold confetti ran down the sides of the street and into the gutters. To the left, Anya saw a sign for a school zone and a large two-story building.

“Lylit High School,” Anya read.

To the right, a church steeple reached unsuccessfully toward the skyline, blending into the ridge that seemed to press the church and the town toward the harbor.

Anya stood at the end of a wide path at the base of the ridge, surveying the improvised segments of steps zigzagging upward, through rocks and prickly pear cactus. As she climbed behind her brother, she caught glimpses of iguanas and little birds hiding in nooks and crevices. She climbed until her wet jeans chaffed the insides of her legs, and her chest stung. She wanted so badly to stop, but she knew that they had to find what they were looking for soon.

Quinn?]]

She’d lost track of time and with no sun to gauge it, she knew Harlie probably had too. Her muscles ached as she pushed her body farther up the ridge. Her breath caught in her parched throat every time she inhaled. Finally, Harlie stopped.

“We need water.” He bent down and curled a hydrangea leaf into a “U.” He let the droplets merge and roll onto his tongue. Anya did the same. They drank for a few minutes, but the rain dwindled into a mist. “I wish I had thought of that sooner,” he said.

“I’m glad you thought of it when you did. At least my throat isn’t so dry,” she said gratefully. She dug in her backpack and checked her phone, but the battery had run down.

“Mine’s dead, too.” Harlie said. “We should have turned them off on the plane. You ready for the last cutback?” Anya nodded. She was relieved as the ground flattened at the top of the ridge and turned onto a path into woodland. Harlie took out his map and compass.

“The map shows a road, North Road on The Circle. The path ahead, at least as far as we can see is north.”

“Hope it doesn’t take long to reach the north arc of The Circle,” Anya fretted. “We’re burning daylight.” She looked back behind her, hoping to catch a glimpse of the harbor but her view was obstructed by the canopy of trees descending the ridge. The sky was lighter behind her and to the east, but she couldn’t see blue. “Harlie, I really think we should go back to the hostel for the night.”

“Come on,” Harlie said, pressing through the woods at a brisk pace. “Let’s see if we can find the road off The Circle first. If we can’t we’ll go back.”

“The map doesn’t show where this path comes out on the Circle, but we can’t be too far from the North Road either way. My best guess is west.”

The Circle finally came into view and a patch of light sky behind them hinted the sun just above the horizon. Harlie stopped to check his compass again.

“The road going north should be on the right not too far ahead,” he said.

“Hope so,” Anya said, “We’ll have to go back soon, or we’ll never find our way back through the forest.” It was raining harder again. Worse, it was getting dark.

“We’ll check in this direction, just a hundred yards or so. If we don’t find it, we’ll go back,” Harlie said.

“Okay, but you have to promise me. No more stalling.”

They took off at a trot, following a small stream on the north side of the road. They had gone a couple hundred yards when she saw a small stone bridge to the right give way to a gravel drive. “Look!” she breathed.

“Are you sure this is it?” Harlie asked.

“Of course I’m not sure. Are you?”

“You’ve got a point,” he conceded.

They turned into the gravel and continued their pace. The forest infringed on the drive from both sides creating a tunnel of trees. Anya tried to match Harlie’s stride until her legs and lungs protested too loudly. She slowed to a walk as night began to settle in around them. “If we have to, we will just sleep under the stars,” Harlie said.

“More like under the clouds,” Anya said wiping the rain out of her eyes. “Do you think we could make it back without getting lost?”

“Maybe,” Harlie answered doubtfully.

Then Anya saw two small lights in the tops of the trees. Maybe an owl she thought, but as they came closer, she saw them flicker. “Harlie...”

She ran toward the lights in the ever-darkening tunnel of trees with Harlie behind her until she reached the end of it.

“It’s a gate!” she said breathlessly.

Torches perched atop two stone pillars sputtered in the drizzle, casting lurid shadows that danced through the twisted wrought iron gate. It would have been beautiful in the light of day, but the leaves and clusters of the metal grapevine snaked in and out of each other, obscuring the tangled mass of black foliage in

its own ominous shade. An ivy-covered wall ran off into the blackness in each direction. Anya shivered as she searched for the ♣ shaped mark in the dancing shadows of the vine. Four feet above her head the vine was distinctly twisted in the middle. Anya pointed.

“There,” she whispered. Harlie scaled the gate and ran his hand over the vine, as if he had to feel it to assure himself. She’d have missed it if not for the light from the torches. It was so artfully integrated into the vine, Harlie would have walked by it a thousand times without noticing, but Anya knew she’d found it. Harlie climbed down, slipping on the wet wrought iron as he descended. He found a small box almost covered in ivy and pushed the white button. The gate swung open in silent welcome.

CHAPTER III

INSIDE THE WALLS

Harlie and Anya walked down the pebbled drive toward a stone manor some two hundred yards away. The rain was coming down steadily again now. Harlie's fingers were as puckered and wrinkled as if he'd spent hours underwater. The flickering light from the gate offered glimpses and faint shapes darkening the formal garden in front of the manor. They had gotten within fifty feet of the house when the porch light popped on and a plump woman in a red floral dress opened the front door.

"Aaah. Prísán muchachos," she said, beckoning them inside.

"Gracias, Señora," Harlie responded tentatively. She nodded and directed them into a dimly lit foyer.

"We're Harlie and Anya Fox—" he began.

"Un momento," she interrupted. She disappeared into an adjacent room, leaving them dripping in puddles where they stood. He leaned against the banister of a staircase that ran up one wall, catching Anya's eyes in the mirrored hall tree at the far end of the foyer.

"Not exactly our VIP-look," she said.

"Not our fault, is it?" Harlie said casually.

The woman reappeared and motioned for Anya and Harlie to come in. They squished into the room. Wooden shelves crammed with thousands of books surrounded the study. A dark-haired man sat behind a mahogany desk opposite two red upholstered chairs. He stood as they came in the room.

"Harlie! Anya! Come in." He came around his desk and greeted them as if he'd known them forever. "So glad you got here this evening. Marta and I have been positively fretful about your arrival. You have no idea how difficult it is to trust these things to turn out just so. I'm Stephen Quinn, by the way—so good to meet you. Heard so much about you—oh, for goodness sakes—where are my manners? Sit down, sit down. You must tell us all about your day." The words tumbled out of his mouth so quickly that Harlie could hardly think fast enough to understand what he was saying.

Anya recovered her voice. "Um... We're wet and muddy, Sir. We'd ruin your chairs."

The man examined their hair and clothes as though he hadn't noticed anything odd in their appearance before this very moment. He mumbled something to himself and without any pause whatsoever said, almost too loudly, "Now that does change things, doesn't it?" Neither Harlie nor Anya knew how to respond to this. Luckily, they didn't have to—Quinn seemed to be talking more to himself than to them.

"Marta, please show our intrepid adventurers upstairs to freshen up." His eyes shifted back to Anya, "Tell the others to meet our guests of honor in the dining room in, say, forty-five minutes." Then, without waiting for an answer, he returned to his desk and began contemplating a parcel of air just inches in front of

him as if his guests had melted away. Harlie stood dripping on the oriental rug, wondering what to make of this odd man, until Marta spoke.

“Por favor,” she motioned them into the foyer and led them upstairs.

~

Marta stopped outside the first door on the left. “Anya, es su cuarto.”

Harlie nudged Anya toward the door. “Go on!”

Marta walked another ten feet. “Jarlos, para ti.”

“Gracias, Señora.”

“De nada.”

Anya opened the door to a room decorated in peach and cinnamon. The walls were papered in a dusty coral with soft brown scrollwork dancing over them. She ran her hand across the silk damask draped over the dark four-poster bed. Pillows covered in magnolia shams leaned against the mahogany headboard. It was the most exquisite bedroom she had ever seen. But Anya’s eyes were drawn to an object at the foot of the bed that seemed oddly out of place in the pristine room.

The aqua plaid of her suitcase clashed violently with the soft muted colors of the room, but to Anya it was the most beautiful sight she had seen all day. Unzipping it, she unpacked her tennis shoes, travel bag, flats, shorts—she unfolded a pink polo and a pair of navy bermudas. There, between her socks and underwear, was a small, acrylic box holding the silver locket her mother had given her for her tenth birthday.

Anya could almost feel her mother’s presence in the room. *She knew we would make it!* Anya had doubted herself all day, but her mother had known, even before they got to the island, that they would be in this house tonight.

Anya picked up the cell phone, rehearsing in her head what she would say to her mother, *You really should have told us what we were getting into this morning! Why didn’t you trust us—or at least me?* But then she looked at the phone and remembered it was dead. She found her charger in her backpack and tried to plug it into the wall, but the prongs wouldn’t fit in the wall socket. “Dammit.” Well, their mom could wait.

She took a quick shower and dried her hair, checking the mirror to make sure her cowlick did not show. Her hair was not thick and full like her brother’s; it was a shinier darker brown. She smiled at her reflection; she felt pretty at the moment. Usually, she didn’t think of herself as pretty or ugly, but lately she spent more time wondering about it. She was insecure about her longish nose and thought her eyes were too deep-set. She consoled herself by concentrating on how unusual her eyes were—a mixture of blue, green, and gold. In dim light, her pupils obscured the inner gold ring, making her eyes look more blue. In the sun, they were brighter green. Anya tilted her head and sucked in her cheeks as she applied some light blush to her face. Staring into the mirror, she had to admit that being pretty mattered to her more than she thought it should.

She wrestled herself away from her reflection and dressed, clasping her locket around her neck, so that it hung lower than she usually wore it. She spun it around several times before unlatching it to check her tiny compass hidden inside. She had felt naked without it, and was glad to have her talisman in its proper place. She grabbed her journal from her bookbag and headed to Harlie’s room.

~

“Harlie, are you ready?” Anya knocked. She hoped that they would have some time to talk before they went down for dinner.

“Come in.”

“Wow!” She goggled at his bed.

“It’s a reconstructed ship!” Harlie exclaimed. A seascape mural covered all the walls in his room. A tall mast with a real retractable ship’s sail doubled as a headboard. Harlie pulled it up for effect; the purple sail expanded to reveal a gold Maltese cross.

“Can you imagine having this in your bedroom when you were a kid?”

“I think that’s what’s happening, now,” she said.

Harlie jumped up on the bow of the ship. “Can you blame, me? You know how I used to love *Pirates of the Caribbean*.”

“Harlie, get down from there,” she insisted, “We need to talk.”

“Lord, what is it now? Onion, I love you and all, but can’t you just let me have a few seconds of fun before we have to start analyzing everything?” His next sentence came out like a poor Captain Sparrow imitation. “Come on. Climb aboard me ship and we’ll talk about me sunken treas—uure!”

“Harlie, I’m being serious, now—stop it!”

“Sass me again, wench, and you’ll walk da plank!”

Anya rolled her eyes at her brother and then stared at him until he relented.

“Oh, alright, Onion, but you’re a pain now that you think you’re grown up.” He slid down beside her onto his mattress.

“I think I know why Mom didn’t tell us about this school—at least I think I know bits and pieces. A few weeks ago I heard her arguing with someone over the phone with a man. It must have been Mr. Quinn. She was worried that we would be in danger if she came with us. She said people would know her here. So I’m just thinking, maybe she went to school here. It makes sense, right? Don’t you find it odd she never talks about high school?”

“Maybe. I guess I’ve never thought of it before.”

“Oh, and she said, ‘I’ve trusted you before’ like she had a history with him. Now that’s weird.”

“I think *he’s* a little weird,” Harlie said, emphasizing the “he.”

“Well, du-uh—but he seems harmless. I think he’s just a little excitable,” she said.

“Excitable? It was all I could do to listen as fast as he talked. I’m just glad you were there to get a word in edgewise, or we’d still be standing there dripping all over his rug.”

Anya smiled at her brother, gratefully. He didn’t usually stop and think things through, but when he did, he could be perceptive. She was hoping he was in one of his more thoughtful moods.

“Do you think Marta is the sculptor’s descendant?” she asked.

“What do you mean?”

“Remember the end of the riddle? ‘*To the sculptor’s descendant, and your host, Stephen Quinn..*’ Well, we haven’t found the sculptor’s descendant yet.”

“Who cares! The whole point was to get to Quinn, and we did,” Harlie countered.

“But why would it even mention a descendant if it weren’t important? I think the sculptor etched his name in Phoenician letters inside a jug on the statue. I took a rubbing so we can compare it to the letters on the map. Maybe they’ll match up—to give us a clue who the sculptor is.” She took the paper out of her

journal and showed Harlie the etching. Its edges were damp but the rubbing was still dry. It had three faint characters: 𐤆𐤃𐤍. Harlie got out the map and ran his finger over its border, touching each of the symbols she was showing him. Anya was right; the letters were Phoenician.

“I don’t know how this is going to help us, though. It’s not like we know what it means, or how to pronounce it. Look, it’s time to go down,” said Harlie, lifting a rosewood box about the width of a silver dollar out of his suitcase and slipping it into his pocket. “Maybe we can figure this out once we’ve had something to eat. I’m too hungry to think!”

“Bring the map,” Anya reminded him, “and concentrate on finding out who it belongs to.”

~

Voices drifted into the foyer as they descended the stairs. They followed the sounds into a large dining room.

“Ah, our guests of honor have arrived,” Mr. Quinn observed. All eyes turned to the twins. “Everyone, this is Anya and Harlie Fox.”

Harlie’s eyes scanned the room. He’d half-expected to see his mother there. When he’d seen his suitcase, he’d entertained the notion that she had taken a later flight to the island.

“Harlie and Anya, these are a few of the faculty of my school, Caminus Academy. This is Anastasia Nettles.” Mr. Quinn indicated a tall woman dressed in riding boots and jeans. “She teaches history and civics, and Phyllo Jenkins,” he said, pointing to the man beside her. Harlie recognized him as the man in the seersucker cap from earlier in the day. “He’s our English and linguistics teacher. And Elissa and Ted Amazir. Elissa is our councilor and Ted is our minister.” A happy, exotic-looking couple smiled at them. Marta appeared from the kitchen with salad bowls in her hands. “Oh, and you have met the most indispensable person in the room, Marta Betancourt. She runs the academy flawlessly in spite of my interference.”

“Hola, Señora Betancourt,” Harlie and Anya said together.

“Sit down everyone. Marta has been gracious to keep dinner warm for us. Let’s not keep her waiting any longer.”

Harlie blushed. “Sorry, we didn’t know you were waiting on us,” he said apologetically.

“No, no, Harlie, we wanted to wait for you. Can’t wait to hear how you found us,” said Mr. Jenkins.

“Well—” Harlie hesitated. He looked at Mr. Quinn, trying to decide what to say. He wasn’t sure what anyone knew or how much he should tell.

Anya intervened. “Mr. Quinn, we’d love to tell everyone about our day if that is alright with you.”

“Please, do. Might help us with a little extra mystery to I hope we’ll unravel tonight.

“Quite the intrigue, as usual, Stephen,” Mr. Jenkins joked.

“Quinn, you’re bold, I give you credit, but really. You think two teenagers are going to solve a hundred-year-old mystery?” Ms. Nettles raised her wine glass to her lips and took a sip, looking amused at the idea.

“How old are you?” she asked.

“Almost fifteen,” Harlie answered.

“So you’re fourteen. A little young to be private investigators, Quinn, but carry on.”

Harlie was utterly bewildered at this exchange. He hated to admit it because he thought she was a little snotty, but he had to agree with Ms. Nettles. He didn’t want to disappoint Mr. Quinn, but he didn’t see how he and Anya could figure out who the sculptor was. He wasn’t even sure he could accurately recount the

unusual series of events that had transpired today. His insides squirmed a little. He always felt like adults were testing him, but it felt worse when they didn't bother making a secret of it.

He and Anya took turns recounting the events of the day. The adults seemed curiously interested in the small details of their discoveries. Mr. Jenkins questioned Harlie about what made him climb up on the statue, how long it took him to find the letter on his ring, a "TSOD-KEE," Quinn called it.

~

When Mr. Amazir asked Anya when she'd decide she trusted Emile, she didn't quite know what to say to him. She had hardly had time to eat any of her salad before Marta took it from her. She would have been truly heartsick had Marta not replaced it with a plate full of spaghetti.

When Mrs. Amazir, sitting just to Anya's right, asked her about the statue, Anya pulled out her journal and handed it to her.

"I took notes on the statue. You can read them if you like," she said, hoping to quit answering questions long enough to eat. Anya twirled the noodles on her fork and lifted them to her mouth. She was repeating the process with great enthusiasm when her eyes focused clearly on the end of her fork. Its handle was a heavy silver mass of leaves and fruit. Anya's mind struggled to remember something it couldn't quite get to. She twirled another mound of spaghetti onto it slowly, examining the handle as she turned it before poking the spaghetti into her mouth—then it clicked: *It looks like the gate*. But her brother spoke first.

"Mr. Quinn, this fork," he said holding it up, "looks like the vines on the gate of this place."

"Good eye, Har—" but he was interrupted mid-sentence by Mrs. Amazir.

"I see you have an eye for art, Harlie. My grandfather designed these forks and the gate of Caminus Academy. Do you like the silver?"

"He is the athlete; I am the artist," Anya intervened. "I love the forks. But the wrought-iron gates are exquisite."

Mrs. Amazir smiled appreciatively. "My grandfather was Walt Sidon, and liked working in wrought iron, but he was a jeweler by trade." She held up her wrist for Anya, showing off a beautiful gold bracelet. "He made this for my grandmother." Amethyst stones hung in loose clusters strung together by finely veined leaves and vines. On the clasp, Anya saw some faint lettering.

"Is that your grandfather's signature?" she asked, pointing to her clasp?

"No, not his signature, exactly. It's more like a stamp of quality. He only put it on his best pieces."

"Mrs. Amazir, may I have my journal?" Anya asked. "I want to show you something."

Taking the journal, Anya held it by the cover. She let the pages hang free and shook it slightly. The piece of paper with the rubbing she'd done earlier fell into her open hand. She unfolded the paper and handed it to Mrs. Amazir. "Is that your grandfather's mark?" she asked, pointing to the rubbing on the paper.

ㄱㄹ#

Mrs. Amazir stared at the page for a moment, and checked her bracelet closely. "Yes, it is—an exact match. But you couldn't have seen this tonight on the gate. Where did it come from?" she asked incredulously. All eyes at the table were on Anya. Mr. Quinn's wild eyes were fixed on her most intensely.

“It’s from the statue. It was on the inside of a jug at Hanno’s feet. You can barely see it in the shadows. It just looks like some scratch marks.”

Mr. Quinn’s lips curled into a self-satisfied smile. “Didn’t I tell you, Anastasia—and you doubted them.”

“You never cease to amaze me, Quinn. Just when I think you have finally relinquished your tenuous grip on your intellect and sanity, you manage something like this.” She shook her blonde locks back and reached for her wine. “A toast! To Hanno the Navigator, to Sidon the Sculptor, and to Quinn the Instigator!” She raised her glass and everyone joined in laughing and joking about Quinn’s new nickname.

“Have you overlooked anybody, Anastasia?” asked Phyllo Jenkins, impishly.

“You do it, then,” she countered indifferently.

Phyllo raised his glass while the others waited. His voice boomed, “To Harlie and Anya, the Foxes of Caminus!” Everyone broke into celebration again. Anya would have sworn that Stephen Quinn fought back a tear, but soon realized that his wine had taken the wrong path down his throat. Marta handed him a glass of water and he soon recovered and cheered, “To the Foxes! Welcome to Caminus Academy!”

Anya and her brother had never been toasted by strangers, and Anya wasn’t sure she liked feeling so known by people about whom she knew so little. And what did Mr. Quinn mean— “*Welcome.*” She could feel the anxiety welling in her stomach, tightening her muscles and constricting her airway. Anya struggled to maintain a facade of poise. She’d indulged all of them, including her mother, in this little game, but she now wanted to know the purpose of all of this.

“Mr. Quinn,” she said, leaning toward him to make sure he heard her, “may I use your phone?”

“Of course, but give me just a few more minutes. I would like to get something settled first.

“Well now,” Quinn began, seeming somewhat lost in his own thoughts again. “I should advise the Chancellor’s Council that Harlie and Anya are under the impression that they have come to do some scuba diving with us.”

“You mean we’re not?” Harlie asked incredulously.

“Oh, we have some of the best diving in the world,” Mr. Quinn explained. “I do hope you’ll have time to go at some point.”

“What are you saying, Quinn?” Ted Amazir asked.

“I’m saying they might need some time to take this all in. You see, their mother never told them about Caminus—thought it best—due to the nature of their—*talents*—”

“Quinn! Think about what you are saying,” Elissa Amazir interrupted.

“You’ve got to be kidding!” and “No!” came from one end of the table.

“What *talents*?” Anya asked.

“Never told us *what*?” Harlie talked over his sister. While neither one of them liked being talked about like they were toddlers, incapable of understanding what *the grown-ups* were saying, Anya was even angrier that she actually *didn’t* understand. This was beyond rude! *Why are these strangers so interested in us? What kind of talents do they think we have? Why didn’t Mom just tell us about this place?*

Everyone at the table was talking at once. Some were not happy. Marta’s voice weaved in and out of the rest of the conversation in rapid Spanish. She heard “traumatized” and “breach of ethics.” The men seemed locked in heated debate. Anya was too overwhelmed to take it all in. Her head began to hurt, and she felt queasy and hot. She tried to glean an ounce of comprehension from the tangled mass of words that streamed

out of everyone's mouths, but she couldn't. Her head felt as if it would explode. She grabbed Harlie's elbow, like holding onto a piece of her brother would keep her from falling apart.

~

Harlie saw the blood draining from his sister's face and he knew he had to do something. "Stop it! Just...stop!" His outburst stunned everyone into silence. Marta was the first to speak. "Dinner is over," she said in perfect English.

"Señor Jenkins y Señorita Nettles, buenos noches. Señor Amazir, Ayudamé, por favor." She and Mr. Amazir began clearing dishes and retreated into the kitchen as the others left. Harlie was so thankful he could have kissed her. Even Mr. Quinn seemed more contemplative.

"Harlie, Anya—sorry for all of the confusion I have caused. I'd hoped to talk to you before dinner. I could have made things a little clearer," Mr. Quinn explained. "Let me start by assuring you that I have spoken with your mother and she knows that you are here and safe. You are here because we want you to consider coming to school here."

Harlie wasn't sure he'd heard Mr. Quinn correctly. He'd expected to be discussing a dive plan or his preference for a dive site, but had trouble wrapping his mind around the words that had just exited Quinn's mouth.

Mr. Quinn turned to Mrs. Amazir. "Elissa, if you will give me until tomorrow, I'll explain the method behind my madness—about the map and the Foxes' arrival—but I'll need the map to give back to the governor; she wants it returned within twenty-four hours."

Mrs. Amazir seemed only slightly pacified, but she managed a strained smile and handed him the map. Mr. Quinn continued, "Mrs. Amazir has stayed with me because she is the counselor for the fifteen- and sixteen-year-old scholars at Caminus Academy. Your mother was concerned that we might be asking you to come too early, but given some preliminary information we've received, I believe both of you might need to be admitted this year."

Harlie wasn't certain what he meant by the word, *need*. From the glance he exchanged with his sister, she didn't either. But Mr. Quinn continued as if he hadn't just dropped a bomb into their brains. "Your mother wants you to get to know us over the next two days, before deciding. We hope you'll choose to stay and continue your education here on Caminus. If not, you'll fly back to Bermuda to your mother."

"But why didn't she just tell us that's what we were doing?" Anya complained.

"Don't ask me to ponder the intricacies of Sicily Fox," he answered with a wry smile. "But I dare say that if you'd never made it to our door, both you and the school would have been better off for your lack of knowledge about Caminus Academy. Our Academy thrives in no small part because it is only lightly tethered to the outside world.

"In her defense, I must add, she didn't know about the map, or that no one would be picking you up at the airport, but she knew you'd be safer if we didn't tell you too much until you got here. You can call her now, if you'd like."

"No, I don't." Anya's cheeks reddened. "She's kept us in the dark since, since—forever! She can wait to hear from us until we're ready to talk."

Harlie didn't blame Anya for being mad, but he thought his sister's stubborn refusal was a mistake she'd regret. He also knew better than to say anything to her about it. Now that the day was over, Harlie thought their little adventure had been pretty fun and Quinn had said that he and Anya would get to choose whether to stay or go. He was a little put out with his mom, but he followed the "no-harm-no-foul" rule; Anya wasn't always such a good sport.

"You were never really alone," Quinn continued. "One of our people was on the plane with you—to watch after you and observe you for any signs of emerging tal—"

"Technically, it's not the Chancellor's job to identify your talents," Mrs. Amazir interjected. "It's yours. I coach scholars to figure that out. Most students do within their first or second year. We believe that every scholar has unique talents that should be developed in addition to more traditional knowledge. Mr. Quinn obviously thinks he knows what your talents might be, but I advise him not to talk to you—or anyone else—about it until you've decided to stay with us."

"Yes, yes, I just got so excited, I forgot myself," Mr. Quinn admitted. "Besides, I defer to Mrs. Amazir's expertise."

Apparently mollified by his deference, she continued, "You showed some extraordinary talents just getting here. It could be any one of these—or something you have not caught onto yet—something that you might think isn't a big deal because it comes naturally to you."

"Do you have to be smart to come here?" Harlie asked. All this talk of talents suddenly made him feel insecure. He wasn't sure that playing soccer was a talent they would find useful.

"No, not in the way most people define smart. Most of our students have average IQs, and others have very low IQs and others are geniuses. What matters to us is that their abilities are rare, or that we don't fully understand why they possess them. It's late. We have a tight schedule tomorrow, so I suggest you get some sleep."

"Quite right, Elissa. I think I'll run along myself. It's not every day that so much happens that I don't already know about. It gets tiring, you know. I don't know how everyone does it."

Mr. Quinn got up from the table and left without another word, confirming Harlie's suspicions that he might just be the most bizarre person he'd ever met. Dona Amazir seemed to take these odd comments in stride; she rose from the table. "Meet me in here for breakfast. Marta will wake you."

"Thank you, Mrs. Amazir. We'll see you tomorrow," Anya said as she and Harlie got up.

"Goodnight."

As Harlie and Anya climbed the stairs to their rooms, they knew without asking what the other was thinking; they had envisioned going to Briarwood Academy, and having their mother cooing over their victories and encouraging them in their defeats. They had not pictured going to boarding school over a thousand miles away from anything they knew or cared about. Harlie waited until Anya got to her door.

"Don't think too much," he said.

"Give me your brain," she answered.

"Goodnight, Onion."

"Goodnight, Harshly."

Academy? Why hadn't her mother told her about this place? Why were these strangers so interested in them?

Everyone at the table was talking at once. Some were not happy. Marta's voice weaved in and out of the rest of the conversation in rapid Spanish. She heard "traumatized" and "breach of security" coming from female voices. The men seemed locked in heated debate. Anya was too overwhelmed to take it all in. Her head began to hurt, and she felt queasy and hot. She tried to glean an ounce of comprehension from the tangled mass of words that streamed out of everyone's mouths, but she couldn't. Her head felt as if it would explode. She grabbed Harlie's elbow as if it would protect her from this horrible sinking feeling that enveloped her.

"Stop it! Just...stop!" Harlie's outburst stunned everyone into silence. Marta, was the first to speak. "Dinner is over," she said in perfect English.

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"But why didn't she just tell us that's what we were doing?" Anya complained. "You'll have to ask her that, but I guess she was hoping that you wouldn't need to be here. If you didn't need to be here, both you and the school would have been better off for your lack of knowledge about us. Our Academy thrives in no small part because it is only lightly tethered to the outside world," Mr. Quinn explained, "If you had never made it to our door, your mother would have been able to keep her children close to her, and you wouldn't have to wonder what you'd missed. I guessed part of her hoped you wouldn't find us.

"You mean, this was her idea?" Anya asked incredulously.

"Let's just call it a compromise."

“You said something about us having talents—what talents?” Harlie inquired.

“Technically, it is your job to identify your own talents,” Mrs. Amazir interjected. “I coach scholars to figure that out. Most of you do within your first or second year. We believe that every scholar has unique talents that should be developed in addition to more traditional knowledge. Mr. Quinn,” she looked daggers at him, “obviously thinks he knows what your talents might be, but I advise him not to talk to you—or anyone else—about it until you’ve decided to stay with us.”

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“Thank you, Mrs. Amazir. We’ll see you tomorrow,” Anya said as she and Harlie got up.

“Goodnight.”

Harlie and Anya carried themselves up the stairs. They were both exhausted, and they each knew, without asking what the other was thinking, so there was no need to talk; they had envisioned going to Briarwood Academy, and having their mother cooing over their victories and encouraging them in their defeats. They had not pictured going to boarding school over a thousand miles away from anything they knew or cared about. Anya waited until Harlie got to his door.

“Don’t think too much,” he said.

“Give me your brain,” she teased.

“Goodnight, Onion.”

“Goodnight, Harshly.”