

PROLOGUE



Jennifer browsed through the different sections in the campus bookstore: History. Physics. Religion. Fiction. Fantasy. Poetry. She rubbed her eyes. *Books. Books. And more books.* She stretched out a hand toward a book and then pulled it back. There was only one manuscript that had ever seized her heart and soul—the medieval manuscript written by Martin, the monk. When Jen had found the fifteenth-century magic manuscript at Mawgan Porth in Martin’s secret cave over the Christmas holidays two winters ago, a door had opened for her to go back in time to his era. First, she had visited the time of Lady Genevieve and Artur. Then she had traveled even further beyond, to the golden era of sixth-century Camelot when King Arthur and Queen Guinevere reigned.

Two years ago, when she had first begun her degree in English literature, she had felt inspired by her teachers and courses at university. But ever since that fateful winter solstice, when she and Arthur had voyaged to the magical island of Eve Ilion along with Martin, academia had seemed dull and abstract and her interest in it had waned.

On Eve Ilion, Lady Eve had trained her in the arts of flying, walking on water, reading elfin runes, speaking elfin tongue, and understanding all languages. Jennifer had learned the ancient history of the elfin people. *Am I now going to spend my life flipping through the musty pages of academic books? How incredibly boring.* She wanted to re-experience the exuberance

and freedom she'd felt on Eve Ilion with Arthur and their guide, Martin, the monk with super powers who had magically transported them there.

She was tired of her studies and, if she could have, she would have immediately withdrawn from the English literature program at the University of London on their return to Earth and England. Were she to reveal to her parents the truth behind her malaise at school, they might think to have her institutionalized or, at the very least, put on medication. What could she tell them? *Well, Mum and Dad, in a cave I found a lost book written by a medieval monk; and the book was magical because, whenever I read it, I lived what it described. I time traveled through two past incarnations with my boyfriend Arthur. A wizard-monk took us by ship to an island that was not on this planet, and we met the beautiful and powerful Lady Eve, the goddess of that island.*

No. She had to keep it secret. With Arthur away excavating the Romano-British settlement at Mawgan Porth, there was no one with whom she could talk about their adventure—not even Lance, a student from France, whom she and Arthur had befriended. How strange. She had been to a magic land—she and Arthur had voyaged to Eve Ilion—and yet now she walked alone on Earth with people who seemed like foreigners.

Jennifer wished monk Martin would reappear. Her heart ached. She missed him and Lady Eve desperately, even more than she missed Arthur, if that were possible.

Chapter One



WAS IT A DREAM?

London, England

Jennifer sat at a corner table in the campus café and stirred the sugar at the bottom of her blue mug of Earl Grey tea. The open window beside her overlooked the university gardens. She breathed in the sweet scent of a lilac tree, whose branches she could almost touch. Suddenly, the scene before her was eclipsed by the memory of her first walk on Eve Ilion—a realm that existed neither on Earth nor in earthly time. She could smell the fragrance of the tree blossoms cascading down on her as she, Martin, and Artur tore along the path that led to Lady Eve.

Jen's heart pounded. Had the voyage to Eve Ilion actually taken place? Or was it a dream?

An elegant Montblanc pen lay before her on the café table—a birthday gift she had received from her twin sister Elaine. Elaine had also given her a green leather-bound diary with gilt edges, as she knew Jennifer loved to write. She'd inscribed the first page with the words: "To my beloved sister Jennifer. Now that people have declared that you're an adult, I hope you always remain a child at heart—open to the universe and all the gifts it has to offer you." Today, Jennifer had scrawled in huge letters the words "*JENNIFER PENDRON.*" Beneath that, she had written: "*My Voyage to the Island of Eve Ilion - Was It a Dream?*" She tapped the pen against

her mug of tea, and waited for more words, but none came. Behind her, the sound of familiar footsteps drew near.

Lance slid into the chair beside her. He had picked up a cappuccino on his way to her table. She glanced over at him.

“Why so serious?” Lance asked. He shook away the long black hair that perpetually fell over his dark eyes and gently tried to pry her fingers from her pen. “What are you working on, Jen? Your honors thesis?”

She nodded. *I can't tell him about Eve Ilion. He won't understand. I'm sure that Arthur wouldn't want me saying anything.*

He stared at her for a moment. “You seem a bit removed from university life these days, Jennifer. You were perhaps more enthusiastic about studying medieval English literature in your first semester?” His French accent, somewhat less pronounced than when she had first met him, lent a pleasant lilt to the English language. He paused and asked, “Heard from Arthur?”

“Yes, he's still in Mawgan Porth. He'll be there for the summer, working on the archaeological dig. Cornwall isn't that far from London, but I miss him dreadfully. It's been weeks since the winter term ended. I was so pleased that he got the internship to join the dig, and I've been dying to visit, but ...”

“So what's the problem?”

“I'm swamped with school work. Arthur phoned this morning and asked me to come to Mawgan Porth for the summer solstice weekend. Said he wouldn't take no for an answer. What should I do, Lance?”

“You should say yes.”

“But I have to submit my thesis by summer’s end! My parents bribed me by saying that if I graduate a year early, they’ll pay for a trip to the Himalayas.”

“That’s your dream, isn’t it, to visit India?”

“It’s one of my dreams.” She paused. “But we’ve strayed. Back to the topic of Arthur and Mawgan Porth. He thought you’d also like to join us there. Would you be able to take the time off, Lance?”

“Sure, but only if you come along. I think we’d both benefit from the trip. You’d get to see Arthur and not have to wait until the end of summer. I adore the ocean and long walks on the beach. I hear Cornwall is gorgeous at this time of year. Never been to South West Britain. How would we travel to Mawgan Porth?”

“By train. We’d have to leave London early Friday to reach Newquay, the station nearest to Mawgan Porth, by nightfall. That way we’d have the whole weekend with Arthur and be there for the summer solstice, which falls on a Saturday this year.”

Lance stood up. “So we’re on then, right? We’ll travel together to Mawgan Porth?”

She nodded and smiled.

After he’d sauntered off, she realized she hadn’t told him it was her birthday. It didn’t matter. He and Arthur had offered her the best present—the prospect of an imminent return to Cornwall, where her voyage to Eve Ilion had begun eighteen months earlier. Once again, she had hope and a sense of purpose in her life.

Chapter Two



MARTIN'S CAVE

Mawgan Porth, Cornwall

Arthur stood at the far end of the railway station in Newquay. Jennifer raced over to him and threw her arms around his neck. “I’ve missed you dreadfully,” she said. “I’ve been miserable at school.”

“We’ve been up to our eyeballs in exams and papers,” Lance added, warmly shaking Arthur’s hand.

Jennifer sighed contentedly. “It’s so gorgeous here! I’d forgotten how lovely Cornwall is.”

The green double-decker picked them up near the train station a few minutes after they arrived.

“So what do you think, Lance, of Mawgan Porth?” Jennifer asked as they got off the bus half an hour later. She pointed to the small cluster of century-old stone cottages that lay, at a distance, beneath a looming cliff, the purplish hills and gorse-covered moor above, and the sea rolling blue and grey below.

“Exquisite, Jennifer! Let me grab our bags from the luggage compartment before the bus drives off. I’ll be back in a sec.”

Jennifer let her fingers trail through Arthur's. She gazed at him. He was tanned, with a full beard, his red hair bleached from the sun. He was wearing black jeans and a white tee shirt. A green silk scarf was tied around his neck and brought out the green of his eyes.

“Before Lance returns, tell me, Arthur, do you still have Avanan, the sword we brought back from Eve Ilion?”

“Of course. It's in my knapsack—sheathed, naturally. I always keep it close by.” He looked troubled. “Jen, why hasn't Lady Eve sent us any messages from Eve Ilion? She whisked us back to England and here we are months later, still not knowing what to do with the sword.”

“What bothers me, Arthur, is that Martin promised he'd see us again. I thought surely he'd have returned to the UK by now. I know, he did say he'd surprise us. I hoped, Arthur, you'd find a time capsule buried at the Romano-British site, with a cryptic message from him that only you and I could understand. You're not keeping anything from me, are you?”

“Nope. So far I haven't discovered anything. No messages from Martin or from Lady Eve. No magic signs. I'm super disappointed.”

Just then, Lance returned with Jennifer's carry-on and his knapsack. “How are the excavations going, Arthur?”

“I dug up a few artifacts which helped the team get a better picture of what life was like in Cornwall fifteen centuries ago. I unearthed a sixth-century gold locket, a Roman coin, and a broken pipe—part of the Romano-British 'hot bath system.' But I didn't find what I was really looking for.”

“And what's that?” asked Lance.

“A message from someone.”

“Okay. You've caught my interest. Who?”

“I guess now’s as good a time as any to tell you about our adventures two Christmases ago. Let’s go to a café where we can sit down, have a coffee, and talk. There’s a lot you have to catch up on.”

They reached the Mawgan Porth Ocean View Café. Lance sauntered over to the glassed-in front counter and selected a plate of pastries. He flirted with the attractive, red-headed woman at the cash.

Jennifer and Arthur spoke quickly and quietly at the table.

“But Arthur, it’s *our* secret. We swore that we wouldn’t tell anyone.”

“I know. But Lance isn’t just *anyone*. He’ll help us. Maybe he can help us figure out a way to pull Martin into our century. Jennifer, this generation needs Martin. It’s such a mess in the world today with environmental pollution, global warming, new and old wars; people remain divided, because they are divided within themselves.”

“Wait, wait, wait a minute, Arthur! Be reasonable. How do you think Lance will react when we tell him about our time travels? Do you really think we can trust him with information about the discovery of the magic manuscript?”

“No clue how he’ll react. Not sure if he’ll believe the story. I wouldn’t,” said Arthur.

“Yes, but one thing lies in Lance’s favor,” Jennifer mused. “He’s a poet, so that means he’s got imagination. Without imagination, you could never believe anything as far-fetched as our stories about Eve Ilion.”

Lance rejoined them at the table. “Okay. Get me up to speed,” he said.

After hearing the miraculous tale of their voyage to Eve Ilion, Lance was quiet.

“What do you think?” Arthur asked.

“Told you we shouldn’t tell him yet,” Jennifer said. “He’s not ready to hear about Eve Iliion. Probably thinks we took drugs. Which we didn’t—and don’t.”

“How do you know that I don’t believe in magic?” For the first time, Lance looked irritated with Jennifer. “You really don’t know me that well, do you? My mother and grandmother brought me up on tales of druids and faeries. My great grandmother lived to be one hundred and three years old. The Dagenais family comes from an ancient Celtic line. Great Grandmamma Lilith claimed that *her* great grandmother had been half human, half elfin. So you see, your story does not seem at all incredible to me. I believe it. But you don’t have faith in me!”

“For goodness sake, stop quibbling, guys!” Arthur admonished. “I have faith in you,” he said to Lance. “That’s one of the reasons I asked you to join us here for the summer solstice.”

“Thanks, good chap.” Lance whacked Arthur affectionately on the back.

The next morning, over breakfast in the cottage, Arthur told Lance, “Jen and I are going to the beach this evening. Do you want to join us? We’ll show you the cave where Jennifer discovered Martin’s manuscript. That’s where our adventures began—exactly a year and six months ago, on the winter solstice.”

“That was the shortest day of the year and today is the longest: June twenty-first, the summer solstice,” Jennifer began. “Present-day tidal patterns prevent you from getting to the cave. It was Arthur’s friend, Pete, who told us the secret that the cave could be accessed on the winter and summer solstices. And we should keep this a secret.”

Jennifer had packed food for dinner on the beach. The three settled on the sand and munched on the tomato and cheese sandwiches and potato-cucumber salad she had made. Afterwards, they drank some coffee from a thermos and ate the shortbreads, also baked by Jennifer. The sun began to set as the moon rose above the horizon. The three sat mesmerized by the spectacular scene. Suddenly, Jennifer jumped up and said, “What about the cave? We completely forgot about Martin’s cave!”

“I’m so stuffed, I can hardly move. There’s always tomorrow,” Lance said complacently.

“No.” Jennifer chided. “I already told you! Because of the tides, we can only enter the cave on two days out of the year: the winter and summer solstices. Tomorrow would be too late!”

Arthur sat up. “I can’t believe we lost track of time! Let’s go.” He offered a hand to Jennifer and the other to Lance and helped them both up. The three began walking. The first stars shone in the night sky.

“Beautiful!” Jennifer breathed in. “The night *is* magical, isn’t it?”

“I think so,” Arthur whispered.

“So do I,” Lance said. He slid down an embankment on the beach. “The tide is way out,” he noted.

They walked along the ocean without talking.

“There’s Arthur’s Seat, that massive rocky mound over there, and inside it—the cave.” Jennifer pointed.

Arthur turned to her. “Did you bring your flashlight?” he asked. They had reached Arthur’s Seat.

“Of course.” She smiled. “I’m always prepared.” She crouched and darted into the cave.

“Jennifer!” Arthur shouted. “Be careful!”

“She shouldn’t be in there alone. I’m going in!” Lance said with concern. He aimed his flashlight into the cave and followed Jennifer. Arthur glanced back at the North Star, and then ducked inside, too.

* * *

Martin’s old cave was dry, though the stone walls were covered with moist seaweed, for the cave was submerged in water for much of the year. They could see the gaping hole made when Jennifer had, eighteen months before, crashed through the wall into an inner chamber.

“What do you see?” Arthur asked. He was several feet behind Jennifer.

“I can’t see anything yet.”

“I feel like I’m suffocating,” Lance muttered under his breath. “Let’s get out of here.”

“No. Wait! I think there’s something here,” Jennifer said. She shone her light toward a far corner of the cave.

“Hello,” a voice said.

Lance recoiled, backing into Arthur.

“Who are you?” Jennifer whispered to the shrouded figure. Her hand trembled and the flashlight shook.

“Don’t you people of the third millennium have any manners left?” the voice answered.

“Martin!” Jennifer shouted. “Lance, Arthur—it’s Martin! He’s returned!”

“Excuse me, Jennifer,” the voice continued. “He is a *she*, this time around!”

Jennifer’s flashlight revealed the wizard’s face. “My God! You’re a woman!”