

“... As he spoke, he moved toward a darkened corner of the room. Maagy had not noticed the screen standing there. As Henry moved it aside, Maagy gasped. It revealed a sinister looking pedestal adorned with gargoyles on which was an intricately woven metal cage with a heavy latch. It was inverted over a very large blue crystal, which was floating upright with no visible means of support. It was balancing in thin air.

“What is that thing?”

“Honestly... I don’t know. The letter states that I should unlatch the cage. When you take the crystal from its perch, all will be revealed to you.”

“I’m supposed to take hold of it?”

“Apparently. No other living thing shall touch it, save the true *Chosen One*. That is what she wrote. Sudden death would be the reward for all others who might be tempted.

Maagy’s stomach was churning. She felt as though she might burst at any moment. She rose to her feet while never diverting her gaze from the ominous object. There seemed to be a force drawing her to it. She turned toward the window... She stared down at the ground in numbed silence.

“That’s why you were never allowed to come in here. It’s why there is only one key to this tower and I possess it... I was afraid if you touched it too soon you might die.”

“You said *Chosen One*? What does that mean?”

“I’m afraid... I don’t know, my dear.”

She whirled round and approached the pedestal, the attraction growing stronger.

“How long has it been here?”

“I don’t know that either. I never came into the tower until your mother suggested she give birth here. It was here then and precisely as it is now.”

“Who put it here?”

“I have no idea.”

“Open it,” she whispered.

“There is more I must tell you first...”

“*Open it!*” She screamed.

“Maagy, do not speak to me in that tone...”

She glared at him through squinted eyes fighting back tears of anguish, fear, and anger. She pursed her lips and scowled, but he held his ground against her intimidation and continued with his account.

“There is a legend, which tells of an ancient curse on Terrasicus. I believe the enchantment is somehow tied to it... None of it made any sense to me until I read her letter revealing that indeed she was a descendent of a woman at the center of both an enchantment and apparently a curse.”

... She was frozen in stunned disbelief, her rebellious attitude dissolved into confusion. Just an hour ago they were laughing and enjoying the most delightful birthday breakfast and now all of *this*. How could she possibly comprehend it?

... “I’m ready to know everything.”

Maagy took a sip of tea and set the cup on the table. She took a deep breath and let it out slowly as she approached the ominous pedestal. Without a word he unlatched the cage, and it floated toward the ceiling. As it lifted, the crystal began to quiver and emit an eerie blue glow. Maagy and King Henry looked on in fear and disbelief, neither of them knowing what would happen when she took hold of it. Something in her told her she was ready to find out. He backed away as she stepped forward.

Her heart pounded in rapid rhythms as she reached out her trembling hand. She wrapped her fingers round the glowing object. Immediately upon touching it her head began to swirl and everything darkened as if she were at the center of a cyclone. Objects flew by so quickly her eyes couldn’t focus on

them. She felt as if she were being lifted off the ground and spun into the air. She tried to scream for her father to catch her, but no sound could emerge. He stood motionless and silent as he watched her eyes close...”