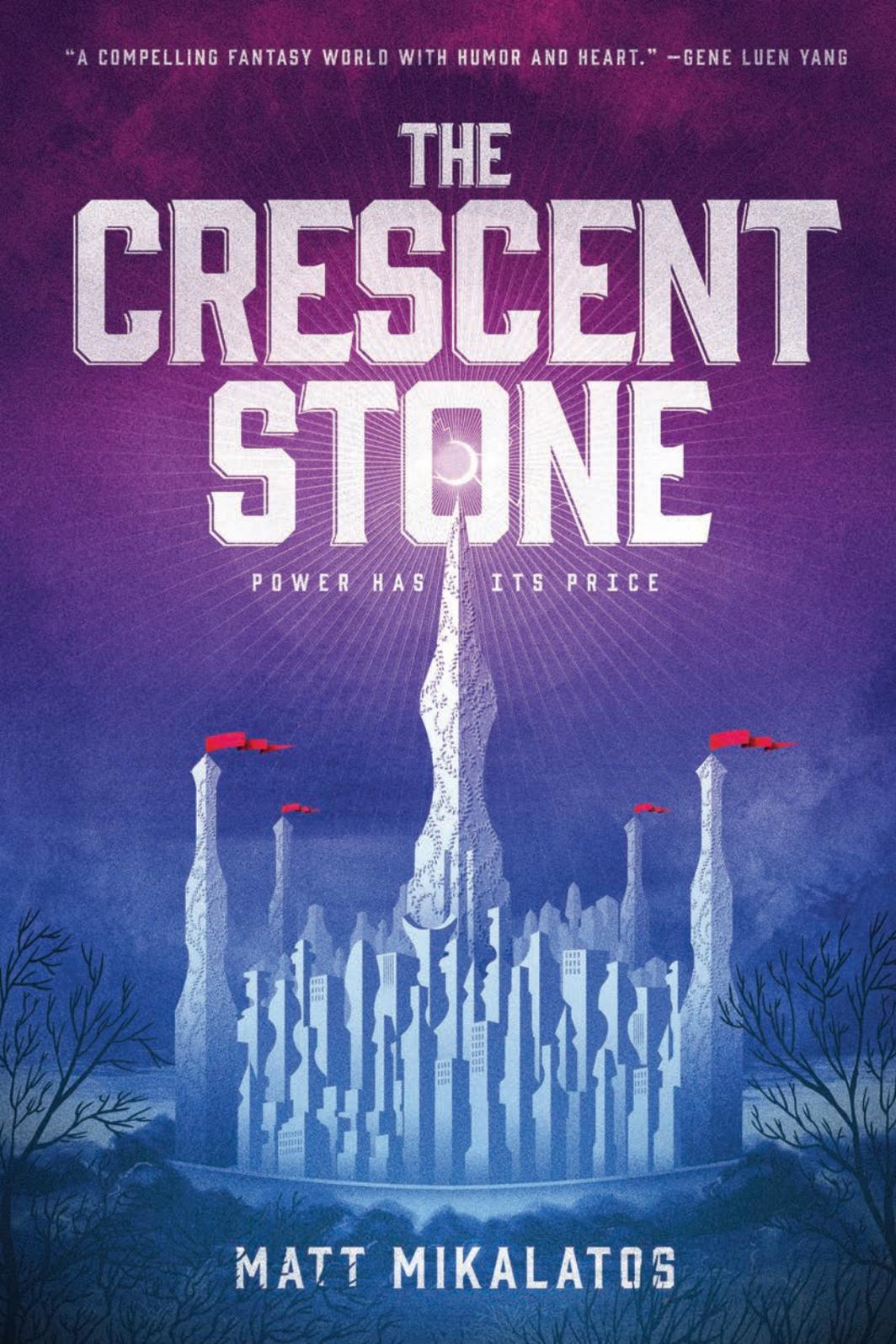


"A COMPELLING FANTASY WORLD WITH HUMOR AND HEART." —GENE LUEN YANG

THE CRESCENT STONE



POWER HAS ITS PRICE

MATT MIKALATOS

PRAISE FOR *THE CRESCENT STONE*

Matt Mikalatos has built a compelling fantasy world with humor and heart.

GENE LUEN YANG, creator of *American Born Chinese* and *Boxers & Saints*

Matt Mikalatos has penned a tale straight out of today's headlines that will tug at your heartstrings. *The Crescent Stone* is a compelling story that will get under your skin and worm its way into your heart.

TOSCA LEE, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Iscariot* and *The Legend of Sheba*

The Crescent Stone hooked me from the first page! With the rich characterization of John Green and the magical escapism of Narnia, this book is a must read for all fantasy fans!

LORIE LANGDON, author of *Olivia Twist* and the Doon series

This is what sets Mikalatos's epic world apart from so many other fantasy realms: the characters feel real, their lives are genuine and complicated, and their choices are far from binary. Mikalatos's creativity and originality are on full display in this epic tale for adults and young readers alike.

SHAWN SMUCKER, author of *The Day the Angels Fell*

The Crescent Stone blends . . . glitter unicorns, powerful healing tattoos, and an engaging cast of characters into a funny and thoughtful story that examines the true costs of magic and privilege.

TINA CONNOLLY, author of *Seriously Wicked*

The twists keep coming in *The Crescent Stone*, a fabulous young adult fantasy with a great cast of characters. I particularly loved Jason, whose humor, logic, and honesty will make readers eager to follow him into a sequel. I found the Sunlit Lands a fantastically engaging place to visit and grew ever more delighted as I discovered more about each culture, their knotted histories, and how the magic worked. Fantasy fans will devour it and ask for seconds.

JILL WILLIAMSON, Christy Award–winning author of *By Darkness Hid* and *Captives*

From C. S. Lewis to J. K. Rowling, the secret magical place that lives alongside our own mundane world has a rich history in fantasy literature, and *The Crescent Stone* is a delightful tale that is a more-than-worthy continuation of that tradition. Matt Mikalatos weaves a rich tapestry that is equal parts wonder, thoughtfulness, and excitement, while being that most wonderful of things—a joyful and fun story. From the first page, you can't help but root for Madeline as she stumbles about trying to navigate a future that is uncertain and fraught with pain. The beauty of Madeline as a character is that her journey is both all too familiar and yet entirely contemporary—the magical land that is her salvation is so much more. I don't know where this series will go. All I know is that I don't ever want it to end.

JAKE KERR, author of the Tommy Black series and a nominee for the Nebula Award, the Theodore Sturgeon Memorial Award, and the storySouth Million Writers Award

The Crescent Stone inspires thought on matters of compassion and privilege in a breathtaking and fun fantasy setting. This is a book that will leave readers empowered—not by magic, but by the potential within their own hearts.

BETH CATO, author of *The Clockwork Dagger*

PRAISE FROM READERS

Jason's personality throughout the whole book brought a smile to my face the entire time.



[The book is about] injustice. The rich taking advantage of the poor. The powerful taking advantage of the weak. How desperate people will do desperate things for their loved ones. That all of our actions affect others around us. Change starts within.



I thought the story itself was very compelling and left me with the excitement of wanting to get to and through the next chapter so I could see what would happen next. . . . I thoroughly enjoyed reading the story and the cultural commentary that was throughout the book.



I love the parallel world aspect of this book. It was unexpected and kept the discussion of privilege and race a fresh perspective.



Overall, I loved the book. I thought the characters and the alternate universe were interesting. I loved the struggles of each character and the surprises within the Sunlit Lands.



Lewis wrote Narnia as a fun story that provided thinly veiled allegory and life lessons. Mikalatos does the same thing here for today's generation. Tackling issues that divide the most rational of adults, Mikalatos shows all these issues with honesty, a story that keeps you engaged, and characters that keep you smiling.



The Crescent Stone is a rare book that shows incredible depth that is matched only by its fun and whimsy.



One of the most engaging stories I have ever read. Nonstop fun meets a conversation-starting masterpiece.

THE SUNLIT LANDS

NO ONE EVER
TALKS ABOUT
THIS ISLAND



PASTISIA
NECROMANCERS.
HARD PASS

SAFE
(MORE OR LESS)



COURT OF
FAR SEEING



NOPE.
NOPE!
KAKRI
TERRITORIES
NOPE!!

TOLMIN PASS



WASTED
LANDS
GROSS

SHARK PEOPLE?!
NO THANKS

TREES? VIL-PROBABLY
FINE?

YUCK!
LIZARDS



THE
SOUTHERN
COURT

GINIAN SEA

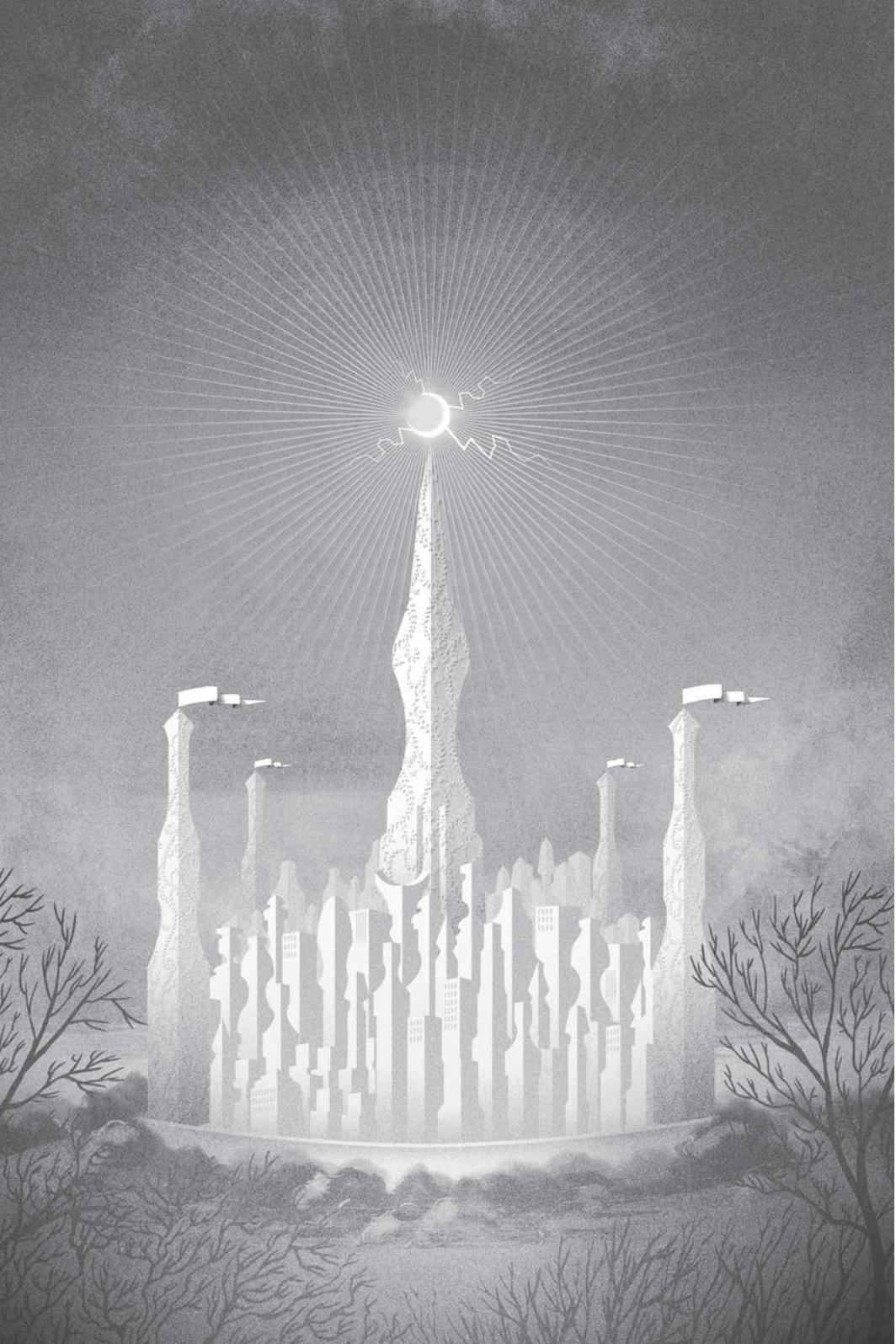
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ALUVOREA

THE SUNLIT LANDS

BOOK ONE





**THE
CRESCENT
STONE**

MATT MIKALATOS



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The Crescent Stone

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The Crescent Stone is a work of fiction. Where real people, events, establishments, organizations, or locales appear, they are used fictitiously. All other elements of the novel are drawn from the author's imagination.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

ARCHON THENODY—the chief magistrate; supreme ruler of the Elenil

BAILEYA—Kakri warrior who has come to Far Seeing to make her fortune;
daughter of Willow, granddaughter of Abronia

BASILEUS PRINEL—one of the Elenil magistrates; in charge of celebrations, rituals,
and communal events

BLACK SKULLS—elite fighting force of the Scim; there are three known members

BREAK BONES—a Scim warrior imprisoned by the Elenil

BRIGHT PRISM—a “civilized” Scim man who works in the archon’s palace

CROOKED BACK—spokesperson of the Scim army

DARIUS WALKER—American human; Madeline’s ex-boyfriend

DAVID GLENN—American human in service to the Elenil

DAY SONG—a “civilized” Scim man who serves Gilenya

DELIGHTFUL GLITTER LADY [DEE, DGL]—a unicorn

DIEGO FERNÁNDEZ—Colombian human in service to the Elenil; has the power of flight

EVERNU—gallant white stag who works alongside Rondelo

FERA—Scim woman; wife of Inrif and mother of Yenil

FERNANDA ISABELA FLORES DE CASTILLA—Lady of Westwind; human woman;
older than most humans in the Sunlit Lands

GARDEN LADY—mysterious old woman who has taken an interest in Madeline

- GILENYIA**—an influential Elenil lady; Hanali’s cousin; has the power of healing
- HANALI**—Elenil recruiter who invites Madeline to the Sunlit Lands
- INRIF**—Scim man; husband of Fera and father of Yenil
- JASON WU [WU SONG]**—American human who follows Madeline into the Sunlit Lands
- JASPER**—American human in the service of the Elenil; in charge of the armory
- JENNY WU**—Jason’s sister
- KEKOA KAHANANUI**—American human in service to the Elenil
- KNIGHT OF THE MIRROR**—human in his mid-forties; fights the Scim without magic
- MADELINE OLIVER**—American human in the service of the Elenil
- MAGISTRATES**—the rulers of the Elenil. There are nine of them, including the archon.
- MAJESTIC ONE**—the Elenil name for the magician who founded the Sunlit Lands
- MALGWIN**—half fish, half woman; harbinger of chaos and suffering; lives in the dark waterways surrounding the Sunlit Lands
- MALIK**—Darius’s cousin
- MOTHER CROW**—a Kakri matriarch
- MR. GARCÍA**—the gardener at Madeline’s home on Earth
- MRS. RAYMOND**—English human woman who runs the Transition House for humans in the Sunlit Lands; fifty years old
- MUD**—Scim child who lives on the streets of the Court of Far Seeing
- NEW DAWN**—a “civilized” Scim woman who works for Gilenya
- NIGHT’S BREATH**—a Scim warrior
- POLEMARCH TIRIUS**—one of the Elenil magistrates; the commander of the Elenil army
- PEASANT KING**—the figure from Scim legend who founded the Sunlit Lands
- RAYO**—the Knight of the Mirror’s silver stallion
- RESCA**—Hanali’s mother
- RICARDO SÁNCHEZ**—American human in service to the Elenil; healed by Gilenya
- RONDELO**—Elenil “captain of the guard” in the Court of Far Seeing

THE CRESCENT STONE

RUTH MBEWE—Zambian eight-year-old who lives in the Knight of the Mirror's household

SHULA BISHARA—Syrian human in the service of the Elenil; has the power to burst into flame

SOCHAR—a member of the city guard; Elenil

SOFÍA—the housekeeper in Madeline's home on Earth

SUN'S DANCE—a "civilized" Scim man; advisor to the Elenil magistrates

THUY NGUYEN—Vietnamese human guard in Westwind

VIVI—father of Hanali, son of Gelintel

YENIL—a young Scim girl; daughter of Inrif and Fera



PART 1

*There must be something better,
I know it in my heart.*

FROM THE GRYPHON UNDER THE STAIRS
BY MARY PATRICIA WALL

1

THE GARDEN LADY

*The king's gardener spoke the secret language of all growing things.
She knew the songs of the morning flowers and spoke the poems
of the weeds. She spent long afternoons in conversation with the trees.*

FROM "THE TRIUMPH OF THE PEASANT KING," A SCIM LEGEND



The bench stood twenty feet away. Such a short distance. Such an impossible one. Madeline clung to the trellis of ivy that bordered her mother's garden path as she tried to force air into her ruined lungs. Every gasp felt like pushing sludge through broken glass.

It was late morning on a Sunday, and she'd taken her inhaler an hour before—a quick, sharp breath of cold that disappeared much too quickly. She should have been in bed, flat on her back—not sitting, not standing, much less walking. But if the doctors were to be believed, it was one of the last spring Sundays she would ever see. Her chest and back hurt from the coughing.

The sunlight caressed her face. She couldn't stand at the trellis forever, and the return path to the house was longer. A few steps set off the coughing

again. She pushed her fist hard into her ribs. She had dislocated them coughing three days ago, and they still didn't feel right. Three steps brought her to the maple tree which crowded the path. Her vision dimmed, and her knees softened. She slid down the trunk, and when the coughing fit passed she dropped her head against the rough bark.

A hummingbird spun into the air beside her, its shining green body hanging to the right of her face. It chirped three times, then zipped to her left, its small, dark eyes studying her before disappearing toward the pineapple sage. The citrusy fragrance of the roses hung heavy across this part of the path. She took little half breaths, and it felt close to natural. The bees hummed as they visited the flowers. A squirrel hung off a sunflower by its hind legs, plucking seeds out of the wide circle of the flower's face with its forepaws. This garden never quite seemed to follow the seasons . . . sunflowers blooming in spring instead of summer, roses year-round, frogs singing in the evenings no matter the weather. It was an oasis of near-magic in their suburban lot. Madeline used to build fairy houses along the "shore" of the fountain when she was a kid, using bark, leaves, and flowers to make tiny homes for make-believe friends.

Her mother had never cared for those little homes. She had planned the garden, a full acre of wandering paths, stone bridges, and small fountains. It was eclectic and a bit overgrown in places. Mr. García had done the planting and did the upkeep, too. Mom liked it a bit unkempt, and he worked to give it the impression of slight wildness. It didn't look manicured, but there weren't weeds, either. The fairy houses, Mom had said, looked like someone had forgotten to clean up after doing yard work.

Everything in its place, Mom always said.

Then again, Mom also wanted her house to "look lived in." That meant strange habits like telling their housekeeper, Sofía, that she couldn't immediately put an abandoned glass in the dishwasher. Once Madeline had come home and smelled fresh cookies, only to discover it was an air freshener her mother had bought from a Realtor. "To make it smell like home," Mom had said, seemingly oblivious to the reality that she was, indeed, home, and that actually baking cookies would have been simpler.

A few more steps, Madeline decided, but halfway to the bench a racking army of coughs marched across her chest. She touched her lips, then

wiped the blood in the grass. With her eyes closed and the little half breaths coming again, she counted to twelve. When the jagged feeling in her chest passed, she lay flat and watched the clouds drifting in some high, distant wind. Air moved so easily for everyone but her.

It may have been a mistake, sneaking into the garden without telling anyone, with no way to call for help. She had chosen the perfect moment. Mom and Sofia had gone upstairs, something about washing the curtains. Dad was at the golf course, or work, or both. Her phone sat inside, turned off. The constant texts from Darius were making her feel guilty, but she had made a decision, and it was final. He couldn't waste his life waiting for her. There wasn't a cure. He needed to live his life. She needed to live what remained of hers.

Birds chirped in the maple. The warmer air made it easier to breathe. Going outside in the winter had been nearly impossible. And the sun felt nice. She closed her eyes. The tree shaded her face, but her hands and feet baked in the sunshine. Last week the doctor had said, "If there are things you want to do, you should do them." He was trying to be encouraging, she knew that, but it sounded too much like "enjoy your last spring." Her mom didn't think she should sit out in the backyard because "she might catch cold," as if that would change anything now.

And here Madeline was on her back, stranded and straining to breathe. So much for doing whatever she wanted.

The hummingbird wheeled overhead. It zipped back and forth over her, then shot off again, chirping incessantly.

"I see her, I see her."

Madeline struggled to prop herself onto her elbow, looking for the source of the unfamiliar voice. It sounded like the voice of an old woman, but there was no wavering in it, no sense of weakness. It sounded, in fact, almost musical . . . as if the woman had been a professional singer once upon a time and the music had never left her. Still, she was trespassing in their backyard. A small thrill of adrenaline coursed through Madeline.

A woman made her way toward Madeline, hunched low, as if carrying a heavy load on her back. She wore a broad hat with pale violet flowers along the brim, and her grey hair stuck out like the straws of an overworked broom. Her patched and dirty skirt trailed the ground, and she carried a

canvas sack. Madeline couldn't imagine how she'd gotten in through the hedge that ran around the garden.

Another coughing fit overcame Madeline. Her vision blurred at the edges, and she pressed hard against her chest.

"Don't get up, dear, rest yourself. It's the hummingbird who's in such a hurry, but I saw you, don't worry, I already saw."

"Does my mom know you're . . ." Madeline couldn't finish the question.

"Of course not," the old woman said. She settled next to Madeline with a great deal of groaning. She looked at the house, her eyes sparkling, a smile tugging at the edges of her lips. Her face was weathered and wrinkled, but her eyes shone like black stones in a clear river.

"You shouldn't be here," Madeline said. "My mom won't . . ." She stopped to catch her breath. "She won't like it."

The old woman nodded thoughtfully, then smoothed her skirt. "Mothers rarely do, dear. Now, to business." She reached into her sack and pulled out a small white button, crusted in dirt, then a recently unearthed bottle cap and a small roll of twine. "I would like to borrow these."

"Borrow them?" Madeline pushed her hand against her chest again, trying to get a deeper breath. "I don't understand."

"They are yours," the woman said. She raised her hand. "Don't deny it. I found them in your garden. The birds brought me the twine, and the squirrel mentioned the button, but I dug it out with my own hands. The bottle cap—well, I've had my eye on that for several seasons."

Madeline tried to call her mother, but she couldn't shout loud enough. She coughed and coughed, and the old woman put a fleshy arm around her shoulders. "My mom," Madeline managed between coughs.

"I won't cheat you," the woman said. "I only want to borrow them. In exchange, I'll give you three favors and one piece of advice." The hummingbird zipped in front of them again and chirped twice. The old woman made a shooing motion. "I know what time it is, go on with you."

Maybe the old woman would go if Madeline gave her what she wanted, and it was only a few pieces of trash from the backyard. "Take them," Madeline said.

The woman beamed at her and collected the bits of junk, scooping them

into her bag. “Thank you, dear. Thank you, thank you—and that’s three thanks for three items, so all has been done proper.”

Madeline wheezed a you’re welcome. She took a shallow breath. “Could you . . . Do you think you could ask someone to come out for me?”

The old woman looked to the house again, and her face crumpled. “Not for the wide world, dear.”

“For one of my favors?” She took the woman’s hand. “I can’t breathe.”

“The flowers sent word of that, they did. That’s why I came. But have they come to you? Have they offered you a bargain?”

Madeline gasped for breath. What was wrong with this woman—couldn’t she see that Madeline couldn’t breathe? The old woman stared at her with a steady gaze, waiting for an answer. Hoping the woman might help after she answered, Madeline shook her head. “Who? The flowers?”

“No, of course they haven’t. Not yet. I can’t get involved until then. Not much.”

Madeline lay back, coughing. The bright green leaves were waving in the branches. Clouds scudded in from the west, much too fast, covering the sun. She shivered and thought she could see the cloud of her breath when she exhaled. But it was too warm for that on this spring day. “Call my mother,” she said. “Or Sofia.”

The old woman’s face appeared over her. “No favors yet, my sweet seedling. But I can give you the advice now.”

Madeline closed her eyes. “Okay.”

The old woman squeezed her hand and whispered in her ear. But Madeline could scarcely hear her over her own racking cough, and when she could breathe enough to roll on her side, the sun was shining brightly again, and the old woman was stepping into the hedge, like a rabbit running into a thicket of thorns. She was gone.

Her mother’s cry of horror came from the direction of the house, and feet pounded along the garden path toward the shady space beneath the maple.