

Author Marie Rutkoski Interviews Astrophil, the Tin Spider

MARIE: Don't be nervous.

ASTROPHIL: I am not.

MARIE: Your legs are trembling. All eight of them.

ASTROPHIL: Oh.

MARIE: This is just a brief interview. I'd like to ask you a few questions. That's all.

ASTROPHIL: Well, perhaps I *am* a tad nervous, but only for your sake.

MARIE: Mine?

ASTROPHIL: Oh, yes. I am a very brave spider, you see, and I have endured many dangerous adventures. If I tell you about them, you might faint.

MARIE: I'll try not to.

ASTROPHIL: Very good.

MARIE: The last time we met, you and your friend Petra had just escaped from Prince Rodolfo's palace with a strange treasure: the eyes of Petra's father. The prince had stolen them, and enspelled them so that he could wear them whenever he liked. So you and Petra stole them back.

ASTROPHIL: Yes, with the help of Neel, a very talented thief. If you look at his hands, they appear to be the normal hands of any grubby boy who should bathe more often. His fingers, however, can grow very long and invisible. But you know all of this. You wrote a book about our adventures.

MARIE: Yes: *The Cabinet of Wonders*. Have you read it?

ASTROPHIL: Of course.

MARIE: Did you like it?

ASTROPHIL: Yes, but it was far too short. There should have been more pages about me.

MARIE: I'm writing a new book called *The Celestial Globe*. You're in it.

ASTROPHIL: Really?

MARIE: It's about what happened to you and Petra after you returned home with her father's eyes. Um . . . Astrophil? Your legs are trembling again.

ASTROPHIL: Well, you see, soon after we returned home, the prince sent monsters to attack us.

MARIE: Monsters?

ASTROPHIL: Terrible creatures. They are called the Gray Men. Petra and I were whisked away to London. In fact, I am supposed to be there right now. I stole a few minutes to speak with you, but I cannot leave Petra alone for very long. I must return to her.

MARIE: Wait! What's happening in London?

ASTROPHIL: For one thing, Petra is finally receiving a decent education. She is being trained in magic, and there is a dashing young fencing master named Kit who teaches her how to use a sword. She is very good. However, we want to return home as soon as possible. I cannot bear to think about what might be happening to Petra's father at this very moment.

MARIE: How frightening! How will you get back to Bohemia?

ASTROPHIL: Petra made a bargain. One of the Queen of England's counselors has been murdered. If Petra discovers who did this dastardly crime, we will be sent home.

MARIE: I hope you solve it.

ASTROPHIL: Don't worry. I shall help her.

MARIE: I've heard a rumor . . .

ASTROPHIL: You shouldn't gossip.

MARIE: It's about Neel and Tomik, Petra's childhood friend.



ASTROPHIL: Tell me everything!

MARIE: I've heard that they're looking for you and Petra. You disappeared from Bohemia, and now nobody knows where you went. So Neel and Tomik are sailing the high seas in search of you.

ASTROPHIL: But . . . but the open sea is so perilous! There are pirates, storms . . . But no. It is not possible. Tomik and Neel cannot be sailing together. They do not even know each other.

MARIE: They do now.

ASTROPHIL: Indeed? So they're friends?

MARIE: Mmm . . . I wouldn't say that. Actually, I think they kind of hate each other.

ASTROPHIL: Oh my.

MARIE: But they're still working together. They have to, if they're going to find Petra—and the location of a magical object called the Celestial Globe.

ASTROPHIL: Oh, I've read all about the Celestial Globe. It is extremely powerful. But then . . . that must mean that the prince of Bohemia will want it, too.

MARIE: Yes, he does.

ASTROPHIL: This is troubling news. I must tell Petra at once.

MARIE: I'm not so sure you should. It will only worry her.

ASTROPHIL: Perhaps you are right.

MARIE: I think I am.

ASTROPHIL: Very well. It will be our secret.