

# Dreamquake

BOOK TWO OF THE DREAMHUNTER DUET

ELIZABETH KNOX

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# 1



*O*N ST. LAZARUS'S EVE IN 1906, OVER ONE THOUSAND PEOPLE WERE AT THE RAINBOW OPERA TO SHARE A TRADITIONAL feast day dream. A dream named Homecoming, performed by the dreamhunter Grace Tiebold.

Grace had told the Opera's manager that she'd been having trouble falling asleep, and that it wouldn't do to keep her audience awake and staring at the ceilings of their bedchambers. She'd arranged for another dreamhunter, George Mason, to lie in with her. He had caught Homecoming too and so would boost her already famously powerful performance. Also, Mason was a Soporif. He often worked in hospitals, enhancing the effects of anesthetics. He would enter the operating room before the surgeons and their assistants, and lie down near the prepared patient—for anyone who was close to the Soporif when he fell asleep would fall asleep with him.

At ten that evening, Grace and George Mason were settled head-to-feet in the dreamer's bed, a silk-upholstered platform at the top of the dais in the center of the Rainbow Opera's huge auditorium. The Opera had a full house. Founderston's fashionable people—magnates, generals, politicians, and the President himself—were all in attendance. The manager was happy and, at the time, looked on the

dreamhunter's change in the evening's arrangements as a good thing.

By midnight the Opera's four tiers of balconies were empty, waiters had collected the cups, liqueur glasses, and bonbon trays from the little tables and ottomans around each balcony. The padded doors to the bedchambers were fastened shut. Everyone—all but the President's and Secretary of the Interior's bodyguards, and the men from the fire watch, who were either patrolling balconies and back stairs in their soft-soled shoes or at their post in the window of the Rainbow Opera's control room—was in bed. The men from the fire watch were awake and vigilant. The building was secure and peaceful. A stage was set in the thousand drowsy heads of the Opera's patrons.



Grace Tiebold lay under the thick, down-filled quilt of the dreamer's bed. She could hear Mason breathing quietly. She waited to fall through the trapdoor of his sleep into their shared dream. It was nice at least not to have to worry about when she'd drop off.

Instead, Grace worried about her husband, Chorley. Chorley had packed a bag and left the house a week before, and hadn't told her where he was going. Grace worried about her daughter, Rose, who had been boarding for two terms at Founderston Girls' Academy, a school that was less than a mile from her home. She worried that Rose, having been sent away by her parents, wouldn't want to come back and live with them again. Grace wanted to do something to reassure her daughter that they were interested in her. Perhaps she should arrange for Rose to come out at the next Presentation Ball, instead of having to wait another year and a half.

Grace worried about her dreamhunter niece, Laura. Since Laura's father, Tziga, had disappeared earlier in the year, she had been quite distant from her family. But at lunch that afternoon Laura had behaved beautifully. She'd been polite and affectionate. She had even remembered to bring her aunt and cousin St. Lazarus's Day gifts—the kind of nice gesture that was usually beyond her. Not that Laura *wasn't* nice—only that she was solemn and wrapped up in herself. At lunch Grace had watched Laura smiling as Rose opened her present, a box of musk creams from Farry's, the family's favorite confectioner. Grace had thought, "She's finally growing up." Rose, even biting into a musk cream and moaning loudly in delight, didn't give her mother a moment's doubt about *her* maturity.

As Grace waited to fall asleep, she mused on that lunch. She fretted. True, Laura had bought gifts and behaved herself, but, as Grace gazed into her memory and studied the face across the restaurant table, she could see that Laura had a look in her eyes, a dangerous look—like that her dreamhunter father had often worn—a kind of dark haze made of desperation and determination and power.

Lying in the white cloud of bed at the pinnacle of the Opera's dais, Grace thought, "What is Laura planning?" She turned her head and looked over at the second-story balcony, and the doors to the Hame and Tiebold suites, where Laura and Rose were sleeping. Firmly fastened, the quilted doors gave Grace no clues.

A moment later she was drifting. Something passed through her mind, a proud happiness about her home, her city, her country, the golden age in which she was living, the fine people she'd chosen to manage her world. The thought pleased her—and amused her too, since it was so unlike her. Why should she be thinking of President Wilkinson when she had so much on her mind?

Then Grace saw the crisp brown, late-summer leaves of oaks in a grove by the road that would take her *home*. George Mason had fallen asleep and had dropped her into her dream.

And then—suddenly—she wasn't at home. She was in a coffin, and under the ground, and she could not get out.



Sandy Mason's bed at the Opera was one tier above and across the auditorium from the Hame and Tiebold suites. Sandy lay, his eyes fixed on the unadorned ceiling of his standard-sized room, and thought about Laura Hame.

When Laura saw him that evening, she had seized his hands and said his name, as if he was really something to her, more than a friend. Her hands were shaking, and Sandy was sure she'd been chewing *Wakeful*, the drug dreamhunters used to ensure they didn't sleep till they were ready to broadcast the dreams they'd caught. But if Laura had a dream, she shouldn't have been at the Opera. A dream would interfere with the sleep of people in rooms near her, and possibly contaminate the dream her aunt Grace would perform. Laura had made excuses, she'd said that her mouth was stained from sucking lollipops, not chewing *Wakeful*, but Sandy was sure that she was lying.

Laura had lied to him, but she had grabbed his hands and pulled him close, and gazed up into his face as if looking for salvation.

Sandy sat up abruptly, pounded his pillow a few times, then flopped back down again. He decided that he'd rather stop thinking about Laura Hame. She was too difficult, a sad and secretive girl. And despite the fact that they were both dreamhunters, had first entered the Place at last autumn's

Try, earned their licenses only months apart, despite all they shared, they were from very different worlds. Laura was wealthy. When her father, the famous dreamhunter Tziga Hame, had disappeared into the arid and silent interior of the Place, he was missed by dream palace patrons and *mourned* by all the invalids he had helped to better health. Laura's aunt was on the dreamer's dais and about to deliver a vivid and perfectly clear print of Homecoming to the audience of a dream palace that had been built for her. Even Laura's non-dreamhunter uncle, Chorley Tiebold, was famous—a figure of fashion and a talented hobby inventor. Laura was *somebody* by pedigree, while Sandy—Sandy was the middle child of seven, whose family lived in the provinces and whose father was the shop steward in a factory that made flax matting. Sandy's father thought that dreamhunting was fortune hunting. He'd said to his son, "Most dreamhunters wind up like wizened, squinty-eyed old gold prospectors, and the rest are corrupt or crazy." Sandy's father saw himself as the salt of the earth. He scorned his dreamhunter brother and was disgusted that any son of his should want to take up the trade, "if you can call lying around in a stupor in silk sheets a trade," he'd said. Sandy's father saw dreamhunting the way much of the population of Southland did—those too far from the Place for dreams to travel and keep fresh. The majority of Southlanders thought that dreams were a luxury, a drug of idleness. And though Sandy wanted more than anything to become a great and famous dreamhunter, a star like Grace Tiebold, or a magician like Tziga Hame, part of him felt his father's squeamish mistrust of dreamhunters.

Sandy bashed his pillow some more and told himself sternly that he was *not* falling for Laura Hame. He was only starstruck and infatuated with the idea of her family.

Sandy felt his Soporif uncle fall asleep and for a moment

resisted the cozy wave of weakness; breathed through it as though it were a spasm of pain. He held to his memory of Laura Hame's pale face and dark eyes, her stained lips and the mauve cave of her stained mouth. Then he felt himself slipping, and then he was asleep.



*. . . he woke, an invalid, weak and encumbered in sheets, wrapped in smooth cloth. Why was it so dark? He took a deep breath and sucked in a bubble of lily-scented satin.*

*A shroud was covering his mouth.*

*He flung out his hands. They hit the soft quilting that lined the sides of the casket, beneath which he felt the hard wood of the box itself. The box—narrow, and irresistible, and dark . . .*



The Rainbow Opera was oval. One of its longer curves faced the Sva River, the other a paved, crescent-shaped plaza. The building and plaza were enclosed by a high fence, built to keep out anyone hoping to get near enough to the auditorium to pilfer dreams. But the Opera patron's chauffeurs and coachmen parked overnight in the plaza could go to sleep if they needed to, for dreams very rarely spilled beyond the Opera's walls.

A dreamhunter's projection zone was known as his or her "penumbra"—a term borrowed from astronomy, where "penumbra" describes the partial shadow the moon casts on the face of the earth during a total eclipse. (The "umbra," or totality, was the dreamhunter himself or herself, asleep and haloed by the shade of a dream.) Grace Tiebold's three-hundred-and-seventy-five-yard penumbra could comfortably

fill all the Opera's rooms and spill only a little beyond its walls. If one of the Opera's security men, patrolling between fence and walls, did happen to hunker down and doze off, he might well find himself involved in one of Grace Tiebold's dreams. Grace's brother-in-law, the great dreamhunter Tziga Hame, had had a four-hundred-and-fifty-yard penumbra. Dozing guards or chauffeurs could find themselves immersed in any dream Tziga Hame performed at the Opera. However, city ordinances and cautious supervision by the Dream Regulatory Body had, for years, guaranteed that none of the households above shops in the streets surrounding the Opera would *ever* feel the faintest bit of color from any of the Opera's performances.

That was until the early hours of St. Lazarus's Day 1906, when sleepers in those houses found themselves snagged by the rim of a great, screeching wheel of nightmare. Only its edge—and although they woke with their hearts pounding, and gasping for breath, their distress quickly passed, to be replaced by something else. Fear. They sat up in bed and strained to hear. Some ran to their windows and threw them open and looked toward the festively lit Opera, from which came the sound of screams—a hellish howling that filled the still, chilly spring night.



Grace Tiebold knew that she was caught in a nightmare and wasn't really in her coffin. She was a skilled and experienced dreamhunter who'd had to free herself from nightmares before. She fought to be free from this one. At first she fought it on its own terms—she struggled with the shroud, tore at the padded satin lining of the coffin, and finally with its undressed wood. She made the futile repeated movements—the

clawing, thrashing, hammering—of the person she was in the dream. *In the dream*, she reminded herself, and kept in mind, as the spark of her experience, her mastery of other dreams, brought her back to herself.

Grace finally burst right out of the battered limbs and welter of blood and filth—out of that miserable, suffering self. She jumped like a specter out of the trapped body, the grave, the dream. For a moment she was paralyzed by sleep, then she struggled free from the silk quilt, panting, and found that her face and fingertips were torn and slick with blood.

She fell off the bed, got up, and looked around the auditorium.

The balconies were empty. Electric candles around the walls of each tier, and the unsteady glow of the gas jets beyond the stained-glass dome, showed Grace her beautiful Rainbow Opera—just as it always was, but as though turned inside out. Its beauty looked ghastly. The men of the fire watch looked monstrous. George, lying rigid, his face contorted, mouth alternately straining open and snapping shut, looked monstrous too.

Grace shouted at the fire watch to sound the alarm bells. She could barely hear her own voice over the storm of screaming that came from the closed bedchambers.

A door was open on the second tier, the door to the Tiebold suite. Grace saw her daughter, Rose, lean over the balcony, her hands gripping its rail. Grace felt herself swoop toward her daughter. She nearly jumped from the dais, stopping herself just in time. As Rose's face came into focus, Grace saw that her daughter was pale and confused, but not bloodied or maddened.

Grace turned back to George Mason. She picked up the water jug and tipped it out over him. Then, for good measure, she slammed the jug itself down onto his chest. The

Soporif woke, then rolled onto his side to spit out blood and a piece of cracked tooth.

Grace turned back to Rose, who wasn't looking at her. Grace followed her daughter's gaze and saw someone running toward the fire watch control room.

It was a man in a long coat and broad-brimmed hat. He moved fast but as though he was skating, his limbs seeming to stretch and blur. He jumped into the control room, among the fire watch.

Then, it seemed, Grace momentarily lost her grip on wakefulness, and the dream came back to change the shape and sense of events she was trying so hard to follow. She saw the coat and hat float to the control room floor. Had the ceiling collapsed? The men of the fire watch appeared to have been knocked flat and were struggling under something that had fallen on them—something dark and heavy. Then one body got to its feet, although it seemed to be covered from head to foot in some crumbling substance, as if it had been in the ground and had emerged contaminated by earth. The body moved toward the power board, put out a hand, and was suddenly caught in a cascade of blue sparks. The control room went dark. The bells didn't sound.

Mason was still struggling to get up, but kept flopping back as if stunned. Grace didn't wait for him to recover. She left the dais. The turns in the spiral stairs forced her to lose sight of her daughter several times as she descended. When she was only halfway down, she felt the dream leave the building. It didn't disperse but departed all at once, like a flock of birds breaking from a stand of trees.

Grace reached the bottom of the dais, located the nearest staircase, and scrambled up it. From above her came the sound of timber splintering.

Halfway up the stairs, Grace was knocked back against the

wall by a phalanx of men—the President’s bodyguards. They were carrying President Garth Wilkinson on their shoulders, like a body on a bier. Bloody foam spilled from Wilkinson’s gaping mouth.

Grace Tiebold was used to being treated with respect, to being *somebody*. It was years since she had been shunted aside by anyone. These men did just that—shoved her aside. Worse, she *was* noticed by the last man, the one following those who carried the President. He was rushing too, but he stepped aside to avoid bowling Grace down the stairs. Then he recognized her, his face filled with disgust, and he struck her across the mouth. It was an open-handed slap, but it knocked her down. She clung to the handrail, her ears ringing. She thought: “He thinks the nightmare was me.”

Once she’d had this thought, another followed it: “If it wasn’t me, then who was it?”

Then, “*Laura*,” Grace thought, though she couldn’t think where her niece might have gone to catch a nightmare like that. It was like something from the “shadow belt”—a region in Band X, four days’ walk into the lifeless desert of the Place. Grace knew that an eight-day walk In and out again was beyond Laura’s stamina, that her niece was simply too small and weak to carry enough water for a journey of that length. So where had the nightmare come from? How had Laura managed to catch it? And *why* would Laura bring a dreadful thing like that to the Rainbow Opera on St. Lazarus’s Eve?

Grace collected herself and went on. She reached the top of the stairs and saw her daughter. Rose’s jaw went slack, and she took a step back, apparently appalled at her mother’s appearance. Grace ran to Rose, took her hands, and scanned her face. Rose was unhurt—her lips were mauve, but, Grace recalled, that was only the stain of the musk creams she had been nibbling since lunch.

The terrible howling had stopped. Behind the Opera's doors, people had begun to call out for help—a sane, human clamor. A few started to spill out onto the balconies.

The door of the Hame Suite opened, and Laura emerged, her face white and mouth bloody. She was clumsily unwinding bandages from her hands.

Grace called to her. Laura looked at her aunt, her expression closed and remote.

There was a loud crash from the auditorium. Grace turned and saw that George Mason was in trouble. A group of men were making their way up the spiral stairs with murder in their eyes. Mason had hurled his own water jug at them. For a moment they fell back, shielding their faces with their hands, then they continued on up.

The control room was dark, but the power board was cascading sparks, by the light of which Grace could see several men from the fire watch leaning across the sill of the window that looked out over the auditorium. They appeared stunned and battered.

Grace ignored the sounds behind her—of breaking glass, and her niece calling to someone—and shouted across the auditorium to the fire watch. "Please help him!" She gestured toward Mason.

A long moment went by. The Opera's rooms disgorged retching, staggering people. Grace yelled some more. She still had hold of her daughter, who was trying to pull away from her. Grace hung on to Rose but kept her attention on the control room and the dithering fire watchmen. She urged them to do something. In another moment George Mason would be overwhelmed. The staircase was so packed now that Grace imagined she could see the dais swaying. Finally the fire watchmen seemed to see what she wanted, and, lit by blue flashes, they began to move and act.

Grace turned back to her daughter as Rose broke away and rushed to the stairs that led to the dreamer's door. Rose stopped, clinging to the doorframe, and peered down into the dark. The lights seemed to have failed in the stairwell. "Rose!" Grace called, and her daughter turned and came back. "Are those stairs clear?" Grace asked—she was thinking how they might avoid the angry crowd.

"No. Laura went down there. *It* took her," Rose said. She was stammering with shock. "Did you see it?"

Grace frowned at Rose and touched her forehead, as though testing for a fever. "Darling, we have to hide," Grace said gently. Then she grabbed Rose and propelled her toward the balcony of the Presidential Suite. These balconies were usually locked, but Grace was hoping that, since the President had been carried to safety, his bodyguards hadn't bothered to close the door behind them when they fled.

The first door was not only open but broken and hanging from one hinge. The balcony was empty except for an overturned chair. Grace hustled her daughter into the suite. She pulled the door closed and bolted it.

For the next five minutes Rose and Grace hid; they cowered as an enraged crowd beat on the bolted door. Then they heard police whistles.

Rose tried to talk in stops and starts. She said to her mother, "Did you see it? What was it? Why did Laura want *that*? Why was she calling it to her?"

And to these incoherent questions Grace could only reply, "It was a dream, darling, just a dream. It must have seemed like that to Laura too. Just a dream. She's not like you and me."

When he was finally able to drag himself free from the nightmare, Sandy staggered out of bed and into his room's cramped bathroom. He ran the cold tap and rinsed his mouth. Ribbons of blood spiraled down the drain in pink-tinged water. It was only once he'd stopped running the water that he became aware of the racket coming from the balcony beyond his door. He went out to look.

The doors of rooms around the third tier were flung open. It seemed that many people had come out only in search of a less confined space. Near Sandy two women in torn silk pajamas were leaned over the balcony rail, one gasping for air, the other scrubbing her lacerated face with blood-slick palms.

People were heading toward the stairs. Some wept and staggered as they went, others were more purposeful, pushing their way through, their faces injured and contorted, but wrathful too.

Sandy looked at himself. There was blood under his fingernails. His pajama top was open, its buttons gone or dangling by threads.

From below came sounds of a melee, crashes, shouting, and police whistles. Sandy went to the rail, leaned over, and saw his uncle. George Mason was at the top of the dreamer's dais, facedown on churned-up bedding. Two men had hold of him by his legs and were trying to drag him into a crowd of enraged people who were fighting for space on the spiral stairs. Sandy saw a few members of the Opera's fire watch among the crowd and, at the foot of the stairs, a bunch of police officers fighting their way up, swinging their truncheons.

Sandy stood frozen, gripping the rail, till the police managed to reach his uncle and wrap both a quilt and their uniformed bodies around him.

Another clutch of police came into sight in the main auditorium. They fought their way through the crowd toward the

main exit. Grace Tiebold was in their midst, the train of her opulent gown in tatters, her cheeks and throat smeared with blood.

Reinforcements arrived. Police poured onto the auditorium floor. Sandy heard a gunshot and saw glass rain down from a hole punched in the Opera's stained-glass dome. He flinched back from the rail and joined the crowd pouring down the nearest staircase.

There was a press of people on the stairs. Sandy was surrounded by the sound of weeping. For a brief moment he was snagged in a group of men in suits who seemed to be trying to decide whether to continue up or turn and follow the crowd back down. Sandy caught snatches of their talk.

"The police have her already . . ."

"But was it her? I think that nightmare was Hame's Buried Alive . . ."

Someone elbowed Sandy in the ribs, and the men slipped ahead of him. He followed, stumbling over a dropped bowler hat.

Outside, in the Crescent Plaza, there were more bowler-hatted Regulatory Body officials. Most of them stood in little groups, turned away from the throngs of distressed people. There were ambulances and paddy wagons in the plaza, and a fire truck, the firemen passing out blankets.

Suddenly Sandy spotted a head of unmistakable bright hair. He ran toward Rose Tiebold, calling her name. He couldn't see Laura with her. Rose turned to him. Her face was pale but unmarked. Someone grabbed Sandy by the collar of his pajamas and held him. Sandy grappled with the hand but concentrated on Rose. "Where's Laura?"

Beside him a voice said, "This boy is a dreamhunter. You should make sure to catch any who were here."

Sandy looked around. The man who held him was a police

captain. The other man, the one issuing instructions, was the Secretary of the Interior, Cas Doran. Doran had his hand under Rose's elbow, to comfort rather than detain her it seemed. His lips were bitten and bleeding. He didn't look calm, but he did have an air of command, of mastery and self-mastery.

Sandy heard Doran tell the police captain that any dreamhunters who had been at the Opera would be reproducing the nightmare when they next slept.

It hadn't occurred to Sandy that he'd taken a print of the nightmare, but now that he knew, he thought he could feel it inside him, a capsule of terror and airless darkness. He moaned.

Rose touched his hand. "Sandy, your uncle is with my mother at the city barracks," she said.

"But where is Laura?"

Rose glanced at the man beside her. "Laura ran off. She was scared. I had bare feet, and there was glass on the stairs—or else I'd have followed her."

Cas Doran released Rose to lay both his hands on Sandy's shoulders. He shook him. "Who was Laura Hame with?" Doran demanded.

Sandy was puzzled—hadn't Doran heard what Rose had said, or did he not believe her? "She was with Miss Tiebold," Sandy said, then added, insolent, "That's why I'm asking Miss Tiebold where she is."

"Laura was in bed with me," Rose said. "We didn't sleep. We were talking. When the screaming started, Laura got scared and bolted down the stairs to the dreamer's door." Rose looked from Doran to Sandy, her expression earnest and, beneath that, very alert.

Sandy wanted to find Laura. He gazed around at the people in blankets. He saw one he recognized, bundled up and

shivering, Maze Plasir's apprentice, Gavin Pinkney. Sandy noticed the odd, imploring way that Gavin stared at Secretary Doran, then dismissed it as irrelevant. He had to find Laura.

Rose was plucking at Secretary Doran's arm. She said she wanted to go home. Her cousin would have run there. Doran shook his head. Rose was his daughter Mamie's best friend, she must come home with him, he said. "I'll send some people to your house to find your cousin." Then the Secretary turned to Sandy. "As for you, Mr. Mason. The police and Regulatory Body officials are gathering exposed dreamhunters . . ."

Sandy was so startled that the Secretary of the Interior knew who he was that he missed the next few things the man said. Something about public safety, and a quarantine for those affected.

Doran called over one of the Dream Regulatory Body officials. Sandy thought to himself that whenever they showed up en masse like this, the officials did rather have the appearance of a private army. Doran's private army.

"I have a dreamhunter here," the Secretary said, and laid his heavy hand on Sandy's shoulder once more. "And Maze Plasir's apprentice is standing just over there. Also, Miss Tiebold tells me that her cousin, the dreamhunter Laura Hame, will have run home."

The official gave a curt nod.

"She didn't sleep," Rose said, urgent. "We were talking." Then she gave a choked laugh.

The official took hold of Sandy and walked him away. They collected Gavin Pinkney as they went. The official said, "We'll find you some clean clothes. Then we'll take you straight In and see if you can't overwrite the nightmare before you have to have it again."

Sandy realized the "clean clothes" remark was directed at

Gavin, who stank of urine. The poor boy had wet himself.

Sandy craned back over his shoulder at Rose Tiebold, hoping for some communication, some sign. But she was speaking to Doran, standing with her head erect and a haughty expression on her face, as though she was somehow above even her own worries.

Sandy turned away, trudged on, and fumed. For a moment he reverted to his earlier resentful thoughts about the rich and famous Tiebolds and Hames. Then he remembered how Rose had insisted "*We didn't sleep.*"

It was clear that *she* hadn't, because her cheeks and mouth weren't marked by her own fingernails. But Laura was another matter. What if the truth was the opposite of Rose's story? What if the girls were not together, were not talking, were not both awake?

Sandy stumbled. The official made an impatient noise and jerked him upright. "Leave me alone!" Sandy said, and drove his shoulder into the man's side. The man wheezed, then, "You're not about to give me trouble, Mason, are you?"

Sandy glowered but let himself be led on. His head was spinning—in fact, the whole of him seemed to be spinning, speeding up, draining away down some great, dark whirlpool. For he knew Laura *had* been chewing Wakeful. She'd taken the drug and walked some distance out of the Place carrying a nightmare. She'd kept her nightmare fresh and had delivered it, overpowering her aunt, and Sandy's uncle, and Sandy, and every other sleeping soul in the Opera that night.



When the Mason boy had left them, Doran asked Rose, "Is that your cousin's beau?"

The girl replied, "I'm sure *I* wouldn't know," every inch a

Founderston Girls' Academy senior asserting her sense of what was proper.

Cas Doran realized with a small shock that he knew very well what Rose's life was like. She had the kind of agile spirit to be found in those who straddled very different worlds. She attended a fashionable school, had all the manners of a nice young lady—in other words, she prickled with barbed boundaries—but she was also from a dreamhunting family and party to the daily phantasmagoria of life with dreamhunters, to their frequent exhaustion and feverish wildness.

These dreamhunters—they were *his*. His responsibility, his study, his stock-in-trade. But Cas Doran was not a dreamhunter, nor was anyone in his family. He lived a regular domestic life in a household run by a refined woman—herself a graduate of the Girls' Academy. And that was how he knew what Rose Tiebold's life was like, how contradictory it must be. Because, even given the differences in their ages and occupations, this girl was in some ways *like* him.



Secretary Doran's car came through the crowd. The chauffeur stood up and called to his employer.

"Come," said Doran to Rose, his tone gentle but managing.

Rose went with him. He spoke soothingly. He said that everything would be all right. He helped her into the car. Its interior smelled pleasantly of new leather. Rose realized that there had been some terrible smells, as well as terrible sights, in the plaza.

The car began to move again, easing its way through the thronging people. There were seething shadows on the plaza,

interrupting the lights from streets and houses. Rose stared at Doran's profile. In the light ghosting over his face, Doran looked grim and intent, like someone getting ready for a fight. Then he turned and smiled at her.

Rose knew she'd do everything she could to keep people from guessing that it was her cousin's nightmare. Before too long she'd speak to Laura, then she'd know why her cousin had done it. There would be a reason, some kind of sense. Rose suspected it had something to do with the letter Laura had torn up, a last letter from her missing father.

The letter had, for some reason unfathomable at the time, been partly buried in a large amount of sand in Laura's bedroom at Summerfort. Laura had been into the Place illicitly, looking for clues to why her father had disappeared. She was back in Summerfort when Rose and Rose's father, Chorley, had found her. Laura had kept them out of her bedroom; then, when she had finally opened the door, they'd found her standing up to her ankles in a pile of sand. The envelope that held the letter was sticking out of it.

*Sand!*

When, that very night—St. Lazarus's Eve—the howls of terror had wound down, Rose had seen her cousin emerge from the Hame Suite and stand for a moment unwinding bandages from her hands. Laura had looked up at Rose, then seemed to dismiss her. She began to call. What she shouted sounded like nonsense, but it was a name. At her call a monster had come running. A great statue in the shape of a man—a beautifully muscled, nobly serene man. A man apparently made of sand. The monster had swept Laura up in his arms and run to the stairs down to the dreamer's door. Rose had tried to break away from her mother to follow them. But Rose's mother had kept a firm hold on her. Then Rose, straining after Laura,

had seen something. She saw the name Laura had called scored in the sand on the back of the monster's neck. Four letters: N O W N.

Rose was trembling. Secretary Doran touched her arm and said, "How are you, Rose?" Then, "We're nearly home."

There was no one in the world Rose was closer to than Laura, but Rose had known nothing of any of this—the nightmare or the monster. She felt herself shrinking. She didn't *know* anything. All her schoolmates thought she was a bit of a hero, but she wasn't. She was baffled, and in the dark.

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