

Chapter 5: The Book

For several weeks Mark, Sky, and Mary established a routine they rarely varied from. Early in the morning, around nine-ish, Mark would fix breakfast for everyone. Then he and Sky would go to Mary's room where she would eat, take her meds, and do her exercises under his careful supervision. Then he would leave Sky with Mary while he went to put the dishes in the dishwasher.

About that time his parents would come out of their bedroom, papers or briefcases tucked under her arms, and settle in the dining room for breakfast to discuss their cases, briefs or clients.

While they ate and argued, Mark would go to his room to study the book. He wrote careful notes on many subjects about a fairies health, diet, behaviors, and especially their magic.

It came as a great shock to him when he discovered the spell that he had used on Sky had vanished from the book. Instead, a translation guide appeared in its place the same style as the rest of the book. Try as he could, he couldn't find any sign of the spell any further pages in that hand.

This is trouble, he thought to himself as he stared at the guide. *Trouble with a capital T and I don't like it.*

Of course, he had to explain to Mrs. Phelps why he wanted to check out the book again. He told her nothing of Sky of course, but told her Mary loved the book and would sit up asking questions and listen to read it for hours. It had become important to them both.

"That's wonderful, dear." Mrs. Phelps croaked slightly. She had a cold coming on. "But I'm not sure..."

"Oh please, missus. Phelps?" Mark bagged. He gave her the best puppy dog stare he could, usually reserved for when he wanted a new toy in the store. "It's helping so much, can't I check it out again?"

"Oh, all right." She smiled. "No one really cares about those, I asked. I think they're going to go out on the next book sale this fall."

"Oh." Mark said. Inside his thoughts raced trying to plan how he could be paid his mom for the doll and earn enough at the same time to buy the book and as many more of the journals as he could.

Back home, Mark found himself kept very busy. When he wasn't with Mary, he was put to work cleaning house, weeding the flower bed, or watering the garden. Every time he did, he kept a weather eye out for the cat, as she did not like getting sprayed. Also, he suspected she knew about Sky. He had caught her running after her shadow in the hall before. And laid at night she had been trying to get into his room that he kept closed.

In the evenings, he sneaks the book back into Mary's room where all of them could read it with sky standing over their shoulders and occasionally commenting. The book proved wrong about several aspects of Fey life, which Mark dutifully recorded in his notebooks. Following Mary's read, he would say good night, and then sneak the book and Sky back to his room. The book he would hide under his bed while Sky changed and got ready to sleep.

"Thanks, Sky." He commented one evening after a particularly interesting read on fairy dancing which Sky had demonstrated for them.

"For what, Mark?" She peered around her plant. "For the dance?"

"That and everything else." He sighed. "Mary's gotten so much better thanks to you." A pang of jealousy hit him; Sky could make Mary feel better but not him, before he could completely quash it.

Sky gave a demure little smile. "It's not just me, you know. It's also you."

"What do you mean?"

"Mary knows how much you've done for her." Her voice sounded heavily like she wanted to roll her eyes and the bond told him that she thought him dense. "She loves you more than you realize or will admit."

Mark shook his head, feeling bemused. *This link stuff can be inconvenient*, was his only thought. Then he felt apologetic. "I'm sorry Sky. I'm sure you are right. And I'm sorry I haven't found a way to help you, yet."

A brief flash of pain twisted her face and echoed through the link, but it vanished like lightning. "I'm sure you'll find a way."

"Mary's right."

“About what?” She looked at him curiously.

“You really are a part of the family.”

Mark felt her astonishment through the bond. Her face looked like she had been hit on the head with a hammer, she was stunned clear to her toes. He frowned. “Why are you so shocked? Surely by now you must have realized.”

“No, I had not.” She replied. The confusion was starting to leave her eyes, “thank you.” She whispered to him.

“You’re welcome.” He told her before turning out the lights.

All throughout this time Mark read through the entire book forward and back in less than a month. He had pages of notes, but no sign of true names except for a tiny note scrawled in one corner of the book: THIS EVIL WILL NOT BE DISCUSSED and next to it in finer print: I WILL LEAVE A CODE.

Mark looked up, a thoughtful look on his face. The code, he figured it had something to do with the journals. *But I looked at all of them, there was nothing there to indicate a code.* Of course, he reasoned, the code key would not be obvious, and he had not been looking for such thing at that time. It was still possible that it resided with the other journals at the library. But he did not think it would help him much, so he put it out of his mind. He wouldn’t be able to get all the books until fall, and even then he might not be able to buy all of them. It was quite probable that he would miss the right book, or would need all the journals and end up missing entire segments of text. He would keep the option in mind, and work to attain it but he wanted to find a better way faster.

For Sky’s part, he did all he could to make her comfortable. He managed to find some extra moss to replace what had died and to give a softer rug. A second plant provided a more privacy, and a small cushioned mousepad he had salvaged and modified provided a softer bed for her with a spare dishtowel for a thick blanket.

Mark was barely aware of Sky observing him as he toiled. He did not realize what his efforts would reap, not for a long while. Not until one night in the fourth week of Sky’s adoption.