

Beautiful Dreamer

By Cindy Rae



*For Pat, who challenged me to write a Winterfest Fic, when Winterfest
had already started.*

We all inspire each other.



A Tiny Prologue

Fate was a funny thing, in Miss Jennifer M. Aaronson's life. A peculiar thing that *sometimes* revealed its plans to her in vivid dreams.

Dreams which she shared with her friends, or her family. Sometimes, fate seemed to show its cards, to Jenny Aaronson, and that allowed her to help the people she loved.

Sometimes.

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It's okay. You're friends. She'll understand.

No, she won't.

Jenny Aaronson had been having the same, conflicted conversation with herself for what felt like the last week. Perhaps longer. Maybe even much longer.

Her dreams had been disturbing, lately. Very. She'd even dreamt that Catherine had died. And though it had been close (Cathy had come home smelling of lake water and chloroform), she'd been okay.

That, in a way, had been the deciding factor.

What if she dies because I never told her? What if she tries to reach me and I'm out of touch? Even if I haven't been part that lately, it was once such a big thing, for my grandparents...

Jenny was guilty. And worse, she *knew* she was guilty. The feeling did not sit well with her.

Yet, in a way, it's got to be okay. We've been friends for forever. She'll understand...

And the mental recording would begin all over again.

Jenny picked up the phone and punched out Catherine's number, then hung up the receiver before it even rang.

Not yet. Not yet. I can't. I said I never would. I made a promise. We all did.

Sighing, Jenny pushed away from her desk, picked up her purse, the deep satchel she'd used for books, and her coat.

She had errands to run, and after that, dinner with Cathy to have. Then, a delivery to make.

Jenny pulled out her car keys. *It's what best friends do. They have dinner with each other.*

Especially considering one had nearly drowned in a trunk, a few days ago.

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"...and you're sure you're all right?" Jenny asked, as their salads hit the table.

"Jen, I swear. I'm fine," Catherine said, spearing a shrimp.

And she was. Even Jenny could tell that. As a matter of fact, Catherine looked just a little better than fine. She looked like she was absolutely... glowing.

"Well. I just thank God for that," Jenny said, picking up her own fork. From under dark lashes, Jenny peeked at Catherine, as they both started in on their food. Catherine's soft, blonde hair fell down, obscuring one eye as she poked through her salad.

I almost lost her. It was 'this' close.

Jenny looked down, and pretended to be engrossed in her own meal.

After a few minutes of uncharacteristic silence, Catherine reached a hand across the table.

"Hey. I'm okay, really," she said, squeezing Jenny's fingers with her own.

"I'm glad. Really glad, Cathy." Jenny picked up her napkin and wiped her mouth. "I don't know what I'd do, you know? You're like a sister to me. You and Nancy. Always."

Catherine gave her friend's hand another squeeze and then released her. "How is Nancy?" Catherine asked.

"I called her and filled her in. She didn't call you, yet?"

"I haven't been home yet, today. I'm sure she left a message on my machine." Catherine resumed her meal.

Once again, conversation lagged between the two best friends; an uncharacteristic occurrence, for them. Looking for a topic of conversation, Catherine glanced down at Jenny's book bag.

"A little light reading?" Catherine asked, peeking down at the floor. The bag was more than half full, and the titles looked new. Jenny worked in a publishing house. Catherine wondered if her friend took work home as often as she did.

"Oh, those. They're discontinued. I just... thought I'd browse them," Jenny said, trying to play them down.

Catherine raised a well-shaped eyebrow, as she caught a few titles.

"You thought you'd 'browse' Hypertension and Statin Drugs, The 20th Century Herbalist, The Letters of Abraham Lincoln, and A Treasury of Mother Goose?"

Jenny shrugged. "You know how it is when you're raised poor. It's tough to turn down the free stuff."

Catherine laughed. "You were hardly poor," Catherine said, knowing that Jenny Aaronson and Nancy Tucker had gone to the same Ivy League schools she had. Her father was a successful accountant. He'd kept the books for Chandler and Coolidge's law firm, before he'd retired.

"Now, now," Jenny chided. "My grandmother was very... middle class," Jenny smiled, kicking the books under the table a little, with her foot.

"And smart enough to open up her own tailor shop with your grandfather, in Queens," Catherine said. They both knew Jenny's family history, well.

"Yeah, well. She barely made ends meet, for a lot of years. Or that's how the story goes," Jenny chuckled. "My Mom says she probably had the first dime she ever made!"

Catherine smiled as well, feeling her friend relax. "So. Still planning on a trip to Boston, this spring?" she asked, as the waiter refilled their water goblets.

Jenny nodded, as they both dug into their meal with a little more gusto.

The conversation became less stilted, and table banter became easier, and freer. Jenny began to relax, and by the time the check came, Catherine no longer sensed any tension, in her friend.

It's been a long, hard week, for everybody. Of course we're all a little on edge, both women thought.

"The Renoir exhibit is opening next week. We're still on for that, right?" Jenny asked brightly, even though Catherine still had the feeling that the events of a few days ago were bothering her friend. Or something else was. Jenny was a very open person, and fairly easy to read, for the most part. At least, Catherine had always thought as much.

"Sure," Cathy said, immediately, hiding the fact that she'd utterly forgotten about it. "I've been looking forward to it."

Catherine winced, internally. *What an excellent liar I've become, with people I love.*

Jenny smiled, and hoped it didn't look forced. "Great! Meet you there at five!"

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The portrait was of a young, pretty girl, her hair a shade between blonde and red. Though it was Renoir Impressionism at its finest, Jenny couldn't help but be reminded of Nancy Tucker, who, like most of her family, had been fairer in her childhood. A few of the other

portraits reminded her of Catherine, particularly those featuring a strong jawline and beautiful skin. Jenny liked to imagine that her friends' forebears had somehow found their way to being part of the famous canvases. It was a mental "game" she always played with herself.

"That serious looking man over there reminds me of your father. He's so stately," Jenny said, nudging Catherine's arm as they took in the incredible collection.

Cathy smiled. "I don't think 'stately' is a word my father ever wanted applied to himself, but I do see the resemblance. He looks annoyed, at his daughter. I think that was the look on his face when I showed him my grades, one semester."

"Spring fever. We all had it," Jenny said, making excuses for her friend.

"It was fall."

"Fall fever. We all had it," Jenny giggled. Catherine joined her.

"I can't believe how much work Renoir left behind. And how... different some of it is, one from the other," Catherine said, looking at the wealth of beauty, in front of her. The famous artist had literally left thousands of pieces of art, in his wake.

Jenny smiled. "They say of all the Impressionists, he was one of the most conflicted. One foot in the Classical world, and one foot in the Impressionist camp. He explored several styles, during his lifetime. Yet fought hard, for the Impressionists, back when very few people dared to."

"Back when they were known as the upstarts," Catherine read her program.

"Radicals and outcasts," Jenny confirmed, feeling happy to be in their company.

Catherine smiled at the words, and thought how much "having a foot in two worlds" described her and Vincent, right now.

"Looks like his family gave him some grief about it," Cathy said, reading the biographical program further. "Still, he had to follow his heart," Cathy said, content that it was true.

"Yes," Jenny said, and Cathy could feel just a bit of the tension she'd encountered last week at dinner come through, again.

"It says here that he used to paint the Impressionist works in secret, and hide them from his family. Sell the more conventional portraits, so he could have money to eat," Cathy read. "That sometimes, he didn't even have money for paint, or canvas." Cathy shook her head, that such talent should be on hold, for want of a few coins.

"He didn't want them to know," Jenny replied. "Even though it was very important to him. I guess it's like that, sometimes." Her voice grew more quiet. "You have to keep some things to yourself."

Catherine paused, looking at one of Renoir's later, more classical works. "It must have been very hard on him to live that way," she said, understanding. She sneaked a peek at her best friend. There was a worry line between Jenny's pretty, dark eyebrows.

"It must have been," Jenny replied. "Then he went to Europe, to study, and drifted away from the movement. Left some of his friends behind..." She sounded almost unaccountably sad, about that.

"He must have felt like he was living two lives," Catherine sighed with understanding.

"He must have. Some people say his family threatened to disown him if he didn't stop helping the Impressionists, back when he was younger. That must have been very frightening."

It must have been, but Cathy got the impression that Jenny was now relating to that sentence very strongly. Was there trouble between Jenny and her family? Trouble Catherine didn't know about?

"Jen, is everything okay?" she asked, putting a reassuring hand on her friend's arm.

"Of course, Cathy. Why wouldn't it be?" Jenny asked, immediately replacing her frown of concern with a masking smile.

"I don't know. You've just been a little... edgy, lately."

The smile faded. "Well. You did die."

Catherine gave the arm a squeeze. "I'm all right, Jen. I swear I am."

Jenny gave her friend's hand a return squeeze. "I know. I know you are. And I promise that all my dreams have been good, for days."

Cathy reached up to brush a dark lock of hair back from her friend's face. It was a gesture from their girlhood, when Cathy confessed to envying Jenny's dark curls.

"You have no idea how much I love you, my friend," Catherine said, in a tone so sincere it couldn't help but tug at Jenny's heartstrings.

"Right back at you, Cathy," Jenny replied, fighting tears.

Both women hugged, right in front of *Madame Charpentier and her Daughters*. It was an embrace Renoir would likely have approved of.

"That looks a little like you and Nancy, sitting around with my Mom," Jenny observed, trying to lighten the mood, as she kept Cathy close.



"Which one of us is sitting on the dog?" Catherine asked.

"The one most likely to get bit," Jenny chuckled. Then: "Given your track record lately, I'd say that's you."

Catherine couldn't help but agree with that, but like Jenny, had no urge to discuss anything serious.

"So. Do you feel like catching a movie, next week? I think I'm open, on Thursday."

Jenny shook her head. No, she wouldn't be open on Thursday. *Or any other night next week.*

"I've got work stuff Monday and Tuesday, and a um... thing, on Thursday. Week after? Maybe?" Jenny said, aware that Thursday's 'thing' was part of why she was feeling so guilty, lately.

"We'll see," Catherine said vaguely, both of them knowing she hated to make commitments too many days in advance. It was a thing about her, ever since she'd taken the job at the DA's office.

And between the two of them only Jenny realized that was part of how much Catherine had changed, in the last few years. The old Cathy had lived by her Day Runner, and had loved filling up the pages, as far out as she could. It was as if the little leather book could confirm for her that her life was being well-lived, thanks to how thoroughly it was being crammed, with social activities.

"I'll call you in a few days. See if we can firm things up, then," Jenny replied.

Content with that, both women finished wandering the gallery full of gorgeous art, and then went their separate ways.

For Cathy, "separate ways" meant back to long hours at the office, and sometimes, blissful evenings spent with her love.

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For Jenny, it meant back to her office, to the New York Public Library, and a trip across the Queensboro Bridge.



"No. Absolutely not, Jennifer. I'm appalled that you could even consider such a thing!" her grandmother said, at Jenny's request to share her secret with her best friend.

"But Grandma, you're judging a woman you've barely met. You hardly know Cathy!"

"All the more reason to say 'no.' Jennifer, this is no light secret. It is a sacred trust. If your little friend has a big mouth, good people could suffer!" They were down in her grandmother's basement. And her grandmother was having none of it.

Jenny suppressed the urge to roll her expressive eyes.

"We're both nearly thirty. She's not 'my little friend.'"

"Then stop acting twelve years old," her grandmother gave no quarter. "Did you bring some books for me?"

Jenny dutifully produced a slim pile of new leavings, and a larger stack of battered ones.

"Library discards from Manhattan, just like you asked."

"Did you have to pay much?" Lottie Levin asked her stubborn granddaughter. Money was always a 'thing' with Lottie. A holdover from many years of not having any.

"Practically nothing. A dime a book," she said, producing some fifteen volumes, in all. *She's about to say 'A dime is a dime,'* Jenny thought. She knew Lottie Levin well.

"A dime is a dime," Lottie said, right on time.

They stacked the books in a large, old, dumbwaiter. The kind that shouldn't have had a 'down' direction, from the basement of her grandmother's house. They were already on the bottom floor.

Yet, it did.

Jenny watched the books go down.

"You're a good girl, Jennifer Mary," her grandmother added, watching the look on Jenny's face, as she watched their gift descend.

Jenny didn't look mollified, at the praise.

"You're named for one of them, you know," her grandmother added, this time softening her tone.

Jenny did, even though they'd never met. From what Jenny understood, Mary had helped deliver her, when Jenny's mother went into a sudden labor, and her father was off to war.

"One of the ... kindest woman I ever met. The kind that could fool you. Slender. But with great strength, inside. You remind me of her. And you don't eat enough," Lottie fussed, wiping her hands on the apron she was never without.

"Have you ever been... been... you know... back down?" Jenny asked a bit timidly, as they closed the door on the dumbwaiter.

"Not since the day you rode it down, like you wasn't supposed to," Lottie replied, indicating they were done, here. She mounted the steps, her arthritic hand grasping the rail, firmly.

"That was a long time ago. I must have been... what? Ten years old?" Jenny asked.

"Eight. And it was a good thing you were found, before you got hurt!" Lottie scolded, as if the event was still a very fresh one.

Jenny knew that much was likely true. Though the memory was awash in shadows and reddish rock, she barely remembered clearing the bend in the first passageway when a big black man had scooped her crying form back up, and taken her right back to the dumbwaiter.

"They's things down here that eat little girls like you," Jenny remembered him saying.

His tone had been very serious. Jenny had believed him. (And wasn't quite sure he wasn't one of those things.)

Jenny and her grandmother entered the modest kitchen of the tiny house her grandmother had occupied since the 1940's. Her grandfather's passing some years ago had left her with a small pension, proceeds from the sale of their business, and few expenses.

Lottie led what she considered a comfortable, modest life. Tea sat on the table, wrapped in a cozy. Lottie poured them both a cup.

"You really don't go down there, do you?" Jenny pursued.

"I see some few friends now and again, but no. They're kind, and invite me every year. But I'm a little old to ride down in a dumbwaiter, and I don't want to know about any other entrances they might have."

The idea that there was more than one way down to the area of passageways beneath her grandmother's home was a surprise, to Jenny, even though she realized it shouldn't have been. New York had structures both above and below street level. Anyone who rode a subway could tell you that. So, yes. It stood to reason that there might be more than one way down. Jenny had never considered it, before.

"You don't ever... visit?" Jenny asked, curious. "Why not, Gran? I didn't even know there were other entrances. I always thought the dumbwaiter was like a ... oh, I don't know, a magical door. Like the wardrobe to Narnia."

Lottie grinned. *There was a lion down there, all right. But he wasn't named Aslan.* She hid her smile in her cup.

"There might be other ways. Like I say. I don't know. I try not to find out too much about them. Your grandfather knew them better than me. Probably understood them better, too."

"Aren't you curious?" Jenny asked, reaching across the table to hold her grandmother's hand.

Lottie set down her Dresden china cup and squeezed Jenny's fingers. Lottie shook her head, seriously. "You don't know what being young in Nazi Germany was like, *mein schatz*, and I pray you never find out.

Your grandfather cut through the stones under the dumbwaiter to give us a place to hide, if we ever needed it, again. He was as surprised as I was, to find what he found."

She returned her hands to her cup and pushed it around by the handle. "But no, I don't go down. What I don't know I can't betray others with. Besides, it's none of my business, and none of yours," she said sternly. "And sure none of Katie's."

"Cathy's."

Lottie snorted as if the name meant nothing to her, which it didn't. Her daughter had married a good man with prospects, and Jenny was their only child, and Lottie's only granddaughter. Her other children, Jenny's uncles, had gifted her with grandsons.

But Jenny was her special child, the bright little girl with the always cheerful smile, the active imagination, and just a touch gifted, when it came to matters of prophecy.

Lottie adored her granddaughter, but firmly believed in letting her pursue her life and her gifts how she would, without too much involvement, from her. As such, she followed Jenny's life only so closely, and expected much the same, when it came to considerations of privacy.

Jenny sipped from her cup, her manicure and gold watch declaring her status as loudly as her salon-styled haircut and her impeccable makeup. Lottie loved Jenny very much. But she knew her granddaughter's sheltered, wealthy upbringing had protected her from many of life's harsher realities. Lottie assumed it was the same,

for Jenny's friends, a group of people so far outside Lottie's experience (except as occasional customers), they didn't bear thinking on.

Revealing the existence of the world Below was not her right. It was not fair to do so, and it could bring risk to good people. Lottie knew well the value of a good hiding place. She and her husband had used those, often enough, when fleeing to the US.

Lottie settled her bent fingers on the sides of her cup, letting the heat from the porcelain warm them. "Jennifer, as I say, it's a sacred trust I carry. Almost a... a holy pledge, a promise I can never break. *No one* must know, and no one must tell. Good people depend on it. You only know the little you do, because I didn't lock the basement door one day, when you came to visit."

She frowned at Jenny as if the old transgression was still a very sore spot, between them. Jenny looked contrite, and Lottie forgave her the old act of childhood curiosity. Again.

Jenny tried once more to explain her position. "It's just... I don't think Cathy realizes how much time I spend, helping. She just thinks I'm always at work, or arranging things for our clients. The night she was attacked, I wasn't even at the party she was at. I was over in Westport, bringing back things from Nancy's. Cathy nearly died, that night, and I wasn't even near. And not two weeks ago..." Jenny's voice trailed away, and Lottie saw her shudder. The familiar brown eyes, so like Georg's, were pleading.

"Grandma, what if she needs me, and I'm not there? What if she needs me, and I'm off scrounging for old clothes, or something from the scratch and dent place? Or digging around for more old books?"

Lottie's answer was immediate, and almost predictably intractable. Eyes or no eyes, a promise was a promise, and she knew what her husband would have wanted her to say.

"Your friend can count on the police, if she needs help. These people... they can't turn to the police, or anyone else, *liebbling*. I know they are strangers to you, but I also know that they love the books you bring them, and make use of every discard. There are only so many people who know, to help them. They need what we do. And they have very little," Lottie picked up her cup, and drained it.

Jenny nodded, humbled. If there was one thing her grandmother understood, it was the necessity of staying in hiding, sometimes, and of helping others who felt they had to do the same.

"Yet they helped you and Grandpa, when he was sick," Jenny knew this story, as well.

Lottie returned the cup to its saucer. "That they did. A very kind doctor likely saved his life, and thanks to us, he's still there, and doing more good. Now. Eat some kugel and make your grandma happy," Lottie said, taking the glass lid off the plate.

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Fate was a funny thing, in Jennifer Aaronson's life. A peculiar thing that sometime revealed its plans to her in vivid dreams. Dreams which she shared with her friends, or family. Sometimes, fate seemed

to show its cards, to Jenny Aaronson, and that allowed her to help the people she loved.

And other times, it really didn't.

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"When you said, 'I have a different idea than a movie,' you weren't kidding!" Catherine enthused. "I can't believe you're taking me to see her! She's like a family legend, at this point!"

Jenny tried not to dampen her friend's enthusiasm. "I gotta warn you, she's still... prideful. She thinks you'll look down on her, because she's scraping by on middle class, and still lives in Queens."

"A lot of people live in Queens," Cathy returned.

"Yes. But their dads don't own law firms," Jenny grimaced. "She's a good woman, Cathy, I promise. She's just... well, when my mom married my dad, she didn't realize how successful he was going to be. My grandmother is very old school. She doesn't want her children to spend money on her, and she's not going to move. But she's good people. Really good."

"I'm sure she is," Catherine replied gently.

"I just... I really want you to get to know her better. She's so kind, underneath her toughness." *And I want her to really meet you. That way, the next time I ask her if I can tell you, maybe she'll agree.*

"A lot of people are that way," Catherine replied. "Besides, it's not like this is really the first time we met. I saw her at graduation."

Jenny chuckled as she pulled into the driveway of her grandmother's modest home. "Yes. Standing behind my mother, taking pictures with an instamatic camera. I remember."

"Hey. Somebody had to get a picture of you tossing your cap," Cathy said, getting out of the sporty red compact Jenny drove.

Jenny simply smiled in agreement.

"Well, here we are. Casa Levin," Jenny said, indicating the wood frame house of her mother's girlhood. A wide porch graced the front entrance. Faded blue paint covered the outside of the little house, and the white trim on the shutters could have used a touch up. But a yellow rose bush bloomed in happy profusion, in the middle of the small, well-trimmed yard, and hanging baskets of petunias firmly declared it was spring. Flowers Cathy didn't know the names of lined the walkways, and a little pot of white flowers sat near the table under the doorbell.

"She's quite the gardener," Cathy said.

"It's a gift. She always keeps a pot of edelweiss near the door. Just in case anybody forgets we're from Germany."

"Your dad is from Chicago."

"You know what I mean," Jenny said, ringing the bell.

Lottie emerged bearing a tray of iced tea things. A tray Jenny had no choice but to accept, as Lottie nudged open the screen door with her foot.

"It's so nice outside. I thought we'd have tea on the porch," Lottie stated, not bothering to ask anyone in.

"That's lovely of you, Mrs. Levin," Catherine said smoothly, catching sight of the tiny, cloth covered table sitting off to one side, on the porch. It would be a tight fit for the three of them. But it was a pretty spot, and Jenny's grandmother was clearly calling the shots, here.

Cathy helped Jenny unload the tray, as the two women exchanged a knowing look, as a bowl of quartered lemons found a home.

She's stubborn. Jenny's eyes said.

Yes. But what can you do about that? Cathy's replied.

Cathy smiled her best "I'm so happy to meet you" smile.

"Jenny tells me you two get together quite often," Cathy said, seating the older woman first, in a rattan chair.

"Not so much," Lottie corrected. "I don't believe in interfering. My Jenny is busy. All you young girls. So much work!"

Jenny thought Lottie was determined to be difficult, until she added: "I'm very proud of both of you. Women in my day? Well. There were only so many jobs." She waved her hand to encompass the female workforce, of the early twentieth century.

"You either cooked, cleaned or sewed. Maybe taught, a little. That's why we had the shop, so we could make more money. My Georg. That man was a master, with a needle and thread." The hand waved again, before it settled on her lap. Precisely folded, ironed linen napkins were placed politely on laps.

"He swears you taught him all his best secrets," Jenny said, pouring iced tea for all of them.

"Ah. A man pays an outrageous compliment like that, it's to keep peace in the family. And let you know he's a smart man," Lottie allowed, whisking a soft dishtowel away to reveal a plate of molasses cookies.

Catherine smiled at Lottie's pronouncement. And the smell from the plate was heavenly.

"Cathy and I were talking, and she just... well. We thought it would be really nice if we came up to spend a little time with you. Together." Jenny fumbled. "Isn't that right, Cathy?" Jenny asked, a little too brightly.

Lottie wasn't fooled, and the look she shot her granddaughter said so. "I'm sure I know why you came," Lottie said. Catherine got the distinct feeling there was an undercurrent, between the two women.

"I'm sure it was for the baking. Jenny raves about you," Cathy said, picking up a cookie.

"My Jenny is a good girl. And so you are her good friend?" Lottie asked, turning her hazel eyes back on Catherine. There was a cataract coming in the left one. But her gaze was still sharp.

Catherine smiled, well aware she was about to be measured, like a tailor sizing up a customer for a new suit.

"Yes, Jenny is dear to me. She always has been," Catherine said, her voice full of her sincerity. Lottie must have liked the sound of that, because she did smile.

"Good! It's good to have good friends. And an attorney, too, just in case she gets in trouble." Lottie shot Jenny a knowing glance, as she squeezed lemon into her iced tea.

Cathy chuckled, as did Jenny, and neither bothered to correct Lottie on which one of the two girls it was who got in trouble, the most often.

Catherine turned to look out at the yellow rose bush, and it was then that Lottie noticed the scar on her cheek. It was a deep one, though cosmetics covered it, some.

Someone hurt you, pretty one. Badly, Lottie thought, stirring her tea. Someone with a knife, who meant to do damage. My husband knew what that was like.

"I love your rose bush," Cathy remarked, clearly sincere in her praise. The gleam in her eye showed the depth of her appreciation for the beautiful blossoms.

"I sometimes think of putting one on my balcony, but it would have to be in one of those big pots, rather than in the ground. It would get nice sun in the morning, but in the afternoon, not so much," she said.

"Ah. Roses are a labor of love. If you grow them in pots, you have to make sure to give them a little turn, every few days. Or only one side of your bush will get the best sun," Lottie advised.

Catherine nodded.

"That one takes a special fertilizer and plant food, or it would get very straggly. My husband used to dead head it, in the winter."

"That takes a lot of courage. Usually, you're trying to get them to grow, not cut them down," Cathy smiled.

"That's why it's a chore I left to him, for years," Lottie said. Then, with characteristic forthrightness, she stated: "The scar on your cheek. No one should hurt a woman that way. My Jenny told me of it."

Cathy touched her fingers to her scar, as if she'd quite forgotten its existence.

"Oh. Well, yes, you're right. No one should."

Still, there was just a ghost of a smile around Catherine's lips, as if the scar had brought her something quite unexpected. Something almost ... pleasant. Lottie picked up on it, immediately.

"What makes you keep it?" Lottie asked.

"Grandmother!" Jenny erupted, appalled.

Catherine's smile widened, fractionally. "It's fine, Jen." She turned back to the older woman. "It was a terrible thing, but in a way, this last year has been the best one of my life. I... grew into a better person, thanks to what happened to me. Kinder. Stronger. I'm thinking you know a thing or two about that?" Cathy hid her expression in her glass, as she let Lottie get as good as she gave, for forthrightness.

Lottie smiled, revealing her dentures.

"I imagine I do. You should eat more. Like my granddaughter. Too skinny, you young things." She offered another cookie, and Catherine took it.

"I really do love your flowers. Are the petunias hard to grow?" Catherine asked, willing to confess she knew next to nothing, about gardening.

"I have a few garden catalogues. You should leaf through. They have good seeds, and hints for growing roses."

Catherine smiled.

"I'd love to look at them. Thank you."

Lottie rose.

"Oh, Mrs. Levin! I didn't mean right now! It's so nice just sitting here visiting with y--"

"No trouble, no trouble, and when you get to my age, you learn 'there's no time like the present.' Because that might just be all we got. You sit. I'll fetch them. They're on a shelf, down in the basement. Won't take but a minute. And I think I have a bag of leftover rose food, to get you started."

Catherine didn't mean to cause Lottie get up and go fetch things, but she could tell by Jenny's amazed expression that it was best to let the older woman go, without further protest.

"She really likes you if you're getting Grandad's special rose mix. It's like... the recipe for Coca-Cola, or something," Jenny whispered,

hearing the screen door bang closed, then the basement door just beyond it creak open.

"I'm happy if you're happy. I just hope she doesn't expect anything to get entered into competition for a few years."

They both heard Lottie make her way down the basement steps, muttering to herself as she went.

"You never know, with my grandmother. She might just show up at your apartment door one day, and ask to see your roses!" Jenny still whispered conspiratorially, as if Lottie could hear them no matter where she was.

Catherine chuckled. "She's delightful. I'm sorry we didn't do this, sooner."

"Hey, the birth of her third grandchild couldn't even get her into the city. You manage it, and I've got relatives who will want to know your secret!"

Cathy shook her head. "She's not unpleasant. She's just--"

But a crash from inside the house cut off whatever Cathy had been about to say.

"My God. The stairs! She's fallen down!" Jenny stood up swiftly, jarring the tea things, as she bolted into the house. Catherine was right behind her.

The two women quickly descended the basement steps to find Lottie, not laying at the bottom, but sprawled near the far wall, instead. The gardening catalogues she'd gone to fetch were scattered all around

her, and she was struggling to get up, and gasping. The bag of plant food was spilled on the ground, its pungent smell doing nothing to help ease the situation.

Lottie looked white. And very scared.

She was clutching at her chest.

"Grandma?! Gran?! Jenny rushed over, cradling Lottie's head, trying to help her to lift it. "Did you fall? Are you hurt?" Jenny was trying to see if her grandmother had bumped her head.

Catherine looked around. Yes, Lottie had fallen. But she probably hadn't tripped over anything, or lost her balance. There was no rug in the room, to catch a toe, and other than the mess Lottie had made, the area was as neat as a pin, with a place for everything, and everything in its place.

If she hadn't fallen, she'd simply collapsed. Catherine knelt down, too.

"My... chest," Lottie said, patting at the skin ineffectually. "Hard to... breathe..."

"Oh, no, she's having a heart attack," Catherine said. "Jenny, the phone. Where at? In the kitchen?" Catherine stood preparing to race up the steps and call 911.

"No... phone..." Lottie shook her head.

"She doesn't have a phone! Cathy, you'll have to go to the neighbors." Jenny said, fighting down panic.

Lottie shook her head, trying to say "no."

"Grandma, it's all right. They'll ... they'll understand."

"Isaac... not there. Sat.... Saturday..." her voice was strained, from effort, and she was clearly in pain.

"Oh, God, that's right. They're at temple! Across the street, too!"
Jenny's voice rose.

Cathy knew she was about to go knocking on doors, hoping someone was home, begging for help. Breaking in, if she had to.

And all that would take time. Time Lottie perhaps didn't have.

Jenny knew it, as well.

Catherine eyed the stairs, wondering if they shouldn't just try to load Lottie into Jenny's car, and rush to the nearest hospital, or at least the nearest payphone. But getting Lottie up the narrow stairs seemed like a daunting task, with only one of them really able to carry her.

Jenny followed Catherine's eyes, and once again, knew what she was thinking.

"Don't ask questions and don't say I'm crazy. Just help me get her into the dumbwaiter," Jenny ordered, lifting her grandmother as best she could.

"Jenny?" Catherine knew better than to argue, *but what in the world...*

"No time to explain and I'm so sorry. Just... do everything I say and pray for a miracle," Jenny said, loading Lottie in, as Catherine helped. The older woman was co-operating as well as she could. Jenny knew

it was a testament to how much pain she was in that she wasn't resisting the idea.

The dumbwaiter was wide, and Jenny climbed in beside her grandmother, and held her steady. "Lower us down."

"Down?" Catherine asked, figuring they were going to haul her up to one of the upper floors.

"Just do it!" Jenny ordered, as Cathy stood in dumbstruck amazement.

Lottie moaned, and Jenny put her arms around her grandmother's shoulders, and gave a nod.

Catherine yanked on the pulley system and watched her friend and her ailing grandmother disappear down what looked to be a fairly long shaft. It reminded her of her elevator. *And it went...?*

No. It couldn't be.

Catherine felt the weight shift in the dumbwaiter, and knew that meant Jenny and her grandmother had gotten out. She quickly raised it back up, climbed in, and lowered herself down. In a moment, she had rejoined the other two women.

"I know this sounds crazy, but I know there's a doctor down here. Somewhere," Jenny said, grateful for a nearby lantern.

She was looking around, blindly, as Lottie sat against a rock, seeming to breathe a little easier, yet still in pain.

Cathy looked at Jenny, who was desperately trying to decide which way to go. The path before her branched off almost immediately into two different directions.

She's down here. But she has no idea what she's doing, Catherine realized.

"Hello?!" Jenny called, as loudly as she could. "Is anyone here?" She shouted it into the left tunnel, then shouted into the right one. "Please! We need help!"

Jenny turned back to look at her friend. "I'm not sure if anyone's here! Oh, Cathy, what do we do? I should have just sent you--"

"I know how to bring them," Catherine answered picking up a large stone.

A few steps to her left, and Jenny watched as Catherine began a staccato banging on the pipes, with the rock.

"What are you...?"

Lottie, from the floor, simply relaxed the tension in her shoulders, as much as she could. She was listening to the SOS. She knew that help would come. They would be quick. And the pain in her chest was already lessening.

"Cathy?" Jenny asked again, watching her friend. The tapping noise almost drowned out her question.

"What are you doing?" Jenny repeated.

"Calling for help," Cathy said, not explaining further, as she repeated the message.

Then, she held the rock away from the pipe, and in a moment, a tinny answer came back. Jenny's brown eyes looked amazed.

"They're on their way," Cathy said, her green eyes meeting Jenny's brown ones.

"It's going to be all right, Jen," Catherine proclaimed. Lottie sighed, reaching up for her granddaughter's hand.

After a moment, they both heard the sound of running footsteps.

--

And possibly because Cathy said it, it was so.

"Costochondritis isn't a heart attack, but that's a nasty bit of inflammation you've got there, and the symptoms can be the same," Jacob stated, tucking a blanket around his newest patient.

"I'm putting you on anti-inflammatories and bed rest. And a trip to your own doctor might not be a bad idea," he concluded, putting away his stethoscope.

"I feel like such a fool for causing all this upset," Lottie said, glancing up at Mary. Catherine and Jenny stood to one side.

"Nonsense. Pain that sharp is bound to frighten you. I want your solemn word that once we get you back home, you'll avoid those basement stairs for a few weeks," Jacob said, patting her hand.

It was Jenny, who answered for her grandmother. "There's no doubt about that. She's going to recuperate at my place. We have elevators," the younger woman declared, in a tone that would brook no argument.

Lottie sighed, feeling the effects of the very long afternoon kicking in. She closed her eyes, ready to take a nap.

Jenny's, by contrast, were wide open. And taking in everything (and everyone) they saw.

Jenny had seen much a good bit of the main tunnels, and Catherine could tell by her wondering expression that she was seeing most of it with pilgrim's eyes.

She knows. But she doesn't know, Cathy concluded. It was the only thing she could think.

Cullen and Adam had helped carry Lottie to Jacob, and Mary had assisted, as always. They'd all seen Pascal, when he'd unexpectedly walked into the hospital chamber, and Jamie, when she'd been sent to get something from Peter Alcott. They'd seen William on the way to the hospital chamber, and Zach, running ahead to let Father know they were coming.

But Jenny had yet to see the tunnels' most famous resident, and in snatches of conversation had over the last hour, Catherine came to understand why.

Lottie was a longtime helper who, like Catherine, had kept that secret from even her family. Jenny knew a little, but only that, by accident. Until today, she'd barely ventured beyond the passageway her grandfather had made to accommodate the dumbwaiter's use as a makeshift elevator.

Until today, she'd not understood what it was her grandmother had always asked her to support.

Her books (and those of many others) lined the walls of Jacob's chamber. Hypertension and Statin Drugs sat gleamingly atop a pile of much older cast-offs. He'd clearly been reading it, and a place was marked.

The book caught Catherine's eye, and she remembered it, from the restaurant. *How long has this been going on?* Cathy wondered.

On the other side of the bed, Jenny wondered much the same thing.

These people, they were unsurprised to see Catherine standing there. More than unsurprised. They ... they *knew* her. And they knew Lottie. In a way they'd never known Jenny. Jenny was the outsider, here, and somehow, Catherine was the insider. It made no sense. And since it made no sense, Jenny refused to believe it.

"I think she needs to rest, now," Jacob declared, clearly indicating that everyone aside from himself and Mary should now leave the room.

Jenny nodded, and Cathy held out a guiding hand. "Come on, Jen. I'll take you. We'll go get some things from your grandmother's place, and come back."

Jenny nodded, feeling a bit stunned, feeling like all of this was some kind of surreal vision she was having. Like one of her ridiculous dreams, but this time, a waking one.

Cathy Chandler, ADA, New York socialite and fashion law student, was picking up a kerosene lantern, adjusting the wick, and behaving as if she was an experienced spelunker or at the least, a seasoned deep rock miner. Like she was offering to take her childhood friend back

through the dusty labyrinth of stone, back through its impossible turns, and not get lost.

"I... sure," Jenny said, hanging back, a little. The woman, Mary, her namesake, adjusted Lottie's pillows, a little. She seemed very kind. She had soft-looking skin and a nice, reassuring smile, a smile she gave to Jenny, now.

"You know, I remember the day you were born. I was new here, and we'd gone to see your grandfather; he donated some sewing things, and some food. Such a kind man. We were sorry to hear of his passing."

Jenny nodded. "I guess I was lucky you were there, considering my mom came in the door, in labor."

Mary smiled. "I've been a midwife since before... well. It's been a long time," she said. "And then you came down when you were little. I hope Galen didn't scare you, too badly."

"Galen?" Catherine asked.

"Winslow's father," Jacob supplied, shaking his head at the long ago 'accident' involving the Levin family. Until this moment, he'd had no reason to connect the dots, between the Levins and Catherine.

"Galen found you before you'd managed to get into any trouble. Made sure you got home safely," Jacob said, barely remembering an incident that had happened close to twenty years ago.

Vincent himself had been a rambunctious youngster, at the time, though he'd been far away from the path Jenny had wandered down.

"I thought he was the largest man I'd ever seen," Jenny remembered, trying to push the shadows of memory back, not to mention the actual shadows, made by wandering in the tunnels alone, as a child.

"And no, he didn't frighten me too badly," Jenny let the half-truth stand. "I think it was being lost that did that," she added, taking Catherine's hand.

I feel like I'm the one who knows about this place. Yet... It's Cathy who seems to? It was a feeling that would not quite go away.

The idea confused Jenny, and she put it down to the upset of the day. For the most part, her attention had been firmly focused on Lottie, while they'd been here. While she'd been frightened for her grandmother, anything else was mentally shelved for some other time.

With something of a start, Jenny realized that that time seemed to be now. And Jenny knew a comeuppance might be due.

Cathy values honesty above anything. Is she angry, that I never told her? Jenny thought.

Jenny's the soul of goodness. Will she be hurt that I didn't trust her with this? Catherine worried.

"I guess you're owed some kind of explanation." They both said it, practically together.

"I never realized you knew about this place." Again, almost at the same time.

Jenny smiled and shook her head, sending her brown curls to dancing. "I'm so sorry, Cathy. I *wanted* to tell you. But Grandma made me promise."

"So you... you... knew about this place?" Cathy ventured.

"Just about the entrance. I was too scared to go back down, ever again. That man, Galen, well, he was big. And he sort of put the fear of God into me. And Gran made me swear I'd never do it again, and never tell. She said there was a bottomless pit down here, and that if I got lost, I might never be heard from, again."

Jenny's eyes searched Cathy's expression for signs about whether or not she knew that was true, but Cathy's steady gaze stayed on the path before them, and gave away nothing.

"Once she realized she couldn't convince me it had all been one of my crazy dreams, she made me promise never to say anything, ever" Jenny said, trudging down the long corridor with her friend. Tunnel sounds rattled on the pipes, but Jenny noticed that no other people passed them, in the rounded passageways.

"I wonder if they're hiding... because of me?" Jenny said, looking uncertainly at the intersection, before them. Catherine took the right fork, without hesitation. Jenny had no choice but to trail behind her.

"They might be," Cathy replied. "They just... they don't really know you, Jen," Cathy said.

And they know you? Jenny thought it, but didn't say.

"My, um... my grandparents used to send donations down here. For years. I once heard my grandfather use the word "Helpers."

Catherine nodded, but kept her own counsel. The quiet between them was as awkward as the one in the restaurant.

"I'm so sorry I couldn't tell you," Jenny said. "It didn't used to be such a big thing, with me. This big secret only Gran, Grandpa and I knew. But then, what with living in Manhattan and going to school, and not seeing Gran as much... it just kind of ... faded. Like a memory from childhood," Jenny explained.

The pipes to their left rattled to life once more, and this time Catherine stopped. Jenny watched her eyes as she took in ... something.

"That's... those are messages, aren't they?" Jenny asked. "Like... Morse code?"

Catherine nodded. "Yes. It's people, talking to each other," she said, aware she sounded exactly like Vincent, that she was repeating what he'd told her about that very thing, not so far from here.

"And you know how to use it?" Jenny asked, clearly trying to get her head wrapped around that.

"Is it something your dad taught you, when you guys were out on his boat?" Charles Chandler had a love for the water, and had always kept pleasure craft, both large and small.

Catherine faced her friend. *Lie. Just lie. Make up a story. Just...*

But she knew she couldn't. Jenny had been truthful. Catherine knew it was time to repay that, in kind.

"No. No, Jen. I didn't learn it from my father."

It felt like a burden was lifting, off Catherine's shoulders. Someone to share this with. Someone from Above. Someone who could understand at least... some of it. Someone in her life, not just a passing acquaintance.

Catherine stepped cautiously onto very new ground.

"I learned it over two years ago. I first heard it ... the day I came to, after I... after I was attacked," she said, touching the scar on her cheek.

"Someone... someone from here? They found you?" Jenny was astonished at the news.

"Yes. I was dumped up in the park. And... someone found me," Cathy confirmed. "That's why I said I didn't remember anything. I had to."

"Oh, Cathy!" Jenny squealed, hugging her friend so hard and fast Catherine thought she might get knocked over.

"I never knew! I never even suspected! I just... I felt so guilty! The night you were attacked, I was off in Westport, collecting things from Nancy!"

"Nancy knows?" Catherine was shocked.

"No!" Jenny all but scoffed.

"She just... well. I tell her one of the girls from work has boys about her kids' ages, and she sends me over a pile of clothes and toys, sometimes. Sometimes other things. I just... I can't believe it!" Jenny hugged Catherine, again.

"It's incredible to believe we both knew about this place, but didn't know we did," Catherine realized, even though Jenny's involvement had been far more peripheral than Catherine's had been.

"How could we tell each other?" Jenny reasoned, as Cathy veered into a very large, very cluttered chamber.

The bed was wide, and heavily bolstered with pillows. Pushed against one wall, a huge, stained glass window held court, above it. The room was awash in... everything. Statues, from tiny to huge. Mementos, knick-knacks, picture postcards. Candles sat unlit, on almost every flat surface. A brazier warmed the space, and the ceiling vaulted away to reveal an upper entrance, where some distant light shone through. A tabletop jukebox sat to one side. A white elephant gleamed, on a red velvet pillow. A sextant. A collection of obelisks. An old, battered headlamp. A porcelain wash basin, a chip on one side.

And the books. So many of those. They were everywhere.

Cathy walked into the room with the familiarity of someone who had been there before. She walked over to a huge chair, and the writing desk which partnered it. A journal sat folded closed, the pen tucked inside, to hold the place. Somehow, Jenny knew it wasn't hers. But she had no idea who all this belonged to.

"Was this... your room?" Jenny asked, taking it all in. A picture of Gandhi stared back at her. "While you were here?" her eyes wandered, hardly able to process everything. A pile of old books sat to one side of the desk. Jenny looked at their spines. John Keats. Charles Dickens.

"It was," Cathy answered, knowing there was so much more to the story than that. Also knowing not quite where to begin, in the telling of it. The feeling of lightness disappeared, as Catherine realized she yet had a burden to overcome. And in a way, it was the one she always carried. To know about the tunnels was one thing. But to know about Vincent...

And not for the world would she think of her love as a "burden."

"There's so much here!" Jenny said, turning around.

Yes. Yes, there was. More than you know, even now, Catherine thought.

"Oh, hello, you!" Jenny said, reaching for one of the books beneath the closest stack. She turned around and flipped it open, leafing through it.

"I remember this," she said with a smile, caressing the pages as Catherine watched, from behind. "Heritage Press. It's one of a huge set of classic works. Published back in the thirties, by George Macy, who founded the firm. The whole set was this great, big, sort of a 'book of the month club' for the middle class. A set of hardbacks, reasonably priced." She caressed the pages.

"They're tough to find in good shape, outside a private collection."

She turned back, and Catherine saw the book Jenny was cradling in her hands.

"These used to come with slipcovers, but most of those got lost, or water damaged, over time. But it's still a good old..."

Great Expectations. Jenny Aaronson was going on about Vincent's copy of Great Expectations.

"Jenny. You know this book?" Catherine interrupted, her eyes growing wide.

"Sure," Jenny said, flipping more pages so she could get a good look at some of the illustrations. "Charles Dickens. It's considered his masterwo--"

"No, no, I don't mean 'Do you know the story of Great Expectations.'" Catherine said firmly. "I mean *this* book. *This one.* Do you *know* it?"

Jenny looked up to see her friend's expression, and knew it was unaccountably intense.

Jenny carefully turned the book front to back, checking it over.

"Probably," Jenny answered. "I donated one just like it a few years ago, if that's what you're asking. It came out of an estate sale, in Westport. These books, they're old, but not really 'rare.' They were mass produced, for a while, or whatever counted for that in publishing, back in the 1930's..."

Jenny continued to ramble, all the while taking note of Catherine's dazed expression. Her eyes had almost refused to leave the book.

"And... you're not really curious about its publishing history, are you?" Jenny asked.

Catherine blinked, and held out her hand. Jenny put the familiar, dark red and white volume back into it, and to Catherine, it felt like something associated with coming home.

I was so scared. And this was my comfort. He was my comfort. No shadow of another parting from you...

How to begin? How to say all that was in her heart, right now? How to even explain how much this book, this very book, this bit of cast-aside treasure that Jenny had sent down, had meant so to her, once upon a time?

"Cathy? Honey?" Jenny looked concerned. "Honey, sit down. You look like you've seen a ghost."

Not a ghost. A bit of fate. A wonderful, incredible bit of fate.

"Jenny..." Cathy began, hugging the white leather cover to her chest. "I can't even begin to tell you what this book means to me. And by that, I really mean, I can't begin to tell you." She sat gingerly on the side of the wide bed.

I can't tell you. It risks him. Telling you... it still risks... everything.

And with that sad realization, she knew she couldn't tell Jenny about Vincent. Not yet.

She couldn't, and she knew she couldn't. In spite of Vincent's message on the pipe that Catherine should come to his chambers, that she should consider introducing them... It was all too much, and

too soon. There was a way for such things to be handled. Jenny would have to be prepared, first.

The day for that particular revelation would come. Lottie already knew. Mary had whispered as much to her, when they'd been in the hospital chamber.

With that as a given, it was only a matter of time before Jenny learned of Vincent, as well.

Probably.

But not today.

"We should get back. Still things to do," Cathy said, wiping a tear as she rose from the side of the bed.

Back to keeping secrets. But maybe this time, not for much longer, Cathy thought, preparing to leave.

Still, Cathy felt a bit of the old, familiar weight coming back down, on her shoulders.

Still secrets to keep. Still things I don't dare say, Catherine thought.

Jenny watched as Cathy settled Great Expectations back where it lived, on the table near where Vincent could reach it, easily.

"We...um... we really should just get going," Cathy said, clearly overcome by something Jenny could not perceive. Something that had to do with the book.

Almost idly, Jenny picked it up again, and turned it over. It felt warm to the touch, like it was alive, inside its own pages. Like something

great and magical had held it, and liked to keep it near, imbuing it with some kind of special warmth, some kind of enchantment.

"Cathy, just one more question. And of all the crazy things we've been through today, I swear this is the last one I'll ask you."

Catherine turned, marshalling herself for the next shock to her system, hoping there would be no more shocks to Jenny's today.

"Yes, honey?" Catherine asked.

"Look, I... I know this is nuts. I can't even begin to explain it, but... You know my stupid dreams."

Cathy nodded. But Jenny had sworn she'd had no more of those, or at least, none that could be considered "bad" or "alarming."

Jenny hedged, not quite sure how to continue, without sounding mental.

"A couple nights ago I had one of those really ... disjointed dreams. The normal kind, not the kind I associate with... anything else."

Jenny twisted her fingers together as Catherine watched her, as she searched for words.

"The price of bananas shot up to five dollars a pound. Nancy called to say she was going to have another baby. And you..." Jenny let her voice trail away, and Cathy waited.

"Me? I what, Jen," Catherine asked.

Jenny's brown eyes held hers. "Cathy... I swear a lion was reading a book to you. As a matter of fact, I think it might even have been this

one," she said, patting the cover of Great Expectations. "And it felt like it was the past, but it felt like it was the future, too. Isn't that weird? Does it make any sense?" Jenny asked.

Catherine sensed movement, above her head, and she knew Vincent was standing just inside the doorway. He was above Jenny, and to her back, but Catherine saw him, clearly. The long cape bespoke his almost regal presence, and the expression in his blue eyes was clear, even from a distance.

The look on his face held both his authority, and his love for her, and that love seemed like a completely unshakable force, at the moment.

Catherine wondered that Jenny's head didn't snap around, from all the emotion Vincent was pouring into the room. His eyes told her something she'd longed for, and they told her clearly.

Tell her. Take the risk.

"It's like he was in love with you," Jenny continued, still trying to explain. "I mean *really* in love. Like... the kind we all wish for, but it almost never happens. Like there's nothing in the world he wouldn't give you, if he *could*." Jenny persisted in trying to explain what was for her, the unexplainable.

"But it was a lion," Jenny concluded, oblivious to the fact that Vincent was right now, staring at her.

"And he was kind. I... you could see it in his eyes. I know it sounds weird, Cathy, but..."

Catherine continued to hold Vincent's gaze. It was an approving one. And also, an agreeing one. Jenny had described his love for her, perfectly. He raised his hood to shadow his face, preparing to make his entrance a less startling one than it already would be.

He's going to come down. He's going to put himself at risk. For me. For us. He wants my blessing, but he's going to do it, no matter what.

I love you so much, Catherine's eyes told him, willing him to feel it, from her.

From deep inside his hood, Catherine couldn't see Vincent's expression. But she could feel it. And it warmed her to her inner soul.

Catherine looked back at Jenny before she could follow Catherine's eyes upward.

"Jen, you might want to sit down," Catherine coaxed. "I don't know anything about the price of bananas, but when we get back home, you might want to call Nancy Tucker, to see if she's pregnant."

--



A Tiny Epilogue

Fate was a funny thing, in Miss Jennifer M. Aaronson's life. A peculiar thing that *sometimes* revealed its plans to her in vivid dreams. Dreams which she shared with her friends, or her family. Sometimes,

fate seemed to show its cards, to Jenny Aaronson, and that allowed her to help the people she loved.

Then of course, at other times, it was just good for picking out a really great Maid of Honor dress. One that went perfectly with the deep red gloves the groom decided to wear.

One which matched the color of the ink, on the cover of a most particular book, by Mr. Charles Dickens.

**

Oh, and the Tuckers had a baby girl. They named her Jennifer Catherine, after her two favorite “aunts.”

**

No matter where you are in your own fairy tale, I wish you love. ~
Cindy

