

A China Garden Fanfic

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This is a China Garden Fanfic (as the title says) It's about When Adrian and Sara decide to visit Clare...

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Chapter 1 - A China Garden Fanfic

2

1 - A China Garden Fanfic

This is a fan fiction on The China Garden. The characters don't belong to me, they belong to Liz Berry. This is my story, written by me! Please Please e-mail me at storyoracle@hotmail.com and tell me what you think!! Enjoy! R&R Please

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By: HorseriderJen

Almost two years after Clare Meredith moved to Stoke Raven, in Somerset, England, her ex-boyfriend Adrian, and her best friend Sara, decided to visit her.

"Are you sure this is a good idea, Adrian?" Sara asked. "Maybe we shouldn't go to Ravensmere. Look, there's the turn to Kenward Farm. Maybe we should go there and ask for directions. The directions in this book - she held up a guidebook - seem to be leading us the wrong way."

"No" Adrian decided. "We'll just drive down to the village. Stoke Raven is a small village. Someone will be able to help us find Clare."

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They had decided to go to Salisbury, instead of Stoke Raven. *Still* Adrian thought. *Someone still should know who Clare is. If not, they can at least give us correct directions to get to Ravensmere.*

"Adrian, look," Sara said as they drove down the street. "A café. Can we stop and get something to eat?"

"Sure." He replied. "We can ask about Clare too."

The café was small, with dirty windows and a smeared board outside. They ordered cake and coffee, and sat down at a corner booth. Adrian looked out the window at a cathedral across the street. *Its not bad* he thought loftily. *If you haven't seen Rheims or Chartres that is.*

The door swung open and four huge bikers sauntered into the café.

Sara groaned. "Of all the Café's in Salisbury we had to pick a bikers hang out."

Three of the bikers came over and sat in the booths around them, while the fourth went to the counter to flirt with the girl behind it.

“You two aren’t from around here, are you?” asked the foxy faced one.

“No we’re not.” answered Adrian. “I’m Adrian and this is my friend Sara. We’re looking for someone. Maybe you can help us.”

“I’m Foxy,” said the foxy faced one. “This is Blackhead-you can see why- that’s Zonk, because that’s what he says all the time-“I’m zonked out”. The guy at the counter is Pete Ancomb. There’s one more in our gang, our leader, Mark the Bastard. But he’s not here right now. We are from Stoke Raven. Who are you looking for?”

“We are looking for my ex-girlfriend, who is Sara’s best friend. She moved to Stoke Raven about two years ago.” Adrian replied. “Her name is Clare Meredith. She moved to Stoke raven almost two years ago.”

“Clare Meredith?” Foxy said. “I don’t recognize the name. What about you guys?” he asked Zonk and Blackhead. They shook their heads. “Hey Pete!” he called to the guy at the counter. The burly youth, with a red face, a button nose, and a thatch of tow-colored hair, finished up his conversation and walked over.

“What’s up Foxy?” he asked.

“Our visitors here- Adrian and Sara- are looking for their friend. Clare Meredith. Says she moved to Stoke Raven almost two years ago.

“Clare? Clare...” Pete pondered. “I don’t recognize... wait... I do. Their talking about Rosie Aylward. Remember? When she first came she was passing herself off as Clare.

“Oh that’s right!” Zonk said. The other three turned and glared at him. “I’m so zonked out.” He sighed.

Adrian and Sara looked at each other. *Rosie Aylward?* Adrian thought. *It couldn’t be the same Clare they were looking for.* Sara was about to tell the bikers so when the door banged open again, and a figure walked in. She had wiry black hair, that fell about her shoulders in a windblown wave. The girl wore a white tee-shirt, with an over-sized studded leather jacket, and jeans.

“You talking about me again, Pete?” She called out.

Adrian and Sara looked at each other. *Clare*

Pete turned around. “Hey Rosie!” he called as he stood up and went over to her.

As they talked, Blackhead turned to Sara. “Are you single, darling?”

As Blackhead flirted with Sara, Adrian let his thought wander to Clare. *She’s even prettier then before. But... he called her Rosie. Rosie? What kind of name is that? And she didn’t say anything about it. She seems to actually like it. Pete said a different last name too. Not Meredith but... Aylward? Aylward, yes that’s what he said. Her mom would never let her get married, would she? No she wouldn’t. So did her

mom remarry?*

Adrian was startled out of his thought by a kick from Sara. He looked up to see Clare and Pete walking over to them.

“Aww, leave Sara alone Blackhead.” Clare laughed. “She doesn’t know how to take your teasing.” She leaned over and hugged Sara, nodding at Adrian. “Its great to see you two again.” She gushed.

“So Rosie,” Foxy put in. “What brings our lovely guardian to Salisbury?”

Guardian? Sara thought. *Why did he call Clare a guardian? And a guardian of what?* She shook her head, and listened to Clare’s reply.

“Oh last time Mark was up here, he said he saw some booklets about Ravensmere.” She replied. “I cam up here to see what I could do about getting rid of them.”

“I thought the 11th Earl bought them all?” Zonk asked.

“I thought he did too, but Mark insists he saw some new ones. I was about to look in the bookshop for them, when I heard Pete say my name, so I decided to come here first.” She shot Pete a pointed glance, then laughed.

Pete laughed and shook his head. “I will never get uses to that physic sense of yours, Rosie.

Sara couldn’t believe her ears. *They had to be joking around.* she thought. *Clare couldn’t of heard Pete if she wasn’t in the café. And having a physic sense? That’s nonsense.*

“Speaking of which,” Pete continued. “Where is Mark the Bastard? Did he actually let you ride his bike up here by yourself? Alone? Not to mention you mother or James letting you come here by yourself.”

Clare rolled her eyes and slid into the booth next to Sara. Pete slid in next to Adrian, and the other guys moved closer to the booth.

“I’m not going to break guys.” She said wryly. “I think I can manage to drive down here from the house.”

Pete’s eyes took on a weird, glazed look. “The village protects the guardians, and they protect the Benison.” He quoted his voice high pitched.

“Guard Ravensmere well

Its stones and its hollows,

Health and prosperity

Always doth follow.”

Adrian and Sara exchanged looks, feeling out of place. They had been forgotten by the bikers and Clare. They were outsiders, not understanding what the others were talking about.

Clare's voice continued the quote, her voice the same high pitch as Pete's had been.

"Let Ravensmere die,

Let the land be torn open,

The end of the world

Is surely betokened."

Adrian started. *Ravensmere? Isn't that where Clare moved to?* He looked over at Clare, and was shocked to see that her eyes too were glazed over. A glance at the other bikers, proved that their eyes too were glazed over.

"That's rather unsettling." Sara remarked softly.

With her comment, the others snapped out of their trance.

"So Rosie," Blackhead asked. "How did you get down here?"

"Oh, I took the bus." She answered. "Which reminds me, I must get going. I don't want to miss the bus. Again." she said, looking knowingly at the bikers, who blushed.

Clare stood up, and started to walk away, but then stopped and turned, and looked at Adrian and Sara. She looked at them for a while, finally making up her mind. "Pete," she said slowly, almost like she wasn't sure she wanted say it. "Today's Thursday. Can you take Adrian and Sara up to the House for the tour?"

"Are you sure, Clare?"

She looked at him, and gave him a half-smile. "Yeah. I owe that much to them."

"If your sure I'll take them up to the House." Pete answered.

Good byes were said, and Clare left.

"She said she owed us something," Sara whispered to Adrian. "What could she possibly owe us? Except maybe an explanation."

"I don't know." Adrian shrugged. "We'll find out later I guess."

Shaking his head as if to clear it, Pete looked at his watch and said, "Well its noon now. I guess if we're going to make it up to the House in time for the tour we have to leave now. I'll take my bike, and you two can follow in your car."

Adrian and Sara nodded. Pete said good bye to his mates, and they left.

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Sara sighed as they followed Pete's bike through the rolling hills. "How can we be sure he's taking us to the right place? He and the other bikers didn't seem to like us to much."

"They don't like us because we're outsiders. They obviously don't like outsiders." Adrian explained. "Besides Clare asked him to take us up to the House. He wouldn't lead us the wrong way when she's expecting us at the House."

"True" Sara agreed.

The car was quiet as they continued to follow Pete. They came to the crossroads, and Pete took the left fork. The one with the sign that read: 'To Kenward Farm Only'

"Kenward Farm? I thought he was taking us to Ravensmere, not Kenward Farm!" Sara exclaimed.

"Lets see where he takes us." Adrian answered.

They continued up the lane and turned, going through two iron gates. They followed Pete up the drive, past a huge stone building, up to a gigantic mansion. Adrian noticed other cars in a small parking lot

and parked their car there. Pete turned off his bike, parked it, and walked over to them. "Welcome to Ravensmere. Follow me, I'll take you up to the House, where the tour starts. They followed him up to the House, where a small crowd of people, mostly school children from the village, waited. "Give your money to Mr. Bristow," he said pointing at a frail looking man, sitting behind a table, who was taking money and issuing entrance tickets.

"The tour will start in a little while," Mr. Bristow called out. "Your tour guide will be Mrs. Meredith, from Kenward Farm."

A little while later Frances arrived. "I'm sorry Mr. Bristow, I was talking to Sarah, and lost track of time." She raised her voice to talk to the group of people. "We'll wait a few minutes longer, in case we have any people still on their way."

She saw Pete, Adrian and Sara, and walked over to them. "Hello Sara," she said warmly giving her a hug. She looked at Adrian, disapproval evident in her eyes. "Pete?" she asked.

"The guys and I met up with them in Salisbury. Rosie came a few minutes later. She asked me to bring them up for the tour. She said she owed them that much." He said as an explanation.

Frances shrugged. "Her decision, not mine." She raised her voice "We will begin the tour now."

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“Wow,” Sara whispered to Adrian, after they had been on the tour for some time. “There are a lot of Aylwards and Kenwards. And the guardians again. What do they mean by that?”

Adrian shrugged. “I don’t know”

The tour soon wound to a close, going back to the main entrance hall, where they saw Clare and a stranger, talking to Mr. Bristow. Clare looked up to see the group and walked over to them.

“Good Afternoon,” she greeted them. “I am Rosamond Aylward, the female guardian. Over there talking to Mr. Bristow, is my husband, Mark. He is the male guardian. Rosamond means ‘Protectress’. Aylward means ‘awe- inspiring guardian’.”

Hearing his name, Mark walked over to stand next to his wife.

She’s married???? Adrian thought.

One of the school children, a small boy, raised his hand.

“Yes, lad?” Clare asked.

“Lady Rosamond,” he asked. “My class is very interested with the China Garden, and the Maze Dance the female guardian does. Could you show us the dance and open one of the Moon Gates?”

Clare looked to her husband then to her mother. Neither had any objections. “I don’t see why not. Follow me.

Mark and Clare led the way to the China Garden. “Which gate would you like me to open?” she asked.

What do they mean, opening the gates? They’re already open. Adrian thought.

“How about the Third Gate?” Mark asked. “Show the children a view of the village.”

She agreed and began the dance. Adrian’s jaw dropped as he watched her sway and turn, her hair flying in the wind. Mark smiled and the children cheered, as she reached the center and swung out to the Third Gate. She came to a stop in front of the gate, and the group ran over to look through it.

“Ooooo,” one of the children squealed.

“Their teacher agreed. “What a great view! The village looks beautiful!”

What village? Sara wondered. *I can’t see any village. All I see is the outer edge of Ravensmere’s park and the boundary wall.*

The group moved away from the gate and out of the china Garden. When they reached the House, Frances told them the tour was over. “Light refreshments are available in the Orangery. Thank you for coming, I hope you enjoyed the tour.”

As the others left, Adrian and Sara started walking over to where Clare stood, talking with Mark and Frances. She saw them coming over, and held up a finger. She said something to Frances who nodded. Clare kissed Mark, and walked over to Adrian and Sara.

"Let's go to Raven Hill," Clare said. "We can talk there."

As they talked, Sara leaned over to Adrian and asked, "When you looked through the gate, did you see the village?"

"No, I didn't," he said slowly. "Did you?"

"No I didn't either. What village were they talking about?"

Clare reached the hill and sat down in the grass. Sara and Adrian sat down next to her. Sara looked around her, she could see for miles!

Clare followed her glance. "Beautiful isn't it? I love sitting here, and being able to see all of Ravensmere."

"What's going on Clare?" Adrian asked forcefully. "Or should I say Rosie?"

She sighed and let her gaze fall on Adrian. "It's a long story." She said softly. "I hardly know where to start."

"Why don't you start with why they call you Rosie?" Sara suggested.

Clare nodded. "My mother never told me I had a second name, until we got here. I overheard her telling My Aylward, Mark's grandfather, who was the former guardian of Ravensmere. He was asking her to send me to him, that it was time for the cycle to start over again. When I walked into the room, he asked me what my name was. My mother told him it was Clare Rosamond. I was surprised, I never knew that I had a second name. Mr. Aylward explained that there must be a Rosamond in every generation. When I went to the café in Salisbury for the first time, about a week after I came, I met the bikers. My husband Mark was the leader. He's the one Foxy called 'Mark the Bastard'. He started calling me Rosie as a nickname, and the others picked it up."

"Your husband?" Adrian asked, his eyes glittering dangerously.

"Yes." Clare smiled "My husband."

"Why didn't you invite us to the wedding?"

"There wasn't a wedding." Clare answered. "We joined hands through the Wedding Ring, and we did the circling for good luck."

"The Wedding Ring?" Sara asked.

"It's a huge stone, about three meters high, with a large hole about waist height. You run around the

stone nine times, then join hands through the stone.”

“Its only superstition.” Adrian scoffed.

Clare shrugged. “You can think what you like.”

“Why do they keep calling you a guardian?” Sara asked.

“Because I am a Guardian.” Clare answered. “I am the daughter. The female guardian. The Kenward bride.”

Adrian didn’t understand, but decided to leave it at that. “When you did that dance, what could the children see?”

Clare hesitated. “I did the dance for the children. They are the future of Stoke Raven.”

“That didn’t exactly answer his question.” Sara said.

“They saw something only people from the village can see. There is many parts of my life now, that you two won’t - can’t - understand. You two are outsiders to Stoke Raven.”

“So are you,” protested Sara, not wanting to be left out of anything her friend was in. “You were also born in London, as was your mother.”

Clare shook her head. “My mother was born here, on Kenward Farm. I am a Kenward. The Kenward daughter. I can’t tell you anymore. I’m sorry.”

“That’s it?” Adrian asked hurt evident in his voice. “Just ‘I’m Sorry?’ That’s all you’re going to say?”

Clare nodded sadly. “I’m really sorry guys, but it’s all I can do. I’ll come visit you guys in London though. I promise.”

Sara leaned over and gave Clare a hug. “I’ll hold you to that promise.”

Clare gave Adrian a hug, and stood up. “I’m sorry I can’t tell you guys anymore. But you just wouldn’t understand.

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On the ride home, Adrian and Sara were silent.

“I wish I could understand why Clare did what she did.” Adrian said at last.

“I know.” Sara said. “But I know she had a good reason for doing it.”

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