

Saving Pemberley

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This story is about a thirteen year old girl named Ariel who has discovered a secret...

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1 - Pemberley

It was a cold winter day, and a young girl was walking along an old trail that lead to her favorite place: an abandoned castle. The young girl's name was Arial, she was thirteen, she had dark brown hair and hazel eyes.

She always longed for adventure, and she usually only quenched that desire by reading an adventurous book. Pemberley was her one and only place of mischief and adventure. A place where she felt she belonged. A place of her own.

"Here it is!" exclaimed Arial.

"Wow! It is just like you described it!" said Georgiana.

Georgiana was a close friend of Arial. She was shy, pretty, and had just turned fourteen. She had long blonde hair that was the perfect texture, and she was very kind. She was always sensible, and used her head.

"See, I told you that I wasn't lying when I said that Pemberley was the best place ever!"

"So, what's inside?" questioned Georgiana.

"Well, I few things that I have put there, like blankets, rugs, towels, games, a few flashlights, some books, extra clothes, and other random stuff."

"Are you sure that no one else knows about this?" Georgiana said doubtfully.

"Well, so far, I have never seen anyone here but myself, and I don't think that anyone knows of it. Why do you ask?"

"Just being curious I guess."

"Want to go inside?"

"Sure."

"Let's race!"

"Well," said Georgiana trying to find a way to get a head start, "I, I guess, ready, go!"

Well, at this Arial was not caught off guard as Georgiana had hoped, because she was used to Georgiana trying to get head starts. Arial was always a very fast runner, and could run as silent and as quick as a wolf. She loved running, and so did Georgiana, but Georgiana was just never as fast, although faster than most people herself, including most of the boys in her grade.

"I almost got you that time!" said Georgiana panting.

"Just remember that I have known you for ever, and I know your little tricks."

"Yeah, I know, I can never get you with that." replied Georgiana.

Once the girls got inside, Georgiana was amazed.

"So why did you name this place Pemberley?" said Georgiana with a quizzical look.

"It was the name of a place from a book that I read." said Arial.

Arial had been reading books ever since she was little and had a desire to read. It was something that was very enjoyable to her. She read almost everyday, and always had at least one good book that she was reading.

"Now we have a place just for us to hang out, but you can't tell anyone, or people would always be coming here and ruining the fun."

"So, what can we do? I am a little new to this place, and what it has to offer." said Georgiana.

"Well, we can play games, read, talk, or go sliding on the creek. I just checked the creek a few days ago, and it is frozen solid! We could have a lot of fun. Or, there are these really great climbing trees. They overlook the valley that is really close by."

"Well, so many choices, I guess that I will let you pick." Said Georgiana.

"And just out of curiosity," Georgiana added, "how did you find this place?"

"Well, I was riding midnight, and this might sound a little bit weird but..."

"But what?" asked Georgiana.

"Well, I felt like I had to go in this direction, and I did, so I stumbled upon this."

"That doesn't sound weird at all. I wish I had a horse, you are so lucky!"

"Georgiana, you know you can use Peppermint anytime you want."

"I know, and I am grateful, I just wish I had my own."

"Hey, do you want to go to the frozen creek?"

"Sure, I'll race you." Said Georgiana who once again had the hope that maybe she could beat Arial.

"You don't even know where you are going, how could you beat me if you have to follow me?"

"Good point, let's just walk."

"We have to go to the back, because that is where the creek is."

The girls walked to the back, both deep in thought, Arial wondering what Georgiana was thinking, and Georgiana absorbing the beauty of the place.

"I bet that this place looked really cool when it was new." said Georgiana.

"Yeah, I can only picture it."

"Well, it looks like you aren't the only one who knows about this place after all."

"What do you mean? How can you tell?"

"Well, unless you took a huge chunk out of this wall and wrote all over it,"

"When did that get there?" said Arial interrupting.

"You mean you never saw it?"

"No, and I was just here two days ago."

"Well, I guess it isn't just your place anymore."

"I don't care as much about the fact that it isn't just mine anymore as I do about the fact that someone would have the nerve to vandalize the place. How could anyone do something like that?"

"Well, a lot of people don't really care anymore. Nowadays people just don't have the respect that they did a long time ago."

"Well, it is pretty pathetic that people have to act like that."

"Hate to break it to you, but it seems like it won't be long until the whole place is ruined and falling to pieces." Said Georgiana.

"Georgiana, we're just going to have to do something about that because we can't just sit back and let people do this."

"You don't know what kind of people are doing this, it could be dangerous."

"I don't care, we have to save Pemberely!"

2 - The Problem

"I know you really like this place, and if you are that concerned about it, that I might suggest you telling your parents," suggested Georgiana, "because they might be able to help.

"I can't do that, because once adults get into it, they will fix the problem differently than we would. They will say something like it isn't a safe building anymore, it is so old that it might collapse, or you shouldn't be here, it is probably someone else's property, or maybe it is some gangster's hide out, and you could get hurt if they find you here, or we should tell the police about this building so they can figure out what to do with it, or any other excuse to clear up the problem." said Arial.

"I guess that you're kind of right, because they probably would say that, and now that I have gotten to know the place a little bit, I really kind of like it."

"See, I told you that you would!" said Arial, satisfied.

"Well, maybe we can stay in those trees that you talked about, and then watch, see if these people who did this come back, and then see what kind of people they are. Then, after we figure out who and what the problem is, we can try to clear it up." said Georgiana.

"Sounds good to me, and those trees provide perfect protection, no one can see us, but we can see them. And you have to be a pretty good climber to get up there, because the branches are so close together, and you have to be just the right size, like us!"

"I only have one thing to say," said Georgiana in a laugh, "it's a good thing that they are pine trees, or else all of their leaves would be gone!"

"Yeah, you're right, if they weren't we would have to come up with another idea.

"Arial..."

"Georgiana what is it?"

"Well, I just thought that we are waiting for someone to come, but what if they are already watching us?"

"I never thought of that. Let's just wait to do this till tomorrow. We have all of the time in the world."

"Ok, but I don't want to spend all of my time trying to figure out who did this, I want to do stuff here. I want to explore. You only took me up to the second level, and there are four."

"I have an idea. Do you remember when I won those little mini video camera things with the main screen to see what all of the cameras were taping?"

"Yeah." Said Georgiana, knowing exactly what Arial was planning on.

"Well, we could put them all over Pemberley, and disguise them. It isn't like they are easy to see, because they are small. We have eleven."

"One for each level, one for each side of the building, and three to put anywhere else."

"But there is one problem with that."

"What?" Said Georgiana, curious to find out what would be wrong with her plan.

"All of the levels have at least four rooms, except for floor one, it only has three."

"Yes," replied Georgiana with a sly smile, "but if we put the camera on the stairs leading up, we will know if someone is coming, and what floor they are coming to. We can worry about individual rooms later."

"I know that you think you have it figured out, but that still won't work"

"Why?"

"Because there another staircase on floor one leading to floor two, three, and four." said Arial, doubting Georgiana's skills.

“That still isn’t hard, just put one of the three left over cameras by floor two looking down to floor two, and one by floor four looking down to floor three.”

“That could work. I guess that I should have expected you to figure it out.”

“Well, that is where I can contribute. You contribute in coming up with a basic sketch, you know, the really brilliant ideas, and I come up with the details to make sure that the plan runs smoothly.”

“Let’s just go and have some fun, I am sick of making plans, and you haven’t even gotten a taste of Pemberley yet!” said Ariel.

“Ok, let’s go slide on some ice!”

“I never realized how secluded this place really is.” said Georgiana, observing the thick brush and the trees that were so tight together.

“That is why it is so hard to find, because these thick trees go on for like half a mile around the whole place, and you couldn’t really get through unless you know where the entrance is. Planes can’t really tell that we are down here either because of the trees hanging over, and all of the plants that are on top and sides of the building make it look like ground.”

“Well, planes probably only go over this area occasionally.”

“Hey look, it’s snowing!” said Ariel.

“I love snow! It is so light and refreshing!”

“Well, now is a perfect time to have an ice sliding competition.”

“Ok, but I am warning you that this is one thing that I think I can beat you in, after all, I can ice skate very well, not trying to brag, but just saying since I did for so many years, and still do it for fun.”

“Yeah, I know, but I have been sliding on this ice forever, and it isn’t all nice and smooth. It takes skill to go far without falling! And you don’t have ice skates.”

“Good point. Bring it on!”

“Ok, you can go first.”

“Oh no, I insist that you go first, after all I do want to see a professional do it first!” said Georgiana sarcastically, in a teasing tone.

“Ok, just remember how arrogant your being, so I can tease you about it when I win!

You may think that these two friends are actually being serious, and being mean, but if you knew them, and saw them, you would realize that it was just two best friends teasing each other.

Ariel got pretty far on her first attempt. Surprisingly, Georgiana got even farther.

“See, I told you that I could do it!” said Georgiana triumphantly.

After a long competition, Georgiana won. She had gotten about a foot farther than Ariel almost every time.

3 - Secrets Revealed

After a long day, the girls went home. Georgiana was spending the night at Arial's house. They decided that they would set up the cameras tomorrow. Tonight, they were going to forget about it though, and just relax.

Since they were best friends, they could do almost anything in front of each other, and they could tell each other everything. Arial had been bothered for a long time by a secret she had been keeping to herself, and decided to try to tell Georgiana.

"I like having someone to tell all of my secrets to!" said Arial.

"Why, do you have one right now?" said Georgiana with an inquiring, amused tone.

"Maybe, maybe not" Arial said calmly, eyes focused on the floor.

"Oh, I get it, you don't want to tell me."

"No, I just don't have a secret!"

"Ha ha!" said Georgiana mockingly. "It's probably just the person that you like, and I already think I know who it is!"

"What are you talking about? I don't like anyone!" Said Arial as her face turned red.

"It that why your blushing?" teased Georgiana.

"Well, fine, I do like someone, but let's get back to the other issue." Said Arial, trying to change the subject to avoid questions from Georgiana, and to talk about what she really meant by secret.

"So, if it's not a secret, what is it?"

"Well, I guess you could maybe call it a secret, but I have never considered it that, because well, cause, no one would believe it!"

"I would, trust me."

"Maybe, but I am not sure you would say that after you heard it. I'll tell you as long as you don't think that I am crazy or something."

"I won't." confirmed Georgiana

"Ok, well, I haven't told anyone yet, cause I don't want it to get out of hand, and I don't want you to tell anyone about this, and when I tell you, I want you to listen to what I tell you to do."

"I won't tell anyone, but I don't get what you said about me doing what you tell me."

"You will."

"So then, tell me."

"Well, I, I can talk to animals."

4 - Confusion

“What! Not that I don’t believe you, but how? And how come I’ve never heard you say anything to midnight to calm her when she is afraid?”

“The reason you’ve never heard me is because I don’t talk out loud, I use my mind.”

“Oh,” said Georgiana, confused, yet trying to act like she understood, “but how?”

“I first realized it when one time Midnight was getting really scared because of this loud noise she heard, and I was hoping that she would realize that it was just a twig falling, and thinking in my mind that she should relax. Then, she just stopped, right before I was about to get tossed off. I was wondering why she stopped, and was just questioning in my mind when I heard someone say an answer, only no one was there. I desperately searched for someone, but, there was silence, not even the sound of the wind. So, I realized, though with much contemplation and thought, that it was midnight.”

“How come you never told me this story?”

“Because I couldn’t lie to you about how I stopped midnight.”

“Well, I still don’t get why you said to listen to what you told me to do.”

“Because, there is one more thing that I didn’t tell you.”

“What, tell me!” Pleaded Georgiana, dying to know.

“I think that anyone can talk to the animals, as long as you believe that you can, and as long as you spend enough time at Pemberley.”

“What do you mean?”

“Pemberley has this sort of magic about it, so, if you spend enough time here, the magic sort of follows you around.”

Georgiana obviously confused sat there with a look very rarely she had, a look that showed she did not understand.

“What I am trying to say is that when you come into Pemberley, you can talk to animals, and when you leave, you can’t. If you come here enough, then you can talk to animals anywhere. But you have to come here at least three times a month. If you don’t, then the range in which you can talk to animals away from Pemberley slowly reduces, until you can’t talk to animals unless you are in Pemberley.”

“Now I get why you always spend so much time at Pemberley!” Said Georgiana. “So, when are you going to help me start to talk to animals, today?”

“Aren’t you angry that I didn’t tell you?” Said Ariel, shocked by how calm her friend was acting.

“No, I understand why you didn’t tell anyone.” Said Georgiana, although she was a little upset.

“Not today, because we aren’t in Pemberley, and you have to be there, or else it won’t work. You also have to fully believe.”

“I do, but, can you just talk to an animal first so I can see?”

“Yeah, let me talk to that little bird outside. We will have to go on the porch.”

The girls silently opened the sliding door leading outside of Ariel’s room. Ariel’s parents were asleep, and they didn’t want to wake the up. Georgiana watched intently as Ariel closed her eyes. Then the bird slowly came towards her, obviously getting coaxed by Ariel. It landed on her finger, and Ariel opened her eyes.

“Do you have to close your eyes?”

“Well, with animals that I have never talked to before, I do, because it helps me concentrate, but with Midnight and some other animal friends that I have made, I can do it while talking to someone else.”

“Really?”

“Yeah.”

“Can you communicate with animals that aren’t near you, like can you talk to Midnight?”

“I am not sure, even though I have been able to do this for a long time now, I have never known if I could, so, I can’t try, because I don’t fully believe that I can.”

“Oh. So, can I try talking to that bird?”

“Not this bird, because I am still a stranger to him, and like I said, you have to be at Pemberley.”

“Oh yeah, I forgot.” Said Georgiana disappointed that she had to try. So, should I try on Midnight tomorrow?”

“Yes, or you could try on Peppermint, because she trusts you and she thinks that you are nice.”

“You asked her?”

“Yeah.”

“What else has she said about me?”

“Just some comments on how you ride sometimes, and other things.”

“Now I know why you are always staring into the distance, and why I have to call your name twice before you look at me.”

The girls stayed up for hours talking about talking to animals, and other secrets they had. Arial was relieved that she finally had someone to talk to with her secret. Georgiana was enthralled with her friend’s ability, and excited that with practice she could do it herself.

“So, why did you tell me this now?”

“Because I think that the people who are destroying Pemberley know that something is up with the place, and I don’t want them to figure it out, because it could get out of hand and dangerous if people found out.”

“Now I see why you don’t want to tell your parents, you don’t want them to find out about it, or think that you are crazy.”

“I don’t think that they would assume that I was crazy, they would just think that I was joking with them.”

“I am not tired at all! Since it is five, and we obviously aren’t going to go to sleep, let’s get dressed, because then we can get to Pemberley early.” Said Georgiana.

“Ok, I hope my parents won’t mind us leaving so early. As long as we tell them we’re going, I am sure they won’t care.”

“I just can’t wait to try to talk to Peppermint!”

“I know, it must be exciting for you, I can still remember the first time when I tried to start a conversation with midnight after I realized I could talk to her.” Said Arial, reflecting back to that day.

“It must have been hard for you to keep this a secret.”

“I realized that it was best not to tell anyone, and I was always looking for times to try and tell you, and sometimes I almost would. I just waited until the right moment.”

“Well, I understand why you didn’t want to tell me until the right moment.”

“You have no idea how glad I am that you actually believe me, so many times I thought that you would think I was crazy, and that is part of the reason why I waited this long.”

“I came up with an idea!” Said Georgiana, her eyes sparkling with excitement.

“What?”

“Well, maybe, sometime, we could spend the night at Pemberley.”

“And what, we are just going to tell my parents about how we have a secret place?”

“Of course not, we are going to tell them that we want to go camping in the woods.”

“And your parents will let you?”

“Maybe. You’ve done it before with Rose.”

Rose was Arial’s older sister, who did not know about Pemberley, or the secret of talking to animals.

“That’s true. But not at Pemberley.”

“Well it still technically is camping.”

“When should we do this?”

“Friday?”

“Sure.”

5 - Wise Wolf

~Just as a note, when something is in color, it means that it is being communicated telepathically. Arial is green and Georgiana is light blue~

The girls decided not to waste time thinking about Friday, but to concentrate on making sure they had everything they needed. They rode the horses to Pemberley. Georgiana wanted to ask Peppermint so many questions, and could hardly wait to get there. Arial was busy thinking how she could instruct Georgiana, and desperately hoping that she was right when she said that she thought anyone could talk to animals if they were in Pemberley. She didn't want to disappoint Georgiana, and was now regretting telling her that.

"Here at last! So, how do I do it?"

"Well, I have to tell you something first."

"What? You don't sound very happy."

"You do know that I am not absolutely sure that you can talk to animals, I just think that anyone who comes to Pemberley can."

"Yeah. But, why do you think that?"

"The day after I realized I could talk to Midnight, there was this animal that told me that anyone could talk to animals if they came here and believed, and that long ago, it was used in the wrong way, and no one has used it since me. He also said that someday, I would have to use it to save Pemberley."

"Why would an animal lie to you?"

"Well, it could have heard rumors, or, it could have wanted to scare me away."

"I guess when it was talking about saving Pemberley, it was talking about now."

"That is why I am confused. I don't want you to get disappointed if you can't do what I said."

"I won't."

"What you do, is you just concentrate on an animal you want to talk to, and then think something in your mind."

"That's it." Georgiana was surprised by the simplicity, and thought she could easily master this.

"It isn't as easy as it seems!"

"You said that about the ice too."

"Well, don't give up if you don't get it on the first time."

Arial watched as Georgiana tried to talk to Peppermint. Furrowed brows, and in deep concentration, Arial could tell she had not yet succeeded, and that she was having trouble. Arial was slightly amused, but then realized that maybe she was wrong. Then, Georgiana's eyes opened, and Arial looked up.

"I did it!" Said Georgiana

"I am glad that that old wolf was right." Arial mumbled.

"You talked to a wolf?"

"Yeah, that was the animal that told me about the whole saving Pemberley thing."

"I can't believe I actually just did that!"

"I wouldn't say that if I were you, or else you might not be able to do it again."

"But I do believe, it's just a figure of speech."

"Just warning you."

"Why would it matter anyway? I could just believe again."

"It isn't that simple. Once you stop believing or have doubts for a second, you can never do it again."

"How would you know?"

"The old wolf told me."

"Oh. How does that wolf know everything?"

"It has lived for a long time, and is very wise."

A moment of silence passed as the girls thought about everything.

"So, what did you say to her?" Asked Arial.

"Peppermint? I just asked her if she liked me. Did you tell her I had never done this before, because she knew?"

"No, maybe midnight told her."

"Do you think that we could talk to each other using our minds?"

"Let's try."

Now, both girls were sitting with their eyes closed. Arial was asked Georgiana if she could hear her. To her surprise, she said yes. They immediately opened their eyes.

"Did that actually work?" Said Arial.

"Yeah, I wonder if we have to have animals with us though, cause Peppermint said something."

"I heard her."

"Peppermint, Midnight, don't say anything to us."

"Hey Arial!"

"It works! Do you know what this means, we could like talk anywhere without anyone knowing we said anything!" Said Arial.

6 - Relief and Distress

"Why don't you try talking to midnight? Then you can branch out and try talking to other animals you don't know."

"Ok."

"After an hour of having Georgiana talk to Midnight and Peppermint, Ariel decided it was time to have her move to other animals.

"Why don't you try talking to my friend, Jason."

"Who's Jason?"

"A mouse."

"I wonder why you named him Jason?" Said Georgiana, saying Jason in a dreamy voice.

"What are you talking about? Said Ariel, trying to hide her red face.

"Like you don't know."

"I don't."

"You like that kid Jason in our class, don't you?"

"Why would I like him?"

"Stop trying to avoid the question, yes or no?"

"What makes you think I named him?"

"Well, I don't think he was born with the name Jason."

"Well, I gave him some choices and he picked."

"That still didn't answer the question."

"Um..."

"Fine, I'll ask Midnight!"

"Midnight, does Ariel like Jason?"

"She does, she told me." Said Midnight.

"Thanks for giving it away!" Said Ariel.

"It's not like I didn't already know!" Said Georgiana.

"Don't blame Midnight for telling your secret, you decided to tell us!" Said Peppermint.

All four of them were using their minds, so, if you were to come up to them, you wouldn't have known that they were talking. All of a sudden, a new voice appeared.

"So, what are we all talking about?"

It was Jason, the mouse. A familiar friend to everyone except for Georgiana.

"Who is this new friend?" Said Jason, eyeing Georgiana.

"This is my best friend Georgiana."

"Nice to meet you Jason." Said Georgiana

"So, Georgiana, do you think that you've got it down?"

"Maybe. When do you think I will be able to talk outside of Pemberley?"

"Well, it depends on how many times you come here, so maybe, if you come every other day, in four weeks."

"That seems like a really long time."

"Not really, it will go by in no time!"

"Let's get started setting up the camera's." Said Georgiana.

She had just remembered of why they really had come back to Pemberley, and wanted to get the job done before anyone else came."

"I totally forgot about that, I guess we should get started."

"So, do you think that anyone will ever find this place?"

"Maybe, I hope not anytime soon." Said Arial.

"Midnight, Peppermint, Jason, please watch to tell if anyone is coming, and tell me, we still should be able to talk, because I won't be far away, just inside."

"Ok."

"No one should come."

The girls set up the cameras, and no one came. They spent the rest of the day at Pemberley, and did not return back to Arial's house until nightfall.

"So, do you think that we will be able to talk outside of Pemberley to each other?" Asked Georgiana.

"Probably, but it will take some time for both of us, because you are just learning, and even for me, talking with another human mentally is new."

When Arial and Georgiana had finished putting Midnight and Peppermint in their stalls, they went inside.

"You girls were gone for a while, what were you doing?" questioned Arial's dad.

"We were horseback riding through the woods, and we stopped a few times."

"Where did you stop?"

"I am not sure." Said Arial feeling a little uneasy about all of the questions.

"Georgiana, you can stay and eat with us if you want to, then you can call your mom to come and get you."

"Ok, I am sure my mom wouldn't mind."

After a dinner full of questions, Arial's appetite was about full of conversation, and dinner.

"Ahhh," Arial breathed a sigh of relief, "the pleasures of being in my own room where I can finally speak my mind." Said Arial.

"It is nice. Are your parents always so questioning?"

"Not usually, but I have never really stayed out as late as we did before, so maybe that's why."

A gentle knocking on the door startled Arial for a moment, but then she realized it was Rose. Rose had brown hair that was soft and flowing, she was very laid back and gentle, and also mature for her age. Her blue eyes expressed her gentle, easy manner.

"So, what were you guys doing today?" Said Rose with a smile.

"Horseback riding."

"I always love to go horseback riding. I could tell that you were getting some what annoyed by all of the questions tonight. Don't you wish that there was a place you could go that no one knew about where you could just, well, just get away for a while."

"Yeah." Said Arial.

"So Rose, how have you been doing lately?" Said Georgiana.

"Very good, It is sad to be in my senior year of high school, knowing it may be the last year that I will see all of my friends, but, we are all going to try to keep in touch."

Arial and Rose were very close even though they were four years apart. They often talked for many hours, and it was not unusual for Rose to talk to Georgiana when she was around. Arial was always in a good mood while talking to Rose, and if she wasn't in the start of the conversation, she was by the end. It was something that had to do with Rose's easy temper and light heartedness.

After dinner, Georgiana left, and Arial was once again alone, not literally, she had her family, but alone in her mind. She had no one to discuss the secrets that she longed to tell. Even though it was a relief that she told Georgiana, that wasn't enough. She really wanted to tell her sister, but she didn't know how. When you hold a secret inside you for a long time, it eats away at you, like a small parasite, little by little, it will take over your body until you can't stand it anymore.

7 - First Glimpse

"Hey Rose?" Asked Arial.

"What's up?" Rose said in her usual playful voice, this time with a hint of concernment, because she could tell something was bothering Arial.

"Well, there is something I want to tell you, but I am not sure how."

"Ok, I thought that something was bothering you, so what is it?"

"Well, will you come horseback riding with me?"

"That's it?" Said Rose, confused.

"No."

"Oh, I get it." Said Rose, knowing that Arial wanted to talk to her where she knew they would be alone. After a few minutes of riding their normal course, Arial stopped Rose, and told her to follow her.

"Why? Nothing is over that way except a bunch of thick thorny bushes."

"Well, not exactly..." Said Arial, smiling.

"Something is over there! Is this what you wanted tell me?"

"Part of it."

After a few hours of going down various paths that lead to more paths, they were finally at Pemberely.

"Before you go in," said Arial with her hand ready to pull back the long leaves and vines that hung in the entrance like a girl's long hair covering her back, "you have to promise you will tell no one, and bring no one back to this place."

"Ok."

Arial pulled her hand back to reveal the old house, it's once beautiful statues and tall pillars standing gracefully, worn with age.

"It's beautiful, how did you find this? How long have you known about this? Can we go inside? Does anyone else know that it's here?"

"So many questions, I will address your last question first. That is part of the reason why I brought you here. I thought that only Georgiana and I knew about this place, but apparently, someone else knows, because there is graffiti on the back wall. I found this place when I was ten.

I was riding Midnight and I felt the urge to go this direction, like I was being pulled in. So, I followed that feeling, and ended up here. And to answer your last question, yes, we can go inside."

"So that is where you have been going when you are out for hours and hours riding midnight."

"Yeah, it's a place to come to relax and be free."

"Two days ago."

"Why did you decide to tell me?"

"After a while, you just have to tell someone. And yesterday when you said you wished there was a place that no one knew about where you could go just to get away? That's why I told you."

"So, can I come here without you?"

"Yeah, but you have to make sure no one knows where you are going, and make sure that no one follows you, because we have no clue what these graffiti people are up to. You can't bring any of your friends. I know you probably want to tell them, but you can't, because there is more to this place than what you see."

"What do you mean?"

"That is the other part of what I wanted to tell you."

"Can we go inside?"

“Yeah, but let me check something first.” Said Arial as she reached into her saddle bag, taking out a screen with various views of Pemberley on it.” “What’s that?”

“Georgiana and I set up these camera things around Pemberley so we can see if anyone comes to do more graffiti. I am checking to see if anyone is inside right now. Ok, we can go in. No one’s even been here today, except Jason, and he’s still here.”

“Jason? I thought no one knew about this place except for you and Georgiana, and those graffiti people.”

“I did.”

“So who is Jason?”

“That’s kind of the other part I want to tell you. But let’s go inside first.”

After going inside and taking a tour of the building, Arial and Rose settled in Arial’s favorite room.

“I see you have a collection of things in this room.”

“Yeah, I usually bring one thing each time I come, because that is all that will fit in the saddle bag.”

“So, who is Jason? No one was even in the building that I saw, and we went through the whole thing.”

“Come out Jason.” Said Arial, laughing because she knew that Rose did not know that she had been talking to Jason during most of the tour.

“What are you laughing at?”

“You won’t get it now, I will tell you after I explain who Jason is, and how I know him.”

“Awww, look at that cute little mouse over there, he looks so cold.” Rose said as she happened to see Jason emerging from behind a pile of books.

Unlike most girls, Rose was not afraid of mice and small rodents. Something that her and Arial shared was their love for animals, another reason why Arial wanted to tell Rose.

“That’s Jason.”

“You have a pet mouse?”

“No, he comes and goes as he pleases. He says hi.”

“That’s cute Arial. I like him. Will he let me hold him?”

“I don’t know, let me ask, one sec.”

“He says as long as you don’t squeeze him.”

“How could he say that?” Rose was really confused now, because when Arial told her he said hi, she thought that Arial just said that, not literally meaning it.

“Well, I am going to say it plainly. You can’t tell anyone, and don’t think I am crazy.”

“Fine, just tell me.”

“I can talk to animals, and so can Georgiana now.”

“I didn’t even hear you say anything to Jason though.”

“That is because I use my mind. The reason why I was laughing was because you had no clue that during most of the time you were taking to tour of Pemberley, I was talking to Jason.”

“So, Georgiana can talk to animals too?”

“Yeah, I just taught her how. When you go into Pemberley, there is a sort of magic, and you can talk to animals.”

After about half an hour of explaining things to and answering questions of Rose, she was ready to try talking to animals for the first time.

“So, try talking to Jason.”

“Ok, here it goes.”

Rose didn’t get it on her first try, but she didn’t get frustrated easily, so she kept trying. On her third attempt, she got it.

“Hi Jason, I’m Rose.”

“Hi Rose, my name is Jason. Arial has told me a lot about you. “

"This is really great Arial!"

"Are you glad that I told you?"

"Yeah, you know how much I like animals."

"So, how long did you say it would take until I can talk outside of Pemberley?"

"Well, I am not exactly sure, just try to spend a lot of time here. But once you can, you have to come back here about three times a month."

"And didn't you say that we can talk to each other telepathically too?"

"Yes, that is something I just found out a few days ago with Georgiana." "Can we try?"

"Sure."

"Hi Rose!"

"Hey Arial, it worked! This is going to be so fun,"

"Wait one second, Midnight is trying to tell me something."

"Rose, someone or something is coming. Midnight just told me. Come on, we have to get out of here."

"Who is it?"

"I'm don't know, it is some kind of creature. Midnight said that she had never seen anything like it before. I told her and Peppermint to go and hide somewhere."

8 - Captured and Alone

"We have to get out of here!" Said Rose, trying to act as calm as possible.

"Let me talk to midnight and see where the creature went, we might be able to climb out the window and run to the trees so that we can hide there."

"Midnight, where did it go?"

"It's going inside of Pemberley, you have to get out of there!"

"I know. Would it be safe for us to climb the trees?"

"Yes, but it is risky, you have to be careful."

"Ok, just stay where you are until I tell you."

"Rose, we are going to head for the trees over there, we have to run as fast as possible. Follow me as silently as you can, and be careful. Oh, and from now on, everything that you want to tell me should be said mentally, unless you are in trouble like getting chased." Said Ariel.

"Ok."

The girls climbed down the side of the building silently. They quietly tip-toed away, and then once they were out of earshot, broke into a sprint. Ariel had arrived at the trees, thankful they had made it out. Just before she turned around, she heard a scream.

"Get away from me!" Shouted Rose.

When Ariel turned around, she froze. About twenty feet away, the creature stood holding Rose. It seemed like it was looking for Ariel. In a desperate attempt to make sure that Ariel didn't get captured. Rose said something to her, hoping that the creature had not discovered the secrets of Pemberley.

"Ariel, stay where you are. This monster doesn't know where you went, and it may not have even seen you. Don't try to save me."

"I have to Rose, I can't just let you get captured!"

"No!" Rose said in a stern voice a tone that Ariel rarely heard her use.

"Fine, I will go back and get help."

"By time you get home, it will be to late, don't tell anyone, they won't believe you."

"But Rose, I, I..." Ariel started crying.

"Stay strong Ariel. You have to do this, for me. There is no sense in getting both of us captured. "

"Rose..."

"Ariel, we better stop talking, I don't know if this creature can hear us. It's taking me inside Pemberley. Don't leave until I tell you that it's safe."

"I swear that I will do everything in my power to save you."

"I know you will."

Ariel was devastated. She knew that what Rose said was logical. If she tried to save her now, she would end up getting captured to. She also knew that if she told anyone, no one would believe her. Ariel had already climbed up the tree to its highest point, to avoid being seen. So there Ariel sat, hot tears running down her cheeks, with an anger and hate burning inside her towards the creature that was stronger than any hate she had ever felt towards another person before. Alone once again, the desolate snowy plain that she was overlooking reminding her of her loneliness. It looked like there was more to save than just Pemberley now.

9 - Bad News

After hours of crying, waiting, and wondering, Ariel finally heard Rose's familiar voice.

"Ariel, I am being taken away, so it will be safe for you to leave soon.

"I can't just let you get taken away. What am I going to tell mom and dad? They are going to want to know where you are."

"Wait until dad leaves the house to come look for you. The best thing for you to do is get supplies, get Georgiana, and come back to Pemberley."

"I hope your right."

"Jason came up with a plan."

"What?"

"He is going to ride in my pocket, find out where I got taken, and come back to Pemberley to tell you. Either that or he will deliver the message through a chain of animals."

"Stay safe Rose, and remember not to give up."

"Bye Ariel, I ..."

Rose's voice was fading because she was getting taken out of Pemberley, and the magic was wearing off, so Ariel couldn't hear the rest of the sentence.

After an hour of waiting and making sure that the creature was gone, Ariel called for Midnight.

"Midnight, I will need to ride you back, Peppermint, stay here."

"Ok."

Ariel waited until her dad left the house to climb up to her room window. Once inside her room, she silently gathered her things. Most importantly was her cell phone, she would need it to call Georgiana. Once she was back at Pemberley, she called Georgiana.

"Hello?" Said Georgiana.

"Georgiana, Rose got kidnapped by a creature at Pemberley. You need to get some supplies, and meet me at Pemberley tonight."

"Rose knows about Pemberley?"

"I told her today, and then this creature came and it took her away. I'll explain more once you get here.

"Do your parents know?"

"No, they wouldn't get it."

"Will you be able to run to my house?"

"Yes. My parents aren't home, so I can leave without being noticed."

"Good, once you get to my house, at the entrance of the woods Peppermint will be waiting for you. Make sure no one sees you, especially not my dad, he is out looking for Rose and I now."

"Are you sure you're doing the right thing?"

"I am doing the only thing I can."

"Ok, well, I'll be at Pemberley in about forty-five minutes."

"Ok, bye."

"Bye."

Ariel was relieved that Georgiana would soon be there. She desperately needed the companionship and help of her friend.

"Peppermint, go to the entrance of the woods, but try to stick to hiding far off in the bushes to avoid being seen." Said Ariel.

"Ok, it might take me longer than usual though." Said Peppermint.

“That’s ok, be careful.”

Arial and Midnight watched Peppermint trot off into the distance.

“Can you believe it Midnight? I can’t believe that this is happening. It seems like I was just talking to Rose and everything was fine. I should have never told her about Pemberley, and none of this would have happened. It’s all my fault.”

“Don’t say that, you had no idea that this would happen. Who would expect that a creature was doing this to Pemberley? You just thought it was a person, you had no idea how dangerous this would be.”

“So, did the creature just walk in Pemberley?”

“No, It came from nowhere, like out of the ground. I think it can change it’s color and shape to look like anything it wants.”

“This just keeps getting worse. It could be anyone, it could be you.”

“Trust me, I know about things we have talked about, like how you are fast, found Pemberley when you were ten, talked to me for the first time when I was scared.”

“I am going to call Georgiana and tell her not to talk to anyone because she might not know who it is. Midnight, you tell Peppermint.” “Ok.”

“Hello?” Georgiana answered the phone.

“Georgiana, we just found out that this creature can change into anything it wants. Make sure you double check with Peppermint to make sure that it really is Peppermint, and don’t talk to anyone on your way here, not even if they look familiar.”

“Ok. Wait, how do I know that this is really you then?”

“Because I don’t think that the creature can actually speak English.” Said Arial.

“Oh. Well, I am almost to your house, so I will be there soon.”

“Bye Georgiana.”

“Bye.”

This new fact left Arial in a state of constant thinking. She always had to make sure that who she was talking to really was who she thought it was. Even if she did get Rose back, it could just be the creature posing as her. Arial’s life was getting worse and worse.

10 - Yimarix

“Arial.” Georgiana said softly as she tapped Arial on the shoulder.

“Who is it?” Said Arial as she jumped.

“It’s Georigana. Remember, you told me to come to Pemberley.”

For a moment, Arial thought that Rose getting kidnapped had just been a horrible nightmare, but Georgiana brought her thoughts back to reality.

“When did you get here?” Asked Arial, she wanted to know how long she had been sleeping.

“Only a few minutes. It took a little longer than expected, Peppermint and I had to stay in the bushes because we saw your dad. “

“Oh, did he see you?”

“No.”

“Arial! Arial!”

“Where are you Jason?”

“At the steps of Pemberley, I am just coming up to the second floor.”

“Good, that’s where we are. What did you find out? Is Rose ok?”

“Rose isn’t hurt, she’s being held in an underground prison.”

“Where is it at? Did you find out who or what the creature was?”

“The creatures are called Yimarix, there are two more of them. The one who took Rose seems to be the leader. I think they called him Aihe. They don’t speak English. It is some kind of language.”

“So where are they?”

“About six miles away from here. It is very easy to overlook the opening to the underground prison, but I put some little markings of my own up, just In case I forget where it is.”

“Wait, how do I know that this is really Jason?”

“Because I sound like me. The Yimarix can speak to you telepathically, but their voices are still distinct, like yours and mine.”

“Good, at least they can’t change their voice.”

“How can we understand them if they speak a different language?”

“The same way you understand Jason, and all the other animals you talk to. When you communicate telepathically, every person in the conversation hears things in their own language.” Said Arial.

“So, what is our plan for rescuing Rose?” Asked Jason impatiently, “We can’t just wait around all day.”

“I know, I think that it will be best if we get some rest first. We will need to have night shifts to make sure that no one is coming. Georgiana, you can go first, I’ll go second, and Jason, you can go last because you are probably pretty tired from running all this way.”

“Well, I didn’t run the whole way, for a while, I rode on that old wolf who told you all about Pemberley and its secrets, what was his name? Oh yes, it was Retagh. He told me that the creatures where called Yimarix.”

“Did you bring any food Georgiana?” Asked Arial.

“Yes, I have lots. I wasn’t sure how long this was going to take, so I packed some stuff that we can cook later too.”

“Good, I have some matches here, and I brought a pot to cook stuff in.”

After a warm meal, Arial and Jason put out some blankets while Georgiana kept watch. Arial had put Peppermint and Midnight in the lobby area of Pemberley on the first floor. She usually just kept them outside, but under the circumstances, she thought they would be safer inside.

When Georgiana got done with her shift, she woke Arial. Even though it was her turn for rest, she stayed up for half of Arial's shift to talk with her.

"I keep thinking that this is some kind of nightmare. It's so unreal. What if something happens to her? What if she...what if she..."

"Arial, I know it must be hard, but you can't think that way. Nothing has happened to her yet, and hopefully nothing will. You have to stay strong, for yourself, and for Rose."

"That's what Rose said to me. If I had only let her run ahead of me instead of behind me. Why do I do such stupid things? If I hadn't had to tell someone my secret, or if I just would have brought her tomorrow, things wouldn't be this way."

"If you had brought her tomorrow, the same thing could have happened. You can't blame yourself."

"Georgiana?"

"Yeah?"

"Thanks."

"You're welcome." Said Georgiana as she reached over to give Arial a hug.

The whole night went by, and before she knew it, she was awake and eating breakfast. Despite the fact that she had gotten a pretty good rest, she still felt like she had no energy. Arial tried to focus her energy and concentrate on the task at hand, but it seemed almost impossible, so many questions were whirling around in her mind.

11 - Plans

"Why does this have to happen to me?" Said Arial.

She was getting a headache from all of the plan making on rescuing Rose, and felt dizzy. Suddenly everything went black. Arial could hear the distant hum of voices. Was this an attack, or was it all a bad dream?

"Arial."

Arial could see Georgiana's concerned face hovering above her own.

"What? What's happening?" Said Arial.

"You fainted."

"Oh." Arial was disappointed, her hope that this might be a dream was crushed.

"You'll be ok." Said Georgiana, who could detect the disappointment on Arial's face.

"Rose told me to stay strong. Look at me Georgiana. How can I rescue Rose when I have no energy, I feel worn out, and I am fainting and becoming delirious?"

"Don't worry, we can wait until you're better until we rescue Rose. We don't have to do it today."

"No. Every minute that we waste could be Rose's life slipping through our hands."

"Maybe you'll feel better in a little while. You haven't had any lunch yet, so maybe having some food will make you feel better."

"The plans have been finished. Georgiana, Arial, I need your approval."

"Not now Jason, you know Arial doesn't feel good."

"It's ok Jason, I know that time is of the essence, what's your plan?"

"Well, the way I see it, these Yimarix things are nocturnal, that is when in comes out to hunt. We have two options. Try to get in during the day, or try to get in when the Yimarix and are out hunting."

"I think that we have a better chance of freeing Rose when they are hunting, but if we are seen, or if they notice Rose is gone, the first place they will go to is Pemberley. If we go in the day, they will be more lethargic, and it might take them longer to notice that Rose is gone. It is pretty much 50/50, either way, it doesn't matter."

"To me, it's seems smarter to go at night, in the cover of darkness. The only thing is that we have no idea if these creatures have good night vision, a good sense of smell, or both. We need to learn more about the enemy."

"I think night."

"Me to."

"That is what I was thinking."

"Then it's settled, we will go at night."

"Not tonight though. I think that we should start to travel there today, and then once we get there, we should do what Georgiana said, and observe how they act at night. Then, the next night, we can free Rose."

"That sounds good to me. Jason, when you were near the Yimarix, did you see any good places for shelter?" "Yes, it's about a mile from where Rose is being held."

"Jason, you will have to do the spying. You have to slip into the Yimarix's layer. You are the only one small enough. I hate to put you in danger but..."

"It's ok Arial. I know that you would do it if you could. You can count on my help."

12 - Recue or Capture?

“Jason, we have to get this right. If we don’t rescue Rose right away... there may be no chance.”

“I understand. Most likely, if they see me, they will just think I am some normal mouse, but then again, they probably won’t take any chances.”

“So, what happens once we rescue Rose, we are just going to leave and go back to Arial’s house right?”

“That’s what Arial said, right Arial.”

“Arial.”

“What? Oh, sorry, I was lost in thought. Yeah, we will go back to my house with Rose.”

“So this it, I better go.”

“Jason be careful.”

Jason slipped inside the Yimarix’s underground prison without being noticed. He found some boxes to hide behind.

Meanwhile Arial and Georgiana were patiently waiting. Both of them wished they were in there helping Jason, but they knew that that would never work, because they would be seen.

“Arial, I can see Rose. The Yimarix are talking of leaving to go hunt, but leaving one of them behind to keep guard. I think we could beat out one, but, it might be a little risky.”

“We may never get another chance, we have to do this. Georgiana and I will start working out the details of the plan and get back to you.”

“What I think, is that we wait until the Yimarix are far enough away so that if we are noticed while freeing Rose, they will be to far away to get back in time.”

“That’s good. I’ll tell Jason what we are thinking. Oh, but if the Yimarix that is keeping guard notices us, we will have to act fast, and knock him out or something.”

Arial told Jason about the plans, and now all that was left was to wait for the Yimarix to leave. Everyone was waiting patiently, no one dared to move.

Hours, or what seemed like hours to Arial, went by, and the Yimarix still had not left. Maybe they knew something was wrong. Or, maybe they were just planning on hunting later. Finally, Jason told Arial and Georgiana that the Yimarix had left. They waited for a few minutes and started to move.

Jason had already located the position of the key, and was on his way to go get it while Arial and Georgiana slowly and silently made their way in to the desolate layer of the Yimarix.

Arial and Georgiana were now inside, and going where Jason told them to. Jason had not gotten the key yet. It was up to Arial and Georgiana to get it, because it was too heavy for Jason to carry in his mouth. Jason turned the corner, and Arial stood, frozen in fear, because there stood a Yimarix, bigger than the one that took Rose. Arial tried to warn Jason, but it was too late. The Yimarix swooped his huge claws down upon Jason and held him between his menacing hands.

Arial couldn’t do anything but run. Georgiana was running slightly behind Arial now, both of them running faster than what seemed possible. They had reached the exit, and as Arial turned around, she saw Georgiana fall to the ground. Now the Yimarix had Jason and Georgiana. Arial shouted to

Georgiana, but all the Georgiana said back was run.

Arial managed to escape, and called for Midnight and Peppermint. As Arial jumped onto Midnight's back and rode off in the night, hot tears ran down her face. Now, with everyone captured, she would be alone. That feeling was becoming too familiar to Arial.

Midnight stopped running when they had gotten far enough away. Arial got off of Midnight, and tried to take in the reality of what just happened. It seemed impossible to her. A million thoughts went through her head, and she couldn't talk about it to anyone. She realized that she had Midnight, and Peppermint, but they weren't humans, and although they could talk, it wasn't like talking to a human. Arial curled up in a ball and blocked out the comfort of Midnight. Right now, she wanted to be by herself, even though she was trying to get away from that feeling of being alone.

13 - Idea

When Ariel woke up, she felt worse than before. She couldn't move because she was so stiff from being curled up all night. She felt a soft wet nudge on her shoulder. It was Midnight.

"I know I can't compare to a human, but I am here for you." Midnight said gently.

"I'm sorry that I ignored you last night." Ariel looked down, ashamed at how she acted last night.

"It's ok, don't worry about it."

"We have to try again. We can't give up. I know this time, we can save them."

"Ariel, you do realize that...that there might not even be a chance that Rose, Georgiana, and Jason are alive." Midnight looked away.

"I know. I think I might have a plan. If we can find Retagh, maybe he can help us."

"That's a good plan, but it could take forever to find him. This forest is so big. He could be anywhere."

"Then let's start now. We can look around here, and around Pemberley. We might even be able to get some help from the other animals. There's no other way. The Yimarix are too strong for us, and now they will be guarding even more."

"I will try to find some deer to help us. I saw a herd last night, so maybe they can help us."

"Thanks. Midnight, I am going to need to ride you, so you will have to come with me."

And so started a new journey that would lead Ariel to unimaginable places. Little did she know that by starting this, she would discover more than what she ever dreamed of finding out.

After searching around Pemberley, Ariel realized she would have to go deep into the woods: a place she had never been. The deeper into the woods you went, the more mysterious and dangerous it got. Few people had gone deep into the woods, and the few that did never went back.

"Midnight, we are going to have to go deep into the woods. Peppermint?"

"Yeah, I heard you. Do you think that I should stay here, in case Retagh shows up here?"

"That's a good idea. But, make sure you try to keep in contact with us. We might end up needing you."

"Ok, be careful."

So there stood Peppermint, watching Ariel and Midnight riding off, slowly getting smaller and smaller as they went farther. For some reason, Ariel had a bad feeling about this.

After a few hours of riding, Ariel and Midnight reached a place that they had never been. In this part of the forest, things seemed to be duller, and there was a strange sadness in the atmosphere, as if a great tragedy had occurred here. Ariel knew the dangers of this part of the woods, but would stop at nothing to save her sister and friends.

"So, this is it..."

"Well, we better keep going."

"Do you feel a strange sadness coming from this place?"

"Yes, as if something here is hiding a dark secret, or a lot of pain."

"It gives me a weird feeling in my gut...but we can't go back. We have no time to lose."

As Ariel ventured farther and farther in, she felt like someone was watching her.

"I haven't seen Retagh, or any sign of him. Have you?"

"No, but I have been telling a lot of the animals that I have come across to help us look, and we have gotten a lot of helpers."

"What's that, over there?"

"It looks foreign, like it doesn't belong in the woods."

"It's...it's...it's a Yimarix!"

"Don't move or make a sound, it might not see us yet."

After a few minutes of intense silence the Yimarix started to look over. It had obviously spotted Arial and Midnight, and was now going on a rampage. It was ripping trees and bushes out.

"It's seen us, run!"

"Arial, it's gaining on us, we either turn around and fight, or we will get caught."

"We are going to have to fight, but, it's so strong. What are we going to use? I can't possible fight it with my hands..." "There are some rocks over there, maybe you can lift them up and throw them at it."

"I'll try. Remember, if I get stuck, or it catches me, run, we can't afford to lose us both. It would be completely up to you to save Georgiana and Rose."

Midnight gave a firm nod, with a sad yet confident look.

The Yimarix was in throwing distance, so Arial picked up a rock, and threw it with all her might. It looked so heavy, but to Arial's surprise, it barely took any of her strength. It hit the Yimarix, right between the eyes. The Yimarix stalled for a moment, but then kept moving.

Arial kept throwing rocks until she ran out of them, and the Yimarix was still coming at her. Although it was bleeding, and had deep cuts all over, it acted untainted.

"What am I going to have to do to stop this thing?" Arial shouted in frustration.

She saw a heavy looking pointy stick, and tried to spear the Yimarix. It went right through his arm, blood slowly oozing out as the Yimarix tried to pull on it.

"It's now or never." Arial thought to herself.

Arial grabbed a dagger from her back pocket, and stabbed the Yimarix. It gave a look of confusion and crashed to the ground.

"I just...I just killed it. I've never killed anything before. How could I be so...so..." Arial stood there, stunned.

"It was trying to kill you," Midnight came up to Arial, "you only did what was necessary to protect yourself."

"I guess so."

"Now go clean off your dagger. Where did you get that from? I didn't know you had that."

"I found it once, in Pemberley. I kept it there, because I never thought that I would have a use for it. I hid it inside a loose brick that was in the building."

"It's a good thing you brought it, it saved your life."

I never thought that I would have to use it, let alone kill something with it."

“You know, you might have to use it again. You are only trying to save yourself and your friends...there’s nothing wrong with that.”

“Yeah.” Arial looked at her feet, while kicking at sticks.

“It looks like it was made by a fine craftsman, someone who new what he was doing. I’ve never seen one like it.” “It’s probably really old. I wonder if someone who used to live their owned it. It looks so mystical.”

“Let’s keep going. I know that you must be exhausted, but you can ride on my back.”

14 - Cahgio

It had been many hours of searching for Ariel and Midnight, and dusk was approaching. Now Ariel really felt like someone watching her. All day couldn't shake the feeling, even after she killed the Yimarix, who was probably the one watching them.

"Do you think that we should stop, or keep going throughout the night?"

"Well, since the Yimarix like to hunt at night, I think in an hour we should stop, and try to stay somewhere that is covered. If we don't, they might hear us, and come towards where we are. We will have to have one of us keep watch, and then the other, that is the only way to get some rest."

"Good idea. If you see a good place to stop, tell me, so that we can come back."

"Ok."

After about half an hour of searching, Ariel and Midnight had found a nice spot where they could rest. Midnight decided that she would take the first shift.

When Midnight's shift was over, she woke Ariel up, and told her that it was her turn.

"Goodnight Midnight."

"Goodnight."

Ariel didn't like staying up by herself at all. She couldn't stand the feeling. By now, she knew that she was being watched, and decided to see if any animals were up watching her.

"Is anyone up? Any little animals?"

Silence.

"Anyone? Don't be shy."

Still, no one answered, so she decided that she would just give up. Then, she heard a rustling in the leaves. She was going to wake Midnight, but decided to see what it was first.

Suddenly, she saw a person come out from the bushes. He looked just like a human, except his eyes were a vibrant blue, even in the pitch black.

"Hello? Can you hear me? Who are you?"

"Why are you this far into the woods?" The person sounded scared, but tried to act bold.

"It's a long story, but I will tell you if you tell me your name and who you are."

"My name is Cahgio. I have been following you for a long time. The rest I will tell you as soon as I have your promise you will tell no one of me."

"I promise. Am I allowed to tell Midnight, my horse?" Ariel gestured toward where Midnight was.

"Only if you wake her now. That way, I can see her, and judge her personality."

"Ok. Midnight, wake up. Midnight."

"Has someone come? Are the Yimarix here?"

"You know of the Yimarix? You know more than I thought." Cahgio looked shocked.

"Who is that? What is he doing?"

"It's ok Midnight. His name is Cahgio. He is going to tell me about himself, but I thought that I should wake you first."

"Ok. Hello Cahgio. Are you human? I have never seen someone with such vibrant eyes as you."

"No, I am not human. I stay deep in the woods with my people. Few humans venture this far into the woods, and the ones that do never make it out."

"So, if you aren't human, what are you?"

"We call ourselves the Ateshi."

"How many of the Ateshi are there?"

"Few are left, after the tragic event. You still have yet to answer my questions."

"Oh, sorry. Well, my name is Arial. The reason that we are this far into the woods, is because my two friends and my sister got kidnapped by the Yimarix, and we came in search of Retagh, a wise wolf."

"It seems like you know a lot. I know no outsiders who can even speak telepathically."

"I kind of found out by accident, and then I met Retagh, who told me about it, and the only two people who I have told and who also know how to communicate telepathically are my sister and my friend."

"And what about your other friend?"

"He is a mouse. So, do you know Retagh?"

"Yes."

"Do you know where he is? Could you help us look for him?"

"I do not know where he is, but I do know something that might be able to help you."

"Could you tell us?"

"Yes, but mine is a long story too."

15 - The Ateshi

"A few seasons back, the Yimarix came and slaughtered our village. We tried to save as many as possible, but the damage was...astonishing."

"That's horrible. Do you know exactly what the Yimarix are?"

"They are a creature that has lived in these woods for a long time. For some reason, they always have purely evil motives."

"You said that you could help us. How?"

"Well, I can help you look for Retagh, but, he will not be able to do anything for you. Even though he knows a lot, he is old, and his time to die is near. But, on the other hand, my people have lost a lot because of the Yimarix, most of their wives, children, and husbands have died, and they would be happy to aid you in the battle against the Yimarix."

"A battle? We never said...we weren't ever planning on a whole battle, just on freeing our friends."

"That is impossible. Even if you did succeed, you would be hiding in fear for the rest of your lives as the Yimarix relentlessly hunt you down. They would even come out of the forest to search for you." "So what you are saying is that, we battle, or it is hopeless?" Arial started to cry, something that she had been doing a lot lately.

"Yes, but all is not hopeless as you say. My people, the Ateshi, have a strong belief in Christianity, and-"

"You are Christians?" Arial interrupted. "I mean, that isn't bad, I am too, but...how did you know?"

"How did you? Just because you have never heard of us, does not mean that we do not have the same beliefs or customs as you."

"Oh, I guess I never thought of it that way." For some reason, knowing this made Arial feel like she could trust Cahgio and the Ateshi somewhat better than before.

"So, are you planning on a battle then?"

"Midnight, what do you think?"

"Well, he has not given us reason to trust him one hundred percent, he could be working for the Yimarix. Maybe if you show us your people and where you live, we will have more reason to trust you."

"That will be fine. Follow me, and I will show you. But, when we get there, do not act hostile."

"We won't unless we have a reason to."

"Fair enough."

Arial and Midnight followed Cahgio through the night. They were trying to be as silent as possible, and not having much luck. Cahgio, on the other hand was as silent as a wolf. Soon, they reached an area surrounded by thick brush.

"This is it. Follow and do as I do."

Arial and Midnight followed Cahgio down stairs made from dirt, and held and the end be the roots of trees, in a tunnel going down.

"Arial, he could be leading us to our death."

"Do not worry about that. This tunnel just goes down, straight, and then back up. It is the only way to enter our village. That is why the Yimarix killed us. It was a surprise attack, we thought that we would be safe, and that no one knew of the entrance to our peaceful village. We had no..." Cahgio's voice trailed off, "no reason to prepare our weapons, we thought..."

"It's ok. I know how you must feel, I am sorry for your loss."

"Can you speak without communicating telepathically?"

"I can, and so can most of the other Ateshi, but some do not. That is part of the reason why I decided to show myself to you, because as I said, I have never seen a human who knows of this secret."

"So, are you sure that your people will be willing to support us?" asked Midnight.

"I am almost positive. We are almost here now, follow me."

After they had gone up the stairs, they reached a door that was decorated very elaborately. It looked oddly familiar to Arial, and after thinking about it for some time, she realized that her dagger had some of the same designs as the door.

"So that's where it came from." Arial whispered aloud to herself.

Since Cahgio was opening the door, Arial decided that she would question him about the dagger later. She had to know if it came from the Ateshi. Obviously, if it did, that means that the Ateshi had been to Pemberley.

"Maybe they are the ones who built it!" Arial said out loud, she blushed, because she realized that now, all of the Ateshi were staring at her, their bright blue eyes like a sapphire shining in the light.

"Sorry."

"What were you thinking of?"

"Oh, nothing."

Suddenly, a few of the Ateshi came up to Cahgio, and started to converse, and point at Arial and Midnight. After what was obviously explaining, Cahgio turned to Arial and Midnight, and started to introduce them. As Cahgio was talking, Arial realized that it was now morning.

After the commotion died down, Cahgio took Arial and Midnight to a room where they could stay, and have some quiet time to think until the banquet that the Ateshi insisted on holding for the quests.

"The Ateshi seem to be very kind."

"Yes. What were you thinking about earlier when you said something out loud. I couldn't understand it, but I knew that you said something."

"I said maybe they are the ones who built it. I think that the Ateshi may be the ones who built Pemberley. My dagger had the same designs on it as that door that lead to the Ateshi village."

"So, are you going to ask Cahgio about it?"

"Yeah, that's what I was planning on. I haven't told him anything about Pemberley, and it seems to me like the Ateshi would still live there if they had known about it, or made it."

"Maybe, but over the years, humans have come and settled. It could have been to close for comfort for the Ateshi, so maybe they wanted to move farther in the woods so that they would not be discovered."

"That could be it. Well, I am going to go find Cahgio and ask him. I will bring him back here."