

In Rosaline's second tale of adventure, she is swept back in time to the Middle Ages. When a beast from her story merges into real life, she must figure out a way to end the chaos that her spoken words have created.

**What the Storyteller Brings - Book II:
The Silver Eyes of Time**
By Robyn Y. Demby

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What the Storyteller Brings

*Book II:
The Silver Eyes of Time*

Robyn Y. Demby

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1

A black, sleek Mercedes pulled up to the main entrance of a school building built of chocolate-colored bricks. Purple steel doors that guarded the main entrance contrasted against the building's dark, rich color. The woman driving the car rested her perfectly manicured hands on the steering wheel, at ten and two o'clock. With shiny black hair pulled back into a bun and eyes the color of onyx jewels, she looked over at her son. "Remember when I told you last night that making friends sometimes requires a lot of energy?"

Edmund, a tall, lean boy with a Hershey complexion, nodded and pushed his glasses upwards. They weren't sliding down his nose—he just needed something to do with his hands.

"Actually," she said, "it's *too many* friends that require a lot of energy. Your personality is like your father's. He's laid back and perfectly content with a small circle of people in his life. So even if you just make one or two good friends, you'll be just fine here." She smiled, but her eyes briefly flickered with worry. "Now go inside before you're late."

As the Mercedes drove away, Edmund rubbed the lipstick off his cheek, glad that no one was out there to see his mother kiss his face. He faced the school and admired the entrance. Above the purple doors, the words *DEEP CREEK HIGH SCHOOL* formed a half circle over a purple and white hornet that looked as if it were ready to strike. Under it read, *HOME OF THE HORNETS*. Edmund walked inside and stood in the main hallway. It was so big it looked like a road covered with white tiles. To the right was the cafeteria and administrative offices. To the left stretched hallways like avenues off a main street. He looked at the paper he held, then glanced to his left at hallway 100. The words below the numbers

read, *Science*, his favorite subject. He approached hallway 200 titled *Math/Art*. He kept walking until he reached the hallway that held the history classes.

The bell rang. He dropped his notebook. Papers drifted to the floor. He scrambled to pick up his things and took a deep breath. Teenagers began spilling out of classrooms. After a moment, he collected himself and approached a classroom where he saw two chocolate-skinned girls peeking inside and giggling. One had a long, kinky plait that rested over one shoulder and luminous almond-shaped eyes. He tried not to stare. The other girl was tall and slender with long braids. His mouth dropped open. His paper and notebook fell to the floor again.

It was the girl from his dream.

He just stood there, gawking at her. His mind became jumbled. *Wait, what? How?* were the only words his brain could process at that moment. The girls didn't notice him. They were too busy giggling and whispering about someone in the classroom.

As Rosaline and Khara peeked inside the history classroom, they watched the teacher as he sat at his desk and marked homework papers.

Khara's almond-shaped eyes widened. "So that's Silver? From your storytelling?"

Rosaline whispered loudly, "Yes! It's him!"

"This is the bad guy who had merged into real life and was after us?"

"No! This is the good one! Remember the kidnapper with the gray eyes?"

Khara looked confused. Then her eyebrows darted upwards. "Yes! Silver! So is his name the same as it was in your stories?"

"Yes."

"Wow! You've got all your characters merging into real life! And my goodness...that is one beautiful man! How can you focus on history when the teacher looks like that?"

Rosaline rolled her eyes to the ceiling. "It's impossible!"

Mr. Silver looked up and the girls drew back from the door. They pressed their backs against the wall in the hallway, covered their mouths, and giggled.

Edmund was still staring at Rosaline with his mouth hanging open. He blinked, then leaned forward and squinted. He rubbed his eyes, reached down, and swiped his paper and notebook from the floor again. He approached the whispering girls and made his way into class.

“Miss Rosaline Gavalon,” Mr. Silver warned, “get inside this class before the bell rings!”

Khara’s eyes widened. “Do you think he heard what I said?” Rosaline giggled again. Khara looked at the clock in the hallway. “Girl, you’re making me late! See you later!”

Rosaline gazed at Mr. Silver while he rambled on and on about history. Her eyes shifted to the next row of seats where the new guy sat. Although she had only seen him from a distance, she knew he was the kid who had moved into the fancy new home in their neighborhood. He seemed to be the only student who showed any interest in what the teacher was saying. He reached up to twist one of the many short locs at the top of his fade.

“Did you have something to say, Edmund?” Mr. Silver asked.

“No, sir.”

“When you do that, it looks like you’re raising your hand.”

“I’m sorry, sir. I do that when I’m kind of deep in thought. I was really engrossed in what you were saying.”

Mr. Silver’s eyebrows rose in pleasant surprise.

Edmund adjusted his round, gold rimmed glasses. “You talked about how hard people worked back in the Middle Ages just to survive. What are your thoughts on how modern conveniences affect people’s work ethics in today’s society?”

Impressed, Mr. Silver nodded his head. “Very good question. I think it makes people a little more lazy and a little less grateful about things in life. Since I have a cell phone, I don’t want to get up and answer my house phone when it rings.”

“What’s a cell phone?” one of the students asked.

“A mobile phone. It’s like a car phone, but you can carry it everywhere with you.”

Students began exchanging looks and excited chatter.

“Okay, settle down,” Mr. Silver said. “I’d like for you to stand, Edmund, and introduce yourself to the class.”

When Rosaline was able to get a better look at the new kid, her mouth dropped open. He was the guy who made her cut potatoes when they stayed at the cabin in the woods!

Even after Edmund sat down, Rosaline was still gawking at him. Aware of her gaze, he shifted in his seat and kept glancing back at her.

Mr. Silver's eyes settled on her. "And who is your partner for the project, Miss Gavalon? Miss Rosaline Gavalon!"

She dropped her pen. A few chuckles sprinkled throughout the classroom. "Uhhhh, what project?" she asked.

"The history project, or were you listening? I just went over the details and it's due in six weeks."

Rosaline glanced at Edmund again, who grinned, shook his head, then focused his attention on his notes which lay in front of him.

He seems pretty smart, Rosaline thought. Maybe I should ask him to be my partner...

Finally, the welcome sound of the bell shrilled through the air. Relieved, Rosaline quickly gathered her books.

Mr. Silver was still glaring at Rosaline. "I expect you to give me an outline on what you're planning for the project tomorrow," he replied. "Class dismissed."

Rosaline hurried out of class. She tensed when she saw Jimmy Veagin and his friends talking on the opposite side of the hallway. With golden skin and curly, brown hair, she remembered how his cinnamon eyes used to make her smile. Now, they made her cringe with embarrassment. He and his friends paused in conversation. All eyes followed her as she walked by. One of them gave Jimmy a high five. Rosaline's face burned with humiliation.

She heard the new guy's voice behind her. "Rosaline!" She turned to see him offering her a pen. "You dropped this."

"Thanks," she mumbled and grabbed it.

He began walking alongside her. "I'm Edmund."

"Hi, I'm Rosaline."

"So what's up with you and Mr. Silver? He calls everyone by their first names but you. And when he does call you by your first name, he says your entire name with the title." Edmund chuckled. "He screws with you a lot."

She shrugged her shoulders. "I think it bugs him that he can't figure out where he knows me from."

Edmund muttered, "Maybe a dream or something..."

Rosaline froze. "What?"

Edmund stopped and faced her. "Have you ever had a dream about someone before you met them?"

Rosaline glanced at the floor. “Um...no.” She met his eyes. “Why?”

“Please don’t think I’m weird, but I had a dream about you this morning.”

She tried to act surprised. “Really? What were we doing?”

His eyes widened, then he pushed his glasses up. “It wasn’t one of *those* kinds of dreams!” This time, it was his turn to look at the floor. “I shouldn’t have said anything.”

She chuckled. “I’m just messing with you.” They resumed walking.

Rosaline wondered if his dream came from the part of her storytelling when she was cutting potatoes in the woods. She wanted to ask him, but had a feeling it would creep him out. If someone described her own dream to her, she would think they were crazy and stay far away from them. She quickly changed the subject. “So what’s the deal with the history project? I wasn’t listening.”

“Hmph. I noticed. We have to construct an invention that may help us in the future or in space travel.”

“We’re juniors, not college graduates!” Rosaline exclaimed. “Who’s your partner?”

“Don’t have one.”

“You seem pretty smart, and you’re the only one who seems interested in Mr. Silver’s ramblings about the Middle Ages. Everyone else is either looking out the window, doodling, or staring at the clock willing it to move so the bell can hurry up and ring. You’ll make someone a good partner.”

“You think so?” He began twisting a lock on top of his head.

She paused at the doorway of her second-period classroom, hoping he would ask her to be his partner for the project. He didn’t seem to catch the hint. “Well, um—guess I’ll see you tomorrow,” she said.

“Later!” he said.

She watched him walk away into the bustle of students, wishing she had the courage to ask him instead.

The next day at school, Rosaline sat in history class, waiting for Mr. Silver to embarrass her with the history project question. She wrapped one of her braids around her forefinger. She unwrapped it, spiraled it around her finger again, then let out a shaky sigh. Before catching the bus that morning, she had scribbled out a few lines about space travel and

the planet Saturn. She desperately hoped Mr. Silver had forgotten about the outline. Then she could crumble up her feeble effort and toss it in the wastebasket where it belonged.

A classmate in front of her, known as Lipstick Girl, was applying lip gloss in her mirror when someone passed her a note. She handed it over her shoulder to Rosaline. It had her name on it. As Rosaline pulled at the frayed edges of the notebook paper, a sketch of an odd-looking contraption unfolded before her eyes. She glanced around until she caught Edmund's eye.

On the same piece of paper, she wrote, *What is it?* She tapped Lipstick Girl's shoulder and sent it back to him. She watched Edmund read it, then scribble something on the paper again. They passed the note back and forth:

Edmund: *A transporter.*

Rosaline: *What's it for?*

Edmund: *The history project. What else? It's supposed to be something that's going to help us in the future, remember?*

Rosaline: *Your drawing says six feet tall and three feet wide. How are we supposed to get it to school?*

Edmund: *Don't worry about that. Let's just concern ourselves with building it first. We'll get an A+! Let's start on it today.*

Rosaline grinned at the realization that they were officially partners.

After the bell rang and students were leaving class, she stopped at Edmund's desk and they huddled over the drawing. "I know the perfect place we can build this," Rosaline said. "We have this cool shed in our backyard. You can come over after school a few days a week and we can build it in there."

"Sounds like a plan!" Edmund said.

Rosaline watched him gather his books together. "Edmund, I have an apology I need to make to you."

Edmund paused and glanced up at her.

"At first me and my friends used to think that you were stuck-up, but then after you started talking to me, I realized that you seem pretty cool."

He shrugged his shoulders. "I think people mistake shy and quiet people as being stuck-up. That's not really fair."

"I know—sorry..."

He shrugged his shoulders and stood up. "No problem, come on."

As Rosaline followed Edmund out of class, Mr. Silver stopped her. "Miss Gavalon, where is your outline?" he asked.

She and Edmund exchanged looks. "I'll catch up with you later," he said. He waved and left class.

Rosaline shifted from one foot to the other. "Well, um, I made an outline, but then changed my mind and decided to do my history project on something else." She handed him the drawing Edmund had made. "See, Edmund decided to be my partner, so he drew a transporter."

Mr. Silver studied the drawing, then looked up at her. "Is this the note you were passing around class?"

Whoa. She wondered how grownups did that. "Yes, sir."

"I asked for an outline."

"Um, this is what I had at first." She slowly handed him the outline she had made on space travel.

He glanced up at her again. "This isn't typed."

"You didn't tell me it was supposed to be typed, sir. Plus, I don't have a typewriter at home."

"The typing classroom remains open an hour after school is out. Also, the public library has typewriters."

She knew that.

"The next time I ask you to make an outline for me, I want it typed. And one more thing." He held the paper in front of his face and leaned back in his chair. "Tell me what else is wrong with this."

Rosaline cringed when she noticed a stain at the top of the paper. "I was kind of eating Cheese Doodles earlier?"

"Is that an answer or a question?"

"It's—"

"Your mother feeds you Cheese Doodles for breakfast?"

"No. I—"

He tossed her outline aside and handed her Edmund's drawing. "Never mind."

"Sir, can I ask you a question?" There was something about the slight twist at the corner of his mouth that made her feel as if questioning him at this point was beginning to waste his time. "Was I the only one required to make an outline?"

"Yes," he said.

"Can I ask why?"

"No," he replied and focused his attention on a stack of papers in front of him; his nonverbal way of letting her know that the conversation was over.

Tuesday arrived and Rosaline was trudging down the street, her body tense from the wintry air. Although the days had already begun to lengthen, the February cold remained unfriendly. The air bit harshly and chilled Rosaline's face. Her breath escaped her as cloudy puffs.

Instead of storytelling hour every Tuesday night in her room, Rosaline had begun visiting Cherrelle's mother on that night instead. She still felt the family's pain from what happened to her friend. Making it up the sidewalk to the Kaigens' front door, she tucked Cherrelle's pendant watch under her thick sweater. She inhaled sharply at the clash of its coldness against her skin. She was always afraid that Cherrelle's mother would take it away from her if she saw it. Rosaline rang the doorbell.

Mrs. Kaigen invited her into their small den where Rosaline seated herself on Mr. Kaigen's recliner in front of the TV. Since Mrs. Kaigen had grown accustomed to her Tuesday evening visits, she had a bowl of Cheese Doodles and a glass of ginger ale waiting on the small table beside the recliner. This small act of kindness sent a pang of guilt through Rosaline. She wondered how Mrs. Kaigen would treat her if she knew that her storytelling was the reason Cherrelle had been shot.

"So, how're you doing today?" Rosaline asked, already knowing the answer.

"As well as I can be." Mrs. Kaigen sat on the couch adjacent to where Rosaline was seated.

Rosaline chuckled when she saw knitting needles and a ball of yarn on the couch beside Mrs. Kaigen. "I thought only grandmothers knit," she said.

"It's relaxing," Mrs. Kaigen said. "I just started." She looked sharply at Rosaline. "Are you calling me old?"

Rosaline laughed. "What are you making?" Mrs. Kaigen didn't answer, just glanced at the telephone.

Rosaline noticed something odd about Mrs. Kaigen that evening. She always felt a sadness about her since Cherrelle's death, but today it was something different. Was it her imagination, or did her hands seem unsteady when she reached for her knitting? Mrs. Kaigen stiffened when the phone rang.

"I'll get it," Rosaline offered as she began to rise from her seat.

"No!" Mrs. Kaigen snapped. The air froze. They both waited for the phone to ring again.

Rosaline stared at her in confusion. “You okay?”

“I’m sorry.” The smile she gave Rosaline didn’t reach her eyes. “I’m just tired.” She started knitting with abrupt strokes. “Soooo, how’s your mother? I haven’t talked to her in a while. Is she doing well?”

“Yes. She said to give you this.” Rosaline rose out of her chair. Pulling a recipe for Jamaican jerk chicken out of her pocket, she handed the folded paper to her. “It’s a lot of ingredients. Just be careful about the spices. What’s hot for Jamaicans can be blazing hot for us.”

Rosaline excused herself to go to the bathroom. In the hallway, she passed a telephone table that held an antique rotary phone. She admired how the fancy copper receiver and dial flowed with the color of the wood. The phone was so pretty and shiny, she wondered if it was there just for decoration.

As she washed her hands in the bathroom, she decided she should leave, thinking that maybe Mrs. Kaigen just wasn’t up for company. She let the warm water rush over her hands. She heard the phone ring again. This time it continued. She hurriedly dried her hands, then quickly stole down the hallway. The antique phone was actually working. Surprised, Rosaline answered it. Mrs. Kaigen was using the phone in the kitchen, so Rosaline heard her voice on the other end. Then she heard a male voice that wasn’t Mr. Kaigen’s. Rosaline kept the receiver pressed to her ear.

“So do you have the money?” the voice on the other end asked.

Mrs. Kaigen’s response came slowly, as if she feared an unpleasant reaction to her answer: “No.”

“We gave you six months. We’ll not wait any longer. Is your daughter of age?”

“My daughter passed away.”

“It takes a sick woman to lie and say that her daughter died. I’m sending someone over very soon. Don’t bother to hide.” *Click.*

Rosaline’s mouth dropped open. Was Mrs. Kaigen in some kind of trouble?

2

The garage in Rosaline's backyard was really a shed that looked older than the house. Her father had done a lot to improve the appearance of the aged home, yet he didn't want to tear down the shed. He always said he liked its seasoned look. To preserve that look, he refused to paint it, leaving it weathered and chipped. Her mother hated it, but Rosaline shared her father's love for it.

From outside of the shed that evening, light peeped through the cracks of a door that barely hung on its hinges. It made curious drivers who were passing by wonder what was going on in there.

Inside, there was a riding lawnmower, a push mower that died years ago, yard tools, boxes, two old television sets, and piles of other junk that the family didn't need but wasn't ready to part with yet. Everything was pushed against the walls so that mountains of junk piled majestically around Edmund and Rosaline. Edmund hammered the last board securely in place. He stepped back as he and Rosaline admired their work: made of two by four planks of pine wood, the wooden box stood six feet tall and three feet wide. A piece of wall paneling served as the door, and a cabinet handle was used as the door knob. Three matching black hinges were secured on the opposite side of the door.

"It looks like an outhouse," Rosaline said.

Edmund chuckled. "Next comes the hard part. My father is helping me with the spherical light speed propellers."

"What's that?"

"They're made of steel. They're almost the size of golf balls and they shoot towards each other."

Rosaline's eyebrows rose in excitement. "So when they collide they explode?"

"No, they pass each other and create a field that'll knock whatever is in the machine into another place."

"What if these objects hit you?" Rosaline asked.

He frowned. "Let's not think about that right now."

The door to the shed creaked loudly, startling them. Mrs. Gavalon poked her head past the door. "You two need to wrap it up," she said. "It's getting late."

"Sorry, Mrs. Gavalon." Edmund looked at the back of his wrist. "I need to get a watch."

"Good idea. And be safe on the way home," she said. Her face disappeared back through the doorway.

"Yes, ma'am." Edmund started putting the tools away. "We'll also need light speed indicators that will measure the speed of light. See, there's also a speed that goes two times faster than light, three times faster, and so on. I forgot what you call it. My dad knows."

"So you're saying that two objects moving three times faster than the speed of light will take something farther away than objects moving towards each other at two times the speed of light?"

"Yep."

"So if I wanted to go to another country, I could be there within seconds?"

"Yep."

"Wow. When did you come up with all this?"

"My dad and I began brainstorming as soon as Mr. Silver told us about this project."

Rosaline chuckled. "While everyone else is groaning about it, you get wildly excited and run home to tell your dad?"

Edmund grinned. "My mom says we're cloned." He carefully made his way through the narrow path they had cleared earlier when making room for their project. He stepped on a yellow squeaky duck, then stopped at the door of the shed and turned. "Same time, same place tomorrow?"

"Sounds like a plan," Rosaline said. She watched him close the door behind him.

After Edmund left, Rosaline fiddled around with the transporter. The wood paneling from the door of the contraption was from a project her dad had never finished. Images of her and Cherrelle drawing their names on it when they were kids seeped into her mind. She opened the door and there, in the bottom corner, was scribbled, "*Cherrelle was here.*" Beside her name was a happy face Rosaline had drawn. *How old were we when we did that?* Rosaline wondered. She smiled, then her eyes glistened with tears. Even if she and Edmund became close, she wondered if she could ever tell him she had killed her friend.

She heard a noise behind her and swung around. "Who's there? Edmund? Is that you?"

Jimmy appeared in the doorway. Rosaline stiffened. "Your mom said I could find you back here," he said.

Rosaline seriously doubted that.

He walked inside the shed and ventured towards the transporter. "What do you have here?" He reached for the door.

"Don't," Rosaline said.

"Scared I'll mess up your little history project?" He opened the door and peered inside. "I don't think you two can pop up in the middle of China within five seconds. That's if you expect this thing to work."

"How long have you been standing out there?" Rosaline asked him.

"Oh, long enough." Jimmy gazed at her and reached for her hair. She drew back, only for him to come closer. "What's the matter?" he asked. "You don't like me anymore?"

She glanced at his light brown eyes, relieved that his looks didn't have a zombie-like effect on her anymore. "Jimmy, I just don't think you should be coming out here."

"Why? I might mess up what you and your little boyfriend have going on? You think you're going to get an A+ hanging out with that little punk? I doubt it. Especially if this piece of junk has a little mishap, like if the door breaks off—you know, by accident."

Rosaline gasped when Jimmy slammed the door, causing the wooden structure to tremble. "Or worse," he said.

As Jimmy left, Rosaline stood there with her mouth hanging open. She carefully moved the door back and forth to see if he had caused any damage.

The next day, Rosaline and Edmund were in the shed again, gazing at the transporter. Scattered around it were pieces of metal, wood, springs from a Slinky, and a disassembled clock. The space heater was struggling in its attempt to keep them warm, but the pitifully insulated shed couldn't do much to keep the heat in. Rosaline blew warm breath into her cupped hands. Just like she had done the previous night, Edmund tested the door of the transporter to make sure there was no damage.

"Think he'll come back?" she asked him.

"He might, so don't stay out here after I leave, okay?"

"What about the transporter?"

"Maybe we can get a lock for the shed door."

Rosaline slid her cold hands into the pockets of her jacket. "He's jealous."

Edmund looked incredulous. "Jimmy? Jealous? No way. He seems so...cool. So confident."

"He's jealous of us because we're about to do something great."

Edmund looked thoughtful for a moment, then he grinned.

"Just imagine if you were the famous inventor of The Edmund Transporter." She stepped on top of an upside-down wooden box.

"What are you doing?" He came towards her. "Get down from there. You'll fall!"

"You perfected this machine so you could show up at random places where there was trouble and save the day."

Edmund looked thoughtful again. "So my machine would predict trouble?"

Rosaline's eyes brightened. "Yeah! Wouldn't that be cool?"

He rolled his eyes to the ceiling. "Yeah, right."

"Listen," she began. For dramatic effect, she raised her hands in the air, palms outwards, as if she were gesturing towards the stars. "It would be like this..."

It was a chaotic and stormy night. Downstairs in the basement, a famous inventor was kneeling inside The Edmund Transporter, tinkering with his latest invention. He paused and looked up when he heard a whirring noise; similar to the sound of a remote-controlled toy truck moving across the floor. The noise stopped. He shrugged his shoulders and continued working. Then he heard it again. This time, he stood to his feet and gazed around him. Suddenly, light speed propellers broke free from their stations and began whizzing around the inventor's head. Like planets

in the solar system, they moved in an orbital motion around him, faster and faster, leaving circular trails of light in their paths. The floor disappeared from beneath his feet. He began to spiral into darkness. Then there was an explosion of light. He landed with his back slamming against the solid ground. It snatched his breath away. Afraid to move, he squeezed his eyes shut.

The sound of a rushing river reached his ears. He opened his eyes and sat up to see evergreen trees with slits of sunlight filtering through their branches. Beyond the trees was a river. He looked down to see light speed propellers buzzing in the grass. He picked one up. "Ouch!" He dropped it. He slowly stood to his feet and brushed himself off, then walked through the trees towards the edge of a wide, chaotic river. Glassy, blue water spilled over smooth, shiny boulders, turning frothy as the river hurried along through the forest.

He heard a voice in the distance: "Help!"

Edmund frowned. He looked upriver. His eyes widened. He saw a man fighting the current. The water carried him along against his will. He disappeared under the water, then bobbed to the surface again. In his panicked state of mind, he grabbed at the water around him. The river continued to toss him, carelessly sweeping him closer towards Edmund. "Help!" The man yelled again.

Edmund searched around him. He spotted a tree branch lying at the edge of the trees. He rushed towards it, then dragged it to the water. Holding onto the heavy tree limb, he ran alongside the river's edge, but tripped over the limb and fell on a large rock. He smashed his ribs against the hard surface and grunted in pain. The tree branch snapped and suddenly, everything was blurry. Edmund instinctively reached for his eyes. His glasses were gone. In a panic, he looked around him, then started patting at the thin layer of pebbles under the shallow water at the river's edge. He moved the broken tree branch to the side and there, underneath it, were his glasses. They were shattered. Edmund's heart sank. Holding his side, he slowly stood to his feet. Boy oh boy, his ribs hurt.

"Help!" the man screamed again.

Edmund looked up and saw a blurry form in the distance. He squinted and leaned forward. It looked as if the man was holding onto a boulder. Edmund grimaced, reached for half of the limb, and waded farther into the water. The man began slipping away from the boulder. "Ay!" Edmund yelled, offering the branch to him, "let go and grab this!"

The man was hesitant at first, but let go. He reached for the branch and held on.

Ignoring the stabbing pain in his ribs, Edmund pulled and pulled until the man was able to gain footing and stand in the water. Edmund waded farther in and grabbed his arm, leading him to the river's shallow edge. Coughing, the man collapsed onto the sand and small pebbles. When he sat up, he pushed wet, shoulder-length black hair away from his face. He tried to catch his breath. Silver eyes met Edmund's. "You saved my life," the man exclaimed.

Edmund raised his eyebrows when the man's face came into focus. "Wow, I can see..."

Edmund could only stare at Rosaline in amazement. He swallowed, then pushed his glasses closer to his eyes. "You sure did make up a heck of a story. I'm a hero. Saving lives." He grinned. "And not only am I saving lives, I can see without my glasses!"

"Yep," Rosaline said. "I figured since you saved the guy's life, you at least deserve perfect vision."

He laughed, then took off his glasses and squinted. "Too bad your story didn't become real. I still can't see. Now get off that wooden box before you break an arm or something." He reached out to her and helped her back down to the floor.

Rosaline's face brightened. "Since we've installed the spherical light speed indicators," she said, "let's see if it really works. Let's put something in it—just for the fun of it."

Edmund took off his new Rolex and pulled open the wooden door, then placed it on the floor of the machine. He quickly backed away and let the door close.

As they stood side by side gazing at the contraption, Rosaline asked, "How long will it take?"

"About five to ten minutes."

As they waited, Rosaline twisted her braid around her finger, then unraveled it.

Edmund watched her. "How long does it take to braid your hair like that?" he asked.

"About six hours."

"Wow! I couldn't sit still for that long, unless I'm reading a book."

Rosaline looked skeptical. "You can sit and read a book for six hours?"

"Of course I take bathroom breaks and eat, but yeah, I can read a book practically all day until I finish it. I get obsessed with it and hate being interrupted."

"Wow. That's a lot of focus." She swooped a handful of braids behind her shoulder.

"Is that your real hair?"

Rosaline frowned. "That's a rude question. You're not supposed to ask a girl that."

He grabbed one of her braids and tugged at it.

"Stop!" She giggled and slapped his hand away, only for him to grab at another braid. She tried to get away from him, but they both tumbled over a stack of cardboard boxes and fell to the floor, laughing. Suddenly, Edmund's smile disappeared. He looked alarmed.

"What's wrong?" Rosaline asked him. "Are you hurt?"

"Do you sense that?" he whispered. "The air feels alive."

"Alive?"

"It's like that awareness you get when you're alone in a room and you feel another presence."

"Now you're being weird," Rosaline said. "And why are you whispering?"

They both got up and brushed themselves off. The contraption began trembling. The two froze. When they looked up, they saw that it was shaking. With widened eyes, they gawked at each other, then back at the machine. The shaking became more violent until an explosion of light pierced through the cracks of the wood. The shaking stopped. They both gazed at each other, as if unsure of what to do next. Edmund raced over to the machine and opened the door. "It's gone!"

Rosaline rushed to his side. The watch had vanished.

Rosaline was in her bedroom, lying across her bed and doing her homework when she heard her father's voice drifting upstairs: "How often does a nice Rolex watch just pop up at your house? I'm keeping it."

Then she heard her mother's voice: "Just let me ask her friends."

"She has no friends."

"There's Khara and there's Edmund."

"Khara doesn't count," he said. "She's her cousin. Relatives can't be friends."

“Yes they can.”

“Well, there’s no way it’s Khara’s. My brother can’t afford to buy her a Rolex. And even if he could, why would anyone buy a teenager a watch this expensive? They’ll lose it, so it can’t be Edmund’s either.”

“The insurance man was here...” her mother said.

“Look, Lucy. If it was left in my house, then it’s mine!”

“Gimme that!” her mother demanded. Rosaline heard her mother’s footsteps as she ascended the stairs. She scrambled to a sitting position on her bed and frowned. *A Rolex? It can’t be...*

Her mother appeared in the doorway. “Rosaline, do you know where this came from?” Edmund’s watch was in her hand.

Rosaline’s eyes widened. “Ma! Where’d you get that?”

“I found it about a month ago just lying on the table. Edmund had told me the other day he needed to get a watch, so it can’t be his.”

“Yes, it’s his. It’s new.” Rosaline got up and took it, staring at it in wonder. “He just got it Saturday.”

This time, it was her mother’s turn to frown. “How did he get it Saturday when I found it a month ago?”

“Hmph,” Rosaline shrugged her shoulders. “Saturday a month ago?”

Her mother was still frowning. “Is that a question or an answer? Why do you do that?” She narrowed her eyes at Rosaline, then looked confused again. She opened her mouth to say something, but instead, shook her head and walked away.

Rosaline was spellbound. She ran out of the house, across the backyard, and rushed into the shed.

And there it was: the tall, rectangular-shaped machine put together by nails and four by four plywood. She glanced down at Edmund’s watch in her hand, then she looked up at the machine again. “Wow,” she said. “But how did mom find it a month ago?” She approached the machine slowly. It seemed to loom over her. She had never bothered with it without Edmund being there, so her eyes darted here and there as if she were about to do something mischievous. Inside, Edmund had placed two metal spherical balls on opposite sides of the machine. She stepped in to take a closer look. It was almost large enough to fit two people. The door swung shut behind her. Rosaline was immediately enveloped in darkness. Startled, she took a step back. Her hand hit something. An object whizzed by her head and made a whirring noise. She felt a breeze, like a hornet had flown past her ear. She felt the same sensation on the other side of her head. Going in opposite directions, trails of blue light

followed the sounds. Like the tails of shooting stars, they dissolved so quickly, she wondered if it was her imagination. The blue trails began a circular motion around her. Her body tingled.

An explosion of light blinded her. Rosaline squeezed her eyes shut. Suddenly, the ground was against her back. The sudden sensation pushed the air out of her lungs. Did she fall? She opened her mouth and gulped in air. Scratchy grass irritated her skin and a cool breeze played over her face. Her mind was spinning. Or was it her head? Or was her mind spinning out of her head?

Hoping to make the whirling sensation stop, Rosaline inhaled deeply and let her breath out slowly. She touched her face. Her eyes fluttered open to see a kaleidoscope of colors shifting above her. The hues mingled and began to fade into a soft blue, until an expanse of clear sky stretched forever above her. *What am I doing outside of the shed?* She sat up with trembling arms that were barely able to support her, then looked down to see two light speed propellers buzzing on the ground. She picked up one and it shocked her. "Ouch!" she exclaimed and dropped it.

A field of wandering green grass and countless wildflowers surrounded her. "It's springtime," she said in wonderment. "And this isn't my backyard."

She heard rumbling in the distance and shakily stood to her feet. Then someone grabbed her. She turned to see Edmund and the garage. Suddenly, she felt as if she were falling. Edmund's grip tightened on her arm. She screeched and snatched her arm free, making feeble attempts at grabbing the air around her.

Edmund's voice sounded as if it were coming from a distance: "Rosaline!" She couldn't see him, but she felt him grab her again and he began pulling her. As if she were watching the meadow through a zoom lens, the beautiful scene began to shrink away and disappear. She spun around and clutched at Edmund's jacket; the only thing within reach that might stop her from falling.

"What's the matter with you?" he yelled, his voice sounding much closer. "What are you doing?"

Breathing hard, her eyes focused on Edmund. She looked around her at the junk in the garage: the riding lawnmower, the dusty old push mower, her sister's bike with the rusty training wheels. Behind her, the machine stood tall and silent, as if nothing had happened. "I-I don't know..."

"I'll tell you what happened. You were disappearing! Like an image, you kept flickering like you were about to vanish! You were messing around with this thing and could have disappeared like my watch did. If I didn't get here in time, you might have been gone forever. What if this machine just makes things disappear and that's it? I wouldn't have had any way of getting you back!" He started pacing. "This is not built for humans, Rosaline." He stopped and glared at her. "What were you thinking?"

"I was just curious." She folded her arms and held them tightly against her body.

"That was crazy, Rosaline! One of those spheres could have gone right through your head like a bullet!"

"But look at what my mom found." She pulled his watch from her pocket and handed it to him.

"Huh?"

"She said she found it a month ago."

"A month ago?" he repeated. "How did she find it a month ago when I..." His voice trailed off. His mouth went lax. He gazed at her, then at the watch. He sat down on an upside-down wooden box and rested his elbows on his knees. "What's going on here?" he asked in wonderment.

"I don't know. You're the one who came up with this whole idea." She sat down beside him. "I thought you and your dad knew what you were doing."

"Maybe your mom got confused. I don't believe she found this a month ago." He began twisting a lock at the top of his head. Finally, he turned to face her. "Look Rosaline: my watch came back, but what if you hadn't? If I wasn't able to pull you out of there, how would I have explained your disappearance to your mother?" The fear was still in his eyes. "You must swear to me that you will *not tell* anyone about this until we figure this out."

"It's wrong to swear—"

"Rosaline?"

"Okay! I promise!"

"Okay." The silence stretched between them as they both gazed at the machine. She glanced at him. "Not even Khara?"

"Not even Khara."

"But Ed, this is huge! This thing works!"

He grinned. "It does, doesn't it? He jumped to his feet and shoved his fist in the air. "Yes!"

Rosaline hopped up and began dancing. They both began chanting, "It works! It works!" Breathless, Rosaline plopped back down on the wooden crate. She watched Edmund head towards the machine and close the door.

"Look, Rosaline, I gotta go, so make me another promise and tell me you won't mess with this thing unless I'm here, okay?"

She sighed loudly. "Okay."

"Okay what?"

"I promise I won't touch the machine unless you're here."

He headed towards the entrance of the shed. "I won't be able to sleep tonight."

She smiled. "Me neither."

He turned before reaching the shed door. "So are you going to finish that story you had started?"

Her smile faded. She looked down at her hands in her lap. "I don't know if that's a good idea."

"Why not? It'll be fun! You could help me save lives. You could be Rosaline, Super Shero, Protector of the Universe!"

Rosaline laughed uneasily. "It's late, Edmund. You better get out of here before my mom turns into a Super Shero and comes after you. You'll be amazed at what she can do with a butter knife."

Before closing the door behind him, he turned and saluted her. "Goodbye Rosaline, Protector of the Universe! Until we meet again!"

3

It was an overcast and bone chilling day. As Rosaline rode the bus home, she looked out the window at the naked trees along the road. Even the trees looked cold. She thought about the secret Edmund made her keep. She was bursting at the seams to tell everyone and didn't know how much longer she could suffer in silence. How could he expect her to keep this secret from Khara? Her own cousin? She frowned. And why didn't she see Edmund in school that day?

As the bus approached her house, she saw a shiny red Mustang parked in her driveway. She stepped out of the school bus and clutched the front of her coat closed. The driver's door of the car was open. She was annoyed to see that it was Jimmy. Again. His left foot rested on the ground as he sorted through some cassette tapes. As she walked up her gravel driveway, his car radio blasted rap music.

"What do you want?" she asked.

"I came to give you a ride in my new car."

"No thanks. I've been on enough rides with you already."

She went inside the house and faithfully performed her after school ritual by heading straight for the kitchen. She opened the refrigerator door and frowned at a cluster of old discolored broccoli that rested beside last night's leftovers. "Mom! Did I get any mail?" she yelled.

"No mail, just me," said a deep voice behind her.

Startled, she swung around to see Jimmy. "What are you doing in my house?" she demanded.

"Just because you live in the boonies doesn't mean you can go around leaving doors unlocked. I could have been a psycho. And why are you getting mail? You're only sixteen."

"I'm asking you again, Jimmy. What are you doing in my house?" She slammed the refrigerator door shut, wondering where her mother was.

"Visiting. What does it look like? Duh?"

"You've got some nerve coming over here. Especially after you've been spreading those lies about me in school."

"What lies?" Light brown eyes widened in innocence. "We did sleep together."

Rosaline was getting tired of the constant reminders of the shame and regret at sleeping with a guy just because his looks made her knees feel like jelly. Instead of gazing into his eyes like she used to do, she rolled her own eyes at the ceiling. "I'm referring to the lies about me being all heartbroken over you—saying I've been begging for you to come back after you dumped me."

He shrugged his shoulders. "I just told people we used to talk."

"Oh, and people were being crude for no reason?" she asked. "So while you were grabbing your crotch around a bunch of guys and giving them details of us in bed in the most vulgar ways, did you mention that *I* was the one who dumped *you*?" She tried to move past him, but he blocked her path. "And I don't remember blasting your phone off the hook afterwards," she continued. "I can't believe I wasted my virginity on a guy who's not only an asshole but can't even last two minutes in bed. Now get out of my house—"

A crimson glow changed his honey-colored complexion. He roughly grabbed both her arms. His fingers tightened painfully around them. "Look, don't make me slap you around like I did Edmund."

Rosaline struggled. "Let me go!"

"My homies, Scrap and Brian, almost made him cry."

She stopped struggling. "What are you talking about?"

Jimmy let Rosaline go as abruptly as he had grabbed her. He walked out of the kitchen.

She rubbed her arms, then waited until she heard the front door slam. She rushed towards it and locked the door behind him. Peeping through the front room curtains, she watched his new car spin out of her driveway and screech down the road. She grabbed her coat and hurried out of the house.

Rosaline stood on the porch at Edmund's house. As she rang the doorbell, she couldn't help but notice how his place was much different than her own. He was an only child and his father was a physicist, so they had a big, nice, brick home with fancy oak doors. Decorative glass with brass camming added class to the already grand entrance.

A woman answered the door. It was Edmund's mother: she was tall, slender, and attractive. Mrs. Rogers was a college professor and had a stoic look about her. She never smiled, and today her full lips were turned downwards. "Edmund isn't accepting any company today," she said before Rosaline could get any words out of her mouth.

"Mrs. Rogers, please," Rosaline begged. "I just need to talk to him for a minute. I promise I won't stay for long."

Mrs. Rogers glared at Rosaline for a moment, then slowly opened the door wider for her to come in. "Ten minutes," she said tersely.

Rosaline followed her upstairs. When Mrs. Rogers pushed open Edmund's bedroom door, they found him lying on his bed and staring at the ceiling. Broken glasses were on his night table. He turned his head in their direction and squinted. "Ma, you don't have to keep checking on me. It's not like I'm going to die or something."

"It's Rosaline," said Mrs. Rogers; then she turned and left.

Rosaline walked into the room and sat on the side of his bed. "Your mom doesn't like me, does she?"

He turned his back to her and lay on his side. "You need to have a talk with Jimmy Veagin."

"What happened?"

"Unbelievable. I was walking across the railroad tracks when he and his friends drove by and asked me if I hit that yet."

Rosaline frowned. "Hit what?"

He sighed loudly. "Sex, Rosaline. 'Hit that' means having sex with a girl."

"What? He *said* that?"

"Yep. I told them to step off and mind their business. They pulled to the side of the road, got out of the car, and Jimmy pushed me to the ground. Then he stepped on my glasses. He crunched them into the ground like he was trying to squish a bug. Then I got up and started swinging until my fist connected to someone's face."

"What?" Rosaline couldn't picture her bookworm friend punching someone. "You hit one of them? Was it Jimmy?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "I couldn't tell, but they knocked me to the ground again and his other friend kicked me in the ribs. I would have gotten the crap beat out of me if this guy who was driving by hadn't stopped them."

"Are you okay?"

He turned and faced her. "My ribs hurt and I'm pissed. Couldn't you have warned me that you have a crazy boyfriend?"

"He isn't my boyfriend. We *used* to talk."

"Well, you must have done more than talk by the way he was acting."

She wanted to deny it, yet his accusing eyes made her feel very tiny; so instead, her eyes dropped to her hands in her lap. She suddenly had this visual of Mrs. Rogers shaking her finger down at her. She thought about the things Jimmy was probably telling people, and felt as if everyone at school was looking down on her.

Edmund sat upright and faced her. "You slept with him? I just didn't think—" his voice trailed off into an awkward silence.

"You just didn't think I was that type of girl? I knew you would look at me differently if you knew."

"No, it's not that." He shifted. "Maybe you should have gotten to know him better first. Then you would have realized he was a jerk and you wouldn't have wasted your time."

"Yeah, that pesky thing called waiting can save a girl a lot of heartache and embarrassment."

"Look," Edmund said, "the best thing we can both do is stay out of his way and hope he doesn't start acting psycho again."

Rosaline stared at her hands as her face burned. She had an all-consuming desire to get back at Jimmy Veagin. A glimmer of hope inside made her wonder: if he did this to Edmund, maybe he wouldn't bother them anymore?

Rosaline and Edmund were in the shed again one day. Rosaline hugged herself. "I'm so tired of being cold. If only we lived in the Bahamas, then life would be perfect. We wouldn't even have to worry about Jimmy Veagin anymore. Maybe we can hire someone to beat the crap out of him."

"That's an excellent idea," Edmund said.

“Speaking of the Bahamas, we can live anywhere in the world. Edmund, we invented something we can make millions and billions from, yet you don’t want anyone to know about it.”

“That’s true, but we have to be careful. Imagine something like this getting into the wrong hands,” he said. “Criminals could use this to get from the police. People could make other people disappear. To be honest,” he chuckled, “I could use this on people I don’t like, but where would they reappear? In someone else’s house? In the middle of the interstate where they would cause a twenty-car pileup?” He faced the machine and rubbed his chin. “See, that’s what I need to work on...”

Rosaline’s eyes held an anxious glitter as Edmund tinkered with the machine. She couldn’t let something like this remain only a history project. She decided that after they got their project graded, she was going to make a few phone calls. First the television stations, then the newspapers, then someone would offer them big money and she could see her family living in a grand house like Ed’s, or maybe even bigger!

“Okay, that should do it,” Edmund said. He turned to her and sat down. “Now let’s do some more storytelling.”

“I don’t know, Edmund. You got kind of banged up when I made up the whole river hero story. You fell over that rock and lost your glasses. Then you got into that fight with Jimmy and guess what?”

He scoffed. “Are you trying to tell me that your story is the reason I got beat up?”

“Well...yeah.”

“If you believe that, then you have truly lost it, Rosaline. That was just a coincidence. If your story is what caused me to get hurt in real life, why do my knuckles hurt now? I didn’t bang up my knuckles in the story.”

“Maybe because real life isn’t an exact mirror image of my stories.”

“How about the big things that happen in your story? If I was a hero in the story, don’t you think I would have saved someone from drowning in real life too?”

She shrugged her shoulders. “Maybe you will. Maybe it’ll still happen—like tomorrow, or next week, maybe even next year. Next summer, you might become a life guard at the YMCA and save somebody. Or like I was saying, maybe every single thing that happens in the story doesn’t merge into real life. That’s what makes things in my stories so unpredictable. That’s what makes it so scary. This is all pretty new to me, Edmund.”

"If stuff really merges from your stories to real life, which I'll never believe, then practice makes perfect. If you tell your stories enough times, you can control how it affects real life."

"From what I've seen so far, mostly the bad stuff merges into real life, so practicing is going to hurt even more people."

"Roz, you're being paranoid."

"Maybe after I explain something to you, you'll believe me."

"Nope." He stood up. "I don't want to hear your excuses. You're being negative, and you suck. I'm taking my machine back."

"Hold on, Edmund! Let's not get drastic. Okay! I'll tell you a little more." She sighed. "I can say I was messing around in the machine one day when you weren't here. Like I did the other day when you had to pull me out." She looked down at her hands.

"Okay," he said. "Go on..."

She chewed the side of her bottom lip and looked up at him again. "But what if you didn't show up to pull me out in time and..."

Bang! The deafening sound invaded my senses. My eyes flew open to see clear blue sky stretched above me. I sat up with shaky arms and looked around me. I was surrounded by a meadow. Two evergreen trees loomed above me. I stood to my feet. When I looked down, I saw light speed propellers at my feet.

I ventured past the two trees and made my way into the surrounding woods where I saw an animal tied to a tree. Was it a bear? A big dog? I walked closer and when it stood up, it was no taller than me. It looked like a baby dragon. Yet instead of leathery or scaly skin, it was covered with short, black fur. Its ears were floppy, similar to a dog's. We peered at each other for a moment, then I began to hear people's voices. I started walking again until I saw huts and cottages stretched as far as my eyes could see. As I wandered down a dusty street, people gazed at me with open curiosity.

Their clothing was different than mine. The men wore burlap tunics with ropes tied around their waists. The women wore full-length dresses that gathered under their breasts, similar to those worn in the Middle Ages. Farther away, majestically rising above the town, stood a castle on a hill. It seemed like I had landed in a fairytale.

As I passed a butcher shop, I saw a bearded man inside. With pale skin and vivid, red hair; he slammed down his hatchet and chopped off the leg of a pig. When he saw me, he paused in his work.

The sound of horses' hooves reached my ears. When I looked down the street, I saw that men atop black horses had galloped into town. The butcher hurried away from his shop. He joined the men who had gathered in front of the horsemen. One of the riders prodded his horse to step forward. Brown dreadlocks hung from under his helmet and rested on his shoulders. "I am Tilgar," he announced, "commander of the Valcan Treasure Hunters. We have come to seize the beast!"

"Over our dead bodies, sir!" the red-headed butcher responded.

Tilgar drew his sword.

I backed away, then took off running until I reached the forest. I jumped over fallen logs. I dodged between trees. I stumbled over rocks; then one gave way under my foot. A short scream escaped me when I tumbled to the ground. I got up and carefully tested my ankle, then began limping. I made it to a clearing, then stopped and rested my hand against a tree to catch my breath. When I looked up again, I recognized the two evergreen trees in the middle of the meadow. I had to push myself to keep going...

As I neared the evergreen trees, I began to hear rumbling again. When I turned to look back, people were spilling out of the woods. Behind them, metallic men atop horses exploded from the forest. A woman raced towards me. "The Valcans have spilled much blood over our town!" she exclaimed. "We must flee!" I watched in horror when one of the Valcans neared us. He swung his bloody sword at the woman and sliced the side of her neck. She tumbled to the ground. When she rolled over, she clutched the side of her neck. Blood shot from between her fingers in angry spurts. I dropped to my knees and tried to help her, placing my hand over hers to help stop the bleeding. Horses' hooves barely missed us as the men riding their beasts rumbled past us. "G-go," she said in a weak voice. "Save thyself..." She looked to the sky and the life faded from her eyes.

I struggled to my feet again, ducking swords, horses, and people racing by me. My eyes focused on the evergreens, which were only a few feet away now. One of the hunters sped towards me, his brown dreadlocks bouncing on his shoulders. He reached down from his horse and swept me up onto his moving stallion. "Nooooo!" I screamed.

It was Tilgar: the leader of the murder-driven savages. "Cease thy struggling," he ordered, "or I shall see fit to drive this sword through thy back!" The reins slipped out of his hands and he cursed. We both tumbled off the horse and crashed to the ground, grunting on impact. I lay beside him, stunned. I struggled with sucking in the wind that was knocked out of

me. I got up slowly and looked in the direction where the woman lay. She was still.

Tilgar grasped my ankle. I tried to wrench my foot free, but stumbled back to the ground on my hands and knees. I turned my head, meeting a set of furious light brown eyes. "Damn thee, wench," he muttered between clenched teeth. He rested on his elbows, then got up and towered over me. His brown dreadlocks were tangled with bits of grass and dirt from the fall. He grabbed my arm and yanked me to my feet, then pulled me alongside him. We made it back to his horse, where he grabbed a rope that was secured to the horse's saddle. He tied one end around my neck, then mounted his horse. As we headed back towards the forest, I kept looking behind me at the fading evergreen trees.

Edmund stared at Rosaline in amazement. He nudged his new glasses farther up on his nose. "So the machine sucked you back in time? Is that what happened before I pulled you out of it?"

"No way," Rosaline said. "I wasn't in there long enough for all that to happen."

He frowned. "Oh, okay."

There was a knock at the shed door. Rosaline's mom poked her head into the garage. "It's getting late. Wrap it up guys." Her eyes scanned the garage, then rested on Rosaline. "Have you seen those photos you took of me and your dad last month when we had that snowball fight in the front yard? Your dad comes out here a lot, and I think he left them in here because I don't see them in the house."

"No," Rosaline said. "I haven't seen them. But good luck finding them in here."

"I have a deal for you," her mom said. "If you and Edmund can find those pictures, then you two can hang out here for a little while longer."

Edmund's eyes brightened. "Okay!"

When her mom left, Edmund and Rosaline began rummaging through boxes.

Edmund paused. "If the snow storm was just last month, would they really be tucked away in some crusty old boxes?" He looked around him. "Maybe your dad left them on a shelf somewhere." He pointed to a glossy envelope on a shelf beside Rosaline. "Is that it?"

She swiped up the envelope and opened it. "This is it!"

"It's hard for me to imagine your parents running around throwing snowballs at each other like a couple of kids," he said. "We don't have

time to look at them now, but can you bring them to school tomorrow? I want to hear more of the story.” She shrugged her shoulders and they sat back down. Then Edmund asked, “So what’s the deal with the furry dragon? Is he supposed to be scary?”

“Of course!” Rosaline said. “Furry dragons can be scary. Remember, he’s a dragon.”

“I pictured a grizzly bear with wings,” he said. “That sounds more goofy than scary. I bet you he bumps into trees when he’s flying.”

Rosaline looked around for anything within arm’s reach that she could throw at him. An old dusty sandal rested by the pillow on which she sat. She grabbed it and flung it at him.

He ducked and the sandal rattled an old lamp before it fell to the floor. “That’s nasty,” he exclaimed. “You almost got toe dust on me.”

“Toe dust.” She shook her head and giggled. “Now do you want to hear some more of the story or not?”

“Okay,” Edmund said. “I’ll get serious.” He made himself comfortable and Rosaline continued to speak the words:

During the journey back into town, I cringed at the sight of bodies that littered the streets. As I tried to keep up with the horse in front of me, I struggled with the knot that chaffed my neck. The destruction around me made my eyes widen with horror.

When we finally reached the castle, its gates were splintered and hanging open. Tilgar dismounted and secured his horse to a pole. Still holding my rope, he led me through the gates. Outside the castle entrance, some of the townspeople were tied with ropes to stakes in the ground. Inside, a colossal hall stretched before me. A long table occupied the hall where the rest of the Valcan Hunters sat drinking ale and eating. A pile of treasures lay in a heap on the floor as some of the invaders hovered and argued over an eye-catching piece.

Some women served the hunters with their feet in shackles. Others were running errands, quickly obeying the men who would strike them just for pleasure. Everyone lapsed into silence when they saw me. Some of the hunters gathered around Tilgar and me. Tilgar pulled at my rope, forcing me closer to his side.

Suddenly, the Valcans who were eating at the table scrambled to their feet. Bewildered eyes were focused on the castle entrance. I turned to see a man with shoulder-length raven curls standing in the doorway. As his metallic eyes flashed with fury, he yelled, “Why do mutilated bodies litter

the street? I have no use for dead men! 'Twas a captured dragon I expected, not dead Waldens!"

"K-Kerwick," Tilgar said, "When the river carried you away, we thought you were gone."

"Well, Tilgar, you seemed anxious to replace me. And during the short time you were in command, you and these low lives who left me for dead have caused much destruction!" Kerwick marched towards Tilgar and grabbed him. He dragged him towards the door, ordering him and the other Valcan Hunters to bury the dead. Then he turned and faced me with metallic eyes that were so brilliant they almost weakened my knees. When he ordered me to bring him food and drink, I frowned at him. Who did he think I was? His slave? I wondered what he would do if I refused.

I looked around me at some of the women. The ones who had bruises on their faces gazed at me in fear. Although we outnumbered him, I doubted they would help me if he decided to get violent with me. I withered under his silver glare, then turned and went into the kitchen to get his food.

It was late evening. I stood at the castle entrance, watching the men still at their dismal task of burying the dead. I looked behind me. Kerwick, the silver-eyed Valcan, had fallen asleep at the dining hall table. His cape lay on the back of his chair. I looked past him, at the kitchen. Some of the women were still cooking. Others were cleaning. My eyes settled on the back door of the castle. I approached Kerwick. Slowly, I pulled his cape away from the chair. He stirred. I froze. With my eyes still on him, I slowly inched away with his cape. I hurried through the kitchen and out the back door.

To my disappointment, Tilgar was kneeling just outside, washing his hands in a wooden bucket. He looked up in surprise and asked if I was trying to run away. I backed away from him. Then I heard Kerwick's voice from inside the castle. "Where's the wench?" he yelled. "The one with the many braids in her hair?"

Tilgar stood up and grabbed my arm, insisting that I come with him. "You shall fair better with me," he said, "for that savage will skewer you once he gets you alone. Come!"

One of the women in the kitchen pointed in my direction. My eyes darted from Tilgar to Kerwick. When Kerwick approached us, Tilgar announced that I was trying to escape and that he would chain me with the dogs for the night. Kerwick told him he wanted the prisoners to be freed, but Tilgar

argued that they may retaliate and kill them in their sleep. "Until we move on," Tilgar said, "we must ensure our safety."

Kerwick frowned, as if the thought had not occurred to him. He watched as, despite my protests, Tilgar pulled me away and back through the castle towards the entrance. Outside the massive front doors, he pushed me down where the other prisoners were tied. He roughly tied a rope around my neck and left me. I spent half the night kicking at scraggly animals who ventured near to sniff at me in curiosity.

It was hours before I could fall asleep.

Edmund shook his head from side to side. "Wow, Roz. You've got yourself mixed up with some treasure slash dragon hunters. I thought you were supposed to be She Warrior, Protector of the Universe!"

Rosaline grinned. "This story is not turning out how I planned it."

Edmund stood up and stretched. "And you let this Kerwick dude boss you around, when muscular dudes are supposed to be feeding you grapes and fanning you instead! What are you doing sleeping with the dogs? Have they had their shots?"

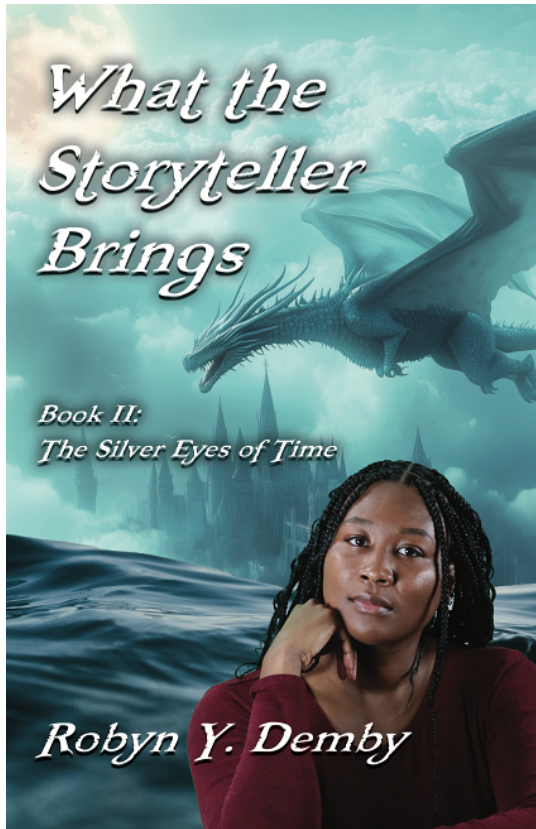
They both laughed. Rosaline stood up and headed towards the entrance of the shed with Edmund.

"So when do I get to hear more?" he asked.

Rosaline shrugged her shoulders. "I don't know if I'll finish it. I was just fooling around, pretending that this invention was a time machine."

"But it sounds interesting. I think you should finish it. See you in school tomorrow?"

"Sure," Rosaline said.



In Rosaline's second tale of adventure, she is swept back in time to the Middle Ages. When a beast from her story merges into real life, she must figure out a way to end the chaos that her spoken words have created.

**What the Storyteller Brings - Book II:
The Silver Eyes of Time**
By Robyn Y. Demby

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