

Dream School

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Chapter 1

Their minds drifted in the dream world. Already, the babies knew that this place was very different from the other world, the one where everything was more real, harder, harsher. Here, they lived a life of imagination.

Drifting in the dream, the boy turned to his sister and laughed. In this world he was not confined to lying on his back, dependant on his mother to pick him up. Here they could drift around, look at objects and even think up toys to play with. Here nobody ever needed to fill their bottles or clean them or bath them. They were simply here, drifting in the warm lucidity of their dreams, enjoying each other's company. At the edge of their dream, beyond where their imaginations played, the dream world was grey, stark.

Shift

They had been sharing the real world for almost a year. At the moment they were sleeping, sharing another dream.

The girl looked at her brother, trying to make her thoughts known to him, but even here in the dream world they could still only get out a few baby words. It didn't matter though. In the dream world they understood each other better.

Tonight, before putting them to bed, their mother had propped them in front of the television, where a program for young children had been showing. Now, in the dream world, Eve's brother was recreating the characters from the television show for her to play with. Bernie and Ernie and Jessy and Jenny, the brightly coloured little fluffy creatures romped all over the place.

Eve laughed at them, and laughed at her brother for being able to create them, it was as if he'd taken her inside the television.

Shift

As they grew older, it felt as if the days were going by faster. Mommy had taught them to talk, so now they could play games and tell each other things. But most importantly, when they woke up, they could tell mommy what their dreams had been about.

In the mornings, if she had time, mommy would take a book and a pen, and she would write down their dreams. Eve and Shawn could not write yet, but Shawn had already said he wanted to learn how to write so that he could write down his dreams himself.

Mommy explained that they would learn to write, as soon as they went to school.

Shawn drifted in a dream, wondering what school was. In the dream world, he slowly pushed out his mind, looking for the minds of other dreaming children. He found a boy dreaming only a little way off. Shawn entered the boy's dream and looked around. It was a sombre dream, filled with grey mist and a meagre sun.

'*Show me school,*' said Shawn. He didn't say this out loud, or the boy would wonder about him. But the soft words were enough to change the dream, and suddenly it was filled with weird and wonderful things. There were lots of children, all sitting in rows on chairs behind desks, and in front of them, there was a woman. She was writing on a black board. The dream changed, the children were on a playfield, some playing games, some sitting around in groups chatting. The dream changed again, showing children practicing sports. It changed again, and again, and again.

Shawn drew out of the boy's dream, amazed at what he had seen. School was definitely going to be interesting, and he couldn't wait to go there.

Shift

In the dream, Eve was looking at Shawn, but he simply pulled up his shoulders.

'How should I know why our eyes are different from the other children's eyes?' he asked.

They had been in school for only a few days, but already they knew that nobody else had eyes like them. The other children had eyes that were all kinds of colours, blue and green and brown, and they had circles with dark parts in the middle. Around the circles, the other children's eyes were white.

'In any case, maybe it's their eyes that are strange, not ours,' said Shawn. Around him the dream was pulsing red, reflecting his frustration at his sister's questions.

Eve and Shawn had silver eyes. No white part, no coloured part with a black bit in the middle, just silver. Some of the other children had made fun of them because of it, but their mother had told them to ignore the other children, so they did.

'Mommy doesn't have silver eyes like ours, she has eyes like the other people,' said Eve.

Over the years they'd been for many eye tests, but nobody had been able to figure out why their eyes were different. Yet their mother had been happy, because they could see perfectly, without needing glasses like some people did.

'Look,' said Shawn, starting to feel exasperated with his sister. 'Maybe one day our eyes will change and look like the other children's eyes.' The dream was starting to pulse magenta.

From the look Eve gave him he could see that she didn't quite believe it would happen, but for now it seemed to placate her. Although she was older than him, she always looked up to him, expecting him to come up with answers about questions or problems.

'What would you like to dream about tonight?' she asked, sensing his frustration and deciding to change the subject.

'Would you like to see my golden dragon?' asked Shawn, 'He's really cool!'

'Show me!' said Eve, her eyes wide with excitement. There was no end to the cool things Shawn could create in the dream world.

Shawn turned away from her and frowned, the dream *shifted*. A yellow glow started to suffuse the dream, and then a huge dragon, scaly and golden, hung in the air in front of him.

'Don't worry, he's not dangerous,' said Shawn.

'Wow, what can he do?' asked Eve, staring wide-eyed at the dragon.

'We can ride him,' said Shawn, patting the dragon on its flank. 'Come on and climb up, I'll show you!'

Chapter 2

Half an hour after the children had gone to sleep Shelly left the lounge and walked through the silent house to her home office. Since leaving her detective job with the police department ten

years ago she had been earning a much better salary as a private investigator and had traded her old apartment with its bad memories for this comfortable house in sprawling suburbia.

She closed the office door behind her and picked a folder off the desk, then walked over to the couch to study it. Although a lot of her work still came from the police department, this file was from a private client. The client was a woman named Cathy Burns, whose husband had gone missing two years ago.

Shelly loved working on old unsolved cases, there was something very satisfying about getting answers to the mysteries nobody else had been able to solve. The Burns case was special because she had worked at it for three months, and still had not been able to solve the mystery of his disappearance.

Shortly before his disappearance every one of Alistair Burns' bank accounts had been cleaned out. Cathy Burns had been left with only a small pension to survive on, and the mystery of her missing husband.

Shelly sighed and sat down on the bed. Everybody was sure that Alistair had simply walked out on Cathy as an easier and cheaper alternative to divorce, as more than two years later there was still no trace of him. She'd tried to find him in the dream world, by trying to see if he was dreaming, but she had been unable to find him. She had entered the dreams of everybody that Alistair had had contact with before his disappearance, trying to find out if anybody knew where he had gotten to, but so far she had drawn a blank. There was no evidence to disprove he had disappeared of his own free will, neither was there any evidence to prove that he had been murdered.

Shelly closed the folder, which was already thick with transcripts of dreams she had recorded, and put it on the table next to the couch, then kicked off her shoes and stretched out on the couch. At the foot of the couch was a light blanket, but she would not need it tonight, the unseasonable heat this early in spring meant it was warm enough in her office. She stretched out a hand and switched off the light, then lay back on the pillow and closed her eyes.

Over the last few months, without them realizing it, she'd entered the dreams of every one of his family, friends and colleges, and yet she had come up empty handed. She let the dreams run through her mind, trying to see if there was something she had missed, some vital clue that she may not have picked up.

Slowly, with her body relaxed and her mind occupied with the dreaming world, Shelly drifted off to sleep, and the lady with the black and gold dress took over the dreaming.

This time, instead of entering the dream of one of Burns' family or friends, Shelly let her mind drift into the dream world. She didn't bother to move her thoughts to the part of the city where the Burns' lived, she had searched through most of that area. Instead she simply let her mind drift with the picture of Alistair Burns in her mind.

What would he feel like, this Alistair Burns, she wondered? If he was still alive, what would he be dreaming of, what would he be thinking of? *Something in the dream world caught her attention. Somewhere, someone had latched onto the picture of Alistair Burns.* With a gentle push of her mind Shelly concentrated on the picture, pushing it out from her and into the dream world.

She felt the tug again, and followed it, slowly so as not to disturb it.

She could see a red light. It was a red light in a display window, shining on an empty wall and an empty chair. Then, from one side of the display, an almost naked woman came into view and sat down.

The hooker folded her legs and smiled at the men looking in at her. Shelly slipped through the glass and into the red-lit room, and then into the dreaming mind of the hooker. What she saw was a memory, the memory of what the hooker had remembered from that night. In her mind Shelly felt around for a name, and found the name Bella. But Bella wasn't right, Bella didn't fit. The real name

wasn't Bella, it was Cindy. Shelly fixed the name in her dream, so that she would be sure to find it again if she wanted to.

She looked out through the eyes of the dreaming woman and saw the hungry stares of the men in the street. None of them was Alistair. Shelly turned her mind into the dream memories of Cindy.

Softly, speaking in a whisper that was no more than a breeze in the air, Shelly spoke to the dreaming mind of the woman.

'Where is Alistair? What happened to him?'

The dream *shifted*, and the red-lit room disappeared.

Now they were in a different room. This room was sparsely furnished – with only a bed. In front of the bed stood Alistair, with his arms around Cindy, and Shelly could imagine how tragically it had all gone wrong for him. He'd grown tired of his wife, but instead of ruining his marriage he'd gone to a hooker to fulfil his sex life. And there, in a street filled with red lights, drug pushers and men hunting cheap sex, he had found Cindy.

Shelly probed deeper into the memories of the hooker.

Alistair had spent one hot steamy summer night with Cindy, and he'd fallen in love. She was twenty years younger than him, and worked the trade as the only job she could find to feed her drug addiction. Over the next few weeks he kept on going back to her. Alistair had promised her the world, promised her he would take her away from it all, from the prying eyes and searching hands and dirty bodies of the men. He had money, and if she left with him, they could make a new life together.

In the dream, Shelly looked at the suitcase lying on the bed. It was filled with money, all the money Alistair had drawn from his bank accounts. He held Cindy close to him, he could smell her perfume. In the stark room, Cindy had moved closer to him, until their bodies were touching. She could feel his heat through the light dress she was wearing.

Slowly, she had pulled out the knife from under her dress, and with the warmth of Alistair's breath still on her neck, the caress of his lips still on her skin, she had thrust the knife from behind, into his kidneys.

Alistair had not made a sound, but as he sagged away from her she had stabbed him again, and again. There had been blood everywhere, blood splattered all over the bed and the suitcase and the money, blood on the floor and blood on the cheap lampshade.

She had left him to bleed to death, while she had washed herself clean at the basin. After a quick phone call and exchange of money, his body and suitcase had been taken care of. Then, wearing a clean dress and carrying his money in her old and tattered backpack, Cindy had left that part of town forever, and had gone to live with her mother, who had been only too glad to have her daughter back.

Shift

Shelly woke up and reached for her voice recorder. She suppressed the excitement she felt, and spent half an hour recording every detail of the dream as she remembered it, then got up to switch on the computer and started working.

It was another three hours before she got back to sleep.

Chapter 3

'Mommy, the girls at school say I'm weird, and they laugh at me!' said Eve crossly.

Shelly looked into the silver eyes of her daughter Eve and sighed. She had known right from the beginning that this would happen, and she had often tried to prepare herself for it, but now that the kids were getting older she was going to have to pay more attention to their dreaming abilities. She should have been doing so long ago, she knew, but her work had been keeping her busy. It had been

too easy to pretend the kids were normal, that they were just like all other kids. She had, after all, always tried to raise them like normal kids as much as possible, to make sure they would fit in with their friends.

‘What happened, sweetheart?’ she asked, ‘Have the other kids been teasing you about your eyes again?’

‘No, not this time. I told them I write down my dreams in the morning, and they just think it’s a load of nonsense. Mommy, do I have to keep a dream diary? The other kids think it’s silly, none of them have to keep a dream diary!’

Shelly bent down and hugged her daughter. With her arm still around Eve she steered her gently but firmly to the large and comfortable couch in the lounge.

‘Keeping dream diaries is very important, sweetie,’ she said, sitting down and pulling Eve down so that the thirteen-year-old was sitting next to her. ‘Our family don’t dream like other people, I’ve explained that to you. But I don’t think you should tell all your school friends about your dreams, they just won’t understand. Keep it to yourself, and tell only those friends that you really trust. And if you tell a friend about your dreams and they don’t laugh at you, then you know you have found a true friend.’

Eve sighed and sagged against her mother. ‘But why do I have to keep a dream diary?’ she asked.

‘Because one day, sweetheart, you are going to be a strong dreamer. You and your brother are going to have special dream powers. I am going to teach you a lot of things about the dream world, and then it will be important to know how to keep a dream diary.’

‘Teach me *now!*’ said Eve, impatiently. ‘You keep on saying you’ll teach us one day, but I want to know *now.*’

Shelly looked at her daughter and sighed. She knew she had put this part of their education off for too long. It was time she started teaching her children how their dreaming was different from other people’s dreaming, what they were capable of doing in the dream world and how to control their dreams.

‘Ok Eve, I tell you what. Tonight, I will come into your dreams, and I will start your dream lessons.’

‘Can you really do that, mommy? Can you come into my dreams?’ asked Eve, surprised.

‘Yes, and then you will see why keeping a dream diary is so important. So tomorrow morning you write down your dream when you wake up. And I will write down my dream, and then we can compare what we wrote to see if we really were in the same dream together. Then you will understand why keeping a dream diary is important.’

‘Ok, but you have to come into my dreams tonight!’

‘Fine, I’ll be there. Now go do your homework.’

Shift

Half a mile away Shawn was walking home from school, enjoying the afternoon spring sunshine. Usually the walk home from school took him only a few minutes, but today he was dragging his feet, thinking about what the teacher had said.

He knew the teacher had felt uncomfortable with what she had said, had even regretted it the moment she had said it, but she had said it and now Shawn had to work out what she had meant. It was the beginning of the new school year and his sister and he had been called aside by the teacher to sort out a problem the teacher said she had with their personal files. Out of earshot of the other children, the teacher had asked Shawn about their eyes.

Shawn was used to being asked about his eyes. His sister and he both had silver eyes, and all through his life he could remember them going for a battery of eye tests to see if the colour was caused by cataracts or some other eye problem. He'd been shown pictures of how eyes with cataracts looked, and it looked very much like his eyes, except that the whites of his own eyes were silver. Yet in test after test, they had proven to have perfect sight.

So once again Shawn had to explain to a teacher that although their eyes looked a bit strange, he could see as well as any of the other children. Standing next to him, Shawn knew his sister would be smiling inwardly, glad that it was Shawn's turn to do the explaining - about - the - eyes routine.

It was then that the teacher had compared his file to his sister's file and looked surprised.

'Eve, according to your file you were adopted at birth,' she'd said, looking at Eve. 'I just cannot understand why both of you would have the same eye problem if you are not related. Surely you must be related in some way?'

'No mam, we're not related in any way, I'm adopted,' Eve had answered, and Shawn could tell that the teacher was feeling embarrassed for bringing the subject up. She had dismissed them, but what she had said had been bugging Shawn ever since.

Shawn reached the house and turned up the driveway. Except for their eyes, there was nothing else remotely similar between him and his sister. Even their hair colour was different, his sister had straight blond hair, whereas Shawn had dark hair like his mother. During break time he'd discussed the matter with Dave and Diesel, but it turned out that even they had thought Eve and Shawn were related.

When he'd confronted Eve with the question, she'd simply shrugged. 'Maybe something happened to us when we were babies, you should ask mommy about it,' she'd said.

He found his mother in the kitchen.

'Hi mommy,' he said, giving her a hug and a kiss.

'Hi honey. How was your day?'

'Ok, I guess.'

'What's up?' asked Shelly. 'You look as if something is worrying you.'

'Mommy, remember you once told us that sissy was adopted, and that you were not her real mother?'

Shelly pulled out a chair and sat down at the kitchen table.

'Yes, I remember. What about it?' asked Shelly, immediately worried about what Shawn's statement was leading up to.

'Well, today at school the teacher wanted to know why we both have silver eyes if Eve is only my adopted sister.'

For the second time that day Shelly felt her heart sink. She supposed it must have been inevitable that one day Eve and Shawn would figure out that they had to have some connection, something binding them in their past, to cause them both to have silver eyes. Sitting at the kitchen table and looking at her son's eyes, she knew she would have to tell them the truth at some stage. It might as well be today, she decided. Eve had already gotten a commitment of a mutual dream out of her, so this would be a perfect opportunity to explain things to them.

'Tell you what,' said Shelly. 'Go call your sister and wait for me in the lounge, and I'll pour us some juice, then I'll try to explain to you why you have such dreamy eyes.'

'You know why we have silver eyes?'" asked Shawn, surprised.

'Yes, but call your sister first, I don't want to explain twice.'

Shawn left the kitchen and headed for his sister's bedroom, while Shelly took glasses from the cupboard and poured them juice. She knew she would have to handle the situation carefully, or what she was going to tell them would do them more harm than good. Eve's school friends already thought that the brother and sister were weird because they had silver eyes and had to keep dream

diaries. If the kids went back to school and told the others what Shelly was about to tell them, she would have a difficult situation to deal with.

As the kids approached the lounge she could hear urgent whispering going on between them. The news that their mother knew the cause of their silver eyes was being taken quite seriously. The whispering stopped when the kids entered the lounge and sat down next to her. Shelly handed them each a glass of orange juice and took a moment to compose herself before she started.

‘The two of you are getting older, and there are some things that you will need to know, like why your eyes are silver and why you have to keep dream diaries. Shawn, I am going to have a mutual dream with your sister tonight, so I might as well have both of you in that dream.’

She stopped when she saw the questioning look on Shawn’s face.

‘I mean that I’m going to come into your dreams tonight, and we are going to have a dream together,’ she said.

‘Can you really do that? Can you come into our dreams?’ asked Shawn, his eyes wide.

‘Yes Shawn, I can come into your dreams. You got some of your dreaming abilities from me, and I will explain that to you later. But first, I want to explain to you why you have silver eyes.’

‘I thought you didn’t know why we have silver eyes, that’s why we had to go for all the tests,’ said Eve, frowning.

‘The reason you went for all the eye tests was so the doctors could see if your eyes were working properly. When you were young, I was scared you might be blind or that you just wouldn’t be able to see as well as other people. But the tests proved that you could see perfectly, and I’m very glad about that.’

‘So then why do we have silver eyes?’ asked Shawn.

‘Before I tell you that, I need you to understand that you should not talk to your friends or anybody else about this. If you tell people this, they will think you are making it up, and they will think that you are trying to get attention. So for now, don’t tell anybody what I’m about to tell you. One day, when you are older, you might decide to tell other people about it, but not while you’re young.’

Eve and Shawn exchanged a glance, and in that look Shelly could see the kids knew all about friends not understanding.

‘Right, I can see you understand. So, in short, the reason why you have silver eyes is that you two were created in the dream world,’ said Shelly. She stopped, waiting to see what effect this comment would have on the children, but the straight forward thinking of the children surprised her.

‘So how did we get from the dream world to this world?’ asked Eve.

‘I’m not sure,’ said Shelly. ‘But I got pregnant in the dream world, and a few months later I found out I was pregnant in the real world, this world, with Shawn. And the same happened to your mother, Eve. But she got pregnant before me, and that is why you are older than Shawn.’

Shelly could see Shawn was thinking hard about something, and waited for him to say what was on his mind. At last he looked up at her.

‘So how come nobody else has silver eyes?’ he asked at last.

‘Well, as far as I know, no other children have ever been created in the dream world,’ answered Shelly, surprised at his question. It had never crossed her mind to find out if there were people similar to Eve and Shawn somewhere in the world.

‘Is that why you don’t want us to tell anybody else about being created in the dream world, because they will laugh at us?’ asked Eve.

‘Yes, that is it exactly. So tonight I am going to come into your dreams, and what do you think your school friends will say if you told them that had happened?’ she asked.

Shawn grunted. ‘Diesel will say I’m daft and Dave will say I’m loony,’ he said, and Eve giggled.

‘Exactly, now go do your homework, and tonight we’ll see about that mutual dream,’ she said.

Shift

It didn’t take Shelly long to find the dreaming mind of her daughter in the dream world. She slipped out of her own dreamscape and into that of Eve, and froze in terror.

The dreamscape was dark, with a full moon hanging in a sky filled with wispy clouds. Shelly could see the small shape of Eve standing in knee-high grass in the dark night, and she could sense the fear coming from the child. Somewhere in the darkness of the night a shape was moving. It was cold in the dream, bitterly cold.

Shelly was about to call out to her daughter, to hug her and change the dream, but thought better of it. She needed to see what this dream was about, needed to understand her daughter’s fears.

A thick, cold and clammy grey mist hung in the air. Shelly concentrated on the moving shape she could sense, and fear tightened her throat. She had not felt that presence in more than ten years. It was the feeling of pure evil she had last associated with Argelon, the person that had killed her lover, the father of her son. But it was also the same presence that was the father of her daughter Eve, the girl who was standing in fear in the cold wet grass.

Shelly moved closer to her daughter until she was standing beside Eve.

‘Eve?’ she asked. ‘What is this place?’

Eve looked at her, and in the moonlit dreamscape her eyes were glowing silver, and as bright as the moon.

‘Mommy! You really came! You mustn’t move, or make any noise, or it will see where we are, just stand still.’ Eve whispered urgently. ‘Shawn will come, you’ll see, he’ll come and then everything will be fine!’

‘Shawn?’ asked Shelly, also whispering.

‘You’ll see, he’ll come, he always comes to help me.’

A shape flitted against the night sky, and Eve sank down into the grass, so that she was barely visible. Shelly also hunched down, but kept her head high. She knew she could change this dream any time she wanted to, she could banish this dark night and replace it with dream scenery of her own, yet she waited, anxious to see what would happen next. From their left, a light approached. It was a small light, bobbing in the night like a lantern being carried by a person.

‘Here comes Shawn,’ whispered Eve, and Shelly could hear the relief in her voice.

Although the light had approached from far off, it took almost no time for the light to cover the distance to where they were hunched down in the grass. Shelly looked inside the circle of light, and her mind reeled. Where the light shone it did not light the dreamscape in which Eve and she stood, instead it showed a different dreamscape, one which Shawn was creating. Inside the ring of light Shelly could see things moving, but they were creatures she had never seen before.

‘Eve, come quickly!’ said Shawn.

‘Shawn, mommy is here too, she must also come.’

‘Mommy?’ said Shawn. ‘Oh yeah, she said she was coming.’ Shawn looked at his mother’s form hunched down in the grass, and Shelly wasn’t surprised to see that his eyes were also glowing silver and as bright as the moonlight.

‘Mommy, you must quickly come before it finds us!’ said Shawn.

‘OK,’ said Shelly, standing up. Stepping out of the dark nightmare of Eve’s making and into the dream that Shawn carried around with him. Around her the night faded, and she was standing in Shawn’s dreamscape.

Eve hugged her brother. ‘I knew you would come,’ she said.

Shelly looked at the creatures surrounding her. Shawn's dream was as light, sunny and airy as Eve's had been dark and dismal. The creatures were every colour imaginable, and suddenly Shelly recognised them. They were Adrames, creatures from a movie she had taken the children to see in the cinema a few weeks back. Shawn had liked the creatures and had collected a colourful sticker book full of them over the past few weeks. Shelly smiled at the strength of his dreams, but deep down she was worried about Eve.

Eve's dreams had been as clear as Shawn's, but dark instead of light. She would have to find out what was bothering her young daughter to cause her to have such dark dreams.

Shelly put her arms around her children and hugged them.

'I thought I would come into your dreams tonight to show you that it could be done, but now I suspect you guys are a bit ahead of me. But remember, when you wake up you have to write down this dream in your dream diaries so that we can discuss it later.'

Both the children nodded and hugged her back.

'Good. Now I'm going to leave you. Eve, will you be OK in Shawn's dream?' she asked.

'Yes mommy, when I'm here the dark thing can't get me, I'm safe here,' said Eve.

'Right, see you kids in the morning,' said Shelly, and pulled out of the dream, wanting to wake up so she could record Eve's nightmare in as much detail as she could remember. The dream had raised fears in her that she'd long forgotten.

Chapter 4

Shelly awoke to the sound of soft rain falling outside, and reached out to switch on the bedside lamp, the memory of the dreams she'd just shared with her children vivid in her mind.

She wondered why Eve had never mentioned anything about her nightmares in her dream diaries, or even directly to her. Everything about the dream was a surprise to her, but mostly she was intrigued at finding out that her children were having mutual dreams. They had never mentioned this to her, yet it had felt as if they had been having mutual dreams for a long time.

How long? Wondered Shelly.

She reached out for her own dream diary and pen and started writing, taking extra care to describe in as much detail as she could remember the dream scenery of Eve's nightmare. It took her a long time, but after years of practice Shelly was used to recording her dreams. When she was done she closed the dream diary, but instead of putting it down she sat with the book against her knees, tapping the cover with the pen, wondering about Eve's nightmare.

If the dark and evil force she had felt in the dream really had been Argelon, Eve's father, then it was important that Shelly taught Eve how to get out of that dream if she needed to, in case Shawn was not there to rescue her.

As Shelly thought back to the last time she had encountered Argelon, goose-bumps broke out on her arms and she shuddered. She'd been training for months to take him on, but when she had met him face to face in a dream he'd been stronger than she could ever have imagined him to be, and she'd been no match for him. Back then he'd been killed by a demon, so how he could be back in the dream world she had no idea, but Shelly knew one thing. *She would never be able to fight him and come out alive.*

I could be mistaken, the thought rose in her mind. Shelly thought about it, and hoped she was right. If it was some other force she could teach Eve to deal with it, to change the dream scenery.

After a long time Shelly put her dream diary back on the table and reached for her file, the one containing the cases she was working on in her life as a private detective. She wasn't sure if she would get back to sleep soon, but if she did fall asleep she might just be able to get some work done.

Shift

On Saturday morning Shelly knew that her life had taken a drastic turn. Working from home, she had become used to spending time with her children during the week, and over week-ends life continued much as it did during the week, with Shelly spending a lot of time on her work, while her children played games in the garden.

Now though, she knew she would have to spend more time with her children, working on an education that the school just could not give them. It was time she started giving them dream lessons.

She reached out for her dream diary and opened it at the dream she had recorded during the night. Reading it, she was as astounded at her children's dreams as she'd been when she'd written the dream down.

After reading through the dream twice she put the diary down and slipped out of bed, heading for the shower. With both her daughter and son keeping dream diaries, Shelly could not imagine how it had happened that neither of them had ever mentioned the dark dreams that Eve was having. And then there was the memory of the children's eyes glowing with their own inner light in the dreamscape. It had been eerie, but it had also been beautiful, filled with an inner light that Shelly could never have imagined before.

These thoughts filled her mind while she finished in the bathroom, and by the time she came out wrapped in a gown she was more determined than ever to give her children the education in dreaming that she'd always wanted to give them. It was, after all, the reason she'd adopted Eve.

Shelly walked through to the kitchen and made three cups of hot chocolate, which she put on a tray and carried to Eve's bedroom. Like most girls of her age, Eve had her room decorated in as many shades of pink as she'd been able to find. Eve was still sleeping, her hands clutching the pink duvet tightly under her chin. After placing the tray on the bedside table Shelly stood for some time looking at her face fringed with blond hair. At last, feeling a slight bit of guilt in case Eve was having a dream, she sat down on the bed and gently shook her daughter awake.

'What?' asked Eve, opening her eyes and looking up at her.

'Wake up sleepy, I brought you hot chocolate,' said Shelly, smiling down at her daughter.

Eve rubbed the sleep from her eyes, and propped herself up on her pillows.

'Hang on a moment, I'm going to fetch Shawn, I made some for him too,' said Shelly, and left the room.

Shawn was already awake, and from the look of things he'd just finished recording his dreams in his diary.

'Morning sweetheart. Come over to Eve's bedroom, I've made us some hot chocolate,' said Shelly.

'Morning mommy,' said Shawn, throwing back the blanket and sliding out of bed. Without any more words he walked to her and gave her a hug, then walked through to Eve's bedroom, where he took up station on the foot of her bed.

'You really came into our dreams!' said Eve. 'Why haven't you done that before? I bet you could take care of the scary monster in the dark dream!' Eve sounded excited, as if a whole new world of possibilities had suddenly opened up before her.

Shelly handed out the hot chocolate to her children while she thought about Eve's words.

'You two really surprised me last night,' she said. 'Eve, if you have been having that nightmare regularly, why have you never told me about it, and why have you never written about it in your dream diary?'

'I don't like the dark dream,' said Eve. 'I don't want to write down the dark dream. My other dreams are much better, I'll rather write them down. I just want to forget about the dark dream, and hope I don't have it again. But it always comes back.'

‘How often do you have the dark dream, sweetheart?’ asked Shelly, aware that for Eve to have given the dream a name, *the dark dream*, it must have had a really bad influence on her.

‘Not very often, but I’m not sure how many times I’ve had it,’ said Eve.

‘I never realised that you two were having mutual dreams. Sometimes you write in your dream diaries that you see each other, but I never thought that actually meant you came into each other’s dreams. How long have you two been doing that?’

‘For always,’ said Shawn, looking at his mother with a frown. ‘I don’t know, since I can remember, I guess.’

Eve looked at her brother and nodded, then looked back at her mother.

‘We once told Margie that we could do that, but she just said we were lying and we made it up,’ she said, sounding annoyed at her friend’s reaction.

Shelly sighed. ‘Yes sweetie, you must remember that other children cannot dream in the same way that you and Shawn can. If you tell them about the dream world, they will think you are making it up.’

‘But why?’ asked Shawn. ‘Why do sissy and I dream differently?’

Shelly wondered how she was going to explain this to her children, but found that she could barely explain it to herself.

‘Yesterday, I told you that you were made in the dream world, remember? Well I think it is because you were made in the dream world that you dream so well. And don’t ask me how it is possible that you were made in the dream world, because I don’t know, I just know that you were. But because you were, you can do a lot of things in the dream world that other children cannot do.’

‘Can grown-ups do things in the dream world like we can?’ asked Shawn, and Shelly could see there was something going on in his mind.

‘Not that I know of, Shawn,’ she answered. ‘There used to be two other people that could dream like we can, but they died before you two were born, and now, as far as I know, it is only us.’

‘So,’ Shawn started, but then fell silent again, a frown creasing his forehead.

Shelly waited politely while he gathered his thoughts, until at last he looked up.

‘So we’re like super heroes?’ he asked, looking at her hopefully, and for a moment Shelly thought she could see the silver glimmer in his eyes, the inner light she’d seen in the dream the night before. She looked at Shawn, her mouth open in surprise.

‘Well, no,’ she said. ‘You’re just a bit different from other kids. But I am going to start giving you a few lessons in dreaming. I’m going to start teaching you about things you can do in the dream world, and about things that you should never do in the dream world.’

‘What kinds of things can we do?’ asked Eve, excited at this new prospect.

‘Things like changing a dream, so that you don’t have to have that nightmare anymore,’ said Shelly, and stood up. ‘Eve, I want you to write that dark dream down this morning. Write down everything you can remember about that dream, and then I’ll teach you how to beat that dream.’

Eve nodded ‘That will be cool, thanks mommy,’ she said.

Shift

Shelly lay on her bed, one of the few photographs she had of her long dead boyfriend, the father of her son, held between her fingers.

Andrew had taught her just about everything she knew about the dream world. He had taught her its secrets, how to manipulate it and how to use it. Then one day she had been a stronger dreamer than Andrew, and she’d moved a large part of her life over to the dream world.

She felt the memory of how Andrew had died trying to claw its way into her mind, but pushed it away angrily, it was not time for that. She needed to think how Andrew would have taught the children. How would he have handled their dream education?

She had always been pushing for more, wanting Andrew to tell her everything he knew about the dream world all at once, but that was because she had been hunting the dream monster. Although Eve had the dark dream, there was now no monster that was killing real living people. She could take her time with their education, and try to make sure she taught them everything they needed to know.

Already, with no help from her, the children could have both lucid and mutual dreams. Shelly remembered how long it had taken her to learn those two things. But these kids had been conceived in the dream world, making her wonder what else they could do that Shelly thought she still had to teach them.

The thought had barely crossed her mind when an even more sinister thought occurred to her. *What could these kids do that she could not even imagine?*

She'd been getting ready for an afternoon nap, but instead Shelly slipped off the bed with a new sense of urgency. She walked to Shawn's room first, and from the brown wooden box where he kept them, she removed the three books he had already filled with his dreams. Then she walked to her daughter's room and fetched Eve's dream diaries too.

If the kids could do things in their dreams that she could not even fathom, the answers would be captured in these books, unwittingly written down by the children. Or so Shelly hoped.

Sitting down at her desk and starting with Shawn's books, Shelly started doing homework.

Shift

The afternoon slipped by quickly while Shelly tried to learn everything she could from the children's diaries, but trying to find out what dream powers the kids might have was difficult, she simply did not know what she was looking for.

With Eve and Shawn sent to bed with a promise that she would visit them in their dreams again, Shelly was trying to think of what she was going to teach the children first. She was beginning to think that the kids could probably already do anything that she could think of teaching them.

In the dark behind her eyes, Shelly remembered a dream she had had with Andrew. In the dream, she had shot Andrew with a bolt of lightning, lightning she had created in her dreaming mind. The next evening, when Andrew had come to visit her, he had shown her how much damage her dream lightning had done to his chest. The large purple and red wound was still bloody, and Shelly had almost ended up taking Andrew to a doctor.

I will have to teach them what not to do, she thought. She was also realizing that she would have to spend time with them in the dream world simply finding out what they could already do, and what they could not yet do. After spending a long time thinking about the education of her children Shelly got up and went to have a bath. The more she thought about it the more she understood one thing – these kids were going to be more of a handful than she had imagined.

Shift

'Before I can start teaching you about dreams, I need to find out what you two already know,' said Shelly.

In the dream they were standing in the garden of their own house, a setting Shelly had chosen as a safe place for dream lessons.

'What kind of things?' asked Shawn, looking at her with the glowing eyes that Shelly had come to love.

‘The first thing I want to know is whether you can fly,’ said Shelly. To demonstrate what she meant she let herself drift about a meter off the grass and hung in the air.

‘I can do that!’ said Eve, and immediately left the ground to drift even higher than Shelly. A moment later Shawn had also left the ground, but only went as high as his mother.

‘She likes to show off,’ he said, looking at his sister.

‘I don’t!’ said Eve with indignation, drifting lower again.

‘Well now is the time to show off a bit,’ said Shelly, drifting down until she was standing on the grass again. ‘What do you two think you can do in the dream world that I won’t know about?’

‘I can go into other people’s dreams,’ said Shawn. ‘Would you like to see?’

‘Can you really?’ asked Eve, and Shelly could hear Eve was every bit as surprised as she was.

‘Well, actually, mommy’s already seen that,’ said Shawn. ‘Remember when I went to get sissy out of the dark dream? Well that is how I can get into other people’s dreams.’

‘Can you only do that with Eve’s dreams or can you do it with other people too?’ asked Shelly.

‘I think I can get into anybody’s dreams,’ said Shawn. ‘But I don’t think they actually notice that it’s really me in their dreams.’

‘You must teach me how to do that!’ said Eve, sounding excited.

Shocked at the thought of her children entering the dreaming minds of strangers, Shelly was about to stop them when she checked herself. The kids had been born with these talents, and telling them not to use the talents could be dangerous. Her job was only to teach the responsible use of the talents.

‘Shawn, you realise that you must never do anything to harm a person in their dreams, don’t you?’ she asked, looking at Shawn sternly.

‘I can’t actually harm anybody mommy,’ said Shawn. ‘It’s only a dream, so they can’t get hurt.’

‘Actually they can get hurt Shawn, but I will teach you both about that later. For now, I want both of you to promise me that you won’t hurt anybody in your dreams.’

‘Ok, I promise,’ said Shawn, looking worried.

‘I also promise,’ said Eve. ‘But Shawn must show me how to get into people’s dreams!’

‘It’s easy,’ said Shawn. ‘You must just learn how to feel for the dream of another dreaming person, and then you can look at what they are dreaming about, and then you can go into their dreams. Sometimes, if somebody is dreaming about you, it will be as if that person is calling you, like when you have the dark dream and you call me!’

‘Mommy, can I go now?’ asked Eve. ‘I want to see if I can get into one of my friend’s dreams.’

‘OK Eve, you can go, but remember that you promised not to hurt anybody in the dream world.’

‘Ok mommy,’ said Eve, and vanished from the dream.

‘Right Shawn, you can also go, but I’ll have a word with both of you in the waking world.’

‘OK mommy,’ said Shawn, still looking worried, and he also vanished from her dream. In the dream world, Shelly headed back to her bed, wanting to wake up. There were some things that were easier thinking about when she was awake.

Chapter 5

Shelly heard the tinkle of breaking glass, and lifted her head from the pillow. For a moment she thought it might have been her imagination, but then she shook her head to clear the sleep out of her mind. She was sure the sound had come from the house, from the waking world.

She slipped her hand under the mattress and pulled out her pistol. It was probably just one of the kids that had gone to drink water and had dropped a glass, but she would have to check. During the past ten years her powers in the dream world had locked up many criminals, and it was always possible that one of them would seek revenge.

Getting out of bed she quietly put on her gown and slipped the pistol into the gown's pocket. If it was one of the children, she did not want them to see her walking around with a weapon at night.

She pulled open her door and checked the passage, but in the dark house the shadows did not look unusual. Walking quietly on bare feet she went to Eve's bedroom door and looked in. Her daughter was fast asleep.

Shelly made her way to Shawn's bedroom and checked his bed. He too was fast asleep in his bed, although it looked like he might be having a bad dream.

Shelly slipped the weapon out of her pocket and made her way down the dark passage, her heart beating fast. She would have to enter the lounge in full view, but there was nothing she could do about it. For a moment she considered going back to bed and returning in the dream world to check what had made the noise, but if there was an intruder in the house there would not be enough time.

There was another noise on the edge of her hearing. From the kitchen, she thought she could hear a tap running. Shelly listened to the sound while she scanned the lounge, checking every shadow to make sure there was nothing hidden there. Moving towards the kitchen she kept to the shadows herself, fear filling her mind with all kinds of dangers.

At the kitchen entrance she hunched down as low as she could and listened. She could definitely hear water running. She was about to look around the door and into the kitchen when something on the carpet glinted in the meagre light. She carefully stretched out her free hand and felt for the object, and wasn't too surprised when the object turned out to be a piece of broken glass.

In the darkness of the lounge Shelly again looked around, straining her ears for any sign of an intruder. Except for the sound of running water, there were no other sounds.

Slowly, Shelly stuck her head around the door and checked the kitchen. It wasn't a big kitchen, and it took her no time at all to realise that there was nobody there. Lying shattered on the tiles was a glass, one of the small blue coloured ones the children used to drink water out of.

Shelly got to her feet and quickly moved to the front door of the house and tested the lock, but the door was securely locked. Still moving quietly she checked the sliding door that led out to the back yard, but this door was also secured.

Even though the house was warm, gooseflesh took hold of her. She knew there was a way a person could get into the house without breaking the locks on the doors. In a life far away, many years ago, Argalon had killed many of his victims in his dreams.

Shelly moved quickly, panic welling up in her. There was no way she could get to sleep quick enough to check up on her children's dreams, she would simply have to wake them. With a sense of foreboding she remembered how restless Shawn had been when she'd checked on him moments ago.

Without realising it she started running, the few steps to her son's bedroom seeming to take forever. In the dream world, Andrew had taught her, a few seconds could be stretched into hours.

She reached Shawn's room and switched on the light, remembering only just in time to shove the pistol back into her pocket, and then she was next to his bed and shaking him by the shoulder.

'Shawn, Shawn wake up!'

Shawn came out of his dream almost immediately, squinting in the bright light.

'What is it mommy?' he asked.

'Were you having a nightmare?' Shelly asked, looking into his silver eyes.

Shawn frowned, trying to remember his dreams, but then his face cleared. 'No, I just had a silly dream. I dreamed I was trying to drink water, but when I picked up the glass I dropped it on the kitchen floor.'

Shelly looked at her son, her eyes opening wide in surprise.

‘What’s wrong?’ asked Shawn, looking at her surprised face.

‘Come here, I want to show you something,’ she said, taking Shawn’s hand and gently pulling him upright in bed.

‘What is it?’ asked Shawn, rubbing the sleep from his eyes with his free hand.

‘I want you to see this for yourself, but you have to put on your slippers,’ said Shelly, bending down and picking up his slippers. She waited for him to get the slippers on his feet, then led him out of the bedroom and down the passage. In the lounge she switched on the light and walked to the kitchen where she stopped, aware that she herself was still barefoot. She put her arm around the kitchen wall and switched on the light.

‘Go into the kitchen, and tell me what you see,’ she said.

Shawn walked into the kitchen and stopped when he saw the broken glass and the running water, then turned to his mother, his eyes wide.

‘But I was sleeping!’ he said, ‘How could it really happen if I only dreamed it?’

Shelly was on the verge of explaining it to him when she stopped herself.

‘Close the tap, and be careful of the broken glass. I want to call Eve to join us,’ she said.

She made her way to her room and slipped on her shoes, then walked to Eve’s bedroom and woke her.

‘Come on, I have something to show you,’ she said once Eve was fully awake. ‘But you have to put on your slippers, there’s broken glass in the kitchen.’

When Shelly and Eve got to the kitchen they found Shawn standing amid the broken glass, looking down with a frown on his forehead. He looked up when they entered.

‘Sorry mommy, I really didn’t mean to break the glass. It just slipped from my hand,’ he said, looking worried.

‘Don’t worry sweetheart, just sit down while I clean this up. Eve, you sit down too, and then Shawn can tell us about the dream he had.’

Eve gave her brother a puzzled glance as they sat down while their mother opened the broom closet and pulled out a broom and dustpan.

‘Eve, just so you know, your brother was fast asleep in his bed when he did this. He was having a dream. Tell us about the dream, Shawn.’

‘It wasn’t much of a dream,’ said Shawn, feeling sheepish. ‘I just dreamed that I was thirsty, and I wanted some water. So I came to the kitchen and took a glass out of the cupboard and opened the tap. But then the glass slipped out of my hand and broke on the floor.’

‘You did this while you were dreaming!’ said Eve, shocked but full of admiration. ‘Mommy, how can Shawn move things while he’s dreaming?’

Shelly dropped the broken glass from the dustpan into the bin and turned to face her children.

‘Listen you two, this is an important lesson for both of you. Remember the other night when I made the two of you promise that you would not hurt anybody in your dreams?’

Both Eve and Shawn nodded.

‘Well, this is why I wanted you to make that promise. Shawn, you said that night that if something happens in a dream, it is only a dream and nothing bad can happen outside of the dream world. But now you can see how you can make things happen here, in the real world, through your dreams. When other people dream, they cannot do what you did tonight. But you two are special dreamers. You are starting to develop dreaming powers that other people just do not have, powers like moving objects in the real world even though you’re in a dream. Do you understand that?’

Eve and Shawn glanced at each other, their silver eyes making contact in the kitchen light.

‘So this is why we had to promise not to hurt anybody in the dream world?’ asked Eve.

‘Exactly,’ said Shelly. ‘And because you have lucid dreams, and you can control your dreams, you can do things in the dream world that can really hurt people in the real world. So from now on, you two have to be very careful about what you do in the dream world, understand?’

Eve frowned. ‘But I cannot do that,’ she said. ‘Only Shawn can.’

Shelly shook her head. ‘No honey, I am certain you can also do what Shawn did tonight, you must just try.’

‘But how?’ asked Eve.

‘I don’t even know how I did it,’ said Shawn, before Shelly had time to answer Eve.

‘I tell you what. Why don’t the two of you set yourself some simple goals, and then get together in the dream world and practice a bit.’ She turned to the cupboard and took out two plastic cups. ‘I’ll put these cups on the lounge floor, against the wall. Then you two can try to push them all the way across the floor. The object is not to see who finishes first, the object is to help each other learn how to do it.’

Eve and Shawn looked at each other and nodded, and Shelly smiled. The kids were learning fast.

Shift

‘So how did practice go?’ asked Shelly, opening the curtains to let the sunlight into the kitchen where Eve and Shawn were already having breakfast.

‘Too easy,’ said Shawn. ‘Eve got bored and carried her cup to her room, then went flying off somewhere.’

Shelly frowned. She had hardly expected the kids to be able to move the cups on their first try.

‘And did you move the actual cup or just the dream image of the cup?’ she asked Eve.

‘The actual cup. When I woke up this morning it was on my desk where I put it last night.’

‘And you, Shawn?’ Shelly asked, filling the kettle for coffee.

‘I also took my cup to my room, but then I practiced some more. I played marbles on the carpet in my bedroom!’

Shelly gave them a broad smile. ‘Listen you two, I think I have to tell both of you to be very careful about what you do in the dream world from now on. Just imagine if you moved something in the dream world but you concentrate on moving the object in the real world. If someone saw the object move but didn’t know it was one of you moving the object, what do you think that person’s reaction would be?’

‘He’d think it was a ghost!’ said Shawn, laughing.

‘Exactly, and people don’t like that kind of thing,’ said Shelly. ‘So please do me a favour and don’t let people see objects moving around while you are dreaming and they are not.’

Eve slipped off her chair and put her cereal bowl in the sink.

‘I’ve got the bathroom first!’ she said, and left the kitchen.

Shawn rolled his eyes. ‘Why does she always have to take an hour in the bathroom?’ he asked the ceiling. ‘And then she says she’s not interested in boys!’

‘She’s too young to be interested in boys in any way,’ said his mother. ‘But all girls are like that, you’ll learn.’

Shawn pushed his empty cereal bowl away.

‘Mom, how does time work in the dream world?’ he asked.

Shelly pulled out a chair and sat down, a frown creasing her forehead.

‘It depends on what you mean sweetheart. Give me an example so that I can understand what you’re asking me’

‘Well, sometimes I dream of things happening, and then later on those things really happen. Last week I dreamed that missus Alberts came to school with her arm in a plaster cast because she had broken it. Then she was in a car accident on Tuesday, and on Friday when she came to school she had a plaster cast on, just like in my dream.’

Shelly looked at her son in surprise. ‘That’s called a precognitive dream, sweetheart. I’m surprised that you have them.’

‘Are they important dreams?’ asked Shawn.

‘Sometimes they are, but you have to learn how to use them. The best thing is to keep your dream diary like I taught you, and to read your old dreams from time to time. Mark those dreams that came true, and maybe you will learn how to use your precognitive dreams. Other than that, I don’t think you should worry about them too much.’

‘But how does it happen, how can I dream about things that are still going to happen?’ asked Shawn.

‘I don’t know honey, but I do know that people have always been able to do things like that. The problem is that not many people believe that it can be done, and if we talk to normal people about it, they think we are lying.’

‘What’s the use of all these things we can do in our dreams if we can’t tell anybody about them?’ asked Shawn, sounding exasperated.

Shelly smiled at him. ‘I’ve told you before, the powers that your sister and you have are special. Nobody else that I know of, except myself, can do these things. And because they cannot do these things, they cannot understand it. And because they cannot understand it, they are scared of it.’

‘It’s just dreams, I can’t see why people think it’s weird,’ said Shawn, getting up from the table.

Chapter 6

In the hot afternoon sunshine Eve wasn’t really listening to the conversation drifting around her. She was seated on the pavilion next to the green sports field, watching the athletes practice.

‘Are you going to sit there with that dreamy look on your face the whole afternoon?’ asked Margaret, taking a seat next to Eve.

‘I’m just thinking about stuff,’ said Eve, hoping that Margaret was not going to start prying, but she needn’t have worried. They were sitting three rows up from a boy that Margaret was interested in, and any problem that Eve had was going to take second place.

It was the first time in her life that Eve was really thinking about the fact that she was an adopted child. Although she had always known she was adopted, she had never felt as if her mother was not her real mother. Of course her mother was her real mother, she had raised her from when she was a baby.

But somewhere out there, Eve was becoming aware, was another mother. Whatever her reasons had been, this other mother had given up on Eve right after birth. *Maybe even before birth*, Eve thought bitterly. Somehow, this woman had gotten pregnant with Eve in the dream world, but had decided not to bring up Eve in the real world.

Mommy must have known my real mother, because she knows I was made in the dream world. The thought entered her mind and hung there, inviting her to think it over. It was quickly overridden by another. *No, mommy is my real mother. The woman who had me as a baby is just that, a woman who I don’t know.*

‘What’s up with Eve, has she met a new boy?’

‘Ha ha, funny you,’ said Eve, moving up to make space for Christine. ‘Nah, I’m just thinking about things, it’s Margaret who can’t keep her eyes off the boys.’

She let the conversation around her drift off in the hot afternoon sunshine, while her thoughts played around her birth.

Her mother had mentioned her real mother only a few times, but she had never mentioned Eve's father. Yet she must have known something about her father as well, because she knew Eve was not like other children. For the first time in her life, Eve felt as if she wanted to know more. She was beginning to wonder what her mother would do if she started asking questions. Would she be angry?

Mommy doesn't ever talk about Shawn's father.

Eve wondered if her mother kept the subject of Shawn's father quiet because Eve might start asking questions about her own parents. *Did her mother and brother talk about his father when she wasn't around?*

Suddenly, the world around Eve seemed to be filled with questions, and she had no way of finding answers except for asking her mother, and Eve wasn't sure she wanted to do that.

'Who's the girl with the dark brown hair sitting on her own?' asked Margaret.

'That's Simone,' answered Christine. 'She's a bit weird. She always sits on her own. I've tried talking to her, but she keeps to herself. I've heard from some of the other girls that she's having a lot of difficulty at home.'

The conversation tugged Eve out of her reverie. 'What kind of difficulty?' she asked.

'Richard lives next to her. He says her stepfather is always getting drunk and screaming at her stepmother and her.'

For a few moments the three girls were quiet. A drunken stepfather was not something they had any experience with.

In Eve's mind the word *stepmother* played over and over again. She had never thought of her mother as a stepmother. Her mother was her mother, and that was that.

Not quite sure why she was doing it, Eve stood up.

'I'm going to talk to her,' she said. When Margaret and Christine looked at her questioningly she just shrugged.

She moved through the rows of children on the pavilion until she reached the aisle, then walked down the stairs until she reached the lowest step, which was deserted except for Simone. It was the thought of talking to another person who was adopted that intrigued Eve. *Maybe Simone can tell me if she had ever asked her stepparents who her real parents were,* she thought.

'Hi Simone,' she said, sitting down next to the girl, who gave her only a brief glance.

'Hi Eve,' the girl replied. Her tone gave Eve the distinct impression that she did not want to talk to her, but it was more than that. It was as if she was scared of company.

'Mind if I ask you a question?' asked Eve, at a loss of how to approach the girl, but now she was here, and she wanted to press the subject.

'I guess not,' said Simone, once again giving Eve the almost dismissive glance. When she looked away though, Eve realized she was not looking at the sports field anymore. She was looking down, and away from Eve.

'Tell you what Simone, why don't you come sit with Margie and Christine and me?' said Eve in a bid to break the icy atmosphere.

'I'm fine here, thanks,' said Simone in a small voice, keeping her gaze averted.

For a moment Eve felt like abandoning the conversation, going back to her friends and leaving Simone to sit on her own, and to pretend that the conversation had never happened. But once again the urge to know what was in her past got the better of her.

'I've got a problem, and something that Christine said made me think that maybe you can help me,' she said.

This at last got Simone to look at her. 'What kind of problem could you have that I can help you with?' she asked.

Eve was feeling extremely uncomfortable. She had thought it would be easy to speak to the girl, but if just getting her attention was this difficult, how was Simone going to react to Eve asking her about her parents? She took a deep breath, deciding she had to give it a go. Then Simone could either help her or not, but at least she would have tried.

‘You see, I’m adopted. I have no idea who my real mother and father are, and Christine said she heard you were adopted too. I’m trying to figure out how to ask my mom about my real mother and father, but I don’t know how to approach her on the subject. I was hoping you might be able to tell me if you’ve ever asked your mom and dad about your real parents.’ Eve stopped, realising she had spoken much faster than she had intended. Simone looked at her for a few seconds, but then turned her head away and looked at the sports field.

‘We don’t talk about that,’ she said, and this time her tone made it clear she was not going to be drawn on the subject.

It was Eve’s turn to look down at her hands. She felt embarrassed, the conversation had not gone as she had hoped it would, but the girl sitting on her own was starting to bug her. Her eyes drifted to the girl’s leg, where a large blue mark was visible.

‘You’ve got a blue mark,’ she said. It was meant as a simple statement and nothing more, but Simone’s reaction made it clear she had hit a nerve.

‘It’s nothing, I bumped it against a table,’ she said, but her voice was quick, too quick. Without even seeming to realise she was doing so, she covered the mark with her hand.

Eve realized she had made a mistake by mentioning the blue mark, but now it was out in the open, like a sore that had not healed yet.

‘Look, I have to get back to Margaret and Christine, but I’d like you to join us.’ she said in another attempt to win the girl’s confidence.

‘Right,’ said Simone, but made no move to get up. Instead she kept her head down, once again looking away from Eve.

Eve got up and walked back to the stairs and up to her friends. It was too hot under the sun, she couldn’t think properly in the heat. She wanted to go home to her cool bedroom, where she would be able to think things over thoroughly.

Shift

‘Mommy, do you really catch criminals in your dreams, like you told us?’ asked Eve.

She was sitting at the kitchen table, watching her mother make sandwiches. Shelly glanced at her, but finished cutting the sandwiches before she answered.

‘I don’t actually *catch* the criminals in my dreams, sweetheart’ she said. ‘I use my dreams to find out what exactly happened at a crime scene. If the police have a suspect, I go into that person’s dreams, and I get him to tell me exactly what happened.’

Shelly stopped, aware that what she was telling her daughter was dangerous. There was no telling what a thirteen year old could get up to if she had this kind of power. And as the dream lessons were progressing Eve, Shawn and Shelly were learning that the kids had a lot more power in the dream world than their mother did.

‘Look, Eve, that is not something I want you to do. Maybe when you are older, and understand the consequences of what you are doing, you can also become a dream detective like me, if you want to. But in the meantime I really don’t want you to simply barge into people’s dreams and force them to tell you stuff that is private. You have to respect people’s privacy.’

Eve cupped her chin in the palm of her hand and looked at her mother.

‘But how do you do it, how do you get people to tell you things?’ she asked.

Eve's questions were beginning to worry Shelly, and again she wished she had someone to turn to, someone who could help her with the children's dream education. She sighed. Of course there was nobody that could help her.

'Well, you already know how to get into people's dreams, right?' she asked.

'Yes, I can do that easily now,' said Eve.

'Once you are in a person's dream, you simply have to control the dream. You can force the dream to be anything that you want. Can you do that?'

'Yep, I can do that too, Shawn showed me how. Once, we went into a dream that Diesel was having, and Shawn made this big dog appear that kept licking Diesel in the face. I made blue butterflies, but Shawn's dog chased them off.'

Once again Shelly could only shake her head at the things her children were getting up to in the dream world.

'Well, that is how I get people to show me how they committed a crime. Once they have done that, I know where to go look for evidence, like where they hid the stolen goods or what they did with a weapon.'

'But what if you don't have a suspect whose dreams you can enter?' asked Eve.

'Then it takes longer,' said Shelly, with the distinct impression that Eve was looking for a way to do something specific in the dream world. 'Then I have to push a vision of the crime scene into the dream world and see who grabs onto it, and then hope one of the people who grab onto it is one of the perpetrators or somebody who witnessed the crime. Now out with it, why do you want to know all these things?'

'Because I want to know how to do everything in the dream world,' said Eve, almost completely lost in thought.

Shelly looked at Eve, suddenly really worried. 'Ok, but before you take over the dream world, I think you should go and do your homework,' she said, more as a way to end the conversation than to get Eve to do homework.

Eve got up and was about to leave the kitchen when Shelly spoke again.

'Eve, you do remember your promise, don't you?' she asked.

'What promise?' asked Eve.

'That you wouldn't hurt anyone in the dream world,' said Shelly.

Eve walked back to her mother and gave her a hug. 'Of course,' she said, and turned away to go do her homework.