

Julia did not hear the grandfather clock strike midnight but was suddenly awakened a few minutes later with an uncomfortable feeling that bordered on panic.

She lay still, not wanting to open her eyes. There was something about the atmosphere of the room and even the bed. The air even smelled a bit different...like...like candle wax?

Her eyes popped open, and when she turned her head, instead of seeing the battery-operated candle, she saw a single brass candle holder with a candle nearly burned out, wax dripping down the sides of the brass.

She bolted up into a sitting position, screamed, and then clapped her hand over her mouth, her heart pounding in her chest.

Merlin was on the bottom of the bed and immediately jumped down.

A minute later, she heard footsteps outside the bedroom door. Then the door opened, and a young woman came in, holding a newly lit candle.

Merlin bolted to the window, jumped onto the pane, and disappeared.

“Miss Lynton! Miss Lynton! Are you all right?!”

Julia stared at her openmouthed, unable to find words to respond.

The woman was a young girl, no older than sixteen or seventeen in Julia’s estimation. She wore a long nightgown with sleeves down to her wrists and a white cap on her head with frills around the bottom. Julia could see a few wisps of brown hair peeking out the sides. Her blue eyes were open wide in concern.

Then Julia looked down at herself and found that she was wearing a gown with long sleeves, and when she reached up to touch her hair, she discovered she was also wearing a nightcap.

She opened her mouth to scream again, but no sound came out.

“Miss Lynton?” the maid said again, advancing toward the bed.

*Oh my god! Did it really happen? Am I now back in the past, just as Pamela or Charlotte or whoever wrote in the journal? This must be my maid, Doria. What should I do? What should I say?*

She sank back into the pillows. There seemed to be more than just the two she’d laid down with earlier, but they felt very plush and comfortable.

Julia looked at the maid. “I...I must have had a nightmare,” she said, her nervousness making her voice sound an octave higher than normal.

She cleared her throat. “What...what time is it?”

Doria turned her head toward the fireplace. Julia’s eyes followed. On the top of the marble mantle, Julia recognized an ormolu clock in an ornate bronze case with matching candle braces on each side.

“Why, it be nigh on morning, Miss. It’s only half past four. Will you try to go back to sleep? Yesterday was a tiring day at the end of our travels. I myself have not quite recovered from the seasickness and trying to find my land legs. Might I bring you a

sleeping tincture? Lady Pamela is still abed, and I'm expecting she will sleep late this morning."

"No, no, thank you. I shall close my eyes again and try to sleep a bit more. I'm sorry for disturbing you."

Doria nodded. "I will leave you to rest then. Just ring when you're ready for your morning coffee, and I'll bring it up."

Doria left, the door clicking shut behind her.

Julia shuddered and pulled the covers up over her head. She didn't think she'd be able to sleep again, but it was suddenly daylight, and she could hear birds chirping outside the window.

Throwing back the covers, she got out of bed and went to the window and suddenly thought of Merlin. She recalled him curled up next to her on the bed before she went to sleep the night before and still being there when she awoke. Had the cat traveled back into the past with her? When she screamed, he jumped off the bed, ran to the window, and was gone. Seeing a tree outside the window, she figured he must have used it to leave.

*But what in the hell is Merlin doing here?*

It looked to be a bright and sunny day, and when she looked at the clock, she gasped when she saw it was nearly noon.

Suddenly, where she was became real to her. She determined she was in the same place but at a different time. Seeing a looking glass above a dressing table across the room, she went over to it and looked at herself. Nothing had changed about her person other than she was wearing a long gown that came up to her neck with sleeves down to her wrist and a silly cap on her head. No pajamas.

Recalling the last two entries in Pamela's journal and that she'd put the wish to meet a gentleman in the wishing jar and then hid it away in the gypsy cottage, it suddenly hit her that the wish had transported her back in time to June 5, 1815. She was in the dower house at Linwood Park with Lady Pamela, just as the journal said.