

‘Where are we?’ Ray stood beside me, peering round. I stared at the lion enclosure where the nocturnal house should have been.

‘Bristol Zoo.’

‘This isn’t Bristol Zoo.’

I tore my eyes from the lions and looked up the terrace.

‘Yes,’ I said. ‘It is. I don’t think it’s a question of where, I think it’s a question of when.’

‘What?’

‘When are we?’

Ray spun round, staring at the clothing of families walking past and crowds stood admiring the animals. I caught sight of gorillas to the left behind wrought iron bars near the entrance.

I turned to my right and studied the fashions of the people surrounding us. We were getting some odd looks. I looked down at my hoody and dirty jeans, my revolver burning a hole at my shoulder. My stomach screwed itself up and my bowels weakened; never had I felt so out of place.

‘We need to change clothes.’

‘No. This isn’t real. It’s a fancy dress day, that’s all.’ Ray was breathing hard and I worried briefly that he would hyperventilate and bring more attention onto us. ‘We need to find a member of staff.’

‘No,’ I said quickly. ‘No. We need to go somewhere quiet. Preferably dark. A nocturnal house would have been perfect.’

‘You want to see our nocturnal house?’

I jumped and spun to see a smiling old man stood to the side of us. Behind him, the elephant with a child on its back approached. I swallowed hard.

‘Yes. Where is it? Please.’

Grinning, he pointed behind us. We turned slowly to look at the building opposite the lions.

‘Her name’s Rosie, by the way. The elephant. You can meet her if you like. Our nocturnal house is the first of its kind, you know.’ He seemed to notice our clothing for the first time. ‘Are you from Bristol?’

‘Yes,’ I said a little too quickly. ‘We’re going to a fancy dress party. Well that sounds very exciting, we must have a look at the house. Come on.’ I dragged Ray towards the nocturnal house before the man could respond.

‘Look, a lake.’ Ray moved in front of me and drew level with the nocturnal house. I followed blindly, deep in thought and walked straight into someone. My heart pounding, I mumbled an apology and tried to dodge the person before they could get a good look at me.

‘Emily?’

It felt like my heart stopped. A sudden agony gripped my chest, my breath forced from my lungs, as I looked up into Bane’s eyes.

I screamed.

Yes, screamed. I’m not proud of it and it pains me to admit it but I actually screamed, like a girl. I threw my arms around Bane’s neck and hugged him so tightly that he had to push me away. He looked at me and then picked me up, arms around my waist, and swung me round, whooping. I fought to compose myself, as I stroked Bane’s leathery cheeks and searched his grey eyes, checking and triple checking that it was actually him.

We sat on the lawns watching the crowds.

‘I haven’t seen anyone else like me,’ Bane said.

‘No sign of my sister?’

‘I haven’t seen anyone else standing out. I left the zoo after my first day here, when I knew I couldn’t get back, and I got some new clothes. Your sister could have done the same.’

‘It’s the fifties, the currency’s different.’

Bane and I exchanged a look.

‘Someone may have taken pity on her,’ I offered. Ray looked scared. ‘I’m sure she’s fine,’ I said.

‘Don’t worry, we’ll find her. And little Katy. One down, two to go.’ I tried to fight the grin but there it was, plastered on my face. My fingers slipped into Bane’s hand. ‘We need to find them and then get back.’

‘How do we get back?’ Ray said, looking doubtful.

Bane stood and pulled me to my feet.

‘Don’t know. One thing I do know, it’s something about the nocturnal house.’

‘It’s the bat-eared fox.’ I nodded. Bane looked at me as if I’d gone mad. ‘Her name’s Silver,’ I said, almost joyful to speak to someone who would understand. ‘She’s a Kitsune, a fox that can transform into a human and bend space and time. She came through with us. Actually, no, we came through with her.’ I frowned, trying to work out where Silver would have disappeared to. ‘She had to have a reason for coming here,’ I mused aloud. Bane squeezed my hand.

‘We’ll start at the nocturnal house.’

‘What about my sister?’ Ray said.

‘I’ve spent a lot of time there, seeing if I could find a way home. Maybe she’s doing the same.’ Bane was already striding back towards the house. I paused for a moment to appreciate his new clothes. His jeans were the same, dirty and frayed, but his chequered shirt was new. It didn’t suit him.

'We landed outside the lions,' I told him.

'We can try there after, then.'

We entered the darkness of the nocturnal house and paused as our eyes adjusted to the blue lighting. Bane led us slowly through and we stopped at each animal enclosure.

'No foxes,' Bane muttered. I opened my mouth to speak when I caught a glimpse of reflected blue-white out of the corner of my eye. I turned before I could think. Silver looked at us and shook her head. The walls fell away and the darkness and blue light moved and blurred.

I sat still. My stomach was turning, my skin turning cold from my feet up and I was fighting a losing battle to keep any food left in my stomach from moving upwards; time travel didn't agree with me. Bane stroked my hair as Ray pulled himself up.

'What happened?'

'We're back home.' Bane said.

'But we weren't done.'

'We'll find her, Ray. And Katy. We'll go back and find them.'

'We don't even know if they were there. We need to know what we're fighting here,' Bane told him.

I shook my head and crawled away from the men, unable to get to my feet. I found a corner and vomited up what little bile was left. My throat burning, I sat back and listened as Ray screamed, thumping the walls as Bane tried to calm him.