

Preface

From the author,

The Sealed Door follows on from 'The Seven Spell' and unless you have read that book, you may not know the characters immediately referred to in this first chapter of The Sealed Door.

I have placed an excerpt here for readers, which is from 'The Seven Spell'. It comes from Chapter twenty-two, the end of the book and introduces the archaeology team. Should you wish to read chapters, from 'The Seven Spell' please take a look at the end notes of this book for the author website address, for five free chapters. Or alternatively preview that book on Amazon.

Excerpt from The Seven Spell Book Three in The Seven Spell Saga, end chapter. Tristan is speaking at the beginning, and then Chloe takes up her narration again. The three friends; Chloe, Oliver, and Tristan have gone out to 'The Peacocks' restaurant, they are reminding themselves of their friendship, even though Chloe is in love with both Oliver and Tristan.

"Thank you for dragging me out of my reverie at home, bringing me out here to celebrate and now maybe we better let go of each other's hands before someone thinks we are having a séance". (Tristan said)

It was only a little funny because there were still spirits of the past in Tristan's life, but we smiled at each other and I squeezed their hands before I let go to make sure they knew I loved them both.

It had been a good idea to go out together, we walked back home around eleven thirty and went into the kitchen. We decided to go to the Kool Kafé to see Will's band on Thursday and Oliver insisted on dropping Tristan back at the Dearing house where he was using his old room.

It was Wednesday when the archaeology team, consisting of three people, came to the door. I was working on a college assignment. We seemed to have one small design brief per week for the first semester, which counted for seventy five percent of our pass mark.

I went downstairs to let them in; they introduced themselves and had ID, but one look at their four wheel drive and I knew they were for real, it was emblazoned with the county archaeology logo on the doors and bonnet. There were two men, a man about forty and a young man about twenty-six, something like that, maybe about the same as James Parker and a girl; she seemed to be about my age, or maybe a bit older. Don the older one asked if they could take a look at the tunnel, and I told him sure but they may need torches or some kind of lights as the installed lighting stopped at the entrance to the tunnel and only lit the interior of the room with the wall painting.

Stefan the younger one went back to get lights from the vehicle, he was very thin and tall with dark hair sort of cut to jaw level, which he wore behind his ears. He had a friendly face and seemed to be smiling all the time, the girl was called Lily, which I thought was unusual to meet two girls called Lily in a few weeks, when you never met anyone called Lily before. I liked her straightaway she was as tall as Tristan almost, with hair just as glossy but a little lighter and redder brown. Her eyes were blue and she had such lovely skin I felt like some paler version of myself as I stood near her, showing the group the entrance to the tunnel.

She didn't get to go down the tunnel until Don had been down there, and then Stefan and she got to go down there, I watched from the entrance to the fireplace and she gave me a smile,

"I'm still a student really, well I have my first degree, but I'm doing graduate studies".

"Oh you must know James Parker then" I said smiling back.

"I do he's supposed to be coming down tomorrow to work with us and so is Leslie, I think she was here for the opening of this fireplace".

"She was that's cool that James is coming down, I have to be out at work in the afternoon, but if you come along in the morning I'll sort you out with how to lock up or whatever".

"Thank you" she said as Don came back and having set up the massive lights, the other two went down there, they put hard hats on before they descended the stairs which I thought was hilarious given Tristan, Oliver and I were in and out of the place bare headed with tiny torches.

I went into the kitchen and started on the coffee and tea I just knew they would like to have, when I asked them. They came up quite soon and found me in the kitchen.

"Well we need to set up some equipment, we will be up and down the hall for a while, I hope that's ok, once it's in place we will not need much more for a couple of days". Don told me as if I cared how much equipment they trailed down to the tunnel.

"That's fine, really, take your time and as much equipment as you need to do the job, I know Tristan will want you to have total access. Can I offer you coffee or tea at all?" They all would love tea and so I continued making it and Stefan went outside pulling back into the drive in a small truck that must have previously been in the lane. He brought stuff in and went down the hall with it; Lily went out to the four-wheel drive and brought laptops down to the big drawing room. I took the tea tray down there too and as she set up the laptops, I went back to the kitchen and got them biscuits.

I took them down to the drawing room and watched Lily set up the computers with some sort of camera feed as usual.

I gave her tea and she put it down and concentrated on the laptop for a few moments. I left them to their work.

In the kitchen I thought I would tell Tristan his 'archaeology' had started and rang him "Hey Tristan what are you up to, I haven't seen you since Monday, come and have a cup of coffee, the archaeologists are here".

"I'd love to, it's just the break I need I'll drive over I'm at the greenhouses so it will be seconds, see you".

I was really pleased.

He showed up within a couple of minutes and I had made the coffee, the front door was ajar but I went to greet him when I heard the old truck crunch onto the gravel driveway.

I took his hand and we went into the kitchen, he kissed my cheek and I smiled at him giving him the coffee.

Tristan had taken a drink of coffee and was standing close to me just companionably as we leaned against the work surface.

He put his cup down and sighed, gently he hugged me close, "You still love me don't you, I can feel it again, Chloe when you kissed me the other day it was the way you used to kiss me and I felt so happy. I know Oliver loves you and I see him

with you and I think it will never change you will always love us both.” He stopped talking and kissed me, and the most bizarre thing happened I felt that wrapped in silk thing that I thought was special to Oliver and me. I kissed Tristan back and held him close, the strange prickly intensity we used to dazzle each other with was gone, and I was shocked by how much I felt for him.

He moved a little away from me. “I wish it was just me, but its not and I value Oliver so much as a friend that I feel I can never fight for you. You know sort of try to win you away from him somehow. I’m sorry I shouldn’t be saying this stuff, put it down to exhaustion, I do love you”, he kissed me again and I was willing to keep holding him close forever right then.

“I love you too Tristan”, I said.

He smiled and he let me go which was just as well because Don came up the hall to the kitchen.

I immediately introduced Tristan to him and he stepped forward to shake Tristan’s hand, “Mr Dearing how very opportune you are here, we have drilled a camera hole in the sealed door area, and I have to say what we can see from just this first glimpse is totally fascinating”.

The Sealed Door

Chapter One

“Mr Dearing how very opportune you are here, we have drilled a camera hole in the sealed door area, and I have to say what we can see from just this first glimpse is totally fascinating”.

Don was smiling and leaning forward to shake Tristan’s hand and at the same time, you could tell he wanted Tristan to follow him to the tunnel. He angled his body towards the kitchen door saying, “If you have the time I can show you the view we have with the camera, there appears to be another sealed door at the end of a chamber, tunnel like chamber” he amended, continuing. “There is a water feature of some kind; well a small pool and a place that looks like it could be a drinking fountain, in modern terms”. He was jubilant and I smiled at his enthusiasm watching him almost bouncing on the spot, with each piece of information he gave Tristan.

“That sounds intriguing” Tristan replied and indicated his intention to follow Don by stepping towards the kitchen door.

“I do have time and would love to look” he and Don were already through the kitchen door and striding down the corridor. I followed to the edge of the big drawing room and then waited to be invited further.

Tristan and Don were bent over the screen of a laptop computer, Lily was at the keyboard of another laptop and she turned to me saying I could look too, “Chloe is interested too Don, that’s ok she looks, come over Chloe”.

I went over to Lily and looked at the screen; it was a dimly lit picture of the interior of the chamber, as Don had called it. I thought more like a tunnel and I could see the water feature he had mentioned only as a pool of some kind to the left of the screen. At the end of this tunnel was another closed up door, it seemed like it was made of soil or was stone columns covered in soil; it was hard to see for me anyway.

Right then more light came from somewhere and the picture on the screen was much more distinct. I could see the tunnel or chamber whichever they decided to call it, had another opening leading off it to the right; it was just the entrance that was visible. The drinking fountain feature that Don had talked about was more visible

now on the left, but only because water seemed to be trickling like a slow mini waterfall over the side of a carved stone area, into the small pool below.

It was all, as Don had put it, totally fascinating; what had me in awe was that it was below where I lived, well I think it was, what room would be over it, I wondered.

“What do you think of it Mr Dearing, worth taking a few stones out of the tunnel wall and going into this chamber or tunnel?” Don addressed Tristan who was still glued to the picture on the laptop.

It had been Stefan who had lit up the chamber a little more, as he now came from the fireplace saying, “Hello, how do you like that?” he was beaming his excitement too.

He was carrying a computer, about half the size of my netbook in his hand, and clearly had been able to see what we could, as he raised it slightly and turned the screen at us.

I smiled at him, “It’s amazing” I said; even if he had not been speaking to me, I couldn’t help but voice this.

“Isn’t it?” Lily added nodding and smiling at everyone.

I stood back from her as Tristan said, “Go right ahead and make room to get through the sealed door to the chamber, I can hardly wait to walk in there myself, I can’t believe I didn’t know about it in all these”. Tristan sort of cleared his throat and then continued, “Where do you suppose it is, under the kitchen or what? Well it must be under the garden don’t you think?” and he turned to Don who was so excited he couldn’t stop smiling.

“We’ll get ‘geo phys’ in the garden because it looks like it may go that way, although you could be right, it may be under the kitchen, it’s hard to orientate right now”.

Tristan was smiling too, “Please call me Tristan; sorry I don’t know anyone’s first name”.

Don supplied his own name and then introduced Lily and Stefan, Tristan nodded at each of them and they smiled back. He added that James Parker would be with them tomorrow and Leslie from the last dig. Tristan was smiling as he told Don he knew James and Leslie of course. Then he looked from one to the other of them, “I must apologise and leave you to it now, I have to get back to work, but as soon as you have breached the sealed door and can walk in the chamber let me know I would love to go in”.

Don was nodding “Naturally we will keep you totally up to date, Tristan”.

Tristan looked my way and I gave them a little wave and went ahead of him up the long hallway to the kitchen.

Once there Tristan put his arms around my waist holding me close, he kissed me on the side of my neck and then the side of my mouth, I was smiling and moved to kiss him too. He kissed my lips gently and then leaned a little away from me to look into my eyes.

“I can’t believe what they found, I very nearly gave my age away in there and said I had no idea it was there, for the last eight hundred years”. He was smiling and his eyes were very blue, the kiss we had exchanged just before Don’s arrival in the kitchen had been melting, and I was feeling very in love with Tristan. I didn’t reply straight away, but kissed him again and then said almost against his lips, “I noticed that; I think this is an amazing find, where do you suppose the water comes from?”

He hugged me and then we drew apart, “Well it must just be some spring that comes out of the rock down there, there’s no sign of damp in the house is there? I

know it's very well heated, you know I made sure the central heating was a really good installation, with plenty of radiators."

I laughed at his seriousness, "It's great Tristan, not that we are using it yet but I guess in a few weeks time. Oh no wait a minute, mom did have it on for two days that really rainy week after the big drawing room had flooded, it's excellent. I nearly boiled before I discovered I could turn down my radiators, with that silver dial thing".

He had walked to the French door and was now standing looking out at the garden with his hands in his pockets he looked thoughtful.

"Why don't I know about that tunnel, I must have passed the sealed door behind one of the tapestries back in the eleven hundreds, just as I did the secret box in the tunnel? Weird stuff, don't you think?" he had turned to me as I reached him.

"I seem to have been going around with my eyes closed back then, and er, I think I've said that before" he laughed. I looked at him and smiled a little, "You weren't looking for secrets then; you know just living your life as a young person, unaware of the intrigue that was going on or whatever".

He took my hands and put them against his chest "Chloe, you always comfort me, you never see any fault in me, but I was spoilt back then, maybe arrogant too, that's why I crossed the river where I did. I just assumed I would be safe, that the ice would be just the way it always was; I was untouchable."

He started to laugh again, "The good freezing I got cured me of that notion". I put my hands up around his face and kissed him quickly, "Do you have to go back to work like you told Don?"

He smiled, "I do in fact, but I can be convinced to have coffee and cuddle up to you for a while longer".

"Maybe I could just come up to the greenhouses with you; it would be nice to watch you work for a while".

"Would it?" he looked surprised.

"Oh yes" I replied, I just didn't want to be apart from him right then.

"What about Don and company?" he wanted me with him, I could tell from his expression.

"I'll just go and tell them I have to go out for while and ask when they plan to leave, if they are anything like last time, it will be about seven tonight".

I left him in the kitchen and scooted down to see Don, or Lily, whoever was available. Lily was alone in the drawing room; the men must be down in the tunnel. As I got close, I could see them on her computer screen, they were working on the sealed door in the tunnel. Already having made a column shaped opening and a carefully placed stack of stones was evident on the floor of the tunnel.

"Lily, I need to go out for a while, when are you planning on leaving?"

She turned to me, "About six I think, is that ok?"

I was nodding, "Sure, I will only be a couple of hours at the most and my brother Steven may come home soon, please help yourselves to tea, coffee, and there are cakes, biscuits and stuff in the fridge if you want anything".

I smiled and left her going quickly back to Tristan, I took his hand, and we went out to the old truck he was using that day.

It was easy to kiss his cheek through the open window, as he was about to close the truck door, when I had gotten into the passenger side. He sighed and smiled as he closed the door. When he was in the driver side, he leaned over and kissed me "I seem to be unable to stop kissing you today, but then you are kissing me back," he said smiling again as he let go of me and started the engine. I just grinned and looked out of the window.

Tristan parked in the end of the Dearing house car park telling me, "The tiny parking space by the greenhouse is already full, and Jo has the trailer in there today in order to load the conifer order. So we will walk from here". He was still smiling.

I got out of the truck, but Tristan came around to me and put his arm around my shoulders as we walked over to the greenhouses. It was just far enough for us to discuss the new tunnel-chamber some more

"Tristan I can't help feeling that tunnel-chamber will hold some mystery since you know nothing of it". I said, and he inclined his head to me, and slowing down hugged me a little closer, "Maybe it will, but at least on first glance there is no giant portrait of my father's secret love interest". He kissed my temple and I smiled, "That's true".

When we reached the greenhouses, I could see two people in the first one, they had the side sliding doors open and were loading what looked like tiny empty pots arranged in rows in large flat boxes. They brought these into the greenhouse and placed them along the workbenches in there. Tristan called out to them, "Jo, Andy how's it going, did you get all the conifers loaded?"

A tall red headed girl, her long ponytail swinging as she turned sharply to answer Tristan called back, "We did, since you seemed to have gone for the afternoon. Andy thought we would do you the favour of bringing over the seedlings as well".

Tristan laughed, "Thank you both, I really appreciate the help, I have to go out to the White Wood greenhouses later, and cut some flowers for the weekend wedding order".

The man with the girl, who I assumed was Andy, waited for Tristan and I to get closer then said, "Pleasure Tristan, we'll finish this, there are quite a few more trays, and then we will get off home if that's ok?" He was smiling and had dimples in each cheek, one of which made a crease right down the cheek. He smiled at me too and nodded, Tristan told them who I was, and Jo called hello from outside the greenhouse. Andy smiled more as Tristan answered his original question, "Thanks for this; it will be fine for you to get going I will be here until late now, see you tomorrow".

We left that greenhouse and went into the second one, this was much longer, and Tristan stopped here and there to pinch out a leaf or turn a pot around. He was talking about the flowers for the wedding saying he couldn't get the exact shade of pink that the florist wanted, in the rose they requested, but had been over there yesterday to show him a different breed, that was actually more vibrant. When he stopped for breath, I asked him about the White Wood greenhouses.

"Tristan, I didn't realize you had more greenhouses, I thought the White Wood area had been made into the car park for the arts holiday accommodation".

He turned around gracefully to face me and opened his arms to hold me. "Yes the space there by the house side of the woods is the car park, but through the woods are four more greenhouses. We used to own a house and the land it was on as well, but the greenhouses were fenced off for us to keep as they are part of the whole business; the house and the land beyond that was sold".

"Oh, what about the woods, are they still part of the Dearing estate?" I remembered him saying something had been sold that he had not wanted to lose and I wondered if this was it.

“They are, because it’s part of a reforestation agreement we have with the county forestry commission, that what we use we have to replace, which is cool, I think”. He smiled at me as I watched him talk; I wanted to kiss him.

“It is cool Tristan, and could I just ask is that house and the land, the place you once referred to as having been sold by Jack. Don’t answer if you don’t want to”. I added this as an emotion went across his face that was hard to interpret.

“Yes it was Chloe, it was where I was living, and it was supposed to be agreed that I could live there, since I run the horticultural part of the business, but it got sold and I’m over it. I kind of like my room in the big house now but anyway since I have actually bought the stables, I can live there if needs be. I wasn’t impressed at the time, I had a sneaking suspicion Jack had done it not just for the money, but also to have me less independent. I was probably wrong; in retrospect, it more than likely was just the money”.

I didn’t answer, but I was thinking Jack has had a lot of different motives for things, and maybe all of them factored in what he did. I just looked into Tristan’s eyes and his expression softened, he put his forehead against mine,

“I need to get working, the pink roses are in the White Wood greenhouses, are you coming over there with me?” he kissed me softly at the end of his question.

As if I wasn’t, I was interested to see the place and also I wanted to be with Tristan.

I kissed him back, it gave me an intense feeling; it was like dissolving, and drifting into the atmosphere, whatever was going on with us, it was addictive.

“I am certainly” I managed to say.

He let me go, “Chloe I’m just about to die from”.

I finished the sentence “Wanting to kiss you all the time”.

“What?” he put me at arm’s length “is that how you feel? I was about to say from thirst, so let’s have coffee or tea or something before we go”. He was smiling but maybe it was true. I felt really silly about what I had said, and was about to try and dig myself out of the hole I thought I had put myself in, when he smiled shaking his head.

He held my face, “I’m joking, it’s what you said, I just about can’t think of anything but you. I love you so much and the last couple of months when you seemed more distant, plus there was Emma, Gui, and Corbett to deal with, I was so very sad. Last week I actually felt you love me more again, and I don’t care what else happens, nor if you love Oliver as well, I just want you. Want you to love me too”. He had taken a breath mid-sentence and it had added to the sadness of what he was saying. I just nodded before he kissed me again; I put my arms around him as he hugged me to him. “Tristan I love you, I do”. I told him.

He took my hand and we went out of the greenhouse and down to the truck, he drove us around to the other greenhouses. It was a short drive, but it was along a dirt single-track road that skirted the woods, and passed a fenced-in house on the right side, before diverting once more through the trees, and into a clearing where four greenhouses stood almost side-by-side. There was a big gravel parking space in the front of them and another truck stood there. It was white, single cab with a tray top, and a little newer than this red one we were using.

“Is someone here already?” I asked Tristan as he parked next to the truck.

“Possibly not, it’s sometimes just parked here as someone will come along in their own car, and then they use the truck for the day, and after it gets left here. No problems it’s safe enough. We all just drive anything that’s available; we have

multiple keys”, he laughed as if he had suddenly found that concept funny, and I smiled at him.

There was no one around and Tristan took unmade-up boxes and made them into the long flat ones I had seen him use, I watched him do a couple and then asked if I could help. I found it harder than I expected at first, but soon got the knack, and made the boxes whilst Tristan cut flowers and then put them in the boxes. We soon had twenty boxes of various roses and greenery.

Tristan laughed, “That’s it, and I want to get these to the florist right away, let’s go”. He loaded them into the truck and we left. I noticed nothing had been locked up, I supposed it was the same as with the other greenhouses, but the plants must be valuable.

“Tristan how come you never lock any of the greenhouses”? I asked

“Well you know since they are all glass, if anyone wanted to get in they could, and no-one comes out here anyway”, he shrugged, it didn’t seem to matter.

I looked at the house that used to belong to the Dearings as we passed, it was a big house, really big, and had a formal garden laid out in the front of it, as well as a wide drive up the side. That was all I could take in as we passed.

Tristan was delivering to the florist by the bridal shop, and he double-parked outside it, he glanced at me, “I don’t care if I am double-parked, I just have to deliver these flowers, it will take hardly any time”.

I asked if I could help, but he said no if you would just stay in the truck, and then if anyone asks questions, you can say we are delivering here for two minutes tops.

It was only two minutes as another guy came out to help with the boxes, and we were on our way again, this time back to my place.

The archaeology team were still there, the four-wheel drive and little truck still on the driveway. Steven’s little red car was in the drive next to mom’s Cherokee; she always used a taxi to Heathrow when she went to the States.

Tristan parked on the lane, he stopped the truck and turned to me, “Chloe, I have a staff meeting at the stables at five, we have one once a month, and so I will leave you now, but could I see you later, is anything happening?”

I wanted to see him, “Tristan that will be really good, I would like that”. I smiled at him, as he looked so happy, and he leaned over to me, I reached up to hold his face and kiss him.

I got out of the truck to go into the house, but Tristan met me as I walked around the front and hugged me tight. I was laughing and so was he.

He walked down the drive with me, holding my hand and at the door hugged me again.

“I’ll see you later”, I told him and he nodded.

Inside the house I went down to the big drawing room,

“Hello Lily”, I greeted her as she turned to check who was coming into the room.

“Oh hello Chloe, come and look at the opening we have in the door, tomorrow we are going into the chamber. There have to be a couple of safety checks first, but we have established that the chamber is under the garden path”.

I was looking at the computer screen, “Wow, you have different views now, more cameras I guess, oh is that under croft, that must hold up the roof then under the garden. Wow, is that the water feature it’s bigger than I thought. How do you have the cameras so close if you have not been in the chamber yet?”

I was fascinated; this was going to be great fun actually going in there.

“Well they are all on flexible cables, like the head of a snake, we have fed them in, and turned them to the places we want to see along with rope lighting; but I have to admit, Stefan has actually been just inside the chamber to make sure of a couple of things”.

“This is so exciting, I can’t wait to see what else you find”, I told her and she laughed.

“I know, it’s great work, I’m so lucky to do work I love”.

I nodded at her, “I agree, I’m really happy with what I do at the moment, but I came down here to check if you would like coffee or some tea, I’m going to make some and go back to my college assignment”.

I made them all tea and took my own cup up to my room, to start work again on the assignment I had left hours ago. As I passed the library, I heard soft music, I put my head around the door; it was Steven and John playing acoustic guitars. I said hi as they looked up, and asked Steven if he was having dinner at home. He told me he and John were meeting the other band members at Will’s place and getting burgers on the way so no.

I grinned at this and left them to it.

It was maybe only half an hour later when Steven came to my door, and said the archaeologists were leaving and so were he and John. So I went down and saw them all off; I would see them tomorrow before I went to work at the art and craft holiday project. The archaeology team had left things set up and said that James and Leslie may be here in the morning quite early. I just smiled and nodded, but I hoped that didn’t mean six am or something.

I had finished my assignment, finally, and went down to the kitchen for a drink of water; on the way down the stairs my cell rang and I took it from my pocket noticing it was Oliver calling as I answered.

He had been working all day and was working this evening too, so we were meeting Thursday night at the Kool Kafé where Will’s band was playing the Thursday, and Friday night gigs.

“Hello Chloe, what’s happening, are you having a good day, I miss you”; it was nice to hear his voice and I could picture his face.

“Oliver, how lovely to hear from you, it’s been quite a day, the archaeology team found there is a chamber under the house; I spent some time with Tristan and did a college assignment. How did your work go today?”

Oliver had been doing computer work, re-networking a small business in town and setting up their intranet. I could hear he was smiling as he told me everything had gone really well, and he was working at the restaurant from seven until midnight.

He said he was interested to see the new archaeology findings and asked laughingly if there were any wall paintings in the chamber. We talked for a couple of minutes and then rang off, as he needed to get ready for work.

I was thinking of him as I went back upstairs, even after being so close to Tristan for most of the day, I missed Oliver and would be very happy to see him Thursday night. I was back to my old ways of really loving both he and Tristan, it was not something I was proud of, I felt worse about it now than I had ever felt. I went and looked out of my window, it was growing dark, and there was a chill in the air. I stared out, not seeing the view, I just felt so wretched about having such intense feelings for both Oliver and Tristan again. How was this going to work out? I had practically told Oliver only a couple of weeks ago, that I loved him more than Tristan, but it wasn’t true, if it had ever been. I felt bad for them both, what was the matter with me, how can someone be deep in love with two guys.

I called Clare, she answered straight away, and I launched into my request. "Clare I was thinking maybe we could meet for lunch, maybe Friday, I haven't seen much of you for a couple of weeks".

Clare greeted me, "Hello Chloe, I'd love to meet you Friday, only I am expected at a theatre meeting, will you be at the Kool Kafé tomorrow. I thought everyone was coming out to see Will's band, maybe we could meet a little early then and catch up. James will not be coming down until about nine, so what if we met for supper about six there?"

I told her that would be great and asked how her work with the theatre was going. We talked for a couple more minutes.

I was thinking of finding something to eat for dinner and had wandered down to the fridge, when my cell rang again, "Chloe, hello" it was Tristan, "I was thinking maybe we could go up to the restaurant to eat, would that be ok?" I smiled as I answered him, "Tristan that's a lovely thought what time were you thinking of?"

He nominated seven thirty and I told him that was good; I wouldn't mind cleaning myself up a bit.

I quickly went in the shower and as I dried my hair, I was thinking it seemed to be getting longer, maybe I could get mom to trim the ends when she got home from the States, they looked a bit dry. I put on my new sweater and jeans; I put the new blue belt on and then took it back off. I decided to leave my hair down for a change, and thought about wearing shoes with a bit of a heel but then decided against it and put my boots on. I took my iPad downstairs and set some music going as I made a cup of tea.

Staring out at the garden, lit up as usual in white and yellow lights I could not stop thinking about the situation I was in, I needed to talk to someone and it was going to have to be Clare, but at least I would only have to wait until the next day. I heard Tristan pull onto the gravel driveway in a vehicle and went to let him in the front door; he looked lovely. He had cut his hair, it was much shorter than he usually had it, spiked and very slightly longer at the front, it really suited him, and he looked great. His dark blue shirt bringing out the colour of his eyes and making his hair look darker, he stopped in the doorway, "Chloe you look lovely".

I took his hand, "I was just thinking the same thing about you, you changed your hair, it's gorgeous," I told him as we went into the kitchen.

He turned me around and kissed me; I put my arms up around his neck and kissed him back. It didn't matter right then about all the things I had been thinking, before he arrived, it didn't matter that I loved both he and Oliver; I couldn't help but kiss and hug him close.

Tristan smiled as he moved back from me, "Oliver is working at the restaurant tonight isn't he?" I nodded in answer and he continued, "Well if I am not as affectionate as I have been today, that will be the reason why, which you would probably have guessed, but I thought I would make it clear".

I smiled at him, "I would have guessed".

It was a little cold; autumn was already well established, it had developed faster, and become colder than expected after our lovely summer, we decided I would drive us up to 'Peacocks' in my Wrangler.

Even so when we went into the restaurant, we naturally went out to the terrace tables; I knew dad was thinking of putting some form of heating out there on the terrace, because everyone loved sitting at those tables, with the view of the lake close by.

“Do you really want to be out here Chloe, it’s a bit cool?” Tristan asked and we moved to just inside the restaurant, at the end tables, as Oliver came along to see us. He looked great and was grinning at us, “Hello, this is nice to see you; I hope you both came to see me, more than for dinner. Excellent haircut Tristan,” he observed.

Tristan laughed, “Sorry Oliver it’s probably about half and half, half to see you, and half for dinner, and yes I thought it was time I changed my appearance, a little at least. You know put people off the notion I don’t age”.

Oliver turned to me, looking lovingly at me, “Did you finish the assignment you had? Hey how about that new find under the house?” he included Tristan then, looking from one to the other of us.

“I know, it’s incredible, I can’t wait to see it properly, I never asked Chloe; did Don or anyone say anything else when they left tonight?” Tristan was talking happily.

I watched Tristan, and Oliver standing near our table, there was no sign of anything other than friendship; I felt that I had better preserve that by being very careful how I treated them both.

I smiled at them.

“Lily, the lovely girl archaeologist, told me they have established the chamber is under the garden path, and there are safety checks tomorrow, before they go in it. I saw vaulted ceilings on the computer this evening, before they packed up; it’s all well-made down there by the looks of it. The water feature seemed bigger to me too, I think it could be a total blast going in there”.

“Wow it sounds excellent fun, I’d love to see it all, maybe I could drop by and see it soon,” Oliver said and Tristan added, “Me too, what are we doing Friday?”

I grinned and shook my head, “Me, nothing important so far, Oliver?” I asked.

He smiled, “Well not free until afternoon”.

Tristan sighed, “Not free until about six”.

I smiled, “We could meet at the house around six, how about that, Don and team will be gone and we can snoop big time”.

Both Oliver and Tristan smiled and nodded, “Ok let’s do that” Tristan said.

“Are you ordering now, because I may have to go to another table if not?” Oliver asked.

We did order and Oliver went off to pass it in.

I smiled at Tristan; he was sitting opposite me and out of reach, which was a good thing. He smiled back, “You will be at the Kool Kafé tomorrow night Chloe; I guess so will Oliver”. It was as if he was making sure of it.

I nodded at him, “Yes, we are meeting down there; I thought you were coming too, I will be down there with Clare early, we are meeting to catch up”.

“I will come down, because about the last time I was there, something spoilt the night for me”, he smiled but then became serious, and put his hand across the table, which was an invitation to me to hold it.

I did hold his hand for just a few seconds, he was referring to Emma stabbing me, and I smiled at him a little. He sat back in his chair and sighed, giving me a look that made me feel like risking kissing him, but I didn’t.

Oliver brought our order and grinned as he put it down, “Your dad said I could take my break with you in half an hour, will it be an intrusion?”

Tristan spoke first, “Certainly not, it’ll be good don’t you agree Chloe?”

I grinned at his friendliness and courtesy, “That will be nice Oliver”.

When Oliver had gone I looked questioningly at Tristan, I didn’t need to voice anything,

“Seriously Chloe, its ok with me that Oliver join us, we are all friends besides everything else, let’s not forget that” Tristan said.

I nodded, “Yes I know, I agree, and I can’t tell you how wretched I sometimes feel about my behaviour, I mean caring for both of you” I tailed off.

Tristan just gave me a caring look; I didn’t say more, what was there to say.

When Oliver came over for his break, he surprised us by telling us that he was thinking of having a party for his birthday.

“Oliver when is your birthday?” I asked him smiling; I was delighted to hear this.

“Yes Oliver when is it, and how old should you be”? Tristan grinned at us both, as Oliver had pulled a chair a bit closer to me than Tristan.

Oliver laughed, “It’s in about three week’s time, well nearly four, twenty fifth of next month, and I should be twenty”.

I sighed, “Really Oliver, that soon, I suppose the years still add up we just will not show them huh?” I looked at Tristan as I said this and he nodded.

“That’s about it Chloe; when is your birthday?”

Oliver looked at me with his eyebrows raised a little in question too, and Tristan smiled again at us both.

“December fifth, and you know what Tristan, I have been meaning to ask when your birthday is for months now, ever since Will and Steven’s party in fact but somehow didn’t get around to it”.

Oliver looked questioningly at Tristan he was interested too.

“Funnily enough, it’s fifteenth of December, if I remember rightly, though I can’t say I have celebrated it for well, a few hundred years actually”. He didn’t seem worried by this, but Oliver looked at me, and I thought I saw a look of sympathy go across his face.

I’m not really into star-sign stuff, but I had a friend in California who was, and almost planned her day around horoscopes she looked up on the internet each night, so I knew my star sign, and I knew we were all the same one.

“Guys, we are all Sagittarians, do you realize, how weird is that?” I informed them.

“Well it is I suppose” Oliver shrugged his shoulders.

Tristan just shrugged too, “I know nothing about it”.

I smiled, “Where will you have your party Oliver?”

“I don’t know, not a big huge thing but a get together you know”.

“Perhaps we should all three have a huge joint party on the lawns on your birthday Oliver,” I suggested.

“We could, if it was not likely to be cold or throwing with rain” Oliver grinned.

“Also it doesn’t seem fair to crash Oliver’s day really”, Tristan said, and added, “Plus I’d prefer not to draw attention to myself, I mean really people may ask how old I am, and it could get awkward”.

I hadn’t thought of this and it appeared that neither had Oliver, as he looked thoughtful.

“Maybe we could just have a get together in the Kool Kafé, I’d be pleased to do a joint celebration with you Chloe, since your birthday is only eleven days later. Maybe it will be the last time we broadcast our ages, since we are never going to look any older than we do now”.

Tristan sighed, “Sorry, I feel somehow as if I have put a dampener on your plans Oliver”.

Oliver shook his head, “No, not so, don’t think like that, we will secretly celebrate your birthday this year too, so don’t think you are getting away with it”.

Oliver was so nice. I looked at them both for a moment, both so attractive, such lovely guys; if anyone said to me Chloe, you have to choose between them now, or disappear in a puff of smoke and that’s that, I couldn’t choose, I would have no ability to do it and so would go up in a puff of smoke. It almost made me smile thinking this, but the fundamental seriousness of loving them both stopped the smile from reaching my lips.

“My break is up really”, Oliver was saying as I tuned back in.

“Oliver we can all talk about your party on Friday evening”, I suggested as he stood up.

“Ok, good idea”, he replied and for a few seconds it looked as if he was going to bend and kiss me, but then he caught himself and smiling at both Tristan and I, went back to work.

Tristan had a slightly sad expression on his face, “He nearly kissed you goodbye then, you realize”, he commented and took a drink of his coffee.

I took a deep breath and nodded slightly.

“You know once in the last couple of months, when we were a little surprised by events, and you and Oliver were leaving in the Landrover, I think; you both kissed me. Oliver on my cheek on the left as he got into the driver’s side and when I went around to the passenger side with you, then you on my right cheek. I don’t think either of you noticed, and I didn’t even think about it until a while later, but it was there”.

Tristan laughed out loud, “Really”.

I was surprised at his reaction and sat there silently for a moment gathering my thoughts.

“You really are not jealous of Oliver at all are you Tristan?” I finally asked.

“No, you don’t want me to be, do you, that was a strange tone you used there?”

“What no, never” I answered.

“I start being sad, not jealous, but only when you seem to stop caring for me”, Tristan elaborated and he looked intently at me.

I answered him, “I lost sight of how much you meant to me for the barest time, and a little bit of that was thinking you might want to be with Emma, I’m so sorry, I don’t know what I was thinking of”. It was true, I don’t know.

He smiled and reached across the table for my hand, he didn’t even look around to check who saw. He held my hand for a minute, and looked straight into my eyes, something that totally unnerved me, and I closed my eyes to break the spell between us.

“Maybe we should go Chloe, what do you think?”

Tristan waited until we had gone half way across the car park before he put his arm around my shoulders. He kissed my cheek as I got into my Wrangler and laughed a little at the gesture, no doubt remembering what I had just told him.

When we got home Tristan hesitated for a moment, “Chloe I was thinking, it’s not that late, you don’t work until the afternoon tomorrow, maybe we could spend a little more time together before I leave”.

I turned to him across the transmission, “I’d like that Tristan”.

Inside we naturally went into the big kitchen, I checked the dishwasher, as I had put the dishes from the day in there before I left earlier. Tristan surprisingly didn’t

make coffee, but looked out at the garden lights and the darkness that was the woods.

“I can’t imagine life before you came to live here, I don’t know what I used to do with myself”, he said as I went to stand near him.

I took his hand, “I love you too Tristan”, I told him softly.