



Yours 2 Keep

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She watched him for a moment, her eyes on his strong, sensitive hands. He molded the metal with a deft and delicate touch, using the flame of a gas lamp to soften each sheath and his fingers more than tools to shape it.

He was in shirtsleeves again today, his coat discarded over a nearby chair, and in the bright light of day the white linen emphasized the breadth and power of his shoulders.

The painting and photograph she remembered so well had caught that power in him, the innate strength and vitality even while he was still. Accustomed to powerful beings, Felicia was wholly fascinated by John Sinclair, because the strength and intensity in him were of mind and muscle and sheer force of will; he owed nothing of what he was to anything that was not utterly, completely human.

And very, very male.

She had never expected to meet him in the flesh, never prepared herself for the shock to her senses that was his voice. And she had certainly never allowed herself to even imagine his touch.

But he was alive. *Alive*. And here, with her. A hundred years no longer stood between them. Age and the dusty finality of death no longer stood between them.

And the word *impossible* no longer seemed so undeniable.

Yours
 **2**
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Kay Hooper



Seattle

December 31, 1999

Felicity Grant circled the artifact slowly, studying it from every angle. It resembled nothing so much as a doorway, minus surrounding walls and a door itself. Just a thin frame of some kind of metal, fastened to an oval base that seemed to be made of smooth, polished stone. The metal had a greenish patina.

“It’s obviously a gate,” she announced with the confidence of the young and untried.

Richard Merlin, who was sitting on the edge of his desk looking through a very old and heavy book, lifted his gaze to his Apprentice. “Thank you,” he said dryly.

Felicity had the grace to blush, but kept her chin high. “Well, isn’t it?”

His black, curiously brilliant eyes held a slight amusement. “Touch it,” he instructed.

She obeyed, and almost immediately jerked her hand away. After a moment, she touched again, her fingertips resting gently against the metal. “Power,” she whispered. “It feels ... There’s almost a heartbeat.”

“Yes. After at least a hundred years.”

Felicity turned quickly to stare at him. “You said it was uncovered just a few months ago but couldn’t someone else have found it—used it—in the last century?”

“I think not,” Richard replied. “It was discovered in a sealed room within Sinclair’s house in London. Until the present owner began to remodel and knocked down a wall, this artifact had been entombed since the turn of the century.”

“And they notified you?”

He smiled. “The present owner is on the Council of Elders, and knew very well my interest in Sinclair. He thought I’d be the best person to investigate.”

“Did the Elder touch this? Did he feel the power?”

“Of course. His opinion is that this artifact is partially wizard-made.”

“But you believe Sinclair built it.”

“Yes.”

Felicity cast herself into a chair near the artifact and frowned at it. “Well, that doesn’t make any sense. John Sinclair was an inventor, yes, even a visionary and an undoubtedly brilliant man ahead of his time, but he wasn’t a wizard. Was he?”

“No.”

“You’re sure?”

“Quite sure.”

“And a hundred years ago,” Felicity mused, “it was more or less the way it is now, with people of power hiding their abilities from powerless people. So it isn’t likely he knew a wizard—or was aware that he knew one.”

“According to our records,” Merlin said, “Sinclair was never approached by a man or a woman of power. He was known to the Council during his time because of his fine intellect and remarkably forward-thinking views, but his power was totally of the mind and quite human. Interesting to us, but hardly something we would have interfered with in any way.”

“Then how was this artifact influenced by someone with a wizard’s power?”

“That is the puzzle, isn’t it?”

Felicity steepled her fingers together and stared at the artifact over them. “Hmmm.”

Merlin studied her as she studied the artifact. A young woman with an unusual beauty, she had long hair so fair it was nearly silver, catlike green eyes so vivid they were almost iridescent, and an expression of such life and vitality that even strangers couldn’t help but smile at her.

For the past five years, since her eighteenth birthday, she had lived in this house as the Apprentice of Merlin and his wife Serena, both Master Wizards. She’d been a late bloomer as a wizard, coming into her full powers in her late teens rather than years earlier as was the norm, and because of that and her few years training, she was still lacking in control. She was as apt to destroy with her powers as to create, and had to be monitored carefully, especially since those newly unleashed powers were rather remarkable.

If she didn’t learn complete control soon, it was possible her own raw ability could destroy her. But both Merlin and Serena believed in her, and they were committed to teaching her.

As he watched, Felicity pulled herself from the chair and went over to a small wooden crate near the artifact. “All this stuff, these books and papers, belonged to Sinclair?”

“They were found with the artifact.”

“Then they might tell us if it is a gate, and what he used it for—or intended to use it for?”

Merlin nodded. “Possibly, although we won’t know until everything is studied. I thought you might wish to be the first to go through the box.”

“Yes. Yes, I would.” Felicity felt heat rise in her face. She was more than a little disconcerted to realize that her Master was aware of what she had believed was her secret obsession. She’d thought herself able to hide her own feelings from even a Master Wizard. She had been wrong, obviously.

If her blush betrayed her further, Merlin gave no sign of seeing it. His voice was calm with self-possession, which came from an absolute mastery of his incredible powers. “I know you weren’t looking forward to the party tonight, so if you’d rather, you may remain here and go through the box.”

“Serena won’t be upset with me?”

“No, of course not.” He closed the book and set it aside on his desk as he got to his feet. “But keep everything here in the study, understand?”

Felicity did understand. This room was insulated, protected by Merlin’s own power; like the workroom upstairs, it would contain any uncontrolled surges of energy. “You mean you think something in this box may hold power just as the artifact does?”

“I think it’s best to be safe,” he said, moving toward the door with easy grace, though his deceptively lazy movements almost concealing the astonishing strength that helped make him the most powerful wizard to walk the face of modern-day Earth. “Treat anything you don’t understand with respect, Felicity.”

Alone in the quiet room, Felicity stood for a moment just gazing toward the wooden crate

Then she drew a breath and went to a particular section of the bookshelves. Most of the shelves were filled with books and scrolls that were literally ancient and virtually pulsed with power, containing as they did the history and wisdom of an ancient and powerful people. But this particular section held more recent books, on subjects other than wizards and wizardry.

The book Felicity chose was clearly well read, a biography of a remarkable man named John Sinclair. Born in London in 1865 to wealthy, unusually learned parents, he had demonstrated his own precociousness by mastering several languages, higher mathematics, and at least three sciences before he reached his teens. By his mid-twenties, he had invented half a dozen gadgets that had made factory production more efficient, had written and published five books—three of them novels with astoundingly accurate predictions of what the world would be like in the coming century—and was well known as a passionate and outspoken advocate for reforms designed to improve the lot of the common man.

And woman. A man definitely ahead of his time, he had also championed women's rights and worked to change both laws and attitudes to give women more rights and freedoms.

Despite that—or perhaps because of it—he had never married. His biographer had found evidence of many friendships with women, and a few more intimate relationships, but either John Sinclair had never met the right woman, or his energy and attention had been taken up with his scientific, creative, and political pursuits.

The book Felicity was holding opened naturally to a page that had often held her attention. Her fascination, if she were honest about the matter.

On the left-hand page was a painting of Sinclair at twenty-one; on the right-hand page, a photograph taken of him before his thirty-fifth birthday in 1900. Not long before he vanished without a trace.

The younger Sinclair was smiling, his eyes bright and direct with confidence, almost arrogance. He was dark; his hair was black and his skin unusually swarthy for an Englishman of the last century. Broad shoulders spoke of physical power just beginning, and his relaxed, easy stance indicated an uncommon grace. His hands were beautiful, strong and long-fingered, while his face ...

Felicity loved his face. It was not conventionally handsome; there was too much strength and character in it for that. His black brows slanted upward toward his temples, flying above eyes that were a clear, pale gray. His nose was strong and clearly defined, his mouth just hinting at a sensitivity in the curve of the fuller lower lip, and his jaw was determined.

It was a face of a brilliant, complex man.

But it was the photograph that had haunted her dreams since she'd first seen it months ago. Taken more than a dozen years after the painting was done, this picture was of a mature man, broad shoulders heavy with physical power realized, still graceful in stance, still confident in attitude.

But there was something different about him. Whereas the painting showed a confident young idealist, this picture was more ambiguous. The confidence was there, yes, but the idealism seemed worn, partially eroded by the years and the inevitable failed attempts to change the things that were wrong in his life and his world.

Still, though his optimism might have taken a bruising, his brilliance was, if anything, stronger and more acute. It burned in his eyes, an intellect so dynamic it had a life all its own. His face was harder, the planes of it smooth, the angles sharp, and that sensitive mouth

was held more rigid in a control earned over years.

And the expression on that face ... It always caught at Felicity's heart and stopped her breath. She had never been able to define it, but it was so subtle and wrenching it drew her back again and again to stare and wonder.

She touched the picture gently, then placed the book back on the shelf. Why did this long dead man from another time obsess her so? She didn't know.

"Felicity?"

She turned quickly to see Serena come into the study. Merlin's wife was dressed for an evening party in a beautiful red dress that flattered rather than clashed with her vibrant coloring, and only the merest curve to her belly gave evidence of her pregnancy.

"I hear you aren't going to the party," she said with a smile. Her face was so serene it was clear her parents had named her well. Although according to her, it had taken her many years, and a tumultuous relationship with Richard Merlin before they were married, to earn that priceless contentment.

"Richard said I could stay here and go through all this stuff from Sinclair's secret room."

"Seems a quiet way to ring in the new year—and the new millennium," Serena said gently. "But very like you. Are you sure? Your friends will be there."

"I know. I just ... I don't feel much like a party."

Perceptively, Serena said, "Richard told you about the Council's warning."

Felicity returned to the chair near the artifact, and grimaced. "Yeah. It's their judgment that I've had enough time and training to know how to control my powers, and the fact that I haven't yet been able to do so consistently indicates that it may be an ability I'll never have. She recited the damning words with a coolness she hardly felt. "They've given me six months more. After that ..." She shrugged. "After that, they step in."

"The most they would do is reduce the level of your powers to bring them within your control. Richard did tell you that?"

"He told me. But, Serena, I don't want to lose any of it. My powers are *mine*. They make me who I am. If I give up any part of them, then I'm diminished. I'm less than what I was meant to be. How is that fair?"

"It isn't, of course. But the Council has to consider the rights and needs of all wizards, not just one. And if your powers escape your control at a time when neither Richard nor I are there to dampen the results, it could have an effect on all of us, Felicity. You know that."

She knew. But it didn't make the judgment of the Council easier to bear. "Dammit, why can't I find the switch? I imagine Richard always had a finger on his, but you said you didn't find yours until you were older than I am now."

Serena hesitated, then said slowly, "Yes, at a moment of great personal pain and turmoil."

Felicity scowled. "Well, if I don't find mine in the next six months, my moment of great personal pain and turmoil will come when the Council calls me before them to take away part of my powers."

"We'll find a way, Felicity."

"I know you'll try. So will I." She managed a faint smile. "Anyway, that explains why I'm not in the mood for a party, even to ring in the new millennium. I'll make myself a pot of tea and spend the evening trying to figure out if John Sinclair built this and what he intended to use it for. It should occupy my mind."

“He usually does, doesn’t he?”

The question had been quite mild, but Felicity felt herself blushing again. Dammit, did everybody know?

With dignity, she said, “He was a fascinating man.”

Serena nodded gravely. “Yes. He was.”

Felicity tried to think of something else to say, but she was rescued when Merlin stepped into the study, dressed for the evening all in black and looking as handsome as usual.

“Ready to go, love?” His voice was different when he spoke to his wife, lower and softer, and his face and eyes reflected a depth of emotion that even the least observant could define easily. He adored his wife, and he was not in the least self-conscious about it.

Serena turned toward him, her smile changing, her eyes glowing with a matching love, and Felicity felt a stab of pure envy.

“I’m ready, darling.” She went to join him.

Felicity sighed. “Have fun, you two.”

“Keep this door closed,” Merlin reminded automatically.

“Yes, Master.” It was only a little bit sarcastic.

Merlin sent her a look, brows slightly raised, but didn’t comment. He shut the study door behind him and Serena, and a few moments later the front door quietly closed.

Alone in the silent study, Felicity carefully built a fire in the fireplace and was more relieved than she wanted to admit when she conjured a normal blaze rather than the inferno she had created the last time she’d tried. She fixed herself a pot of tea the old-fashioned way and then settled down in her chair with the small crate of John Sinclair’s papers and books within easy reach.

It was a rainy, fairly miserable night, but as time passed Felicity was less and less aware of the outside world. She sorted the contents of the crate first, stacking books and gathering papers together in a pile. There were several journals, which she reluctantly put aside for later, one surprising and fanciful book on magic, one on electricity, and a final volume that seemed to be a workbook filled with diagrams and notes in John Sinclair’s clear and beautiful handwriting.

Most of the sketches and diagrams were beyond her understanding, though she did recognize what looked like an embryonic radio and television, something that might have been a radar, and a primitive computer. The notes made little sense, as they went far beyond her own scientific knowledge, until she found on one page what she slowly realized was the theory of relativity. The date on the page was 1898.

“Wow, John. I think you had the jump on Einstein.” She felt an odd little thrill of pride. The famous scientist hadn’t advanced his theory until after the turn of the century.

On the following page, scrawled as though it had been a fleeting thought, was the equation $E=mc^2$, a foundation stone in the development of atomic energy, and also credited to Einstein.

She wondered what would have happened if this workbook had been discovered just after Sinclair’s disappearance, how history might have been changed. It was a sobering thought.

Felicity was about to put the workbook aside when a slip of paper fell out, and she saw with another jolt a diagram of the artifact just a few feet away from her.

His notes identified it as a portal, and she gathered that his intent was to build

teleportation device—a way of moving instantaneously from one place to another. He had chosen to fashion the frame from beaten copper, thin plates of which were molded around a delicate wooden skeleton, and the stone base was taken from the ruins of Stonehenge.

Felicity blinked. Stonehenge? The base stone must be a fragment that had broken away from one of those huge stones.

Sinclair didn't explain his reasons for choosing such a stone, though Felicity couldn't help wondering if he had believed there was an unusual energy in that ancient place. He wouldn't have been the first, though certainly the first she knew of to try to harness some of that energy.

According to his notes, Sinclair planned to connect his invention to a source of electricity, thus providing it with the power necessary to teleport a person to another place. As far as Felicity could tell, his plans had not advanced to the point of providing some means of determining just where the portal would deliver that person. Was that another reason for the base stone? Had Sinclair believed a traveler would end up at Stonehenge? Perhaps. It made a certain kind of sense.

Felicity hesitated. It would be, she knew, totally irresponsible of her to experiment with the portal while she was alone. Totally. Merlin would not be happy with her, especially if something went wrong.

But what could go wrong? She was in Merlin's study, safe and protected from even her own wayward powers. And she really wanted to be able to tell her Master Wizard the precise capabilities of the portal when he came home. And nothing was going to go wrong, anyway.

Besides, she really wanted to know if Sinclair's most ambitious invention actually worked.

A small voice in her head reminded her that he had disappeared without a trace, possibly as a result of stepping through a faulty portal, but Felicity didn't let that stop her. She was a wizard, after all. Besides, she had no intention of stepping through the device herself.

Not until she knew if it would work.

She left the study to get what she needed, noting in passing that the grandfather clock in the foyer showed just past eleven-thirty. It would be at least a couple of hours before Merlin and Serena got home. Good. That should be enough time.

She found the set of modified jumper cables right where she'd left them months before when she'd been conducting a few experiments to better understand the nature of electricity. A wizard could not control what she did not understand, so study was necessary, and electricity was something about which she was still uncertain.

She took the cables to the study and shut the door. It took her a good ten minutes to maneuver the heavy portal close enough to the nearest electrical outlet. Then she carefully fastened the positive and negative clamps into place on the copper part of the portal, following the general ideas in Sinclair's diagram.

"If I blow up the house," she muttered, "Richard will kill me. Worse, the Council will take away a large portion of my powers."

That possibility made her hesitate, but only for a few moments. Curiosity drove her. Keeping her distance from the portal, she cautiously plugged the other end of the cables into the outlet.

There was a sort of swooshing sound, a shower of sparks fell from the copper frame onto the base stone, and a low, vibrant hum filled the room. As she watched, the greenish copper

began to glow, not hotly but with a weird radiance.

“Wow.” Felicity circled the portal slowly. She thought she could discern a very faint shimmer in the center of the portal. Excited, she looked around until she found something she could use to perform a little test, and settled on a paperback book she had brought into the room earlier. Standing well back, she tossed it into the center of the portal.

It disintegrated with an angry hiss.

“Yikes. That isn’t good.” She frowned. “But John would have tested it, too. Surely he would have. Maybe there’s too much power....”

The words had barely escaped her lips when she heard the grandfather clock in the foyer chime the hour of midnight. Promptly, all the lights in the study flickered, dimming and then going much too bright.

“Oh, jeez—the Y2K bug strikes.” The portal was glowing brighter and brighter. The only thought in her head was that she had to unplug the portal quickly, before the power surge destroyed it. Being a wizard, she instinctively reached her hand out and sent her powers to grab the cables.

As her energy stream flowed through the device, she saw the glowing doorway change, as if the color suddenly turn from green to bright red. The shimmer in the center became a mass of swirling colors, and tendrils of those colors shot out both sides, as if reaching for something.

A tendril touched Felicity’s outstretched hand.

The tendril of energy captured her, and within the space of a heartbeat pulled her into the portal.

It was like falling into a black well.

The trip might have lasted seconds—or months. Felicity saw colors she'd never seen before, heard sounds she couldn't define, and knew she was totally at the mercy of a force she had unthinkingly set in motion.

Then, abruptly, it was over. She felt her weight as if she'd just stepped down from something high, felt dizzy and disoriented and a little sick. The silence was absolute.

She realized she had her eyes closed, and opened them very cautiously.

For just an instant, she thought she was still in Merlin's study. There were books on shelves, a big desk cluttered with papers and more books, a fire burning in the fireplace. But that's where the resemblance ended. The light in the room came from old-fashioned sconces on the walls and an oil or kerosene desk lamp. The rug on the floor was different, and the two tall windows looked out on darkness, with hints of a skyline she dared not recognize.

"Dear God."

The voice, though it was strained with shock, affected her oddly, seeming to brush along her nerve endings in a caress that was more than pleasant. She wanted to enjoy it, to take that voice and wrap it around her, but she had a strong hunch she had more imperative things to attend to.

She realized her hands were gripping the frame of the portal, that she was standing squarely in the center of the stone base. Unnerved, she released the portal and stepped quickly out of it, then turned to see who had spoken.

He stood a few feet to one side, holding in one hand a fair duplicate of the cables she had used. He was in shirtsleeves, and something about their style struck Felicity as a bit off. It wasn't wrong exactly, just different. But she wasn't all that interested in his clothes; she was more caught by his face, which she knew almost as well as she knew her own.

John Sinclair.

The powerful emotions created in her by his picture in a book were nothing compared to her reaction to the living man standing before her. For a moment, she couldn't breathe. The feelings were a strange and restless tangle inside her, so strong they were almost painful, and the only thing she recognized clearly was an attraction so instant that she actually took a step toward him before she could stop herself.

It was like the instinctive pull toward the warmth of candlelight shining in total darkness.

"Who are you?" he asked slowly, that beautiful voice still strained. "Where did you come from?" His pale eyes flicked to the portal and then back to her, and in them was both the excitement of an inventor whose creation has performed beyond his wildest expectations—and the utter disbelief of a man of reason in the fantastic.

Felicity drew a breath and tried to keep her own confusion and panic under control. What had she done? What on earth had she *done*?

"My name is Felicity Grant. And I came—through the portal."

“How is that possible?”

She crossed her arms beneath her breasts, thinking absently that the way she was dressed—in jeans and a sweater—was probably a shock to him. “Well, you tell me. You designed and built the damned thing.”

He seemed to realize he was still holding the cables, and cast them aside as he took a couple of steps toward her. “You know who I am?”

“You’re John Sinclair.” She concentrated on keeping her voice calm and level, deciding for the sake of her sanity to take this one step at a time. “Listen, before we get into anything else, I have to know something. Where am I?”

He blinked. “My home in Grosvenor Square. London.”

She swallowed. “And the date?”

“The date? The twenty-eighth of December, 1899.”

A hundred years. No—more than a hundred years.

She frowned at him, trying to make sense of what she didn’t understand. “That isn’t right. It’s three days until New Year’s Eve. How could I ...” Her gaze strayed to the portal and the discarded cables, and she had a thought. “Is this the first time you’ve connected that thing to electricity?”

“Yes.”

“Then that must be it.” She looked at him and drew another deep breath. “Surprise. Your portal works. Only it doesn’t just move people from place to place. It also moves them through time.”

“That isn’t possible,” he said, taking another step toward her.

“Time is relative, remember? I believe that’s a pet theory of yours.” There was a wing-back chair nearby, and Felicity went to sit in it, feeling more than a little shaky.

He frowned. “How do you know that?”

“I know it because I looked through your workbook and saw it written there. And I know you, because I read about you in a book. A history book. A hundred years from now.”

Sinclair didn’t move a muscle for a long while, but then he came forward far enough to be able to study her carefully, which he did. The shock was lessening, but he was still obviously far from convinced. “I must admit, your manner of dress is unfamiliar to me. And your voice, your way of speaking—”

“I’m from America.”

“I’ve never met an American before.”

Felicity suddenly felt like a zoo exhibit, and had to smile. “I’ve never met a Brit, if it comes to that. But here we are. The thing is, I’m supposed to be thousands of miles and a hundred years away from here.”

“I’m finding it very difficult to believe that you came from the future.”

“You saw me come through the portal?”

“I—saw you appear, yes.”

“Where did I come from?”

He hesitated, then said, “From another place, obviously. But another time? The portal was not designed for such travel, even had I believed it possible.”

Felicity considered the matter, calling on all the discipline of an Apprentice Wizard to concentrate when too many emotions and sensations pulled her in other directions. “I think

there was a glitch—a problem you couldn't have anticipated. I'd connected the portal to an electrical source a hundred years from now, and there was a power surge."

"You connected the portal?"

She didn't blame him for being confused. "A few months ago—in my time—your portal was discovered in a sealed room in your home. This house, I gather. It was sent to—to a man who was interested in your work. I was the one who went through a crate of your books and papers, and found a diagram of the portal. Just as an experiment, I ... hooked it up to an electrical source."

Long accustomed to hiding from powerless beings the fact that she was a wizard, Felicity was uncertain now if she should tell this man. If the gate worked purely on electricity ... But she had a hollow feeling that it was her own energy directed through the portal that had thrown her back in time. And if that were so, then she would need the same energy to get home.

Assuming she could get home.

She drew a breath to quash the surge of panic. "And the next thing I knew, I was here."

"A hundred years in your past."

"Yes."

Sinclair shook his head.

Felicity leaned back in the chair and stared at him. Quietly, she said, "A lot of your ... dreams have become reality. We can sit hundreds or thousands of miles away from where a ... play is taking place and watch it on a little box in our homes. It's called television. We fly in jet-powered airplanes, crossing the oceans of the world in just hours, and communicate with one another almost instantaneously. We sit at our desks and use machines to collect and sort information and to send electronic messages to one another, and that's just a tiny part of what computers do."

She paused, then added, "And many of the social reforms you've fought for have come about. We still have poor and disadvantaged people, but at least in your country and mine we also have social programs to help them, and laws to protect them and their rights. No more workhouses. Fewer class distinctions as you know them. As for women, we have the right to vote and own property in all the free countries of the world, and we can be educated and work at any profession we wish. As a matter of fact, your own country had a woman serving as prime minister until a few years ago."

That last seemed to satisfy rather than astound him, and his mouth curved in a slight smile. "It sounds like Utopia."

Felicity gave a half laugh, half sigh. "No. No, the world I live in is far from perfect. We have plenty of problems, both old and new. But I have to believe the world is improving even if only in fits and starts."

He fell silent once more, then said, "I cannot believe this."

Felicity made up her mind. "It gets better," she told him, not without sympathy. "Or worse, depending on your point of view. I'm not exactly an ... ordinary woman."

"I can well believe that."

She felt heat rise in her face at something in his voice, but kept her own matter-of-fact. "Don't think you'll believe this. I'm a wizard."

Sinclair put a hand out to find a chair and sat down carefully. "I see."

“Told you you wouldn’t believe it.” She sighed. “But that I can prove. If, that is, I can control—Never mind.” Remembering the book on magic she’d found among his belongings, she said, “Do you know anything about magic?”

“I know it is sleight of hand.” The faint note in his voice told Felicity he’d been disillusioned, and it made her hopeful.

She stood up, pleased to find her legs no longer so shaky. “Okay. Is this sleight of hand?” With a slight, graceful gesture, she conjured her long black Apprentice’s robe and donned it.

Sinclair blinked.

“I see you aren’t convinced. Let’s see ...” She didn’t tell him she had to choose carefully. Some basic spells demanded little energy, and she was confident of her ability to control them. Other spells were more demanding, and she dared not risk attempting them.

Felicity spent the next ten minutes convincing John Sinclair that magic was indeed real. She moved books off his shelves, levitated objects—including the chair, with him in it—made the fire in the fireplace blaze high and then die down to embers and blaze high again, formed a ball of energy between her hands and made it arc and swirl, and turned his favorite footstool into a pile of ash.

“Damn! I’m sorry.”

“Think nothing of it.” Astonishingly, he smiled. His eyes were very bright. “So. A wizard.”

Felicity got rid of her black robe with a slight gesture and sat down again. “A wizard. And I think your portal sent me back here because I accidentally used some of my own energy at the exact moment there was a power surge. Now, I don’t know much about the space-time continuum, but I’m guessing that because this was the first time you connected the portal with electricity, you opened a doorway into this time. And because I was ... experimenting with the very same portal a hundred years from now, I inadvertently opened the other doorway—and got pulled into it.”

Sinclair leaned forward, elbows on his knees, and stared at her, vivid interest in his eyes. “So in order to become a vehicle for time travel, there must be two doorways—the same portal in two different time periods—both activated with electricity simultaneously.”

Felicity chewed on her lower lip. “I think so. Damn, I hope the Y2K bug didn’t crash the power at home. If it—”

“Y2K bug? What on earth is that?”

She shook her head. “It’s much too long a story to go into. Let’s just say that with advancing technology come some very ... interesting problems. The point is, if the portal in my time remains activated, I should be able to get back home. I think.” She turned her brooding gaze to the portal, looking at it clearly for the first time since her arrival. And we were cold.

“Wait a minute.” She got to her feet and went to the portal, moving slowly. “This isn’t right. It isn’t finished.” The wooden frame was covered with copper sheathing in only two spots—where Sinclair had attached the power cables, most likely.

He joined her, a little puzzled. “It isn’t?”

Felicity tried her best to remember his diagram. “You planned to encase the entire frame in copper.”

Sinclair went to his desk, then returned to her with a piece of paper. On it was the diagram Felicity had seen—but without the penciled note stating the entire frame would be sheathed

in copper. “I had no such plan. The copper plates on either side of the frame were intended only to create an electrical field, not to enclose the entire structure.”

Felicity looked up at him, far more aware of his nearness and its effect on her than she wanted to admit to herself. “But the portal we found was completely encased in copper. When I attached the cables, it glowed, and there was a shimmer in the center, a distortion—of space and time, I guess.”

He nodded slowly. “It makes sense that more power and a larger electrical field would be required to transport a traveler through time rather than simply over distance.”

“Do you have enough copper to finish the job?”

“No, but I can have it delivered tomorrow.”

They looked at each other for a moment in silence. Felicity fought a sudden and almost overpowering urge to slip her arms around his waist and lean against his powerful body. She wanted to touch him, and badly.

She took a step back, removing herself from temptation and trying very hard to think logically. “What bothers me is the fact that I don’t have enough power to duplicate a large electrical surge.” *Not power I can control, anyway.* “If we can’t match the conditions exactly, it won’t work. Either I’ll end up somewhere else, maybe in another time or place or ...” She remembered the book she’d thrown into the portal and watched disintegrate, and swallowed hard.

He lifted a hand, hesitated long enough to make them both conscious of it, then placed it on her shoulder and squeezed gently. “Then we shall find a way to duplicate the conditions,” he said. “Don’t be frightened, please. Somehow, I will see that you get home, Miss Grant.”

“Felicity.” She managed a smile. “My name’s Felicity.”

Grave, he said, “Felicity. Thank you.”

This time, her smile was easier. “Manners are much less formal in my time. You’ll have to forgive me if I appear to break all the rules of etiquette. Do you mind if I call you John?” She didn’t add that she’d been calling him by that name in her mind for months before her trip here.

“Of course not. Please do.” His hand squeezed again, then released her, but he didn’t move away. His gaze held concern. “As much as I would enjoy talking to you for the remainder of the night, Felicity, you must be exhausted. We cannot do anything further with the portal until tomorrow. I think we both need to sleep.”

“And find, with any luck, that all this was just a dream?”

“Somehow, I doubt that will prove to be the case.”

She half nodded. “Yeah, I don’t believe it, either. This is as real as it gets.” She moved away from him, trying to seem casual. “What time is it, anyway?”

Sinclair returned to his desk briefly, leaving the diagram there and picking up a pocket watch. “Just after two. The servants will be up in another two hours.”

“Oh, damn, I forgot about them. John, they can’t see me. Can’t know anything about me, not even that I’m here.”

He shook his head. “My servants are discreet—”

“They may well be, but think about it. A young woman appearing without warning or explanation in your house in the middle of the night, and dressed like this ... I’m obviously not English, and even if I was crazy enough to pretend otherwise, I’d be bound to make

mistakes in my speech and manner they'd spot right away. Now, I don't know about you, but I'm reasonably sure even the most discreet servant would want to talk about a stranger like me. They can't know about me. If word gets out, it could—could change history, somehow.”

“Felicity, they live in this house. What would you have me do?”

“Well ... can you give them a few days off? Or maybe send them to your country house. You have one, don't you?”

“Yes, but it is more than adequately staffed.”

“Never mind that. Would they go? For a few days, maybe a week?”

“Of course, if I required it of them. But—”

“It's important, John.” She looked at him with pleading eyes. “I've already made a mess of things by being here. If something I do changes the future, I'll never forgive myself. Please? I just don't want to take any chances.”

“Very well. But it is an unusual action to take, and it will be noted even outside the house.”

“Better a small mystery than a big one.”

He smiled. “I suppose.” Picking up the lamp on his desk, he returned to her side. “Come and I'll show you to a guest room.”

She went with him silently, noting as they passed through the foyer and went up the curved staircase to the second floor that there were electrical light fixtures here and there on the walls, but all of them were off. It wasn't until he opened a bedroom door and turned on the switch to light that room that it occurred to her he had probably turned off all unnecessary lights before connecting the portal to electricity.

“I believe you'll be comfortable here,” he told her, his voice low. “There is a connecting bathroom rather than a dressing room, and should provide you with anything you need. Then his gaze turned doubtful. “That is ...”

“Don't worry,” Felicity reassured him. “I can create anything I need, remember?”

He nodded. “Good. Lock the door. The maids will be up and about early, and it will take some time even after I talk to my butler to have them all out of the house.” He paused, then added with a flicker of a smile, “I do hope your ability to create extends to meals, or we shall be reduced to eating raw whatever we find in the larder.”

“I think I can keep us from starving.” She found it difficult to create food from nothing, but she was confident of her power to conjure meals from raw edibles.

“Good night, Felicity.”

“Good night, John.” She closed the door and locked it, then leaned back against it and surveyed the bedroom with a feeling of decided unreality. Was she here? Really here, in 1899? She wouldn't have believed it possible, and yet she knew without a doubt that this was no dream. As she'd said to Sinclair, this was as real as real got.

Tired beyond belief, she took only a few moments to look inside the bathroom, which was fitted out in Victorian style with actual furnishings and was much larger than the average bathroom a century later. She was amused by the water closet with its wooden box designed to hide its parts, and impressed by the size of the enameled, cast-iron tub complete with shower.

Good as a shower might feel, she had a hunch that plumbing in this time worked neither as efficiently nor as quietly as what she was used to, and she had no desire to rouse the

household by making too much noise. So she merely used her powers to get cleaned up and change into a nightgown, created a brisk fire in the fireplace to take the chill off the room, and climbed into the big bed.

It was comfortable enough, but even so, for a long time Felicity found it impossible to fall asleep. Worries and questions swirled in her mind, and fear made her feel cold and very alone. What if she did something to change history? Worse, what if she was stuck here?

She reminded herself that if the situation became desperate, she could—very, very cautiously—seek out the wizards living in this time and place. A being of power could recognize another, so it would only be a matter of time before she was able to locate at least one other wizard. And that wizard would most likely do his or her best to help her. Time travel was uncommon among wizards, and frowned upon due to the dangers inherent in the practice, but it was knowledge taught to every wizard by his or her Master.

Felicity hadn't quite reached those chapters in her own study, so all she knew of the matter was that it was dangerous, that changing history could have terrible consequences—and that Merlin was going to kill her when she got home.

For the first time, she wondered if Merlin and Serena would realize what had happened. So, the minds of two extraordinary Master Wizards would be considering the problem and how to solve it from their end.

She hoped.

Partially reassured by that, she felt herself drifting off to sleep. She was almost there when she had a last clear thought, and it followed her into dream.

According to the historical record, something she had totally forgotten, John Sinclair had, without explanation, sent his servants away for a week in the final days of 1899. And when they returned, it was to find him vanished without a trace.

History, it appeared, was so far on track.

Sinclair returned to his study, moving slowly. It was late, and it had been a long day, but he had never in his life felt less need of sleep. Or want of it.

He was half convinced that if he closed his eyes for only a moment, he would open them and find it had all been a dream. All of it. That she had been a dream.

He stood staring at the invention that had been conceived in a moment of frustration with London traffic, and shook his head in wonder. Never in his wildest dreams had he expected a visitor from the future to step through the portal, to look at him with vivid green eyes alive in a face so lovely he knew it would haunt him always.

And not only a beautiful woman from the future, but a wizard, a woman of power. A woman who had donned a long black robe with a sweep of her hand, and with the same graceful ease had lifted him and the chair in which he sat so that they drifted in the air with the lightness of a feather.

He told himself that a man of science should not believe in such strange and unearthly powers—but he was not a man to doubt the evidence of his own eyes. Her powers existed every bit as real as she was herself.

Sinclair went to his desk and sat down, but kept his gaze fixed on the portal on the other side of the room. Just a bit of wood and copper affixed to a plain, ancient stone, such a simple and innocent doorway to have allowed wonder and magic to pass into his life.

And it would also allow that magic and wonder to pass out of his life all too soon.

He looked down at the hands that had built the portal, watched them close slowly in fists. A man's hands might open a doorway into time, but they could never master time. The hours would pass, inexorably, and the future would reclaim the haunting visitor it had so briefly sent him.

And leave him alone once again.

After a moment, Sinclair forced his hands to relax and reached for his workbook. He turned to a blank page near the back, and began sketching. Under his skilled fingers, Felicity's loved face took shape, filled with all the life he could create with spare lines and shading and longing.

She woke to dim sounds she didn't recognize, and for a few minutes lay with her eyes closed, trying to identify them. Then, as she remembered the previous night, her eyes flew open, and Felicity sat up hastily in bed. The room was quiet, the house beyond her locked door quiet, but the windows ...

She got out of bed and crossed the room, and for a moment stood staring at the scene outside in the street. Carriages and horses and people bustled along, noisy and brisk. It was obviously a chilly day, judging by the way the people were bundled up.

She shook her head and turned away from the window to quickly get dressed, creating for herself today a long tunic sweater in a flattering shade of gold, and dark brown slacks. She even pulled her hair up in a style that looked casual but elegant.

"Idiot," she muttered to herself, hardly unaware of what she was doing. "Just because he disappears in a few days doesn't mean he comes back to the future with you. That's an absurd thought. And dangerous. He probably just decides on a trip after you're gone."

She pushed speculation out of her mind, knowing it was unspeakably dangerous; she could not betray her knowledge of his future to Sinclair, because doing so risked changing what had to be. Whatever the cause or reason for his disappearance, she could not influence either his actions or events to make it happen—or not happen.

She left the bedroom cautiously, listening but hearing no sounds to indicate the presence of servants. A grandfather clock in the upper hall told her it was nearly ten o'clock, and she relaxed somewhat as she realized there had been time for the servants to pack up and leave.

It was easy enough to find her way downstairs; once in the foyer, she remembered the way to Sinclair's study. In fact, she found the doors open, and Sinclair already at work carefully bending thin sheets of copper around the frame of his portal.

She watched him for a moment, her eyes on his strong, sensitive hands. He molded the metal with a deft and delicate touch, using the flame of a gas lamp to soften each sheet and his fingers more than tools to shape it.

He was in shirtsleeves again today, his coat discarded over a nearby chair, and in the bright light of day the white linen emphasized the breadth and power of his shoulders.

The painting and photograph she remembered so well had caught that power in him, the innate strength and vitality even while he was utterly still. Accustomed to powerful beings, Felicity was wholly fascinated by John Sinclair, because the strength and intensity in his features were of mind and muscle and sheer force of will; he owed nothing of what he was to anything that was not utterly, completely human.

And very, very male.

She had never expected to meet him in the flesh, never prepared herself for the shock to

her senses that was his voice. And she had certainly never allowed herself to even imagine his touch.

But he was alive. *Alive*. And here, with her. A hundred years no longer stood between them. Age and the dusty finality of death no longer stood between them.

And the word impossible no longer seemed so undeniable.

He looked around suddenly, as if feeling her gaze or her intensity, and that hard, strong face lightened a bit. His mouth curved in a smile that was a bit wry, and his brilliant eyes reflected both satisfaction and something else she couldn't quite define.

It made her heart skip a beat.

"So you are real. I was half afraid I'd dreamt you."

"I'm real enough." She tried to keep her voice casual. "Good morning. I gather the servants are gone?"

"Yes, they left more than an hour ago." He nodded to a silver tray on a nearby table. "There's coffee, although it's cold by now."

Felicity knew he watched her as she went to the tray. She didn't make a big production of it, just put her hands on the silver pot briefly and then poured steaming coffee into the cup beside it. Then she turned to face him, sipping the coffee.

He let out a breath as though he'd been holding it. "I told myself it was incredible enough if you had come from the future, that I must surely have dreamt the rest."

"Afraid not. I am a wizard." Absently, she conjured the only meal she was good at creating from nothing, a sausage biscuit, and took a healthy bite.

Sinclair looked as if he wanted to say something, but instead went back to his work. It was several minutes later when he finally asked, "Are wizards common in your time?"

"No more so than in yours." He sent her a quick, startled glance. "Oh, yes. Wizards have always walked the earth. We've just learned to hide our powers."

"Remarkable," he murmured.

Felicity set her coffee cup aside. "John, something occurred to me last night. The circuits in this house are probably overloaded quite easily, aren't they?"

He looked at her in comprehension. "You don't believe there will be power enough to activate the portal?"

She chewed on a thumbnail, then made herself stop. "I have no way of measuring, but I'm afraid there might not be."

"You said your own energy was added as well."

"Yes." She didn't even want to think about that, because she was desperately afraid she would not be able to control what she had unthinkingly created before. "But that was after the power surge. There *has* to be enough sheer electrical power." Even as the words left her lips, a memory surfaced, and she felt her heartbeat increase.

"I can tap into the main line," Sinclair said slowly. "But even that is unlikely to increase electricity to a high enough level."

Felicity drew a breath. "There's something I just remembered. I've been researching electricity lately—or was, in my own time—and I remember reading that here in London something unusual happened just at the turn of the century. On New Year's Eve, 1899, just at the stroke of midnight, three separate power stations here in London experienced an unexplained power surge."

“Just as power surged in your time.”

“Yes. With one difference, I think.”

Sinclair waited, brows lifting.

“In my time, it’s purely a matter of technology getting in its own way. I think the power surge here in London is caused by me. I think the only way we’re going to get enough power to this portal is if I draw it here myself.”

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