The Pearl Earrings

WC: 1294

Something tickles my nose. Something almost wet. A very tender touch. I crack my eyes open and close them again - Luna’s tiny pink nose is right in my face. Her slim orange body sits on my blanket. Four delicate paws knead my tummy.

“Is it time already?” I moan, turning over and pushing her off my belly. She slides off and tip-toes over to my head, impatiently flicking her tail. It is too warm, too soft, and I am just not ready to get up yet. Nevertheless I don’t want to be late today. “Mrrreow,” Luna trills. As I determinedly bolt upright and swing my legs out of the dreaminess, my feet slapping the wooden floor. For a second, I take in the overwhelming feeling that rushes over me. My body, which felt relaxed and heavy when I woke up, now suddenly has to function, and the adrenaline pumps through my veins, causing the relaxation to evaporate quickly.

I stand in front of the mirror, brushing my teeth. The moonlight is shining through the little window on the ceiling, turning the deep brown of the wooden floor and walls into a silvery milky color. I sigh. Today, I will give Emmeline the pearl earrings. She will need them to travel. The earrings could prevent an unfortunate incident with a conductor, or with any person who might get suspicious about her appearance - her deep emerald cloak over the long, old-fashioned olive dress, the upward curved tip of her black boots, her outdated suitcase, and, last but not least, the long, wooden, worn-looking broomstick. For her journey up north, she will wear the set of pearl earrings as a protection. The earrings’ charm will create an invisible bubble around her that makes normal folk oblivious to her. It is a strong spell.

The earrings circulate to whoever is in need of them. Simply: they prevent trouble and create invisibility. In our country, I am the only one that knows how to produce such items, so people visit me all the time to rent them or acquire a set to buy. So, I have made a little business out of it. People come from all over the world to buy a pair.

Our world must stay in secret.

I myself used my own set recently, when I visited the moss maze where I was looking for the Middlemist Red Camellia.

After changing into my red-white striped stockings, black boots and black short dress, I run over to the kitchen to feed Luna and put the prepared cookie dough into the oven. I didn’t exactly make the cookies magical, but by eating them, Emmeline will be more aware of her surroundings. My little plan is that she eats these on the train and then, arriving at her conference, isn’t as clumsy as usual. She is a brilliant witch, no doubt. But all her talents and cleverness cost her the ability to be collected and organized. Almost everything around her is a mess. A good hour later, I hear the thump of Emmeline’s heavy boots on my doorstep.

“Liesbeth! I am here!” she calls, her voice a little higher than usual. I step to the wooden door and let her in.

“Honey, I am so late, let’s move fast,” she says hastily. I take the earrings from my ears, and let them slide into a tiny, silky, dark green satchel. Then I grab the cookies from the table and give them to her in another little bag.

“These are for you. I just felt like baking yesterday,” I say.

“Great, thank you!” she says and opens her suitcase to stow the cookies inside. “Can I use your bathroom mirror real quick? I am so bad at putting on earrings,” she adds and rushes past me towards the little door in the other corner of the open kitchen.

“Of course …” I say - to the door. For a second, I bob up and down my feet, the sudden silence is surprising. In the meantime, Luna has made her way into the kitchen. Now she is weaving around my legs.

All of a sudden, Emmeline storms out of the bathroom, staring down at her wristwatch. Two feet in front of me, she comes to a standstill. “No, no, no, no, no, no!” she mumbles anxiously. ” I gotta go.” And with that, she rushes to the door. In a split second her coat flies through the door gap and then wood bangs on wood. I stand in the middle of the room, dumbstruck.

Half an hour later, I am in my bubbly bath. The moonlight shines on the foam. Slowly, I begin to relax and scooch further into the water. The warmth surrounds me and my eyes start to feel a little heavy. From far away, it seems, I hear Luna padding into the bathroom. Then I hear a clink next to the bathtub. My eyes wander to where Luna is playing with something. I look closer. A silver spark gleams.

Then I realize. I bolt upright. Suddenly my thoughts are running a marathon. Emmeline! Luna is batting one of the earrings I gave to Emmeline! In her hurry, she must have dropped it. I replay her rushing out the door in great hurry. There is something else that feels wrong. My eyes narrow in intense thought. Then they widen. I can picture it. The odd thing about her rushing out the door was actually, that something was missing. Not only had she dropped the earrings, but – worse – she had rushed out carrying nothing, not even the suitcase she’d arrived with.

My hands find the rims of the tub and I push myself out of the warm water and the rosy bubbles. I snatch the pearls from Luna, grab my towel from the floor and wrap it around my body, and run towards the kitchen. My eyes scan the room. In a corner, right next to the coat rack, sits the suitcase. The dark brown leather melted into the shadow of my overcoat. My hair still dripping, I put on my clothes and rush to get my coat. From my nightstand, I grab my pearls and hastily put them in my ears. Back in the living room, I pull the suitcase out of the shadows and then hustle out the door.

Outside, my broom is leaning next to the door. I slide the suitcase over the broom, wrap my hands around the cool wood, and swing my leg over it. I focus on my feet on the ground. I feel the mellow breeze. My heavy hair slides over my coat and over my shoulder. Then I feel the tickling inside my bones and push myself off powerfully. Air rushes against my face, making my earrings twirl. Soon I am high up and speeding through the sky.

I can feel that I am calming down. The gentle light of the stars light up my way over hills and enormous meadows. At night, and from my point of view high up, the grass looks like a sea, flying by beneath me. I cannot help but open my mouth and take a deep breath, my chin to my chest, blocking the wind. I can taste the stars, their scent filling my mouth and nose. Clear, fresh and almost sweet.

I close my eyes and turn on my perception. The air still vibrates from Emmeline’s tense body. She flew by here, I know it. I allow the energy to fill up all around me, and I open myself up to it. The process is starting. I begin to feel the pull - it will guide me towards where she will land. I will follow her route through the night. I will find her. I can feel it.