

# SECRET OF LIGHT



kc dyer

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藏书章

*For Peter,  
swordsman,  
construction expert,  
and appreciative listener.*

# SECRET OF LIGHT

**kc dyer**

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September brings school and best friends return,  
But an enemy, too, shows his face.  
A fresh goal for the term means a Fair and hard work,  
Classes new, yet an odd sense of place.

To remember old times, a trip through a cave,  
No glyphs but a sketch, bright and true.  
Ancient light cannot shine, yet it summons and calls,  
A wind rises, the past beckons anew.

Among Renaissance lands, a new day is drawn,  
Rebirth in the Arts, all rejoice.  
Possibility raised; a prediction unheard,  
A hasty retreat not by choice.

Thrust out of time, a return must be made,  
Obsessions squeeze tight as a fist.  
A seeker is lost, a couple is joined,  
A dog disappears in the mist.

A soldier, an artist, a sculptor, a friend,  
Can one man hold the key to all time?  
Traveller as thief; is the prize all it seems?  
Does an enemy witness the crime?

Study intense, friends ignored, school work shunned,  
Yet the answer remains beyond reach.  
Long dark night of despair, in the end all that's gleaned,  
Is a lesson just friendship can teach.



A Renaissance Fair marks the end of a year;  
But words from a wise woman warn.  
An unwelcome traveller, a poignant goodbye,  
Old worries anew must be borne.

Kidnap, frantic search, and a dash through the dark,  
A dome and a monk and a clock.  
A final betrayal, a fire explodes,  
Inferno consumes all but rock.

The beacon is ash, route through time seared away,  
Hope for peace, winter break is in sight.  
Yet reflection brings pain, for how high was the cost  
To unravel the Secret of Light?

## CHAPTER ONE

Darrell sat propped, comfortable against warm rocks. Leaning her head against a boulder, she gazed at the fine, blue sea with eyes closed to a slit against the setting sun. Delaney stirred under her hand and nestled into a more comfortable spot on the sand. He lay at her side, head on his paws, eyes watchful.

From this angle, Darrell could turn her head and just see one corner of Eagle Glen School's north tower. Constructed of grey granite, the tower looked as though it were standing guard over the rugged coastline. She craned her neck to see more of the tower, her mind filled with speculation. A whole school year here at Eagle Glen! There was a lot she wanted to learn, and not much of it was academic.

Delaney raised his head and Darrell shifted her focus. Two figures emerged from the winding path leading down from the cliffs. One of the figures waved

and they began to run. Darrell's heart lifted. "Good spotting, Delaney," she said, and ruffled the dog's fur. "It's about time those two got here."

Darrell glanced down at the sketchbook in her lap. The wind rippled the pages, and a few grains of sand skittered through to settle in the binding. Each page held a sketch or a drawing depicting a young girl with brown hair engaged in various activities: swimming, running, riding a bike. The girl in the sketches differed from the artist who drew them by only a single element. She had two sound legs.

In seconds, a girl with short, red hair standing up in spikes off her freckled forehead collapsed breathless on the sand. Puffing behind her, a tall boy with almond eyes was carrying a heavy backpack.

"You only won because I was lugging this," he said, grinning.

"Ha!" The girl struggled to speak, still panting heavily. "It's just my — superior physical — conditioning."

Darrell laughed, her melancholy mood forgotten. "I'm glad to see you guys. You need to take it easy on Brodie, Kate. He's not as young as he used to be."

Brodie Sun nodded. "Yup. My birthday was last week. Got a whole set of new tap hammers for fossils."

Kate Clancy rolled her eyes. "More stuff to weigh down your backpack."

Darrell beamed at her friends, now settled in comfort on the sand. "What've you got there, Brodie? Some of your birthday presents?"

Brodie flashed a guilty grin. "Oh, you know, just some stuff..."

“Stuff for looking at cave walls, maybe?” interjected Kate.

“Maybe. It’s getting a bit late today, though. And we’ve got our orientation session tonight...” His voice trailed off, the longing in it palpable.

Kate laughed. “Brodie, you are so predictable. Once a fossil geek, always a fossil geek.”

Brodie pulled the pack across the sand, leaving a deep track. “You’re just mad you don’t have your laptop with you,” he teased. “Or have you given up computer programming in the past month?”

Kate raised an eyebrow. “Actually, you guys will be proud of me. I spent the last two weeks at the studio near my house, practising tae kwon do. I’m going to try for my fourth-degree black belt when I go home for the holidays.”

“Man!” Brodie shook his head in mock consternation. “Two weeks away from your computer? You must have been in agony.”

Delaney rolled over and set his paw on Brodie’s hand.

“How you doin’, Delaney boy?” Brodie ruffled the dog’s fur and scratched behind his ears. “Look at this guy, Kate. He doesn’t look too much like a stray anymore.”

Kate smiled and buried her face in the dog’s ruff. “Nope. Looks like he’s been living the good life lately.” She ran her hand along his side. “I can hardly feel his ribs, Darrell. What’ve you been feeding this boy?”

Darrell leaned forward indignantly. “He is *not* fat. He’s just happy to have a real home now, that’s all!”

Kate laughed and punched Brodie’s backpack into an uncomfortable-looking pillow. “Yeah. I guess his log

house is gone for good.” She lay down and gazed across the sand to the spot where the hollow log had once rested on the beach. “Must’ve been quite a storm to pull that giant old tree out to sea.”

“He doesn’t need it anymore, anyway. Professor Tooth gave me permission to keep him in my room.”

Kate followed Darrell’s glance toward the school. “Feels good to be back, eh?”

Darrell nodded. “I can’t believe it. We get to spend a whole year here instead of going back to the stupid school in the city.”

Kate pulled a water bottle out of Brodie’s pack and grinned at him as she stole a sip. “Aw, c’mon Darrell. That school wasn’t so bad. You just had some rough days there.”

Darrell’s smile faded. “It was a terrible place.”

“Well, no school can compare to Eagle Glen,” Brodie interrupted. “I’ve never had a summer like this one before...”

“And probably never will again,” interjected Kate, seeming to catch Darrell’s mood. “The glyphs on the cave wall are all gone, Brodie. Eagle Glen will be just like every other school now. I bet — Hey!”

A shower of rocks cascaded over the cliff, setting off tiny explosions of shards and sand. Kate and Brodie scrambled out of the way of the dusty fallout and Darrell jumped up. A large chunk narrowly missed the spot where Delaney had been lying and rolled against the rock face with a hollow *thunk*. Looking up, they could see a distant figure stride away from the cliff’s edge in the direction of

the school. Delaney growled low in his throat, his hackles high.

“I don’t know,” said Brodie, brushing a fine layer of dust off his pants. “Somehow I don’t think Eagle Glen has revealed all its surprises just yet.” He stood and hoisted his pack onto one shoulder. “Let’s go see who would want to send us such a warm welcome. We can have a look through the cave later.”

The sun slipped under the horizon and the warmth slid out of the day like a hand into cool water. The damp air caused an ache to rise in Darrell’s right leg, and she limped a little as she found her footing on the rocky shore. They gathered their things and, Delaney in the lead, trekked back along the beach toward the school.

Darrell climbed the winding path with her characteristic hop-skip step, following Delaney on the well-worn trail. The discomfort she’d been feeling bloomed into pain shooting up her right leg, but she tightened her lips and increased her pace. In the three long years since she’d lost part of her leg and her father in one terrible night, she had hardened herself to letting anyone share the ache she felt in her heart or in her leg. Brodie and Kate had helped, and she was not going to let a little ache slow her down.

The cool air of the early fall twilight lifted the hair on Darrell’s arms, and the sudden breeze stirring the leaves of the old arbutus in the school garden made her shiver. Students milled around the front of the school, and she watched Kate frown at the sight of the new faces.

“Well, this is a pain. Look at all these strangers taking over our school. I wonder which one threw those rocks?”

Darrell looked over the crowd. “I wonder, too. Maybe it was an accident.”

Brodie shrugged. “Probably.” He glanced at Kate. “You’re funny, Kate. It’s only been our school for a couple of months. You sound kind of possessive.”

“I feel possessive, too,” interrupted Darrell. She patted Kate’s shoulder. “This is the only school I have ever liked. I’ve made friends here for the first time in a long time,” she added quietly.

Kate snorted. “Some friends — one computer techie and one fossil geek.”

Darrell grinned. “Well, you two are the lucky ones, I guess. You get to be friends with an *artiste*.” She pushed Brodie’s backpack so he staggered into Kate. “You’d better get rid of that thing before orientation,” she said, looking at her watch. “I’m going to take a quick run through to the art studio. I’ll meet you guys in the dining hall in ten minutes.”

“Yeah, I’ve got to go get my stuff,” said Kate, neatly sidestepping Brodie’s giant pack. “I’ll grab my laptop and save us all seats.”

“See ya in ten!” Brodie resettled his heavy pack on his shoulders and began the long climb up the old stairs to the boys’ rooms on the third floor.

Darrell smiled at her easel, feeling in a way like she was greeting an old friend. She glanced around the art room. Everything was, of course, just as it had been when she

left a scant three weeks before, yet she felt a rush of emotion that the room was still here, ready to wrap her in its warm embrace. The place even smelled like home. She couldn't wait to begin.

"I've got ten minutes, I don't have to wait," she said aloud, and then jumped at the sound of her own voice echoing off the curved glass windows of the large room. She laughed at her own reaction, but still looked around to make sure no one had overheard her talking to herself. A quick glance confirmed she was indeed alone, and, safe from prying ears, she continued the conversation.

"What I need is some paint," she began, as she strode over to an open cupboard door and started to rummage. "Some paint and some lovely, thick Arches paper and my new brushes." Arms full of supplies, Darrell dashed over to her station and began to fill the small, wheeled trolley standing beside the draped easel. From her backpack on the floor she pulled a soft cotton towel rolled and tied with string. Laying the roll on the tall tabletop near the easel, she carefully untied and then unrolled the cloth — a soft case loaded with paintbrushes.

Darrell pulled the drapery off her easel and gasped. Instead of a blank canvas, propped under the oilcloth drape was the picture she had painted last summer. All the manic energy drained out of her as she stared, mesmerized, into the streets of Mallaig, a small fishing village on the west coast of Scotland, as they had been six hundred years before.

"I took the liberty of having it framed."

Darrell's head snapped up and she found herself gazing into the deep green eyes of the school princi-



pal, Professor Myrtle Tooth, standing beside the art room door.

Darrell's voice caught in her throat. "I — I can see you have," she said, at last. "Thank you."

"Consider it a welcome back gift," the principal said, smiling. She stepped away from the easel and spoke in her familiar measured tone. "I want you to know someone else honours your work as much as you do." She paused. "It is a beautiful piece. Very dark and mysterious — rife with speculation."

"What do you mean?" asked Darrell.

Professor Tooth smiled and looked at her watch. "A beautifully executed painting is like an interesting person — multi-layered. What can be seen on the surface is not always an indicator of what lies beneath." Darrell was about to reply when the door to the studio flung open and Kate surged in, narrowly avoiding the principal. She screeched to a halt beside Darrell's easel and smiled a guilty apology.

"Professor Tooth! I was looking for Darrell. It's almost time for orientation."

The principal nodded and glanced again at her watch. "I see. Thank you, Kate, for helping me keep to my schedule."

She turned to Darrell. "I hope you are happy with the frame. Perhaps, with your permission, we may display this work in the front office? I'm sure Mrs. Follett could do with a change from the dreadful Monet print she has hanging there now."

Darrell nodded and watched the door close behind Professor Tooth. Kate slapped her hand on a