

Glimpses of CELTELLINA
—and the Wonder Hill Orb—

There are secrets and mysteries imbedded in these tales, that the wise hearted with alert minds just might decipher.

BOOK 5

CELTELLINA'S SECRETS

Grenda and Moustour had moved on, soon after the lovely event of the ball, just as the dream heralded. In the beginning days of getting accustomed to life without them, Roden took trips around from time to time, and Celtellina often spent time pondering about life before, and what life might hold for her in the future.

Today, while alone, she pulled out her jar of treasures for a time of reflection. Her jar of treasures was something Celtellina began when she was very young. In it were some jewels she'd found in the hillside. Some things in it her mother had given her, before she and Father Moustour had move to the Enchanted Dome.

There was one special item. It was a carved piece of wood, given to her by a friend. Well, he wasn't just a friend, but someone Celtellina had fallen in love with. But he no longer lived there. She missed her special friend, as well as her parents, whom the King had asked to help Him in the Enchanted Dome, until it would be her time to join them sometime later on.

As she picked up this wooden treasure it seemed to give off a warmth or aura. In this land of wonder that was inhabited by some of the Children of the Wind, special things could happen. Not only could a gift be given to another that reminded them of something the giver wanted to pass on, but the very air of love and kindness could be embedded into something, if it was given with a pure heart. Whenever someone looked at what was given to them, or held it in their hands, the love that radiated out could be noticed.

Celtellina was glad that the King of the realm had enabled this to be the case, as she thrived on love itself. Love's energy and power is what enabled her to move about with effortless ease and cast aside, as an old garment, the feelings of mistrust or weariness.

Love gave her wings, in a sense, to soar above everything. When she felt the love of the King through the deeds and care of others, she felt twice as capable to channel it again to those who were in need of loving care and thoughtfulness.

Celtellina also had a secret friend, one that others could not see, for the gift given to this friend was that they were to remain totally and completely invisible in the realm that she was now living. She wasn't the only one who had such a friend, but her friend was focused on her care. This invisible friend knew all about her, and it was as if this friend had been assigned to her care.

She could at times nearly feel their presence, but most of the time the words they would speak to encourage her heart would be words that they two alone shared, in the dimension of her heart and mind. Just thinking of her dear celestial invisible friend, gave her heart a renewed courage and stability. Even though those she held dear were not around just now, still she was never alone.

Celtellina put away her treasure box and locked it with the unique diamond tipped key, then she returned the key to the golden locket that she now wore on her neck. It seemed to radiate love itself, so she kept it close to her hear. The fields and the wind, the sun and the heather were beckoning her to come outside and join them. Her dress that blended with the emerald coloured grass blew in the wind, while she ran bare foot through the fields, soaking up the sun's rays that beamed down on her long red tresses.

When she arrived at her favourite spot, among the blooming heather, she lay down on a pillow of her bunched up scarf, and looked dreamily into the ever changing blue-and-white painted sky. A lady bug found a resting place on her nose just for a second before taking flight again to land on the bowing grasses beside her. A butterfly welcomed her presence while lighting on her bent knees, that may have appeared somewhat like a miniature green hill.

Celtellina was glad that only lovely little creatures graced her with their visit. It was a picture of what Wonder Hill was like—light-filled, beautiful, and allowed each one of the Children of the Wind to display their true and well-created personalities and gifts. No one was compelled to be just like another, for each quality added a welcome and needed side to this growing and thriving community.

Each one was given space and allowance for their special times of quiet, and no one would think of disturbing those who seemed even at play. For that was a needed element of life. To retain the radiance that each one emitted, all needed their times to themselves, alone with nature, where they could also commune in heart and mind with the King Himself. —For the King of the realm knew where each one was, and in His mysterious and inaudible, invisible way could communicate with anyone who wished for it.

When someone was at work or at play, sharing with others, or sitting alone, each one would use their inner sense to detect what was most needed in order to help them best thrive. Harsh words or pressure would bring a creeping blanket of darkness on the light-hearted and cheery souls that lived joyfully here. Each one realized the value of what each one must do to keep their joy—their inner light—glowing.

This was one such a time when Celtellina felt the call of the wind, the sun, and even the whisper of the King for her to come to her special spot. She knew she would not be disturbed. Breathing in the warmth and the refreshing, Celtellina then closed her eyes and knew that any questions on her heart would one day be answered completely to her satisfaction. And anyone that she missed the company of, she would eventually be one day rejoined with, and they would be all the better for the time apart—hearts growing fonder in love.

Celtellina rolled over and examined the soil and the ever so tiny flowers that were growing so close to the ground that they would not have been noticed had she not been lying very closely to them. Each one so small, yet so perfect in shape, and growing just as beautifully as the larger ones in a garden.

Then a new wonder occurred—for in Wonder Hill one never knew just when something pleasant yet completely out of the ordinary would happen. Just as Celtellina looked admiringly at the tiny beauty, the small yet perfect creation, it seemed to grow bigger, or she was getting a rather magnified look at the little flower.

Well, that is what it first appeared to be. However, in actuality she, herself, was getting smaller, so very much smaller, and zooming in to land on the tiny face of the smallest flower she'd seen yet.

"I hope I don't encounter a ladybug now," Celtellina chuckled, realizing just what had happened, as she stood, steadying herself on the little swaying beauty. Then added, "Or maybe that would be fun, as I could catch a ride!"

Just as the thought struck her, that very miniature friend, the ladybug, who had been instructed by its creator to assist her, showed up. Celtellina then spread her wings and took flight a short distance, landing on the red and black spotted bug.

She was tiny enough that she could nestle towards the front of the friendly bug, allowing full movement of its wings. "Up and off we go!" Celtellina called, instructing her borrowed flying coach for the moment. She had to hold on very tightly as the ladybug spread its wings and flew a ways away, with a speed that made her nearly feel dizzy—for a person as small as she was at this time. They landed on the thick and rugged bark of a tree, and could see several other—what seemed larger than life versions of the bug type creatures, crawling here and there on the tree.

"Thank you," Celtellina said, as she patted her transporter friend, who then took to the air to land somewhere else on the tree.

Just then, Celtellina began to realize the tree was a special one to her as the tree seemed to greet her. As she was gaining her usual size once again, while flying up to sit on one of the large out-spreading branches she mentally responded, "Hello to you," to the welcoming air and sensed greeting of this wonder of nature, filled with majesty and splendour.

Celtellina, now in her usual form and size, however, true to form blending in with the colouring of the branch that she now sat on, looked in wonder at the display above. Each leaf so beautifully formed; each designed to absorb light, and utilize it for its growth and wellbeing.

Celtellina felt a prayer welling up in her soul. Without verbalizing a structured prayer in perfect words, her heart rang out to the King of all, that just as her dress resembled the green of so many beautiful things in nature, so did she, just like the leaves, wish to absorb and draw into herself the pure Celestial light. She wanted to be as a magnet for light, if such a thing were possible. She knew this was the way to thrive, just like this lovely tree, so strong and big, and filled with countless leaves, shining in the sun, and waving in the breeze.

She then pondered all the things she'd seen during that brief time of being very, very tiny. All the unknown secrets missed by most of the people around—just how things looked so close up.

“Our King, our Creator, made things oh so amazing, but many things we just are unaware of. We just can't see them from our perspective.”

A sense of wonder filled her when realizing just how clever and intricate each part of nature is the more zoomed in you look at it. There is always more to see and learn and find out the more closely an inspection you give to the things divinely made.

“Celtellina,” a wistful voice seemed to blow through the wind. Being sensitive to the feelings and needs of others, she could sense this call, more than she could actually hear it with her ears.

“It must be time to go. I've had such a lovely time,” she smiled, and jumped down from the branch, landing as light as a feather with a gentle bounce on the ground. One last glance up to the lovely tree, then she was moving swiftly, yet gracefully towards where she felt the call had come from.

It remained no mystery, however, where the whisper came from—the unseen realm aiding her. She remembered the class she had arranged to teach the small children of the town—a class on the beauty and value of flowers. She smiled, as she now had an even greater understanding of the well-designed beauty, from her close inspection. The children would love to hear about it. Off she skipped, stopping every now and then to pick an eager flower, to join her and the little children.

EMERALDS IN THE OCEAN—Part 1

Celtellina woke with a start and then laughed. “Look where I've fallen asleep!” she said, picking herself up from the rug in front of a large window that gave gazers a view of the vast and verdant landscape that seemed to reach on and on in all directions.

“Aunty Lully” she called out, “Are you around?”

A spunky and beautiful lady bounded in with a smile. Lully was the youngest sister of Celtellina's mother, and lived some distance away from where Celtellina and her brother Roden stayed. They didn't see her that often, but for now, Celtellina was here for an extended visit, while her older brother was travelling.

“I see you have had a lovely rest! You look ready for another pleasant day,” Lully cooed, with her smooth melodic voice.

Lullaby, as was Lully's full first name, had the gift of song. And sing she did. It seemed she wrote a new song each day--songs about nature, songs about friends, songs to sing a child to sleep, songs to awaken the weary to engage in joyful frolicking.

Celtellina didn't intend to sleep, but rather to gaze out at the vast expanse that could be seen from the window in this comfortable country house. There was much she wanted to ponder over and contemplate.

Knowing her Aunt's musical ability she asked Lully to sing a few of her newly written songs. They were part of a set she was preparing for a children's sleep-time song collection. Sure enough they did just that, for young ones and older ones, and before too long Celtellina was fast asleep on the rug.

Lully smiled, rather surprised herself, and had quietly slipped away to another room, leaving Celtellina to enjoy the peaceful moment of blissful slumber. Using her harp, while waiting for her friend to rise, she sang several songs; then sang a song that told of a mysterious and delightful place, she hoped to one day see.

As I leave the bank of the old world behind

I know not what I'll find

But lo, as I gaze at the vast lying sea

A new beckoning mystery

Tell ho, tell hi, sing to me from the sky

Lead me where I am to go

Unfold that which I am to know

Then to go will I, and draw nigh,

Beneath the sea mist

Beyond the waves' crest

A place made of emerald and gold

With diamond sparkles to hold...

Celtellina had called then to her when she had awakened, and Lully went to see her friend.

"One day..." Lully whispered as she left her room. "One day I know I'll discover and explore that beckoning place," though she knew not how or when it could become a dream come true. One look into Celtellina's eyes told that she too had been dreaming of mysteries yet to be discovered and enjoyed.

A bark from Sandy, the gold-coloured dog, announced a visitor.

Quickly Lully went to greet the unexpected guest, while Celtellina peered out the small veiled side window. A tall and handsome gentleman holding some freshly picked roses was talking with Lully. Lully's fiancé, Bernardo, had come to invite her this afternoon on a picnic. It was a pleasant surprise.

It was to be more than a walk in the park, however, for he, being the son of a sailor (and flying horse trainer, as well), was to bring the invited to an island that he and his family alone knew of. It wasn't always easy to navigate to it, for the weather and fog often prevented any from venturing on the ocean in that part of the coast line.

However, today as Bernardo woke he heard the whisper of the sea saying, "Come sail on me". And so he had prepared the family's small sailboat, and stocked it with picnic supplies. When all was ready he headed off to extend this offer to his beloved, to come on this pleasant surprise adventure.

Celtellina thought she remained unnoticed, but when Bernardo turned to meet her gaze, he motioned and said, "Why don't you both come? I'm sure you'll enjoy yourself."

They wouldn't be alone on the sailboat, for it would take a team to work together. Bernardo's two older brothers, a sister-in-law, and a friend ever since childhood were all aboard waiting for him to return with Lully—if she was game to go.

EMERALDS IN THE OCEAN—Part 2

Lully went to talk it over with Celtellina, and they both smiled excitedly, agreeing. It almost seemed they had been prepared for this very thing—with the song, and with the yet untold dream that Celtellina had while slumbering on the soft rug moments before. They knew in their hearts it was right, though adventurous indeed.

Into the carriage they went with Bernardo bringing only some bottles of drinking water and an extra wrap to keep themselves warm in the sea breeze.

The air was brisk, but the sky was clear and the view across the ocean could clearly be seen for miles in all directions. Lully and Celtellina stood up and took in deeply of the air and the view. Lully looked over at Bernardo with a smile, who was waiting for just that—a look of her approval, to know that she was indeed glad she had ventured on this surprise outing.

Bernardo drew her into an embrace and said, “Welcome aboard, mate”. It was a fond thought indeed, to imagine the day when they would truly be mates and wed. Lully blushed somewhat and nestled her head on his chest, while the waves bounced the vessel rhythmically up and down.

Celtellina had found herself a friend who seemed to enjoy her company—and mostly the food morsels she was throwing its way. A seagull had landed near to her and called out. “Been fishing, I’m sure,” she said to the friendly bird, who was glad to have yet more to eat, or at least an easy meal.

Just then her attention—and the attention of all—were drawn to an island beginning to be seen on the horizon. It was rare that the day was so clear and it could be seen easily. It didn’t look very big at first, but as they briskly sailed near it, they saw its size and beauty.

“Is this where you are planning to have our picnic?” Lully asked Bernardo.

Bernardo smiled and nodded, while going to fetch a good pair of binoculars. After looking through them, he handed them to Lully to get a look, while motioning to Celtellina to come over and take a look too. Lully was amazed at how luscious it appeared. It was indeed a beautiful place.

“Do you have a name for this island that your family has discovered?” Lully asked.

Bernardo, placed his arm around his fiancé. He took a deep breath, gazing at the island as they neared it, and said, “I like to call it ‘Ocean Emerald’. It’s so beautiful and green; and look at the sparkles on the water as the sunlight dances on it. It’s a gold and diamond pathway to the Emerald Palace.”

Celtellina and Lully both drew back a breath and looked at each other. They each had something to say, and started at the same time.

“I was just singing a song...” blurted out Lully.

“I had this dream today...” began Celtellina.

“Sounds like we’ll have something interesting to discuss over our lunch on the island,” interjected Bernardo. “I must now help with the vessel, as we anchor it in a safe place and begin disembarking, taking smaller boats to the shore. We’ll talk as we sit under the verdant canopy of natural beauty.”

Lully and Celtellina went to gather their few belongings. Within minutes they would be walking on, touching, seeing, exploring, something their hearts had heard existed, and were eager to know.

Once everyone had safely arrived on “Ocean Emerald Island” the ladies began to spread out the picnic on a blanket for all to enjoy. It was a luscious feast. Bernardo’s mother was a good cook and knew what hungry men who had been sailing wished to enjoy; yet being a lady she also knew what to include so as to whet the appetite and bring enjoyment to the ladies joining in.

“So, tell me, my dear,” started Lully. “It is most curious. What did you dream of, while I was in the other room singing of something so similar?”

Taking the cue and knowing the time to share was right, Celtellina began to describe. “I was—in my dream that is—on a vessel much like the one we sailed on today. Then I saw in the ocean, as if it were an iceberg sticking out of the water, an enormous and gorgeous emerald. It was green and radiant. But rather than it being dangerous to sail toward it—such as it might be with an iceberg—there was an atmosphere of peace and joy.

“When we neared to it—that is in my dream—I could reach right out and touch it. And as I did I felt something ripple through me, a kind of energy—a very pleasant feeling. At that moment all weariness or sorrow seemed to dissipate. I felt renewed and invigorated. Oddly, I do feel somewhat similar while here now, in this living “emerald” of gorgeous natural beauty.”

Celtellina ended what she wished to say.

“It’s funny, but I’ve often found myself feeling something similar when my family has come here as well,” Bernardo expressed. Celtellina and Bernardo then looked at Lully, giving her a chance to speak.

“I was singing a song, while Celtellina was resting. It was a song my grandmother sang when I was young. I always wondered what it meant. Perhaps it was a song written by others who had also discovered this amazing, wonderful place. Who knows? It was kind of mysterious, yet beckoning me, awaking within me a desire to go to it. Perhaps now I am here.”

“Very curious,” Bernardo said, and Celtellina asked Lully, “Will you please sing it for us?” And so she did.

This time Celtellina does not fall asleep, but feels enraptured in the splendour of this unspoiled and tranquil place. As she leans back on her arms and looks up through the tree branches, her hand feels something. Looking down, expecting a beach pebble or shell, she is amazed to find what it is. Picking it up and radiating a smile, she shows her find to Bernardo.

“Why! That is the prettiest emerald I’ve ever seen! Go ahead and take it home. Let it remind you of the joy you can have when you leave the shores of the old, and rest in the secret places the King Himself prepares for us.”

As they sailed away to return home in the dusk of the evening, Lully sang for all aboard some special songs her heart seemed to compose just then. It had been a very special day.

TALES AND TREAT—Part 1

“Roden!” Celtellina said with joy, “How nice to see you here! How was your trip with Emilda and her mother?”

Roden, Celtellina’s brother, was always one ready for adventure. If there was a journey to be had, he was eager to find some way to make himself useful, and quickly would become a rather indispensable member of the team. He wasn’t picky about what work or assistance he would offer to give. Whatever was needed, he would do it as best as he could, gaining skill quickly, and working patiently.

It was clear that he wasn’t just hanging around for the fun and the adventure of travel. He made any team welcome his presence with his trustworthy character. In this way he was able to learn much about the country, and its people all around. When people wanted to find out what distant places might be like, they often came to Roden. He seemed full of news and knowledge from his journeys, whenever he found a team who wished for him to come along.

Emilda, and Shaulic her mother, decided to take some supplies that were not currently being used in their town, to a place a few weeks’ journey away. News had come through the wind to them that the Quauf family, who had moved away some time ago, was now in need. Leaving as soon as they could, and faster than expected due to Roden’s assistance on the trip, help and supplies were given as quickly as was possible to those in need.

Meanwhile, Celtellina went to spend some of the time at her aunt’s house. With Bernardo’s assistance, Aunt Lully had seen that Celtellina was home again in time for her brother’s arrival. Roden gave his sister a big brotherly hug and sat with her to find out all that had gone on in his absence.

“How’s Aunt Lully doing? Did you have a nice time staying with her?” Roden started out asking.

After Celtellina told him in her excited and animated way about the trip to “Ocean Emerald Island”, he commented, “Sounds like you’ve been doing some exploring too, while I was gone! I wish I’d been there!”

Special things had happened for the both of them—though Celtellina’s trip to the secret Island had almost sounded like a dream. But she had something to prove it indeed had happened.

“Wait here!” Celtellina said, with a twinkle in her eye. “I’ve got something to show you!” and off she nearly flew to get it. Within a moment she was placing her diamond-tipped key into the lock of her treasure box, and opening it. There, nestled with the other treasures, was the emerald that Bernardo—her soon-to-be uncle, had given her.

Returning slowly now to her waiting brother, she carried in her hand this beautiful gem and along with it the lovely memories of her time to that special island. “Look!” she said, and opened her hand.

“Wow!” Roden said, and picked it up to get a closer look. “So you really did go there! This is lovely! Maybe one day we’ll all go there together... since Bernardo is nearly a relative of ours.”

Then it was Roden’s turn to tell of his trip, and some of the things he’d seen and learned and done.

“Tell me what it was like... where exactly did you go?” Celtellina prodded her brother. She could tell by the twinkle in his eye that there were some good tales about to be told—and perhaps even a treat or two that he was able to bring back.

After hesitating for a moment, to let his sister enjoy the suspense, he then began to give a detailed and elaborate account of all that occurred on his latest country adventure and exploration.

“The trees in that part of the realm aren’t like any of the trees here. They are enormous! And their branches spread so far out, the roads seem to be under an umbrella wherever you walk. Rain is no trouble when you walk under them—and is in fact the reason for the size of the vegetation.”

Celtellina sat, giving full attention, as the natural beauty was described. Finally, she paused and realized she had yet to offer him some refreshments. Going momentarily to the kitchen, she returned with something for them to eat and drink, while they continued chatting.

“Do fruits grow on those trees?” Celtellina asked, guiding the conversation back to finish the topic they were on.

“I didn’t notice any, but perhaps it just wasn’t the right season of year for it. But there was something much more interesting in the branches,” Roden replied, with a bit of a chuckle.

Her mind was quickly imagining some type of large bird, or bushy squirrels. She didn’t guess what he was about to say.

“Many people make the trees their living quarters! It was not uncommon to find tree-houses high up in the branches. Perhaps it keeps them dry up there, from the frequent puddles or flowing of water from the rainfall. They are clever in their tree-house building skills,” Roden expressed.

Celtellina could only imagine it. And while she was doing so, she remembered her time up in the tree, while her brother was gone. It was odd that sometimes, though they were apart, they ended up being in similar circumstances. Perhaps her brother had gone visiting or helping out in someone’s high-up living quarters, at the same time she had fluttered up and sat on the large tree branch while out in the meadow. She smiled, and then related her interesting experience of also becoming very, very small, in order to fully appreciate the intricate and lovely design of a single, tiny flower in the grass.

Back and forth the brother and sister went, each telling of events that the other’s account had reminded them of. Quickly an hour or more had passed, while stories had been shared.

TALES AND TREAT—Part 2

“How is Emilda?” Celtellina inquired. “I did miss her. She is so kind and intuitive; always knowing the right thing to say, it seems.”

“Let’s take a walk and continue our talking in the garden; we’ve been sitting here for a while,” Roden suggested, mostly because he wanted a moment to think just how he was going to communicate the next thing he felt nudged to say.

A bird fluttered up from the birdbath as they opened the back door. “No need to fly away!” Celtellina cooed to the timid winged creature, and held out her finger. The bird flew back and landed on her extended finger, as if it was a branch on a tree. It sang a lovely short song, and then off it alighted to join its friends in the cherry tree.

As brother and sister walked for a bit, they wended their way past the lovely flower beds, around the fountain, between the hedges, under the spreading fruit trees, over the small bridge going across the stream, and walked up the gentle hill behind the house. Roden was quiet, yet a hint of a smile was on his lips.

“Tell me what you are thinking?” Celtellina invited. She knew he had something to tell.

“I don’t know if this is good news to you or not...” Roden hesitated, but it was clear he was nearly bursting to express something that seemed joyfully good to him, and so longed for his sister to share in his joy—and for it to be a thing of delight for her as well. But he was unsure of her reaction.

“You know how I love to travel... and I was going on this trip for that reason, and that reason only. But then...” he took another breath.

“Yes?” Celtellina tugged his arm and fairly begged with her eyes for him to say all that was on his heart.

“You know how I have been wishing to find the right lady for me...”

“Let me guess... You’ve fallen in love with someone... you met the right one... and you are to move to this distant place... and I am to go or stay here...?” Celtellina tried to suggest all at once what Roden might be wishing to say.

“Ha!” he laughed. “Let me answer one thing at a time; or rather continue on with what I wanted to say.”

She nodded for him to continue, as they stopped to sit under a fruit tree. Celtellina plucked a ripe piece of fruit and began to eat. This kept her mouth quiet and gave her patience to hear, in this slow way, whatever her brother wanted to say.

“I’ve fallen in love, yes. But please realize that this does not take away any of the love and duty I feel to you, my dear and only sister. However, to make our family complete, I think this will benefit you too. If I were to get married, you would have someone to stay with you when I travel—and she would have someone to be with her and the children too, when I must be apart or working.

“I’ve put lots of thought into it, as my first priority is to see that you, my sister, receive the best care. I have noticed also that you are very skilled with teaching and caring for young children. I think it would bring more joy and less loneliness to you, if children were to be part of our life here, do you not think so?” Roden said, in nearly one breath, with one line quickly following the other.

When put this way, Celtellina could imagine it a very good thing. She would be included in activities and outings, meals, and trips to the lakeshore, and so forth. She was not to be alone, as at first she might have feared, but life would be filled with more goodness than before. She smiled, and Roden let out a sigh of relief. Of course who it was, had not yet been hinted at.

Suddenly, Celtellina said, with a confidence, “It’s Emilda, isn’t it?”

Roden turned away and blushed, trying to stifle a grin.

It was amazing to him, too. Emilda was a girl they had virtually grown up together with, and knew each other well. All the children at this side of Wonder Hill often played together. Now they were getting older, and beginning their young adult years. Roden had often wondered who he would find fit to get married to—for it would have to be someone whom his sister likewise would enjoy the company of.

However, on this trip he began to see the deeper, mature side of Emilda. She was now a young lady. Roden noticed her caring heart, and willingness to go to whatever distance was needed to help others. He saw she was very loyal to the King of the realm, and would do all that she could to make this part of the land be pleasing to Him.

Day-by-day, as the weeks went by, the love in Roden’s heart grew for Emilda, and he knew she was the right one for him. Besides the fact that his sister enjoyed her caring friendship as well.

Emilda’s mother had been secretly wondering for some time now, years in fact, if Roden would turn out to be a dependable young man, one she could trust to care for her daughter, and herself too, in her aging years later on. This trip proved to be just the answer to her question. Roden was every bit the perfect gentleman, caring about the comforts and needs of the ladies while disregarding his own. Though she said nothing to either Emilda or Roden, Mother Shaulic said a prayer that if it would bring good into both of their lives, and in the lives of those they lived around, that they would unite as a team.

Roden blurted out to his sister, “I have not told her a thing, however, sister, as I wanted to first of all get your permission.”

It was Celtellina's turn to blush. "MY permission! Dear brother you are free to choose whomever you wish to marry. My thoughts matter not. It is with her that you will share your life and your all."

"Not all, but yes, a good part indeed. For I will always take care of you, as I promised our parents I would do, as they left this land... until such a one may be found that is suitable for you to join with in marriage, when the time is right and you are of age," Roden expressed. He then stated once again, "Yes, I wanted to ask for your permission or at least be assured of your agreement."

Turning away for a moment of silence—and painfully so for Roden whose heart waited to hear what would either cause it to soar with joy, or sink down with shattered hopes, at last she spoke. "I give you my permission," Celtellina said, in a very important way. "I will accept Emilda as my sister-in-law; as long as..."

A smile broke out, and a deep gratitude flashed in Roden's eyes as he looked into Celtellina's; then it turned to a look of question... "As long as what?" he asked.

Suddenly she burst into tears, the brave face melting, Celtellina added, "as long as you don't ignore me. You are all I have of our family," Celtellina sobbed.

Roden rolled her into his embrace, and wiping the tears away, said, "No one, even the best wife I could find, could ever take the place of who you are to me. There's no one I love in just the way I love you. Even if I start building a life with someone, only you and I have shared our childhood memories together. You will always be my special Celtellina!"

That was enough. Her heart was secure, and she was ready to allow another person to be part of their somewhat lonely life—perhaps about as lonely as Emilda had also been. If they were all together, perhaps they could fill in some of the missing pieces in each other's lives.

As the two walked back to the house Celtellina asked, "So when will you tell her of your love and invitation to live a life with you?"

Before Roden could answer, they looked up to see a visitor had just arrived—and it was none other than Emilda herself. When unpacking from their trip she had found a small bag that belonged to Roden, and had come to return it. But, since having the gift that Emilda had—that of knowing the thoughts of others—one look into her eyes, Roden knew there was little left to say.

She politely said nothing with her lips, but the look she gave to each of them, showed a love and deep gratitude for their love and a willingness to be a friend and share a life with them—share the work and the joys.

In a moment she was gone, but both Celtellina and her brother were left with the tingling excitement that a new life and change for the better was in the nearby future.

The bag that had just been returned was a special one indeed, and it would have been missed at that very moment.

"Are you ready for your gift?" Roden said, as he held the bag containing something he had collected on his trip to bring all the way back for his sister.

She wasn't expecting this, but was eager to see.

"Seeds!" Roden said, as he opened it to show Celtellina. "All kinds of new seeds—flowers, new foods, and even a few I won't tell you what they are, as that's a surprise for you to find out when you plant them!"

Celtellina was thrilled, and grabbed the small bag with one hand, and gave her brother a hug of gratitude with the other. She knew what she was going to be doing first thing tomorrow—gardening!

"I wonder what those mysterious seeds are..." she pondered as she went to put the bag away. Just then, a thought came to her: *Planting good ideas in people's minds, and love in people's hearts, is the best kind of gardening one can do—and anyone can do it, no matter where they are.*

DANCING AND DELIGHTS—Part 1

Lully looked one more time in the mirror, as she prepared herself for the dance party. This was to be the celebration that followed her marriage a week and a half ago. This was the official start of their three-month time of fun. As was the custom of the land, the newlywed husband was to do no work, and the newlywed wife was to focus on making their first few months together the best she could.

All her husband's favourite meals were cooked, long walks and hikes were enjoyed. Whatever he found most pleasing, if it was good, she was to do her best to satisfy his wishes. He likewise would give his full attention to listening to what his new wife wanted to say, letting her sleep late without disturbing, drawing water to warm and fill a bath for her to soak in, and so forth.

After this time, there would be work aplenty for the two of them, and it was important that they spend this time getting to know one another well, and reassure each other of their love.

Though their marriage commitment, or ceremony was a solemn occasion, the time for a good party had found its time and place, and occurred for Bernardo and Lully after ten days of their wedding.

Bernardo was below deck putting on his best suit—for after all, the party and dance was to be held on a ship. In the morning they would set sail, and enjoy their first three months out at sea. The ship was fully stocked with ample supplies, and there were several islands they would dock at for exploration and enjoyment. This was Bernardo's wish, and Lully wished to indulge him in it, as her gift of love.

Of course, Bernardo insured that the ship had every bit of luxury that his new wife could want. Their bed was made with the finest white linen. The kitchen was supplied with all the things she would need for cooking the delicious foods they wished to enjoy. A large bath was installed, with a fireplace nearby to keep Lully warm when she wished to bathe.

They were all set, dressed and ready to party—and so were the many guests, friends and relations that were aboard. This was the time for gift giving, if one wished to do so. Knowing what the couple wished to do with their first three months gave the guests an indication of what gifts would be appropriate.

Those wishing to give gifts usually counselled with the parents of a newly married couple, so as to see that all needs would be met, and they could relax during their first three months' time. Sometimes a gift that was offered was the gift of one's time and effort to help build the house that would be needed—if one was indeed requested by the couple.

Each couple was supported in all the ways possible, so as to start them off with a stable and love-filled marriage, completely free of care and burdens. Grandmothers in the community often knitted quilts and bonnets, or booties for the babies that were sure to follow and join the couple before too long.

Sometimes children gave gifts of toys they no longer used and had outgrown, to be used by the new little one they hoped to have join Wonder Hill. Every new little one brought something special, their personal special gift, and it was always a surprise what gift each newborn child brought to Wonder Hill.

There were lights strung all around the deck, and live music was being played. Celtellina made sure there were plenty of flowers all over, decorating every corner. She went below deck then to find her Aunty and see if she needed anything. Dressed in a sparkling, pale pink dress, and well-done hair, Lully was ready to be the life of the party. Lully gave her niece a hug and thanked her warmly for everything she had done—which was a long list indeed—to help both the party go well, and the trip they were to take immediately afterwards.

“And guess what?” Lully whispered to Celtellina, “Bernardo has offered to take several of us again, to his special Ocean Emerald island—you and Emilda, your brother and his good friend Shane. That's something to look forward to when we get back!”

Celtellina smiled excitedly and hugged her Aunt again.

“Okay, well, the music is playing, I guess we better go!” Lully said, while they both headed upstairs.

When both the bride and the groom were standing together on the deck, that was the signal to begin the party officially. The master of ceremonies announced, “The first song is dedicated to this lovely new couple here. Let’s hear a cheer for them!”

“Cheers!” rang out from every voice.

“Please Sir, would you tell us your chosen family name, so we can cheer to the future of your family!”

This was the time that they decided to announce their chosen family name. “Seashire”

“So to Bernardo Seashire and Lulluby Seashire, we dedicate this first song. Get your dancing feet ready, and let’s all join in the fun!”

With that the music began and so did the dancing—sometimes to the beat of the waves rocking or swaying the ship gently. All kinds of music was played, and all types of dances were enjoyed. There was something for everyone. Several hours of that, while breathing in the fresh sea air was enough to give everyone a very solid sleep that night.

When the party was over, and everyone but the couple, were safely back on the shore and on their way home, Lully and Bernardo settled into their bed aboard the ship—the home that was to be theirs for the next three months.

DANCING AND DELIGHTS—Part 2

It had been a special week and a half, and they were sure there would be plenty of adventure in the following months. Lully had promised Celtellina that she would keep a journal of the most outstanding events of their ship journey, and tell her all about it when they returned. A house was being built for the Seashire couple much closer to where Celtellina and her brother lived; but on the lake shore of course.

Some of the events recorded in Lully’s journal included:

Woke with the sound of thunder; the waves were so fierce we dare not travel. We played games and chatted and laughed through the storm. By the next morning, thankfully the storm had cleared and we could be once again on our way.

I liked the fruits of an island called “calm”; the water indeed was calm all around it. Huge fruits hung from vines that clung to trees. One could climb up to pick them. If one asks me what they tasted like, I’d have to say I wasn’t sure, as the fruits taste different to each person, according to what they most enjoy. You’ll have to find out for yourself one day I guess. Bernardo has the map and knows how to get there.

I read for hours last night, as I just couldn’t sleep. Must be the excitement of the journey. But the ship’s library that Father Baufin (now my grandfather-in-law) helped to set up, was a delicious treat for the heart and mind. He knows the best kinds of books. I learned things I’ve never known before.

I was able to can and preserve some of the foods that the natives of one island gave us. They had a plentiful crop, and wished to give much to us. We can then enjoy those rare and unique fruits and roots while we continue on our journey.

A very large seabird landed on deck and flew off with a fish I had just caught! Bernardo has taught me how to fish, and some evenings we have a deck party of broiled fish, while we watch the stars appear, and try to remember our favourite songs.

Would be nice if a musical band travelled with us. But I guess that’s what being alone with just the two of us is for, getting to know each other—what we each know and where we are lacking knowledge, so we can help each other better.

A leak in the ship was discovered when we were, thankfully, not far from land. But it meant we stayed put for a couple weeks until all was fixed. However, mercifully there was a fresh water stream near the beach, and we had what we needed. Bernardo was eager to get going, as he had many islands that he wished to see, but this delay would shorten the time we had available for travel. That is part of being together, helping each other through the ups and downs, and times things don’t work out just as planned. I tried to make the best of it, and learned how to make all sorts of things from the coconuts that were abundant there.

Four of the islands we reached seemed uninhabited, but perhaps it was just because they are shy or are living where we didn't see them. We didn't stay long, but enjoyed exploring for a day or so, finding all kinds of vegetation. Some of the plants we were familiar with, but the large or very small size of them in this place was unique.

Anchored back where we started our journey from. I'm sitting here now as the ship is docked. A long and yet pleasant journey we had. Much more than I could have the time to write about in this short journal. We'll have time to talk and I can tell you the rest, before too long.

It wasn't yet a week from the time they arrived back from their sea adventure and had settled into their new home, when a house-celebrating party was held. Close friends and relations were invited, and house warming parties like these lasted some days. New houses were built with several rooms to house family, friends, or visitors. Later on, a large and growing family might fill up the rooms, but for now with just a new couple living there, there was plenty of room for others to stay on and make it a happy time of starting their new life in a new house.

During these days Celtellina was able to have a good long chat with Lully—there was so much to talk about, questions to ask and stories to share. The young men too had things they talked over. One evening a question came up about Bernardo's family's special island.

"Ah, you've heard about it, have you?" Bernardo said to Roden. "Let's take a trip there in about a month, when we've had time to settle in a bit here. Perhaps, if you are someone as keen as I am to explore across the water, we could plan for regular adventures. I could take you and your family and a few others who wish, to some of the islands that Lully and I have checked out. Some islands you may like more than others, but either way, a bit of adventure is always good for a man's heart!"

"Indeed!" affirmed Roden.

Plans and living out those plans then followed as the months and years passed. It was a family and group of friends that liked travel and discovery. They all got along wonderfully.

THE LONG WALK—Part 1

One day, Celtellina choose to start off on her secret journey very early in the morning, so early the rooster had not yet crowed, and not a ray of light had yet peered over the horizon. It was a day that her brother and Emilda had chosen to spend at the lakeside. Of course, Celtellina was invited to go along, if she wished, but instead she chose to travel in a different realm. She was intent on finding the Treasure Cave and the secret Chest of the King.

"Perhaps today is the day I'll find it!" she thought. "If I am able to journey far today, and make sure to stay only on the King's secret path, perhaps I will find the treasures."

Though it looked to others like she was just resting in bed, or walking in the garden, or looking at a map, she was in fact on her journey.

After struggling up a steep incline, and pushing through thorny brush, Celtellina sat down to rest. A trickling brook was a welcome sight, providing fresh cool water to drink and something to use to wash her scratches that she'd gotten from the thorns.

A voice not melodious in the least, but rather sounding like the smooth, slimy moving of mud down a rock face, began to speak with her. With a sneer the voice said, "What's wrong with you? Can't you tell you are on the wrong path? So much trouble for nothing, I say. You're not going to find any treasure at the end for all your struggle. Nothing but a big empty pit you'll trip into..."

Celtellina was rather surprised, as she hadn't had an encounter like this before. Sometimes she had seriously wondered if the way was right, and if the reward and treasure would be worth it. This someone seemed to be looking over her shoulder at the map she held. Her first reaction was always to check the map, if it said it was right, then no matter how hard the climb, or thick the mud, or rough the way, she didn't hesitate.

The voice then said, "You're trusting that old thing? Ha! That's a fake, I can assure you. An imitation created to lead poor simple folks like you off the beaten trail and trap you in your own folly. I don't know why you didn't come to me long ago. I have treasures more than you can dream of! If the King actually wished for you to have treasures, why didn't He just put them into your hands, without making you do this whole obstacle course... He doesn't care..." the evil voice would have gone on, but didn't get a chance.

Reaching her hand into her pocket where the golden key rested, she felt comfort and reassurance that the words of the King to her were the truth, and the voice spouting off now was the usurper and hinderer, spouting off one lie after the other. She suddenly remembered that the King had warned her of this danger. He'd said, "If any voice contradicts what I am telling you, and if anyone mocks the accuracy of the map, their words are like poison and will bring ruin to you and your quest. They wish you harm. Don't hesitate for an instant, but call out for My assistance. Do not give the slightest heed to what they say."

So now, when faced with this very situation, Celtellina, did just that. As she held the pulsating golden key she called for assistance with a whisper of her heart. Faster than a heartbeat the King summoned strong guardians of the Secrets of the King to escort this unwanted stranger off.

Although she never cared to so much as look the way of the hindering one, she did hear something that sounded like a mix of a gasp, a yell of terror, and a fading pitiful whimper, a sickening weak voice trailing off as whoever or whatever it was, was being taken further away. She could tell the lying creature was now in great discomfort, with a plan foiled.

When Celtellina stood up, somewhat shaken, there was the comforting arms of her angelic friends and helpers to embrace her. They whispered to her words of cheer, and were so pleased she'd made the call for help. Her plan of making great progress on her journey this day was not disappointed. And on the trek went.

While passing in a forest with many leaves on the ground, a particularly large pile of leaves caught her eye. Before making any sudden moves, she always paused to make sure it was right. You never knew when something unexpected and unpleasant would surprise the travellers on this secret pathway. She received approval both from her angelic helpers as well as the King of the Realm before approaching the heap and finding out more about it.

She brushed aside what she discovered was just a thin layer of leaves covering a chest!

Celtellina's heart began to pound, and the voice of the King in her heart and mind came loud and clear. "You have passed the test, and chosen to believe My words, and disregarded all else that opposed. This is for you!"

Yes, yes! Could it really be? Yes, indeed it was the secret chest! Now with the leaves brushed aside, the chest began to glow. At first Celtellina started to impatiently tug at the lid to get it open, but seeing it was locked made that approach impossible. She felt dismayed, as in the excitement of the moment had forgotten that she already held the key to unlock it, within her warm bosom.

She looked over to her angelic guides and they nodded, smiling encouragingly as if to say, "Go ahead! Try the key in the lock. Don't fear. You won't be disappointed."

She hesitated. She paused. This was an event that would either prove that the King and His instructions were right, and that He hadn't fooled her, and great joy would be hers; or it would show that everything she had endured to reach this secret chest was pointless. Would the key work? She almost didn't want to try, for fear of being utterly disappointed.

She stood up and walked a bit back down the path she had come. She needed time to think.

"Why have I lost my confidence? What has come over me? I think I just need to catch my breath. Perhaps the excitement caught me by surprise."

Her angelic friends huddled together to make plans. All was not lost if she did not open the secret chest. She could still carry on with the journey and revel in the many gems and jewels of the Treasure Cave yet to be discovered. But she would miss out on so much that she would certainly regret if she didn't take the bold step to give it a try.

THE LONG WALK—Part 2

The day was nearly spent, and the last rays of the sun would linger but for a short while before darkness would fall and sleep would follow. She was feeling tired, hungry and thirsty, but wasn't willing to give up yet.

The angelic helpers seemed to be quietly communing with the King and asking for something to be done.

Just then, while Celtellina sat on the ground, pondering what to do, the sound of footsteps were heard shuffling through the dry leaves on the pathway. She looked up to see a traveller, dressed much in the same colours and cloth type as she.

"Hello, fellow traveller," he said to her in a friendly voice. "Can I help you find your way? Are you lost?"

Surprised that anyone else would be here, and be speaking with her, she stuttered a hello, but didn't quite know what to say. A glance over to the chest indicated to this man what she was thinking about.

"Gotta key?" he asked.

She nodded.

"Did you use it?"

Somewhat embarrassed, she shook her head.

"Well, I've just come back from the Treasure Cave, take a look at these!" he said, showing an array of jewels that had been stuffed in his pocket.

"I think I know what you are feeling. I understand your hesitation to give it a go. You've gone through so much to get here, and now you so much want it to be true that you are afraid to try just in case you have been mistaken. Is that right?"

The traveller reached out his hand to take hers, and drew her to walk with him over to the chest. The glow and warmth from it were clearly seen.

"Perhaps you know it is true and good things are in it, but you wonder if you are worthy to open it. You think perhaps your lack of perfection will make the key the King gave you not work; that it has something to do with your goodness or lack of it."

Celtellina listened to this wise man. He seemed to speak what she felt was on her heart.

"How does he know?" she wondered.

"How do I know this?" he verbalized, again, seeming to know her thoughts. "I'm on the same pathway as you, and some time back I too came to this very place. I think I felt much like you do now. But then I thought, 'I have more to lose by NOT trying it, than what I fear might happen if I do.'"

"So what happened?!" Celtellina looked up and asked anxiously.

Drawing out the suspense just a wee bit more, the traveling man said, slowly, "Well... I took the key in my hands and examined it. It looked genuine, it felt genuine. Being somewhat mechanical I even looked into the keyhole and back at the shape of the key, and it seemed to be a correct match."

"Yes...and then what?" Celtellina urged him on.

"Well, I tried it...!" he exclaimed, not giving away the end result.

"And..." she said with pleading eyes.

"And it WORKED!" he looked right into her eyes with jovial expression.

The light from his eyes seemed to enter hers, and new courage was felt.

"So, what are you going to do about it?" he pressed.

Feeling silly to just be standing there any longer, when there awaited for her something special—just what she wasn't sure—but incredibly eager to find out, she pulled out her key and took the brave step over and rested her hands on the chest.

Looking up once more to the traveller, who met her eyes with a, “Go ahead, what are you waiting for?” look of confidence, she took the plunge.

In the key slipped, or rather was practically drawn, into the keyhole as soon as Celtellina positioned it and chose to give it a try. A click was heard as she turned the key, and with a spring the large chest lid opened up. The light from within it burst forth, and a cheer was heard from her three angelic companions. At last! The moment they'd been waiting for. At first it was almost too bright to see what was actually within the chest, as Celtellina peered in. Eventually her eyes became adjusted.

“What?” It wasn't at all what she expected, but really, it couldn't be any better.

Whatever she had needed at that moment was in the secret chest—it was hers for the taking. Other travellers when they arrived would find in it, also, whatever was needed, and would be for them. It seemed very magical.

Celtellina asked the traveller what he had found in the chest earlier on his journey, as his needs would have been different. Each of these two travellers had found exactly what was needed, placed there by the King. She laughed at her own folly at hesitating for so long to make use of what the King had placed there for her, due to her lack of faith to try the Key He had clearly given to her for that moment.

“Dig in deeper,” one of her angelic guides urged her. And when she did she was surprised.

THE LONG WALK—Part 3

The chest was filled with keys of all sizes, shapes and colours! They were made of precious stones and of other shiny material she didn't even know what.

“What are these?” she asked, hoping the traveller would have an answer.

“I wondered that too at first, but then as I examined them closely I saw a word inscribed on each key. See if you can get to the bottom of the chest...” the traveller challenged.

Celtellina dug down with her hands to reach what would seem to be the bottom of the chest, yet it seemed to be bottomless. The store of secret treasure keys just went on and on.

The traveller smiled. “There is more in here to supply our needs and wishes while on our journey—far more than we'll even have the time and the need to use. Life on Wonder Hill will be through before we even can make use of all our King has provided for us who walk on His secret pathway. Each key has the inscription on it of what it will do for you. Take as many keys as you think you will need. Dig and take all the ones you think will be useful for you. Fill your pockets with them if you wish. Then the game has only just begun.”

“Game?” Celtellina wondered.

“Well, sort of, I guess it's the treasure hunt game. And as you go on your journey to reach the Treasure Cave, whenever you face a difficult spot, or have a need, or feel too weary to go on, take out the key that has the inscription relating to your need. Then as you hold it and whisper a request to the King, because they are the Keys that He has placed there for you, He will honour your request, and almost by magic will supply or aid you in whatever way you have need. The chests that these keys open are for the most part invisible, just like our King usually is, but as you hold it, the supplies from the secret chest will be given to you—or whatever it is that you have need of.”

Celtellina was amazed, and wished someone could show her just a bit more what it meant and how to make full use of this gift from the King.

“I'll walk with you a bit, if you like,” the traveller said. “We can practice together this art of using the King's Keys. The next time you come back to carry on your journey, I'll be right here to help you, if you'd like, as I've been sent here to do so. Unless you feel ready to continue on right now with me for a bit.”

“Thank you! I would very much like that,” she responded, then turned to refresh herself with all that the chest held that was placed there for her. There was a coat for warmth, a torch for light, a powerful nutritional snack, a jug of water, and a bottle of sweet nectar for energy. Even a new pair of shoes to keep her feet protected on the next part of the way.

She looked at her worn shoes, and thought how glad she was to have accessed all that the King wanted her to have. The traveller indicated that the way from there was even tougher in some respects, however it also was going to be much easier for her now, due to the help from the King that she would now be able to ask for.

Normally, she would have had to stop her journey there for the day, but with the supplies from the chest she was able to keep on going. She had light and warmth, and her feet were protected. Besides that, she had a purse full of the Kings Keys—anything else she would need would be hers for the asking.

The traveller walked on and talked with her and kept her company for a while longer. She was glad to have the companionship of someone who had been on that path before. Up the winding narrow mountain pathway they went, while the air seemed to gradually get thinner as well. At one point Celtellina felt nearly ready to faint, and thought she’d have to stop. The risk of falling over the cliff was troubling her.

“There’s no risk, nor weariness—remember, use the King’s Keys. You have a need, ask for it!” the traveller urged her. Now was the perfect time to see what they would do.

The traveller held the torch and shone it for Celtellina while she looked through the keys she had chosen, trying to find the right one to use. At last she spotted one that said “safe and easy travel”. That sounded just perfect. As she held it she whispered to the King that she had a need for a safe and easy travel. In an instant the request was granted.

Two large guardians of the secret pathway were on either side of her, holding each of her arms. There was no fear of falling now, and it seemed they lifted her slightly off the ground so that she was gliding over the pathway, until she reached a wider part of the pathway. New strength had likewise been imparted to her, and she felt able to continue on.

When she reached a mountain meadow, she felt it time now to pause on the secret journey for a while. A cry of a little one—Mama Emilda’s newest little one—was heard. Celtellina realized that it was past midnight in Wonder Hill, and perhaps some assistance was needed. She rose to offer her help to Mama Emilda.

“I’ll hold him for a bit, while you get what he needs ready,” she offered to a thankful and tired mother of a little one. “Come, let’s go look at the stars! See how they twinkle?” she said in her soothing way while walking out on the porch with her tiny nephew. She tucked his favourite soft cuddly toy in his arms, and then sang a song while rocking him in her arms.

It was good to be needed, and lovely to have a family to be a part of, in her own simple way. Though she couldn’t wait to carry on the journey to the Treasure Cave, there was a time and place for everything. Sharing the treasure of her love and care with an infant was what was right for now.

In time she would carry on with her secret journey—and reach the Treasure Cave. One step at a time she would get there; and be sure to help others find the way.

One thought just kept coming to her, however, *that traveller... he reminds me of someone in Wonder Hill... just his appearance was different than I recognize...*

Indeed it was true, someone, a special someone was on his own journey to and from the Treasure Cave. He assisted her, in this mysterious way, on the secret pathway; and in a couple years more, he was to assist her and join with her on their trek through life in Wonder Hill.