

THE FIND

MAX AND THE DREAM TIME

What would you do
if you could see the future?

A SHORT STORY BY
R.C. DUCANTLIN

Max and the Dream Time

A Collection of Short Stories



The Find

The Everwhen

The Tontine

The Lost Years

The Price of Love



By

Ruairí Cinéad Ducantlin

The Find

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THE FIND

PROLOGUE



JULY 2017

Oh no, no, no...

Jamie, what have you done?

I knew you could not be trusted. I should not have listened to Mark. Mark was wrong about you. Mark was wrong about everything. Where are you Jamie? You never understood what it was or its power. Jamie, did you sell it for drug money? No, you had kicked the habit and turned

your life around. Maybe Randall knows. Randall vowed to be the last. Randall loved you, but he hated Mark. You enjoyed making them fight.

Jamie, what have you done?

Stop. Think. Max, you can figure this out. Jamie must be close. She doesn't know how to use it. Did Jamie learn to use it? Did Mark teach Jamie to use it? No, Mark doesn't know how to use it. Mark didn't believe it worked. Randall. Randall must have taught her to use it. Randall knew the key to open the box before the timer expired. Yes! Randall. He must have given Jamie the secret to opening the box. No, Randall would not speak to Jamie after she left him for Mark. But Jamie left Mark too.

Jamie, what have you done?

Look at the rust. The box has been open for a long while. Where is the rainwater? No water in the box. When was the last time it rained? Jamie,

why did you leave the box open? Did water damage it? No, I found it water. Water can't damage it.

Jamie, what have you done?

Max. Hey Max! Earth to Max. Where did you go? Did you hear my question?

Sorry, Mark. The box triggered another episode. The episodes feel real.

Max, I am here for you buddy. Let's continue the walk. Is that okay?

Sure, let's walk.

I will find Jamie and make her put it back.

Jamie, what have you done?

Ouch! Damn it! Max, that hurts. You need to remember I am here too. Right here! Right here, in the real world.

Sorry, Mark. You know the Dream Time is real for me. I was searching for Jamie and the device.

Yea, well, it stings being close when you go... Wherever you go. Did you find Jamie or the device?

CHAPTER ONE

“JUMP, AND YOU WILL FIND OUT HOW TO
UNFOLD YOUR WINGS AS YOU FALL.”

RAY BRADBURY

JULY 2006

*She's always flirting. She thinks we don't notice.
I liked her better before. I feel sorry for her.*

Hello, I'm Max. Me, Mark, Randall, and Jamie spend almost every afternoon together. Either at the old mill or at Mark's house playing Xbox. This Wednesday afternoon, in late July, is no different. The sun is warm and the pond water cold. The gang, my gang, is sitting on the concrete abutment that was, a hundred years ago, a waterwheel mount. Now, no waterwheel, no mill. The gravel road which led to the mill is badly overgrown, a thin footpath remains.

Mark and I always sit on the right of the massive, rusted tight, bearing that once held the waterwheel's axle. Randall and Jamie sit on the

left of the mount where the concrete is smoothest.

Max, Mark, Randall, and Jamie. Always the same order.

We could sit on the other side of the lower pond, closer to the water but we like the warm concrete. The water is always cold. The water flows from the upper pond, through a pipe, falling over a short rocky waterfall, and into the lower pond. The upper pond once fed the waterwheel, and the lower pond was, once, the waterwheel outflow. Year-round, the water from the bottom of the upper pond is too cold for a long swim.

Jamie is always the first to jump into the water. Mark said it is because girls don't feel the cold like boys. I know better. Mark always says stupid stuff. Jamie is first because she likes showing off her wet bikini. Jamie always adjusts the bikini top when she steps from of the water. Mark and Randall always look at her when she climbs above of the water. Jamie doesn't mind them

staring at her.

Max, why don't you like to swim?

What Mark?

How come you don't like to swim?

I like to swim.

Why do you come with us every day? You never spend a lot of time in the water.

I dunno. I like hanging out.

Mark always knows when I am thinking. He knows it annoys me when he interrupts me. He does it because he can. I think Mark is lonely.

Mark says he is going to be the captain of the High School hockey team. Go Knights! Mark does barely enough schoolwork to be eligible to play hockey. He probably will be captain.

Everyone needs a goal.

High school is next year. In September we will enter grade eight. High school is one year away.

College in five years.

I have no goals.

Randall never stops talking about what he is going to do after college. In two months, we start grade eight and Randall is already planning a life after college. If Mark is going to be captain of the hockey team, Randall will be voted most likely to succeed.

Jamie. Jamie is a girl looking for a way out. Never interested in school, or sports, or music, or video games, Jamie goes along to get along. Jamie is thin with mouse blonde hair. She is beautiful to me. Also, Jamie likes to read. Reading is the thing she cares about. Mark, Randall, and I are Jamie's only true friends.

Last year, Jamie made the cheerleader squad. She quit after two weeks. She told us she quit because it took too much time and her mother couldn't drive her to practice. We know better.

Jamie quit the cheer squad because the other girls made fun of her for preferring books to talking about boys.

*Jamie always flirts with Mark and Randall. Mostly Randall. I think being on the cheer squad was bad for Jamie. The cheer squad girls made her feel unwelcome and not liked.
Fuck those stuck-up bitches.*

Hey Randall, we are going to get Miss Cartwright for English. She teaches grade eight advanced English.

No way Max. Maybe Jamie will get advanced English, but we are going to get Mister Scott. He teaches regular English. My brother had him, said it was an easy class but a lot of reading.

I saw the assignments. We are assigned to Miss Cartwright. Fourth period, right before lunch.

Max, you are full of shit. The assignments have not been posted.

I was in the office this morning. I saw the assignments on Misses Gratti's desk.

No way! Awe... This year is going to suck.

I hope Miss Cartwright's class is hard. I think I might be a writer someday. Randall worries and complains but always gets an 'A'. Randall's mom would die if Randall came home with a 'B'. Jamie will get an 'A'. Jamie always gets 'A's. Miss Cartwright will learn Jamie has read all the assignments, is bored, and will give Jamie special reading assignments. Mark will struggle but I will help him pass advanced English. I always help him pass.

Randall is always flirting with Jamie now. Jamie says she had to switch to a bikini because the other swimsuits don't fit. We know better. Jamie is showing off. Mark watches Randall flirt with Jamie. Mark is jealous.

Jamie arrived at the top of the abutment and reached for her towel. I can see the goosebumps, from the cold, on her arms. Before she can grab the towel, Randall pulls her towel away. Jamie puts her hands on her hips and stands, dripping

wet, staring at Randall. Mark and Randall stare at the small, iridescent blue, bikini.

Jamie reached across Randall to grab the towel. Randall pushed back, trying to push Jamie into the water. Jamie grabbed Randall's wrist for balance.

Jamie, Randall, and their towels fell off the abutment, landing in the cold water. Jamie rises from of the water roaring with laughter. Randall had his sneakers on and wants to be mad, but Jamie has her legs wrapped around his waist.

Mark watches the whole thing. Mark always watches Randall flirt with Jamie but will never say anything.

Ya know Mark, tons of girls want to hang-out with the future captain of the hockey team. You can do better than a bookworm.

Fuck you, Max.

Mark pushed me off the abutment and into the

water. I barely missed landing on Randall and Jamie. Acting like I meant to jump in, I start diving down, looking for polished stones. I hear Mark when I emerge for air.

Max, do you need more rocks?

Jamie, it's not *any* rocks. I like the way some of them look. The tumbling water has polished them. They shine in the sun.

Yea right. Nerd.

CHAPTER TWO

Randall and Jamie are at the far end of the pond. Randall was standing in enough water that it barely rose above his waist. Jamie had her legs around Randall's hips and was lying on her back, in the water. She was softly paddling to keep her head above the water, looking at the trees, and playing twenty questions with Randall.

What's your favorite color?

Blue.

No really. You said that because of the bikini. Tomorrow you would have said green.

You have a new green bikini?

Wouldn't you like to know? What's your favorite movie?

Stupid questions. They should kiss and get it over. Oh, there's a nice one. It is deep. I'll need all my air. Breathe in. Breathe out. In. Out. Ready. In. Out. In. Hold. Dive!

The water is clear today. The cold hurts my eyes and my ears always pop when I dive deep.

The rock is heavy. Push off the bottom like a rocket to the surface. Breathe out. Gulp air in. Wow, that was deep. The rock is warm. Can a rock be warm in this cold water? The water doesn't feel cold now. I feel warm all over.

Hey, guys, look at this.

So what Max, you found another rock.

No Mark, look. It is not a rock.

Mark ignored me, kicking off his sandals, he did a cannonball into the water near Randall and Jamie, before he swam over to me.

Give me that.

No way, you'll throw it.

Damn right. Like you need another rock.

I am not giving them this... It is not a rock. What is it? It's an Orb. It might be a rock. Why is it warm?

I'm going home.

Ahhhh... Maxxxx... You always leave early.
Stay a little longer.

Jamie, you can stay and flirt with Randall.
I'm cold and hungry. I am going home.

Jamie splashed water on my face because of my flirt comment and began swimming to the edge of the pond. We followed Jamie from of the water. Ascending the diagonal edge of the abutment was always a little slippery. Holding the Orb in one hand made the climb extra difficult. Reaching the top, I zipped the Orb into my backpack and grabbed my towel. Randall's and Jamie's wet towels meant they had to put their clothes on without drying off first. We headed out, following the narrow lane. Me, Mark, Randall, and Jamie. Always the same order.

Show me the rock.

What Randall? No.

Why does Randall want to see the Orb? I don't think it is a rock. He never wants to talk about

rocks. He'll throw it into the woods.

I'll show you at the clearing. If you promise to give it back. You have to promise.

I promise.

Swear it Randall.

I swear, I will not throw it.

They don't think I saw them wink. Mark and Randall are planning something. I know them too well. I don't trust them with the Orb. Can an Orb be oval? This thing is oval. Is it an Orb?

We reach the clearing, which used to be a crossroads. At the clearing, I stopped walking, and whipped my backpack around to unzip the outer pocket. The object is warm when I pull it from the backpack pocket. The others move to stand in a small arc looking at the Orb in my hand.

Swear it. Both of you. Swear you will give it back.

Ah, you're no fun. I swear. Mark?

I swear.

Jamie too.

What? Why me? I don't want your stupid rock.

Stay alert. Watch them closely. If they throw it, I can find it. I will watch where it goes.

I handed the object to Randall who shrugged and tried to hand it to Jamie. Jamie rolls her eyes, turns, and resumes walking along the lane. Mark grabs the object from Randall.

It is warm.

I told you Mark, it was warm in the cold water.

What do you think it is, quartz?

It's not quartz. It might be glass. It is not a rock.

It's a rock.

No, look at it. Hold it high, toward the sun.

Mark held the object up, toward the sun. The three of us leaned in, put our heads close to look at the light bouncing through the Orb.

Randall shrugged and took off running after Jamie.

Mark was rotating the object, watching the light and colors bounce around inside the Orb.

Holding the object toward the sun, a beam of light shot through the object and hit me in the middle of my forehead.

Did you see that?

See what?

The beam?

What beam?

Mark, you didn't see the beam hit me?

No... No, laser beam. Max, you're losing it.

Mark tossed the Orb to me and took off running

after Randall and Jamie.

What the hell was that? Mark didn't see it? Why is it warm? Is it pulsing? I think it is pulsing.

After putting the Orb in the backpack and zipping the outer pocket, I run along the lane to catch the gang. Dodging overgrowth and exposed roots I reached the gang quickly and ran to the front of the line.

Leaves of three, let it be. Me, Mark, Randall, then Jamie. Always the same order.

What was that? Am I hearing things? Again?

Did you guys hear something?

Hear what?

Nope.

Not me.

Mark's right, you're losing it, Max.

Why would Randall agree with Mark? They must

be talking about me. Am I losing it?

CHAPTER THREE

AUGUST 2006

Randall and Mark are always staring at her. She's always flirting. Jamie moved the lounge chair, from the far end of the pool. She moved the chair to where Mark and Randall could see her through the window of the pool house.

Stupid bikinis.

Mark's pool house is where we play Xbox. Jamie hates Xbox, she hangs and reads. She wears those bikinis and lounges by the pool. Mark and Randall don't let me play Xbox anymore, they say it is no fun losing all the time. Ever since I found the Orb, I haven't lost one game. Randall really hates losing. He used to win all the time. He says he doesn't, but we know Randall practices to beat Mark and Me. Randall's player is always named Randy. Randall's mother won't let anyone call him Randy. He names his avatars Randy.

This is boring.

With the verbal outburst, Mark tossed his controller and returned to staring through the window. For Mark, exclaiming he was bored meant he was losing again.

Oh, come on Mark, you had a chance to win that time.

Whatever. You weren't paying attention. Maybe Max will play you. Go ahead Max, beat him again.

Leave me out of this.

No way, Max never losses. Tell me again. What did you do to get good at video games Max?

I told you a hundred times.

Yea, ugh, I don't believe you. I don't believe that thing you found made you smarter. What are you reading now? You read four books a day?

Only a couple of books. The library on Main Street is too small. I go into the city, to the central library, to find books which interest me.

Here we go again. They get bored and I get

harassed. Maybe I should play Xbox and beat Randall again. Look at them staring.

She won't mind if you go outside, closer, and stare.

Lately, when Mark and Randall agree on anything is when it is time to beat me up. My "go stare" comment triggered a tussle. Grabbing my backpack, I was through the door before they could grab me. Flopping into a chair, next to Jamie, I knew she would not let them beat me up again. Mark and Randall glowered at me through the pool house window. Randall pointed, and Mark made a slashing gesture across his throat.

You know, they are afraid of you, right?

What do you mean? They are not afraid of me.

Yes, they are. But they are dumb boys and don't know why they want to beat you up.

Okay, smarty, why do they want to beat me up?

Jamie never opened her eyes. She simply started talking. She knew I was running from Mark and

Randall? She knew I pissed them off. Jamie is a smart girl, but she wants people to think she is a dumb.

They don't want to beat you up. Not really. They want to remind you they can. Plus, they are jealous of you and me.

What!?! No way! You and me? Ha!

Relax little boy. Not you and me, as in *you and me*. But like you and me as friends who talk about stuff.

What is Jamie saying?

What do you mean?

Think about it. Mark and I have almost nothing to talk about. All he ever wants to talk about is sports. If Randall isn't playing Xbox, he's working on his college plan. His mother insists, that's all he talks about, getting into college.

Oh, I see. You and me, we talk about everything.

We do talk about everything. I like talking to Jamie. She listens and never says my ideas are stupid. She knows a lot about stuff from the

books she reads.

Yes, we do talk about everything and they are jealous of our talking.

Do you like my green bikini?

Why is it new?

I've seen that bikini before. I think I have seen it before. Is it new? Why is she asking me now? She never asked me about her clothes before.

No silly, it is not new. Do you like it?

Yea, I think so, maybe?

What do you mean, maybe?

I mean, yea, I like it. Why are you asking me now?

Because I want an honest answer. Mark and Randall tell me stupid stuff they think girls want to hear. I want to know what you think.

Oh no. This is weird. Why is she asking me? What am I supposed to say? Why do I feel warm? Why am I sweating?

I think you are the prettiest girl I know.

Sitting up, sliding her feet around, Jamie looked at me for the first time. She had a twinkle in her eye and sweet smirk. Her skin was slightly damp from sweating under the sun. Adjusting her top, she was always adjusting her top, she never took her eyes off me. I forced myself to focus on her eyes and not look at the bikini.

The prettiest? What about Mary Reinhardt?

Mary? No way. You are the prettiest girl I know.

This is weird. She never talks to me about girls.

Why am I sweating?

What about Sue Ellen Beaumont?

I am not going to compare you to the entire grade eight class. Why are you asking me?

Because I want to know. You are the smartest person I know. Ever since you found that thing, you have gotten smarter... And, you never stare. I try to get you to look at me, but you are always too

polite. I like polite. The other boys are rude.

Don't stare. Don't' stare. Don't stare. She is testing you. If you stare you will fail. She is beautiful. Why am I sweating? I need to leave.

I don't know about the other boys, but I think you are the prettiest, smartest, girl I know.

I stood to leave, spinning my backpack on to my shoulders. Jamie stood also, pulling with her an oversized pool towel. Wrapping the towel around her shoulders, under her arms, high enough to stay put and low enough to...

Don't stare. Don't' stare. Don't stare.

Give me a minute to change, I'll walk with you.

Jamie stepped over, kissed me on the lips, and darted into the changing room on the side of the pool house.

Mark and Randall were stone still, staring at me

through the window, mouths agape. I stood to leave. Mark and Randall rushed to stop me.

How did you do that?

How did I do what Mark?

Get her to kiss you?

I didn't do anything, she did it.

Son of a bitch.

Randall, you'll be dead if your mother hears you swearing.

Son of a bitch.

Randall was mumbling the swear words to himself. Mark was looking from me to the changing room and back, shaking his head in disbelief. Both were disappointed neither got the first kiss from Jamie.

Jamie emerged from the changing room, with pink summer bag over her shoulder. You could see the dark outline of the emerald green bikini under a white linen blouse and white Capri pants. Jamie is a beautiful girl.

Ready?

Sure.

As Jamie stepped by Mark and Randall, I turned and fell in stride with her. We walked around the pool, to the side gate, and let it close behind us.

You know they were staring at us the whole time.

Yea, I know. They deserve it.

What do you mean they deserve it?

You'll see.

Jamie reached and took my hand in hers.

CHAPTER FOUR

NOVEMBER 2006

I wish they would leave. If they left, I could get continue reading. Resume my research. I have the answer. No, I am close to the answer. I can feel it. The Orb responds to me now. I know what it can do. I know some of what it can do.

Come on Max, stop being a pain in the ass. Tell me the answers.

No Mark, I can't take the test for you. You need to at least know what the formula does.

Son of a bitch. I am never going to get this...

Max, what happened to you? All you do is read that stuff online.

Randall, tell him he needs to learn something, anything, to pass grade eight.

Leave me out of this.

Randall never took his eyes from my PlayStation, he kept playing, ignoring everyone else. I was, in

my usual place, in mt bedroom, at my desk and computer. Mark and Randall were sitting on the floor, leaning back, against the side of the bed. Randall was playing PlayStation and Mark was trying to comprehend basic algebra. Jamie was lying on my bed, reading a book I gave her. Everyone's winter coats were tossed on to the floor.

What's this word Max?

What word Jamie? I can't see what you are reading.

Ex-Is-Tent-I-A-L.

It is pronounced existential and it means to assert or imply something exists.

What does *that* mean?

It means... The question of the Orb having power is no longer existential. I have proven it has power.

Oh fuck, here we go again.

Shut up Mark. Max, what do you mean you have proven it has power?

I mean... I know it gave me the power and

I know why I was at the bottom of the pond.

Damn. Damn. Damn. I was not paying attention and she got me to tell too much. Ahhhh, damn. Randall stopped playing PlayStation and is looking at me.

Spinning around in my chair, to face the gang, I knew I had to think fast.

Forget it. I was thinking aloud.

Max, you're losing it man!

Damn right he is. Oh crap, I forgot to save. I have to start this level over.

No, you guys out. I need to study.

What about her?

She can stay because she is quiet.

Mark and Randall got the hint. Snatching their backpacks from the floor, Mark filched my math homework from my desk, pulled his coat from the pile on the floor, and scooted through the door. Randall stopped at the door, turned, and while he

was pulling on his coat looked at Jamie and me. Randall zipped his coat, shook his head, and closed the door behind him.

Jamie slid off the bed and came over to sit on my lap. Kissing me on the forehead.

I thought they'd never leave.

Jamie, weren't you reading that book I gave you?

Yes, but this is our fun time.

A little later, okay? I have something I want to show you.

Should I tell her? Will she keep it a secret? I can tell her. Maybe? No? Should I tell anyone?

Faking a pout, pushing forward her lower lip, Jamie stood and went to puff the pillows and lay on the bed.

Okay, spoilsport what is it you want to show me?

Maybe I shouldn't tell her? She will tell Mark. Mark will tell Randall and they will tell everyone.

No, tell no one. She will be mad.

Jamie never gets mad.

Well smarty pants, you going to show me or what?

No, keep it a secret. I've got it!

Instead of telling Jamie about the Orb and its power, I flung myself on the bed next to her.

Oh, I see, that is how it is going to be?

What?

We make-out when *you* want to make-out?

If this is not a good time...

I start to roll off the bed, but Jamie grabbed my arm and pulled me down. We stopped kissing when my mother hollered it was dinner time.

Do you want to stay for dinner?

No, you know my mom expects me home. I'll call you later.

About nine?

Okay, about nine.

Jamie kissed me hard, on the lips, and left, leaving the door open behind her. Closing the door, I turned back, stood on the side table to reach the air vent over the mirror. A couple of months ago, I unscrewed the vent cover. Cutting off the mounting screws, I glued the screw heads to the vent with epoxy. On the backside of the vent cover, I epoxied magnets.

Pulling off the vent cover, I could barely reach the Orb. Pulling it out, I held it to the window and the setting sun. The iridescent colors begin to vibrate. Almost every day, I confirmed the Orb responded to the power of sunlight.

Every day that I held the Orb to the sunlight, I gained strength of mind. I know the answers to every test question at school. I stopped answering them all correctly to get the teachers to stop asking about my "study habits" and "what changed over the summer."

What is this thing doing to me? Where is the end to its ability? On warm days it is stronger. I can feel it vibrating on warm days. The vent keeps the Orb warm and safe.

Why was it at the bottom of the pond? Was it put at the bottom of the pond to stop the vibrations? Yes, someone wanted it to stop vibrating. Why would they want it to stop?

The dreams are vivid now. Sometimes the dreams seem real when I am sleeping and when I am not sleeping. Maybe that's the clue I need. Dreaming. Are dreams real? In the daytime, the dreams that are another place are real.

Yes mom, I heard you, I'm coming.

Was I dreaming?

Stepping on the side table, I put the Orb into the little bag I bought for it and placed it as far as I could reach into the vent. I carefully replaced the vent cover. Wiping away the dust marks left by

my sneakers on the side table, I made sure nothing visible indicated I was standing on the table. The vent cover was not askew.

How do I keep this a secret? What do I do with this ability? Can I expand the ability? What about the dreams? That is the clue, the dreams? I need to know as much as I can learn about the dreams.

Coming Mom!

CHAPTER FIVE

FEBRUARY 2007

I am not a hero. Why does everyone keep saying that? I do not want a parade. Who does parades? It is 2007 not 1957.

Well, I'm not going.

You have to go Max. You will disappoint the whole town if you ditch the parade.

But I didn't do anything.

Yes, you did! You saved that boy.

No, Mark saved that boy.

No, Mark did what you told him to do to save that boy.

So, what, Mark did the hard part.

Yes, and that is why he's riding with you in the convertible.

Jamie was not going to let me blow off the parade. She was in my room making sure I was going to be ready. My mom had given Jamie strict

instructions.

Make sure he combs his hair and puts on a clean shirt. Oh, and no holes in his jeans. Wait, no jeans. Slacks! He has to put on slacks.

Jamie nodded to my mother, smiled, before gushing a wicked smirk at me. My mother smirked too and left us to get me dressed.

Leave while I change my pants.

Why? I have seen your underwear before.

Nuh-uh.

Have so. The day you forgot your suit at the pond. We all swam in our underwear because you refused to swim in your underwear by yourself.

Jamie that was two summers ago. Things are... Things are different now.

So, what? Who cares? Don't be a prude.

Jamie is testing me. She wants to see if she can make me blush. I like that about Jamie, she is not afraid. I'll turn my back. I did save that boy.

But it is not what people think. It's too cold for a parade in an open convertible. The band will freeze their lips. These slacks are too short. Oh well, I'll be sitting down. She's watching me. I can feel her emotions. Jamie loves me but wants more. Jamie always wants more. She tells me she is happy, but she has a gap in her soul. She is trying to fill the gap but doesn't know where to look. I know she loves me, and I make her happy, but it is not enough. She knows it is not enough. She knows that I know it is not enough.

How do I look?

You are handsome.

Jamie put her hands on either side of my face and kissed me. Turning, and grabbing her coat in one motion, she headed for the door.

Let's go or we'll be late.

Okay, but promise you'll come to the dinner?

No promises, that's our deal, remember?

I remember, but this is different.

No, it isn't. You're being a baby.

The parade was cold but, mercifully, short. The band practically ran the six blocks. The horses should have been behind the band in the parade order. The tube player's tuba will never be the same after the slip which upended two baton twirlers.

Jamie did meet us at the restaurant for dinner, wearing a blue, shimmering, dress. My mother and father looked at each other with raised eyebrows and my dad pulled Jamie's chair.

Dinner was fine. My parents had stopped asking about the day on the lake and saving that boy. Jamie sat and smiled and answered questions. We dropped her at home, her mother waving from the porch when we drove away.

You two are pretty serious?

No mom, we hang.

I know better, that girl likes you.

Mom, please, we are close friends.

No one who is a "close friend" wears that dress to a dinner date.

She likes you boy.

Yea, Dad, I suppose so...

Here we go. They'll keep talking and I'll sit quietly listening and grunting. Don't they know? Life is more than teenage romance.

Yes, Dad.

Jamie is nice, and I like having her around. Mark is playing hockey all the time. Randall's mom makes him study and doesn't let him visit his friends too much. I know there is more. A lot more. I knew the ice was thin and I knew that boy was going to fall through before it happened. Did I know that? Did I guess it? I saw it. I saw it in the dream time. The Orb did it. The beam did it. The beam gave me the dreams.

No, Mom.

If the dreams are real, can I control them? What did I read a couple of weeks ago? Something about "Everwhen". Yes, that is the key. "The Everwhen".

No, Dad. I'm not going to ask Jamie to the spring dance, she already asked me.

Arriving home, I go right to my room and close the door. The heat is on and I can feel the Orb vibrating. Something is different. The vibration is faster. Retrieving the Orb, I pull from the bag. It is too hot to hold. Dropping it, I jump off the nightstand. Using my jacket as a mitt, I lift the Orb and place it on the mouse pad.

CHAPTER SIX

MAY 2007

They will never understand. I should not have brought it up.

No, I told you, the Australian Aborigines. Not the *Austrian Orphinals*. No people are called the Austrian Orphinals. Orphinal is not a word Mark.

Who cares? You're losing it Max. What happened to all the rocks?

I boxed them and put them on a shelf in the garage.

We are in my bedroom. Randall's mom said a ninety-seven on an advanced algebra test was too low. She made Randall stay home and study. Jamie was lying on the bed, acting like she was reading a book. Jamie is watching me. Jamie is making me nervous.

Why?

Why what?

Why did you get rid of the rocks? You have been collecting them since we were five.

Max, tell Mark, why you got all *grown-up* yesterday.

Mark and I stopped looking at Aboriginal drawings on my computer and turned to look at Jamie. Sitting up, putting the book aside, Jamie leaned forward with intent.

This should be good. Jamie makes me nervous.

Yesterday. Max found the reason his dreams and visions feel real. Why he can see in the... what did you call it? Oh yea, 'The Everwhen'. Isn't that right Max? Can you see things happen in The Everwhen?

Oh crap. Does she know? What did I do? Did she figure it out? Mark will not understand. Talk to Jamie. I can make her tell me what she knows.

What are you talking about? I got tired of the rocks. We will be in high school in a few months. With the studying... No time for rocks. Plus, it is time to find new hobbies.

Why are you avoiding the subject Max?

Mark is turning his head from Jamie to me to Jamie and back. He is confused. He understands the words but has no clue about the meaning of Jamie's conversation.

Hanging with Max is causing you to lose it too Jamie. I am outta here.

Mark closes the door when he leaves. Jamie leans against the pillows but does not take her eyes from mine. She is waiting for me to speak first.

She is testing me. She is always testing me. She is always testing herself. This is another test. This time is different. She thinks she knows something. She is searching. She is always searching. Jamie always wants more. That is why she reads book after book. She is searching. Searching, but she does not know what she is searching to find.

What are you talking about?

You know what I am talking about.

Oh! We are going to fight.

No, we are not fighting. You know what I am talking about.

Why don't you tell me what you think I should know about what you are talking about?

Huh? Is that a question or a statement?

It is a request.

Why are you being stubborn?

Jamie, what is it you want to know?

I want to know what you learned that led you determined the Everwhen was real?

How do you know that? I mean, what makes you think my dreams are real?

First, you don't call them your dreams anymore. You refer to your dreams as *the other place*. Second, you have read everything you can find on the altered states of reality. JoAnne, in the library, gave me a list of the books you have been reading.

What? No way. She can't do that.

She did because I said I wanted to buy a book for your birthday, but I want to make sure you had not read it.

But it's not my birthday.

JoAnne doesn't know that. Max, what is The Everwhen?

She has me cornered. This is what I get for having a smart girlfriend. What do I tell her? If I tell her the truth, she will think I am crazy. Maybe she already thinks I am crazy. Think Max, where is the path from this corner>

Jamie, there is nothing to The Everwhen. It is something I have been studying for a while.

Nice try. You are a bad liar Max.

Cornered.

Jamie, you will not believe me. No one will believe me.

I *will* believe you Max. When I don't believe you, I will listen and not laugh. I promise. I want to know what is going on with you.

Cornered.

Remember, you promised.

Cornered.

The Everwhen is another dimension of our reality.

Fuck, Fuck, Fuck. I knew she'd laugh at me. Oh well, I'll find another girlfriend eventually. Someone who doesn't know about the Orb or The Everwhen.

I am sorry Max. I am not laughing at what you said. I am laughing because I figured it out. I guessed and got it right. In the Everwhen... I mean, when you are in The Everwhen, is it today, is it now?

Oh, she believes me. Hmmmm... Okay then. Let's see what she believes.

It is whenever I want it to be... I mean, I don't think I can go back in time and alter events. I can see the future. That is... I knew the kid on the ice was in trouble. I saw the ice cracking and I saw Mark pulling him from the water with the hockey stick.

Cool. Can you change things in the Everwhen?

I don't think so. I mean, I don't know. Most of the books seem to think the Everwhen

is like a movie that you can fast-forward. Not really fast-forward like a tape. It is like jump to a point in time. Yea, it is like I can think about a time, in the future, and I can see it in the Everwhen.

Is that why you know all the answers to the test? You go into the Everwhen and get the answers?

Are you asking if I cheat? No. The Orb made me smarter.

Son of a bitch. I knew it. She is laughing again, and I know she is laughing at me. I knew this was a mistake.

You promised not to laugh.

I know Max. I am not laughing at you. Really. I am laughing at the possibilities. Do you know what you can do? Have you thought about what knowing the future means and what will happen to you? Do you know what it does? What it does *for* you? It will make you rich and famous.

NO! You can't tell anyone. Jamie promise me. You will never tell anyone about this. Ever! Please! Promise me. Please! Promise. Right now.

Okay, Max, calm down, stop screaming. They are

going to lock me up. If Jamie tells anyone about this, they will lock me up. I can feel it vibrating. It is reacting to my panic. I need to relax. Breathe. Think. Breathe.

No, Mom, everything is okay,

Jamie patted the bed, inviting me to come over and lay next to her. I nodded, got up, and went and lay next to Jamie.

Max, I love you. I would never hurt you. Promise me something?

Here it is. Jamie is always searching. Jamie wants something.

Sure Jamie, what?

Promise?

How can I promise when I don't know what it is you want?

Promise you will take me with you?

Take you with me? Take you where? I'm not going anywhere. What are you talking about?

No, not right now, silly. I mean, promise to take me with you when you get rich and famous.

I need to stop laughing. Look at her face. She is pissed off now. Oh. Yeah. I get it now. Jamie is afraid. Jamie wants to be anywhere but this small town. This is the first thing she has found that can take her away. Jamie is running from herself. Jamie thinks... She thinks me, the Orb, and the Everwhen are her key to something more.

I am sorry for laughing. Jamie, I love you too. I promise, if I become rich and famous, I will take you with me. But you have to promise. Promise Jamie. Say the words.

Max, I promise. I will not tell anyone about The Everwhen, or the Orb, or that it makes you smarter.

Jamie kissed me to seal the promise. Jamie stepped over me, picking her jacket from the floor, and took a long stride to the door in one motion. Turning back, before opening the door, Jamie looked at me and smiled a sad smile.

Max, when you get there, wherever the Orb and The Everwhen take you, will you come back? For me?

Jamie, I am never going to leave you. I will always be here for you.

Jamie lost her smile, turned, and closed the door behind her.

What do I do now? Did Jamie break up with me? I know... I can look... Should I look? Do I want to know the future?

IN THE EVERWHEN: SATURDAY, MAY 26, 2007

No, silly, that is: I Wanna Love You by Akon.

Who the hell is Akon? I liked Paralyzer by Finger Eleven better. Is that Snoop Dogg singing too? Are they allowed to play that?

Who cares about the song Max? This is the best Spring Dance ever! Do you see what is happening?

What Randall?

Geez, you can be the dumbest sometimes. Mark and Jamie, do you see them? They

have been dancing together all night.

Oh that. Yea, they are dating.

No way! Didn't she come to the dance with you? She dumped you at the dance?

No, she didn't dump me. Yes, we rode together. But she is getting a ride home with Mark's parents.

Man, that must suck. Are you upset?

Nah, I am going to be okay.

Man, I'd be upset. That must suck.

Randall, what gives? I should be upset, not you. Did you look over there?

Over where?

Over there, idiot. Mindi and Chrissy keep looking at us.

No way, they are cheerleaders.

So, what, they are girls with no dates at the Spring Dance. We can be their dates, Randall. You do know how to dance, right?

THANK YOU!

“The world is, of course, nothing but our conception of it.” – Anton Chekhov

Dear reader, please accept my sincere gratitude for spending your precious time reading the words I was able to cobble together. The story of Max and the Dream Time continues with *The Everwhen*.

Also, I am reminded often of how lucky I am to be able to write and do much with my life.

“Be grateful for what you already have while you pursue your goals. If you aren’t grateful for what you already have, what makes you think you would be happy with more.” – Roy T. Bennett

I have my health, a loving family, a wonderful wife, and a desire to keep them all.

Thank you!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fortunately, in secondary school, my interest in reading was sparked. A close friend and an instructor, who took interest in a boy he later called 'The rebel without a clue,' were instrumental in my learning the value of a good book. Both piqued my interest in reading. My lifelong friend inspired me to read J.R.R. Tolkien and I became addicted to the fantasy genre. The instructor required I read interesting historical novels for academic credit. Frank Norris, Leon Uris, and Ken Follett are inspirations and fuel my love of history.

Born to a military family, it was logical that I follow the military tradition. However, after four years of "yes sirs" and scraping the wax off floors I decided there must be more fun in a corporate career.

Thirty plus years of work experiences across the globe, the corporate career landed me in Colorado where I live with my wife and I can be close to my children and grandchildren.

CONTACT RUAIRÍ

Website:

<http://ruairiducantlin.com>

Comments:

<http://forum.ruairiducantlin.com>

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/RCDucantlin>

Twitter:

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