

The Secret of the Silent One

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CHAPTER 1

Emily crunched the last sweater into her bulging suitcase and jammed the lid down. Holding it with one knee, she pulled the zipper closed, tucked her journal into a secure pocket of her backpack, and flopped onto the bed.

“Did you pack your thick green pullover?” Kate asked, entering the attic bedroom.

“I have plenty of warm clothes,” Emily answered her mom. “You know it’s summer time in Scotland too.”

“Maybe, but the weather could be chilly and damp, especially with the wind coming off the North Sea. And didn’t your dad say you might go to the Highlands as well? There could be snow in the mountains.”

“No, I’m not taking a parka,” Emily said, anticipating her mom’s next suggestion. “I packed my bathing suit, though.” She laughed, jumping up to stand by her mom. She was surprised to find that she’d grown during the summer. Now she could look straight into her mother’s eyes.

Kate gave a little sniff. “I doubt you’ll need it.”

Seeing the worry in Kate's eyes, Emily suddenly realized that her mom was more anxious about her going away—and going with her dad—than concerned about what she'd packed.

Emily gave her mom a quick hug. "I'll be fine."

Kate held her a moment longer. "I know."

Unexpectedly, the familiar flurry of little butterflies doing quick somersaults in her tummy was back again. Emily wasn't sure how she'd feel, seeing her dad, David, for the first time since her parents had decided to get a divorce several months ago. She'd been wanting to see him but almost afraid he was forgetting her. Now that she was going to see him, she felt shy and wondered if she'd still know how to talk to him.

He'd be working part of the time, heading a professional team on some geology dig and giving a lecture at a scientific conference. But first, they were going to have a week for sightseeing.

She was a little nervous too about flying and her first trip out of North America. She could hardly imagine travelling for the more than eleven hours it would take to get to Edinburgh.

Kate gathered Emily's discarded clothes and headed downstairs, calling over her shoulder, "Hurry with your packing; it's almost time to leave."

"Okay," she answered, imagining the places she'd been studying on the Internet. Mist creeping over Loch Ness and the first rays of sun reflecting off the high peaks of Ben Nevis. They were going to see some famous historical sites too, Emily and her father, before he settled in to work. Then they'd be staying at a cottage in