

BOOK PROPOSAL FOR
THE SKELETON SCORE

By Mardi-Ellen Hill

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The Skeleton Score – Book Jacket

The Skeleton Score – Book Jacket

Always there have been the Barringtons – not under that name alone but under many, from the start of human history to the present. A specially gifted genetic line, the Barringtons alone know the hidden order beneath the visible – an order of sound, of MUSIC in its many forms. They alone understand the hidden musical order's powers, which are vast and almost entirely hidden from the rest of us. They are driven by a will to power that pushes them forward and at the same time makes many of them rogues and outlaws and traitors. Their family's internal conflicts are written large in the history of the world.

In 2008, Lily Barrington, a lawyer and musicologist, ignorant of her family ties and her family's powers, is investigating an insurance fraud, when she is sent to Washington D.C. She is unaware that she has been set up by her own law firm, to unearth highly guarded secrets relating to her family history. Lily discovers a disk – it is in an obsolete format, a CD-Rom filled with music interwoven with encrypted data.

During her stay in Washington Lily realizes that the CD belonged to her daughter, who is killed at the moment that Lily uncovers the CD; and that the disk unlocks the hidden musical order at the root of the Barringtons' power. It can be used to save or destroy the world. As we enter the narrative, Lily is about to be surrounded by interrogators, who are hell bent on holding her in her hotel room at the Mayflower on suspicion of committing murder and other treasonous acts against the U.S.

The Skeleton Score, tells the story of Lily's adventures and discoveries as she travels from New York City to Washington, DC, and to Paris, learning her family's special knowledge and power, becoming aware of an imminent global threat to humanity, a plot that could bring the Earth itself to an end, if she does not find her own special place in the Barrington plan.

To avert global catastrophe, Lily must find out who she is, what her powers are, and how they must be used if the world is to be saved, and she must survive her family's attempts to kill her, control the disk and end the world. Her story will unfold in music, and it will end in music – the melodies encrypted in a frail plastic disk that contains the final secrets of the hidden musical order.

The Skeleton Score - Preface

Lily's Soliloquy

The Skeleton Score – Preface

Lily's Soliloquy

I awoke early that morning at the Mayflower Hotel, thinking of the very first time I heard my famous mother-in-law, Rose Barrington sing in her glorious lyric coloratura. Rose has that rare and beguiling gift. She is, was always a phenomenal performing animal. Her talent is amazing. In her lifetime Rose has passed on many incredible traits, but none so beguiling than the voice and composing talent my daughter Rachel, Rose's granddaughter claimed. The new young STAR of the 21st century Barrington dynasty, Rachel took the Barrington voice talent giant steps further in her yen for commercial recognition. In fact, it was Rose who had asked that I come to Washington D.C. for a few days to do some research on my famous family, the Barringtons. Initially I thought nothing of it. My husband Henry and I were on the outs. Separated. This was a good time to be apart. We needed space. Yes it was to be a big night out for the Barringtons, but being in the company of so much talent in one space always provided the possibility of a family feud that landed in the papers. As it happened the papers got wind of a family terror that I would be learning about the next morning. A public debacle was mounting that would change the course of the Barrington dynasty and possibly world history forever.

During the night, I tossed and turned. I couldn't shake free of my own child's recently composed hit song. I hated to admit it. This song revealed a part of Rachel that I had no knowledge of. I thought I knew her, but the sound of this tune was something extraordinary. The song Rachel labored over had been written in honor of Rose and Rose's retirement from the stage; an elegant theme that bespeaks of ions of family history and a centuries old penchant for writing good melodies. But in it's modern twist, there was something to the sound of this melody that spooked me. The tune ripped through me during the night; a distorted lullaby that had no ending yet as if it was still in search of its target home cadence. One might say that the tune unfolded in several bizarre endings that fell

one upon another, a kind of kaleidoscopic collapse of sound that did not work well for a Hollywood STAR's knock em dead statement. I tossed and turned to the sound, half awake, half asleep, the hotel rooms echoed on all sides.

Who was I to cast doubt on the validity of a pop icon? I was only the family musicologist. I had taken a back seat to my daughter, my inventor husband, and my illustrious mother-in-law, Rose and her clan. The clan, a seemingly happy bunch all in N.Y. landed on time at their cozy after hours party that culminated the Carnegie Hall duo of Rose and her young STAR granddaughter Rachel. Their soprano voices resounded as one voice whenever they sang together. I could hear them in my mind. Their joined sound is sealed in my memory as one family voice. I had been out of the equation tethered to my post as the family memory and analyst. Was I jealous? A bit, I could sing too, but preferred the role that bound everyone together.

Rachel had given me the song on her CD before I left for D.C. Little did I know that her CD would be needed as proof of her identity and the identity of all the Barringtons. It was almost dawn. An unknown task I was about to encounter had me in its grip. I was sweating. The memory of the lingering tune woke me up. I felt relief and guilt at being glad that it had left me. Or had it? The tune like running water harbored above and around me, closing in on me in my hotel bed as if the sound inside my head was filtered and broadcast live from the four corners of the world to zone in on and mark off the territory, the presence named me. And that meant my ancestry and all that I was about to learn about the power of this song. My daughter Rachel was dying. Something was very wrong, but that was all I knew until Rose's call. In the wee hours of the next morning, Rose's voice rang with shrill despair.

Rachel had struggled as she always did to get the music that she wrote all "just right." But this time there something almost possessed about my daughter's need

to get the song done and out to the public, her public, a public that had followed our family for ages. The adoring audience clamored with delight as Rachel made her ascent as the next Barrington STAR in line. And now as news of her death traveled a feeding frenzy was upon us. The public wanted answers and to know about the Barrington power. What roles did each one of us family members play in the STAR's life?

As musicologist, I was met with Rachel's rage over her musical independence. Her will was inscribed in the power of her message, a STAR's way of saying this is her voice in this century, not to be matched. Rachel made her Carnegie Hall performance with her grandmother by her side but never did finish the tune that came to me in the night. She was murdered shortly after her performance. I will never forgive myself for being in the dark about the shrouded Barrington family history. I could have foreseen and stopped this horror. Or could I?, I had lots of demons, and had I known what I was about to find out, Rachel would never have been born. How could I have known that I too was part of a huge scheme, set forward centuries ago, to uncover a missing map's musical meaning and that this VERY tune had found me for a reason?

A devil's bargain between public and clan had emerged the moment that Rachel's body was found. Why had she been murdered? And by whom? At the moment of Rachel's passing everyone in her family became suspect, including me.

On that cold blustery December day in Washington D.C. before I knew that Rachel had been murdered, I had found the map and a telling message about the clockwork nature of the Barrington dynasty. The reveal put me on the path to finding out how I had blindly stumbled into Rose's voice studio and fallen madly in love with her son Henry in the first place. My husband Henry is a secretive inventor who, as the newspapers have set forth took it upon himself to mechanize the Barrington secret voice network.

I was in Washington, being followed, used as a human weapon and bait to find that missing ending to Rachel's song. The cadence to the song is Henry's access code to a most timely and dangerous invention called MEND (musical encode decode platform). The grand global scheme had been thought up long before I had ever been born. I was petrified. The tune is always by my side, my accomplice and guide.

The Skeleton Score – Chapter One

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Uncovering the Encryption

I – Village of Vaugirard

September, Anno Domini 1347

Everyone knew the child Mirabel – Mirabel of the curly red hair; Mirabel of the rosy cheeks and the guileless blue eyes; Mirabel of the soft hands, like a girl's, too sensuous for so young a boy. Mirabel of the song. Mirabel, who stood that day accused of murder.

“My husband was alive last twilight. He said he needed to hear Mirabel's song once more before he went to sleep. But he never said he did not plan to wake up today! He heard the song, and then he died. What more proof do you need before you stop this abomination?”

“Madame, calm yourself. Please. Songs do not kill.” The old priest, whose habit it was to nap between None and Vespers, had been awakened by the widow's cries.

“Fool! Of course songs can kill. Songs that come from the evil one are tuned for nothing else; and after *mon mari* heard Mirabel's song, he died. Is that not enough for you?”

“A single incident is hardly sufficient proof.”

“Do you need more evidence? Pick up your head, and walk through the village. Everyone here can tell you a story like mine. Where have you been hiding, that you do not know about this monstrous song?”

“Madame, control yourself. I am not God, neither omniscient nor perfect. I am but a village prefect, the shepherd of your immortal soul in this miserable world. Pray do not add to my burdens with your mischief. Songs that kill indeed”

“Idiot! You’ll ruin us all with your stupidity! I do not need second sight to see that everyone who is sung to sleep by Mirabel tonight will not rise to greet the morrow. As surely as I know God sits in heaven to judge, I know Mirabel’s is no ordinary song. You have heard it yourself, desecrating the church. You know what I mean.”

“Madame, s’il vous plait, the song, as you call it, was, perhaps, disruptive. But to call it evil – does that not go too far?”

“What, too far? For days *mon mari* had been ill. Each day he grew weaker and weaker, but he would sit up to listen whenever that accursed child sang. Then, yesterday, he was too weak to do the milking and the task fell to me. But ill as he was, he managed to slip away while I was milking. I saw his footprints in the mud, and they led toward Mirabel’s home.”

“Perhaps your husband was looking for one of your own cows that had strayed.”

“No! All of our stock was safe in the barn. He returned more than an hour later, and he went directly to prepare for bed. He would not speak to me.”

At this word some of the villagers laughed behind their hands. The speaker was a well-known harridan in the village.

“*Mon mari* came to the bedroom, blew out the candle, and then lay beside me, still but awake, for much of the night. I could not sleep, and he would not

speak. Then he fell asleep, but not before singing a tune I had never heard before. It made me shiver, made me cold to my bones, because I had never heard him sing a note in his life, not once. But his singing was not so chilling as the tune that answered it, floating through the window after it."

"Who would have been singing outside your window in the middle of the night?"

"Who, indeed! It was that devil's child. He and my husband sang to each other, and three hours later I became a widow."

The sun set slowly, gilding the furrows of wheat nearly ripe for reaping. Out of the early evening the song once again drifted over the fields, fetching, mesmerizing, essential in its own way, as though by his song Mirabel marked the hours. Even the cows in their stalls responded, gentling to the touch of the milkmaids. The song insinuated itself into the very air, permeating every movement, every thought, but this music was no plainsong like those chanted daily in the parish church. This music was omnipresent, inescapable. Two of the villagers stood, enthralled. They conversed but dared not raise their voices above a whisper.

'Qu'est que c'est?'

"Je ne sais pas – une chanson?"

"Mais cette chanson, si c'est une chanson, qu'elle chanson!"

"La musique me prend!"

"J'en ai besoin."

"Besoin??"

“La chanson. J’en ai besoin.”

“Oui, je comprends. Il me faut l’ecouter si je veux m’endormir.”

“Vraiment. Cette chanson. J’en ai besoin, j’en ai absolument besoin.”

In those years the Black Death had begun its clockwise sweep of Europe, decimating towns and villages; but in Vaugirard even the plague was no match for Mirabel’s song. No one in the village could sleep without being wrapped in the plaintive, yet somehow soothing, melody Mirabel sang. Never mind that his parents were – well, they were well connected with the clergy. Never mind that his parents wanted for nothing even as the workers in the fields fell dead in the midst of their labors. Never mind that Mirabel caressed the dead and dying as the clergy refused to do, touching them gently with his delicate, unnaturally large hands, easing their way as they crossed over. Mirabel’s song had its own power.

The tune refused to rest, and the villagers refuse to rest without it. And every day at dawn was heard shrill keening and wailing to terrify the hardest of hearts. All of the men, women, and children who had stayed awake to hear Mirabel’s song – the one he sang in the cathedral, much to the consternation of the *Abbé* – died in the night, victims of the plague. If it were not Mirabel, then who was the guilty party? Who visited this evil upon the village?

At the next cock-crow, the sun was hidden by gray clouds, dampening the ripening fields. The rain delayed the harvest, as the disease laid waste the villagers. Close upon the cock’s call, the bells of St. Germain chimed, sounding falsely merry on this grim-looking day. The river grumbling its way past the

village added its own note of discord to the morning, strangely at odds with the sun shining brightly at the opposite end of the village.

There, beneath the brightening sun, a lone voice wove a counterpoint to the other sounds, plaiting them together, enfolding them until they became a seamless whole, making lovely what had been merely bothersome noise. The villagers turned to listen, distracted from their chores by the haunting melody. The sound sent the widow to the *Abbé* again, but not before she had gathered as many of the villagers as would come with her.

"The child is singing again. It is the same evil tune that killed *mon mari*."

The *Abbé* asked the widow, "Can you sing this tune for me? The one that you believe killed your husband?"

"If I could, I would not."

"What do you mean, if you could?"

Hidden sniggers from the townsfolk met this response; everyone knew the widow could not carry a tune in a bushel.

"The song runs away even as I hear it in my memory. Even as it chills my heart and soul."

"The words, then, do you remember them?"

"Remember? I shall never forget those nonsense syllables. He said, '*Mon âme retournera à travers la porte du rayon.*' Nonsense, that's all he said. Nonsense!" She neglected to add that at those words, she had opened her tightly-shut eyes just a little, and had seen – or thought she had seen – the song move past her in the night air. Just a sliver of movement, it was, but enough to

cause her to freeze as though she herself were dead. She could no more have spoken to her husband at that moment, even if she had wanted to, than she could have moved the earth.

“Perhaps you did not understand.”

“There is nothing wrong with my ears. Those are exactly the words he used.”

“Well, there may be something to what you say. Give me some time to ponder and pray on this. I will consult the bishop, perhaps. We must move with caution in such cases.”

“Caution!” she screamed. “The word you call upon to hide you when you mean to do nothing! We are not fools, and you will not play with our lives! Consult your bishop, and we will consult the source of our ills. We must be rid of this evil child or we will all die!”

“Please, Madame, some compassion for an innocent.”

“Those in league with evil can never be innocent. I tell you, *Père Abbé*, Mirabel is in league with the evil one and he must be stopped!” To the crowd that had gathered, she flung a challenge: “Who will help me? Come forward, all of you; testify to the truth of what you know!”

The widow’s mounting hysteria had an unsettling effect on her hearers. They began to murmur among themselves.

“Perhaps she is right.”

“It is true that all the dead became ill after hearing Mirabel’s song.”

“My cousin sang the night he died. He had never sung before in his life.”

“The child is bewitching us. He must be stopped.”

Provoked by the widow’s hysteria and their own uneasiness, ready to do whatever they could to protect themselves and their homes, the villagers soon became an angry mob. Grabbing scythes, hoes, shovels, anything that might serve as a weapon, those who had survived the night made their way to Mirabel’s home. He was singing from somewhere as they approached, and at the sound of the song, the crowd became incensed. Shouts of “Stop him!” and “Take him to the prefect!” -- even of “Kill him!” -- rang through the morning air. But when they reached the house, they could not make themselves try to find him.

Mirabel’s home was a grand affair compared to the homes of most of the villagers. It had a foundation of stone and the walls above were wooden, pierced by large, shuttered windows. Two coveted chimneys were placed, one at each end of the house. With two fireplaces to heat it, this house would be warm even on the coldest winter night. The shutters fit the windows snugly, and there were no gaps to let in unwanted air or rain. The front door was carved in a manner that mimicked some of the woodwork in the pilgrimage churches. The fine workmanship bespoke more than wealth; only the aristocracy paid for such embellishments, but Mirabel’s parents were commoners.

The garden was another thing. There were actually two gardens. One behind the house, near the animal shed, produced vegetables and fruit. There were also some fruit trees there. The garden in front of the house – such

decadence – produced only flowers and some herbs – flowers of unique fragrance, and herbs that could be used for anything.

The villagers milled about the front garden, murmuring, threatening, some of them intentionally trampling the flowers. Eventually, someone sent a child to fetch the *Abbé*, who came in his own good time.

When he arrived, the widow shrieked, “I told you, but you would not listen! How many more will have to die before you force this monster to admit his unholy alliance?”

More shouts from the crowd greeted this outburst; and the *Abbé* waved his arms, trying to calm the people. The murmuring continued even as he spoke.

“Bring the boy and his parents to the church. I will question him there and determine whether we need call in the bishop.”

The mob rushed to Mirabel’s door, only to find him waiting for them in the garden. They had not seen him come outside, but there he was, singing, moving his hands as though to coax the very plants around him to sing. No one would touch him except to prod him with their farm tools, forcing him to walk toward the church. One of the farmers banged on the door to the house. There was no answer. He smashed the shutters to climb into the window and Mirabel turned.

“They are not at home, sir.” Then he turned back, walking toward the church as if on his way to his first Communion.

At the church, the *Abbé* insisted that the villagers leave their weapons on the outer steps. Entering, each person dipped two or three fingers into the holy

water font, crossing forehead, chest, left shoulder, right shoulder, purification and protection for what might yet come today.

The *Abbé* sat in his chair beside the altar. The villagers herded Mirabel toward the *Abbé* while Mirabel sang bits of his song.

“Enough! Mirabel, why do you insist on singing this wicked song?”

“But it isn’t wicked. I know.”

“Where did you learn it?”

“I have always known this song. Ever since I could remember anything. *Maman* and *Papa* always smile so when I sing it.”

“Did they teach you the song?”

“No. I told you. I have always known this song.”

The questioning went on for hours. The *Abbé* grew tired. The villagers grew more and more tired and angry. The *Abbé* asked a last question.

“Mirabel, will you stop singing your song? It is clear that your song brings evil and so must be from the evil one. You must confess your sin and give up this abomination.”

“But how can I stop the thing that gives me life? Would you give up the sacraments? This is my sacrament, and I must have it if I am to live.”

Before the *Abbé* could speak again, the crowd went mad. Cries of “Heresy!” and “Sacrilege!” were heard as they surged forward. They had sat through the long testimony; they had seen their loved ones mesmerized by the song at night and then dead in the morning; they themselves had felt the pull of the song. It was not natural. It was not holy. This evil must be annihilated. As

one they rushed to the altar; they ripped away Mirabel's clothes. Someone brought in the hoes and scythes. As they tore at his body, he whispered the last words he would ever say:

"La première personne qui entend mon nom le matin est la dernière personne qui me parle la nuit."

Moments later Mirabel lay dead, dismembered, no longer a threat to anyone

In accordance with conventional wisdom, each piece of Mirabel's body was taken to a different location around Vaugirard and buried in unconsecrated ground so as to prevent his rising at the Last Judgment. Following a logic born of hysteria, the burial sites mimicked the placement of the hours on the sundial in the churchyard, except for those places where the terrain forced modification. In accordance with something much older than conventional wisdom, the sundial was observed to bulge oddly, mapping the path the mob had followed.

The women stayed behind to clean the blood from the stone floor in the church. The children hid in the pews, terrified that they might have done something as bad as Mirabel's sin. By the time it was finished, the cock crowed again. The unholy work had taken a full twenty-four hours, and in that time none of them had laid eyes on Mirabel's parents, nor had they found any of the purported treasure hidden in their home – but not for lack of trying. The family's home was as fully dismembered as Mirabel by the time the cock crowed again.

When the bells of the church chimed, the villagers seemed to shake themselves awake, still dazed and disoriented by the events of the night. They went back to their farms, milked their cows, tended their crops, eventually went to bed. But no one slept. There was no lullaby this night. And in the morning, five more were dead.

The evening after the murder, the Mother Abbess tried to sleep, but her mind would not rest. Never before had her cot felt so uncomfortable. Rising, she dressed and walked silently through the convent. Quietly unlocking the door, she walked down the stone steps and out into the convent garden, hoping to find some peace. The events of yesterday weighed on her heart as she recalled the sweet demeanor of the child called Mirabel. Was there nothing that she might have done to help? She could see the church below and shivered to think of the blood that had desecrated it. She thought she caught something of Mirabel's scent on the cool night air. Impossible! It was merely the sleeping scent of the flowers. For some time she tried to meditate to rid herself of this delusion.

Deeply engrossed in her self-examination, she was startled by a fragment of melody that seemed to float through the air. It sounded strangely like Mirabel's song; but she was no believer in ghosts, this abbess. Turning first left, then right, she tried to locate where the air, inseparable from the music, originated. At every turn, she felt herself losing her way, even though she had known this garden for more than twenty years. The tune kept changing, and with

it came scents the abbess did not understand. They did not smell like the plants in the convent garden, and they seemed to change along with the tune.

Stopping to get her bearings, the woman looked back at the path she had trod. The pattern it traced, outlining the different beds of fruits and vegetables in the garden, somehow echoed the melody she still heard. Superstitious or not, this abbess could feel her heart pounding in her breast. Backing toward the convent door, she stumbled, almost falling backwards. She imagined that she smelled the sickly sweet odor of the abattoir the villagers had made of the church. She thought about the retribution that must surely come upon the village after what they had done to a child still too young to have made his first Communion. Innocents should never be made to pay for the sins of their elders – but so it was, and so it would continue to be, world without end.

. The glimmer of the stars caught her eyes, constellations that might have been glittering in rhythm with the song. The sight chilled her to the heart. Later, In her chamber, before first light, she would write: “I have recorded everything that happened that night and day, and I have made a map of Mirabel’s burial places. If he is innocent, he must be allowed his rightful place at the resurrection of the dead. Perhaps someone in a day to come will find my testament, and right the wrong that was done here. I can but provide the facts as I saw and heard them. This is a true and faithful record of the events, I so swear before God.” ***

[Insert here a hand-drawn map of the village with the burial places marked.]

II – Washington, D.C., Library of Congress

December, 2008

Lily Barrington loved any excuse to visit the Library of Congress. Every time she approached the building with its two-tiered façade, she found herself standing about a block away just to look at it. The three arches at the top of the stairs of the Jefferson Building reminded her of a cathedral, while the columns that stretched across the second level of the façade might have been from an ancient temple. She imagined the fountain, with its water-spouting statuary, bathing a garden of exotic plants that bloomed under a gracious, warm sun. Today's clear, winter sun, however, was of a different sort: reflecting from the building's white exterior and the vehicles in the street, it simply made spots dance in front of her eyes.

Still, she paused again near the fountain. The previous night's dreams came back to her mind briefly – the way Rachel's tune had entered her sleep, and the shapeless foreboding with which she had awakened. "Sunlight is supposed to disclose everything", she mused, "but this light accentuates the shadows. Light and shadow – Henry and Charles. Love and – I don't know – spite, I guess." She shook her shoulders lightly as though to discard a covering, and walked toward the steps.

"Damn!" She grabbed the handrail just in time to stop herself from falling up the stairs. The library had a street level entrance, but Lily preferred climbing. Despite a slight unevenness of gait that she managed, usually, to hide, she never

took the easy way in. Part of the experience for her was this almost ritualistic climbing of the stairs. Once inside the building, she spent a few minutes craning her neck to look around the Great Hall as her eyes adjusted to the change in light. The walls and ceiling rising two floors above her were spectacular, no matter how many times she came upon them. After a moment, she headed straight for the archives where her friend Richard was already waiting with the materials she had requested.

"Lily, it's always good to see you -- and on a Thursday! You must be planning to stay at least two days."

"Right you are. Richard, thanks so much for getting these things for me. I can't wait to get started. But then, I've always been a sucker for moldy paper – the older the better." Especially now, her thoughts added – now that the search is my own.

As Lily relaxed into her chair, it came to Richard again that she seemed to bring light into the place with her. Tall and slender, she carried herself as her convent schooling had taught her – erect and graceful, somehow self-effacing, unaware of her beauty. Today she had dressed for warmth and comfort in a creamy twin set and wool trousers, with flat shoes. Her radiant golden hair was pulled back so as not to interfere with her work, revealing her fair, fine-boned face to which, now, she had added the round tortoise-shell glasses she needed for close work. Those same deep blue eyes often managed to look dreamy and focused at the same time, disconcerting to those meeting her. They were never sure whether she was paying attention to them or not – though she always was.

Lily Barrington looked at once out of place and completely at home in the archives of the Library of Congress.

“Lily, you may be the only person I know who prefers dead trees to live people.”

“Richard, please, don’t hyperbolize. I like live people just fine – provided they are my kind of people.”

“Oh, so now with the fancy words. Let me remind you that I am both a librarian and an English major. You can’t lose me that easily.”

“Richard, I would never want to lose you. How would I find all these hidden treasures without you?”

“How, indeed?” Richard smiled ruefully as Lily turned back to her work. His work as librarian done, he would watch as Lily was lost in her own, private space, where she would remain until the library closed. Insatiable curiosity spurred her to research things some people considered pointless; but for Lily, the search had often been as important as the outcome. Richard would keep the building open late for her, never letting on that she had stayed well past closing every time she had come to the archives. By the time he left the room, Lily was fully engrossed in the manuscript before her.

“Interesting. And odd.” She carefully unfolded the fragile pages, revealing more a puzzle than a comprehensible document. Interspersed between what appeared to be phrases of musical notation were crude drawings of a church, some hut-like buildings, sketches of paths or trails, and what might have been a stream or river. And, finally, there were pages of what appeared to be

illuminated script, but without the vibrant colors that should have been there. Lily summoned Richard on the intercom phone.

“Can you come down here for a minute? I’ve found something really strange, and I could use an expert opinion.”

“I’ll be right there.”

While she waited for Richard, Lily stood and walked around the table, looking at the manuscript from different angles. She couldn’t be sure, yet, whether she would need her MEND interface. What she was reading appeared to be written in medieval French, but she wanted Richard’s opinion before she went too far down that road.

“Oh! Richard. I didn’t hear you come in.”

Richard had been standing in the doorway just watching Lily work. If she had been less engrossed in the manuscript, she might have recognized that the way he looked at her was the look of a man who would like to be more than a friend. He had a protective streak, always picking up strays and finding them homes, and he was convinced that Lily should be protected. Lily jumped when the door slapped shut.

“Sorry, I didn’t mean to startle you. What do you want me to see?”

“This. It looks like medieval French to me, but I want an expert opinion before I spend too much time finding out if it’s just some monk’s idea of a bad joke.”

“What do you mean by ‘bad joke’?”

“Well, I’m finding things that look like musical notation, but music wasn’t notated this way until the sixteenth century. But the weirdest thing is this map. Or clock. Or – I don’t know what. There are sketches of body parts laid out over what looks like a map of a town or a village.”

“What? Body parts?”

“Exactly. That’s why I need someone who is expert in medieval French. This could be a really gross joke of some sort or it could be a really gross real life story.”

“So, what else are you finding here?”

“Not much except that the word “or” keeps showing up – French for gold. This could be a treasure map or it could be, well, I don’t know what else. But an expert would be a real treasure to me right now.”

“Lily, you are in luck. Professor Yves Hubert teaches at Georgetown, and his ‘specialité’ is medieval French language and history. If he can’t help you, I don’t know who can.”

“Wonderful! How soon can I talk to him?”

“Give me an hour or so to track him down, and I’ll see if I can set up an appointment with him while you are in D.C.”

“Thanks so much, Richard. Now, how much more time do I have here?”

“As long as you want, Lily. I happen to have an “in” with the guy in charge.”

“Maybe because you are the guy in charge?”

“Maybe so. Let me know if you need anything else.”

“Thanks, I will.”

Lily bent over the manuscript again, then turned to show Richard a particularly odd notation. But Richard was gone.

“Why,” Lily thought to herself, “can’t I ever seem to get involved with men as nice as Richard? What is my problem?”

Shaking her head and sighing, Lily went back to the manuscript. Gruesome as it was, she couldn’t pull her attention away from the ‘map’ of body parts on the central page. The arrangement formed a shape that reminded her of something, but she couldn’t quite place it. And then there was the musical notation – so far out of time and place. It didn’t make sense. Nor did the eerie familiarity of the tune.

“I must have heard Rachel sing or play this some time. Nothing else makes sense.”

Lily made several entries in her MEND interface, and then added the musical notation. One of the MEND keys began to glow, and when she tapped it, the device played back the bit of tune she had entered as well as a couple of other musical phrases.

“Ooh, that gives me goose bumps. How could music from fourteenth century France have a counterpart in my twenty-first century MEND? It’s almost as if – oh that can’t be right. No one in the fourteenth century notated music this way. This has to be some kind of weird joke. But . . . if it is, it is getting more and more interesting. The sooner I can meet with Richard’s expert, the better.”

Lily carefully returned the manuscript to its protective sleeve before saving her computer files. Just before she closed the MEND interface, another of the special keys began to glow. Apparently, MEND had more to tell her. When she touched the key, she heard a tune that MEND should not have in its memory banks – Rachel's current work-in-progress. So far as Lily knew, she and Rachel were the only ones who had ever heard it. Lily shivered as she shut down her computer.

Richard came into the archives, obviously in a hurry. "Lily, I'm sorry to interrupt your work, but we have to close down the archives. There is a wicked storm headed this way, and we need to secure the building."

"And wouldn't you know it, I don't have my umbrella with me."

"Not to worry. In addition to being an English major and a librarian, I was also a Boy Scout as a lad. I am prepared with, not one, but two umbrellas suitable for fending off the rain."

"Richard, you are a marvel! Just let me collect my electronics."

Outside the building, wind was gusting. When Lily looked up at the sky, all she could see were roiling clouds so dark they looked black. As menacing as the storm looked, its arrival somehow quieted the fears Lily had been unable to put to rest.

"Normally I'd walk the few blocks to my hotel, but I think this occasion warrants a taxi. Can I drop you anywhere, Richard?"

"No, thanks. I'll see you tomorrow."

By the time she got back to her room in the Mayflower Hotel, the rain had begun to coat the windows. Lily couldn't wait to share her find with someone. She called her mother-in-law in New York.

"Allo." Rose had never lost her French accent, despite her long sojourn in the US.

"Rose, I'm so glad you are home. It's Lily."

It would have been impossible for Rose to mistake Lily's voice, regardless of the medium. For Rose, listening to Lily speak was something like hearing herself in an aural mirror; the ebb and flow of Lily's speech, the intonation, the pitch, all reminded Rose of how her own voice had sounded when she was Lily's age. Sometimes, when they spoke at the same time, anyone listening might have thought they were singing.

"Lily, how good to hear from you."

"Rose, you won't believe what I've stumbled on in the archives. It is the most amazing manuscript!"

"Really." Rose pushed the "record" button on her answering machine. She then settled herself into a comfortable wingback chair upholstered in pale green silk damask.

"Tell me about it."

"Well, it's from the fourteenth century, or at least it's supposed to be, but it has this phrase of musical notation that couldn't have been written before the sixteenth century. It's really odd. And the oddest thing is that the tune on the

staff – the staff that shouldn't be there, I mean, sounds like something I am sure that I have heard Rachel sing or play. It's weird, but sort of exciting”

“It does sound strange, my dear. Are you sure that you aren't making too much of this? The family has a long history; but, really, Rachel's music in the fourteenth century seems something of a stretch. Your daughter – my granddaughter – is not that old, regardless of what she would like us to think.”

Lily laughed. “It is funny how anxious our children are to grow old beyond their years. No, it's that Rachel's composition is so similar to the notation in this manuscript. The more I look at it, the stranger it becomes. 16th century musical notation in the 14th century that seems to be the same as a 21st century composition. So odd.”

“Are you suggesting that Rachel's composition is not original?”

“Of course not! It's just awfully strange – eerie, really. Why would Rachel's music sound so much like what's on this old manuscript? I'll send it to you, and you tell me what you think.”

Lily's excitement was reflected in the pitch and timbre of her voice; Rose had to catch herself from being caught in that excitement. Clutching the arm of the chair, she forced herself to speak calmly, almost disinterestedly, to her daughter-in-law.

“Lily, what else can you tell me about this melody?”

“Well, this is going to sound really strange, but I think that the melody is related to a particular sentence in the manuscript: '*Mon âme retournera à travers la porte du rayon.*' It's just so odd. 'My soul will return through the door of the

ray.' Hardly makes sense, unless it's a reference to the whole sol/fege music tonality, as in soul/sol, door/do, ray/re. But that still makes no sense in the 14th century. It's so confusing and so intriguing.

"But, Rose, the eerie thing about this phrase is that when Rachel was young I used to call her *mon rayon* – my sunbeam.

"There's another phrase, though, that is, well, I don't know what. 'La première personne qui entend mon nom le matin est la dernière personne qui me parle la nuit' 'The first person who hears my name in the morning is the last person who speaks to me at night.' Who is the first and who is the last? And, oh, I don't know exactly. It's a puzzle, and every puzzle has a solution. I'll find it."

Rose struggled to keep her voice steady. "Lily, you must be sure to let me know everything that you find in the archives. There are so many things about the family that have been buried in the past. Your research could help me solve some of these mysteries."

"Rose, of course, I will let you know whatever I find."

The phone line crackled. "Rose, the storm here seems to be kicking up. I think I should get off the line for now. But please look at what I'll send you. I really want your insight on this."

"My dear, of course, I will look at this information. After all, it was I who encouraged you to delve into the archives for certain details of the family history. I will read what you send most carefully." What Rose did not say was that Lily had found too much, and sooner than Rose would have preferred.

At her home in New York, Rose paced for some minutes, while she worked out a strategy suited to the situation. She sat down at her Louis Quinze desk, sketching notes about the next steps she should take. The information Lily had shared could only have come from one source, Odette Rae. True, the manuscript showed some of the coded tune, but the insights Lily had shared with Rose could only have come from Odette, who was in Paris with her father. The women in the family had always been especially attuned to each other. Telepathy was not necessarily too strong a word to describe the way they related – even half a world away.

She knew clearly what she had to do. The Paris operation had become insecure, and would eventually endanger the whole. It would have to be cleaned up. The drain on company – no, family – resources had been going on for too long. The timing was not to Rose's liking, but with Lily's discovery of the manuscript and her knowledge of the tune, the timetable had to be changed. It was risky, but there was no choice.

Rose summoned her maid. "Thérèse, telephone Charles. I must speak with him at once."

The connection made, Rose spoke to her cousin. "Charles, it is imperative that you come to my apartment immediately. Bring Marie with you."

"What is this about, Rose?"

“This is not something that can be discussed on the telephone. Come at once.”

“As you wish, Rose. I will see whether I can elicit Marie’s cooperation.”

“Exercise your considerable charm, Charles. See that she comes.”

Lily’s lover Charles and her sister-in-law Marie did not arrive immediately. It was fully dark, and the rain had slackened somewhat, before they came to Solange Rose Barrington’s Upper West Side New York apartment. They waited for Rose in her living room, a room bespeaking the elegance of an earlier time, much like Rose herself. Charles walked the length of the wall that served as a pictorial family tree. Portraits in oil hung there, alongside professional photographs of Rose and her family, all in gilt frames suited to the room’s Francophile furnishings. Charles looked toward Rose as she made her entrance. Dressed in pale mauve silk. Rose seemed the epitome of the *grande dame*, elegant, self-contained, in control, unsmiling at her two guests.

Charles bowed as she entered. Aware that women found him attractive, he unconsciously smoothed his sleek black hair.

“Hello, Rose. I was just admiring the family portrait gallery. The layout is admirable. It so neatly displays a certain truth about the Barringtons. On this side of the Atlantic we have the artistic branch of our family headed by Henry. And on the other side we have Jack, heading up the corporate branch of the family tree.”

“Charles, I do not have time for your analysis.” Rose’s rich voice, still accented by her native French, sounded beautiful and aggravated at the same time.

“But I have only begun. Look at this. Both have beautiful, talented daughters – prodigies, in fact. Rachel and Odette Rae have such a strong family resemblance you’d think they were sisters. And they share such a strong resemblance to their grandmother.”

“Why should they not?”

“Why, indeed. From what Jack tells me, Odette’s musical genius rivals Rachel’s, amazing in one so young. Sometimes the things Jack says make me wonder whether there is not some sort of psychic bond – perhaps even telepathy – between them. And, naturally, they each have particular roles to play in the family enterprise.”

At the mention of telepathy, Rose looked sharply at Charles and then looked away. She was losing patience, but she knew that interrupting him would do nothing but prolong the distasteful meeting.

Charles continued his examination. “So nice, too, that both of your sons have such beautiful, talented wives. Makes the wall so much more attractive. There’s a funny thing about portraits, though. So often they conceal more than they reveal. I can think of another grouping, but it would be Byzantine, to say the least. So many marriages. So many intermarriages. So many tangled relationships. Under so many names, even assumed ones.”

Rose responded sharply, "And what of you, Charles? Where do you fit into this scheme?"

"Me? Merely a minor representative of the English branch of the family – the poor stepchild to the French branch. But now, you have become Barringtons as well as Americans. And now that you have, old family squabbles have only historical interest, wouldn't you say?"

"Enough of your malicious chatter, Charles. I have business to discuss with you. And with your cousin's wife.

"I have learned of irregularities in the European offices of Global Arcade Associates. The auditing firm I hired tells me that funds from Russian banks have been channeled through our accounts to various banks in the Caribbean. The process is called, I believe, 'money laundering,' a term I imagine you are familiar with. Jack has failed to exercise proper oversight, and the situation will be corrected."

Charles' voice remained unctuous, practiced. "I can understand your discussing this issue with Marie. As Jack's wife, she would naturally be concerned. But why should it concern me?"

"It concerns you and Marie equally because you have both influenced him – no, you have dominated him – for years. For all those years you have manipulated him and everyone in the family."

At this Marie leaped to her feet. Except for her perpetual frown and her preference for black, she might have been considered beautiful. As it was, she was merely an interesting woman with a sharp tongue.

"Stop this! I will not be treated as if I were not present. I have never 'manipulated' *mon mari*."

Rose's voice kept its cultured calm. "Please, Marie, this is not the time for your histrionics."

"*Cochon*. That is what you are, a pig. A pig who wants everything for herself and would leave nothing for the rest of us."

"Enough, Marie! Were we not related by my son's marriage to you, old as I am, I would throw you to the floor for speaking to me like that. We have business to discuss, much more important business than the niggling and wrangling for position, prestige, and power that seem to give you a reason to live.

"I know that you are the ones with the Russian connections, not Jack. The two of you are the ones with a history of questionable financial affairs.

"Whatever your arrangements, whatever Jack's complicity, it stops now! I am instituting more rigorous controls on corporate communications and financial transactions. I will be paying particular attention to cash flow through the European branches."

Marie, prodded by Rose's ultimatum, shouted, "*Putain!* Whore! You accuse us? We will expose your disgusting secrets. We will destroy you!"

"As you wish. But be mindful. If you destroy me – or try to – you will only succeed in destroying yourselves as well. And, perhaps, this is the time for the truth to be revealed."

Rising herself, Rose once again summoned the maid. "Show these two OUT."

Once Charles and Marie were gone, Rose paced back and forth in front of the family portrait gallery for some minutes, considering how to proceed. Killing the Paris-St. Petersburg connection required some delicacy and diplomacy. And with so little time left, she could not afford to be wrong. She walked the length of the hallway/portrait arcade to the balcony where she could look out over Central Park. The view usually calmed her, but on this night no view of nature could offer her peace.

“Madame, Monsieur Henry is here to see you.”

“Send him in, Thérèse.”

Henry strode into the room. The family resemblance between Henry and his mother was unmistakable. Except for a certain nervousness of manner, he would have been just as patrician in his carriage as Rose.

“You just missed your cousin and your sister-in-law.”

Henry, too agitated to really listen, launched directly into the reason for his visit. “Rose, someone has been trying to get into my private files. I have evidence that someone has been in my office and that someone has tried to get into my MEND.”

“I cannot say that I am surprised; I would not look too far from the family circle for the culprits.

“Lily called today, *Henri*.” Rose could not help but fall into her native tongue when she spoke with her son. “She found the Mirabel manuscript in the archives.”

“Mother, I do not understand your reason for sending Lily to the archives at this critical juncture. And with this attempted theft of information – it could too easily compromise what we have been working on. No! There are so many things she might learn – and learn before she should – once she tries to unravel the archives and the manuscript.”

“*Henri*, do not lecture me about how to manage family affairs. I have been doing it for longer than either of us would want to recall, and I have managed quite well until now.”

“I suppose, but I have never seen you so agitated in all my life.”

“Perhaps it is Rachel’s concert and the fact that she wants me – a singer of opera – to appear at her ‘rock’ concert.”

“*Maman*, do not try to pretend that performing on stage anywhere would make you this anxious. If anything, performance relaxes you. No, this is a much larger concern than a single concert. You behave as if we had a Manhattan Project on our hands that had suddenly reached cosmic proportions.”

“Then perhaps it is the cosmos that concerns me. This family of ours is not like any other, as you well know. And *quelle difference!* Coupled with wealth of the sort we have managed to accrue, it invites interlopers, competitors, slackers who would reap where others have sown.”

“But . . .”

“Truly. Who but Charles and Marie would, or should, concern us at this point? They are family in name and, at least in part, genetically. But they are not

true family, if by "true" we mean full and honest family members. They are concerned only for themselves, what they can gain, and damn the rest of us."

"And what of Jacques?"

"I spoke with him this morning. Some part of him is true family, despite his dancing on the edge of destruction. If he refuses to keep his distance from the Russian mob, I will take the necessary measures. I told him that I suspected some irregularities in the Paris operation and that I was planning a full audit quite soon."

"How soon? If you wait too long, he will have time to cover his tracks, assuming that he has anything to hide."

"*Henri*, we all have something to hide, and I am not concerned with what he might try to hide. My sole concern is with keeping the family interests within the family. If that means disinheriting Charles and Marie, so be it."

"Did Jacques have anything to say about Odette Rae?"

"He did. In fact, he had much more to say about her than about business."

"Well, what did he say?"

"As you expected, Odette Rae has begun to keep a notebook. And she goes to the arcade every day to listen to the dolls sing in the window."

"Did Jacques say whether she sings back?"

"No, but she draws maps on the sidewalk and plays some kind of hopscotch while the dolls sing. It will not be long now."

"Regardless of how long it may take, we still have to use caution with Lily."

“Caution, yes, but we still have control. And you have access to everything she puts through the MEND interface. It is possible that she will find the answer before Odette does, but she will not know what the answer means. We will.”

“I’m not sure. She may not have the family genes, but she is certainly smart enough to follow the logic of her research.”

“Let me worry about that. You worry about Charles and Marie.”

“You truly chose *le bon mot* saying ‘worry.’ I do little else about them.”

“Keep your head. We are closer than they could possibly be.”

“I hope you are right.”

“Henry, you must have faith.”

“Very well, *maman*.” Henry left as hastily as he had come, walking rapidly into the damp, windy night.

Lily had an early dinner in the Mayflower Hotel dining room, and then went to her room, deep in thought. “I know I should let my research rest until morning, but I also know I won’t be able to sleep on it. So, here goes.”

Slipping into pale rose satin lounging pajamas and soft slippers, she settled herself in bed with her Apple and her MEND. There was something about the map that she just had to sort out. What was the shape outlined by the body parts? Loading the image, she rotated it a few degrees at a time. At one point it looked like a warped clock face, at another like a sundial, and at another like a constellation, Vela, perhaps. There had to be a reason for the placement of the body parts, but what?

What, indeed. Rose sat in her Manhattan apartment, contemplating the possible repercussions of Lily's exploration of the family archives. If Lily found out too much — well, best, perhaps, not to think about what Lily might find out or what she might do with the knowledge. But like her daughter-in-law, Rose was not practiced in not thinking about it; she looked forward to a restless night, at best.

Later, in Charles Hobbes' Upper East Side apartment, Marie was working on her third double scotch. Charles' personal space resembled nothing quite so much as a '60's bachelor pad, but with lots of money to take the edge off of what might otherwise have been considered tacky. The bar was well stocked, and the glassware was all crystal. In keeping with improvements to home bars, his had its own small refrigerator with built in icemaker. Marie served herself like one who has made herself at home

"My dear, that is not the best way to prepare for battle, and battle it will be."

"Screw you. I'll drink what I want and when I want."

"Fine. Just don't blither when I'm trying to save our necks. Penkovsky is getting impatient, and there is no margin for error built into the program."

"All this fuss over a stupid Fabergé egg."

"Not so stupid when it is worth more than a few measly million dollars. For Penkovsky, it also has national importance. This is a piece of his country's

history that he wants to take back home, especially when it will be in his own private collection. He'll be a national hero and thief at one and the same time."

"Charming."

"No need for sarcasm, my dear. Oh, there's my cell phone. Perhaps our Russian friend is calling back.

"Hello? Ah, Mr. Penkovsky, thank you for returning my call. It seems that my aunt Rose Barrington has discovered our little arrangement." He added quickly, "But she cannot trace anything to us, much less to you."

Penkovsky's English was clear, although thickly accented. "Mr. Hobbes, this is most inopportune. My operation will be greatly disrupted."

"I understand, but we have to move with caution."

"If by 'caution' you mean that you need time to make other arrangements, consider that my colleagues are much less patient than I. This is a serious business."

"I have never doubted your seriousness."

"Good. This is not the time to start. I would hate to see anything unfortunate happen before we have 'cooked' this little egg. However, I will not wait indefinitely. I hope my meaning is clear."

"Quite clear, Mr. Penkovsky. I will be in touch with you again soon."

"Let us hope it is soon enough." With that, Penkovsky broke the connection.

Charles put down his phone and went to the bar to pour himself a drink. His usually placid demeanor showed stress in the twitch of his eyebrows, a bad habit he had never been able to break.

“My, my, Charles. Did bad old Mr. Penkovsky frighten you?”

“Shut up, Marie. This is nothing to joke about. He’s furious, and he threatened me. Once a Soviet KGB officer, now a gangster – there’s no real difference.”

“God, I despise him.”

“Fear and loathe him, you mean. But this storm should pass over quickly. Rose will protect her beloved son, Jack, and she will not be able to trace anything to us or, God forbid, Penkovsky.”

Charles’ cell phone rang again. Right on time, Charles thought; Jack is so reliable.

“Hello, Jack. What do you have for me today?”

Jack’s voice was placid, soothing. “I’ve uploaded some photos I took of Odette Rae’s hopscotch pattern, and I’ve also scanned some of her notebook entries into MEND so you can access them. They should be quite helpful.”

“I’m sure they will be. Would like to speak with your wife? She’s here with me now.”

“Certainly.”

Marie made a face at Charles and ungraciously snatched the phone from him.

“Jack, dear, I trust that you and Odette are well.” Her voice was not entirely devoid of the displeasure that showed on her face.

“Very well, indeed. You would be amazed at what she can create. Her notebook is full of astonishing sketches and even lines of music.”

“She is indeed extraordinary. They do say that breeding counts, you know. With her family, how could she be anything but exceptional? I must go now, dear. I’ll call you when I have made my flight arrangements for the trip home.”

“Very well. Good bye, Marie.”

Marie stabbed the “off” button on the phone, and then dropped it on the couch.

“What is the point of bringing up breeding? You know that it bothers Jack, and we need him working with us for the time being.”

“It is not Jack who has problems with breeding, Charlie dear, it’s you.”

“I seem to recall that you had some problems with it yourself.”

“If you mean carrying Odette Rae in my body for nine miserable months, yes, it bothered me then, and it bothers me every time I look at the child. I never intended to have children at all, and carrying a child who was only partly mine – don’t remind me.”

During Marie's short rant, Charles had opened his MEND laptop.

"MEND! The fucking oracle. We use it like superstitious peasants."

"Science and technology, Marie, not all that different from any of our other fabulous electronic toys. Do you understand them?"

"Henry understands MEND."

"Some of it, but not all – he will tell you that. But that limited understanding gives him a power that he neither deserves nor knows how to use. I could use it, though, if I had the chance. I could make very good use of it."

Charles clicked a few more keys. "Hmm, I see that Lily has been uploading quite a bit of information into her MEND. Let's see what she has been dabbling in."

Charles opened several files in separate windows on his machine. His eyes fairly bounced from one window to the next as he tried to comprehend the information in front of him. The map seemed puzzlingly familiar; but his French was not as good as it might be, and he couldn't decipher the text. The musical score, however, was a different matter. It contained a few notes of a tune that he played on the piano.

"Oh, shit, shit, shit."

"What?" Marie still sounded bored.

"Come and look."

"What's the problem?"

“Lily has found the origin of the melody, and if I can read it so can Henry. That means that Henry, if he is paying attention, will realize the melody’s significance. His MEND is much more evolved than mine, and that’s what will give him the edge – if he is paying attention. Meanwhile . . .”

“Meanwhile, he has cut you out.”

“Not just Henry. The rest of the family, especially Rose, treats me like a pariah. But never mind; we aren’t playing from the same score, as it were. At least I know what I want and how to get it.”

“Charles, don’t talk musical metaphors with me. Music, always fucking music. This whole family overflows with it. They’re like the fucking von Trapps – if the von Trapps had been raised by werewolves. No, make that vampires, feeding off each other the way they do.”

“Don’t you mean the way “we” do? And Rose would greatly dislike either comparison. Remember, too, that it is the family song, hundreds of years old, that is the key to finding the egg. Of course, we have to find the right sequences and that most important final cadence before MEND will be able to decrypt the music and give us the answer we need.”

“How much do you think Rose knows?”

“About MEND? As much as she bothered to learn from Henry. About the egg? Well, she doesn’t know that Villars brought the egg out of Russia. After all, she doesn’t have Penkovsky to open the relevant KGB records. But if Henry realizes that the egg exists and can be found, he will, without a doubt, tell Rose.

We have to move, and quickly, or our Russian friend will be without his egg and we will be, well, without.

"Fortunately, we have Rachel. I am certain that her concert will give us the rest of the music we need for MEND. Then our 'fucking oracle' will give us the location of the egg, which we will give to Penkovsky, who will be utterly delighted, and we will become truly wealthy."

Marie took a long pull on her scotch. "And he probably won't kill us."

"Unless we make a mistake along the way."

III

The Mayflower Hotel, Washington, D.C.

At her hotel, Lily stepped from a hot shower, toweled off, and then slipped into lavender silk pajamas. After calling room service for a light meal of tea, toast, and grapefruit, she settled herself on the bed and opened her MEND, intent on deciphering more of the mysterious manuscript. She made little progress before her order arrived.

"You can put it over there," she said a little absently, indicating the desk near the bed. Fishing in her purse, she produced a five-dollar bill which she gave to the waiter after signing for the food.

"Thank you, ma'am. Good night."

“Good night.” To herself she added, “I hope it will be a good night.”

Between bites of toast and squirts of grapefruit, Lily played with the notes and words of the manuscript she had scanned into her machine. Despite her best efforts, the sense of the thing continued to elude her. It still seemed that what she had in her hands was a coded musical score, but it was written in a code that could not have been designed in the context of the fourteenth century manuscript she saw before her. And the arrangement of the body parts – the more she looked at it, the more it reminded her of the constellation Vela -- another thing that made no sense in the context. Finally, too tired to concentrate, she saved and closed all her files. Putting her machine on the desk beside the bed, she turned out the light and fell into a restless sleep.

In her dreams, Lily saw herself as a child playing hopscotch with a boy somewhat younger than she. She was winning. The boy was not upset, but he kept trying to imitate every move Lily made. Despite his best efforts, he never quite succeeded in matching her competence. Behind them in the dream scene was an arcade; with all the signs in the windows in French. One read “Parfumerie”. Its door opened, and a woman who resembled Rose, only much younger, stepped out and called to the children.

“Lily, Jack, it’s time to come in. Dinner is ready.”

“*Maman*, we want to play some more.”

“Lily, dear, there will be time to play tomorrow.”

“But, *maman*, I have almost solved the puzzle.”

“No, my dear, you won’t solve that for a long time.”

“But I don’t have a long time. I need to finish it.”

“Later. Come. Recite your poem for me.”

“I only know a little of it. ‘La rue de vaugirard / the longest street / in Paris, it winds / through the fifth, sixth, seventh, and fifteenth / arrondisements many, many / change discreetly’ That’s all I remember, *maman*.”

“Here, set the table for dinner. While you do, try your poem again, but be careful that you do not swallow your words. Keep them up front.”

Lily tossed fitfully in her sleep, not quite waking up but managing to tangle herself in the sheets. Trapped, she dropped back into sleep, back to setting the dinner table. But the table was all wrong. The dishes were set in odd places, and they looked like the map / constellation from the archives. In typical dream fashion Lily was aware of herself as an adult, watching the action. It bothered her that she saw her younger self doing and saying things that only the dream Lily understood.

“*Maman*, you smell so good. Are you creating a something special for someone?”

“Yes, Lily. Something special for you.”

Snatches of melody that sound like the music from the manuscript – and from Rachel’s composition – emanated from an antique radio on the sideboard. Rose lit candles set in crystal candlesticks, and Lily clapped her hands, laughing.

“Oh, I do so love when you light the candles.”

“Be careful, dear. Candles are beautiful but dangerous.”

Jack, who was slow to come inside, passed Lily on his scooter. Too late Rose called to him to stop. Losing control, he crashed into the sideboard and the candles fell into the draperies, setting them on fire. In a matter of seconds, the dining room was engulfed in flame, consuming the table, the chairs, the all-wrong table setting in a single, terrifying instant. In the timeless logic of dreams, the three seemed at once to be in the flames and out of them. The adult Lily watched helplessly as somehow, Rose hustled her children out to the street, where she called for help. The dream Lily pulled on her mother’s hand.

“*Maman*, I must go back. My poem, my notebook. I need them or I’ll never be able to solve the puzzle.”

“Lily, they are gone.”

In the hotel, Lily jerked awake and sat up in bed, still smelling Rose’s new scent all around her, still hearing Rachel’s song, still feeling the heat of the fire, coughing from the dream smoke, wiping real tears from her eyes. The clock showed 5:45 a.m. Shaking from the strength of the emotions left over from the dream, Lily decided to make the most of Friday. Research had always been her shield against distress.

The Skeleton Score
Chapter Descriptions and Book Outline

The Skeleton Score – Chapter Descriptions and Book Outline

1. Uncovering the Encryption

Part One: Village of Vaugirard, 1347 A.D.

Mirabel, a mysterious young child whose song is believed to be an omen of death, is murdered by the villagers. His body is dismembered and buried in unconsecrated ground in a pattern roughly tracing the hours of the sundial. A Mother Abbess records the event and maps the location of the burials.

Part Two: Library of Congress, 2008 – Thursday morning

Lily Barrington uncovers a medieval manuscript that appears to contain a coded musical message. Her mother-in-law, Rose Barrington, matriarch of the family and head of the family business, is ambivalent about Lily learning what the message means because of the power the information will give Lily. Rose has recently learned that her nephew and daughter-in-law, Charles and Marie, are using the family business to launder money for the Russian mob. They are also looking for a priceless Fabergé egg that their Russian contact wants to buy. Henry, Rose's son, has invented a device, MEND (Music Encoding/Decoding Device), that is capable of increasing his (and the family's) power and wealth. It stores encrypted information as musical notation. Henry has not yet discovered the code that will enable him to

access the full potential of the device; but he has reason to believe that his daughter Rachel will soon reveal it.

Part Three: Mayflower Hotel, Washington, D.C., 2008 – Thursday evening

Lily is not completely successful in deciphering of the meaning of her find at the Library of Congress, because she lacks certain vital information about her family heritage. As she sleeps restlessly, she dreams of a forgotten scene from her childhood, in which she and her brother-in-law Jack, whom she has not seen for a long time, narrowly escape a violent and horrific fire at the Paris perfumerie in the Arcade on the rue de Vaugirard. In the fire, the child Lily loses everything. The adult Lily awakens, unable to comprehend the scene or Jack's strong presence in her conscious memory. She is terribly aware of the verse the child Lily was reciting in the dream. The verse frightens and excites her, because she suddenly realizes the way that the verse recapitulates the burial spots outlined in the map from the Middle Ages. She smells the scent of perfume all around her.

2. Encryption in Action

On Friday morning, as Lily awakens from the disturbing dream, Rose's granddaughter, Odette Rae, has been listening to the music of the church bells around Paris. As she listens, she watches a set of whirling mechanical dolls in the

fashion Arcade in the rue de Vaugirard, and she makes up her own hopscotch dance and her own music in response. Odette's dance replicates the musical map of the burial places of the child from the Middle Ages, but the sequence is incomplete. This information is sent by her father, Jack, to his cousin Charles. Charles, who is not above using any methods whatsoever to advance his own agenda, believes the message in Odette's dance will give him coded information about the location of the Fabergé egg, and will also allow him to hack into Henry's MEND. He doesn't know that Lily is getting the same information from Odette Rae because of their hidden genetic link.

3. Exploding the Encryption

Saturday evening Rachel, the daughter of Lily and Henry Barrington, gives a concert at Carnegie Hall where Charles expects to hear her reveal the solution to Odette's musical sequence. Rachel, who has had secret romantic liaisons with Charles, learns that he has betrayed her by setting up a romantic triangle involving her and her mother Lily. Enraged, Rachel vents her feelings at Lily. Charles, assuming he has full control over both the women, plots to destroy his cousin Henry's invention and perhaps his cousin with it. He has Henry's office in the Helmsley Building blown up, along with a copy of the manuscript Lily found and a score of Haydn's Creation, in which Henry has marked what might be the secret solution. Charles does not

know that Henry has protected his MEND along with copies of the documents, so that they are not destroyed in the explosion.

4. Murder

Shortly after midnight, early Sunday morning, Rachel Barrington writes an email to Lily apologizing for her behavior, and expressing her frustration over her difficulty finding a good ending for her new hit song. Charles and Marie enter her apartment using a key that Rachel had failed to get back from Charles after their fight. They goad her into delivering the complete musical sequence. Frustrated, jealous of the young singer's success, Marie kills Rachel before Rachel can deliver the information. At almost the same moment in Paris, Odette Rae is critically injured in a hit-and-run accident, and is hidden in the family crypt, accessed through a secret passage on the rue de Vaugirard.

5. Notes and Notebooks

Tuesday: The funeral for Rachel Barrington is in two parts. At one, a service for her fans, the police begin to investigate her murder. They are curious about Henry's whereabouts. The other funeral is a private service for the family. Lily attends the private funeral with Rose. Consumed with shock, Lily is dizzy with the memory of Rose and Rachel's singing voices. Rose gives Lily a CD of Rachel's concert. Jack,

who like Lily is attempting to unlock the secrets of the family, sends her a copy of Odette Rae's secret notebook from Paris. Later, when she examines the notebook, Lily is able to link Odette's train of thought with the original musical document which she found in the Library of Congress. This connection gives her solace, and makes her feel closer to Rachel. Remembering that the events depicted in the original document occur in a specified time span, Lily knows she must begin to solve the musical puzzle quickly. Not to do so would grant the wrong parties access to MEND. Lily is unaware that her lust for information is feeding those same parties the data they will attempt to use to destroy her. Rose gives her tickets to a concert of Haydn's Creation, at the Kennedy Center.

6. The Egg and the Crypt

Wednesday: Odette Rae remains in a comatose state, but is beginning to show signs of improvement. Charles, via Jack, keeps close tabs on her condition; he wants the code he could not get from Rachel. Lily goes back to the Library of Congress to do more research. Later that evening, she attends the concert of Haydn's Creation at the Kennedy Center, where she runs unexpectedly into Charles. His previous tactics thwarted, Charles has altered his focus, playing Lily and Rose off against each other in this high-stakes game of inheritance and power. Lily is not consciously aware of a deadly secret Rose has kept from her, nor is she aware that Charles intends to use this information to entice and entrap her. As Lily listens to

the Haydn, she hears disjointed passages of music and words, overlaid by the Haydn. To her surprise, the words are the whole text of the verse she recited as a child. These passages communicate to her, making connections she has never made before about the meaning of the music and the family she married into. In need of comfort, Lily has an assignation with Charles at the Mayflower Hotel, still not knowing that Charles had been her daughter's lover at the same time that he was hers. She wakes in the middle of the night to find Charles reading files on her MEND. In the morning, she finds a printout of Rachel's email in his jacket pocket. Reading it again moves Lily to tears, as she also begins to suspect that Charles may have been involved in Rachel's murder. She heads to the airport for her flight to Paris.

7. The Palace

Thursday: In Paris, Lily begins to retrace the locations in the verse, by walking through the city looking for clues. She learns certain facts about her true relationship to the members of the Barrington family and about the full scope of what Henry's MEND invention is capable of doing. Lily comes to understand that MEND can manipulate time as well as information. She also discovers that the capability of MEND is based on the Barringtons' family traits. The more she learns about her past and the closer she comes to finding her daughter's murderers, however, the more information she unwittingly leaks to her enemies. She enters Rose's

apartment at the Palais Royale, where she finds that for each family member there exists a personal signature doll with their character traits hidden inside. Lily appeals to Henry both for data stored only in his MEND, and for his cooperation in accessing secrets of which Rose alone is the custodian. Lily learns enough that on the next Thursday, a week after her arrival in Paris, she finds her way into the catacombs leading to the crypt where Odette Rae is being held. Odette Rae's transmission to Lily in the music and words of the verse leads Lily directly through the passages to the egg. As she passes through the underground maze, she unknowingly traces the family's international history, making connections that are stored only within MEND's virtual world. But one more threat awaits her in the crypt: Charles, the co-designer with Henry of the MEND software, has used his knowledge to find the crypt and hide there, desiring either to control the crypt's occupants and the MEND system, or to destroy them. Lily makes a bargain with him, trading the egg for Odette Rae's life. Before the egg is removed from the crypt, however, Lily extracts from it a scroll written by a mathematically inclined member of the family, a scroll that is crucial to a full understanding of the family's genius and their potential for creating a global empire. Lily still doesn't know what the scroll contains, but she intends to learn its contents, just as she intends to solve the puzzle of the buried beginnings of the Barrington family.

Glossary: Meet the Melody Makers

A Guide to The Key Players

GLOSSARY: MEET THE MELODY MAKERS

A Guide to the Key Players

FAMILY TREE: SOLANGE ROSE BARRINGTON is the Matriarch of the Barringtons, a family known for their extraordinary musical gifts. Known as Rose, she runs a global empire, Global Arcade Associates. She has had a long and illustrious career and life as a singer and perfumer and has developed the family business. But all is not well in the global Barrington home. Rose is about to retire and turn over her empire. A conflict of epic proportions is developing among her descendants, over the secret wealth and power amassed by the family and wielded by Rose herself.

Her eldest son is HENRY BARRINGTON, who is married to LILY BARRINGTON, a musicologist who has secretly taken on the mission of unearthing dangerous secrets about the family's past. Henry and Lily are the parents of the Star, RACHEL BARRINGTON. They live and work in the United States and run the American side of the family business. Henry is a musician turned inventor. His creation is a new computer device called MEND: Musical Encode/Decode Device.

Rose's second son is JACK BARRINGTON, who is married to MARIE BARRINGTON. Jack is a financial wizard, and is known to have taken unwise risks with the family fortune. Jack and Marie are the parents of the child ODETTE RAE, a known child genius. One of the family's best-kept secrets is the 21st-century engineering of Odette Rae's birth, accomplished in order to further family "work" roles as senders and receivers of secret musical vibrations. Jack and Marie live and work in Paris and

run the Paris side of the family business. An Arcade on the rue de Vaugirard is the center of their operations.

FAMILY ARCADE: A bewitched location full of the living presence of past and present family members, each with her or his own entanglements. The family business began there; and the rue de Vaugirard is the location of the Arcade where Henry has placed a display of dancing, musical dolls. The dolls' likenesses are pictured on MEND's special keys. But the Arcade is even more powerful: it has a secret way of transmitting information wirelessly to the MEND software, allowing a read out of Lily's discoveries about the family.

MEND: The access code to this dangerous global mechanism is the notated version of the family melody by a family member in the 21st century. MEND's software program is like nothing anyone has ever seen before, as it works through the dolls in the Family Arcade, which can be "read" like musical notation by the family member who represents, in this century, a child of the Middle Ages.

ODETTE RAE: The child Odette Rae has begun to dance a Hopscotch pattern on the sidewalk in front of Jack and Marie's headquarters in the rue de Vaugirard, as the church bells of Paris ring. She is dancing the living presence that is emanating from that place. She places all of the districts from which she hears the church bells ringing into her Hopscotch tabulation, and then enters the data about the sequence of the dolls that dance on the Arcade in her secret notebook. Perhaps knowing, perhaps

unknowing, she is rewinding in linear form the musical pattern that circulated through the village of Vaugirard in the Middle Ages, finding and bringing to life the source of the family's power, reading the network with her feet. On this same Arcade, Odette Rae suffers a hit and run accident which renders her comatose, unable to send or receive data.

NOTEBOOKS: After Odette's accident, Jack needs help deciphering Odette's secret musical language. He sends Lily a copy of Odette Rae's secret notebook, which contains the data from the child's dance. Unknown to Lily, a number of governments, the United States among them, are seeking the notebook in order to gain access to the powerful information contained in MEND. This information will not only form the basis for an espionage trial, but will also lead Lily into a trap.

STAR: At 19, RACHEL BARRINGTON is perfectly poised to become a world Star. She is a beautiful young woman. Rachel convinces her grandmother Rose to join her on stage at Carnegie Hall, for what will be Rachel's debut performance and Rose's dramatic farewell. This move is dangerous for Rose. Rachel intends to premiere a new song that she plans to release on CD and DVD. Rose's alliance with Rachel on stage gives a 'sign' to many of Rose's business partners and descendants that a secret musical code, spelling out layers of encrypted information about the Barrington family, is about to be found in Rachel's song. This A-list event will cost Rachel her life.

CHARLES HOBBES: A cousin of Solange Rose, Charles works with Marie Barrington on e-commerce trading projects of the family. Charles has worked with Henry on the making of MEND and all the software components of its operation. He needs the family signature melody and final cadence to access this powerful software. He is fighting with Henry over the last update. Charles is an unsavory character who will do what is expedient with anyone, in order to get the power he needs.

MELODY: The Barrington family melody, an ancient Carthaginian tune that varies every century until the original theme is plainly heard and written down by a family member who is able to hear it. The melody has been kept secret for centuries, in a manner that has served to protect the world from its awesome power. When the melody is finally revealed, it will expose the internal workings of a people who consider themselves "chosen". We will discover at last their private inheritance scheme of "talents"!

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS: Top Secret Barrington Files are hidden here and have been purposefully hidden from Lily's inquiry, until the day when the melody is to be heard. The Library of Congress is also the site of the virtual reality/game that Henry's MEND device enables all Member players to enter.

MAP: A map, hidden in secret files at the Library of Congress, shows the old village of Vaugirard, and contains secret musical encryptions providing documentation of the last

time the family theme was recorded. The code is very valuable, as it can be read with huge global significance regarding how and when the family theme will be heard again.

MISSING: A Faberge egg with an updated musical encryption of the secret map of the Barrington family musical melody, showing the present-day arrondissement/districts where the old Vaugirard village map existed. Finding the egg is very important to determining the future leadership and hierarchy of the family when Rose retires.

TRICK PALACE: The mainframe of the MEND software program. Trick Palace provides the network for the entire Barrington family heritage as an ethernet wireless scheme. It connects Odette Rae's dance, the music of the Middle Ages, the moving dolls, and the secret map, in a single program. MEND reads this program and is dependent upon members of the family finding the most updated encryption of their hierarchy. Using Trick Palace software, MEND contains a global tracking system for multiple cities, allowing those who use it to locate each other at any time. Access to MEND requires a different musical cadence for each century. Rachel has tricked her killers into thinking they have it, but in fact only Lily will be able to find it. Lily will accomplish this Mission Impossible task by entering the final passage in the Trick Palace, allowing herself and others to uncover the Barrington's secrets and become part of the Barrington Family empire.

MIRABEL: Everyone in the family is descended from the family line of a child, Mirabel, known to have been of sinister repute. Mirabel lived in the 14th century; and upon his death a secret musical map was created, detailing the family inheritance.

MOTIVE: Family members in the present have very different reasons for needing the information contained in the map – just as they have differing strategies for untangling and processing the information. Among these strategies is using MEND. The access code to MEND is time sensitive; the hidden scheme must be revealed in time to be effective. Family members are engaged in a global fight about gaining control of MEND and the Trick Palace software.

PROTAGONIST: Lily Barrington, haunted by mounting questions about her family's past, goes to the Library of Congress and finds secret files which reveal that her family is related to a child known for sinister acts in the Middle Ages. With the use of her husband Henry's invention, MEND (musical encode decode), Lily is able to decode a secret musical map that spells out very pivotal information about the hidden location of a missing Faberge egg that contains the family encryption. Lily does not realize that family members are eavesdropping on her MEND findings and using a software program for MEND called Trick Palace; nor has she access to the memories of her own past that might make her aware of the motives of others and her own grave danger. In order to succeed, she will need to recover her own memories, as she reveals and moves on from some shocking revelations about the breeding plan for the empire over the centuries.

Future Books in the Series

Future Books in the Series

Marie's Scroll

The scroll found in the Fabergé egg which Lily discovers in *The Skeleton Score* is also hidden in the crypt where the egg was found. The verse on the scroll is updated every century by one of the prime carriers of the Barrington's musical code. The code is their unique genetic heritage, passed on from generation to generation. In order to update the verse, the current heir to the family legacy must recognize his or her own internal genius. That person then becomes responsible for managing the family fortune, arranging appropriate marriages in order to maintain the family's genius, and for keeping the family's secrets. During World War Two, the Nazi's learn enough to recruit two family members to carry out espionage on the Barringtons in hopes of acquiring the egg, the family fortune, and the code that might help them control the world itself.

The STAR-CHILD Legacy

The Barrington family has been using a carefully-crafted plan of genetic management to keep their musical genius within the family. That genius has the potential, eventually, to allow the Barringtons to control the entire world. In every century, a member of the family is designated, by means of an intermarriage code, to carry the musical legacy forward to the next century. Some family members believe that Odette Rae is the twenty-first century's chosen carrier of the code, and that she is therefore the custodian of the family's awesome secrets. The greatest secret the Barringtons hold is their origin beyond earth in

the fifth century BC. The Empress, the family matriarch of the fifth century, is the source not only of the family's special abilities, but also of their genetically coded capacity to use music as a source of power. While some wish to see Odette Rae elevated to her destined position in this century, others would prefer to control her gifts for their own purposes. To do so, they are not above revealing and exploiting the Barrington family heritage.

Henry and Rose: The Epic

Henry and Rose are mother and son – and so much more. They have learned many unsavory ancestral secrets during their time in Europe. Leaving the continent covertly, they go to the United States, where they continue to control the family business, Global Arcade Associates. Henry uncovers some of the skeletons in the Barrington family closet, and learns about the part he has played in the breeding plan. The discovery shocks him, just as it makes the family's potential for unbridled power obvious to him. Abandoning his musical career, he develops MEND (Music Encoding/Decoding Device), in order to share Barrington knowledge with the world, while still retaining control as the system's creator.

MEND

Henry works with his cousin Charles to develop MEND. Charles, however, has an agenda of his own. He envies Rose and Henry their wealth, far greater than his own, and he determines to do something about it. Believing that the family knowledge base is a property of incalculable value, he sets about to sell portions of it to the highest bidder. But neither Henry nor Charles recognizes what they have created in MEND. The machine is an electronic/mechanical model of the way the Barrington family functions. What no one has

realized is that MEND is capable of updating itself in much the same way that the family's genetic musical code is updated. Needing only the appropriate musical clue from a given century's code carrier, MEND's artificial intelligence can develop the capacity to control the global empire in its own virtual reality, raising the question of who – or what – will end up running things.

Summary of the Complete Book Series

Summary of the Complete Book Series

Project Concept and Story Arc

A recent news article's headline notes that "the earth gives off a relentless hum of countless notes, completely imperceptible to the human ear, like a giant exceptionally quiet symphony, but the origin of this sound has remained a mystery. Now unexpected powerful tunes have been discovered in this hum. These new findings could shed light on the source of an ancient enigma."

In the wake of this news release, meet the Barrington dynasty in a DA VINCI CODE meets ATONEMENT meets KING LEAR generational saga titled: THE SPELL OF VAUGIRARD. The story follows the manifest destiny of the Barrington dynasty as their members reveal knowledge about the music of the earth. The story of the Barringtons is told as a psychological thriller with a science fiction bent that takes us as an audience into the wonder and perils of access abounding in the wireless world.

Throughout a five book thriller series, the Barrington dynasty seeks to wield world power through their knowledge and manipulation of their secret royal ancient musical language. The language transforms the hum into a clock work of melodies written down by the Barringtons over the ages. The dynasty members each have different roles in the encrypting and archiving of data for the next generation's historical reference.

The saga opens in the 21st century when we meet the Barringtons in the first book: THE SKELETON SCORE. The protagonist, musicologist Lily Barrington, arrives at the Library of Congress and stumbles onto the dynasty's hidden secrets and language encryption. She unfolds lies that have been fed to the public about how the language originated. The Barrington dynasty is momentarily changing leadership, and is embroiled in a global fight over ownership and access to a new invention and multimedia platform called MEND-musical encode decode.

MEND has its origins in the Barrington's secret musical familial language, and the special familial connection is revealed in a young star's song cadence. The song spells out how the dynasty is wound into a constellation of notes that connects the characters as one force field that keeps the earth humming on its axis. The star, daughter of Lily and granddaughter of the dynasty matriarch, is brutally murdered just before she releases the secret cadence to the song—a song that has been heard before during a time of great challenge in the lives of the Barringtons. As the events surrounding the star's murder unfold, all human life is threatened when the Barrington fight escalates into a war of epic proportions over access to their lies and secrets. Lily soon finds herself at the center of a plot that threatens the security of the United States. As Lily seeks the truth, the stakes are going up exponentially and one wrong move could endanger the planet and all humans forever.

Introduction to the Book Series: First Book THE SKELETON SCORE

In the first book of the series, we learn along with protagonist Lily Barrington about the time clock nature and powerful roles assigned to the family members and how their extraordinary musical and other gifts of genius give them instant access on the world map. The largest property owners in the old French village of Vaugirard, the family stems from an ancient royal lineage. It has immense ambition for world power, and the means to gain it through its musical genius. A lovely melody is transferred through the ages to a special member of the family who can sing the tune, and give secret familial commands through the tones and their meaning. The family, likewise, has devised a carefully-crafted plan of genetic management to retain both the genius and power. This strategy proves successful until the Middle Ages, when the family is jeopardized by a public blight on its name.

The unknowing culprit is a cherubic Barrington offspring living in Vaugurard. It is the year 1347, and the black plague is threatening to wipe out much of Europe including this extraordinary clan. This young child alone possesses the ability to save the family through his unique ability to change the character of sounds by echoing, trilling and breaking apart the family members' musical tones, thus binding them all together within one familial heartbeat. He uses this technique with the family's signature melody as a call to arms that they all recognize – a warning to consolidate their affairs and leave town. Plague is upon village and there is serious danger!

But the town villagers believe this child's powers are omens of evil, and out of ignorance and fear, they capture and brutally murder him. His death breaks apart the family's musical connection, causing them to lose both their power and the deed to their Vaugirard land. The family's name is desecrated and its fortune lost. The cadence chord resolving this crime will not be heard until the child's voice is rerouted, nearly 700 years later, when his genes reappear and are heard by all Barringtons throughout the world.

The first book concludes with Lily proving her ability to take over the family reigns from the presiding Matriarch. Upon taking on her mission impossible challenge and uncovering the Barrington's secret powers Lily learns many shocking details about her family's past and about her own complicated loves. This knowledge leads her to uncover how MEND was conceived and the diabolical plan used to hide away the Barrington genetic remake of the child of the Middle Ages. It is this plan that indirectly causes the death of the American family star. The remake ancestor hidden in Paris is used to program MEND and to control the family's private character Arcade and store front in Paris.

Lily's personal journey in this opening coming of age story saves us from disaster and protects the Barrington family data from falling into the wrong hands. Finding the 21st century child remake reveals the character clockwork of the formation of the signature melody. The timely revelation brings us into a new era in history and gives access to MEND to all people around the globe as they are welcomed into the Barrington dynasty fold.

The five books in the Vaugirard series chronicle the family's quest to regain its prominence, thwart take over and define their territory around the globe in order to maintain their powers and secrets to the world's origins as the character formation of MEND is encoded daily and powered by the regenerative force of music.

Author Biography

Author Biography

MARDI-ELLEN HILL is the managing member and founder of MEH MULTIMEDIA LLC, a cross media entertainment and technology enterprise, focusing on new ideas and inventions in literature, music, media, the sciences and education.

Ms. Hill, who has taught and lectured in several U.S. universities has received two awards from the NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS, an ANETTE KADE FULBRIGHT GRANT, an ASCAP AWARD, as well as major funding from numerous other private and international sources.

THE SPELL OF VAUGIRARD was originally premiered as a staged work. The work received stellar reviews in international news brands. As a book series, the story breaks new ground by creating a puzzle of clues connecting the narrative throughout all divisions of a global franchise. THE SKELETON SCORE, the first book of the VAUGIRARD series is Ms. Hill's first book of fiction. Please visit the author's website: www.mardi-ellen.com.