

chapter one



Daisy

I'd been with the Admin and Liaison Department (ALD) for nearly two months when the news hit my screen.

To be honest, I almost missed it. Not because I wasn't concentrating—although I have to admit, ALD *is* the most boring department in the whole of ATC. (That's Above the Clouds, fairy godmother headquarters.) I'd been put here after what happened with Robyn's dad when he trapped me in a jam jar. My wing still wasn't back to normal since it had gotten crushed in the jar. But I was healing and couldn't wait to get back to doing real assignments again.

In the meantime, my job was to cross-reference fairy godmothers with their departments and match them up with their clients. I could do it standing on one wing—provided

it wasn't my bad one. So I hardly even thought about what I was doing. Punching in names, numbers, and departments didn't take a lot of concentration.

Which might be why I almost missed it when it came up on the screen. It wasn't one of my jobs to assign, so I couldn't see the details. But I saw enough:



JENNY FISHER. FGEAGLE5197. SRB.

SRB? No! I must be mistaken. I shut the page on my screen and walked across the office to the Clients file. I tried to saunter as casually as I could so no one would have

any idea what I was doing. Interfering with an assignment from another department is strictly against Fairy Godmother Code. If I was caught doing it, I'd be in terrible trouble.

Luckily no one looked up. They rarely did. ALD is generally quite a serious bunch. There's a reason why the fairies here aren't out on normal assignments. Sometimes it's injury-related, like it was for me. Others are here because they're not up to par for any of the "live" assignments. Both of which helped give ALD the nickname Angry, Lonely, and Demoralized.

I grabbed the file of clients' records and looked up Jenny Fisher. I checked all the details from my screen against the ones in the file. It was definitely her. Philippa's mom. I went cold. Why was she getting a fairy from SRB?

I glanced around to make sure no one was watching what I was doing. Then I jotted down all the details of the assignment on the back of my hand, carefully replaced the file, shut down my computer—and ran out of the office as quickly as I could.

Philippa 

"Are we almost there?" I asked for the twenty-fifth time.

Dad gave me the same response he'd given me twenty-four times already. "Almost!" he said, smiling at me in the rearview mirror and giving Mom a nudge in case she hadn't noticed his funny reply.

I sighed and got back to reading my book.

But then I noticed something outside the window. "Wait!" I sat up a bit straighter. "I recognize this road." I leaned forward and looked through the front windshield. "It's the woods!" I said. "We *are* almost there!"

"I told you we were," Dad replied.

"To be fair, you also said we were almost there when we hadn't quite reached the end of our street," Mom added.

But we were this time. We were on the outskirts of Ravenleigh. I felt a jiggle of excitement go through me. We were nearly at Robyn's house!

Robyn and I had met a few months ago when Mom, Dad, and I rented her family's former cottage for vacation. We'd kept in touch ever since, and she was one of my best friends now. The other one was Daisy. Daisy had been my fairy godsisiter

(which is like a fairy godmother, only one that's the same age as you).

Robyn and I had had a rocky start — especially after her dad trapped Daisy in a jam jar and tried to cut off her wings. But once everything had settled down, he'd completely changed. He was like a different man and had ended up becoming friends with my parents. So well, in fact, that he'd asked if we'd like to come back to visit over winter break. They'd booked us into the same house we stayed in last time — their old home!

Unlike my other friend, Charlotte, whom I'd lost touch with since she moved away, Robyn and I had kept in touch since that week, e-mailing and texting each other virtually every day for the last three months.

We drove up the gravelly driveway as it was starting to get dark. It was only four o'clock, but the evening was closing in around us already.

"Can I go over to Robyn's?" I asked, swinging the car door open the second Dad turned the engine off.

"I was thinking we might at least make it through the front door first," Dad replied over his

shoulder as he helped Mom out of the car, twirling her around and around.

“But I haven’t seen her for ages!” I said, vaguely wondering what it would be like to have parents who could go longer than an hour or two without breaking into a dance.

“Let’s get in and unpack first,” Mom said, letting go of Dad’s hands and opening the trunk. “Then you can run over to tell her we’re here.”

“Great!” I grabbed my bag and ran to the door. Minutes later, I’d squashed a week’s worth of clothes into drawers, flung a bundle of books and magazines on the bed, and shoved my suitcase underneath.

“See you later,” I called as I closed the door behind me and ran to Robyn’s.

Robyn and I sat in her room above the bookshop her dad owns and caught up on all our news.

I couldn’t help comparing it with what had happened when I’d gone to visit Charlotte the first time after she’d moved away. We’d spent a week not knowing what to say to each other. With Robyn, you couldn’t shut us up if you tried! I don’t know how we still had so much to talk about — but we did, and I wasn’t complaining.

I checked my watch. Nearly six o'clock. "I'd better get going," I said reluctantly. Mom had told me to be back for dinner. "See you in the morning?" I asked as I headed down the stairs.

"Definitely! I'll come over as soon as I'm up."

"Great."

I was about to turn to walk through the shop to go out when something moving across the floor caught my eye. A mouse! It ran across the shop floor and right over to my feet!

I screamed and ran back to the stairs. The mouse followed me. I stumbled halfway up the stairs and the mouse tried to follow, but the steps were too steep and it kept falling back onto the floor.

It stood at the bottom of the steps looking up at me with tiny green eyes.

"I've never seen a mouse with green eyes," Robyn said. She'd heard me scream and was looking down from the top of the stairs.

"Me neither," I replied, although at this moment, I didn't care what color its eyes were; I just wanted it to stop chasing me.

"It likes you," Robyn said with a laugh.

"Well, I don't like it!" I replied. "Make it go away!"

“Look, it’s got something in its mouth,” she said, coming down the stairs, bending down and reaching out toward it.

“Don’t touch it!” I screamed. Just then, the mouse dropped whatever was in its mouth, looked up at me once again, and scampered away.

I cautiously made my way down the steps as Robyn was examining what the mouse had left behind. It was a torn, crumpled-up piece of paper covered in mouse spit.

“Nice,” I said.

Robyn laughed. She dropped the paper into the trash as we headed through the shop. “See you in the morning,” she said at the door.

“Can’t wait!” And with that, I waved to her and to her dad, who was busily chatting with a customer. And then I headed back to the house for an evening of moussaka and Monopoly with my parents.

The next morning, Robyn was at the door before Mom and Dad had even woken up. Which isn’t that amazing, really. When Mom and Dad are on vacation, you don’t really get much more than snores and grunts out of them before lunchtime.

“Come on, let’s go out,” Robyn said. I scrawled a quick note, propped it up on the kitchen table, and followed Robyn outside.

We wandered around the village, talking and looking in shop windows. We paused outside Potluck, the pottery shop owned by Robyn’s friend Annie. She used to be Robyn’s mom’s best friend, but Robyn’s mom had died just over a year ago, and Annie and Robyn’s dad hadn’t seen eye to eye since then. They’d made up last time we were here, though.

“How are things?” I asked nervously.

“Fine,” Robyn said with a smile. “She and Dad are totally cool now. She comes over for dinner every Friday, and I’m allowed to see her whenever I want. She and Dad even go out walking together on the weekends sometimes.”

“I’m so glad,” I said. The shop was closed, but we stood looking at all the plates and bowls and animals in the window.

I was admiring a particularly handsome dragon when suddenly someone barged into me out of nowhere, knocking me forward so hard, I almost bumped into the window.

“Hey!” I spun around and came face-to-face with a woman staring into my eyes in a way that really

creeped me out. She was hunched over, with an enormous multicolored shawl looped over her shoulders and over the top of her head, a tiny little face that you could hardly see because the shawl was spread halfway across it, and a pair of beady bright green eyes boring straight into mine.

“Sorry,” I said automatically, and then felt foolish. Someone barges into me, almost bashes my nose against a shop window, and I apologize to them!

The woman stared into my eyes for another moment. Then, wrapping her shawl more firmly over her shoulders, she glanced around. She seemed to see something in the distance, because she suddenly shook herself and began to turn away. “Look after your mother!” she said in a rasping voice.

“What?” I said. “Why? My mother looks after *me*!”

But the woman was already walking away. A dark storm cloud seemed to follow her down the street. “Just do it!” she called over her shoulder.

A moment later, the cloud had turned to rain, fat heavy drops plopping down on the pavement all the way up the street. As the woman scurried away and out of sight, Robyn and I hunched together in the shop doorway and waited for the rain to stop.

“Well, that was bizarre,” Robyn said.

“Wasn’t it?”

“Did you see the way she stared at you?” Robyn threw her coat over the top of her head, wrapping it around her face just like the woman’s shawl. “I’m a strange little lady in a very weird outfit,” she said, imitating the woman’s rasping voice. “And you must do as I say!”

Then she laughed and pulled at my arm. “Come on,” she said as the rain shower passed. “Let’s head back.”

I followed her, lost in my thoughts. I’d laughed at Robyn’s impression, but there was something about the woman. Something about the way she’d looked at me. Her eyes. I couldn’t get them out of my mind. They reminded me of something, but I couldn’t think what it was.

I shook myself as we headed to the back of the shop and poured a couple of glasses of juice. I was being silly—my imagination working overtime as usual.

By the time we went upstairs to Robyn’s room with our drinks and some magazines from the shop, I’d forgotten all about the weird woman.

* * *

“Want to play a computer game?” Robyn asked.

I looked up from my magazine to see her opening a bag from the side of her desk. “I didn’t know you had your own computer,” I said. Robyn had e-mailed me lots of times in the last few months, but she’d always used her dad’s computer downstairs in the shop.

“Annie just gave it to me for Christmas. It’s her old one.” She pulled a laptop out of the bag and opened it up on her desk. “It’s pretty old, but it works well enough. Come on, I’ll show you a new site I found.”

I squeezed onto the seat with her and waited while the screen booted up. Before long, we were having ketchup-bottle gunfights, bursting balloons over each other’s castles, and chasing each other around virtual mazes.

I scanned the site’s list for a game we hadn’t played yet. As I looked down the screen, something caught my eye. “What’s that?” I asked, pointing to a tiny little star flashing in different colors around the screen. First it was orange, then it changed to yellow, then blue, flashing on and off so gently and moving around the screen so swiftly, it was hard to follow.

“What’s what?”

“Wait, it’s gone. You’ll see it in a minute.”

A moment later, it was there again, flashing at the top of the screen, so faint you would miss it if you weren’t looking out for it. “That!” I said.

Robyn shook her head. “I don’t know. I haven’t noticed it before.”

The flashing star had caught my curiosity. “Let’s see what it is,” I said.

We tried to trace it around the screen, while I pointed and shouted “There!” every few seconds, and Robyn chased after it with the mouse and clicked — just a second too late each time.

“It’s impossible!” she said, passing the mouse to me. “Here, you try.”

I tried for another minute or two with no luck. I was about to give up and suggest having another ketchup-bottle fight instead when the star appeared again. This time, I somehow managed to click at the right moment, and the star was instantly replaced by a bright white box with some squiggly text slowly coming into focus. “Got it!” I said with a smile.

“I hope we get more than a little box saying congratulations after all that effort,” Robyn said.

We stared and stared at the squiggly writing, but it didn't get any clearer. It just squiggled across the box, rising and falling in sharp peaks and valleys.

"Not even that!" I said sarcastically. "Great game, I must say!" I moved the mouse over to close the box. "Come on, let's go back to—"

"Wait!" Robyn grabbed the mouse. "Look. What does it remind you of?"

I watched the lines squiggle up and down across the page a bit more. "I dunno," I said. "Maybe those charts you get in hospitals that record your heart-beat and stuff."

"Exactly. It's showing the levels of something. Hold on a sec." Robyn moved the mouse to the volume button in the corner of the screen. The volume was muted. She clicked the icon and instantly a crackling, screeching sound came through the speakers.

"Yikes—what's that?" I clapped my hands over my ears.

"I don't know! Hang on." Robyn adjusted the levels of the various audio controls, and the crackling died down to a faint hum.

"What's that one?" I asked, pointing to an icon that stood apart from the others. It looked as if it

had been added on separately. The others were all square boxes with a circle inside them. This one contained a star with a red line through it.

“No idea,” Robyn said.

“Try it.”

She clicked the star. As she did so, the red line disappeared and the humming sound instantly stopped. The computer was silent. For about two seconds. Then something incredible happened. We heard voices coming through the speakers! And not just any voices.

“That’s — that’s —” Robyn stared at the screen, watching as the squiggly lines danced up and down in perfect time with the rise and fall of the two voices.

“I know!” I said, although I could hardly believe what I was hearing. “It’s Daisy!”

chapter two



Daisy 

“What did you think you were doing?” My supervisor’s voice boomed through my MagiCell so loudly, I had to hold the phone away from my ear.

“I—I—” What could I say? I’d run out of the office so fast, I hadn’t even thought of making up an excuse. Since then, all I’d focused on was trying to get a message to Philippa to warn her about her mom—which had turned out to be impossible when I couldn’t appear as myself. That would be the one way to guarantee an instant image link to ATC. I didn’t even want to *think* about the kind of punishment that would have meant. Interfering with another fairy’s assignment is one of the worst things you can do—especially when it’s not even your department!

"I'm waiting," FGRaincloud74921 said.

"I needed some air," I said feebly. "It's the office; it makes me a little claustrophobic at times."

Silence at the other end of my MagiCell. Did she believe me? Had I gotten away with it?

"How *dare* you treat me like a fool!" FGRaincloud74921 burst out so angrily, her words turned to sharp drops of rain, splattering down at me like arrows.

"I'm sorry," I said. "But I haven't really done anything I shouldn't have." In a way it was true. I'd *tried*, but I hadn't gotten anywhere. Well, how was I to know that if I became a mouse, I'd go and chew up the note I was trying to pass to Philippa? Or that she'd shrug off the old woman as a weirdo? I'd thought that somehow she'd always know it was me, no matter how I transformed. I'd even kept my own eyes both times, in case that would help.

"You are to return to ATC immediately," FGRaincloud74921 said, ignoring my plea of innocence. "We will deal with you there."

"Right," I said. "I'm on my way."

"You are close to Portal BZ 589245. Go there now. We will send someone to meet you. Do not talk to anyone, look at anyone, interact in any way with anyone or anything until you are back at ATC. Understood?"

“Totally,” I said. With shaking hands, I turned off my MagiCell, let out a heavy breath, and headed for the portal.

Philippa 

“You’re sure it was her?” Robyn asked for about the seventh time.

“I’m positive! I’d know Daisy’s voice anywhere!” Once Robyn had clicked the star and removed the crackle, the voices had come through as clearly as if they’d been in the room with us. “But I’ve got no idea what they were talking about.”

“Me neither,” Robyn agreed. We’d only heard a small slice of a conversation. Probably about ten seconds — and none of it had made sense.

“Is there any way of playing it again?” I asked.

We searched the screen. Robyn held the cursor over the bottom of the box, and a new line of controls came into view. “There!” I said. A button in the middle had an arrow on it, like the play button on a remote control. “Try that.”

Robyn clicked the button — and the snatch of conversation that we’d already heard played over again. If I’d had any doubts before, I certainly didn’t now. “It’s *definitely* her,” I said. “But what are they talking

about?" The other voice was telling Daisy to go back to ATC, then reeling off a bunch of numbers and talking about something called a portal.

"I don't know," Robyn said. "But those numbers must mean something."

"It sounded like they related to the portal. But what's a portal?"

Robyn shook her head. "I don't know. There's something about the style of those numbers, though. It reminds me of something. Like a map reference, perhaps."

"Of course!" I jumped to my feet. "Have you got a pen and paper?"

Robyn pulled a drawer open. "In here."

I grabbed a pen and opened up a spiral notebook. "OK, play it again," I said.

Robyn hit the play button and the conversation started over again. When it got to the numbers, I scribbled down exactly what I heard.

"Come on," I said, tearing the page off the pad.

"Where are we going?" Robyn asked, getting up from her seat.

"Downstairs to the shop. The map section! There must be something there that'll help us figure out what this is."

She paused. “I don’t know. I mean, do you think we should? We don’t know what we’re messing with. I mean — this was Annie’s computer. She must have been linked up to Daisy’s MagiCell from her last assignment, but I bet this is all top-secret fairy stuff.”

Annie’s a fairy godmother herself. We only found out when I was here for fall break. She’s actually a really important one. The Dream Maker — that’s the fairy godmother in charge of creating and distributing dreams all around the world. That was probably why her computer had access to fairies’ conversations like the one we’d heard. I was sure Robyn was right — we hadn’t been meant to hear it. But at the same time, it was *Daisy’s* voice we’d heard! And I knew Daisy well enough to be able to tell from the tone of her voice that something was seriously wrong.

“I can’t leave Daisy to get into trouble without trying to help,” I said.

Robyn nodded. “I know. You’re right,” she said, leading the way down to the shop. “Come on, let’s see what we can find.”

* * *

Half an hour later, we were back in Robyn's bedroom with a pile of maps and guidebooks. We'd looked up the word *portal* while we were in the shop and found it was a kind of doorway. So Daisy had been told to go to a fairy doorway!

We'd narrowed the numbers down to some sort of map coordinates but hadn't figured out whether it was some kind of GPS thing or what. I sat by the radiator, leafing through an atlas.

Then Robyn picked up a map from the pile we hadn't looked at yet. "Philippa — look!"

I put the atlas down and looked to see what she was holding. It was a local map, with the words *Chiverton Maps: JK & BZ* on the cover.

I looked at the letters I'd written down. "BZ," I said. "Do you think it's in here?"

Robyn started unfolding the map. "Only one way to find out."

We spread the map across the bed. "If I remember from geography, the first three numbers are along the bottom and the second three go up the side," Robyn said. She ran a finger along the bottom line and another up the side of the map. They met at a point roughly in the center of the map. "That's where it is," she said. "Somewhere around this point."

We scoured the map, looking for anything in the area that could possibly be a fairy doorway.

“That’s it — it must be!” Robyn cried, suddenly jabbing a finger at a symbol right in the middle of where we were looking.

I checked the symbol against the key on the back. “Archaeological site?”

“It’s Tidehill Rocks!” Robyn said excitedly.

“Tidehill Rocks?” I repeated. “Isn’t that —”

“Yes!” Robyn gathered up the map and started putting her shoes on. “The stone circle. It has to be there. Tidehill Rocks must be a fairy portal!”

We clambered up the hill, squelching through mud and wiping rain off our faces. We followed the path that led from the main road all the way up into the woods, even scrambling up a sheer hillside where the ground had collapsed earlier.

“Be careful,” Robyn said. “There was a landslide here last year when there was lots of flooding. You’ll be OK as long as you don’t go off the path — the edge is a lot closer than you think. Follow me.”

I had no intention of going off the path. I couldn’t see far beyond it anyway, through the damp mist that was settling more and more heavily around us

as we walked farther into the forest. I followed her steadfastly until the ground evened out again and we could walk side by side. In the distance, a startling sight came into view.

“Wow,” I said, stopping to wipe another strand of wet hair out of my eyes.

“I know,” Robyn said. “Amazing, aren’t they? There’s nothing like coming over this hill and seeing them.”



Tidehill Rocks stood ahead of us: a circle of large stones, standing proud and majestic and solitary,

a line of mist hovering around them, like a band holding them together. As we drew closer, I could see there were nine stones making up the circle, and a larger one probably four or five times my height in the center.

“They’re incredible,” I whispered, so awed by the sight, I didn’t want to speak too loudly. A feeling of peace spread through me as we drew closer. This place felt magical. Nothing bad could happen here!

There were a couple of other people there—a man walked his dog, and a woman wrapped up in a big coat walked around the stones while she talked on a cell phone. A stab of irritation ran through me. Imagine coming to a place as beautiful and sacred as this and talking on your phone!

We looked everywhere. Daisy wasn’t there.

“How long should we wait?” Robyn asked.

“I have no idea,” I said. “Maybe she’s already left. Maybe she’s not here yet. Let’s hang around a bit.”

Robyn nodded, and we kept on wandering around the stones. The woman was on the other side, still talking on her cell phone. The man with the dog eventually left.

I couldn’t stop staring at the stones. They were so big, and they’d been there for thousands of years,

and yet no one had any idea who'd put them there, or why. I guess that was part of what made them feel so special—the mystery of it.

Robyn suddenly grabbed me. “Philippa!” She pulled me down behind a stone and pointed at the woman on the other side of the rocks.

“What?”

“That woman. I just caught a glimpse of her face.”

“And?”

“It’s the same woman who bumped into you earlier.”

I crouched down behind the stone next to Robyn. The last thing we needed now was to get into a conversation with a weird person who was going to bark strange orders at me. “Let’s wait here till she’s gone,” I said.

The woman hadn’t seen us, and I couldn’t hear what she was saying on her phone—the wind was carrying her words in the opposite direction—but every now and then I caught a glimpse of her face and she looked anguished. There was something about her eyes. . . . What *was* it?

“Hey, look!” Robyn pulled me away from my thoughts. She was scratching away at the stone in front of where we were crouched. Just above the

ground, there was something engraved into the stone.

“What does it say?”

Robyn rubbed away at the moss and mud around the words. “I don’t know. Help me.”

We worked together to wipe the muck out of the letters. “I guess not many people crouch down behind the stones,” I said.

“I bet we’re the first people to see this for hundreds of years!” Robyn’s eyes were sparkling with excitement. I wasn’t so thrilled, to be honest. We were here to find Daisy, and I was pretty sure once we’d rubbed the dirt out of the words, it would just be an old signature. A twelfth-century version of *Jill was here* or something.

It was hard to make out at first — the writing was old-fashioned, and the engraving was quite faint. But once we’d cleared away the dirt, we could read it. It was a poem. Robyn read it aloud.

*Follow a fairy 'round the stones,
Amongst a hundred trees.
Call her name and catch her eye,
And join her world with ease.*

I stared at the poem, my jaw so wide open it began to ache. “Fairies,” I managed to say eventually.

Robyn was equally stunned. “We were right. This really is a fairy portal!” she said.

“So you think the poem is for real, not just someone messing around?”

“Why would they write it way down here, virtually out of sight at the bottom of a stone, if they were messing around? And look how old-fashioned the writing is.”

“Wow,” I said lamely as I read the poem again. What did it mean? What *could* it mean?

Just then a sound broke into my thoughts. The woman on her phone. She was close enough for us to hear her now. I almost wanted to jump out and shout at her: “How can you wander around here talking on your stupid phone when this place is so magical?” But I didn’t, of course. For two main reasons. The first reason was that I’m not the kind of person who does that sort of thing. And the second reason — well, the second reason was only just starting to dawn on me.

“Robyn!” I whispered, grabbing her arm. “Listen!”

“That woman?” she asked. “I know; how dare she —”

“No! What she was saying — did you hear her?”

By then, she'd walked by and was heading away from us again, and she'd put her phone away in her pocket. But the snippet of conversation I'd overheard was enough to convince me that I was right. I didn't hear the whole thing, but I was sure I'd heard her say something that humans generally don't know anything about.

Robyn shook her head.

“I only heard a few seconds, but I'm positive about what I heard.”

“What? What did you hear? What did she say?”

I paused. Was I imagining it? Did I just *want* it to be true? Would Robyn laugh at me if I told her? No — none of those things mattered. I knew what I'd heard, and suddenly I knew what I had to do. “She said, ‘See you at ATC.’ I'm sure of it,” I said, getting up from behind the stone and brushing my legs off. “Wait here; I'm going to check it out.”

Then I followed the woman as she walked around the stones. She still hadn't turned around. Still hadn't noticed me. I held my breath as I followed her, passing one stone after another, until we reached the last one. *Follow a fairy 'round the stones, amongst a hundred trees. . . .*

And then we passed the final stone. *Call her name and catch her eye, and join her world with ease.*

Taking a deep breath, and praying I didn't have this wrong and was about to make the biggest idiot of myself, I stood still and called out as loudly as I could, "Daisy!"

For a moment, nothing happened. My cheeks burned. I'd made a fool of myself. I was wrong. Robyn *would* laugh at me.

And then the woman turned around, looking to see who had spoken, her face crinkled up in confusion and disbelief. And then she saw me. Looking me straight in the eyes, she grinned so widely that I was left in no doubt at all.

"Philippa!" she shouted. And in that moment, everything disappeared. The ground, the stones, Robyn — everything except me and Daisy. She was no longer the weird woman; she had transformed into the Daisy I knew. Her blond curly hair, her smile, her sharp green eyes — the eyes that I suddenly realized I'd recognized in the woman, that had troubled me so much when I couldn't figure out why I knew them. They were Daisy's eyes!

For a moment, I thought I was fainting. The feeling reminded me of the one time I'd gone on the

Tilt-A-Whirl at a fair — sick and dizzy from spinning around and around, feeling as if the ground was falling away from me.

I shut my eyes, hoping that would make the feeling go away. But when I opened them again, they only confirmed that this wasn't the temporary feeling of dizziness you get from a carnival ride. The ground really *was* falling away from me!

I looked around and all I could see was Daisy, spinning and hovering above the world beside me as we both rose higher and higher into the huge, great, black nothingness of space.

