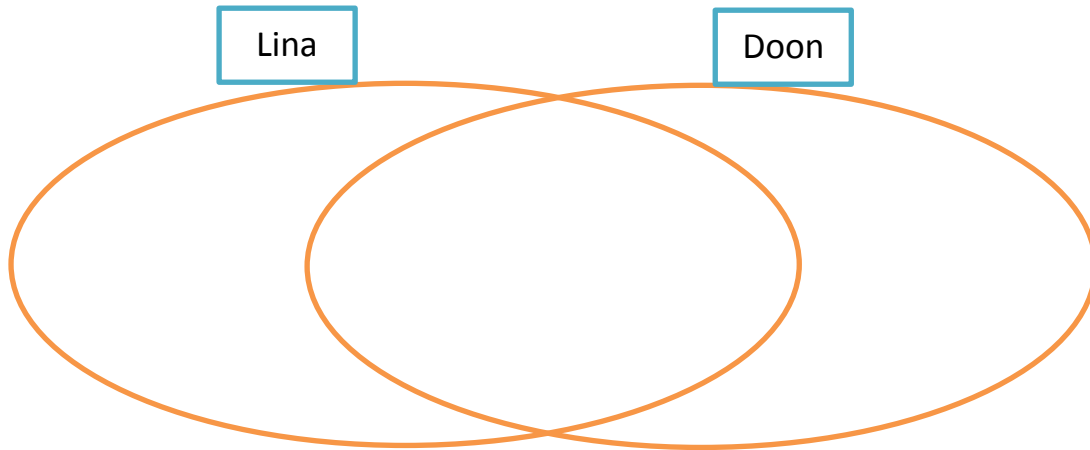


Tuesday 19th May 2020

Although Lina and Doon are alike in many ways, they are also different. Draw a Venn diagram such as the one below to compare the two characters.



Now read the next chapter.

CHAPTER 13

Deciphering the Message

Doon headed for home, and Lina went in the opposite direction across Harken Square. The little group of Believers had gone, but the protesters with their signs continued to pace back and forth. A few of them were still shaking their fists in the air and yelling, but most of them tramped silently, looking tired and discouraged. Lina felt a bit that way, too. Once Doon said he'd seen a door, she was sure that the door he'd found and the door in the Instructions were the same. She had had such hopes for that door in the Pipeworks. But hoping so hard had made her jump to conclusions. She'd gone a little too fast. She always went fast. Sometimes it was a good thing and sometimes not.

Now Doon thought the Instructions were nothing important after all. She didn't want him to be right. She didn't believe he was, even now. But her thoughts felt like a mess of tangled yarn. She needed someone wise and sensible to help her sort things out. She headed for Glome Street.

Though it was nearly six o'clock, she found Clary still in her workroom, at the far end of Greenhouse 1. It was a small, crowded room. Pots and trowels cluttered a high table at one end. Above the table were shelves full of bottles of seeds, and boxes of string, wire, and various kinds of powders. Clary's desk was a rickety table, littered with scraps of paper, all of them covered with notes in her neat, round handwriting. Two rickety

chairs went with the rickety table, one on each side. Lina sat down facing Clary. “I have to tell you some important things,” she said. “And they’re all secret.”

“All right,” said Clary. “I can keep secrets.” She was wearing a patched shirt that had faded from blue to grey. Her short brown hair was tucked behind her ears, and a bit of leaf clung to it on the right hand side. She folded her arms in front of her on the desk. She looked square and solid.

“The first thing is,” Lina began, “that I found the Instructions. But Poppy had chewed them up.”

“The Instructions,” said Clary. “I’m not familiar with them.”

Lina explained. She went on to explain everything—how she’d shown the Instructions to Doon, what they had figured out, how he’d searched the Pipeworks and found the door, and what he’d seen when he opened the door.

Clary made an unhappy sound and shook her head. “This is very bad,” she said. “And sad, too. I remember when the mayor was first starting out. He has always been foolish, but not always wicked. I’m sorry to know that the worst side of him has won out.” Clary’s dark brown eyes seemed to grow deeper and sadder. “There is so much darkness in Ember, Lina. It’s not just outside, it’s inside us, too. Everyone has some darkness inside. It’s like a hungry creature. It wants and wants and *wants* with a terrible power. And the more you give it, the bigger and hungrier it gets.”

Lina knew. She had felt it in Looper’s shop as she hovered over the coloured pencils. For a moment, she felt sorry for the mayor. His hunger had grown so big it could never be satisfied. His huge body couldn’t contain it. It made him forget everything else.

Clary let out a long breath, and a few of the scraps of paper on her desk fluttered. She ran her fingers through her hair, felt the bit of leaf, and plucked it out. Then she said, “About these Instructions.”

“Oh, yes,” said Lina. “They might be important, or they might not be. I don’t know anymore.”

“I’d like to see them, if you’d let me.”

“Of course you can see them—but you’ll have to come home with me.”

“I’ll come now, if that’s all right,” said Clary. “There’s plenty of time before lights out.”

Lina led Clary up the stairs and into her new bedroom at Mrs. Murdo’s. “Nice room,” Clary said, looking around with interest. “And I see you have a sprout.”

“A what?” said Lina.

“Your bean,” said Clary, pointing at the little pot of dirt on the windowsill.

Lina bent to see what Clary was talking about. Sure enough, the dirt was heaving up a little. She touched the pushed-up part, brushed away the dirt, and discovered a pale green loop. It looked like a neck, as if a creature in the bean were trying to escape but hadn’t yet managed to pull its head out. Of course she already knew that plants grew from seeds. But to have put that flat white bean in the dirt, to have almost forgotten about it, and now to see it forcing its way up into the air . . .

“It’s doing it!” she said. “It’s coming to life!”

Clary nodded, smiling. “Still amazes me every time I see it,” she said.

Lina brought out the Instructions, and Clary sat down at the table to study them. She puzzled over the patchwork of scraps for a long time, tracing the lines with her finger, murmuring the parts of words.

“What you’ve figured out so far seems right to me,” she said. “I think ‘ip ork’ must be ‘Pipeworks.’ And ‘iverb nk’ must be ‘riverbank.’ So this bit must be ‘down riverbank’—then there’s a big space here —‘to edge.’ Edge of what, I wonder? And does it mean ‘down riverbank’ as in ‘walk alongside the river’?”

“Yes, I think so,” Lina said.

“Or does it mean go down the riverbank itself, down the bank toward the water? Maybe ‘edge’ means ‘edge of the water.’”

“It couldn’t mean that. The bank goes straight down like a wall. You couldn’t go down to the edge of the water, you’d fall in.” Lina pictured the dark, swift water and shivered.

“This word,” said Clary, putting a finger on the paper. “Maybe it isn’t ‘edge,’ maybe it’s something else. It could be ‘hedge.’ Or ‘pledge.’ Those don’t make much sense. But it could be ‘ledge’ or ‘wedge.’”

Lina saw that Clary was no better at deciphering the puzzle than she was. She sighed and sat down on the end of her bed. “It’s hopeless,” she said.

Clary straightened up quickly. “Don’t say that. This torn-up piece of paper is the most hopeful thing I’ve ever seen. Do you know what this word is?” She pointed to the word at the top of the paper, *Egres*.

“Someone’s name, isn’t it? The title would be ‘Instructions for Egreston,’ or maybe ‘Egresman,’ or something like that. The person the instructions were for.”

“I don’t think so,” said Clary. “If you add an s to this word, right where this tear in the paper is, you get ‘Egress.’ Do you know what that means?”

“This is where it says ‘door,’” Lina said. “Somehow the door is by the ledge. Does that make sense?”

“And there’s that ‘small steel pan’— what can that mean? What would a pan have to do with anything?”

“But look, but look.” Lina tapped the paper urgently. “Here it says ‘ke’ and here it says ‘ey.’ It’s talking about a key!”

“But what is a door *to*?” said Doon, sitting back. “Remember, we thought about this before. A door in the bank of the river would lead *under* the Pipeworks.”

Lina pondered this. “Maybe it leads to a long tunnel that goes way out beyond Ember, and then gradually up and up until it comes out at the other city.”

“What other city?” Doon glanced up at the drawings tacked to the walls of Lina’s room. “Oh,” he said. “You mean *that* city.”

“Well, it could be.”

Doon shrugged. “I suppose so. Or it could be another city exactly like this one.”

That was a gloomy thought. Both of them felt their spirits sink a little at the idea. So they turned back to the task of deciphering.

“Next line,” said Lina.

But Doon sat back on his heels again. He stared into the air, half smiling. “I have an idea,” he said. “If we *do* find the way out, we’ll need to announce it to everyone. Wouldn’t it be splendid to do it during the Singing? Stand up there in front of the whole city and say we’ve found it?”

“It would be,” Lina said. “But that’s only two days away.”

“Yes. We have to hurry.”

They were bending again over the glued-down fragments when Doon remembered that he should check the time. It was a quarter to nine. He barely had time to get home.

“Come again tomorrow,” said Lina. “And while you’re at work, look for the rock marked with E.”

That night, Doon had trouble sleeping. He couldn’t find a comfortable position on his bed. It seemed to be made up of nothing but lumps and wrinkles, and it squeaked and groaned every time he moved. He flailed around so much that the noise woke his father, who came to his room and asked, “What *is* it, son? Nightmares?”

“No,” said Doon. “Just can’t sleep.”

“Are you worrying? Frightened of anything?”

Doon wanted to say, Yes, Father. I’m worried because the mayor of our city is taking for himself the things that people need, and I’m afraid because any day our lights could go out forever. I’m worried and afraid a lot of the time, but I’m also excited because I think there *is* a way out, and we might find it—and all those feelings are whirling around in my head, which makes it hard to sleep.

He could have told his father everything. His father would have plunged in with great enthusiasm. He would have helped them decipher the Instructions and expose the mayor’s thievery; he would even have come down into the Pipeworks and helped search for the rock marked with E. But Doon wanted to keep these things to himself for now. Tomorrow, the guards would announce that an alert young boy had uncovered the mayor’s crime, and his father, hearing the announcements along with the rest of Ember, would turn to the person next to him and say, “That’s my son they’re talking about! My *son!*”

So in answer to his father’s question, he simply said, “No, Father, I’m all right.”

“Well, then, see if you can’t lie still,” said his father. “Good night, son,” he added, and closed the door. Doon smoothed out his covers and pulled them up to his chin. He closed his eyes. But still he couldn’t sleep.

So he tried a method that had often worked for him before. He would choose a place he knew well—the school, for instance—and imagine himself walking through it, picturing it as he went in minute detail. Often his thoughts would wander, but he would always bring them back to the imaginary journey, and something about doing this would often make him sleepy. This night he decided to retrace his explorations of the Pipeworks. He held his mind to the task for a long time, picturing, with all the clarity he could muster, everything he had seen in that underground realm—the long stairway, the tunnels, the door, the path along the river, the rocks along the path. He felt sleep drawing closer, a heaviness in his limbs, but just as he was about to give in to it, he saw in his mind’s eye the wrinkled rocks that bordered the river at the west end of the Pipeworks, the rocks whose strange ridges and creases had reminded him of writing. His eyes flew open in the dark, his heart began to hammer, and he gave up on sleeping and lay in a state of terrible impatience for the rest of the night.