

Chapter 1 — Sleuth Pam at Work

Pam reached a decision. If Simon Mac Fluide was indeed a student at Bradbury's and if both Professor Herbert Mac Elroy and Governor Alister were there during that time, surely Professor Herbert could tell her about Simon's years as a student. Perhaps that would help her fill in some gaps in her time line. She sent a Message to Professor Herbert.

“Lindsey, I am meeting with Professor Herbert as soon as I help you get everyone onboard the bus for home. You can take my bags with you. I will Teleport to the ranch later today. Maybe I will even be there before you and the bus arrives. Cover for me please?” Pam asked.

“Sure, what's up anyway?” she asked.

“I want to see if I can get more data on my Simon time line. Professor Herbert was one of his teachers. Thanks for covering for me.” A half hour later, all of the teens bags were stored beneath the double decker bus and the tally sheets verified. No students were missing the bus. Pam watched it roll out of the parking lot, before she stepped back inside the massive gates. A quick flick of her wand and she opened a Magical Door to the Math and Science building. Stepping through the doorway, she arrived outside his office. She knocked.

“Welcome, Miss Betts. What a surprise visit. Shouldn't you be on your bus heading home?” he asked. His white hair was uncombed and he wore everyday clothes. “Ignore the mess, Elaine and I are packing. We are about to head to our retirement home outside of Phoenix.” He moved a box so she could sit on their couch and moved a bag off his sofa and sat down.

Elaine passed through, carrying an armload of clothes. “Oh hi, Miss Betts. Thought you were all off heading home by now.”

“I stayed a bit to visit with Professor Herbert. Thanks for seeing me on such short notice.”

“Well, Herbert, you should offer her something to drink. Soda perhaps?”

“No thanks, professor. I'll try not to take up too much of his time.”

“Okay, then let's chat. You said that you wanted to talk about Dominus or Simon when he was here at Bradbury's?”

“Yes. I have been constructing a time line of his early years, hoping to gain more clues of his many enterprises. Once we capture him, we want to confiscate everything that he owns, sell

it, and use the proceeds to help all those he has injured or harmed,” she explained.

“Admirable, if it can be done. How can I help,” the old man asked.

“Here’s my data thus far,” she handed Herbert her short synopsis. He read it over quickly.
Pam’s Time Line of Simon Mac Fluide (2182)

2138: Born in New Orleans
which makes him really forty-four years old 2182
looks to be at least sixty.
Parents: Ross Mac Fluide (Scottish descent) (Pervert or sadist)
Jacqueline (French)
2144: Sister Michelle born (6 years younger)
2148: Mother got diabetes (amputated arms below elbows,
legs below knees, wore corsets)
Reports of beatings by Ross
2150-2156: Attended Bradbury’s
2156: (Jan) Jacqueline dies (found death certificate)
+ Michelle dies (no record)
2156: (Jan) Ross divides holdings
half to Simon (graduation present from his father??)
half to R. B. Folquet
Ross vanishes, no trace ever found after this
2157: Donates children’s wing at hospital where Ashley was at
in memory of his loving mother and sister
2163 Captured by Rat Pack (14 years in jail)
2177 Escapes jail

“What was he like when he was here, in his early years?” Pam asked.

“Oh, he was a typical Black Hall boy,” Herbert began reminiscing. “Thought he was hot stuff, as they say. Friendly to the more powerful wizard professors, but considered me not worth much, I’m afraid to say. He just had this thing against normal people, but now that I remember it, that didn’t come out until later on, around his fourth year. I know that he really loved his invalid mother and he doted on his little sister. He kept telling me to treat her right when she came here. She was supposed to arrive in 2157, but she never did. I believe he said something about her dying, as I recall. His mother, she died over the Christmas holidays, on the 1st of January, 2156.”

“You know, that must have been traumatic for him. Now that I look back on it, Pam, he seemed a changed man when he came back from the holiday vacation in January. It was as if someone had taken the restraints off of him. He fought with some of the professors. I know that he was forever getting into philosophical arguments with Alister, yelling matches might be a better description. Alister chalked it up to his having just lost his mother and sister, but I think it went far deeper than that. Something happened that Christmas vacation, something that really changed him. Those last few months, he never again spoke of his sister nor his mother. He cut my math classes frequently that spring, I found him in the Library, studying spells. Typical sixth

year, trying to cram every last spell they can into their brains.”

“I know he shocked Alister when he mastered the Restricted Wish spell. I think that Alister still regrets that day when he pointed out to him what he was doing wrong. Alister blames himself for Simon having learned that spell.”

“Of course, you have to realize that, when he enrolled here, he went by the name Dominus Malefic and not Simon Mac Fluide. Everyone here thought that was his name, we had no idea he was really Simon Mac Fluide, the son of one of the most wealthy men on the planet. Of course, that may well be why Ross enrolled him with that fake name, so no one would know that he was the heir to Ross’ fortune. That could well have make a mess of young Simon’s days here. Perhaps had we all known that he was the son of Ross Mac Fluide, things might have turned out very differently.”

Pam mused a minute and then asked, “What about those arguments? What were they about?”

“You know, Pam, I don’t recall the specifics, been too long. However, when he published his Manifesto a while back, those ideas were pretty much what he debated with everyone here, especially during his last term here. During his first few years here, he and I had many discussions about normals versus wizards, but that last term, he avoided me like I carried a plague. That last term, he rarely attended my math class. Come to think of it, he skipped Jamie’s class and Hardwood’s as well, they were normals too. As I said — real change in personality after his mother died. Well, not so much a change, more like all his restraints were lifted.”

“What did she die of? Did he ever say? What about his sister, Michelle?” Pam asked.

“Diabetes, though why someone failed to give her an Insulin shot is beyond me. Alister got a letter from Ross explaining her death. Why on earth the man didn’t cast Cure Disease on her is beyond me! I remember Alister mentioning that the letter also said that his sister had died too. Strange that you cannot find her death certificate, Pam.”

“Strange indeed. And no one matching his sister’s description ever came here that next year?” she asked.

“Nope, pretty sure of that. Michelle is a French name, relatively rare around these parts out west. Of course, she too could have changed her name, but if she did come to Bradbury’s, no one ever knew of it. I suppose that it is possible she came here and graduated under an assumed name, but Alister would have been alerted if her parent was Ross. Dead giveaway. He’s never said anything about something like that, Pam. I’d bet my money on the fact that she did die and somehow her death certificate has been misplaced or lost. That can happen, you know.”

“Okay. So he really started down his Golden Path thing after his mother and sister died?” she wanted to make doubly sure of this fact.

“Yes, that is a fair assessment of it Pam. Prior to that, he was like any normal teen, opinionated, thinks he is right and everyone else is a dummy, that sort of thing, perfectly normal, but always held in check, mind you. No, that last term, he was down right belligerent to everyone on the fact that wizards ought to be the master race. I wonder how much his mother kept his ideas balanced out; she was a normal person, not a witch or she could have cured herself of diabetes. Yet, I don’t see how a mother could have held that much hatred in check. Evidently, she must have, though.”

“Say, where did Dominus and family live when he was here? I mean I was living in Sterling, but now with Lindsey near Arapahoe. Maybe if I knew that, I might be able to find out more information from that city or town,” Pam asked, suddenly inspired.

“Don’t know, but we can find out.” He typed into his laptop and brought up school records. Ah, here it is. The bus always picked him up and left him off at 1032 Rosewood, Denver. Does that help?”

“You bet it does. Now I have something concrete to go on.” After looking at her time line again, she asked, “Weird. Ross disappeared right after his wife died. Do you know anything about that?”

“Not much. When he started acting up that last term, I sent notices to his father about the conduct of Dominus. Sent five, but then all came back address unknown, no forwarding address. I thought that was strange and told Alister about it. He promised to look into it. I never heard anything more about it. Look, there is a red flag on his last return home bus trip.” Herbert showed Pam the notation. “See, Alister was going to refuse to allow the bus to drop him off at that address and Dominus refused to give any new address. He must have Teleported home, because he sure did not take the bus. You see, all those tally sheets that you Monitors fill out when the kids board the bus are stored in our database.” Pam smiled, so those check lists she kept on the passengers were not discarded, but logged into the computer. Interesting, she thought.

Elaine came back into the room again. “You are still chatting about Dominus?” she said with a mischievous grin.

“Yes, Professor Herbert has been giving me lots to go on in my research,” Pam replied.

“Say, did you ever find out about his sister? What was her name supposed to be, oh yes, Michelle. He bragged about her for five years, I remember that. He kept telling me she would be following in his footsteps,” Professor Elaine asked, curiously.

“Nope, only that everyone believes that she also died around the same time as his mother,” Pam replied.

“Dominus never said that Michelle was ill or had diabetes like her mother. Certainly, Dominus never had that illness, not when he was here,” Elaine commented. “I wonder how she died.”

“Well, I am going to see if I can find out,” Pam stated flatly. “Besides, I am really getting curious to find out what happened to his father, Ross, who also disappeared. You don’t suppose that Dominus killed his own mother, father, and sister, do you?” That sudden idea flashed through Pam’s mind.

“Oh heavens no. Ross was a powerful wizard, as rumor has it. Dominus seemed utterly devoted to his mother and sister,” Professor Elaine defended Dominus. “No way could he have killed all three, Pam, but I see why you might have such speculations. Dominus was a different person during his earlier years here.”

“You know, I am beginning to think that, if we know what really happened back there that Christmas holiday, then we might have a big clue on how to catch Simon today,” Pam theorized. “Well, I’ve taken up enough of your time. I best be going. Thank you very much, Professors. Have a good vacation down in Phoenix.”

Both smiled, “We certainly will, Pam. I am a bit surprised that you didn’t ask me about the Elementary Education elective for the fall,” Herbert teased her.

Pam grinned, “That took me by surprise, sir. I do like to help others, so I ought to know all of the best ways to help others. Well, thanks again. I’d best get going.” The three shook hands and Pam headed back to the main gates, once outside, she could Teleport home.

As she opened the gates, there stood Wilma and Monane, waiting for her. “Hi Pam. Sorry, but it is not safe for you to be off by yourself,” her aunt explained.

Pam grinned. “Thanks, glad to see you too. Say, could we make a detour? I’d like to see the old house that Dominus supposedly lived in while he was at school here. It is 1032 Rosewood, Denver.” A minute later, Pam stood beside a now vacant lot full of playground equipment. The home had been demolished years ago and turned into a small park. A minute later, they arrived at the Compton ranch, just as the school bus arrived.

“Hi everyone!” Lindsey cheerily called out, as she stepped off the Bradbury’s bus, along with everyone else. A huge crowd was there to meet them, including Lena, Lloyd, and little Jonathon, who seemed to have grown these past few months. Polly hugged her daughter, Pam, while the Whiterwater clan hugged as well. Amanda and Fern greeted both R. B. and Luci, who had dropped over to the Compton ranch to welcome their returning daughters. Audrey was not

left out either, as both Lena and Lloyd hugged her tightly as well.

“Welcome home all of you!” Lena said, very happy that her daughters were finally home for the summer. “Come on in, bet you are all starving. Polly, Luci, and I have whipped up a hearty lunch. Besides, we are dying to catch up on all the news.”

As they walked inside, having Moved their giant piles of duffle bags inside, Lindsey commented to Lloyd, “What’s with all these men?” Getting off of the bus, she saw three strangers milling around just outside the long front porch.

“Extra States Security men. We’ve been assigned a group of thirty men and women. Ten are always on duty now, watching over the ranch. Seven are on the perimeter. Constant vigilance is the byword this summer. After what happened to you two at Halloween, Governor Alister’s request for extra security has been honored. They will stay quietly in the background, girls. Three more are watching over R. B.’s ranch as well. Come on inside,” he ushered Lindsey inside, bringing up the rear. Lindsey shot a quick glance at the three bored looking men and they smiled and nodded to her.

The quick lunch turned into a marathon afternoon session; everyone wanted to hear all about the attack on the school in April, as well as how their studies went. Monane, Wilma, R. B. and Lloyd were keenly interested in Lindsey’s incredible Dispeller skills, Wilma pumping her endlessly on details. At last, Wilma commented, “Well, Lindsey, your dad, Sam, was one fantastic Dispeller. However, it is my opinion that you have exceeded even his incredible skills as a Dispeller. I would be proud and honored to work with you as your Eliminator. Any time, say the word, and Bill West will go into action once again.”

Lindsey realized that Wilma was treating her as her peer, not as a sixth year magic student! She grinned and replied, “Thanks, I aim to help us all capture Dominus and the lot, but this time, there are a lot of us, not just four.”

Monane interrupted the two, “Wilma, for heaven’s sake, let them all finish their schooling first, before we go after them all. Although I admit Amanda is now as good a Tracker as I am. How’s Deiter coming along with his Eliminator training? You know as well as I that we are going to need more than one Eliminator to round up this bunch.”

“Another year and he will be ready,” Wilma pronounced. “He’s coming along nicely. I know, you are right. Haste makes waste as they say, but I am so impressed with Lindsey’s skills that I can hardly sit still. If she can keep those Disintegrate spells nullified, we stand a terrific chance of capturing them all. Remember how hard Sam had to work on those spells?” The two women began remembering their hours of training so many years ago.

“How can I forget,” Monane replied. “For hours, Sam would have us shooting Disintegrate spells his way so he could work on Dispelling them. I was petrified he’d make a

mistake and I would take his head off by accident.”

Wilma chuckled, “Me too, me too. Those were some times, weren’t they, Monane?” Lindsey’s heart ached; if only she had seen them practicing. She missed her father, her only memories of him were from when she was five there on their tiny ranch.

Around three, the group broke up. Ahana, Orenda, Amanda, and their folks headed home, while the girls proceeded to unpack their many bags. Lindsey and Ashley make hasty work of this, heading off to play with Jonathon, who had entered his terrible two’s and was crawling everywhere. Audrey and Fern disappeared into Audrey’s workroom to figure out where they were on their backlog of wood carvings, leaving Pam alone in her room.

With quiet finally here, Pam sat down and typed up her recollections from what Professor Herbert had told her. More than ever, her curiosity was aroused about this dysfunctional family and what had happened some twenty-six years ago. Somehow all this bore on the current situation with Simon, if only in that he had acquired billions of dollars worth of corporations from his father. Still, the fact that Ross disappeared and the mysterious death of Michelle taunted her — a mystery to be solved. Why would his father just disappear after dividing up his huge financial holdings, giving half to his son and half to this other person, this R. B. Folquet. Who was this Folquet person anyway? Was he also somehow tied into Simon and his attempt to become dictator of the world? Pam had to know and she set to work once more with no more school work to interfere.

First, she decided to see what public records were available online. After an hour, she had an electronic copy of Jacqueline’s death certificate, the birth certificates of the two children, Simon and Michelle, and a bill of sale from 2156 selling the family home in Denver for two hundred fifty thousand dollars. Next, she focused on trying to find out all she could about the corporate split of Mac Fluide Enterprises, back in 2156. She retrieved the electronic document that she had found months ago, the dissolution papers. She studied the documents for the tenth time, hoping to see something she may have overlooked.

She found nothing new, except there was the official witness’s signature, one Herb Fry, Attorney. Pam decided to see if this man was still around, perhaps she could visit with him. After a bit of Googling, she found his law firm in Denver, Fry, Fry, and Associates. She decided to give them a phone call. While she preferred to have gone to visit them personally, Pam knew that she would have to get an adult escort and opted to use the phone instead of imposing on her aunt and the others again today.

Ten minutes later, she dialed the number. Herb Fry had retired years ago, his sons now ran the law firm, but the secretary had given her his number, a retirement home. After some delays, she finally hear the old man’s voice on the phone. “Hello, this is Herb Fry.”

“Hi, I am Pam Betts, a high school senior. I have been doing some historical research on large corporations of the past. A school project, you see. I chose the old Ross Mac Fluide corporation, studying how the break up of that billion dollar corporation was handled. I found your name as the official witness on their dissolution papers, Mr. Fry. I was wondering if you would be willing to chat with me a bit about that time. I won’t ask for any confidential information, sir, just general background information for my school report.”

He chuckled, “My, my that is ancient news. My memory is not so good these days, that was a quarter of a century ago. Yes, I remember it. It’s not every day that an attorney gets to witness the dissolution of a billion dollar corporation. What would you like to know, Miss Betts?”

“How did Ross seem when he signed the papers? I mean, it must have been quite a big deal for him to divide his entire business in half. I bet Simon was very elated about it.”

“Oh yes, Simon was extremely pleased, sort of a smug look, like he had achieved some major success. I guess inheriting billions would tend to do that to one. Now Ross, he seemed reserved. I believe he said this was his son’s graduation present. Some present, don’t you think?” Pam agreed.

“Say, one thing has me puzzled, Mr. Fry. He gave half of the corporations to Simon, but the other half went to this R. B. Folquet, not himself. I don’t understand that part. Who is the Mr. Folquet?”

“Strange that you ask that. That was the funny part of the whole deal. I don’t know. Ross showed up with Mr. Folquet’s witnessed signatures on all the appropriate documents. I asked him about this several times. Ross alluded to the fact that he was retiring. Well, I didn’t think too much of it at the time. After all, if I was a billionaire at forty, I would retire too. Yet, over these many years, that keeps troubling me. If I was in his shoes, I would have given half to my son and half to my daughter. However, I remember hearing something about her having died as well, shortly after his wife died. You know she died of diabetes some months before he divided up his corporations don’t you?” Pam admitted that she did.

“So I would have left the other half to my brothers, sisters, nieces, and nephews. It’s sort of bothered me all these years that he left it to this stranger.” The two chatted a while longer, but Pam got no further useful information from the old man.

A while later, Pam stared at these new notes on her computer. “Why would he leave billions to this Folquet person? Who is this Folquet person and what happened to Ross anyway? Suicide? Murdered by Simon?” Pam looked frustratedly at her computer screen. Just then, someone called out for supper and Pam headed to the dining room, joining the others.

Nadia and Jolina had arrived, joining the large group. “Well, tomorrow, girls, we have to get all your maid of honor dresses picked up and any last minute adjustments made,” Nadia was explaining to the teens. Their weddings were going to be held in two weeks. Pam had forgotten about them, she made a mental note to find them appropriate wedding gifts, Bailey and Barnaby too.

“What with all this heightened security around you three, I have made arrangements for the dressmaker to come here to do the adjustments. I do hope that will work out,” Nadia continued.

Jolina added, “We will have a dress rehearsal on Friday before the big day on Saturday the 15th of June. I tell you we are getting so excited!”

“Are you going to go on a honeymoon?” asked Lindsey, remembering that Tom and Sandy Whitewater did that.

“Five days in Tahiti! Look at the brochures!” Jolina was ecstatic. Tropical beaches, sunny skies, and exotic food headlined the brochures that she passed from eager hands.

“We have to be back to run the Friday night dance,” Nadia added, so it’s just for five wonderful days. It’s hard to imagine that in just a few more days I will be officially Nadia Hampton. I have never been so happy!”

“What do you all think of Jolina Wessel-Hampton?” she asked. “I want to keep my last name in there. You can understand why Nadia doesn’t though. She’s been through that before and wants to forget the past as much as possible.”

“Cool, Jolina!” Lindsey replied. “I like it, has a good ring to it.” Jolina seemed pleased.

Pam exclaimed, “Eureka! What a dummy I have been.” All eyes stared at Pam and her surprising outburst. “Oh, sorry. I have been totally overlooking what the maiden name of Simon’s mother was. Duh. I bet it is important. If you will excuse me, I just have to find out now.” Pam hastily left.

“Sleuths!” teased Lindsey and everyone chuckled. Everyone knew there was no stopping Pam when she was on the trail of something important.

Back in her room, she got her laptop out of hibernate mode and headed for genealogy sites, looking for clues on where to find marriage licences. A while later, she realized that in all likelihood, she would need to know the city which issued the marriage license. “Rats, could be anywhere, even Scotland, he’s from there.” Disgusted, she looked at the other genealogy links and came upon Genealogy-One, a site that claimed to have millions of marital records on file. Only 19.95 to join. Pam transferred the funds and created her user login and password. Finally,

she was able to get into the members only section and began her search.

Three minutes later she was staring at the marriage license from 2135! Ross Bernard Mac Fluide and Jacqueline Blanche Folquet united this 25th of May, 2135 in Marseille, France. Pam let out a loud squeal of joy, she had found yet another major clue! She now knew who R. B. Folquet was, it was Ross himself! He had not died, but adopted his wife's maiden name!

Hearing her squeal, her friends came dashing into her room, wondering what was going on with her. She pointed to the screen and one by one, everyone began to see the connections. Lindsey scratched her head, "Pam, this still doesn't make any real sense. Now we have Ross dividing his corporation in half, giving half to his son, changing his last name and taking control of the other half, and having Ross Mac Fluide disappear from the planet. Why? Why would he do this? It is making even less sense to me."

Pam grinned, "Please, one mystery at a time." The teens chuckled. "Seriously, I don't know yet, but I will continue to work on it."

"How about starting tomorrow, Pam. We are all starting up a family canasta game. Your mom is playing too, so come on, you have to play too," Lindsey ordered. Pam sighed, she had no choice and followed them out, though she did give her laptop a loving, longing look.

The next morning was also shot, as far as Pam was concerned. The dressmaker arrived bright and early with the many dresses. Nadia and Jolina hovered over the proceedings, making sure that everything was just perfect. The dresses, Pam noted, were sky blue satin and they were to wear a matching outer corset, with matching five inch pumps. Each of the girls had filled out some since Christmas, but the dressmaker had allowed for that. Still, it took time to get the dresses properly fitted for Ashley, Lindsey, Audrey, Pam, Amanda, Fern, Orenda, and Kathy.

The wedding was going to be held in the Compton's large living room, security reasons naturally. However, no matter how much the teens pleaded, neither Nadia nor Jolina would tell them who was going to walk them down the aisle, namely the long hallway from the bedroom areas to the living room. Lindsey and Ashley, as their head maids of honor, both knew, but were sworn to secrecy.

Only after lunch and the dishes done could Pam finally slip away into her room. The others had headed over to Amanda's pond for a swim. Pam got her laptop up and running and then began searching. "First, we find out all we can about Folquet Enterprises," she whispered to herself.

After a half hour of browsing, she realized that, unlike the Mac Fluide Enterprises, the Folquet Enterprises seemed to be totally open with corporate information. Their main headquarters was located in Marseille, France. Even their main page had links to every subsidiary company in their giant conglomerate. In the "About the Corporation" link, Pam discovered that

their founder, R. B. Folquet had long ago retired from active leadership. Now a man going by the name of Simone Folquet was running the extended corporation. Furiously, Pam searched the websites for a photograph of this Simone Folquet, but found none. On the other hand, she found pictures of all of the presidents of the various subsidiary companies; Simone's was conspicuously absent. Curious, she thought. Could this be another disguise of Dominus? Could he be secretly running his father's enterprises? If so, she had to know everything about them! The ramifications were gargantuan.

Time flew by, still not a single photograph of this Simone fellow. However, he was not being secret about contacting him. She continually came across links that said, "To contact Mr. Simone Folquet, please contact his attorney, Mrs. Isabella Folquet at the law offices of Folquet et Associés at 4520 Rue Jean de Bernardy."

At last, Pam gave up on that avenue. Instead, she decided to find out the connections between the companies in the Folquet and Mac Fluide enterprises. Just what inner-corporation business transactions were occurring. She started a new database of Folquet companies and began searching for relationships, partnerships, major business transactions, anything that might tie Simon to this new set of corporations.

At dinner, her father, asked her about her research. Fred asked, "Well, do we have even more to fear, Pam? Found lots of French connections?" he teased her.

She grinned, but replied, "No, dad. They are being extraordinarily secretive about any transactions. I haven't found one, not even one minor sale of equipment or commodity. It's like he's buried it deep underground, but I will keep on it, dad. We just have to know."

"Let Mary Hampton lend you a hand. She's now got access to many overseas records," Fred suggested.

A half hour later, Pam brought Mary up to speed on what she had discovered, giving her a copy of her ever growing database of Folquet companies. "Terrific sleuthing, Pam," Mary complimented her. "Let me take this to my office in the morning and see what the US government has on them. Most are French or European companies, I see. Very little here in the US."

"Yes, just that one paper mill in Oregon," Pam replied. "I don't see what use Dominus has for a paper mill, though."

"Sometimes, these are merely figureheads or shell companies for money laundering and other nefarious actions. Let me see what we can find out," Mary suggested.

The next morning, Fern and Orenda came over bright and early, while the teens were still eating their breakfasts. "Honestly, musicians!" Fern declared. "Kicked us out again."

“Huh?” Lindsey replied, surely Eli’s Rockers were not here, at least she hadn’t heard Ahana talking about them coming so soon.

“It’s Amanda, she and Ahana are practicing. Seems Amanda is trying to get into their band!” Fern stated flatly, as if this was a total impossibility.

“Well, you two can lend me a hand in the garden,” Audrey replied. “Weeds are taking over.” She and the two headed outside to tend the huge organic garden. Lindsey and Ashley headed out to deal with the chores as well. Pam sighed and joined them, though she didn’t like milking cows or fetching eggs. She wanted to get on with her research, still, she knew she needed to lend a hand with the daily chores and did so.

Around ten, Pam finally was able to get back to her work. Lindsey and Ashley were going to experiment more on dispersing spells. While Pam wanted to try her hand at that, this research seemed vitally more important at the moment. She eagerly threw herself into Sleuthing mode once more.

When they all got together for supper, Pam had still not found any connection between the two enterprises. However, the day was not lost, she had found ten more pharmaceutical companies that she had not known about, all overseas, all needed to be checked out to see if they were now manufacturing the National Health Care pills. After dinner, Mary dropped over to chat with her.

“Sorry, dear, I was unable to find any connection at all between the two vast enterprises. Could it really be that there are no connections between father and son’s corporations?” Mary asked.

“Normally, I couldn’t believe that they would not work together somehow. Dad and I work together all the time, but then their relationship is suspect, especially if the rumors that the dad beat the son are true. Maybe they don’t want anything to do with each other,” Pam suggested, though she did not believe it.

“Well, Pam, just who is this Simone Folquet anyway? I assume that he is another son of Ross. I thought that you had said Ross had only two children and that the young daughter died around the same time as the mother,” Mary inquired.

“I suppose that he could have gotten remarried and had another son,” Pam suggested the most logical answer. I guess I ought to follow that down a bit too.”

On Friday, the teens began to get ready for the big formal dance at B & B’s Dance Hall. Nadia told them this was the fancy, dress up night, and to wear their finest. Pam emailed Tom about the dance and he replied he’d be there. Hence, Pam spent much of the afternoon adjusting her fancy Inaugural Ball gown. Indeed, with so many women staying on the two ranches, nothing

got done Friday afternoon, except getting themselves ready for the dance.

Audrey's boy friend, Bill Williams, was taking her. Fern asked her new boyfriend, Hank Tomson, to accompany her, while Orenda's new boyfriend, Bill Jones was taking her. Lindsey relaxed, now that all of the teens had regular dates. In fact, she and Ashley made sure that both Fern and Orenda had fancy dresses to wear.

Pam set the stage by saying, "I'm going to try to look my very best for Tom tonight. I hope I don't make a fool of myself in these heels." She was planning to wear her five inch heels from the Inaugural Ball. Of course, Lindsey, Amanda, Ashley, and Audrey had to follow suit and then Lindsey found herself loaning Fern and Orenda similar heels. Even her mother was wearing the fancy dress that Nadia had gotten her. This was going to be one fine night of dancing, Lindsey was certain of that.

She was not disappointed. As she held onto Deiter's arm, they entered the revised dance hall. R. B. had doubled the inside space. Nadia had added satin draperies and Jolina added more subtle lighting so that just walking inside one felt romantic. The teens, unused to the high heels, made sure to hold on tightly to their boyfriends as they walked inside.

"Wow Nadia!" Lindsey exclaimed as the two host couples continued their tradition of personally greeting each person who came to their dances. "This place is even more fabulous than before!"

Nadia beamed, "You bet it is. We've made a lot of changes, giving people more of what they desire. Still, I think we are going to have to expand it even further. You'll see just how packed it is tonight."

Soon the waltzes began and Deiter swept Lindsey onto the dance floor. All around them, couples danced and romanced the evening away. Before long, the DJ announced this was the last dance. The lights dimmed even further and the hundreds of couples pulled even closer to each other. When the music ended, Lindsey found herself in a deep embrace with Deiter, loving every second of it. He whispered in her ear, "You are the greatest woman in the whole wide world." She blushed and gave him another kiss.

They waited while the crowd of some five thousand slowly left the dance hall. Lindsey could not help notice that Pam's face was quite flushed and wondered about her. However, with everyone still packed inside, she decided against chatting with Pam about it. Tom had his arms around her, so that was a good sign, Lindsey thought.

Around one that night, they all arrived back at the Compton ranch. Because of the late hour, Lindsey was forced to say good night to Deiter quickly, so that he could get home before his curfew. After seeing him off, she headed to her bedroom, passing by her mother and father who were being passionate in the dim livingroom. She smiled as she passed them.

When she got to her room, Pam was sitting on Lindsey's bed, her billowing dress folded over her legs. The clicks of Ashley's heels announced that she had finally said good night to Jim and was joining them. Just as soon as Ashley entered, Pam finally burst out, "He asked me to marry him! Tom!" Both Lindsey and Ashley let out a loud squeal, and Audrey poked her head into their room to see what was going on. Pam repeated it.

"Wow! Super Pam! I knew he had a crush on you. What did you say?" Lindsey finally remembered to ask.

"Yes, of course! I can't believe it! Someone pinch me!" Pam bubbled.

"Way to go, Pam! Congratulations!" Ashley added rapidly.

"He's perfect for you," Audrey commented, not as wildly enthused as the others. She took all things in stride.

"Have you told your folks yet?" Lindsey asked.

"Er no. I suppose I ought to," Pam said. "What if they don't think he's right for me? What if they tell me I shouldn't marry him? What if?"

"Don't be silly! Just go tell them or I will!" Ashley took charge and pulled Pam up onto her feet. "Come on, I'm going with you." Not to be left out, Lindsey followed behind them, a trio of heels clicking on their hardwood floors.

"Oh Pam!" Polly exclaimed the instant Pam made her grand announcement. She hugged her daughter tightly. Fred beamed like a proud father and then hugged the two at the same time. "I'm so happy for you!"

"I hope you approve of Tom," Pam said hesitatingly, hoping they would not disapprove.

"Why of course, dear. Tom is a really nice young man," Polly replied.

"None finer," Fred put in, a little unsure just what to say. "I do hope that you two wait until you finish Bradbury's before you get married."

"Of course dad! We haven't set a date yet, but we will wait until next summer. Tom's bringing me a ring tomorrow night, a real engagement ring!"

It was closer to three am before the teens finally relaxed enough that they could go to sleep. The morning came altogether way too soon for the four of them.

Pam got no useful research work done on Saturday. Everyone kept chatting with her about her engagement. Amanda and Fern came by to hear the news. Then, she had to repeat it for Ahana and Orenda. Kathy and Emilio came over to congratulate her, Lindsey had Messaged them. And so it went all day long. At least for the rock dance tonight, they didn't have to dress up. Jeans and tops were the norm.

Pam let out a squeal when the monotone voice announced "Tom Ryker is arriving," shortly after six pm. She raced to the front door. Everyone else remained in the diningroom, giving them some privacy, but Polly and Fred could barely stand the suspense.

A bit later, Pam waltzed into the room, dragging a shy Tom with her. She proudly held up the small diamond engagement ring that Tom had just given her. Polly and Fred got up at once to congratulate Tom. Polly gave him an embarrassing hug, while Fred shook his hand heartily. Then, the teens just had to see Pam's new ring and the incessant chatter began full steam, only dying down when they finally arrived at the dance hall for rock and roll night. The live band was from Denver, Stevie's Boys.

Wilma's comment to Lloyd and Monane, who had to accompany them, providing protection from Dominus and his Death Stalkers, said mountains, "I sure will be glad when we don't have to come to these rock dances any longer. I can't hear myself think." Lloyd laughed heartily, his sentiments exactly.

After the rock dance Sunday night, things still didn't settle down much. Preparations began for the dual weddings to be held in just five more days. Deiter and Emilio were chosen to be Barnaby and Bailey's best men. Although they had other friends, none were near and for security reasons, they chose not to invite outside guests. The teens began decorating the living room, culminating with a large number of flowers, carefully arranged just perfectly by Audrey and Fern.

Lena and Polly worked on the reception food and the wedding cake, while the girls made the livingroom look like a cathedral. With a little creative spell casting, the Compton front room did look totally unique and gothic, come Saturday morning. The wedding was to take place at ten in the morning. At eight, the teens began dressing and helping Nadia and Jolina get ready. The two women still lived in apartment number eight, just off the teen's bedroom hallway. Barnaby and Bailey still resided with their folks, the Hamptons, in number seven, right next door.

Lindsey made last minute adjustments to Nadia's wedding gown, while Ashley did the same to Jolina's. Both wore identical white satin gowns, but both also had a matching outer corset, and six inch white satin pumps to match. Nadia and Jolina had their maids of honor all wearing matching sky blue satin dresses, with similar outer corsets and heels to match.

"See, I told you Lindsey, it is actually easier to walk in six inch heels than five," Nadia explained. Indeed, all of the sky blue heels were six inches tall. The teens were still trying to get

used to walking in them. “Remember, small steps and oh, I am so nervous, Lindsey! How do I look?”

“Like the most beautiful bride I’ve seen,” Lindsey said, adding, “you too, Jolina. You both look like knockouts!” Then, they heard the start of the music and waited for the guys to pass by their door, heading into the livingroom. Nadia heard Barnaby ask, “You sure you have the rings?” Dieter replied that he did.

“See, he’s as nervous as you are,” Lindsey pointed out to Nadia, who grinned.

“Okay. That’s our entrance music. Here we go! Hold onto me, Lindsey,” Nadia exclaimed, as waves of nervousness came over her. Silently, Lindsey cast her Calm spell on Nadia and then on an equally nervous Jolina behind her. In these heels, they had to take small steps, but as they slowly made their way down the hallways and into the livingroom, Lindsey realized Nadia was right. It was easier to walk in these than in the lower ones, a fact she did not understand.

At the entrance to the room, packed with their friends, Lloyd took Nadia’s arm from Lindsey, while Fred took Jolina’s from Ashley. Both men wore blue tuxedos. The two women had had asked their fathers to give the brides away, Lindsey felt honored; Pam, likewise.

The teens went first, taking their places up in front, opposite the groomsmen, though Dieter could not resist blowing her a kiss. Slowly the men brought the two brides to the front, handing them over to the two grooms, and the wedding began. The foursome had written their own wedding vows, which the pastor had agreed to use. Lindsey only partially heard the words, “From this day forward, to have and to hold, to cherish. . .” She was off in a sort of dream land.

Then, it was over, the two proud men were kissing their brides. To a cheerful tune, the four walked back down the aisle, while the groomsmen came over to take the arms of the maids of honor. Everyone then met in the dining room, where the congratulations were given, photographs taken, and lunch served. Next, they opened their many wedding gifts.

Lindsey surprised the two women with a pair of matching magical earrings, which actually could store one magical spell. They only needed to say the command word to have the spells activate. Dieter had gotten them each a ring which stored a magical spell. Hence, the two women would always have some good protections about themselves. Of course, there were many other equally fine presents.

As things wound down, Nadia wanted to make a little speech. “May I have your attention everyone. I wanted to take this time to once more thank Lindsey and Lena and the all rest of you for having given me and Jolina our lives back. Without what you have done for us, we would not be here today with these incredible husbands. We can never thank you enough for what you have done for two sometimes silly, Dutch girls. From the bottom of my heart, thank you Lindsey,

Lena, and all of the rest of you!” Everyone clapped.

Barnaby finally said, “Well folks, please party on for us. It is time that Tahiti beckons us, if you know what I mean. We will be back on Friday in time to open the doors of the dance hall. I hope you will not be too disappointed,”

Bailey finished his sentence, “that the dance hall is closed this weekend. Thanks for everything.” With that, the two men escorted their brides out of the room. After a quick change of clothes, the four Teleported away.

After they left, Deiter called out, “Say, we are all dressed up. What say we have an afternoon formal dance?” Of course, Lindsey needed no further suggestion. They partied until the late evening.