

## ~ Prologue ~

Shadows prowled in the dark and dreary bushlands. A thick veil of mist settled over the trees, which snapped and crackled, the foliage rustling in the gentle caress of the wind.

Suddenly, a mystic disturbance pierced the eerie quiet and stillness of the bushlands. A torrent of swirling black energy erupted from the sky and crashed into the rich red soil that was unique to Australia.

Tongues of darkness spread like wildfire, consuming everything in their path with a ravenous, unquenchable hunger. Every tree within a five-metre radius was uprooted and obliterated into splintered shards which jutted from the billowing cloud of dirt and ash that shrouded the newly formed crater.

Amidst the swirling vortex of darkness at the centre of the crater, five figures appeared. They were tall and beast-like in appearance and while their faces were obscured by shadows, the blood red glow of their reproachful, inhuman eyes shone like lamps. Like the rest of their body their clawed hands and feet were heavily scaled in some places and tinged with grey in others. Leathery bat-like wings sprouted from their scaled backs, furled loosely.

They emerged from the vortex and examined the silent bushlands with vigilant eyes. Two rows of serrated fangs protruded from their jaws, dripping with the blood of a fresh kill. One of the creatures raised its head. Sniffing the air, it picked up a faint scent on the wind. Their prey approached.

“The messenger should be here within a minute,” one creature hissed, watching the sky. “Do not let it escape our grasp.”

Barely a second after the creature had spoken, a small shape swept from a jagged patch of dark clouds, gliding gracefully in the waning light of the moon. It was a white-bellied sea eagle; its keen, dark eyes scoured the bushlands below, the slick white feathers of its chest and slender black wings gleaming in the moonlight. The eagle carried a message so important that it could potentially change the fate of the world.

The creature that had spoken stepped forward and held its clawed hands aloft in the air. A ball of dark energy appeared, crackling and sizzling like lightning and with a lazy flick of its wrist the creature hurled the ball into the air. He watched as it charged towards the eagle, but the eagle had seen it and with a shrill cry dived out of its path.

“After it!” the creature growled, baring its pointed fangs menacingly.

The creatures unfurled their bat-like wings and launched into the air swiftly, gaining on the eagle within a matter of minutes. One of them dived at the eagle and grabbed one of its wings with an iron hold. The eagle flapped and flailed desperately, jabbing at the creature's claws with its sharp beak, its eyes alight with a fierce gleam.

Finally, the eagle broke free, but not before the creature tore the tightly bound scroll from one of its legs. The eagle darted away, the feathers on one wing bent awkwardly, and disappeared beyond a new gathering of clouds.

Triumphant, the creatures returned to the bush, landing before the swirling vortex within the crater.

One creature hastily unravelled the scroll, revealing a faded leaf of parchment and an old newspaper clipping. A big bold heading took up most of the top half of the clipping above a large picture of a beach.

It read:

**The Pambula Times**  
**A Newfound Hope for Pambula Beach**

Written on the parchment in a messy scrawl was a single set of numbers:

**157**

“Clever, but not clever enough,” the creature hissed gleefully, scrunching the note in its clawed hand and dropping it into the dirt. The three numbers together were meaningless, but separate the fifteen from the seven with a foreword slash and you had a date; the Fifteenth of July to be exact.

“You can't hide from us!”

One after the other, the creatures stepped through the vortex and disappeared into the black void.

Miles away the creatures reappeared in a flurry of dark energy amidst another close-knit outcrop of trees. They looked around, their vision strong enough to see in the darkness and the thickening blanket of fog.

None of them spoke. They stalked through the bushlands silently like shadows in the night. Soon the trees fell away behind them and they entered an open terrain of hills..

The largest of the hills contained a cave concealed behind an illusion of sheer rocks and dense thickets of thorn bushes; dark magic guarded this place.

The creatures passed through the illusion and entered into the cave. There was no light, but the creatures did not need light to see. They melded into the shadows, the only trace of their presence the haunting glow of their eyes.

They strode through a seemingly endless maze of tunnels which gradually sloped downwards. Beasts lurked all around them as they travelled deeper into the earth. This place was a sanctuary for all creatures of the dark and dank, but to the newcomers they were nothing but vermin whose revolting stench filled the tunnels.

Soon they entered a gigantic, dimly lit cavern, the only source of light coming from the windows of a castle, its many turrets and towers looming menacingly before them.

Unfurling their leathery black wings, the creatures launched into the air and flew towards the highest tower of the castle, their swift, syncopated wing beats breaking the silence of the cavern around them.

One after the other, the creatures swept through the opened window into the chambers of the fierce and bloodthirsty King of the Drukhan, Agravaine.

He looked up as they landed silently on the smooth stone floor and bowed deeply. Agravaine was tall like all Drukhan, but like the creatures before him, his appearance had become more beastlike. He had chalk white skin and cold cobalt eyes, his irises rimmed with crimson as red as the blood he constantly craved.

"We have news, King Agravaine," one of the creatures hissed as Agravaine stood and approached, his calculating gaze moving from one creature to the next.

"I trust it is good," Agravaine sneered in a deep, cold voice.

"We intercepted a message from the girl's protector to the Elven king. We believe she will be moved to a remote town in the next few days."

Agravaine fixed it with a cold stare. "You are certain this information is accurate?"

The creature nodded in confirmation.

"Then go, send the boy and his pet to find her, but he is not to reveal himself yet. You are only to attack when you are certain this is not a trap or yet another decoy. And when you do strike use any methods necessary to obtain her."

"As the king commands," the creature said with a stiff bow, masking the anger and discontent spurred by Agravaine's orders. Agravaine was beneath them, but a higher power, their true master, bid them obey the king. The creature and his brethren turned to leave, but Agravaine was not finished.

“Should you fail me once more you will not find me so lenient as before.”

They left the chamber the same way they had come, their minds churning with thoughts of vengeance. Agravaine was but a puppet and one to be discarded once his usefulness ran out. A smug gleam ignited in their monstrous eyes; that time would soon come, and they would bask in the satisfaction of watching Agravaine burn.

Agravaine watched the creatures vanish into the gloom. A maniacal grin spread across his pale features, exposing his fanged teeth. Turning to an outcrop of obsidian set on a nearby table of carved pine, he murmured, “Our time has come, my master. Soon she will be within our grasp.”

The obsidian, which pulsed with a dull purple light, visibly brightened.

“Her power has yet to awaken. We must strike while the iron is hot,” a voice spoke, resonating from the obsidian. Upon its glossy surface a single monstrous eye appeared, murky grey and rimmed with red, slitted like the eye of a snake. It was but a small part of an almost infinite form amassed in shadow.

“Victory will be ours!” the voice exclaimed with a high, cruel laugh that filled the entire room with its malevolence.

## A New Beginning

A white Volkswagen van glided down a long, deserted road that sloped down a mountain toward a small country town. Filled with herds of grazing livestock and widespread trees, vast fields of lush green grass encircled the town. Beyond was a perimeter of dense bushlands.

Evanlyn Granger stared out the window of the van, her face reflected in the clear glass surface of the window; bright-blue eyes stared back at her. The layered locks of her light-brown hair framed her face, brushing against the fair skin of her neck. In the distance, she could see the beach, the deep-blue ocean sparkling and shimmering in the sunlight as she watched the waves roll up the beach and withdraw in a tumble of bubbles and foam.

Evy's father, Jeffrey, glanced at her in the rearview mirror with his calculating, greyish-green eyes. Straightaway, he was able to guess her thoughts. "Evy, I know you miss our old house and your friends, but you will make new ones easily, and your cousins will be there. You'll be fine," he said reasonably.

Evy nodded but did not reply. She pressed play on her iPod and turned her music up to block out the loud rumble of the van's engine.

Her family had decided to move to Pambula, a small country town south of Sydney, to live with her grandparents. It had been a sudden development and one Evy had not expected. She had thought that they had settled down for good. She had been wrong.

Evy had always wanted to live on a massive property near a small country town with a beach not far down the road and acres of bushland to explore. She loved the freedom of the bush more than anything. For her, the city was too cramped, too busy.

The move was a positive thing, but Evy was sick of the constant moving. Her family had moved so often in the past few years. She wished they would settle down for good. Evy had begun to feel settled and at home at the last place they had lived. But now she had to start from scratch again, and she was not entirely happy about it. She always had trouble fitting in, and every encounter with a new potential friend was anxiety inducing and awkward. She had often wondered if it was, in part, because for as long as she could remember she had felt as if there was something missing. Perhaps it was simply just the way she was,

Why they moved so much was always a mystery. Countless times she had asked her father about it only to be turned away. Once there had been a series of disappearances and strange killings, mainly just wild animals and livestock. When Jeffrey heard the rumours, preparations

to move began days later. It was like her father was running from something. But from what she did not know. It would, however, explain why her father had always taught her to be vigilant and instructed her and her siblings in self-defense from a very young age.

The car trip stretched on. Evy could feel herself growing restless. She kept fidgeting with her iPod and the hem of her worn T-shirt. She tried sleeping to pass the time, but she was not tired, and sleep would not come.

Evy leaned her head against the window and stared out at the rapid blur of trees that passed in a mottled flurry of green and brown. The van drove over a bump on the road, and her head smacked the window hard. She yelped softly, opening her eyes and raising her hand to rub the tender area where her head had struck the window.

One of her cats, who was curled up, asleep, on her lap, looked up to gaze at her as if to ask, *what did you do that for?*

*If only cats could talk*, Evy thought with a smile, stroking her cat's soft fur behind his ears. She went back to gazing out the window as he purred contentedly, his eyes half closed.

It did not take long for her to recognise Pambula. Her father guided the car down the main street, travelling across the ragged dirt roads, flicking up billows of dirt and stray rocks. He turned on to a street where houses stood in a row on both sides of the road. The old-fashioned houses had faded painted walls and weathered verandas that ran the length of the house. The next street was lined with Pambula's main street shops. Beyond them was the caravan park, where dozens of kangaroos grazed on the lush, green grass and ignored the onlookers.

It started to get windy, and sheets of rain poured from the darkened grey sky, pounding against the van's windows. The Volkswagen cruised around a narrow bend, and the entrance to the property came into view. The wrought iron gates swung open with a loud groan. Vines of orchids coiled around its rusted surface. Down the driveway, a small, green Hyundai was parked in the carport between the mansion and a broad storage shed.

The mansion was two stories high and had more windows than Evy could count. It looked out of place, more like the castles from England than the cultural Australian homestead. But despite its similarity to European castles, the mansion still had an Australian feel to it with a vibrant garden bursting with native flora and trees bearing a variety of fruit. A barn could be seen off to one side of the house. A tiled pathway, lined with flowerbeds and potted plants, trailed around the gardens and into the bushlands.

The mansion had been in Evy's family for centuries. When Evy was younger, Jeffrey had told her stories of how the mansion came to be.

Evy smiled fondly, remembering the night when she had heard the story for the first time. She had been four years old at the time and could recall it effortlessly.

“Long ago, an elvin prince travelled throughout the world,” her father had begun. “He wanted to see the world before he was tied down by his duty. He witnessed many wonders and experienced numerous cultures.

“The night before he was due to return home, he stayed at a grand palace, and there he fell in love with an elvin maiden; Erowen was her name. She was elegant, and her beauty captivated the prince. She was the royal singer at the court of King Robert, the king across the sea, and his queen, Vasillia.

“As their eyes met across the crowded grand hall, they both knew that fate had brought them together. So she accompanied him to his kingdom. But she was not happy; she was homesick.

“The prince could not endure her unhappiness. It was his desire to see her smile again. He sent his messengers to King Robert’s kingdom and requested a likeness of the king’s castle to be transported to his own kingdom.

“Seeing the finished castle, Erowen was overcome with joy. The castle has stood for generations as a symbol of the prince’s love. That is the end of the story,” Jeffrey had said, tucking the blankets around her.

“But there are no princes in Australia,” Evy had replied with a frown.

Jeffrey had smiled then, brushing strands of her silky hair out of her face. “Among his tribe, he was considered a prince.”

“Did elves really exist?” Evy had asked. More than anything, she had wanted to believe magic existed.

“No, but remember, Evy, some stories contain small truths. It may not have been an elvin prince who travelled the world and brought back a castle for his love, but it did happen. This story has been passed down in our family for generations. The mansion did come from another land and was transported across the ocean.”

Evy’s father parked the van beside the green car in the carport and stepped out. He walked around the perimeter of the car and pulled open the passenger door for Evy’s mother, Sarah.

Evy rose from her seat. Her cat jumped to the floor, skittered under the seat, and climbed over the piles of boxes and suitcases. Evy released a long sigh of relief as she stepped from the van and stretched her cramped muscles, easing the tension. The rain had lessened considerably.

The raindrops glistened on the leaves of the trees, and the sweet, fresh smell of rain lingered in the air.

“Welcome to your new home,” her father said cheerfully, leading the way arm in arm with Sarah toward the back door of the mansion, where Evy’s grandparents waited.

“It’s so good to see you,” her grandmother said, hugging them all, one after the other. “She has grown up so much, hasn’t she?” her nana continued, smiling at Evy fondly.

“That she has,” Jeffrey agreed proudly.

“When will Zoe and Will arrive?” her grandad asked Evy, greeting her with a hug.

Zoe and William were Evy’s younger siblings. Due to the lack of space in the van, they had decided to go with their uncle Bill, who had come down for the weekend to help with the move. The van was crammed with boxes and Evy’s animals. Evy had only just managed to squeeze in the back.

“They should be here within half an hour with the rest of the stuff. Bill is bringing them down,” Jeffrey answered.

Her parents and grandparents entered the mansion via the back door. Evy followed and entered the kitchen. Dinner was already cooking on the stainless-steel stove and oven. The delicious aroma of food wafted through the kitchen, making Evy’s mouth water with hunger. Her stomach growled in protest.

Evy passed through the kitchen and stepped into a broad dining room. A golden chandelier hung from the centre of the high ceiling, suspended over a mahogany dining table. Numerous arms of glinting brass extended from the chandelier, each containing hundreds of tiny, glistening, crystal bulbs. A small flame flickered within each bulb, bathing the dining hall in its splendid glow.

“It’s amazing, isn’t it?” Sarah asked, coming to Evy’s side. Jeffrey followed.

“There is something we want to show you,” Jeffrey added, smiling.

Curiously, Evy followed her parents out of the dining room and was led down a long corridor with white, plastered walls. Candles hung aloft along the walls over a row of majestic pedestals adorned with large painted vases of flowers, freshly picked from the gardens outside, Evy assumed.

Sarah and Jeffrey led Evy to the east wing of the mansion, leading her up a spiralled marble stairway onto the second floor. When Evy had previously visited her grandparents in the past she had never been to this section of the mansion. She could feel anticipation building with every step.



Evy's parents led her to a closed door at the end of the hallway on the second landing and stopped before it.

"Go on in," Jeffrey said, openly excited.

Cautiously, Evy opened the door and walked inside. It took a few seconds for her eyes to adjust to the sudden pale beams of sunlight peering through the broad window and sliding door. The door led out onto a balcony overlooking a river and the most breathtaking view of the bushlands beyond. Though it still sprinkled outside, sunlight lanced through gaps in the dreary mass of grey clouds, and her eyes had been accustomed to the glow of the candles in the windowless hall.

In the distance, Evy could see the coastline and the small country town that would become her home. She crossed the room and stepped out onto the balcony, glancing out at the breathtaking view before her.

From the balcony, she could see the front garden and the pearl fountain at its heart. Water spouted from the top of the fountain and curved down in a glistening arch, cascading over each level.

"Do you like it?" Jeffrey asked, joining her on the balcony.

Evy grinned, "I love it!" she replied, hugging him. "Thank you."

Jeffrey smiled. "I thought you might. Zoe and Will have had their eyes set on their rooms since they first saw this mansion so they didn't mind you having this one."

"I thought this section was always off limits?" Evy queried.

"It was, but only because this section was in need of renovations." Jeffrey led her back inside the room, her room.

"Come up here, it's the best part." Jeffrey gestured towards a set of stairs, which Evy hadn't noticed.

Excitedly, anticipation building, she hurried up the stairs and walked underneath an arch of flowered vines into a tall, circular room. It had a high ceiling and walls laden with several built-in shelves, each adorned with a stunning array of flowers and candles.

Evy breathed in the fresh, luscious scent of the flowers, the scented candles reminding her of the vibrant aroma of spring. She ran her fingers across the coarse surface of the sandstone walls, listening to the gentle rhythm of wind chimes, dancing in the breeze slipping through the opened stained-glass windows. Tiny shards of coloured glass had been aligned together to create a perfect replica of a butterfly with jewelled wings. The greenhouse was illuminated with a soft rainbow hue as rays of sunlight peered through the stained glass.

A small built-in pond adorned the centre of the greenhouse, encircled by brilliantly painted flowerpots, each blossoming with lilies of various colours.

To one side there was a large aviary and several smaller, open cages. Each was filled with a group of different birds and there was still space for her budgies. Evy ran over to the birds excitedly. There were two parakeets, a cockatoo and a Crimson Rosella, all chirping softly.

“This must have cost a fortune!” Evy said, turning away from the birds to look at Jeffrey.

Jeffrey smiled, “The parakeets and the rosella belong to your Grandmother. She thought it best if they stayed up here instead of the yard. As for the cockatoo, it is from your Uncle Bill’s work. They couldn’t release it into the wild so he thought you could look after it.”

“What about the fish?” Evy gestured towards the pond, where several gold fish weaved in and out of the plants jutting from the pebbled base of the pond. “This is amazing!”

“They’re from the pond out the front. I’m glad you like it,” Jeffrey smiled. “There is plenty of storage room for food and supplies over there.” Jeffrey pointed to a space under the built-in fish tank that had been left unoccupied. “The ceiling also opens up so natural light can come in. It looks amazing at night.”

Evy smiled, “I can imagine. This is so amazing, I feel incredibly spoilt.”

Jeffrey laughed lightly. “You’re worth it and so are Zoe and Will. You should see their rooms.”

Evy grinned, following Jeffrey back down the staircase.

The actual bedroom was huge and had a loft furnished with matching bookcases along one wall. Evy’s last room had been cramped with a vast collection of books, which she had barely been able to fit, let alone all her other stuff. She was glad she was able to have enough space to set up her library properly.

The walls of the room were a light shade of green and bathed her room in an emerald glow whenever the sun shone directly through the window. Gossamer curtains adorned the window currently bunched together by a thick rope of frayed gold thread.

Evy returned to the balcony as she heard a car pull up onto the driveway, gravel crunching under the tyres. She recognised the light blue car and trailer that her uncle owned and the large hire truck Jeffrey had rented that followed after it, driven by a cousin.

She hurried back inside, “Zoe and Will are here with the rest of the stuff.”

Jeffrey nodded, and together they made their way downstairs.

Zoe and Will were one year apart, but the way they acted around each other they could pass for twins. They had always been close and were always together. Attempting to separate them was hard work.

“Hey guys,” Jeffrey called as he and Evy stepped outside into the drizzling rain, “How was the drive?”

“It was good,” Bill called back, stepping out of the car. He pushed the door closed and put up a plain, wide-rimmed umbrella. Zoe and Will joined him under the umbrella and together all three hurried over to the back door. Fortunately, the rain had lessened to a slight drizzle and was showing signs of stopping completely. Evy hoped it would otherwise unloading the truck and trailer would be quite unpleasant. The boxes would become soggy and wrecked.

“Hi guys,” Evy said, hugging her younger siblings one after the other.

“Hey Evy, how cool are the new renovations!” Zoe said excitedly. “I can’t wait to set up my room!” She swung her silky, blonde hair out of her face, her hazel eyes sparkling as she animatedly described, in detail, how she wanted her room to look.

Will grinned at Evy and rolled his eyes. Zoe talked a lot and once she got started on a topic she liked it was rare for anyone else to get a word in. She and Evy were complete opposites in that regard.

“Come on Zo, give the rest of us a chance to speak,” Will said, laughing. Droplets of rain rested on his thick, dark brown hair, which when he shook his head, showered Zoe with water.

“Watch it!” Zoe protested, ducking through the doorway.

Evy and Will exchanged another amused glance and laughed. Will followed Zoe inside while Evy remained by the door, watching a silver car pull up into the driveway and park beside Jeffrey’s white Volkswagen.

*I wonder who they are?* Evy thought. As far as she knew they were not expecting anyone else.

From the back seat of the car, two boys roughly around Evy’s age stepped out into the drizzling rain. They could have been identical with the same tanned complexion and thick brown hair. However, their eyes were different colours, and one had hair that sat on his head in a ruffled mess, sticking out in different directions whilst the other’s was neatly brushed and cut shorter than his brother’s. The oldest, the one with the ruffled hair, had deep honey-coloured eyes; his brother’s were a bright hazel. Both had an athletic build.

Evy couldn’t look away even though she knew it was rude to stare. There was something familiar about them that she couldn’t shake. Could she have seen them before?

From the driver's side, a tall man appeared. He was taller than the two boys and older but just as handsome. He had glossy, black hair and dark brown eyes that reminded Evy, strangely, of the eyes of a wolf. Evy guessed he was roughly in his early thirties.

Evy's parents walked over to the new arrivals and greeted them like they would old friends. One of the boys, the one with the ruffled hair, gazed over at Evy as if he could sense her watching him, and as their eyes met, Evy felt as if she had seen the boy before, but could not think of where. The boy smiled. Evy flashed a wan smile in return and lowered her gaze, embarrassed that she had been caught staring. She could sense his gaze linger and blushed, feeling heat rise up her cheeks.

"Evy," Jeffrey said, gesturing for her to join them. "There are some people I want you to meet. This is Kadison and his adoptive sons Jared, the eldest, and Drew," he explained once she had joined them, pointing to each as he introduced them. "They have been friends of the family for a long time."

Kadison held out his hand to Evy. "It is a pleasure to meet you again. The last time I saw you, you were only a small child. You probably don't remember," he said as she shook his hand. He had calloused hands, she noticed.

Drew stepped forward and shook Evy's hand. "It's great to finally meet you, we've heard a lot about you from your dad."

Evy's face grew warm, and she knew her cheeks must be red. She glared at Jeffrey who chuckled softly, "A father is allowed to be proud of his daughter, isn't he?"

Evy rolled her eyes and shook Jared's outstretched hand, glancing up at him with a shy smile. She followed Jeffrey, Kadison, Jared and Drew over to the trailer where Bill had the back doors ajar and was waiting to pass boxes down to them.

Evy jumped into the back of the trailer and helped him hand the boxes to everyone waiting outside. Once the trailer was emptied they moved on to the truck.

That night, once the unpacking was done, everyone assembled around the dining room table. The table was laden with several silver platters and glass bowls brimming with mouth-watering roast pork and crackling, roasted potatoes and pumpkin, a steaming medley of vegetables, a fresh Greek salad and a boat of gravy.

Evy stared at the food, and her stomach growled hungrily, begging her to start eating. She hadn't eaten much all day, but Jeffrey insisted everyone wait until Sarah had returned from the cellar with the wine.

The food didn't remain on the table for long. As soon as Sarah returned and Jeffrey had made a brief toast, they all dug in. The food was delicious. Evy helped herself to a second serving, and she wasn't the only one, she noticed; Jared and Drew were both tucking into their third serving.

Evy did not stay long after dinner. She knew her parents wouldn't mind, and she was eager to begin exploring. She went out into the garden and headed towards the edge of the bush, walking down a narrow, overgrown path. By chance she discovered an obsolete timber tree house built onto the thick branches of a gum tree. She climbed the tree and settled onto the ledge of the treehouse, watching the fading rays of light disappear beyond the horizon.

By the time she got back to the mansion everyone except Kadison, Jared and Drew had left. Evy walked into the kitchen and found Jeffrey and Kadison arguing in hushed voices. Jeffrey was glaring at Kadison whose shoulders were tensed. They both stopped and turned to look at the door as Evy entered.

"Well we should be off, but we'll catch up later," Kadison said. "It was good to see you again." He smiled, though it was somewhat strained, and left the room. He was gone before either Evy or Jeffrey could say anything.

"Where did you disappear to?" Jeffrey asked, standing rigidly.

"I was exploring the bush," Evy replied, wondering why Jeffrey seemed so tense.

"I don't want you wandering off at night, and if you do go out during the day let me know. I don't want you out in the bush alone either, someone must be with you at all times," Jeffrey said firmly. "Is that clear?"

Evy nodded and left the kitchen. She loved her father, but sometimes she couldn't understand his actions. It was not like she had gone far; she had still been able to see the mansion from the treehouse. But he had always been unbearably overprotective of her. She knew he cared for her, but sometimes he was so distant from her, and she hated it.

Evy entered her room and flicked on the light to find it filled with stacked boxes. Her bed had been set up and made in the far corner of the room against the wall. At night, she would be able to look out through the window and have a clear view of the starry night sky. Her desk had been left in the centre of her room and the boxes with her books had been placed in the loft along with a couple of green and orange beanbags.

The first thing Evy arranged was her desk so she could plug in her iPod speakers and listen to her music while she unpacked. She moved her desk into the space underneath the loft, shoved

all her clothes untidily into the chest of drawers and pushed it against the backboard of her king single bed. She then began to unpack some of her books and other possessions.

At 11pm, Evy finally crawled into bed but could not sleep. Though she tried not to think about it, she worried about the next day and having to start at a new school. She paced around her bedroom in the darkness, constantly staring out her window at the dark silhouette of the bushlands outside.

After a while, Evy grabbed her pillow and a blanket, and climbed the stairs to the greenhouse. She lit a couple of the scented candles and used the light to locate the switch for the roof. She flicked it on and watched as the two glass panels slid apart with a faint humming sound. The pale moonlight illuminated the room with a warm glow, translucent shafts of silver lancing down into the greenhouse.

Evy curled up under her blanket, the stars twinkling above, and fell asleep to the gentle lull of the wind chimes.