

## CHAPTER ONE

### I Dreamed of May

On a cold winter's night, with January's final day slipping away, I dreamed of May. Therein, along a gentle brook I strolled, amidst daffodils stretching tall, in the warmth and light of day.

In the meadow low, I spotted three figures standing still, conversing. When the speaking paused, the trio set out up the narrow path that leads to Poet's Lodge. Known by few, Poet's Lodge has hosted playwrights and poets for more than two centuries, and advances ever closer to a third.

The trio I did not recognize, yet I feared them not as enemies. Loreto, too, spotted the curious three, as she paced to and fro on her perch, a simple wooden rod hung from the ceiling by thin, woven copper chains. The perch is positioned at window height, giving Loreto an unobstructed view of the meadow and beyond.

Loreto, with her feathers green and head blue, simply appeared one day resting atop the lodge gate. Curious, I cautiously stepped along the stone walk with intent of drawing near. Slowly I advanced, step by step, pausing after each step.

My shadow reached the gate ahead of me, at which point the parrot flapped her wings just enough to lift and alight upon my left shoulder.

As still as well water I stood. Then slowly, pensively, I turned my head, till the bird and I stared at one another, eye to eye.

Shallowly I breathed, not wanting to breathe at all. Not a word I uttered, nothing but a closed-lip hum, barely audible. Stock-still I