



Cricket Lone Wolf Part 18

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Marcia discovers some interesting symbols and investigates the crypt.

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After Stefan and Marcia spent time in the tunnels, she wanted to get back into the chapel. The headmaster arranged for Chantel's memorial service with village priest for just before Palm Sunday on a Thursday night. The small chapel would hold the service with interment in the crypt following it. Marcia was happy with the arrangements, but still felt suspicious of the way Chantel died. She wanted Stefan to join her in opening up Chantel's coffin to examine the body. She pressed him hard to join her, but he felt it was a violation of Chantel's remains to examine them. Marcia spent a lot of time with Stefan as they explored the tunnels with the maps they found. After a week wandering the tunnels, Marcia felt comfortable alone in them, but enjoyed spending time with Stefan. On several of their trips, Stefan pushed Marcia to invite Naomi to accompany them. Naomi was not happy with time spent below ground in confined spaces, from past time spent as a young child locked in a closet. She went on a few trips with Marcia and Stefan, but stayed very close to him as she held his hand tightly. Over time, Naomi grew comfortable wandering the tunnels, but never alone or without carrying a flashlight and a copy of the underground map. Two days before the memorial service for Chantel, Marcia and Stefan entered the chapel to explore the crypt. As they walked through the nave to get to the crypt, Marcia noticed that only one coffin sat on a single bier. Marcia walked to it out of curiosity because if it was Chantel, she wanted to open it. She looked at the polished plaque affixed to the casket that displayed Chantel's name and years she lived. There was another thing etched into the plaque, which resembled a symbol for a sect or society. It was unusual to see, but it also sparked a modicum of curiosity in Marcia. She took a small sheet of paper out of her pocket, placed it over the symbol and rubbed a pencil over it. Stefan watched her, fascinated at what she did and when she tried to open the casket, he quickly intervened to stop her. He put his hands on the lid and held it closed, while he glowered at her. Marcia discovered that the lid contained locks, which held the lid closed preventing her efforts. She surrendered to Stefan's efforts, but did not tell him the lid had locks. She put her paper and pencil back in a small pack she carried with her. She took Stefan's hand and led the way into the underground crypt. As Marcia opened the heavy door that lead down to the crypt, a musty heavy smell flooded the nave and spread to her nose. Stefan quickly pinched his nose, but not before, he had a strong sneezing fit, which echoed loudly through the chapel. Marcia squeaked, but kept the noise to a minimum, as she descended the hand hewn stone stairs. She looked down at the stairs and saw how worn they were from things and people using them over the centuries. She knew that the stairs and the crypt were the only hidden way in and out of the castle. Unlike the tunnels, the crypt was the only closed and sealed entrance to the castle, which made the air stale and foul. At the base of the stairs, Marcia saw tracks where a cart carried the latest caskets to their final resting place. Dust swirled up around her feet, as she walked over to the two holes in the wall now filled and looked at the caskets. Naomi parents' caskets lay side by side with the polished plaques visible to read. Etched in each plaque was the same symbol that was on Chantel's plaque. Marcia's mind was curious and wanted to know the significance of the symbol. Now that she had a copy of the symbol, she would go to the school library and look it up. She liked mysteries and now she had one, which sparked her keen interest. As Marcia and Stefan poked around the crypt, they failed to hear someone enter the chapel. When the chapel door slammed shut, Marcia grabbed

Stefan and pushed him into a small alcove. They waited in the darkness, while the person in the chapel moved about. The door to the crypt opened and the person descended a few steps flashing a light around. Content that he found no one in the chapel, he closed the crypt door and left the chapel. Marcia grabbed Stefan, ran up the stairs and found the door to the crypt locked. Stefan saved the day by pointing out the spare key hanging high on the wall above the stairs, which they used and ran out of the chapel. What they missed as they ran out of the chapel, a person watched from the abandoned classroom. "That was close we could have been trapped in the crypt," Marcia breathlessly said. "You forgot that there is a way out of the crypt through the underground garage into the forest," Stefan pointed out. "Next time we are in the chapel, we will have to explore the other way out through the parking area," Marcia calmly added. Over the next few days, Marcia spent time in the castle's library researching the symbol she copied from the casket. The library did not contain many resources with pictures of symbols, but she would not stop looking. Marcia stumbled upon a book that contained Wiccan symbols, which resembled the one she had. In the book, she found the symbol from the caskets with a description of the use of it. She took her notebook out drew the symbol in it and copied the information from the pages. As she wrote, a smile drifted across her face only replaced quickly by a determined look. She knew what she found, but was unsure if it was the school or just a group of villagers who were practicing wiccans. The symbol she found resembled the 'Eye of Ra' that first originated in ancient Egypt. She found very little written about the symbol or its relationship to Wiccan practices in modern times. Her discovery excited Marcia and she wanted to share it with Stefan, Naomi and Polina. She wanted to know more about the symbol and Wiccan beliefs, but needed to find more resources. She wondered if the village contained a library, but had not seen one on her visits. She thought that Hans would be a good resource on reference material or library availability. Marcia copied notes from all she read and wanted to tell her friends. She discovered that the 'Eye of RA' also known as 'Hathor' was the daughter of Re, the Sun God. She was sent out by Re in the form of an all seeing eye to watch over humankind. When she got too fiercely aroused she became savage and destructive, which caused the origin of the term 'evil eye'. In addition to the 'evil eye', the Ankh derived from Hathor's eye was a symbol of good luck. Marcia saw the Ankh on several places throughout the school, and now understood why it was there. The excitement Marcia felt increased as she thought about sharing it with her friends. The reaction of Hans, if she told him, worried her because he was outside her group of friends. She pondered whether or what she would tell Hans or ask him. There was a lot more she had to investigate before she exposed the Wiccan group. She wanted to be very positive on what she knew before revealing what she discovered. She had not found an altar, which she knew that Wiccans always built for worship. In all the exploring of the chapel, no altar appeared in any form. Stefan and Polina reasoned that the headmaster and other school staff Wiccan members used the chapel to get to the forest. The other curious thing was the 'Eye of Ra' etched on most all the caskets in the crypt. Did the etching signify that the person was a member of that Wiccan sect, or just a protective omen for the afterlife? Marcia was not sure and would need more time to investigate further. As she thought about the problem, she wondered if the wolf knew about an altar in the forest. Maybe she could meet the wolf where the castle back entrance

opened and follow a path beaten down by people walking. One afternoon after classes let out early, Marcia and Naomi walked through the chapel into the crypt and out to the forest. As they emerged from the castle, the wolf stepped out of the forest and met the girls. The grass had a partially hidden path worn through it into the woods, which Marcia saw and followed. The path wove through the woods, but the wolf saw where Marcia headed and ran ahead to lead the way. He led the girls through the trees along the path straight to a stone slab tucked between four pillars and a fifth to make an altar. Marcia felt giddy and grabbed Naomi to do their happy dance, as they did at home in New Jersey. Marcia's mind screamed, "We found it, the Magic Circle, the sacred purified place of the coven. This was the space where all rites, magical work and ceremonies happened. It was the area where there was a reservoir of concentrated power. It acted as the doorway to the world of the gods." Marcia saw references to the four pillars many times in her library searches, but the fifth pillar was new. The four pillars represented the four elements, Earth, Water, Air and Fire, but Marcia never read of a fifth. It was a mystery, which she would have to search deeper for information. The fifth element was Spirit, which bound all the other elements in nature. An interesting thing that shrouded the altar in more mystery was the trees at the four corners. Each corner had a coppice of Birch trees in a circle, which seemed to highlight the slab's appearance. Marcia saw this and made notes about the sight and would investigate it later. Naomi looked at Marcia and said, "Why are you so happy? All we found was a stone slab with four pillars around it and a fifth one in the middle." "Look at the slab. There is the 'Eye of Ra' etched in it. This is where the Wiccans hold their ceremonies and sacrifices. This is the Magic Circle . It provides a sacred and purified space in which they conduct all rites, magical work and ceremonies. It offers a boundary for a reservoir of concentrated power and acts as a doorway to the world of the gods. This is a big discovery for me, for us. It confirms what I thought all along, there is a Wiccan sect in the school. Now I can ask Hans or the headmaster about it." Marcia walked around the altar carefully examining each pillar for identifying marks. Each pillar had a single symbol etched into it that identified the element it represented. Each element was necessary to sustain human life and without one of them, the others could not exist. If the Earth were without Water to wet it, or without Fire to warm it, or without Air to encompass it, it would be a lifeless planet. All these elements worked in harmony, but at times, they appeared in conflict with each other. The elements existed in physical form as well as energy. There was a fifth element, which was the part that ran through all matter. This fifth element known as the 'Element of Spirit' bound all the other elements together, named 'Akasha'. The symbol on the fifth pillar was new to Marcia, which caused her to take and draw it in her notebook with the other symbols. She had more questions than answers, which would confuse most, but Marcia's mind swirled with the pressing desire to gain more knowledge. All this signified another mystery, which Marcia had to solve to feel comfortable. After she walked around the altar drawing the symbols in her notebook, Marcia scribbled notes about the surroundings. The altar was in a large circular clearing void of any vegetation. Footprints in the wet ground showed that at least twenty people came there at any time. There was no evidence of any live sacrifices, which happened there. As Marcia looked about, the wolf stalked outside the clearing guarding the girls. The wolf never entered the clearing, as if some force prevented it. Marcia felt something too, as she

walked the perimeter. The air seemed to shimmer along the edge and kept the altar area protected. The wolf perked up and growled warning Marcia of someone coming near. She grabbed Naomi, left the altar area and walked toward the castle. The wolf followed growling and hidden in the thicket of the forest. As they walked, two figures emerged ahead and approached them. It was Stefan and Polina stumbling through the thicket, which made a lot of noise. The wolf hid, while Marcia went to them and stopped. The four friends talked a little and turned back to the castle. Marcia held Stefan and Polina preventing them from going further into the forest until she discovered more about the altar and its use.