

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a purple dress and gold high-heeled shoes, is floating in the sky. She is holding a white balloon with a red string. The background is a blue sky with white clouds.

# The Fall

A Short Story

FROM BEST SELLING AUTHOR  
**HOLLY KELLY**

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# *The Fall*

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# The Fall

Evie didn't *want* to die, but what she had planned would probably kill her. That knowledge wasn't a deterrent. Her parents were dead, and it was her fault. She'd been the one behind the wheel. She'd been the one who made the error. Her mom and dad paid the cost of her mistake with their lives. Now she had a chance to undo the damage she'd done. She could make things right.

Her sneakers pounded the pavement as the cool California air breezed over her skin. Her heart raced as the ocean spread out before her. "I can do this," she panted, speaking to herself as she crossed the highway.

She barely slowed as she reached the railing that lined the shore. It slammed into her hips and she bent forward sucking air in through her lungs. She slumped attempting to catch her breath before she did what needed to be done. Fingering the scar on her forehead, she looked down the road. She could see a break in the railing. She avoided looking down the ravine. She already knew she was in the right place.

Squealing tires made her heart pound harder. She was half surprised her heart didn't pound right out of her chest and land in a pulsing mess on the cement.

A red BMW flew around the bend in the road and screeched to a stop in front of her. Evie's hand clamped around the watch strapped to her wrist – her finger poised above the red button. It was likely her only escape route.

Her older sister popped out from the driver side and ran towards her – her eyes wild as she searched Evie’s face. The moment her eyes dropped, and locked onto the band on Evie’s wrist, the color drained from her face.

“Evie, please! Just...just don’t move.”

She shook her head, tears spilling from her eyes and trailing down her cheeks. “Kalli, it’s too late. I’ve already made up my mind.”

“No Evie, you don’t understand. The Ora hasn’t been fully tested yet. We don’t even know if it works. It could kill you.”

She continued to shake her head, “I already know that. I don’t care.”

“If our calculations are off, you could end in deep space, you could end up in the early Precambrian period, or you could simply cease to exist. Please, baby sister, just take off the Ora and give it to me.”

Evie swallowed. “But if it works, I can go back and save them.”

“Mom and Dad are gone,” Kalli said.

“No!” Evie shouted, her hand shaking above the device.

“It’s not your fault.”

“That’s easy for you do say. You weren’t the one driving the car. I shouldn’t be here. I intend to change the past, or die trying.”

She took a deep breath, closed her eyes, and before she could think hard enough about it to dissuade herself, she pushed the button. The last thing she heard was her sister screaming her name.

Evie's stomach lurched as a gale force wind blew past her. It felt like she was falling. Opening her eyes, she saw what looked like churning waves coming toward her fast – and then the water slammed into her. It felt more like a freight train. The blinding pain scorched the entire front of her body. The air bubbled from her mouth as she flailed underwater. With no air in her lungs, she had to get to the surface. Looking around, she saw light beaming and kicked out her feet. As soon as she broke the surface she sucked in a lungful of air.

She treaded water as she attempted to concentrated on her breathing and ignore the pain. The entire front of her body had to be bright red. That was the worst belly flop of her life.

Looking around, she gasped. There was no shore line in sight. She turned her head left and right and spun completely around. It should be there. It had to be there. She'd given herself an hour to intercept the person that triggered it all. The woman who didn't see them coming and peddled her bicycle in front of her car. Evie had gone over it a million times in her head – if she'd only turned the car to the right instead of the left. Her parents would still be alive. She may not be able to undo *that* decision, but she could stop the accident from ever happening. If only she could stop the woman on the bike. But not only was she nowhere near the highway, she couldn't even see the shoreline. All she could see was ocean in every direction.

Holy crap! What if her sister was right? The Ora should have taken her exactly three hundred and sixty days and eighteen hours into the past. But what if it not only took her to a different time, but different place? What if she were miles from shore? What if no one could

find her? She'd drown out here. Or be eaten by sharks. At that thought, she searched the surface of the water, looking for dark shadows and dorsal fins. The churning waves obstructed her view. It was hard to see anything that might be lurking under the surface.

"Help!" she shouted. "Please, someone help me!"

She listened for an answering reply, but all she heard was the gentle roar of the sea.

She continued to call for help until her voice was raw and her throat went dry. She closed her mouth and tried to swallow, but there was no moisture. Oh great, now what was she supposed to do? She had nothing to drink, and even worse, her arms were so very tired, as were her legs. She couldn't keep treading water forever, she'd eventually drown. Lying back, she tried to rest in a back float, but the water sloshed over her face. This wasn't like swimming in a pool. There would be no rest. She glanced at the Ora on her wrist. What choice did she have? She'd have to use it again, or die here alone in the ocean.

She kicked her legs vigorously and tried to lift the Ora so she could see what it was set on. It should say April 14<sup>th</sup> of last year – the date she'd set it to. She lifted her arm. The date flashed in her vision and made her heart stop. She closed her eyes just before her face submerged. She had to be seeing it wrong. It couldn't possibly be right. She began to tread water once more and took controlled breaths and tried to calm her heart. She had to look again.

Lifting the Ora, her suspicions were confirmed.

It said, April 14, 1818. About two hundred years ago!

She shook her head, “No, no, no, no. That can’t be right. I didn’t set it for 1818!” The wrong day she could handle, even the month, but the wrong century. No way! That had to be wrong.

She needed to go back. She absolutely had to get back to her own time. And out of this darn ocean!

It was tricky setting the time. She could push the time and date buttons only once, before submerging. And it seemed she had to press them a hundred times to get them to the right date. She didn’t care where she ended up, as long as she was back in her time, and back on land. Her sister can fly her back from anywhere in the world. As a renounced scientist, she had a lot of connections. But if she ended up in the wrong century again, she might have a problem.

Finally! The date was set. If the stupid Ora worked this time, she’d be back to her own time. Well, close to it. She was still determined to save her parents. But this time, she gave herself two weeks before the accident. That would be enough time to fly back from where ever she ended up and time to prepare. Maybe she could convince her past self to stay at home. But then maybe her parents would still take the drive. If she had to, she’d slash the car tires.

“You’d better darn well work this time,” she said just before she pressed the button. She stopped herself when a thought occurred to her. The fall to the water was painful enough. What if she were to land on top of a jagged mountain? It would probably kill her. Or what if she didn’t materialize over the mountain, but inside? Holy crap! She’d be dead for sure.

“Ouch,” she said as her arms spasmed with pain. Water washed over her face repeatedly as she attempted to tread water. But between the weakness and muscle spasms, she just couldn’t do it. This was it. She was about to die either way.

With her heart pounding, Evie pushed the button once more.

Pain shot through her arm as a scream tore from her parched throat. In blinding agony, she hung suspended from her arm. She looked over and gasped at the sight. Her forearm was impaled through a limb. She reached out to catch hold of another bough nearby. The tree was barely more than a thick branch growing out of the side of a cliff. She looked to be hanging about twenty feet down the side of a rocky precipice. Evie felt the spray of water and could hear waves pounding below. She didn't seem to be too high, but she refused to look down.

"Ow, ow, ow..." she chanted as she pulled the weight off her arm, but she couldn't hold it for long and once again dropped the entire weight of her body against the limb. Crying out, she squeezed her eyes closed for a moment. *Please let this be a nightmare. Please let me wake up.* She opened her eyes, but the scene had not changed.

"Help! Someone please help me!" she screamed as she hung in agony. She had to get out of this tree. She could feel branches below her, maybe if she stood on a limb, she could figure out what to do about her arm.

"Ahoy!" a voice called out from above. "Is someone down there?"

"Yes! Please hurry!"

A dark-haired head poked over the side. His eyes flashed open wide. "Cursed be, lass. How did you end up there?"

"Why don't you sit down while I tell you?"

"Are you serious?" He gaped at her.

“No, I’m not serious!” she shrieked. “Get me off this tree!”

“I’m coming. Be patient.” He began to climb down. His black boots kicked dirt down on her as he made his way, grasping rocks, and saplings on his descent. His clothes were definitely not modern. They looked like something out of a historical movie. What year was this?

Thankfully, the Ora was on her good arm. She lifted it and took a look.

1623

Holy crap! Not only was she not back in her own time. She’d gone even further into the past. And if she remembered her history right. She probably wasn’t in America any more – the man climbing down didn’t look like a Native American. Besides, he spoke English to her. Where was she? Probably England. Thank heavens she ended up somewhere where they spoke her language.

“Ow!” she screeched when his foot came down on the branch.

“Sorry, lass,” he said. He wasn’t as old as she’d thought. He looked only slightly older than she was – seventeen or eighteen. And he was handsome – strong jaw, broad shoulders. If she wasn’t in so much pain, she’d probably be tongue tied and in ogle mode. Instead she was doing her best not to vomit. He swung down and landed on the branch below, coming eye level to her. “How...” his voice trailed off in shock as the most curious horrified expression materialized on his face. “How is your arm impaled on this branch? There are leaves on it! And there is no blood. How can you not be bleeding?”

She shook her head. If she told him the truth, he wouldn’t believe her. So instead she pled ignorance. “I don’t know. Can you please get it out so I can get down?”

He nodded. "I think so. It may hurt a bit."

"It's already hurting."

He pulled a long knife from his belt.

She swallowed. "You're going to cut the branch, right?"

"I think it preferable to your cutting arm," he raised an eyebrow.

"Yeah," she breathed.

"Where are you from?" he asked as he began to saw on the branch. "You don't sound English, and you're definitely not Portuguese."

She sucked in a breath at the pain the sawing motion caused. "Why would I be Portuguese?"

He stopped sawing. "Because...you are in...Portugal."

"Oh right," she said, as she began to tremble. Her stomach took a lurch. "I think I'm going to be sick."

"Sick? Well it is a bit cold. And you are drenched."

"No not that kind of sick. I feel like I'm going to throw up."

He narrowed his eyes. "I don't understand."

"Puke?"

He shook his head.

"Vomit."

"Ah! Well do not vomit on me."

She sighed. "I'll try not to."

"So what is your name?"

"Evie."

"I am going to guess your real name is Eve."

"Actually no, it's Evelyn." She sucked in a breath as the knife slipped and jarred her arm.

"Sorry. Once we have it cut, we should be able to pull it from your arm. I do think we should wait to pull it out when you've been seen by my physician."

"*Your* physician?"

"The one on my ship."

"Wait a minute. You don't own the ship, do you?"

"Actually it's my father's."

"Ah, so your father's a captain?"

"No. My father's a king."

Evie sat in silence, staring at the man in front of her. "You're joking." She finally said, scrutinized him more closely. He couldn't be serious, could he? Although his clothes did look expensive.

“About being a prince?” he barked a laugh. “Only a fool would joke about such a thing—a fool who is not very fond of keeping his head. Truly, I am a prince, though not an important one. I have six older brothers so will likely never ascend to the throne.

“And you...” he continued. “Your clothes are strange. Either you were stripped down and jumped to escape an attacker. Or perhaps you are a harlot who angered a customer.”

“Did you just call me a harlot?” Evie’s anger rose.

He raised an eyebrow and smirked. “Well, you are hanging here half naked. Not that I mind. You are well built and easy to look on.”

Suddenly Evie *felt* naked. In California, no one would’ve batted an eye at her tank top and shorts. But in the 1600’s, it would be a lot less clothes than people were used to. Her face burned with embarrassment. She decided it best to lie. “I was robbed, if you must know. Someone took my clothes and pushed me off this cliff.”

“Oh really?” He looked doubtful.

“Sire!” a voice called in the distance.

“Down here!” he shouted back.

A blond head popped over the cliff. “What in blazes are you doing down there?”

“Rescuing a damsel.”

“Oh, bloody buggars. How did she get down there?”

“She was robbed and pushed over the side. Bring us back a rope and a blanket to cover her. Oh and tell the doctor to expect us.”

"Yes, sire."

"So Evelyn, you never told me where you are from."

Evie tried to rack her brains for a believable answer. What other countries spoke English in this day and age? She couldn't think of a single one, and she couldn't remember if England had settlements in America yet. "You wouldn't believe me."

Finally he cut through the branch and Evie fell against his chest. He dropped his knife and wrapped his arm around her. "There now," he said as he helped her to step onto the branch herself and loosened his grip.

The limb hung from her forearm. Thankfully, there wasn't a lot of foliage on it. She nearly lost her footing and he caught her before she could fall.

"I think it best if I hold onto you," he said.

"Uh, yeah. That's probably a good idea." After hours of swimming and then hanging impaled in a tree, she was as weak as a newborn kitten.

"You are not going to vomit on me, are you?" he asked.

She shook her head. "No. I don't feel sick anymore."

"Good." He nodded and then narrowed his eyes. "Now, it is probably going to be a few minutes before Connor comes back with the rope. I have a few things I am curious about."

She looked in his eyes, wishing this gorgeous prince would stop asking questions. Actually, she wished he would kiss her.

*No! Don't even go there Evie!*

"You say I wouldn't believe where you are from," he said. "So how about I venture some guesses and if I am right, you can confirm my answer?"

"Okay," she said reluctantly.

He sighed, and looked at her closely. "First things first, is English your native tongue?"

"Yes."

He sighed. "Your accent is strange. Are your *parents* foreigners?"

"Of what country?"

"Of England of course."

"Oh right. Yes, they are foreigners."

"Thus the accent and unusual words. I'm assuming you were raised outside of England?"

"Yes."

"Is it a country in Europe?"

"No."

"Then you were raised somewhere in Asia."

Evie pressed her lips together and shook her head.

"Africa?"

Again she shook her head.

"Then where *were* you raised?"

"Uh-uh," she said. "You have to guess."

"Was it on an island?"

"No."

His eyes opened wide. "That leaves me with...No. You could not."

"Sire! We have the rope."

He ignored the men above as he gazed in wonder at her. "Were you raised in the Americas?"

She nodded slowly, at his expression. Would he think she was crazy?

"Sire?"

He shook himself out of his apparent stupor and answered. "Yes. Yes, I am ready. Throw it down."

He caught the rope as it came down then expertly ran the rope around her hips, creating a seating harness and tied it off. "Try to keep the branch from bumping against the cliff."

"Uh, yeah, I kinda figured that one out on my own."

He smiled as he shook his head. The rope pulled from above and she lost her footing. As he steadied her, his hand bumped against the Ora. Her heart took a leap as she worried he'd accidentally push the button. Who knew where she'd end up? She probably wouldn't survive the next time jump.

“What’s this?” he asked and then clamped his hand over her arm and pulled her arm forward.

Her heart dropped knowing what he was seeing – a digital date lit up in the watch’s face. Something you definitely wouldn’t see in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Why, oh why didn’t she flip the cover over to close it?

He turned accusing eyes on her.

“We are waiting for your signal, sire,” the man above said.

“Just a moment,” he called back. He pulled a piece of cloth from his pocket and tied it over the Ora. “Don’t let anyone see that. You and I will have a lot to talk about when we get back to my ship, but it will have to wait until we are alone.” The iciness of his voice terrified her. What if he accuses her of being a witch? The way he looked at her told her he just might think she was.

“Um, you’ve already done enough,” she said. “I can find my way.”

He pressed his lips into a tight line. “You have a branch impaled in your arm.”

“I’ll pull it out myself.”

“Can you promise me you’ll survive such an injury?”

She swallowed thinking about infection, gangrene, not to mention the fact she didn’t think she’d have the stomach to pull it out. But all those things would be preferable to burning at the stake. That’s what they did to witches during this time, didn’t they?

“Yes,” she answered. “I’m sure I’ll survive.”

He frowned at her. "You're lying."

"No I'm—"

"Quiet," he snapped. "You will come with me, and you will not say a word to anyone else. I want you to pretend you cannot speak. Understand?"

He fixed his eyes on her, apparently waiting for an answer.

"Yes, I understand." Seriously, she hoped she understood his actions. He seemed to want to protect her. Why else would he hide the Ora?

He looked up and shouted, "She's ready. Pull her up."

An hour later, Evie lay on the bed in the cabin of a ship, trying not to look at her arm. The doctor wasn't able to pull out the branch. It seemed to be fused into her arm. The best they could do was cut it flush to her skin, leaving ringed wood circles the size of dimes on either side of her arm. She had kept quiet, just like she said she would as the doctor rambled on in confusion. In the end, the prince paid the doctor a small bag of gold coins and sent him on his way. Actually, now that she thought about it. That seemed like a lot of money for the job the doctor did. Perhaps, the prince was bribing him to keep quiet.

"Okay, Evelyn of the Americas, I think I deserve some answers. And I want the truth."

The anger in his voice caused something inside her to snap. Tears burned in her eyes and leaked, spilling down her temples. The plan she'd made was so clear. Go back in time and save her parents. Instead here she was, stuck in the sixteen hundreds, alone, afraid, and missing her home. Even without her parents there, she missed her bed, missed the sanctuary that was

her room, missed the high school and all its drama, and most of all, she missed the sister that tried to stop her from making the second worst mistake of her life.

If only Kalli were here. She'd know exactly what to do. Her genius of a brain would be able to figure out how to get her back. If Kalli were here, everything would be fine.

A sob wracked her chest.

"Are you crying?"

"No," she said as she shook her head and wiped the wetness from her cheek.

"I cannot abide tears," he said shifting his weight from one foot, only to switch to the other.

"Well, that's good because I'm not crying."

He looked her over and sighed. "I am sorry. You obviously have had a trying day. Please, I just need to know."

"Know what?"

"Who are you? Where are you from?"

"You'd think I was crazy."

"I find that doubtful," he said as he glanced at her arm. She followed his gaze and cringed at the wooden circle.

"Who are you, really? Have you spoken truthfully?"

"Mostly," she said and sniffed.

“What did you lie about?”

Should she tell him? He obviously knows that something is strange in this situation. And her arm makes the biggest argument for her. Heck, even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, people would freak out over that. Yet he is still willing to help protect her. Taking a deep breath, she took a leap of faith.

“I wasn’t robbed. I wasn’t pushed off the cliff.”

“I already knew that.”

“What? How?”

“You are a terrible liar, Evelyn. So how did you get there?”

“I came from the future.”

“The future.”

She nodded, searching his face to gauge his reaction. He seemed composed, but there was tightness around his eyes.

“Is that why the band on your wrist shows today’s date? It sent you here?”

“Yes.”

“Is it a witch’s talisman?”

She shook her head. “It was made by a scientist – my sister actually.”

“Your sister is not a witch?”

“There’s no such thing as witches.”

He pressed his lips together, doubt filled his eyes. "So what time did you come from?"

"Nearly four hundred years in the future."

Shock spread over his face as his eyes darted back and forth from the Ora to the wood infused in her arm. He sank down to sit on the bed beside her.

"Do you believe me?" she asked.

He nodded his acceptance. "What is it like? Living in your time?"

"It's hard to explain. It's pretty different."

"The clothes you are wearing...is that typical?"

"Yeah, I wear these kinds of clothes when I want to be comfortable. Or when I'm jogging."

"Jogging?"

"Running."

"What do you run from?"

She smiled at his question. "I'm not running from anything, I run to exercise. To keep myself in shape."

"I have no idea what you are talking about."

"Hmm. Well, in the twenty first century, we are less active that you are now. When we go places, we travel in cars – they're like carriages without horses. And then if we want to talk

to our friends, we call them on our cell phone. It's a little box that will let you hear their voice, even when they're far away."

"And if you want to journey to another time," he said, "you travel with that thing on your wrist."

"Actually...I stole this thing on my wrist from my sister. It's the only one of its kind, and it wasn't ready for someone to use it. It actually doesn't work very well. I put in the time, and push this red button, but it never takes me to the right time, and I end up in strange places."

"So you did not mean to come to here?"

She shook her head. "I only wanted to go back one year, and I never meant to leave California."

"You wanted to go back only one year?"

Evie sighed. "To save my parents."

"Ah," he said softly. "They have died."

She jumped when he brushed her hair away from her face.

"I'm sorry," he said and pulled his hand away.

She turned to him as he sat near, his eyes looking into hers. "It's okay."

"I lost someone I love too – my younger sister. She died from smallpox. Do people still die from such things in your time?"

She shook her head. "Not so much. We have really good medicine that cures a lot of illnesses. I'm sorry about your sister." Evie's heart pounded when she looked at his lips.

He touched her chin. "Are all women in your time so beautiful?"

Her gaze shot to his eyes. "Um, I don't know. I...don't know how you can think I look beautiful. My hair has to be a mess, and I'm not even wearing any makeup."

"Makeup?"

"Um it's stuff you put on your face to make you look more beautiful."

He scrunched his eyebrows together.

"Like paint."

Understanding lightened his eyes and he raised an eyebrow. "In this time, good, proper women do not paint their faces."

"Hmm. Well that will make getting ready in the morning easier. So you really think I'm pretty?"

"Yes." The warmth in his voice stirred something inside her. Before she could figure out what it was, he leaned forward, his gaze intense. She raised her hand and her finger tips brushed his cheek. He must have taken her action as an invitation, because her touch was soon followed by the touch of his lips on hers. The kiss filled her with warmth, comfort, and made her tremble as she closed her eyes. He may have been born four hundred years before her, but he sure knew how to kiss. He pulled away too quickly.

“Forgive me,” he breathed. “I should not have been so bold. You barely know me. Besides—” his eyes flew open wide. “You are not married are you?”

“Married?” she squeaked in surprise. “I’m only sixteen.”

“Is that not old enough to be married in your time?”

“No, not usually. My mom told me I couldn’t get married until I was at least twenty-five. But then she was always overprotective.”

“That is a long time to wait—” He took her hand.

The door to the cabin slammed open and soldiers rushed inside. “I’m sorry your majesty,” a man with a shiny, bald head rushed in behind them. “They wouldn’t listen to me.”

“What is the meaning of this?” he dropped her hand and stood, stepping in front of her.

The soldiers gathered in a semicircle surrounding them. They parted as the physician was pushed between them, stumbling at his feet. “I’m sorry sire,” the doctor said. “I only meant to protect you. There is an evil curse on that woman. The evil must be purged.”

*Purged?*

“And how do you intend to purge her of the evil?” the prince said, as he reached back as if to block her from the threat.

“I tried to convince them all we need to do is cut off her arm,” the doctor said. “But they won’t listen.”

“She will be burned at the stake,” one of the soldiers said, speaking with a heavy accent. “Only then can we be certain the evil has been eliminated.”

Evie looked down at the Ora. Should she? She'll die either way. Besides, ending up inside a mountain would probably be a much easier death than burning alive. Okay, one more try. She punched in another date. Please, oh please, let this work. If there's a god above, please let this work. Before she could push the button, the prince was being pushed aside. A monster of a man clamped his hand over her arm and pulled her forward.

"What are you doing?" He looked down at the Ora – the numbers shone brightly. "What evil is this?"

"Remove it," another soldier ordered.

"No!" the doctor shouted. "Don't touch it, lest the evil afflict you also."

"Burn it with the witch!" a voice called from the crowd.

"Yes, burn it with her," said another voice.

"No," the prince shouted. "I order you to release her!"

"You are a prince of England, you have no right to order us."

"It is for the best, your majesty," the doctor said. "I'm afraid you are bewitched. I'd hoped this woman was a simple victim, but just now I saw her casting a spell over her talisman. There can be no doubt; she *is* a witch, and a harbinger of evil. We must burn her, and quickly, before she can cast anymore spells."

"I'm not a witch!" Evie screamed over and over as she dragged her off the ship and down a cobble street. Two soldiers had a hold of her – each holding one arm. She couldn't get to the Ora to save her life. A crowd gathered, trailing behind them and lining the streets. There

was a rumbling of voices and sea of excited faces. Apparently they loved a good public execution here.

Evie's heart was pounding as she came closer to her own, painful death. Ahead, a man was digging a hole in the ground. *Why is he digging a hole? I thought they were going to burn me, not bury me.* He stopped digging and stepped away from the hole. Through the crowd came men carrying a long, wooden post. They hefted it upright and dropped it into the hole and filled the area around the post with dirt. And then the wood was brought in—load after load of branches and logs.

“Please,” Evie begged. “If you let me touch my talisman, I’ll leave and never come back. I promise.”

“What is the promise of a witch worth?” a soldier asked they pulled her forward. “Move,” he ordered. When she stopped at the pile of limbs, he growled, “Climb.” She turned to find the blade of a sword pointed at her. With care, she stepped from branch to branch, trying her best to avoid the sharp, jagged sticks while the soldiers held her arms in their grasp. Finally, she made it. One of the soldiers backed her against the post and tied her arms behind her back. She tried to move her hands. If only she could touch the button. She found out quickly, she’d never be able to do it. Her wrists were strapped tightly together. The situation was hopeless. Tears began to fall when she realized she was about to die. Yeah, she might have been ready to die to save her parents, but this was different. This situation was completely out of her control. Besides, burning to death sounded excruciatingly painful.

One of the soldiers made his way down the pile of branches, but the other lingered. Evie wondered what he was waiting for. When the torches were brought out, she began to beg and plead as she sobbed. "Please, don't do it! I don't want to die."

Then someone was fumbling with the straps at her wrist. She turned to see who it was. It was the soldier who had stayed with her. But this was no soldier. Why didn't she look closer at him before? It was her prince, and he was rescuing her.

"The red button right?" he asked.

"Right."

"Good luck, lass," he said with a hint of a smile.

Once again she was falling. Thank heavens she didn't have far to fall before she slammed – this time into the ground. But there were two problems. First, her hands were still tied. Second, and even more importantly, the post transported with her. When she hit the ground, the log tipped over landing painfully against her back, effectively pinning her to the ground. Wriggling around she finally got the post to roll off her, pinning her arm. She heard a crack and realized the Ora was beneath the post – probably broken. She took in a deep breath while spots swam in her vision.

"That was not a pleasant way to travel," a deep familiar voice spoke nearby.

She tried to look around to see the speaker, but couldn't accomplish the impossible feat. Finally, the man stepped into her vision. She knew who it was even before seeing him, but seeing his face made her so relieved, she cried.

He immediately dropped to his knees and untied the binds at her wrist and rolled the post away from her. "Hey, Shh. It is okay. You are safe now."

"I'm so glad you're here!" she said as she threw her arms around him.

He returned her embrace and said, "Yes well, I am glad you are glad, because there are a thousand places I would rather be. I did not expect I would be traveling with you. Where and when are we?"

Something slammed against her head, and sharp pain radiated over the crown of her head. "Ouch!" she said, rubbing her head. "What in the world was that?"

He looked up. "Our fall must have loosened an apple from that tree."

Sure enough, above them stood an apple tree, loaded with apples.

"At least we have food," she said as she looked around. Her eyes widened. Before them was a lush forest, with fruit trees and bushes loaded with berries. "Wow, this looks like an orchard."

"Not just an orchard...a garden. Evie, what year is this?" his voice took on a whole new layer of tension.

She looked at the Ora. Through the cracked screen, a date flashed briefly and then darkened. Her jaw dropped. "I don't think you want to know."

"I can assure you I do want to know."

Her stomach churned and her body trembled. "It's 4,088..."

"What? Are we in the future, or the past?"

“B.C.”

“It can’t be,” he gasped.

“I know. How could we have traveled back six thousand years? And even worse, I think the Ora is broken.”

He sat in silence. Evie hoped he wasn’t having some kind of mental breakdown – she herself was on the verge of one. The only thing saving her was denial. Her mind couldn’t wrap around the fact they were stuck so far in the past. Finally he spoke. “There’s more to it than that,” he said in a low voice.

She looked up into his eyes – they seemed haunted, yet enlightened. “Evie, I never properly introduced myself.”

She narrowed her eyes, wondering where he could possibly be going with this.

“My name is Adam.”