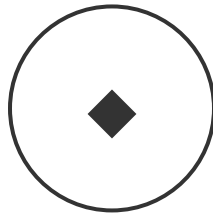


INTERPRETERS OF THE REALM



Gwynneth

BOOK ONE

Chapter One — The New Interpreters

A free sample chapter

BURNEIL

BURNEIL.COM

Gwynneth Aberdare's Journal

Chapter 1 – The New Interpreters

July 22, 2030

The plane dropped like a rock. I hung from my seatbelt and hoped for a miracle to keep us from crashing.

All of a sudden, there was dead silence all around me.

“Goodness Gracious!” I thought, “I’m dead and it didn’t even hurt.”

A tired old voice said, “You’re not dead.”

Could that be God? Old and tired. Poor God.

“I’m Morgan and you’re on my spaceship now. The plane has crashed, killing all aboard.”

Had I spoken out loud? I wondered if I was in heaven, but I was afraid to open my eyes in case I wasn’t. I’d planned to be a star someday and do important work to make the world a kinder place. I’m an actress and a good one, but maybe I was dead

already. I could still feel the handles of my new makeup bag clutched in my fists. That was a good sign. Then I heard her and I knew I wasn't in heaven.

“Put us back on that plane this instant!”

It was Patrice. Yelling her head off. I opened my eyes and she was standing like a drill sergeant yelling at an old man in a silver robe with a black rope belt. We were in an all-white room with chrome trim. Someone could use an interior decorator!

Patrice and I had talked in the airport in Denver. We're both thirteen, but she said she was a pilot and could fly “anything with or without wings”. I didn't believe her.

The tired old man in silver said, “Please sit down and stop yelling.” He repeated it about a million times in the next five minutes because she just kept it up.

Finally, I said, “Patrice, knock it off. If he's powerful enough to pull us from a crashing plane, he could, and probably will, shut you up when he gets as tired of hearing you yell as I am.”

I turned to Morgan, the old man. “Do you want me to shut her up? I'll do it if you want me to.” I smacked my fisted right hand into the palm of my left and mocked being a mean fighter. I heard someone snicker, and someone else gave a derisive snort.

“That won't be necessary, I think. I could ‘shut her up,’ as you say, if I liked. I thought to let her exhaust herself so she would be able to listen to what I have to say.”

I looked at Patrice who was sitting on the bench with a fake “I'm just biding my time before I murder him” half-smirk on her lips and narrowed beady eyes that made her look more insane than dangerous. I smiled when I looked back at the old man.

“You’re quite right. She’s not yelling anymore. Thank you,” he said.

I gave him a quick curtsy and sat down.

Andico, the gymnast with the brain tumor, was sitting in front of me on a white bench in the white room that Morgan called his spaceship. Andico felt okay in the airport until he did a back flip over an old lady. Then his headache came back. It looked like it was worse now.

Sitting farther down the bench was Hudson, a geeky guy with an iPad and a chronic cowlick. He was staring at Patrice.

“Don’t look at her,” I whispered. “It will encourage her to talk even more.”

“Quite right,” said Morgan.

Was I whispering that loudly?

“Not at all,” he said, and it sounded like I had headphones on or something. His voice seemed to come from the middle of my head, not from my ears.

“Goodness gracious! He can hear what we’re thinking,” I said to Hudson. Morgan agreed with me.

“Pardon me?” I said as I walked right up to Morgan and looked into his face. All lines and wrinkles. He should use Oil of Olay or whatever takes away wrinkles for men.

“I said that you are quite right. I can hear what you are thinking.”

I stared up at his old face. What a tiny little mouth he had. It didn’t move when he talked and he didn’t have any ears at all.

“You look bizarre,” I thought, and I didn’t mean it as an insult. It just slipped out.

He had no ears and a mouth that was way too tiny. Some well-applied lip liner in a neutral shade would make his mouth look normal-sized. My aunt Celia in Hollywood is a makeup wizard!

“I look like the Fomalairé, my father’s people. My dear mother was a vocal like you, who could speak to the telepathic Fomalairé. She was the first interpreter for the royal family. You will be the Fomalairé’s next interpreters.”

“What are the Fomalairé?” I asked. He pronounced it like ‘foe-ma-LEHR’ so I did too.

“They are the people of the planet Fomalautis. We’re headed there now.”

It didn’t feel like we were moving, and the little white room didn’t seem much like a spaceship, but I had to believe him. The only other option was petrifying! Moments ago, we were in a crashing plane. He’d plucked us out of that plane and brought us here. If we weren’t on his spaceship, then we were probably dead. I preferred to think of us as traveling through space.

He’d mentioned the Fomalairé royal family. My father’s the head gardener at a castle in Wales, so I’ve met lots of royals and foreign dignitaries, but I’ve never lived with them or been able to spend more than a few minutes at a time with them. Being the Interpreter for the royal family sounds like an important job, and I’m ready for it. I let out a sigh of relief. I was okay.

“The Fomalairé find conflict of any kind painful. Until my father’s time, whenever a conflict occurred between other peoples in space, the Fomalairé would

terminate them.”

Patrice butted in. “You mean they destroyed their armies?”

“No. They destroyed all of them.”

Hudson, Patrice, and I gaped at one another, our mouths hanging open.

“You needn’t look so shocked. Your people have destroyed many species. People aren’t considered barbaric when the species destroyed is far below them in evolution as vocals are to the Fomalairé. Consider it.”

I thought about dodo birds, carrier pigeons, and dinosaurs. I didn’t feel bad about those. Am I awful?

“What do you mean by vocals?” I asked, glancing over at a viewing screen where it looked like planets and stars were whizzing past us.

“Vocals are creatures like you,” he said, pointing at us. “They speak to each other using mouths and ears instead of thoughts.” His tone was haughty and he was looking down his long, thin nose at us. “Andico seems to have been damaged in the plane accident and can no longer transmit to us, so he is useless to the Fomalairé. You three can and will be interpreters for the Fomalairé’s three new ambassadors.”

In Wales, ambassadors travel and are treated like royalty. I hoped that as an interpreter for an ambassador, I’d be treated the same way. “What do interpreters do?”

He answered, his voice dripping with disdain. “They listen to our thoughts and speak them out loud to vocals. Then, they transmit the vocal’s words to us by thinking about them. Quite simple for those equipped to be interpreters.” He cast a look of

disdain Andico's way.

He'd said that Andico could no longer transmit. I asked, "Can everyone on Earth be an interpreter?"

"No," he scoffed. "It is a special gift we have bred into you. Most of your people cannot communicate with us."

Bred into us? I wondered what he meant by that. I know dogs are bred for special traits like herding or drug sniffing. Did he mean breeding like that?

"Does everyone speak English on Fomalautis?"

"The Fomalaire have no language as you know it. Languages and speech are primitive. The Fomalaire speak to each other and to you using only their thoughts, not words. My mother, our original interpreter, also spoke your language, so it is the language of diplomacy whenever the Fomalaire deal with people from other planets.

I wondered if his mother was from Earth, but only for an instant. If she was still alive, they wouldn't need new interpreters.

"Why are there new ambassadors?" I asked, wondering what happened to the original ambassador and pulling him back to the exciting part about royalty and ambassadors.

"My father began negotiating peace between warring vocal populations instead of terminating them as had been the custom. It was a new way of dealing with the discomfort that their conflicts brought to the Fomalaire. He and I are very old now and will soon die. Three new ambassadors will take my father's place to negotiate peace."

Hudson's cowlick waved in the air when he talked. "Is there a conflict right now, or will we be in training until one comes up?"

Morgan shuffled to a bench and sat down. "There is a conflict between the Grutacians, a warrior people whose leader died a few days ago, and the Denatans, who run a salvage operation in this part of space. The Denatans have begun salvage operations on the dead Grutacian leader's ship and, of course, the Grutacians are angry about it."

Patrice stood up and put her hands on her hips. "How did the Denatans get the dead man's ship?" she demanded. What's with her always demanding instead of just asking?

"The Grutacians send their fallen leaders on a Final Journey – a glorious final adventure on a small spacecraft that is both tomb and battleship. The Denatans have intercepted this ship on its journey and are looting it. They use the word salvage instead of loot."

Before I could ask Morgan how a dead man could enjoy a glorious final adventure, Patrice asked, "Will there be a war?"

Morgan stood slowly and turned his faded blue eyes on Patrice. "There will be no war. We will destroy both civilizations if your ambassadors are unable to negotiate peace in 48 hours. My father and the other Fomalaire have agreed that 48 hours is enough time to settle any conflict."

Hudson leaned in eagerly as he asked, "Tell us more about the Grutacians and

Denatans.”

“Look at these pictures.” Morgan pointed to a blank wall. A second later, a picture appeared. It was a ferocious-looking, hugely tall Black man in some kind of metal-looking chest plate with muscle-y bare arms. A small, dark-haired Black woman who needed to do something with her bushy eyebrows and perpetual scowl stood beside him. “The Grutacian leader Krutibas and his younger sister Katrina,” he announced. “They are wearing their ceremonial mourning uniforms.” Next to them in the picture was the best-looking man I’d ever seen. Gorgeous dark hair, perfect Roman nose, deep violet eyes, and such eyelashes! Morgan continued, “The Fomalairé man standing with them is Dandekar, one of the new Fomalairé ambassadors.”

Wow! What a gorgeous hunk!

“Gwynneth, you will be Dandekar’s interpreter.”

I was in heaven!

I loved his black robe with the purple and lavender trim. I wondered if I had anything in my suitcase to match and then realized that my suitcase and all of my clothes were probably scattered all over Oklahoma with bits of the plane by now. I had some eyeliner to match, however, in the makeup bag my aunt gave me. As I turned back to the bench to get it, this little floating metal robot-looking contraption with a pincher-arm sticking out of it grabbed my makeup bag and scuttled right through one of the walls. I ran after him and smacked into the wall. Ouch!

“That thing stole my makeup bag!” Now I was yelling at the tired old man.

He sighed. “If you really need it, you can get another from the service unit in a few minutes.”

A moment later, that nasty floating metal contraption was back. This time, it pointed its arm at Andico.

“Not yet,” Morgan said, and the little critter raced back through the wall.

“What is that?” Patrice bellowed with her baby blue eyes bulging.

“A cleanup unit. It collects trash and useless articles to be discarded.”

“Then why did it come for Andico?” Hudson asked, indicating Andico with his Apple pencil.

“Andico can no longer transmit, so he is useless as an interpreter,” Morgan murmured.

“How could it have taken Andico anyway? It’s so small.”

I shouldn’t have asked.

Morgan said, “I hate to be indelicate, but when a cleanup unit encounters something too large to handle in one trip, it chops the item into smaller pieces and carries the pieces away one at a time.”

We all looked queasy and hoped Andico couldn’t hear Morgan. His look of fear said he could.

Morgan motioned to the wall again, and a picture of a good-looking blond man in pale blue appeared. He was standing between two creatures that looked like they were half chicken, half man. The blond man looked like he smelled something fowl – I mean

foul.

“You’re right again, Gwynneth. The Denatans do smell bad, and Cassel, the ambassador to the Denatans, is not pleased with his post. Patrice, you will be Cassel’s interpreter.”

Thank heavens it’s her, not me. I can’t imagine telling people I was a Fomalairé Interpreter (which sounds impressive) and then showing them pictures of an ambassador holding his nose standing next to the half-chickens he works with. I could almost feel sorry for Patrice if she weren’t so bossy.

Morgan went on talking. “When my father retires, my cousin Mergl will take his place as lead ambassador. Mergl is the crown prince, so it is appropriate that he should lead the team of ambassadors. You will be his interpreter.” He nodded to Hudson.

I wanted to be the interpreter for the lead ambassador since I’ve worked with royals before. I bet Hudson had never even met a duke.

The picture on the wall changed to one of a very tall, slightly overweight, soft-looking man of 25 standing between a very good-looking man and woman of the same age and normal height. “Mergl and his parents,” Morgan announced.

I chuckled at the marshmallowy soft big guy. My ambassador, Dandekar, was much better looking.

Morgan turned his earless head toward me, “That is irrelevant. Mergl is the lead ambassador.”

“Then why did you assign Hudson to him? I have experience with diplomats and

dignitaries from all over the world. I know more about politics and ambassadors than Hudson does.” I wasn’t bragging. I help out at the castle where my dad works. I love to spend time with the important people who visit. Mergl should be mine.

“Mergl will need great encouragement from Hudson to pursue this mission.”

Morgan turned to Hudson. “He will need extraordinary support and guidance in diplomacy and will rely heavily on you.” Hudson looked a little green around the gills.

Morgan turned to go. “You have your assignments. Change into your interpreter’s robes in the service unit and await my instructions.” With that, he walked right through the wall.

Patrice lunged at him and bumped her nose when she slammed into the solid wall. “How did he do that?” she asked, and I had to smirk. She sat down and was quiet for a while. Finally!

Hudson got up and went over to where Morgan had stepped through the wall. He stood there until a door opened and swallowed him up.