



ALLISON PANG

MAGPIE'S FLIGHT

THE IRONHEART CHRONICLES



MAGPIE'S FLIGHT

Allison Pang

IRONHEART CHRONICLES III - MAGPIE'S FLIGHT

Copyright © 2022 Allison Pang. All rights reserved.

Published by Outland Entertainment LLC

3119 Gillham Road

Kansas City, MO 64109

Founder/Creative Director: Jeremy D. Mohler

Editor-in-Chief: Alana Joli Abbott

Paperback ISBN: 978-1-954255-45-6

Ebook ISBN: 978-1-954255-46-3

Worldwide Rights

Created in the United States of America

Editor: Danielle Poiesz and Double Vision Editorial

Cover Illustration: germancreative

Cover Design: germancreative

Interior Layout: Mikael Brodu

The characters and events portrayed in this book are fictitious or fictitious recreations of actual historical persons. Any similarity to real persons, living or dead, is coincidental and not intended by the authors unless otherwise specified. This book or any portion thereof may not be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever without the express written permission of the publisher except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

Printed and bound in the United States of America.

Visit outlandentertainment.com to see more, or follow us on our Facebook Page facebook.com/outlandentertainment/

— A WORD FROM THE CRITICS —

“Pang delivers a fascinating storyline, strong character development, and plenty of plot twists which will draw readers into the first book of the IronHeart Chronicles and leave them eagerly anticipating the next tale in the series. Maggy is a plucky and loyal character that will fascinate readers but what makes this novel so enthralling is the relatable and carefully drawn characters coupled with vivid imagery throughout every scene.”

—4 Stars – *RT Book Reviews*

“Allison Pang’s *Magpie’s Song* is exactly the sort of thing I love to read most. Beautiful prose, interesting characters that I want to know better, a carefully crafted world of that is both mysterious and almost inevitable. It’s rare that a book surprises me on so many levels. Powerful stuff with enough surprises to make me smile and enough twists to keep me on my toes. I can’t recommend it enough!”

—James A. Moore,
author of the *Seven Forges* series and the *Tides of War* trilogy

“Vivid, thrilling, clever, and imaginative, *Magpie’s Song* is a genre-bending gem built around a kickass heroine and a compelling, beautifully-wrought SF/fantasy world you’ll want to explore further. Allison Pang’s talent is on every page. Fans of Pierce Brown and Wesley Chu will love *Magpie’s Song*.”

—Christopher Golden,
New York Times bestselling author of *Ararat*

“Pang has crafted a beautiful world with a ticking mechanical heart and a story that flies with fast-paced action. Utterly enchanting!”

—Laura Bickle, critically acclaimed author of *Nine of Stars*

“Maggy is an unlikely heroine, but Pang makes it easy to root for the foulmouthed scavenger.... [U]nique worldbuilding and impressive character work.... Readers will be eager to know what comes next.”

—*Publishers Weekly*

“The world-building is a true delight, having a feel of Sanderson’s old *Mistborn*, a touch of hardcore steampunk, but most of all: pure and distilled fantasy dystopia.”

—Bradley, *Goodreads*

“Finally, a book that has left me speechless.”

—Melissa Souza, *Goodreads*

“From the very first pages I fell in love with this story.”

—A Book Shrew, *Goodreads*

“Every once in a great while I come across a story that knocks my socks off. This is one of them... This world that Allison has created is stunning. The characters are people that I want to know and go “rooftop dancing” with. Clockwork hearts, a mechanical Dragon that can sit on my shoulder, and eat pieces of coal? Yes, please. The entropic city below, and the floating, shiny city above? Yes, yes, yes. Even this plague? Again, yes! I can’t wait to visit this world again. Highly recommended!”

—Lisa Noell, *Goodreads*

“Love, love, loved this book. Can’t wait to get my hands on book 2.”

—Seleste deLaney, *Amazon review*

— ALSO BY ALLISON PANG —

Graphic Novels

Fox & Willow: Came a Harper

Fox & Willow: To the Sea

The Abby Sinclair Series

A Brush of Darkness (Book One)

A Sliver of Shadow (Book Two)

A Trace of Moonlight (Book Three)

A Symphony of Starlight (Book Four)

A Duet with Darkness (a prequel short story
in the *Carniepunk* anthology)

The IronHeart Chronicles

Magpie's Song (Book One)

Magpie's Fall (Book Two)

Standalones

"Respawn, Reboot" (a short story in the
Out of Tune, Book 2 anthology)

"The Wind in Her Hair" (a comic in the
Womanthology: Space anthology)

"A Dream Most Ancient and Alone" (a short story in the
Tales From The Lake Vol 5: The Horror Anthology)

"A Certain TeaHouse" (a comic in the *Gothic Tales
of Haunted Futures* anthology)

*To Magpie, Ghost, and Sparrow.
You know who you are.*

*A ragged singing is my cry
Broken wings on which to fly...*

*A roving gambler is my trade.
Winning wagers, bets are made.
With Death, the biggest cheat is fated,
Alas to find His dice were weighted.*

— CHAPTER ONE —

Mags, Mags, dressed in rags..." *The voice is eerie and familiar, but I can't tell who it is. It's like a whispering shadow of everyone I've known or lost in the tunnels of the Pits. Penny. Conal. Anna. Georges. Even Buceph, his wheedling sinister cadence tumbling through my mind. I dodge through the caves, my feet scraping over rock, ignoring the cuts and bruises.*

The sound grows louder, becoming less like words and more like heavy, sad moans. I am nothing but air moving through the lungs of the earth, dark and damp and without meaning. My hand slides over a wall, sticky.

On instinct, I pull it away and wipe it on my shirt. The smell hits me then, the sickly-sweet scent of blood. Rotter blood, decaying and stagnant. I turn away, not wanting to go forward, but the walls shake, rocks crumbling as the ceiling begins to collapse. I writhe, the air growing hot and thick and hard to breathe, the tunnels filling with blood and filth.

Penny's head goes rolling by, her broken teeth bared in the rictus of a grin. "Don't be a suck-tit, Maggy." She laughs cheerfully. "Give us a kiss, aye?"



I jerk awake, trembling in a pool of sweat, my hands scrabbling in the bedsheets as though I might somehow bury myself in the mattress. But my stomach spasms, and I roll from the bed into the private bathroom to vomit noisily into the toilet.

“Are you all right, Mags?” Ghost murmurs the question from the threshold but doesn’t come in.

“I will be.” I wash the sour bile from my mouth in the sink. I’m sucking in great gulps of air, my lungs burning. The bathroom is Meridian-made, of course, but I’ve paid scant attention to the details. I suppose the suite itself is simple enough by Meridian standards, but marble sinks and stone tiles are a luxury I’ve never had.

I haven’t bothered to turn on the light, but then, light isn’t exactly necessary for me. I catch a glimpse of myself in the mirror, my hair and eyes glowing with a soft luminance in the dark, a play of shadows scattering over my face as I move. I don’t linger. My face is too gaunt, my cheekbones stark, my collarbone jutting from beneath my shirt. All evidence of lack of food, lack of light, lack of air.

Lack of humanity.

Penny’s chuckle echoes in my ears, and I push it away, swallowing down another queasy shudder. Shivering, I emerge from the bathroom, pausing to wave off Ghost’s questioning look. He hands me a glass of water, and I sip it gratefully.

“I had a nightmare,” I say, not fighting it when he drapes a blanket around my shoulders.

He nods in understanding. After all, we both spent time below-ground in the Pits beneath BrightStone—me as a victim of the Tithe and him in a haphazard attempt to rescue me. But now we are here on Meridion, whisked away to a hotel inside one of the silver towers that dotted the landscape the moment the airship docked. I’ve been here for nearly a day, ensconced within our room

while my skin itches with the need to finally see the city I've given up so much for.

In hindsight, the delay gave us a chance to bathe, eat, and rest a moment before making our next move, whatever that is, though I'm not sure if I am completely ready for such a thing. The day before was a blur, running through the streets of BrightStone, avoiding Rotters, trying to save Lucian from being hanged on the gallows by the Inquestors...

My bones weigh heavy with exhaustion, but that doesn't quite quell the vibration of excitement that rattles down my spine. I glance toward the window with its heavily drawn blinds. Not even the barest crack of light emerges through the thick cloth. "What time is it?"

"Almost dawn. We'll be meeting Lady Fionula for breakfast in a few hours so there's still time to rest." He sits on the bed opposite mine, his own face bleary with weariness, but his smile is kind when he looks at me, his lips curling gently.

We'd shared the room, of course. His brother, Lucian, is in the suite next door, but I'm glad enough for Ghost's company. Nightmares are hard enough when you're sleeping alone, and they certainly don't seem as though they'll be stopping any time soon. That we hadn't shared the bed was more a circumstance of being exhausted and tumbling onto the nearest mattress as opposed to any issue against the matter.

I pick up the glasses with the dark lenses I need to wear to face the day, a souvenir of my time belowground, and slide them onto my face before carefully peering around the curtains. The sun hasn't risen quite yet so the glare isn't terrible, though the lights of Meridion glitter all about us like strands of falling stars.

It was overwhelming the night before, and it's just as bad today, but I ignore the sharpness of it to stare down at the city. My clockwork heart quivers in anticipation, whirring in response to my reaction.

"It's beautiful," I mumble, trying to take it all in. The great glass buildings, the flashing lights, clusters of airships and wind balloons streaming past us in some metaphysical dance that I don't understand. From up here in the tower, I feel like a bird nesting in a great tree. But it's new and different, and despite all my longing to be in this place, unease trots over me, leaving tingling footsteps upon my skin.

Ghost makes a soft sound of agreement behind me, and I turn. He's facing away from me, stretching his arms as he puts on a shirt. "You'll get used to it. It's going to take Lucian and me some time, as well. After all, we haven't been back here in, what? Fifteen? Sixteen years?"

"You seem so calm about it," I point out.

He lets out a low chuckle, capturing my hand and pressing it to his chest. "I'm not, as you can tell. I'm just better at hiding it."

And indeed, his heart is galloping beneath my palm. Still, barely an ounce of emotion is reflected upon his face, that stoic expression barely changing. His high cheekbones are sharp, the dark eyes soulful and serious while he watches me.

While he had always been long limbed and wiry, the time underground didn't do him any favors, either. His expression is far less hollow than mine, though his hair is just as white. Moon Child hair, the telltale sign of mixed blood and limited social status.

A knock on the door interrupts anything I was going to say, and Lucian pokes his head into our shared suite. "Ah, you're awake. Good."

Brothers or not, his skin is far lighter than Ghost's, with a hint of red in his shoulder-length golden hair. He eyes me critically when he crosses the threshold, his doctor's gaze measuring me as it always does. He says nothing, but I already know he disapproves of my emaciated figure. But then, I'm not exactly thrilled with it either, though I'm grateful he's too polite to mention it right now.

"Why are you here?" Ghost yawns at him, flopping down on the bed. "It's not time for breakfast yet, is it?"

"No, but I thought a little privacy in which to discuss some things might be prudent." He tosses Ghost a small cosmetics tube. "Here. Go dye your hair."

Ghost rolls the tube between his fingers, glancing at me. "Are you sure?"

"Only you, yes. There are too many uncertainties right now. Until we know what we're working with, I think disguising your Moon Child status is for the best."

"I hardly think anyone will be paying attention to me," Ghost grumbles, heading into the bathroom with a grimace.

"We don't know that. If Lady Fionula manages to snag us an audience with the Civil Court this morning, we don't want to be making excuses for your appearance." Lucian scratches his chin. "Not that we all couldn't use some new clothes and a visit to the barber beforehand." He gives me a weary smile. "Well, we'll see to all that after breakfast. There's quite a lot to do, but nearly all of it takes money. Our mother had many holdings and accounts, of course, but all of them were frozen when Ghost and I were forced into exile."

"I suppose that's the practical thing to do when your mother is considered a criminal," I say archly.

He flushes. "A bit of an understatement there, but I see your point."

"Should we get our mother's estate restored to us, money won't be an issue. It's certainly the easiest route to take—and the most obvious one." Ghost leans his partially darkened head around the corner. "People here are very silly, Mags. Appearances mean everything."

"Indeed." Lucian gestures at him. "You're dripping all over the floor. Hurry up and finish."

Ghost rolls his eyes and disappears again. I straighten my loose-fitting shirt. It's a bit ragged, but at least it's relatively clean considering I slept in it. "I don't suppose there will be some money in the budget for me?"

Lucian smiles tightly. "But of course. You won't need to worry about that. We'll even give you your own line of credit. You'll be able to buy whatever you want, whenever you want it."

It's a heady thought. I've always been poor. The idea that I might simply waltz into a clothing shop or a candy store on a whim seems ludicrous. I don't want to get too excited about it, though. So many things have been pulled out from under me, too often. But I allow myself to hope at least a little.

Lucian retreats into his room, leaving me to sprawl out on the bed to wait for Ghost to finish. I whistle aimlessly at my clockwork dragon, which has taken refuge on the decorative mantle, its tail twitching like a cat's as it peers at me peevishly. For a mechanical device it has a remarkably intelligent way about it. I haven't managed to figure out its secrets yet, other than the fact that it was most likely created by Madeline d'Arc, Ghost and Lucian's mother. Not only was she the brilliant architect and inventor who created many of the functionalities that allowed Meridion to fly, but she stole the mechanism and fled the city, leaving chaos in her wake.

That she placed said mechanism into my own chest, where it allowed my clockwork heart to function, was another matter entirely. But here, upon Meridion, anything was possible, wasn't it?

Somewhere along the way I doze off, only to be awakened later by Ghost, his hair now a light chestnut. "We're off to breakfast, Mags."

I stretch and gather myself to my feet. The dragon gives me a sour look when I gesture at it, and it alights on its usual perch upon my shoulder. Ghost waits until I'm done lacing my boots, though I

can't help but tug on his newly darkened locks when I finish, a bit of the ink staining my fingers. "Shame you have to do this."

Lucian made Ghost dye his hair during his younger years in BrightStone as well, partially as a disguise and partially to keep up the illusion that he was still a Meridian. Which technically he is. Although not an actual half-breed like me, he has the appearance of a Moon Child, given to him after his mother injected him with a serum, something none of us knew the reasoning behind. Her notes mention it in passing, but with details no more definitive than her needing a Meridian test subject.

Ghost had not been keen on the concept when he found out, and I couldn't blame him. Family was supposed to protect you, not experiment on you. His face falls a little at my words, but he shakes it off. "It's just for now. Hair doesn't make the man, right?"

"Fair enough." My fingers linger on the curve of his jaw, and I'm sad at the idea. As though the Ghost I know will somehow disappear, lost in the potential of Meridian privilege to which he'd been born. "But don't let Lucian pull you into machinations simply for the sake of appearances. Survival is one thing, but you are who you are. And that's enough for me."

Something unreadable flickers behind the darkness of his eyes, but he merely smiles. "I'll remember that," he says, studying my face. "Are you sure you feel well enough to eat?"

I tuck my ever-present hammer into my belt, its weight a comfort. "Do I ever refuse food? Lead the way, aye?"

He laughs then, his teeth flashing as he opens the door and ushers me out.



"Have you thought about what I said?" Lady Fionula asks pensively. She's sitting across the table from Lucian, using her spoon to stab her grapefruit with deadly accuracy. I try to do the

same to mine, though it takes most of my patience not to simply bury my face in it, the citrus scent driving me mad with longing.

I force myself to take small bites, ignoring the way the spoon wants to slip from my grasp, the juice electrifyingly tart upon my tongue. Ghost is across from me, and he hides a smile, ignoring the way I kick him under the table.

The four of us are seated in the small hotel restaurant. It's empty except for us. Lucian was good enough to choose the table farthest from the great glass windows on the far side of the room. Not that I wouldn't love to take in the scenery, but the glare is already causing my head to ache, even with the welcome darkness of my spectacles.

"What is there to think about? Nothing's changed since last night." Lucian generously slathers a piece of toast with a creamy slab of butter. "Our mother's estate is to be restored to us, of course. And then once we're reestablished among the Meridian Houses, we can focus on Moon Child reparations." He inclines his head in my direction.

Lady Fionula's attention flicks between us briefly, her eyes lingering on the dragon perched quietly on my shoulder, before she returns to her breakfast. She's gorgeous, with a royal bearing that looks as though she is very used to having her words heeded. Even this early in the morning, her dark hair is done up in extravagant fashion, curls rolling down her shoulders and back, nestled against the emerald-green of a gown that glistens like the scales of an exotic fish. I can only imagine what sort of duties she actually has as the liaison between Meridion and BrightStone, but I'd only met her the day before and I have no idea what the protocol is for interacting with her.

Her face is emotionless, but tiny streaks of lightning flash over her ebony skin. It's fascinating to watch, though I try to keep my curiosity hidden. The skin illumination is an odd phenomenon I've only seen a few times. Once in BrightStone, when I found the

body of a Meridian after it apparently had been pushed from the floating city, and once in the Pits, where the Meridian scientist Buceph had corrupted the effect by using mushrooms that glowed in the dark. Mushrooms that contributed to my own luminescence, in fact, though we still aren't sure how it worked.

But despite being Meridians, neither Ghost nor Lucian have lightning skin. Something about living in the city itself is the trigger. They and the Meridian Inquestors, who had been exiled to BrightStone, both lost the ability somehow. Would they get it back? Would I, as a half-blooded Meridian react the same way? And if the lightning reacts to a Meridian's emotions, would I be able to utilize that to my advantage? An unkind thought, perhaps, but I've been used my whole life by Meridians and those in power. What harm would it be to use it against them now?

"Reparations, is it?" Lady Fionula's plump mouth purses in pretty amusement, and I savagely bite down on my grapefruit to keep from barking something rude at her.

"It would not be so odd a thing to pursue," Lucian retorts mildly. "While I understand you have been removed from current events in BrightStone as of late, do not assume that Meridion bears no responsibility. We owe these children more than you can possibly understand."

"They bear all of it," I snap finally, unable to contain myself. "Or nearly so." I thrust my spoon in Lady Fionula's direction. "I didn't ask to be born, and I surely didn't ask to be used and forgotten—same for the others in my clan. You Tithed us, made us lead a parade of the dying underground in some ridiculous ritual meant to both appease the ignorant masses and hide the research *your* people were conducting. Our immunity to the Rot made us test subjects in an experiment so vile as to be incomprehensible. So yes, reparations would be the least of what you owe us, *aye?*"

"Mags." Ghost lays his hand on my leg under the table. *I am here...* He gives it a gentle squeeze, and I relax beneath the heat of his palm.

"No one is forgetting you," Lucian says, one brow cocked at Lady Fionula. "Are they?"

"Indeed," she says a moment later. The lightning beats unhappily at the base of her throat. "It was not my intention to offend, but things are different now than they were years ago. There were always rumors, but no one wanted to believe them. To think that Meridians were breeding with the citizens of BrightStone in some...contrived plot to search for an immortality serum... Well, it seems like a tall tale."

She raises her hand before Lucian can protest. "I have read the recent reports, and obviously, with the plague—the Rot, as you call it—clearly things are far out of hand. I will do my best to investigate the issue and work with BrightStone to try to remedy the matter. But understand, for Meridion, the Moon Children are less...a curiosity and more of a quaint concept most people would prefer to ignore." Her look grows more pointed. "I have heard Moon Children essentially run wild in the streets. Even if I wanted to come up with some sort of assimilation plan for them, however would it be managed?"

"We're not rats living in a sewer," I grind out. "We live in clans, yes. Before the Pits collapsed, we were split into several groups spread out across BrightStone. But now...now we're mostly under one clan with a couple of leaders. Josephine, who runs her operation from the ruins of the Brass Button Theatre, is one of them." I pause, uncertain of how much detail to give her. "And Bran is the other. He was in the Pits with me, though I'm not entirely sure where he'll be now."

"If you need to get a message to one of them, contact the Chancellor of BrightStone," Lucian interrupts before Lady Fionula can respond to me. "In fact, you should be exchanging information

with her already. Chancellor Davis has a unique grasp of the pulse in BrightStone and the people living there—including Moon Children.”

“My thanks for explaining to me how to do my job.” Lady Fionula gives him a withering stare, her skin lighting up briefly before she schools her expression into something more professional. “Ahem. My understanding is that Moon Children are unable to reproduce, correct? There will be many here who will assume the reparation issue will die out as soon as no more of you are born.”

“Well, as long as I know where I stand. The honesty is refreshing.” I finish the grapefruit and set down my fork, the fruit sticking in my throat like poison.

“It isn’t you—not directly. It’s what the Moon Children represent. Meridians always like to think we are above such pettiness. Moon Children make it abundantly clear that we are not.” Her mouth curves into a self-deprecating smile. “Forgive me.”

I shrug at her as Lucian inclines his head, as if unsure of how to respond. “Forgiven,” he murmurs. “What is the timeline, then? How soon can you get us an audience?”

Her face smooths in an instant, the lightning becoming quiet. “I have already sent out missives. They’ll be expecting my report on what happened in BrightStone yesterday, of course. I will endeavor to be as clear about the situation as I can be. As far as your house goes...”

“There’s nothing to say,” Lucian insists, pouring himself a fresh cup of tea. “It belongs to us, and we *will* be moving in.”

“The city took it as an asset once you were exiled. Nothing was done with it as far as I know, but I’m fairly certain they’ve got it locked up. I doubt you’ll be able to enter without a writ from the city declaring the ownership transferred back to you.” She pauses carefully. “Jeremiah could help you with that, if you want me to ask him.”

Lucian’s smile turns bittersweet. “I see.”

Ghost squeezes my leg in warning. Jeremiah had been Lucian's lover before he and Ghost were forced to flee Meridion. Lucian doesn't talk about the other man much, but even I can see how desperately he's trying to hide his emotions. I can only imagine how Lucian has held himself together this long, instead of rushing off to find his lost love.

But then, Lucian always put his brother's safety above everything else, even his own happiness. I suspect that won't stop now simply because we're on Meridion.

"He spent quite a bit of time at university after you left. He's a barrister now. You know how he is: once he sets his sights on something, he rarely turns away from it. Much like you, I suppose." Her expression grows gentle. "He has never stopped searching for a way to undo your exile. Believe it or not, he's been in front of the Council several times to plead your case."

Lucian stills. "I thought he might have moved on by now."

She scoffs ruefully. "Please. I'm sure he hasn't become a monk, by any means, but there's a part of him that's just as trapped as you are. I could tell him you're here. As your fiancée, it would be the... compassionate thing to do."

My head whips toward Lucian, but I'm nearly biting through my tongue as it is.

"That would be kind of you, yes." There's a shiver in his voice, as though the very words are breaking inside him.

Blotting at her mouth with a napkin, Lady Fionula stands up. "I think we've discussed things enough for now. I have another meeting shortly. I'll let you know what the Council says when I can. Where will you be staying?"

Lucian blinks. "Our house. Like I said."

She frowns. "But the locks..."

Ghost side-eyes me. "Somehow I don't think that will matter much."

Lucian snorts, the three of us exchange a quick look that speaks volumes. In whatever odd bit of fate twisted our lives together, Madeline d'Arc's inventive clockwork heart not only keeps my blood pumping but contains a key of sorts that can open every Meridian lock ever made. Or so our current working theory goes. Thus far, I managed to open several unlockable doors over the last several weeks, but there is no sense in showing our hand this early in the game.

When none of us volunteer any more information, Lady Fionula sets down her napkin. "Well, then I leave you all with a bit of advice. The Council abhors paupers. You'll do better if you look more respectable." She points at Lucian's face. "You've got the appearance of someone who just left a bar brawl."

Her comment rings true enough. A set of purple bruises blossoms over his jaw and right cheekbone, one eye sporting a swollen lid, courtesy of the Meridian Inquestors who took him captive and sentenced him to death.

"Next time I'll make sure to preserve my dashing good looks as I'm being dragged to the gallows," Lucian retorts. "That way the Council can pull their respective beards at the handsomeness of my corpse as they deny me my rights yet again."

"Point taken." She inclines her head toward me, and I bristle. "This one, in particular. Moon Child or not, the least you could do is make her seem civilized."

My eyes narrow, whatever charitable thoughts I might have had about her flying right out the window. "Less like a Moon Child, you mean?"

Lucian pinches the bridge of his nose. "That's enough, 'Nula. Don't take my sins out on them." She blinks at his casual tone. "Lady Fionula, then. Or would 'Your Eminence' be preferable?"

"We may have been children together," she says. "But you must try to keep things as formal as possible if you want the Council to take you seriously. Even if you think they're not watching." Her

mouth presses regretfully. "I'm sorry. I really am." Glancing at the serving boy, she waves him over. "Charge their meal to my account. I'll send my factor to make amends this afternoon."

And with that, she glides out of the restaurant, her hips swaying gracefully.

Ghost slugs the rest of his juice in a quick swallow. "Well, that was fun, wasn't it?"

"You have an odd definition of fun, aye?" I snag another biscuit and pocket it for later. "Now what?"

"Weren't you listening?" Lucian stares at the space Lady Fionula left behind at the table. "Now we go home."