

Esmerelda Sleuth

**“THE MAGIC BOX”**

*[Book Two]*

by

Eileen Sheehan

©2019 Eileen Sheehan

Worldwide Electronic & Digital Rights

Worldwide Print Rights

Worldwide Rights of all Languages

ELECTRONIC EDITION

EARTH WISE BOOKS

All Rights Reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, scanned or distributed in any form, including digital and electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without the prior written consent of the Publisher, except for brief quotes for use in reviews

This book is a work of fiction. Characters, names, places and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to any actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

Notice\*\* Portions of this story may prove too graphic, sexually explicit, or violent for sensitive readers. It is intended for mature readers.

“I always looked upon magic as a form of entertainment. Now I know that it is so much more.”

Esmerelda Sleuth

## Contents

### Let's Catch Up

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

[Sneak Peek at Vampires in the Attic](#)

[About the Author](#)

[Other Great Books by Eileen Sheehan](#)

## A Quick Summary to Catch Up

Welcome to book two of the Esmerelda Sleuth series. In book one, “The Other Side of the Mirror”, Esmerelda met and fell in love with Lance Northrup. Introduced to her as a handsome and wealthy realtor, Esmerelda soon discovered that this was simply a ruse that he took on to camouflage the fact that he was a time traveler who’d traveled from the nineteenth century specifically to find her and take her back to marry him. Fortunately for Lance, she fell in love with him almost immediately and happily obliged.

Unbeknownst to Esmerelda, she’d been born in that time frame and had been bonded in marriage to him by her family while an infant. When enemies who didn’t want the marriage to take place threatened her life, her parents had her magically sent forward in time to protect her; making sure that her memories were erased as well.

A private investigator with a practical mind, Esmerelda found it difficult to accept that hers and Lance’s families belonged to a secret society of people who hadn’t lost the ability to tap into nature’s magic like the rest of the world did when religion took hold and made magic an evil sin. It took Lance taking her through a mirror that acted as a portal through time before she even remotely began to believe.

There were rules to using the magic and the supply available to a person could be depleted, which was what happened to Lance after using it during his longtime search for her. Hence, when she fell in love with him and willingly went back in time to marry him and her life was threatened again, he was unable to return to the future with her. Instead, he stayed behind while he waited for his depleted supply of

magic to replenish and he figured out a way to be with her again without danger to her or to him.

She was safe from those who wanted to harm her because she'd been given a drink that slowed down her vital signs to the extent that the physicians of that time weren't able to detect them. In short, she was pronounced dead. A mock funeral was held for her before her distant cousin, Anton, -who was also magical- took her back into the future and left her in the care of her good friend Nora.

This brings us to book two of the Esmerelda Sleuth series, "Magic in the Box".

“He was a good-looking guy with raven black hair that was so rich and shiny that it made Lance’s gorgeous dark head of hair seem faded. His eyes were almost the same; captivating and unforgettable in an eerie sexy way that sent chills all over my body,” my best friend, Nora, said as she lay on the bed watching me pull my thick coppery mane of wild curls into a ponytail, “but not the most congenial. He came in and dropped you off without saying much at all. That mirror was so small. I don’t know how he managed to step out of it with you in his arms. First one leg came out, then the other, and then all of him. He did it with such ease before he took long confident strides across the floor and gently set you onto that bed like you weighed no more than a bundle of linen while telling me that you had to come back due to attempts on your life. He said that it would take a while for you to wake up and that when you did, you’d have a whopper of a headache. Then, he walked back to the mirror. He turned and gave me a nod and a smile that almost stopped my heart before...,” She splayed her fingers for emphasis. “Poof! He stepped back into that mirror and was gone. Just like that! I had to pinch myself to make sure that I wasn’t dreaming.”

I’d heard the story of how the sexy Scotsman came through the mirror to deliver me multiple times since my return from the past, but I didn’t stop her from repeating it. I found her enthusiasm and awe over Anton amusing.

It was several weeks since my distant cousin from the nineteenth century, Anton, carried me from the other side of the mirror and brought me back to the future. By doing so, he took me away from Lance; the



man that I fell in love with practically on sight and who I'd only just married.

Lance had taken care to make arrangements for my potential return from the past by visiting a law firm and turning all of his estates over to me. Nora gave me the paperwork as soon as I regained consciousness after the drink was out of my system. The drink slowed down my vitals to the extent that the physicians -who lacked modern technology- were unable to detect them and, therefore, pronounced me dead. Unbeknownst to my enemies, while my mock funeral was taking place, I was being transported back to the future for safety.

She also gave me a private note that Lance wrote in the event that we were separated. It not only spoke of his love for me, but he mentioned that a box containing magic was hidden beneath the floorboards in the top of the grand mansion that he'd so generously turned over to me. In this box, he would leave messages for me to keep me abreast of his progress in finding a way for us to safely be together again. Unfortunately, he neglected to give me the exact location of the floorboard that protected the magic box.

For the first few weeks, I spent a good deal of time searching for a loose floorboard that a wooden box could be hidden beneath, but the house was enormous and the upper level was cluttered and filled to the brim with antiques and collectibles. Clearly, my husband hadn't taken into consideration any remodeling and such that would happen over the course of centuries that passed between our times. Not only did I not have the strength to move a good deal of it out of my way, but I lacked

the time. Work had gotten crazy. It felt like the world had gone mad and the call for private investigators was at an all-time high.

Although Lance had managed to manipulate time so that Nora was only waiting the rest of that weekend for either me to come back or for him to return and inform her that I was staying with him in the past, she was forced to call our office and make an excuse for our absence while she waited for me to come out of the induced coma-like state that Anton delivered me to her in. This made it so that my boss was placed in the position of having to inform an extremely wealthy, impatient, self-indulgent, and overbearing client whose husband's activities I'd been investigating that he wasn't having an affair. He was simply providing his transsexual cousin with emotional support. Her husband was also giving his cousin financial assistance for his medical transition from male to female by way of her money. Since his wife was a bigot of the worst kind, he was keeping this factor a secret from her. Having met with this client on more than one occasion -and finding that I much preferred the husband- I think that it would have been easier for him had he been having an affair.

Needless to say that the stomach flu that Nora claimed we'd both contracted would have been better to actually have endured than the wrath of my boss when I finally did go back to work.

"Why would you think that you were dreaming?" I asked while I held back the smile that was forming with lips that were fresh with a new color lipstick that I was trying out. "Lance and I went to the other side of that mirror and he came back through it in front of you, didn't he? He

also said that either I'd come back or he'd come to tell you that I wasn't coming back. Right?"

"Maybe it's because I didn't expect you to be brought back by a handsome, six-foot something Scotsman in a kilt with calf and arm muscles made of brick," she mused. "I don't know what you've been wearing that's acting like a sexy man magnet, but I want some of it. First Lance and then the Scotsman. I can't wait to see who's next."

"No one is next," I said as I pulled my ponytail tight and slipped into a loose-fitting sweater. "I'm married. Remember?"

"Married to a man who lives three-hundred years in the past and can't come forward in time anymore," she said with sadness. "What kind of marriage is that?"

"It's my kind," I said with defiance as I headed for the bedroom door. "Besides, I told you already. He'll regain his magic at some point."

"What about the people who want you dead?" she asked. "Anton said that it was a serious situation back there. Lance may get his magic back, but he still has to figure out how to join you without any of them realizing that's what he did. Isn't his own life at risk too?"

"I need to find that dumb box so that I can see what's happening," I complained. "I could use some help."

She shrugged. "I'm free, so why not?" With a glint of excitement in her eyes, she added, "I love that old place. It's just magnificent. I get a thrill every time we go there. I can't understand why you don't move into it. You are the owner, after all."

"It holds bad memories for me," I said with a frown.

“They can’t be all bad,” Nora mused. “After all, you met and fell in love with Lance in it.”

She was right, of course. It did hold some very good memories. Sadly the bad memories were so dramatic that they overshadowed the good ones.

After filling my lungs with air, I said, “Besides, it’s not as convenient as here. I’ve been spending a lot of time with work. Driving in from the estate house would only add to a day that is already too long.”

“I hear you on that point, girlfriend,” she said with a smile. “Maybe we could just spend our weekends there. The ones that the boss doesn’t make you work on, that is.”

“Ha,” I said with a sarcastic tone. “If the day ever comes.”

“What’s going on lately, anyway?” she asked. “I’ve never seen it so crazy at work. Has the whole of society become sneaky thieves and lying cheaters?”

I shrugged. “On the bright side, the paychecks are decent.”

She threw her head back in laughter. “You’re so funny. Lance left you so much money that you’d never have to work another day in your life.”

“He was big on respecting his inheritance,” I grumbled. “I doubt he intended for me to become a fat princess spending it all.”

She scowled. “Not spend it all, but spend some. I’m sure he didn’t intend for you to not use any of it.”

“I’ll use it for the upkeep of the house and property, but I don’t need it for me. I make a good living without it,” I insisted.

“At least live in the damned house,” she practically shouted with frustration.

“It’s not...” I began.

She interrupted me as she swung her legs over the side of the bed and stood up. “I know. It’s not convenient.”

I thought for a moment. She was right. Lance left me that beautiful house with its grand and gorgeous manicured grounds, yet I continued to live in my small, one bedroom apartment with a few potted plants on the windowsill to represent nature. Of course, I was also right. My apartment was more convenient to the office. Perhaps if I compromised... “Maybe it would be easier if we spent weekends there instead of traveling back and forth.”

She clapped her hands as she followed me out of the bedroom, through the living room of my six-hundred square foot apartment, and into the hallway of my apartment building.

“What’s on the agenda today?” she asked over her shoulder as she bounced down the stairs in front of me like an energetic schoolgirl.

“Do you believe in ghosts?” I asked with amusement since I already knew the answer.

She stopped short on the next to the last vinyl tiled step and turned to look at me. Her face was pale and her eyes were wide open. “Is the part of the house where we’re going haunted?”

“You do realize that walls don’t stop ghosts, right?” I giggled. “If there’s a ghost in one part of the house, it’s in all of it.”

“Don’t tell me that,” she pouted. “I spent a few days alone in that house.”

“Do you still want to move into it?” I asked with a teasing tone.

She moved to the door and yanked it open. “You’re picking on me now. You don’t even believe in ghosts.”

I nodded. “You’re just too easy a target.”

I didn’t bother to tell her that I’d changed my opinion on the existence of ghosts after my encounter with Agatha while I was back in time. I don’t know why I brought up the topic to begin with. Perhaps it was my subconscious trying to tell me something. Like, maybe Agatha was still haunting the house?

Time would tell.

As I eased my late model Chevy Malibu through the oversized ornate iron gate and drove it up the tree lined driveway, I took a long look at the house. It was in just as beautiful condition as it was in the eighteen hundreds: if not more so. The way that the sunshine blended with its soft, pale-yellow exterior and the pristine condition of its white trim and array of columns holding up the imposing portico made me realize that Nora was correct in labeling it majestic. It had to be the most spectacular house that I'd ever had the opportunity to view and walk through -let alone own and live in-, but it emitted a sad and lonely vibe.

I pushed aside the memories of Jason's horrific sneakiness and vile treatment of me and the fact that I'd been poisoned while in that house and allowed myself to remember the long walks with Lance in the elaborate gardens and the beauty of our wedding night. Perhaps Nora was right. The house did hold some wonderful memories for me. I just needed to pull them to the forefront of my memory bank and push the bad ones to the back. Or, even completely out. If that was possible.

As I stopped the car in the circular part of the driveway near the front door and slowly got out, I could actually feel the sadness that the house emitted. It blended with the late fall chill and caused my body to involuntarily shudder. I hated the cold, but I had to accept the fact that winter was upon us and, although Virginia didn't get the cold like New York did, it still got cold and snowy.

I adjusted the fur collar on my coat so that it offered better protection against the elements. My heart ached with regret over the emptiness of a house that had once been full of life. Some of the life was

happy and good while some was sad and evil, but all was vibrant. Nora might have been right when she pointed out that the house needed life. I considered how Lance would feel to see his house so lonely looking. I felt, in some small way, obligated to do something about it.

“If I moved in here, I’d want you to live with me,” I said as I searched my keychain for the key to the front door. “I couldn’t live here alone.”

“Live here?” she asked. “Or, stay on the weekends?”

“I don’t know,” I moaned. “It makes no sense to keep our two apartments when we have this enormous mansion at our disposal.”

“Have you any idea what a help not having to pay rent would be for me?” she asked with obvious relief as she got out of the car. “I don’t make the same money as you do.”

I looked at her with surprise. “Are you in need of money? You never said.”

“My financial struggles aren’t your problem,” she said with her chin held high as she stood next to me and waited for me to unlock the door, “but it would be a huge load off my back if I got rid of the burden of rent.”

“And the utilities,” I added as I inserted the key into the keyhole and turned it.

She raised her brows and said with enthusiasm, “That’s right. Those too!”

“Okay, then,” I said as I swung the door open and stepped aside to allow her to enter first. “Let’s give notice to our landlords.”



“I’ll pitch in with the bills, of course. I’d never think of becoming a mooch. I’m no mooch,” she enthusiastically chattered as she practically skipped over the threshold wearing an enormous smile.

I chuckled. “I’d dare say that Lance has all of that covered. You just live here with me so that I don’t feel lonely and we’re good.”

“Seriously? What a deal!” she squealed as she rushed to the door and rested her hand on the doorknob. “Will I get a key?”

“Don’t be silly. Of course, you will,” I said as I dropped my keys into my handbag. “Now, why don’t you go select your room while I make us some coffee and turn up the heat a bit. This place feels cold and harsh.”

She giggled. “It is winter, after all.”

I shuddered and said, “It’s still late fall. Don’t rush things.” Then, shaking my head, I added, “Not that kind of cold and harsh. A lonely kind of cold and harsh.”

“That will change once we’re in it,” she said with a happy smile. “Is there hot chocolate? This just feels like a hot chocolate occasion.”

“As long as it’s not teatime, I’m good,” I muttered as I made my way to the kitchen.

I listened to her muffled footsteps as she ran up the curved and highly polished oak staircase with its ornately designed, brick red carpet flowing like a waterfall down the center of its steps as I thought back about the hundreds of cups of tea that I’d been forced to drink while back in time with Lance. I’d never developed an appreciation for tea as I did for coffee. After having it shoved on me by Lance’s overbearing

mother, Vivian, more times than I could count, I didn't care if I never saw another cup again.

Standing in the kitchen, I closed my eyes and remembered the kitchen of the nineteenth century. It was located in what was now considered the basement, but what they'd called the lower level. The kitchen, food stores, laundry, etc. were all on the lower level. Sometime over the centuries, it was brought up onto the main floor in the back of the house.

I wondered what they'd done with the rooms in the basement but decided to put off investigating for a while. After all, it wasn't like I was on a time schedule to check out the place. I owned it. My priority was to find the hiding place of that darned magic box.

I'd spent just enough time in the kitchen with Lance when we'd first met to have gotten a decent idea of where things were, so it wasn't long before I had a tray with two steaming cups of hot chocolate ready to take into the parlor to enjoy.

Nora bounded into the room just as I'd set the tray onto the coffee table. She sat on the long, antique sofa and cradled her cup in her hands.

"It's such a gloomy day today," she said as she blew gently on the liquid to cool it down enough for her to drink. "Boy, it's taking quite a long time for the house to warm up. You turned up the furnace, didn't you?"

I slapped my forehead with the palm of my hand. "I got so involved with this that I forgot."

“I’ll get it,” she said as she leapt to her feet and rushed into the hall where the thermostat was located.

“You knew just where to go,” I said with surprise and appreciation. “I’d have been hunting for ages.”

“I did a bit of exploring while I was waiting for you to come back,” she explained.

“You knew that I’d be back?” I said.

She shrugged. “I hoped. Anyway, I knew that one of you would be coming back to tell me what was up. So, I killed time by exploring.”

A thought struck me and I eagerly asked, “Did you happen to explore on the top floor?”

She shuddered and vigorously shook her head. “I was alone, remember? I kept to the main rooms; away from creepy, lonely ghost hangouts.”

“I already told you that walls don’t stop them,” I said with mild impatience.

“Maybe not, but the walls make me feel safe,” she replied. “As do lights. I think I’ll turn some on. The sun’s shining, but it’s not making its way in here very well.”

Just as she said that, I thought that I saw a figure flash past the archway leading to the foyer and disappear into the shadows, but I said nothing to her. For all I knew, it was my overactive imagination conjuring things for my mind to worry over in a house that held the energy of centuries of living in it. Knowing how she felt about ghosts and other things that went bump in the night, I knew that it was best for me to keep

quiet until I was certain that I'd actually seen something. As well as what it was that I'd seen.

"Did you pick out your room?" I asked.

"I took the one that Lance put me up in. I spent enough time in it that I got used to it," she replied. "What room are you going to take?"

"I'm not sure yet," I said as I thought back on who occupied what room when I went into the past. "The room that Lance put me in on the weekend when we first met was the one that I occupied while in the past. I want to sit in that one and the one that was his and see which one speaks to me the strongest."

I hadn't told her everything that happened while I was in the past. So much of it was still too painful to speak about. Therefore, I couldn't admit that the room that I'd stayed in was also the room where Jason had manipulated and sexually used me in order to obtain my magic.

"Which room did you spend your wedding night in?" she asked.

"His," I said with a faint smile.

"That would be the one that I'd pick," she offered. "It's sure to have the best memories attached to it."

I looked at her and grinned with relief. "You're absolutely right. It might also have a hint of what's happening with him now."

"I'm still having trouble understanding how time happens all at once," she mused with a scowl.

"It really is confusing," I replied. "Yet, in some way it makes sense. "If you believe in quantum physics, it states that there are timelines with markers that separate things that are occurring in each vibrational reality. Whatever reality you're in is the one that your

consciousness experiences. What I'm still having difficulty with is how Lance could travel back and forth, yet he can't stop things from happening. How can that be?"

She threw her hands shoulder height with her palms extended toward me and shook her head. "You're asking the wrong person."

I sighed. "Maybe someday things will come together like a great big jigsaw puzzle. Until then, let's look for that box."