Sorceress

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For Terry and Catrin, who came with me


PARTS UNKNOWN
St Lawrence
Richelieu River
Montreal
Lake Champlain
Missisquoi
Connecticut River
Adirondack Mountains
White River
White Mountains
Lake Win
Merrimack River
Sparks F
Camp 2
MOHAWK TERRITORY
Green Mountains
Sparks Fire's
Camp 1
Deerfield River
Native Village
Beulah
Deerfield


Further Journeyings
Of Mary Newbury
OUTWARD
RETURN
Atlantic Ocean
Cape Ann
Milford
Haven
Cape James

INTRODUCTION

This volume follows on from the remarkable collection of documents known as *The Mary Papers*. These were found hidden inside a quilt dating from the colonial period and identified as the diary of Mary Newbury, a fourteen-year-old girl forced to flee from England in 1659 after witnessing her grandmother's execution for witchcraft. The diaries went on to describe her subsequent journey to America and her life there in a Puritan settlement. Mary's account of her life ends in mid sentence, when she is forced to leave the settlement or meet the same fate as her grandmother.

Apart from a page or two added in a different hand, the diary ended there, and with it what we knew of the story of Mary Newbury. Even before transcription was completed, I knew that I wanted to know more about Mary's subsequent fate. Many people

responded to my email appeal and I would like to thank all the correspondents who have helped me to piece together the histories of many of the people Mary encountered. I have tried to incorporate as much of this information as possible into the text; where there is too much to include, I have supplied end notes. This book is, however, primarily Mary's story and she proved to be the most elusive person of all. So finally, I have to thank Agnes Herne and her aunt, Miriam Lazare, who found her for me. Without their help this book would never have been written.

Alison Ellman.
The Institute, Boston, MA.

1

Mary: Massachusetts, November 1660

If I am a witch, they will soon know it. I had never ill-wished anyone but as I fled Beulah anger and hatred clashed together, sparking curses like steel striking flint. I had done no wrong, so why was I forced to run like a fugitive? My accusers, Deborah Vane and the other girls, they were the guilty ones. Even as they denounced me as a witch, their eyes gleamed with scheming malice. The madness twisting their faces was counterfeit. Who could not see it? 'Them that's blind and will not see.' My grandmother's words came to me. She was a wise woman, but her wisdom brought her nothing but sorrow. She ended her life on the hanging tree, and now the same fate awaited me.

They searched, and that most diligently. I cowered in Rebekah's borning room, thinking to be safe for a little space, but they demanded entry even there, with voices ringing loud with right and duty. Only Martha stood

against them, standing up to Reverend Johnson as brave as a robin before a striking hawk. They went away reluctantly. I tracked them searching through the rest of the house, moving from one room to the next, their heavy tread freighted with hatred.

I got away, but they searched for me still. I heard them hallooing through the woods, saw their torches, tiny bonfire sparks in the blackness. I heard the dogs baying and yelling. Dogs run faster than men.

Snow started falling soon after I fled the town, icy pellets seeding the wind. It began to come thick, ever more whitening the ground, making it easier for the dogs to pick me out. The first to come upon me was old Tom, Josiah Crompton's hunting dog. He's a gaze hound, hunting by sight. Old Tom came leaping out of the brush towards me and threw back his long bony head, making a sound deep in his throat, somewhere between a yelp and a swallowed bark of triumph. This brought the other dogs tumbling to him. They stood ringed about, tongues lolling, eyes bright.

They had me cornered. I backed against a tree and stared at them, waiting for them to spring. Tom crept nearer, the others following, the circle tightening, then he stopped. He stood, head inclined, his short ears cocked as if harking to

some sound. The men's shouting was nearer now. I thought that was what he was hearing and that at any minute he would commence barking, but he did not. He gave me one last look, wheeled round and made off with all the others streaming after him in a raggle-taggle mob.

The baying and yelling thinned to nothing. Tom had led the hunt away from me. I was alone again in the forest's frosty silence. I thought to run on, but tiredness overcame me. I sank down, leaning my back against the tree's rough bark, thinking to gather what strength I had.

I have been here ever since. The snow is still falling, drifting through the air and making no sound, feathering across my cheeks like angel fingers, weighting my eyelids, settling upon me, covering me like a counterpane filled with the finest down.

I feel no cold, but I cannot move. My limbs have no feeling in them. To sleep is to die, I know that, but I cannot keep awake. Sometimes I almost hope that they might come back this way, that they might find me, but I dismiss the thought as soon as it arises. I'd rather die here than be taken. I'd rather freeze to this tree than be hanged.

2

Boston, Massachusetts, April, 20:00, present day

Agnes fell forward, cracking her head sharply on the glass. The saver jarred and jerked, just for a second, then the screen went black and she was looking at her own face staring back, eyes dilated by more than the pain in her forehead. What had that been? Vision or dream? She was cold, she was freezing. Her fingers were bloodless and withered, the nails blue. She looked to the window, expecting to see snow falling, but there was nothing. The sky was a clear evening blue.

Whatever had just happened was as real as any experience of her own, anything that she had ever known. She could not stop shivering. She got up and dragged the quilt off the bed. The quilt was serviceable as well as beautiful, a bright Lone Star, Aunt M's farewell gift to her. Agnes gripped the edges tight, wrapping it close around her, but

still she could not get warm. Teeth chattering, she went to the window, opening it on to the square below. Sodium street lights were coming on, bronzing the leaves on the trees. Across the way, desk lamps were beginning to show in the windows of rows of little rooms just like her own. She closed the window and in the gathering darkness she shifted her focus, making the glass into a mirror, and stared at the face staring back at her.

She put her hand up, sweeping back her jet-black hair. She wore it long, past her shoulders. She was only eighteen, but already a few silver hairs were threading down from the parting. She would have a white streak there, just as her aunt had, and her grandmother before her. She frowned, thick dark brows drawing down. The eyes beneath were grey, rimmed with black. Unusual, particularly in her family. The colour of her eyes and her faraway gaze had caused her grandmother to name her Karonhisake, Searching Sky.

No one called her that here. To her fellow students, to the staff in the faculty, she was Agnes Herne. The only time her tribal name was used was when she was back on the reservation. She did not seek to hide her Native American blood. She did not disguise it, neither did she advertise it. It was

who she was. She went home as often as time and vacations would allow, but she'd moved away to go to college and she liked to keep her life in separate compartments now.

She had chosen anthropology as her course of study.

'You'll have us all laid out like bugs on a tray,' was what Aunt M had said about that. She'd laughed, blowing smoke through her niece's denials. Then she'd added, 'You be careful, honey, or they'll turn you into a spy in your own house.'

The cold was receding now, the room returning to its normal temperature. Agnes went to her chair, trying to figure what had sparked the experience in the first place. She stared at the screensaver spooling on the VDU. She'd been sitting over here, thinking she maybe needed fresh air. Her head was aching and her shoulders felt like they'd been crafted out of rock. She must have closed her eyes, just for a second, and that was when it happened. She shook her head as if that would clear the fog in it. She'd definitely experienced something. She could feel the effects even now. Not quite a vision, but definitely more than a dream.

Nothing like this had ever happened to her before,

nothing so intense. It left her feeling dazed. Some deep part of her knew that all her life she had been waiting for this exact moment to happen. Meanwhile her brain struggled on, trying to find some rational explanation.

It had to be a projection from the book she'd just read. She'd been reading it most of the day, cutting classes to finish it, and had been feeling kind of tired and spacy when she went to check the web site. She touched a key, banishing the saver, and a face appeared, a girl's face shaded in bleached-out black and sepia. She was meant to be Mary, the girl in the book. Agnes found herself pondering on who she really was. A model, maybe? Some girl off the street? Was it an archive photograph? An Amish girl? Or an immigrant, straight off the boat, caught on camera before she began her long trek west? Whoever, it was a good choice. The girl was young, you could see that, and there was something compelling about her face. The strong brows, the clear, level gaze, the lips slightly parted as though she was just about to smile or speak.

Agnes printed the page and tacked it to the pin board above her desk. Underneath the face there was a message similar to the one in the back of the book.

Since the discovery of these diaries, efforts to trace Mary Newbury and the other people in this account have continued.

If you have any information regarding any of the other individuals and families mentioned, please contact our website www.witchchild.co.uk, or email Alison Ellman at alison_ellman@witchchild.co.uk

Agnes read the message again, although she knew it by heart. She moved the cursor around until it turned to a hand, first digit pointed to the highlighted address, but she did not click on it. She did know something about Mary Newbury, about what had happened to her, but to click would be a big step, one she was not certain that she wanted to take. Especially not now, not after what had just happened. It was a sign. She knew enough to recognise that. Medicine power ran through her family, like the streak of white in the hair. It followed the female line. Her aunt, her grandmother and her grandmother before her, each had followed the medicine way.

'If it's gonna come to you, it'll come,' her aunt had told her. 'Natural as your period. No way you can avoid it.'

Agnes hadn't wanted that, either. Now the thing had happened and she was not at all sure what to do. She stayed for a long time lost in indecision, finger raised, hand crouched over the mouse.

'Keep your mind open and there's no knowing who'll come visit.'

Her aunt's voice was in her head again and Agnes looked around, almost as if someone had spoken the words out loud. There was no one there.

The room was tidy. Agnes was a neat person and liked to keep her things that way. The walls were bright with posters and prints; the room was scattered with interesting things she'd collected, stuff she'd brought from home. She'd hoped that the effect was welcoming, but it had taken a while for people to step in and appreciate it.

She'd been lonely here. Very lonely. What friends she had at home had decided to study locally, or to skip college altogether, but she had wanted to get a degree, and she had chosen to come here. That decision had been made almost by accident; there were so many schools, so many courses. She'd wanted to get away and this seemed as good as any place, but when she got here, it had not been what she had

expected. She had a few friends now, in the student house, in her faculty, but it had been hard at the start. Back then, doubts had gnawed at her, eating away at her confidence. She'd kept to her room, listening to the voices outside raised in greeting or fixing meetings, calling down the corridor, shouting out of the windows into the square. Within days it seemed as if they'd all known each other for ever, while none of them had discovered that she was even here. She'd stayed on her own, alone in her room, wondering if she'd made the right decision, if she'd even make it through the year.

She'd been lonely plenty of times before, but there'd always been someone there for her, even if it had just been her mom. Here, every face she saw belonged to a stranger. The big city streets had her shrinking within, as if her true self was slinking inside another person's skin.

For a while she'd even thought about leaving, but those thoughts hadn't stayed long. She owed people. She couldn't quit school for no reason. They'd made sacrifices. Besides, she was not a coward and she'd toughened up some since then. Now it didn't bother her much if it was the beginning of a warm spring weekend, with everyone gone away. She had not been expecting company anyway.

But someone had come visiting. The girl watched from the wall as Agnes began to tap out her message.

To: alison_ellman@witchchild.co.uk
Cc:
Bcc:
Subject: Mary Newbury
From: Agnes Herne
Dear Ms Ellman,
A friend lent your book to me. She really liked it and thought I might too. She was right about that, I read it all the way through without stopping, but there was something that she couldn't possibly know. One of the reasons that I couldn't put it down has to do with Mary, the girl at the center of the story.

Agnes stopped the rapid motion of her fingers. Typing the next words would commit her to a course of action and there was no telling where it might lead. Agnes hesitated. When she'd first read the story and realised that there *could* be a connection, her heart had leaped inside her, but then reason had begun to kick in. She'd only glimpsed the

things after all, and the stories might be about someone else, not Mary at all. How could she be sure? How could anyone be sure that *this* was the one person out of all the unnamed dead who'd gone before? The more she thought on it, the more unlikely it seemed. Her aunt would know more, but that could be the biggest problem of all.

Even if it *was* Mary, getting the things from Aunt M, bringing them here to the city, taking them to be studied, that would be difficult. Not just difficult – impossible. Because these were special. Sacred. Aunt M, as guardian of such things, would never allow it. She'd led campaigns, got up petitions, demanding the return of sacred objects. The way she saw it, most of the Native American artefacts displayed in museums had been amassed as ethnic knick-knacks, cultural curios, by collectors who had no idea of their true worth to the people from whom they had been taken. To her, they were so much stolen property.

'What right they got to any of that stuff? Bunch of grave robbers!' Aunt M's voice started up in her head again. 'How'd they like it if we started busting up their churches, hauling the crosses off the altar, stealing the chalices and

crucifixes? What if we started breaking open their tombs and digging up their dead?'

There was a pause, then the voice came back, even stronger than before.

'You just flat out can't have them. I'd rather toss them in the trash can.'

Agnes thought to close the letter right there and then. Instead she found herself typing:

I am Kahniakehaka, Mohawk, part of the Haudenosaunee, the Iroquois Six Nations Confederacy. I live on the reservation in upper New York State, but right now I'm at college here in Boston

The sky outside was black now, the night had closed around her, making anything possible. Making what she typed, anything she typed, not real. The coverlet fell from her shoulders as she added some more:

My aunt also lives on the reservation. She has certain artefacts which seem like the things that Mary could have taken with her when she left the settlement. Much of our

history is told in story form and one of these stories tells of a white woman who joined the people. I can't recall all that much about the story, I'm afraid. I heard it when I was quite a little girl and guess I wasn't paying much attention. Neither can I be certain that this ancestor *is* her, but when I saw the message at the end of the book, I knew I had to contact you.

Agnes looked at what she'd just written, hesitating again before clicking on Send. She went to close the window instead.

Do you want to save changes to this message?

She was about to click on No when the picture on the wall caught her. The eyes held hers. She'd worry about Aunt M later. As Agnes stared back, the room began to get cold again.

She reached for the coverlet, wrapping it close around her, no longer able to dismiss this as some dream projection triggered by reading the book. This was something else altogether. Even though she had not consciously sought for it, it had come to her anyway. Impossible to deny it. She could still feel the coldness. To ignore such a powerful experience might be positively dangerous. She

was medicine enough to know that once a thing like this started, it would not go away. She had to find what it was and follow. Wherever it took her. Whatever the consequences. She had no choice.

The first step was obvious. She flexed her numb fingers into painful tingling life, then she pressed Send.

3

alison_ellman@witchchild.co.uk

Alison Ellman was working late at the Institute. An icon popped up in the corner of the screen, informing her, You have mail. She ignored it, concentrating her attention on the task in hand. She had information and files on pretty much everybody now. All the people mentioned in Mary's diary: Martha, who had befriended her; Jonah Morse and his son Tobias; the Rivers family and their daughter, Mary's friend, Rebekah; Elias Cornwell and Reverend Johnson; the people of Beulah; the girls who'd accused Mary; even Jack Gill, the boy she'd met on the boat. Everyone was there. Everyone except Mary. That was the worry.

She put it out of her mind to refocus on what she was doing, working on a transcript of Elias Cornwell's journals. These were not a complete record, some parts were missing, but they had proved a good source for what happened in Beulah after Mary fled the settlement. Alison had

read through them and everything else that he'd ever produced in her quest to find any reference to his time at Beulah, and to Mary.

Cornwell seemed to have had a soft spot for Mary and hadn't been the first to accuse her of witchcraft, but when push came to shove he'd joined in readily enough. He never lost his interest in the subject, and New England's subsequent history had offered plenty of scope for his expertise. His theories were pretty much run-of-the-mill – Cotton Mather did it better – but there were one or two references that were maybe based on Cornwell's actual experiences. They showed up in sermons he'd given on visits to outlying settlements, ones very like Beulah. He seemed to think that they were most in danger. Alison added a Post-it to the ones already frilling her computer, to remind herself to follow that up.

At last she'd found what she had searched for so diligently. She read through what she had so far. There was only a little bit more to transcribe and she didn't mean to leave her desk until security made their final rounds and the alarms were set.

Alison leaned back in her chair, her transcription from

Cornwell's diary finished.[1] She was glad she didn't have to spend any more time with him. He had not improved much as he got older. He'd just become more pompous, his observations increasingly long-winded and tedious, as he progressed through his various ministries. He'd married Sarah Garner, one of the girls who bore witness against Mary, and he'd sure kept his young wife busy in the child-bearing department. She'd gone from confinement to confinement and had died on the job, so to speak. Child-birth claimed her before she made thirty. Barely ten years after she left Beulah her young life was over, her strength gone, her body worn out.

The other girls hadn't fared too well either. Mary's main accusers had been Deborah Vane and her sister Hannah. According to Cornwell, Hannah had never recovered from her 'possession'. The temporary madness became permanent in her case. Within a year she was dead of some kind of wasting sickness. As for Deborah, their leader, she'd got her way and married Reverend Johnson but 'Be careful for what you wish', isn't that what witches said? This marriage

[1] Refer to the historical notes starting on p. 347 at the back of the book.

had not brought happiness. After Johnson, Deborah had gone on to Ned Cardwell, but this had not worked out well, either. The record showed a history of domestic violence and disorder. Eventually she left Cardwell and ended up in Virginia. Alison had a feeling that even there she did not prosper, probably finishing up in the stews of Jamestown or some other port. All evidence so far collected indicated Deborah's life choices had led her straight to the gutter.[2]

Maybe there was something inevitable about that, just like her sister Hannah going mad, but Alison had that feeling again, feathering the hairs on her arms and the back of her neck, that something else was going on here. Maybe Mary *had* put a curse on them.

Just like in that other, more famous place. The legend of Salem did not end with the witch trials. The judges and the sheriff did not walk away unscathed from courtroom and execution place; they went bearing curses. Many of those involved met untimely ends, so the stories went, and the curses did not finish with them, but passed down from generation to generation.

A similar dark stain spread through Beulah's history.

With the exception of Cornwell, all the accusers and would-be persecutors had come to a bad end in some way or another. Her two main tormentors were dead by the next year's end. Obadiah Wilson, the Witch Finder, choked to death on his own blood. Johnson drowned in shallow water. Indeed, the stain had spread until there was nothing left. Beulah had been obliterated. It didn't appear on any modern map, or any map at all that Alison had managed to find. It had ceased to exist altogether.[3]

Could this have been Mary's work? Could there really have been a curse? Alison rubbed her arms as the goose-flesh spread.

''Bout to lock up, Dr Ellman.'

The security guy's words startled her back to reality.

''Kay, Lloyd.'

It was nonsense, of course. Alison hauled her jacket off the back of her chair. It had got chilly in here, that was all. Most likely the heating had clicked off for the night. She had been studying these Puritans for so long, she was beginning to think like one.

There were logical reasons for every single event. The explanations were evident. Each of these individuals was

responsible for their own fate, and everyone had to die some time, of something.

It was not all dark and gloomy. Others in the story had prospered, sometimes in conditions little short of miraculous. Take Jonah and Martha. They had befriended Mary, cared for her, and nothing bad had happened to them, as far as Alison could tell. Jonah had opened an apothecary shop right here in Boston, in what is now the North End. There they had stayed, living out quiet lives in peace and prosperity until both were buried up on Copp's Hill.[4]

The Rivers family, along with Tobias and Rebekah, had experienced far more turbulence in their history. John Rivers had led them clear across the state to the Connecticut River valley, right to the edge of the world then so far explored. Here they had endured all kinds of dangers and difficulties. Rebekah and Tobias had even come under Indian attack in the conflict known as King Philip's War. Their town had been deserted for a time, but they went back. They survived; not only that, they prospered, going on to found quite a dynasty.

Alison had pieced their story together with the help of one of their descendants[5] and running like a thread all the

way through this story was the quilt. It had passed from Martha to Rebekah and then, according to family lore, it had been handed down through the female line, from daughter to daughter or daughter-in-law. A quirk of family history had led to the quilt's survival and ten girls in all had received this inheritance. Ten girls growing from child to woman, each in turn fading from maiden to matron, handing on the quilt, then ageing to crone before death and the grave claimed them and turned them to dust.

The quilt had its very own file alongside all the major players. Alison had information on every one of them now. Everything was catalogued and accounted for, ready for inclusion in the sequel.

If there was ever going to be a sequel.

Working on Cornwell's diary had kept her buoyed up, made her think that she was getting somewhere. Now gloom descended. She was not a quitter, but sometimes she felt like giving up entirely. What was the point in going on with this? The material she'd discovered about the Rivers family, about Martha and Jonah, about Jack Gill, it was interesting, fascinating even, but by itself it was not enough. It could never be enough without Mary. Without her, there

could be no second story. Without her there was a void at the centre of the whole project.

'Locking up now, Dr Ellman.'

'Be right there, Lloyd.'

Alison moved the pointer to shut down her computer. The You have mail icon was still flashing in the corner. She was eager now to finish for the day but she did not like to put things off and leave them until tomorrow.

From: Agnes Herne
To: Alison Ellman
Subject: Mary Newbury
Dear Ms Ellman,
A friend lent your book to me. She really liked it and thought I might, too. She was right about that, I read it all the way through without stopping, but there was something that she couldn't possibly know. One of the reasons that I couldn't put it down has to do with Mary, the girl at the centre of the story …

Alison sat for a moment, unable to believe what she saw with her eyes. She even looked away and back again,

expecting the words to erase themselves or tumble down to the bottom of the screen.

She read the whole email several times and then got up from her desk and walked about. She went to consult the big wall map of north-eastern America, her mind processing information in double time. Mohawk Reservation, upper New York State. Her finger went up near the Canadian border. Canada. Mohawk. Iroquois. That put a brand-new spin on everything. She'd thought Native American before, thinking maybe Mary joined up with Jaybird and his band, but she had come up with a total blank – a big nothing. But what if they'd gone to Canada? She'd thought of that too, but without proof of some kind it would be searching for a needle that might not be there to find. But a link to the Iroquois, to Mohawks? That meant Mary might have passed through Montreal. And that opened up a sudden new wealth of research possibilities. It was not within Alison's province, but that hardly mattered. The knack was knowing where to look, whom to contact. She had friends and colleagues up there. One in particular. She wondered if he'd be online now.

She went back to her desk, the beginning of a plan forming itself in her head. But first she had to contact this girl.

To: Agnes Herne

Cc:

Bcc:

Subject: RE: Mary Newbury

Hi Agnes,

Thanks so much for getting in touch! You are the first person to contact me who has promised anything about Mary. We have information on other people involved in her story but nothing on Mary, so anything you have would be an advance on that. Would it be possible for you to come here to the Institute and meet with me? Would tomorrow be too soon? Say around 11 a.m.? If this does not suit you, maybe you can suggest a better time.

I am VERY anxious to talk with you – I can't tell you how excited I am about what you have told me.

Looking forward to meeting you.

Best,

Alison Ellman

'Got to set the alarms now, Dr Ellman. Have to hurry you.'

Alison did not look up from her screen. She was already prioritising web sites, collecting threads, composing more messages.

‘I could be here all night. So you might as well lock me in. You got coffee?’

‘Sure.’ The guard grinned. ‘Black without, right?’

‘You got it.’