

CERRADO

by

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Chapter #1

The night was crystal clear as an incalculable amount of stars twinkled in the cloudless sky. A father and son walked along a small dirt trail that followed the contour of a lazy brook. The boy, dusty and snaggletooth with wild brown hair, had his eyes glued to the night sky as the tall, proud father held his little hand as they walked through the night. With only the full and bright silver moon as their guide, the pair walked in silence. The boy didn't bother to notice the brook to their left or the red stone wall holding the forest back on their right.

The smells of harvest lingered in the crisp fall air. It was not cold enough yet to see your breath, but cold enough to warrant an extra layer of clothes and a pair of gloves. The leaves beneath the pairs' feet crunched loudly as they walked along, making no attempt to quiet their movement. The father looked at his young boy with pride. The boy hadn't taken his eyes off the sky since they'd left their house. The young boy stopped, forcing his father to stop with him.

“What's the matter, Son?” the man asked.

“Father,” the young boy began, with a quizzical look on his face. “If there are so many stars in the sky, are there other worlds up there that contain people?”

The father smiled at his son. He was used to questions like these—questions that all six-year-old boys ask, boys who are curious about everything around them. The father looked to his son with a smile in his eyes. “Son, you don't need to look to the sky to find another world.”

The young boy nodded confusedly as he continued to walk along with his father, his eyes still scanning the heavens. The boy had dreams of going to a different world—of being on

a star, looking down on earth and looking back on his home and his friends. He dreamed he would be vast distances away—distances no other adventurer in history had traveled. As the boy looked, a shooting star shot across the sky, leaving a rainbow of color in its tail. The star burned out in the night while the boy's eyes enlarged as he quickly formulated his wish.

“Shooting star, shooting star,” the boy said, as he stopped and bowed his head in prayer. “How I wonder what you are. I wish I may, I wish I might, have this wish I wish tonight. I wish to find another world, and have an adventure greater than any adventure anyone has ever had.”

The boy looked back up to the heavens to see that the shooting star was no longer in the sky but its tail was still hanging like a mist in the atmospheres. The boy smiled as he looked up to his father.

“Kale Risdell,” the father said, sternly, to his son.

“Are you going to tell me not to have my head in the clouds?” Kale asked his father. “Like Mommy tells me?”

“No, I'm not, Kale,” the father said, getting down on one knee to look his son in the eye. “I'm going to tell you that when you find that world, when you have your grandest adventure of all the world, there's one thing you need to do.”

“What's that, Father?” the boy asked.

“You need to return to this spot on a clear night like this with billions of stars twinkling in the sky,” the father said, “And you need to thank the shooting star you just wished on.”

“I will, Father,” Kale said. “I will thank that star when I have my adventure.”

Kale Risdell never forgot that night, nor did he ever forget his dream of finding another world. In fact, he was so enthralled with the concept of seeing a new world and having an adventure that he spent his teen years studying everything he could about the stars. Kale received a scholarship to attend the foremost university of astronomy in London. It was there he used the biggest telescopes in the world to view the skies.

Although his heart was true and he worked harder than anyone else in the university, Kale was never able to discover a new world. He spent every waking moment trying to find something—something that wasn't there. His peers began to see his endurance in his theories of new worlds and they began to mock Kale over his beliefs. 'Everyone knows there's only one world—this world!' his schoolmates would say, mocking him for their own entertainment. Kale wouldn't give up, he knew his wish upon a star would come true. Not because of the particular star he wished on, but because his father believed in him.

As his passion for a new world consumed him, even the professors of the university worried about Kale. He never socialized with his classmates, and while his friends were spending time with their girlfriends, Kale was searching the skies. Kale was awkward and had a timid face with nervous eyes, but there were still girls longing for him to escort them to a dance—he never noticed. It got to the point where the leaders of the university decided Kale needed to have a break. They told him to return home for one month's time and stated if he wanted to continue with his education he would have to put his ideas of other worlds out of his head and focus on his studies.

Kale returned home to his family's sheep farm. His parents were happy to have him home, hoping that he would stay and be a shepherd like his father, his father's father, and all the men in the Risdell family. Kale knew his parents wanted him

to be like them—content herding sheep, living the simple life of a shepherd.

Kale simply couldn't accept that his wish upon a star wouldn't come true. He knew if he worked hard enough, he would find his other world and the adventure that came along with it. Kale took a walk to clear his head and try to figure things out. He didn't notice he was walking along the same lazy brook on the same road he and his father had walked together so many years ago. When Kale looked up to the sky on that crystal clear night—stars everywhere—his father's words came back to him: You don't need to look to the sky to find another world.

Kale never before pondered what his father meant by those words. If I don't need to look to the sky to find other worlds, where in the world would I look? Kale looked around where he was at. To his left was the lazy brook and to his right was a red stone wall holding back the Moon Forest. Kale had heard about people who went into the forest and had an adventure. He heard there were things in the forest that weren't human—nor were they animals.

Kale noticed a gate in the red stone wall, and in that moment he decided he would walk the forest and see where his path would take him. Kale stepped through the gate, looking over the dark forest. There were very few places the trees allowed the shafts of light from the bright silver moon to come through. Kale didn't know how he would find his way but something told him that he would. Timidly, Kale entered the forest.

After trekking only a few minutes into the woods, Kale wasn't sure where he was at or which way he had come from. He knew in that instant he had to make a choice that would change his life forever—should he continue on through the forest or should he turn back and go home. It seemed like it

should be such a simple, small choice but something told Kale that the weight of that decision and its consequences would be with him the rest of his life.

As Kale was about to take another step forward into the Moon Forest, something happened that he didn't expect. About twenty feet in front of him, Kale noticed two trees had seemingly fallen together, forming an arch over a patch of dirt. The trees themselves nor the arch weren't the strange thing. The strange thing was the fact that the arch seemed to be glowing a cool green color. It was like nothing Kale had ever seen. Kale fidgeted as he looked at the arch. He didn't know what to do—but then something came over him, prompting him to run into the arch.

From the cloudless night came a crack of thunder and a bolt of lightning which lit up the entire forest while the thunder shook the ground with its force. The next instant, the Moon Forest was quiet again. Only soft sounds of the animals—an owl, a fox, and crickets making noise. Notably, Kale was no longer in the Moon Forest.

Where he went or how long he was there, only Kale can say. No one from this world was there with him to understand the adventure that he had. His parents began to worry and many people searched the Moon Forest and surrounding areas but there was no trace of Kale, no one knew what happened to him. Every night, his mother and father would stand on their porch, looking out at the sky, hoping their only child would return to them.

After what seemed like a lifetime to his family, but was only six months, there was a bolt of lightning that lit up the entire Moon Forest. It was followed by a crack of thunder that shook the ground. Everything grew silent just before another bolt of lightning and crack of thunder. Standing by where the

trees had formed into an arch was Kale, smiling a true and happy smile for the first time in a very long time.

Standing next to Kale was a figure in a black hooded cloak. The figure was almost as tall as Kale and had a shapely and curvy figure. Long, shiny, thick black hair protruded from the hood of the cloak. A tiny bump was starting to form at the figure's midsection—barely there but enough to be noticeable. As the figure turned, what part of the face wasn't hidden by the hooded cloak, was bathed in the silver moonlight—revealing clear complexion skin glowing with youth and vigor, full pouty lips slightly pursed below a tiny button nose, and a smile that lit up the forest.

Kale took the hand of the figure and led her through the forest, past the red stone wall, and toward his parent's farm. As they started walking home, Kale stopped and looked up to the amazing starlit night. Kale smiled as a shooting star streaked across the sky as he took a deep breath, "Thank you star, thank you."

As the pair started walking again, Kale saw his father rushing down the road. When his father reached them he almost knocked Kale down when he embraced his son. His father noticed that Kale looked different somehow—braver and stronger. Kale's father looked at the figure with Kale, looking over her face before looking down toward her stomach.

"Kale," his father began. "It appears you had quite an adventure."

"Like you wouldn't believe, Father," Kale said. "I don't think my room is going to be big enough for me anymore, for us I mean, as this is my wife and she is expecting."

“I gathered that, yes. Adventures can change a person, Son. Are you sure being a shepherd will be enough for you?”

“Father,” Kale said. “I’ve seen things I didn’t know were possible. I’ve experienced things I never thought I’d experience. And I’ve lived a life I didn’t know I could. I know now that our little village is not the worst place in the world. I’m sure one day I’ll want to have another adventure, but for now we will be content to raise our child here on our little farm.”

“Your mother will be happy to hear that,” Kale’s father said. “When we heard that thunder and saw the lightning, the same thunder and lightning that marked the day you left, your mother had me rush here to see if you had returned.”

“I am back, Father,” Kale said. “Tomorrow we will find a proper house for my wife and me, but tonight let’s celebrate my return.”

Kale, his wife, and his father all smiled as they started to return to their home. Kale and his wife made a very successful run on the farm and Kale never returned to the university. His child was born and his parents passed away, the arrow of time points in one direction only, and Kale never spoke to anyone about his journeys beyond the arch—only telling people that he met his wife a few towns over.

The pair had a handsome son, Krispin, who they raised to follow in the family footsteps of being a shepherd, but they also instilled in him knowledge and values that most shepherds don’t need. Krispin grew into a strapping but scrawny young lad. A lad who, like his father, longed for adventure...

Chapter #2

On a bright and sunny day, where only whips of white fluffy clouds hung lazily in the sky, Krispin Risdell, a tall and lanky, scrawny lad with bright eyes, unknowing of the world as his thick brown hair cascaded past his shoulders, slept with his back to a tall old apple tree. He was in the family's south paddock, a swell of grasslands that was surrounded by a three foot high gray stone fence that contained most of the family sheep. As he slept, Krispin dreamt of adventures in the world, pirates on the high seas, treasures and gold in the Klondike, and mysterious buildings in the desert.

The sheep grazed peacefully on their own, feeling protected by the wall which would not allow them to see the wolves gathering outside trying to find a way to sneak in while the powerful and handsome Kale Risdell walked along the wall. Kale was on his way home from the market after selling the winter wool crop, his wallet was fat with the bounty of a good year. The trees and grass had that spring green look, that special hue of green that looks so good after months of being covered by the white snow.

Kale arrived at the old apple tree where his son took his nap. Kale smiled while shaking his head, looking at his boy, knowing that Krispin was destined to greater things than tending a flock of sheep. Kale decided to play a small joke on his son.

“The sheep are out!” Kale yelled, not more than a few feet from his son. “The sheep are out and there's wolves out there!”

Krispin instantly woke up, grabbed his staff, stood quickly, and tried to take off but tripped over his own feet. In

confusion, Krispin looked up to see his father offering a hand to help him up while at the same time chuckling at his joke.

“That wasn’t funny, Father,” Krispin said.

“Never allow the chance for a joke to pass,” Kale said, as Krispin got to his feet. “You may not have another chance to have that joke again. Tell me Krispin, how are the sheep today?”

“Months away from being a meal and a sweater, but they still fatten themselves up thinking they are living the good life in our paddocks,” Krispin said. “Ah, Father, the sheep are fine. They were fine yesterday and they will be fine tomorrow. We have the best walls in the country, Grandfather built them himself. The sheep will not escape nor will the wolves enter.”

“I sense you’re upset.”

“Whatever gave that away?”

“Son...”

“Don’t give me the lecture again, Father,” Krispin said, as he looked over the flock of two hundred sheep. “I know, everyone in my family has been a shepherd. We are a family of shepherds who take pride in have the best sheep in the countryside. I just feel like there’s so much more out there, that something is calling me to be something more than a simple shepherd.”

“Are you saying that a shepherd doesn’t have a noble occupation?”

“I didn’t say that at all, Father,” Krispin said. “It’s just that I’m not a shepherd. I’m something more.”

“What?”

“I don’t know yet,” Krispin said. “I haven’t had the ability to find out yet because I’m always watching the sheep. I want to go out and explore the world, Father. There has to be more here than just our little farm with our little village.”

“And if you were to go, where would you go?”

“Paris or London,” Krispin said, looking dreamily into the sky. “Maybe I’d go to the Klondike and pan for gold, or I could go to the Caribbean and protect ships from pirates. I could go to the desert and investigate the strange buildings and tombs being found. I could go climb a mountain or cross a sea. There’s an adventure out there for me, Father. I know it. But I can’t find it if I’m trapped here on this farm.”

“Don’t let your mother hear you say it like that.”

“But I’ve heard the stories,” Krispin protested. “You went to university and studied the skies. They said you were gone for four years and when you returned you’d already married Mother and she was expecting me.”

“You’re right,” Kale said. “I did go to university and met your mother. Krispin, your mother and I only want you to be happy but we need you on the farm. There are more important things than having an adventure. I’m sure you’ll find your bride here. I’m sorry, Son. I can’t let you go off on an adventure. Not yet anyway.”

“Father,” Krispin said, turning to look his father in the eyes. “I have to move on soon. I can’t keep watching the flock. I need something more than this.”

“What would you do with more?”

“I don’t know,” Krispin said. “I’ll know when I see more, experience more. It’s my time, Father.”

“You don’t choose when your calling is, Son,” Kale said. “Krispin, one day you will get your adventure, but not today. Why don’t you walk the wall again and make sure there are no gaps where a wolf could get in.”

“Okay, Father,” Krispin sighed heavily as he climbed onto the wall.

Krispin walked on the top of the wall as he checked over the wall’s integrity. Like always, the wall would stand through anything, built strong and true. Krispin couldn’t believe his dad was so unwavering in his desire to keep Krispin on the farm. As Krispin was walking, something caught his attention. On the road, walking toward him, was Holly Porter. Holly was a tall, thin girl, with a shapely body, long eyelashes, bright big blue eyes that were sometimes hidden by her long golden curly locks. She was walking down the road, deep in thought.

Krispin instantly noticed that Holly wasn’t walking with the usual skip in her step, that energetic step that would drive all the boys wild as she passed by in her fancy dresses and matching hats. Her bright eyes were focused on the ground, like she was trying to figure something out, her face held in a confused, questing expression that Krispin had never seen before. As Krispin was watching Holly, he wasn’t watching where he was walking and walked right off the wall, hitting the ground with a thud, right in front of Holly.

“Holly,” Krispin said, quickly standing and brushing the dust off. “I wasn’t planning on dropping in on you today but I saw you walking and I thought, why not?”

“Krispin,” Holly said, in her light, angelic voice. “How dreadfully charming. Please, today is not the day for your jokes.”

“What’s wrong?”

“Everything.”

“Come now, Holly,” Krispin said, hopefully. “A beautiful woman like you cannot have that big of problems. Tell me what’s going on and I’m sure I can figure it out for you.”

“I don’t know, Krispin,” Holly said. “I don’t think you’d want to know.”

“I’m going to find out sometime anyway,” Krispin said. “You’ll go home and tell your little friend Hannah, simply because you tell her everything, and Hannah will tell everyone in the village.”

“You’re right,” Holly said. “Okay Krispin, but remember you pushed me to tell you. I received a marriage proposal today.”

“What?” Krispin almost yelled. “How...what...from who...what?”

“Chester Van Brunt,” Holly said.

“Chester?” Krispin asked in disbelief. “That Neanderthal? These sheep would make a better husband than Chester. Why do you even spend your time with that brute?”

“He may be brutish,” Holly said. “But he has his charms. Oh Krispin, my knees get weak every time Chester flashes those fire-intense eyes at me. I get butterflies in my stomach when Chester takes my hand. I get...”

“I get it,” Krispin said. “He’s a swell fella. Holly, there’s a lot of men that would like to marry you.”

“Believe me Krispin,” Holly said. “I know that. I’m the most beautiful girl in all the village, plus my father is the largest grain farmer and I have no other siblings. A man that marries me gets not only an amazing woman, but more money than they could imagine.”

“I want to marry you, Holly,” Krispin said, optimistically.

“I know,” Holly said. “But I owe it to my family to marry a man who will not only take care of me but also run the family farm in a way Father would approve of. I need to be with a strong man who can protect me. I need a man who knows how to treat a woman.”

“I know how to treat a woman,” Krispin said. “Better than Chester ever would.”

“Can I make a confession to you?”

“Of course, Holly.”

“I don’t want to marry Chester,” Holly said. “I really don’t want to. The reason isn’t why you think. Chester’s content to be here, to run a farm and drink ale at parties but I want more than that. I want to see the world. I want a man who will take me to the new world. I want a man who will take me to London and show me the museums. I want to go to Paris and see a real play. I want to sail the seas.”

“Holly,” Krispin said. “That’s exactly what I want to do. I’m going to have an adventure one day. I’m going to have an adventure that will go down in history as the greatest adventure of all time. Remember when we used to walk home from school together? I would tell you about the adventures I would have. I’m going to have one of those adventures, Holly. I will.”

“Oh, thank you, Krispin,” Holly said, laughing heartily. “I needed to hear a good joke. You are not the type of boy who has adventures. You are a shepherd just like your father and his father. You will stay in the village and tend the flocks your entire life. You’re grade-school fantasies will never come true.”

“I won’t be a shepherd, Holly,” Krispin said, dropping to one knee. “Holly, marry me.”

Holly was shocked by Krispin’s proposal. She did know he cared deeply for her and she’d even used that care to get Krispin to cater to her before. Holly was in a tough place, she just had two proposals from men she really didn’t want to marry but she knew her parents wanted her married before her twenty-first birthday, which was only three months away.

“I have to marry someone I know will be a good match for me, Krispin,” Holly said.

“I will be the best match for you,” Krispin said, still on his knee. “When we get married I will sell part of my flock and take you on a one-year tour of the world. We will have grand adventures that will be the talk of our village for years to come. We will see all the major sights of the world.”

“I still just don’t know, Krispin,” Holly said. “I don’t know if I even want to return to our village...it’s so small and plain.”

“Holly,” Krispin stood and took her hand. “My father always says people have no limits on what they could achieve if they work for it. He had an adventure and met Mother while he was away. I could have an adventure grander than anything he ever did. You never know what turn of events could happen to a person. In a few years I could even be king.”

“Oh please,” Holly said, taking her hand away and laughing harder than before. “You, king? I doubt that any one would ever bow to you Krispin. You talk big but I don’t hear any conviction in your voice. You don’t believe the words that you say. I’m going to marry Chester. He may be couth but I will be taken care of and rich. I can talk him into trips and adventures. It would be best for everyone.”

“Not for me, it wouldn’t,” Krispin said. “Give me a chance, Holly. I will show you and everyone in the village that I’m capable of having a grand adventure.”

“Okay,” Holly said. “Why not? I will get married on my twenty-first birthday which is three months from now. If you have an adventure, and I mean a grand, amazing adventure, I will marry you instead of marrying Chester. I will alone decide if your adventure is grand enough for me to marry you. Do you accept those terms?”

“I do, Holly,” Krispin said. “I will leave for an adventure that will amaze everyone.”

“You do that, Krispin,” Holly said, as she began to walk away.

Krispin rushed back to the wall and jumped on top of it, throwing a quick glance over his sheep before leaning against his staff to watch Holly skip away. Whatever he’d said, it gave her that spring—that skip, back to her step. His mind raced with all the things he would need to do before going on his adventure. As he watched Holly, he regretted only one thing, one thing he didn’t say. He watched Holly disappear around the bend as he whispered, “I love you.”