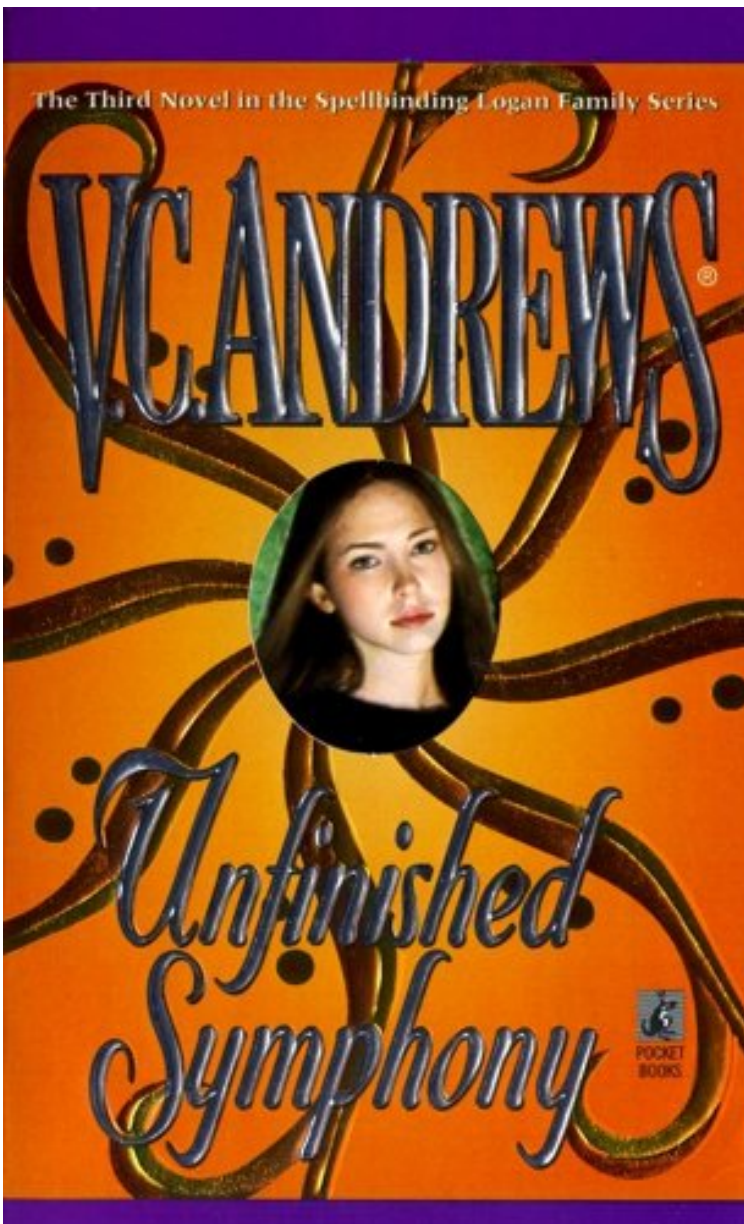


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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurMelody Logan had only just found a safe harbor when a new storm set her adrift all over again....Melody had always believed her mother, Haille, and dear stepdaddy had died in tragic accidents -- that's why she'd come to stay with her secretive Logan relatives on Cape Cod. But then a friend recognized Haille's picture in a catalog and kindled Melody's hopes. Maybe her mother hadn't perished in a fire in California after all, but was in some desperate trouble that kept her out of reach....Melody's dream of finding her mother seemed as flimsy as the scrap of paper that was her only clue. And despite the pampered

life Melody was offered as a guest in a Beverly Hills mansion, nothing could soften the blow of the moment she stood face-to-face with her mother and saw her eyes turn dark and cold as stones. Melody knew there must be a reason why her mother pretended at first not to recognize her -- and why she'd even faked her own death. Though Melody's beloved Cary beckoned from Cape Cod, she felt in her heart that her mother needed her now more than ever. And beneath her mother's unkept promises and tattered fantasies, Melody hoped to unearth the truth about her own past, and find her way to a safer, better place...where she could embrace a bright new future of her own.

Extrait Prologue

The New York City skyline took my breath away. As Holly and I approached the sparkling city, I reflected on the rush of events that had brought me all this way. Too excited to rest yet too tired to talk with Holly, I decided to write Alice Morgan and thank her for sending the picture that had catapulted me into this odyssey, this journey to find my past.

Dear Alice, Thank you, thank you, thank you for sending me that clothing catalogue with the picture of the model who looked just like my mother. Kenneth and I agreed with you, and Kenneth contacted the catalogue company and they gave him the name of the model, Gina Simon, and her address. And you'll never guess where I'm headed right this very minute as I write this letter. Los Angeles! Hollywood! Well, actually, I'm in New York City now (or driving through it at least -- we just passed the Empire State Building!). Kenneth's friend Holly offered to drive me to New York, and then Holly's sister Dorothy and her husband, Peter, have volunteered to let me stay with them in Beverly Hills. Can you believe it? I'm a little scared to be traveling so far on a dream, though. What if this Gina Simon just turns out to be a woman who looks a lot like Mommy? Or maybe even worse, what if she is my mother? What does that mean? Then who is buried in her grave in Provincetown? And why hasn't she let me know that she's okay, that she really didn't die in that car crash? Maybe she got sick and lost her memory. If Mommy has amnesia she might need me now more than ever. I just have to go. I have to have the answers to all these questions. You would think that with all the excitement Of finding a clue about my mother I would be happier. But leaving Provincetown almost broke my heart. I know when I last wrote you I told you that I was lonely, and that Grandma Olivia was giving me a hard time, and that certainly hasn't changed, but Cary and I have grown so close that it was painful to leave him. And to watch little May cry as she waved good-bye was just awful. They really have become like family to me. And Cary, of course, has become much more. I'll have to tell you all about it when we talk.

Well, Alice, I hope to have news for you soon, and I hope you are enjoying life back in Sewell. I really do miss West Virginia. And you of course! Say hi to everyone at school and keep your fingers crossed!

Love, Melody

Chapter 1: A Glimpse into the Future

Holly's crystal shop looked small inside because every available space was utilized. The air reeked of incense and there was some kind of Far Eastern music playing. Large crystals, all shiny and jagged, stood on antique tables at the center of the shop and tall oak bookshelves lined the side walls. I turned my gaze to the books alongside me and noticed that the shelves were filled with titles describing meditation practices, astrology, faith healing, the afterlife and parapsychical wonders, whatever they were. Along the back wall was a long glass case crowded with birth stones, as well as amethyst, blue topaz, citrine, garnet and other minerals set in earrings. On the shelves behind the glass case were boxes of incense, teas, Tarot cards and herbal medicines. The ceiling was covered with charts of the constellations, along with posters explaining the powers of various stones. Above the cash register, framed in flowers, was a photograph of a man Holly said was the Buddhist guru who had taught her about meditation. A curtain of multicolored beads hung in the doorway that led to the rooms in back of the shop.

We'd only been in the shop a few moments when a young man in a wheelchair, whom I knew had to be Billy Maxwell, parted the curtain and appeared. He had silky ebony hair that reached his shoulders and framed his face, a face that had an angelic glow because of his rich, almost alabaster complexion. As soon as he saw us, his light green eyes brightened and a gentle smile appeared on his face. Perhaps because of his disability and dependence upon his arms and shoulders, his upper body was firm, muscular, obvious even in his loose, light blue shirt. He wore a pair of dark jeans, white socks and sneakers. There was a large, round gem in a gold casing dangling on a gold chain around his neck and his right ear was pierced and filled with a turquoise stone earring.

"Hi, Billy," Holly said as he wheeled himself closer, his eyes fixed on me. "Hi. You got here earlier than I expected. How was your trip?" he asked her, while still concentrating on me. "Good. This is Melody." "Pleased to meet you," Billy said, extending his hand. He had long, soft fingers and a palm that was warm against mine. "Hi," I said. There seemed to be such peacefulness in his face, a calmness that helped me feel at home. "So you're on a big journey," he said, sitting back. "Yes," I answered, unable to hide my nervousness. "The Chinese say a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step and you've taken that single step. That's usually the hardest," he added. "Now the momentum will take over and carry you to

where you have to go." I nodded and then glanced at Holly, not sure what I should say or do. She laughed. "You'll get some good advice here, Melody. Billy's the best tour guide in our galaxy." Billy smiled but kept his eyes on me. It was strange having him look at me so intently, but I didn't feel intimidated or self-conscious. I felt his sincerity, his concern and it was as if he and I had known each other for years instead of minutes. "What's been happening here?" Holly asked before we started across the shop. "Well, Mrs. Hadron's daughter gave birth prematurely early this morning, but the baby is doing well. She stopped by to thank us for the smoky quartz -- it really helped her daughter get through the crisis. And Mr. Brul was here this morning to tell you that the variscite helped him recall a past life. He had vivid details to share." "Past life?" I asked. "Yes. He saw himself in England, mid-nineteenth century. He said he was a bookkeeper, which made sense to him. He's an accountant now." "You mean you believe we all have former lives?" I asked, looking from him to Holly and then back to him. "Yes," Billy said smiling. "I have no doubt." "Well, for now we'll have to concentrate on her present life," Holly said. "This way, honey." "I'm sorry I can't help with your bags," Billy apologized. "We'll be fine," Holly replied. "See you in a few minutes." "Welcome again, Melody, and don't worry. There is good energy surrounding you." His eyes grew small. "Things will work out for you," he said with confidence. It was as if he really could look into the future. "Thank you," I said. The door chimes rang as two elderly women entered the shop. While Billy attended to them, Holly led me through the curtain of beads to the living quarters at the rear of the shop. "Our rooms are right back here," she explained. I followed her through the doorway to a short hallway. There was a small living room on the right with a sofa, a smaller settee, two easy chairs, a glass table and two standing lamps. "This is Billy's bedroom," she said nodding at the first door on the left. "It makes it easier for him to be closest to the shop. I have the next room and you can take this room across the hall," she said opening the door. It was a very small room with one window that opened on the rear of the building. There wasn't much to look at: just a driveway that provided access to garbage trucks and a small, fenced in area for someone's dog. The dog was in its doghouse at the moment, with just its large black paws visible. The window had light brown cotton curtains and a window shade with a quarter moon and a star painted on it. There was a large ball-shaped mauve candle on the nightstand. The dark pine bed had a light brown comforter and matching pillows. It looked comfortable. Actually, the room was cozy with its tan carpet, its dark pink walls, lamp, rocking chair, table and matching dark pine dresser. A set of chimes dangled in the corner above the chair, barely moving at the moment. "This room gets a lot of use," Holly explained. "Many people who belong to our network of friends pass through New York going one way or another and stop over for a short visit. I know it's small but..." "It's fine, Holly. Thank you." "Why don't you just settle in. The bathroom's at the end of the hallway. Freshen up. I'll do the same and call my sister. Then we'll have some dinner. Billy does all the cooking, you know." "Really?" "And he's quite the gourmet." "I forgot what you told me about why he's in a wheelchair. Did you say he was shot?" "Mugged, about five years ago not that far from here. He ran and the mugger shot at him and shattered Billy's spinal cord." "How horrible, but I'm glad you told me. I didn't want to say anything wrong." "Don't worry about that. Billy is quite at peace with himself and his condition. Because of his spirituality, he pities more people than pity him. I can't think of a moment when he was depressed these past few years. Anyone who comes in here feeling the least bit sorry for himself usually leaves feeling ashamed of his own selfpity after they talk to Billy. And he's a wonderful poet, published in many literary magazines. We'll get him to read you something later." Holly put her arm around my shoulders and squeezed. "Just like Billy said, everything's going to turn out fine, Melody." I nodded. The discoveries, the quick decision to make the journey and the ride to New York, as well as how overwhelming the city was, suddenly filled me with a deep fatigue. I felt my body sink, my legs soften, my eyelids turn to lead. "Take a rest," Holly wisely advised. As soon as she left me I lay down and dropped my head to the pillow. A tinkle, like the sound of glasses being jiggled in a dishwasher tray, woke me. For a few seconds, I didn't know where I was. The sun had gone down and the room was filled with shadows. Someone had come in while I was asleep and turned on the small lamp by the rocking chair. I sat up to grind the sleep out of my eyes. The window was slightly open and the breeze that passed through made the chimes hanging from the ceiling tap, which solved the mystery of the sound. I heard a gentle knock at the door. "Yes?" Holly, dressed in one of her bright yellow dresses with a yellow and green headband, her silver crystal earrings dangling down to her shoulders, poked her head through the open door. "You've been sleeping quite a while. Getting hungry?" "Yes," I said. "Good. I spoke to my sister Dorothy and everything is set. As soon as we know when your flight arrives, I'll call her and she and her driver will meet you at the airport. My friend is working on the ticket now and promises to call within the hour. Billy's been preparing a feast. Freshen up and come out

when you're ready," she said. "Thank you, Holly." "You're welcome sweetheart. Oh," she said before closing the door again, "I spoke to Kenneth. He sends his regards and his best wishes," she added, but I picked up a change in her tone. "Was something wrong?" "He just sounded a little down. Maybe he misses us. Misses you, especially," she offered. "He's probably working twenty hours a day." "Twenty? More like twenty-two," she said with a small laugh. Then she closed the door and I got up and opened my suitcase to pick out something to wear. After I had washed up, fixed my hair, and changed, I went out to the kitchen. The aroma of the food was tantalizing and made my stomach churn. Billy, bent over a table obviously built lower to accommodate him in his wheelchair, turned as I entered. Holly was in the shop with a customer. "Hi. How are you doing?" Billy asked. "I feel better after my nap. Looks like I slept longer than I thought I would. Can I help?" "Everything's done," he said nodding at the table he had set. "Holly will close the shop in about ten minutes and we'll have dinner. Oh, let me light the candles," he said. "I like to dim the room when we eat. It heightens the sense of taste when you diminish the power of the other senses. Did you know that?" "No." "It's true," he said, laughing at my skepticism. "Didn't you ever notice that food tastes better in the dark? Assuming it's good food, that is." He lit each candle and then returned to his work table. "How long have you been cooking?" "Since I became a vegetarian. It's just a lot easier to cook for yourself and besides, preparing good food is an art and very self-satisfying. Most people today think it's an ordeal, but that's because they don't take pride in what they do. They don't look for the essence, the inner rewards. Life for them is full of burdens. They're never at ease and they rarely enjoy their own accomplishments. Their days are full of stress and negative energy." He turned back to me. "I don't mean to bore you with a lecture. Holly says once I get started, I'm like a clock that won't wind down." "No, really, I don't mind," I said. "Why are you a vegetarian?" Billy paused in his food preparation and turned his chair so he could face me. "I follow many Buddhist traditions and consider all animal life sacred, but other religious groups practice vegetarianism as well. In the Roman Catholic Church, for example, it has been practiced monastically by Trappists since 1666 and among Protestants by Seventh Day Adventists. I believe that the killing of animals is unnecessary and cruel and can conceivably lead to disregard for human life. It's also a healthier way to live, as long as you don't neglect your protein." He smiled. "Now you think I'm some sort of kook, right?" "No," I said, "but I know a lot of people in Cape Cod who would be unhappy if people stopped eating fish." "Oh, well, for that I make an exception," he said with a wink. "I'll eat net-caught fish on occasion, as long as I know there are no chemicals added." "Something smells very good," I admitted. "Tonight's menu," Billy announced, sitting up straighter in his chair. "We shall begin with chilled okra yogurt soup, then an orange, walnut and romaine salad, followed by rice, carrot, mushroom and pecan burgers on toasted seven-grain bread. For dessert, I have prepared a carob cake with carob ricotta icing. Something special in celebration of your arrival," he added. My silence brought laughter to his lips. "Don't know what you're in for, huh?" he said. "It sounds...interesting," I said, and he laughed harder. "What's going on in here?" Holly asked as she entered the room. "I just described the menu to Melody and she was speechless. Then she said it was interesting. How's that for diplomacy?" "Oh. Don't worry, Melody. You're in for a delightful surprise," Holly promised. "Did you close up?" Billy asked. She nodded. "Then let the feast begin," he declared, slapping his hands together. Once again I asked to help, but Billy insisted I was the guest of honor. It amazed me how quickly he could move about the kitchen, spinning himself on the wheels of his chair. Holly turned the lights down and took her seat. The soup was delicious and refreshing. The salad was very good, but I was most surprised by the vegetable burgers because they did resemble meat in their texture and even their flavor. "How do you do this?" I asked, munching away. "He has magic hands," Holly said. Billy asked questions about Cape Cod, my life there and my life before in Sewell, West Virginia. He was a good listener, absorbing every detail. Occasionally, he and Holly exchanged a look that told me they had discussed me and my situation at length. "You have to realize," he said when I completed my explanation as to why I was on this trip, "that places change people. We react to our environment, to the other people around us, to the climate and especially to the sort of energy force that is there. Even if this woman is your mother, she might be more of a stranger to you now than you would expect." "I hope not," I said mournfully. "Just be prepared," Billy advised. "I don't know how to prepare for something like that." "Maybe I can help you," he said, his eyes intense. The telephone rang and Holly spoke to her travel agent friend. When she hung up, she told me my flight was set for the day after tomorrow. "It will bring you into Los Angeles about eleven A.M. Pacific time. I'll call Dorothy and give her the flight number and time," she added, returning to the phone. My heart began to pound now that my plans were becoming a reality. When I looked at Billy, I saw he was smiling softly at me, his eyes full of comfort. It helped me relax again. This time when Holly hung up, she shook her

head. "Dorothy will take you to some Beverly Hills restaurant for lunch, where you will eat a piece of celery and a cupful of pasta for a hundred dollars, I'm sure," she said. "Think of my sister as someone who has to be humored. La La Land is just Disneyland for the rich and famous." "Oh, now let her make her own conclusions, Holly," Billy said charitably. "Who knows? She may enjoy that world." "Not this down-to-earth girl. You listen to me, Melody. Get in and get out. Find out what you have to find out and if it isn't what you expected or what you want, put yourself on the next plane out and come back here if you like before you return to Cape Cod," Holly said. "Also, ignore ninety percent of what my sister tells you and be skeptical about the other ten percent." The phone rang again. Holly spoke to someone for a few moments and then, when she hung up, she announced she had to leave for a while. "I have to do an astrological reading for someone. It's way past due. I hate to leave you your first night here, but..." "She'll be fine," Billy said. "Will you read her one of your poems?" "If she would like," he replied, turning to me. "Oh yes, please," I said. "But I insist that you let me help clean up." "No problem. I'm a gourmet cook and all gourmet cooks let people help clean up." He and Holly laughed and I smiled widely. I had been in New York only a few hours, but I felt more at home here than I had at the homes of my so-called relatives and family. Maybe Billy was right; maybe there was such a thing as positive energy and maybe he would give me enough to help me get through the dark valleys and tunnels that loomed ahead. The question was, would I find any light at the end? After I straightened up the kitchen and put dishes and cooking implements away, I stopped by the living room where Billy sat gazing at a notebook in his lap. "Come on in," he said. "I was sitting here thinking about what I had written that would be most appropriate for your circumstances and it's taken me all the way back to my rebirth." "Rebirth?" He nodded and flicked some strands of hair from his eyes. He had that soft, angelic smile on his lips again. I had never met anyone who seemed so at peace with himself. It reminded me of the deep calm before a storm, when the whole world seemed to be holding its breath. Cary called it Mother Nature's deception, claiming she tricked us into believing all was well just before she sent the furies down around us. "Yes, rebirth, for I was dead to so much before my...my death," he said. "I was like most people, blind and deaf, confused by the clatter and noise, chasing material things, living on the lowest level and never hearing the song." "The song?" "The spiritual song, the voice deep within us all, the voice that links us to each other, to every living and even non-living thing. Even the man who shot me is part, of this overall spiritual essence, and in that sense, we're part of each other, forever." "Did they catch him?" "No, but that doesn't matter. He shot himself when he shot me. We're eternally tied together by that act." "You mean you could forgive him for it?" I asked, astounded. "Of course. There's nothing to forgive. The negative energy that was in him is what must be driven away. He was captured, a prisoner of that, just as I was captured and for a while made prisoner by the bullet that shattered my spine." "How can you be so positive?" I asked with curious astonishment. "I was lying on my hospital bed, feeling terribly sorry for myself, cataloguing all the things I would no longer be able to do, regretting how much I was dependent on other people, in truth, wishing I would die," he explained, "when suddenly Holly stopped at my bed accompanied by her guru, an elderly man from India who had eyes like crystals themselves. It was part of their charity work to visit the infirm and give sick people hope. Right from the start, I felt something about him, some inner strength that he was able to share with me, instill in me. He taught me how to meditate and opened the doors to my new self. I dedicated my first poem to him. He has since gone back to India. That's a picture of him in the shop." After that Holly came to me and offered me a job in her shop and I agreed. I've been here ever since. "Let's see," he said, flipping the pages. "Ah, yes. This was when I first began to write poems. I wasn't working here long. I had read some poetry in this Village newspaper and thought I would like to try putting my thoughts down, too. Want to hear it?" "Very much, please." He stared at the pages for a long, silent moment and then in a very soft, low voice, read. "I had come to the end of daylight and faced the doorway of darkness. But when I touched my face, I realized my eyes were closed and my skin was cold. All that I thought I loved and needed was gone and I was naked, shivering in misery. They were measuring me for a coffin. Suddenly, I heard a voice calling from within myself. I turned my eyes around to look back, to look down, to look deep and I saw a single candle. It drew me closer until I could reach out and put my fingers in the flame. Slowly, meticulously, I burned away my dead body and when it was gone, I was no longer naked." He looked up slowly. "It's beautiful," I said, "but I'm not sure I understand." "I had to crawl out of my old, now crippled body, burn it away because it literally imprisoned me. Once I found the inner light, true spirituality, I was able to go beyond the physical body and reach a higher place. Someday, you will too. Everything you love and think you need looks lost. You're on a search because you feel naked, without meaning or hope; but you'll see that you have everything you need inside yourself and you didn't have to

take a single step in any direction."I said nothing. We gazed at each other in the silence and then he smiled."You've got that look in your eyes again. You think I'm a kook again." "No," I said, laughing. "Actually, I hope what you say is true." "It is, but these are discoveries everyone has to make for himself or herself. I can only show you the way, point you in a direction." "Is that why Holly called you the best guide in the galaxy?" "Yes," he said with a laugh. "All right, enough lessons for one evening. Want to go for a walk?" "A walk?" He laughed at my surprise. "Well, you'll walk and push me along," he said. "Oh. Sure," I said, hoping I hadn't insulted him with my astonishment. "It's pretty warm out. You don't need a jacket." Without any hesitation, he turned his chair around and wheeled himself out of the living room, through the kitchen and out into the shop. I almost had to run to keep up. We paused outside the door for him to lock it and then he, asked me to push him up the street. At the corner, we crossed and went down another street, past the shops, a few restaurants and a small theater. The sidewalks were crowded with well-dressed people, and I enjoyed seeing their glamorous hustle-and-bustle lifestyle. When we reached the N.Y.U. campus, Billy had me pause to listen to some speakers. Some were making political speeches, others were ranting about the coming of the end of the world. At one corner a man played a guitar and sang folk songs to a small group that had gathered around him. He had his hat before him and people were putting in change and dollars. Farther down, a group of young men sang spiritual songs a cappella. They were very good and they, too, had a basket out for contributions. "What do you think?" Billy asked me as we moved down the sidewalk, past homeless people asking for handouts, a man arguing with a tree, and a black boy who looked like he couldn't be more than twelve playing the bongo drums. "Now I understand why Holly calls New York a carnival of life." Billy laughed and asked me to wheel him toward a bench where there were no people and little noise. I sat and we watched the traffic, the groups of tourists and city dwellers making their way to and from their destinations. "It was on this corner," he suddenly said. "What was?" "Where it happened. I was running in that direction," he nodded to the left. "It was about two in the morning. I was a student here, you know." "Oh. Doesn't it bother you to come here?" "No. It intrigues me. I can give you this advice, Melody Logan," he said in a deeper, darker voice that made my spine tingle. "Seize the moment, confront the face of that which frightens you and search until you find a way out. Don't let anything shut you up inside yourself. Wherever you go, whatever you see, when you are most afraid, think of this corner, of those shadows, of me sitting here and staring back through time at myself, at the gunman, at the sound of the pistol, at myself folding on that sidewalk and then, suddenly rising up out of myself and standing taller than before." He reached out and took my hand and I felt as if his courage and spiritual strength moved into me. I smiled. "Thank you, Billy." "Thank yourself, cherish yourself and don't let anyone make you feel small." He sat back and suddenly looked exhausted, as if he had spent all his energy on me. "Maybe we should go back now," I suggested. He nodded. Holly still hadn't returned by the time we arrived. "Can I help you with anything?" I asked. "I'll be fine," he said, smiling. "Thank you." Billy wheeled himself down the corridor, first to the bathroom and then to his room. I prepared for bed myself. As he went by to go to his room, he paused at my door. "Good night, Melody." "Good night, Billy," I called. He wheeled into his room and I marveled at how cheerful he was and how well he had driven the shadows of loneliness from his door. I wasn't in my room five minutes before those shadows began closing in on me. Here I was in a strange place, away from anyone I loved or who loved me, feeling like a wanderer who had lost all sense of direction and no longer knew her way home. From what well of faith did Billy Maxwell draw so much strength? I lay there in the dark thinking about Cary, hearing his laughter, recalling flashes of his smile, his beguiling eyes, even his smirk. Thinking about him made me feel better. I closed my eyes and concentrated on the memory of the sound of the ocean, visualized the sight of the tide rushing in to wash the shore. And soon, the shadows of loneliness sunk back. Sleep, like the tide, washed over me. I was drifting out. When I woke the next morning, I was embarrassed by how late I had slept. I practically jumped out of the bed, washed and dressed. Holly and Billy had already opened the shop and were dealing with customers. "I'm sorry I slept so late," I declared when the customers left. "That's all right, honey," Holly said. "You must have been exhausted. Billy told me you two went for a walk," she added. "I guess all the excitement of being in New York tired me out." "I'll get her some breakfast," Billy called out as he headed for the kitchen. "I hate being so much trouble." "You're no trouble. After you have some breakfast, we'll go get your airline tickets," Holly said. "Then, I'd like to show you some of New York. What would you like to see the most?" "I don't know." My mind reeled with the possibilities, the things and places I had only read about and Alice and I had spoken about back in Sewell when the two of us planned a future trip together. What had once been a childhood fantasy was now a reality for me. "I guess I'd like to see the Empire State Building and Broadway and the Statue of Liberty and the

Museum of Natural History and...""There's only one day," Holly said, laughing."I'll show her most of that," Billy called from the kitchen. "Got some fruit, a bowl of multi-grain cereal, juice and coffee in here waiting on you, Melody.""You'll show me?" I asked, not hiding my astonishment well. He and Holly looked at each other and then laughed."Billy gets around as well as anyone," Holly said. "He has a van with a lift and a specially engineered steering wheel.""Gift from my parents," he said, and I thought, how strange that he had never mentioned them before."I can't take you away from the shop. I...""What do you mean? I'm due a vacation anyway, aren't I, Holly?""More than one," Holly replied. "Better eat breakfast so you can get started," Holly said. "Go on," she urged. "Stop being a worrywart."I laughed and went in to have my breakfast. Afterward, Holly and I drove over to the travel agency where her friend worked and I picked up my airline tickets. Having them in my hand with the itinerary spelled out before me made me suddenly frightened. Would I really get on that plane tomorrow and fly across the country to stay with people I didn't know and search one of the country's biggest cities for a mother who might not want to see me?Billy had his van in front of the shop when we returned. He showed me how the lift worked and then took his place in the driver's seat. Holly waved good-bye as we drove off for my tour of New York, Billy looking as excited about it as I was."It's always fun to see familiar things through virgin eyes," he explained. "It helps one appreciate what one has more."Seeing the Empire State Building in the distance was one thing, but to ride right up to it and look up was another."You want to go up?" Billy asked."Can we?""Of course. I'll pull into that parking garage there and we'll take the elevator. It's a beautiful day for it. We'll probably see into Canada.""We will?""No," he said laughing."You probably think I'm a country bumpkin," I said, grimacing."Absolutely not, and what if you were? It would be refreshing and honest," he replied. Billy could turn anything negative into a positive, I thought. How could anyone be so perfect?Billy moved about the city as if it were just a small town no bigger than Sewell. The hordes of people, a veritable sea of bodies and faces moving up and down the sidewalks, the legions of cars, the noise and commotion seemed not to exist. He wheeled himself along barely noticing any of it, while my eyes raced back and forth, up and down, taking in everything.The elevator ride to the observation deck of the Empire State Building was the most exciting I had ever taken, and when we stepped out and over to the railing, I thought we were literally on top of the world. I squealed with amazement. Billy laughed and gave me some change for the telescope through which I could see the Hudson River and clear across to New Jersey.Afterward, we drove up to Broadway and past all the theater marquees, the great electric signs and through Times Square, a place I had seen only on television and read about in books. My heart pounded with excitement. I couldn't wait to write to Alice.

Billy decided we should have lunch in the world famous Chinatown, where he could get his favorite -- vegetable lo mein. While we were there, he bought me a beautiful hand-painted fan.After lunch, we went out to the Statue of Liberty. The sky was still mostly blue and there was a warm breeze from New York Harbor. When we returned to shore, I realized Billy was more tired than he pretended and I told him it was time to go back to the shop, claiming I was tired myself. I wasn't. New York had a way of injecting its energy into me.

The panorama of people, things to see and do was mesmerizing and helped me forget all my worries and troubles.Back at the shop, the three of us sat and had some tea while I ranted on and on about the things we had done and seen. Afterward, Billy went into his room to meditate and Holly and I took care of the customers. I was fascinated with how much people were intrigued by her crystals and gems, how much they wanted to believe in the powers. All sorts of people came in to buy and inquire about the items: old as well as young, men and women alike. Some were frequent customers and many testified to the claims Holly made about her stones.When Billy emerged from his room, he looked revived. Once again I offered to help him with dinner, but again he told me I was the guest and he enjoyed the preparations. After she closed the shop, Holly and I sat in the living room and relaxed while Billy made dinner. I told her about the poem he had read and the things he had said."He's a wonderful person. I'm happy he became my partner.""He said his parents gave him the van, but he didn't mention any more about his family to me. Where are they?"Holly grimaced."They live upstate and they are quite happy he's not there, too. They don't accept his way of life now. His father calls him a hippie.""Oh, how sad.""Billy isn't happy about it, but he's resigned and he accepts it.""Does he have any brothers and sisters?""An older brother, an attorney. He sees him whenever he comes to New York; or, I should say, once in a while when he comes to New York. I don't think he calls every time. He wanted Billy to go home and live with their parents, but Billy won't be treated like some handicapped person, as you've probably already noticed.""He's amazing," I said. "Inspirational."Holly nodded. Then she turned a bit serious."I've been working on your charts, Melody," she said. "Now that I know more about you and the events, and I can pinpoint things, I can get a clearer picture.""And?""I don't

think you're going to find what you want," she said gently. "Maybe you should turn around and return to the life you have, the people you know you can count on." It was like a clap of thunder above my head. I sucked in my breath and smiled. "You know I can't," I said softly and she nodded. "But after being with Billy and learning from him, I'm not as afraid as I was." "That's good." "I'm very grateful to you for what you've done for me. I don't know if I would have had the courage to do this if it weren't for you, Holly. Thank you." She didn't smile. "I hope I've done the right thing," she said. I could only wonder what it was she saw in the stars

that made her even doubt it. It's better, I thought, not to ask. Copyright 1997 by The Virginia C. Andrews Trust and The Vanda Partnership
Presentation de l'auteur
Melody Logan had only just found a safe harbor when a new storm set her adrift all over again.... Melody had always believed her mother, Haille, and dear stepdaddy had died in tragic accidents -- that's why she'd come to stay with her secretive Logan relatives on Cape Cod. But then a friend recognized Haille's picture in a catalog and kindled Melody's hopes. Maybe her mother hadn't perished in a fire in California after all, but was in some desperate trouble that kept her out of reach.... Melody's dream of finding her mother seemed as flimsy as the scrap of paper that was her only clue.

And despite the pampered life Melody was offered as a guest in a Beverly Hills mansion, nothing could soften the blow of the moment she stood face-to-face with her mother and saw her eyes turn dark and cold as stones. Melody knew there must be a reason why her mother pretended at first not to recognize her -- and why she'd even faked her own death. Though Melody's beloved Cary beckoned from Cape Cod, she felt in her heart that her mother needed her now more than ever. And beneath her mother's unkept promises and tattered fantasies, Melody hoped to unearth the truth about her own past, and find her way to a safer, better place...where she could embrace a bright new future of her own.