

CHAPTER 2



A SEA OF COTTON

The moon was full this Christmas Eve, illuminating the bedroom in a soft, dream-like light. Charlotte flipped the quilt over and dove under it, not even bothering to remove her robe. Lying on her back, the quilt completely covering her, she held it up with her arms and legs, creating a makeshift tent. Turning on her flashlight, Charlotte could see the images and stories sewn into it. *Memories of Christmases*

past, she breathed, tracing her hand over the different patches.

Charlotte had to admit the women in her mother's family were talented. Each patch was wonderfully detailed. Her great-grandmother's was a colourful map of the world, showing all the exotic places she wanted to visit. It was intricately stitched with seashells and silks of silver and gold. Charlotte found herself mesmerized by it.



Slowly, Charlotte began to crawl on her back towards the foot of the bed. She followed the memories of her family going back generations – everyday scenes of ice skating and tobogganing to fantastical images of unicorns and handsome princes. Then, beneath the patch of a young girl sitting on a galloping horse, she paused. *The quilt can't be this big*, she thought, and she reached her arms out to grab the edges. Only her hands didn't find the edges, just more fabric.

Charlotte tried to throw the quilt off her, but for some reason it was now too heavy. Charlotte then turned on her stomach and crawled towards where she knew the foot of the bed was, but all she found was a sea of cotton. "I must be dreaming," she said aloud, as if naming it would rob the dream of its power. She closed her eyes tightly, crawling faster, but when she opened them again, the quilt was still there.

This is just a dream, Charlotte told herself again and again, believing it less and less as time passed. Her crawling seemed to last hours and she had long ago given up on what direction she was crawling in. She was sure she'd find her way

out, until she didn't. Sure she would wake up, until she didn't. Sure this nightmare would end. Until it didn't.

Eventually, she collapsed from exhaustion, the soft bed sheets absorbing her tears. There was no way out, no escape from this nightmare.

And then she heard singing.

It was very faint, but in the heavy silence under the quilt, the music was a beacon of hope. Holding her flashlight in one hand, Charlotte crawled as fast as she could towards the sound. She was almost able to make out the words when she tumbled out of bed and onto the hardwood floor.

Charlotte slowly stood up, any discomfort from the fall masked by embarrassment. *I was dreaming*, she chided herself, feeling silly for being so frightened just moments earlier. She looked over at the bed to see if she'd woken Batrix, but she wasn't there. *Probably crawled in with Nana*, thought Charlotte, looking at the door that connected their rooms.

Her eyes adjusting to the moonlight, Charlotte could see the bedroom was *different*. Even