

The background features a complex abstract design of thin yellow lines forming various geometric shapes, including triangles and polygons. A prominent feature is a large, solid yellow shape that resembles a stylized arrow or a jagged, angular form pointing downwards and to the right. This shape is composed of several overlapping geometric components, including a large triangle and a smaller, more complex polygonal shape. The overall aesthetic is modern and minimalist.

STONE BEARER SERIES

# The Lost Amulet

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Book One

Mary Farrugia

# THE LOST AMULET

Book One

Mary Farrugia

*M G F*

MANY GREAT FINDS

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*To my family & friends  
Thank you for your support & guidance*

## 1.

Blue mist engulfed the centre of Pine Dilley Forest and out of the ground sprang a sparkling ocean blue door. Twirling in mid air, it slowly drifted towards the ground. The door had no wall or hinges supporting it, yet it could magically hold its centre of balance.

The turquoise door knob began to turn and the door creaked ajar. Out from the door appeared a lanky woman wearing a purple cloak. Behind her, out popped a scraggly girl, no older than fifteen. She wore rumpled clothes underneath her own mahogany coloured cloak. In her petite hands, the young girl carried with great caution a basket which seemed to be filled with bundles of clothes. The old woman removed her hood and bent down to look straight into the girl's green eyes.

"Keep them safe; keep them hidden, Marina. The fate of our world rests in your hands. You must not let Colt get his hands on them," the old woman said sternly.

"I promise, my lady, you don't have to worry. You can count on me," Marina said and nodded in reply.

"Remember, you have the length of three thorns before the gateway closes. Follow your instructions, Marina, and hurry." Marina stood there and just nodded at her mistress.

The old woman furrowed her brow. "Well, what are you waiting for? There is no time to lose. Make haste."

Instantly, Marina dashed into the pine trees to find the closest exit out of Pine Dilley Forest.

Clutching her cloak, the old woman turned to face the sparkling ocean blue door. She mumbled, "I hope we have made the right choice – for the sake of this world and ours." She donned her hood again and with the hem of her purple cloak sweeping behind her, she vanished into the existence that lay behind the blue door.

Marina ran onto the cobbled path that followed the pine surroundings of the park. The park's path was stencilled like the number eight with an entry point at the top and at the bottom of the eight. When the pathway reached one of the far end entrances, which was across the main road of Crumple Street, Marina ran towards the road.

Whilst Marina was crossing the road, two light beams shone brightly into her eyes. A tumultuous beep droned out of the vehicle until it came to a complete halt. Marina saw the driver wave his fist at her. She trembled, tightened her grasp around the basket's handle and slowly backed away from the vehicle. Marina waited until the car had driven off before she turned and ran to the other side of the road. Sweat began to build on her brow. She felt that time was ticking faster than usual and so she hurried. She kept running for two blocks and turned left into a deserted arcade known as Riverwell.

Riverwell seemed like an endless dark tunnel. Marina feared that the arcade would be a dead end and that she may not reach her destination in time. She scrunched up her face to muster as much courage as possible before she bounded into the arcade. Once she reached the end of the walkway, she let out a huge sigh of relief.

The walkway connected to a path that led to some residential buildings. Marina kept running until she reached her destination, the city council district of Rivington.

Marina crept up the stairs and laid the basket upon the last step where there were already two others. She had no time to linger as one and a quarter thorns had passed. However, she was determined to keep her promise to her lady.

She knocked on the door and was relieved when she distinctly heard a girl's voice coming from inside the council district building.

Inside the building, the girl was walking towards the entrance as Marina banged on the door. She stopped in front of the security guard.

"Bye, George, don't work too hard," she said smirking.

George was slouched on his swivel chair, hat lopsided and feet crossed on top of his desk.

"Yes, good night, Jana," he murmured. He did not look up from his *Ultimate Cars* magazine because he was too enthralled.

Flicking her dark brown hair behind her shoulders, Jana clunked her way, in her high heel shoes, towards the front entrance to then walk home. She was a slender sixteen-year-old who was trying to impress the senior delegate of Rivington during her work experience. She had agreed to cover the late shift when the assistant called in sick.

Jana pulled the front door open to step outside. But the sight of three baskets transformed her mouth from a grin to a gaping hole. Marina placed her finger to her lips.

The door slowly closed behind Jana as she stood for a moment in complete stillness to comprehend what was in front of her. She warily lowered her shoulder bag beside her. Anxiety churned within her as she bent over to take a closer look at what was inside the baskets.

She saw three little faces goggling back at her. Jana caressed the cheek of a wide-eyed baby girl with bristling brown hair. She then stroked the cheek of another girl with a dark complexion. The baby lulled dreamily, as she rubbed her brown eyes and sucked her thumb. The last baby, a little boy, thumped his clenched fists and jerked his feet in the air to gain Jana's attention. She stared into his big, deep blue eyes and caressed his bristly ginger hair.

Marina fell to her knees.

"Please help me," she pleaded.

Jana shook her head. "What on earth is going on?"

"Please believe me, these babies are loved but are in danger." Marina covered her face with her hands as she was on the verge of crying.

"Please protect them from the evil that seeks to harm them."

"How can I protect them?"

"Never leave them out of your sight."

Jana looked into Marina's desperate eyes and merely said, "Okay."

Marina gave a sigh of relief, thanked Jana and dashed back to Pine Dilley Forest.



Jana alerted George, and the authorities were quickly notified. Jana had no information to provide them apart from her encounter with Marina.

The babies appeared to have no relation to one another except for a tattoo of two alphabet letters, one uppercase and the other lowercase which had been inked on their right shoulder.

2.

Archive wiped perspiration from his brow. He could hear his heart beating rapidly and with each thump, anxiety flowed through his veins. He could feel it spreading quickly throughout his entire body.

He stood side-by-side with his comrade Albert in front of the wrought iron gate of one of the far end entrances of Pine Dilley Forest. They both wore black attire and had their hair slicked back.

Archive turned his head towards his comrade. "The blue door has opened."

"Yes, and who knows what will flow through the gateway," Albert mused.

Both men turned to look behind them as they heard the beeping of a car horn.

Archive huffed. "What is certain is that the Amulet is returning to Earth and Colt will certainly follow it."

"Alas, no one is safe."

Archive clasped his hand around Albert's forearm and patted his back with his other hand. "Good luck, my friend, and that you shall return in one piece."

The two men withdrew from the embrace. "Why is Colt so desperate to get his hands on the Amulet?!" Albert exclaimed.

"Oh Albert, you and I both know that there are those who crave power, no matter what the cost."

Albert shook his head. "Colt has enough power without the Amulet."

"Even so, it is a grand treasure that possesses the power of old magic. Colt must never get his hands on it. We must find the Amulet first."

"I fear what he will bring with him to Earth, Archive."

"Whatever comes, let us hope it does not stay too long." Archive's shoulders drooped as he inclined his head. "I have been called to duty, Albert."

"You? Surely not!"

Archive huffed. "Yes, it is true."

Albert shook his head. "Ah, let this war end swiftly and that we may live to enjoy the celebrations."

He tilted his head back and inhaled a deep breath. "Ha!" he said and slapped his palms on his thighs. "If I do not return, Archive, have a drink and be merry and toast the life that I once had."

"Let us both go to the pub after this night with the Amulet safe in our hands."

Albert glanced over his shoulder. "I will go to the other entry point and we will meet at the centre of the forest."

"Agreed. But before you go, drink this." Archive handed Albert a red vial.

"What is it?"

"It is a mobility potion. It will allow you to be at our rendezvous point in seconds rather than the hours it would usually take."

“Fantastic! See you soon then.” Albert tipped his head back and sculled down the contents of the vial. Instantly, he felt a burst of energy in his legs and was running as fast as light.

Moments later, Archive and Albert met at the centre of Pine Dilley Forest, hiding behind one of the enormous pine trees. They stared in the direction of the sparkling blue door.

Suddenly, a creature, no more than four feet tall, came through the gateway holding a silver studded chest.

“Finks!” Archive gasped. “He has the Amulet.” But even before they could move towards it, the creature had vanished in a puff of white smoke.

Archive got up from his crouching position. “I should follow his teleportation.”

“No, Archive, Colt will be here any moment. We must fight him and throw him out of this realm before he can do any harm to it.”

“Yes, you are right, Albert.”

Archive and Albert waited for Colt’s entrance into Earth. Yet, it felt like it would never come. No one entered or exited the gateway and with every passing minute the sparkling blue door inched closer to becoming shut.

As the door was centimetres from closing, it sprang abruptly back open. The door swung back on its invisible hinges and a man with sleek black hair and pale skin walked into this plane of existence. The man was tall with broad shoulders and had haunting yellowy eyes.

The man growled, "Earth. How pathetic! I hate this realm." He spat on the ground beside him.

Behind him, ten minions walked through the doorway. One man was particularly robust with long stringy hair. He had drawn black eyes, pointy nails and his whole body was scarred with slashes. There was one scar, however, that was particularly noticeable across the left side of his face. It started from the tip of his lip, jagged across his cheek and ran across the centre of his eye.

The man licked his lips with his long tongue. "Colt, we will find the Amulet first. I will personally find it."

"Silence, Jarco," Colt growled. "Find those precious babies that the lady adores and kill them. I will find the Amulet and destroy this pathetic realm."

Jarco licked his lips enthusiastically and said to the other minions, "You heard Colt. Let's go."

Albert jumped out from behind the pine trees and yelled, "Stop!"

He held out his hands to his foes with his palms pointing towards them. His legs were also bent and spread out as if he was a guard in a basketball game trying to stop his opponent from moving forward.

Colt folded his arms and tilted his head to glare at him. "Albert, Albert, Albert." Colt shook his head. "Are you sure you want to stop us?"

Albert straightened up and swallowed a dry gulp. "Yes, I think that it is my duty to, so I must."

“Where is Archive? Surely you have not come here alone.”

Archive stepped out from behind the pine trees. “Colt, stop this madness. You have nothing to gain from this hunt.”

“Nothing to gain!” Colt tilted his head back and laughed. “The Amulet stores one of the oldest forms of magic. Paragon will be pleased once I bestow it to him.”

“Paragon will give you nothing in return for the Amulet.”

Colt turned his head towards his minions. “Half of you stay and kill them, the rest of you go with Jarco and find the children.” Colt turned his head back to face Archive before he shimmered away from their sight.

Jarco howled to the moon and bounded out of Pine Dilley Forest with five minions trailing behind him.

“What shall we do?” Albert whispered to Archive.

“Fight these lowlifes first and then I’ll go after Colt and you go after Jarco.”

“Agreed.”

Archive and Albert battled with the remaining minions and vanquished each one with ease. But before the last foe was defeated, the sparkling blue door slammed itself shut and immersed itself into the ground.

Archive and Albert loitered on top of the area that the gateway had been. They both felt a pang

of longing for their own realm. But they both knew that if Colt found the Amulet, they would not have a realm to go back to.

### 3.

On the main road called Crumple Street at house number 24, Harold Holt lay on his brown couch, in his pyjamas, watching the reeling credits of a late night movie. Harold Holt was a withdrawn, irritable and eccentric old man. He relied on the company of his faithful but lazy bloodhound called Bob, who was lying on his tummy beside his master's feet.

Turning off the television, Harold sluggishly got up from his tattered couch. He stretched out his arms and back and exhausted a drawling yawn.

*BANG!*

A loud noise sounded across the lounge room. Harold instantly jolted upright like a springy ironing board. He moved his head intently around the room to distinguish the cause of the noise. He relaxed and let out a comforting sigh, as he realised the culprit to be the front security door; he could hear the subsequent creaking of the door opening and slamming itself shut.

"It must be windy tonight, hey, Bob?" Harold said, half yawning. Bob merely sunk his head in between his paws.

Scratching his bristly chin, Harold ambled unperturbed towards the front door. As he was doing so, a draught of cold wind swept through the lounge room. It instantaneously made his fly away hair spring up and become dishevelled. Harold intuitively hunched over, folded his arms close to his chest and uttered a cold shudder. He could feel goose bumps and the bristling hairs on his arms and



hands spring up. Harold quivered as a cold tingling sensation slowly trickled down his spine. He had a fleeting suspicion that two beady black eyes were staring at him. Anxiety was surging within him and, as he took his next step towards the front door, he swore he heard the distant noise of shuffling feet.

“Bob, stop that,” Harold bellowed as he faced the front door. He assured himself that it was only Bob rubbing his paws on the lounge room rug. He hastily shut the security door and dashed towards Bob for comfort.

“It must be cold out tonight,” he said again in a jitter.

Finding comfort in patting his old friend’s head, Harold ambled his way past the tattered couch towards his bedroom with Bob trailing sluggishly behind him. Harold passed the kitchen and saw, from the corner of his eye, a black garbage bag near the side wall. Harold let out a disgruntled sigh; he had forgotten to take the garbage out. Half heartedly, he decided to take it to the curb. He first retrieved his shabby blue dressing gown and brown slippers from his bedroom before he made his way outside and down the driveway with Bob at his heels.

Before he could reach the curb, he distinctly heard the snap of a twig which caused him to stand completely still. Harold thought he could hear his heart pounding like a little drum.

Harold tightened his ears and face when he heard the peculiar scampering of feet. He quickly spun round. Harold’s eyes darted from shrub to shrub

within his prize-winning rose bushes to try and find the culprit. Sweat began to build on his forehead and his throat felt parched and dry.

Brandishing the garbage bag, he quavered, "Who's...who's there? I know something's there! I...I have a weapon and I'm...I'm not afraid to use it."

Harold received no answer. He vigorously shook his head and rubbed his eyes. He mumbled anxiously to himself, "Get a grip; there's nothing here. Bob's right beside you."

Harold took in a deep breath and as he was just about to take another step forward, a puff of white smoke ascended from the main branch of Harold's front garden elm tree.

Out of the white smoke, a sly mischievous voice resonated contemptuously, "Looky, looky! What do we have here! A fat old man!" The white smoke faded to reveal a creature twirling a cane and wearing, strangely enough, a bow-tied tail coat suit with a top hat.

Harold felt as if a mountain of weight was building in his throat. He took a big dry gulp before stammering, "What – what are you?" He was utterly unnerved by the sight of this creature. It had two beady eyes, a long pointy nose and pointy ears.

Harold could tell that this creature was not human. He had the surging compulsion that he should flee from this place but he couldn't. Harold's eyes were transfixed by what lay before him. He did not dare take the slightest step. He stood trembling in absolute terror.

“What am I? What am I? Tut, tut, tut, old man,” the creature said flamboyantly with a malevolent grin. “No, no, no, that is the wrong question. The first question you should have asked was who am I?”

“Who...who are you?” Harold said, his teeth chattering.

“Ah, my name... Well, it is too complex for your primitive ears.” With his cane, the creature tapped the main branch of the elm tree on which he was standing and vanished in a puff of white smoke.

He reappeared almost instantly in the same fashion on the ground. But this time he was leaning against the trunk of the elm, with his arms and legs crossed and his top hat covering his eyes. It was as if he was imitating someone from an old western. With a wide derisive smile, the creature tipped up his top hat and said, “But you can call me Finks.”

“What are you?” Harold ventured again.

Finks could see Harold’s fear, and so he said with indifference, “Ah, that question again.” Finks straightened up to the height of four feet and twirled his cane. “But, old man, you know exactly what I am. That is why I still stand before you and have not vanished completely from this existence.”

“No, no, no, I don’t and I...I don’t want anything you have to offer. Now leave this place you... you foul creature,” Harold half heartedly bellowed as he tried to ignite his inner courage.

“Tut, tut, tut, now that hurt.” Finks extravagantly clutched his chest. “I thought you had better manners

than that, old man – or should I call you Harold? That is your name, isn't it?" Finks said, grinning more contemptuously than ever.

Harold looked into Finks black beady eyes. "How did you know my name?"

"That, old man, is not important. The main point is that you know exactly *what* I am."

"Yes, yes I know what you are. You are a goblin and I know that everything you say is a complete lie!" Harold bellowed, finding his courage.

"Now, now, Harold, we don't want to draw attention to ourselves," Finks replied mockingly. "But you should know that not everything that I say is a lie. I only say what gives me the greatest return."

"What...what do you want?" Harold said, inclining his head in dismay.

"Ah, again the wrong question. It is not what you can do for me but what I can do for you."

"Everything that you possess is evil. I shall want nothing that you have to offer," Harold said in spite.

"Not even this?" From the back of his tail coat Finks retrieved a silver-studded steel chest. "Are you sure that you do not want this?"

Harold glanced at the chest and quickly turned his head away. But slowly he began to revolve his head towards it as if it mesmerised him. "Um, what is it?" Harold asked.

Finks chuckled sinisterly, "A chest! Isn't that obvious?" Harold licked his lips and clenched his

fist towards his mouth. "Um....yes..... I think I need to have it," Harold said slowly.

"Why? You don't even know what's inside," Finks said mockingly.

"It doesn't matter; give it to me." Harold eyes widened with eagerness for the chest. He again licked his lips. "I have decided I shall have it after all. I must have it."

Dropping the garbage bag, Harold stretched out his hands, stepping closer to Finks.

Finks held out the chest in front of Harold and began to sway it from side to side and Harold's eyes followed its every movement. Harold attempted to snatch the chest from Finks, but Finks, in the nick of time, pulled it close to his own body.

"Uh, uh, uh, now why should I give this chest to you? I think, yes, I have changed my mind. You are not worthy to have this dazzling beautiful spectacular chest."

"Give it to me!" In sheer determination Harold lunged towards Finks and snatched the chest from him.

"If you insist," Finks said with a strange indifference. He dusted his hands as if his quest was done. Finks twirled his cane from one hand to the other and flicked it under his armpit. With his top hat, he gave Harold an extravagant bow whilst brandishing a malevolent smile. He did this before he turned and walked away and vanished in a puff of white smoke.

But poor Harold was so engrossed by the chest that he held it close to him. He walked warily towards the front door of his house. Harold was consumed with the urge to have the chest near him, to be able to hold it and, more importantly, to see it. He was so entranced by the chest that he could barely hear the honking of the car horn and the loud screeching noise of burning rubber on asphalt as a car attempted to come to an abrupt halt. Nor could he hear the loud thump as the car struck a large mass. Harold was too mesmerised by the steel-studded chest to care. However, when he heard the faint whimper coming from beneath the wheels of the car, Harold instantly jolted upright.

He turned to face the wreckage, hoping that his worst fear had not come true, that his best friend Bob had not been struck. In that moment, Harold forgot all about the chest and what entranced him was lifted.

The chest dropped to the ground and opened to reveal a round rusted gold amulet with a fiery red stone embedded in the middle. The red stone had some strange scribing around its rim which read:

*To your destination you seek*

*Upon which obstacles must be completed to reach.*

Harold was devoid of all desire for the chest and its contents. He could only think of the welfare of his best friend. He scurried towards the car in hysteria whilst the driver got out of his car. But once the Amulet touched the ground it vanished.

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I don't know what happened. I was driving and then there was this girl..." the driver rambled in panic and disbelief.

"She came out right in front of me. She got me so angry I wasn't concentrating. I just came into town to visit my mother. Why did this happen?"

But Harold wasn't listening. He was more concerned to see if his friend was alright. "Bob, Bob are you okay?" Harold wailed.

Thankfully, the driver had nearly come to a complete stop before he reached Bob. Out from underneath the car he crawled and got up on three paws. Bob's left forepaw was injured from the impact. "Oh, Bob you're okay, you're okay," Harold said in euphoria and hugged his loving companion.

"He's okay," Harold said calmly to the driver. "And it's okay; I'll take him to the vet and you don't have to worry. I won't bill you, just be more on the lookout next time."

He gave the driver a concluding nod before turning to face his best friend. "Now, come on, Bob, let's go inside and find you a vet to look at your paw." Bob gave a big woof in agreement.

The driver thanked Harold for his understanding and drove away. Slowly, Harold and Bob made their way to their house.

When they reached the spot where Harold thought he had dropped the chest, he scoured the ground for it. But it was nowhere to be seen. He scratched his head and muttered to himself that he swore he had dropped the chest over here. But when

he glanced back at his friend, he smiled in relief and kept walking to the front door of his house. But the thought remained with Harold that he should continue to look for the chest. A compulsion began to grow slowly within him that he needed to see that chest again.