

Elenor burst into the kitchen and announced the news. Helen shrieked. Maude threw a ladle in the air. Carla gave Elenor a hug that lifted her off her feet, then burst into sobs.

"One of us, one of our very own, taking up the scallop shell!" whispered Maude, awestruck.

"What scallop shell?" asked Elenor.

"The scallop shell you wear on your hat, when you've made the pilgrimage to Santiago," Helen explained.

"What hat?"

"Your big black hat. It goes with your staff and your gourd, so everybody knows you're a pilgrim," said Helen, miming every word. Elenor covered her face with both hands, feeling very, very ignorant. The smaller children clustered around her now, pulling on her dress and asking questions.

"Is it far, Ellie?"

"Will you be home tomorrow?"

"Will you bring me a yellow bird?"

"Can I come?"

"Father Greg! There you are!" she heard Carla's voice say. "Come in here by the fire, and tell us a story. These little field mice need to learn about where our Ellie is going."

Maude stoked the fire and called in Billy. Carla shouted for Thomas, but he was nowhere to be found. Elenor sat on the floor across from Father Gregory, her back against Carla's knees. A dog put its head in her lap. Children sat all around the priest, while Helen went quietly about her chopping, listening.

Gregory leaned back, the warm firelight playing on his face. He put a hand on one child, then another.

"The story begins in Galilee. A land of milk and honey, a land of fish and pomegranates, a land where..." His voice trailed off and he looked at a child for prompting.

"Where Jesus grew up."

"Yes, Jesus was a boy in Galilee. He worked as a carpenter, but he also fished. His uncle Zebedee was a fisherman on the Sea of Galilee, and his cousins, James and John, were fishermen, too.

"Cousin James was loud, and strong, the best swimmer of them all. By the time he was, oh, fifteen, he could stand balancing in Zebedee's boat and pull in the net, heavy with fish, a smile on his face.

"When Jesus began to teach in the farms and villages around the Sea of Galilee, James and John