

The Hughes Chronicles



The DuGall Valley

Book Five

DuGallan

THE DUGALLAN CHRONICLES

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THE HUGHES CHRONICLES

The DuGall Valley



A story for young adventurers and the parents who read to them

Based on a true family story

DuGallan

DuGallan Publishing · DuGallan.com

THE HUGHES CHRONICLES — BOOK FIVE
The DuGall Valley

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This book is a work of creative nonfiction based on the true story of Samuel Thomas Isaac Hughes and the Hughes family. The author has made every effort to ensure the accuracy of the historical events and family recollections described. Some scenes, dialogue, and details have been reconstructed for narrative purposes, representing the author's honest interpretation of confirmed family history.

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Written by DuGallan

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For

Emrys

Keeper of the DuGall valley

Who held the knowledge through two hundred years of waiting.

Who knew the girl would come.

*Who understood that some things cannot be given —
they can only be arrived at.*

Croeso adref.

Welcome home.

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BEFORE WE BEGIN
What I Know So Far



Before we go any further, let me tell you what I know.

My father's name is ST — Samuel Thomas Isaac Hughes — and he has been missing since I was young. He left Wales, crossed an ocean, bred racehorses in Shannon in the Orange Free State, and created a tea called Black Forest Tea from a flower that grew in only one known place in the world: a boot-shaped island in a Congo river. Then he went to find that flower's source — and something stopped him coming home.

But there are three flowers, not one. The Congo flower. The original Welsh cultivar, grown in the DuGall valley in mid-Wales for centuries. And a third — the Namaqualand flower on the West Coast of South Africa, near Kamieskroon, which Jan Heyneke has pressed in a tin every August for twenty years without knowing what it meant. Together the three flowers form a formula that no pharmaceutical company has ever been able to synthesise. A man called CJ Barnard — representing a European company called Hartmann — has been trying to steal it

for years. He has two of the three pieces. He does not know about the Namaqualand flower. Not yet.

ST built a network before he disappeared. Different clues with different people. Old Joseph gave me the note about the third flower. My sister Peggy, in her sanatorium in Bloemfontein, gave me the shape of the arrangement and the name of Emrys — the old man in the DuGall valley who has been keeping the Welsh cultivar's knowledge for three generations. Hendrika Heyneke at the Shannon post office gave me three uncollected letters, including one with ST's own handwriting at the bottom: Croeso adref, Daffodil. Welcome home.

DJ Hughes — ST's grandfather — carved his initials in the Shannon tack room door frame before ST carved his. He came from Wales first. He started this search. Three generations of Hughes men and women have been following the same trail, from the DuGall valley out into the world and now, at last, back again.

And the night before we sailed, Charlie Mokoena came from Johannesburg to tell me one more thing: when I get to Wales, ask Emrys about the other name. Not DuGall. The other name. The one that connects it all.

I am in Wales. I am in a valley that my great-grandfather knew. I am about to knock on the door of a farmhouse where someone has been waiting — for how long, I cannot say — for a girl with her father's eyes.

The canary sang the entire voyage. Every morning, in the grey Atlantic light, it sang. We are going the right way.

Come with me.

CHAPTER ONE

Arriving

MID-WALES — SEPTEMBER 1941



Wales smelled of rain and old stone and something green that had no name in any language Daphne knew.

She had been trying to find the word for it since the train from Cardiff had climbed into the hills and the landscape had changed from everything she understood into something entirely different. It was not like the veld. It was not like Johannesburg. It was not like anything she had ever seen — this deep, folded, ancient greenness, this feeling of a country that had been thinking about itself for a very long time.

Her mother walked beside her without speaking, which was its own kind of eloquence. She was looking at everything with the careful attention of someone who has waited a long time to see a place and does not want to miss any of it.

The lane wound uphill between stone walls that someone had built centuries ago and maintained ever since out of a habit so deep it had become indistinguishable from instinct. At the top of the rise, the valley opened below them.

Daphne stopped.

She had seen valleys before. The Free State was full of them. But this was different. This valley was enclosed, held, as if the hills on either side were arms around something precious. Small fields, divided by more stone walls, dropped toward a stream at the bottom. The stream caught what light there was and held it. Above the valley walls, the hillsides were covered in low, dense growth — heather and something else, something that even from this distance she thought she recognised.

"Is that it?" her mother said, very quietly.

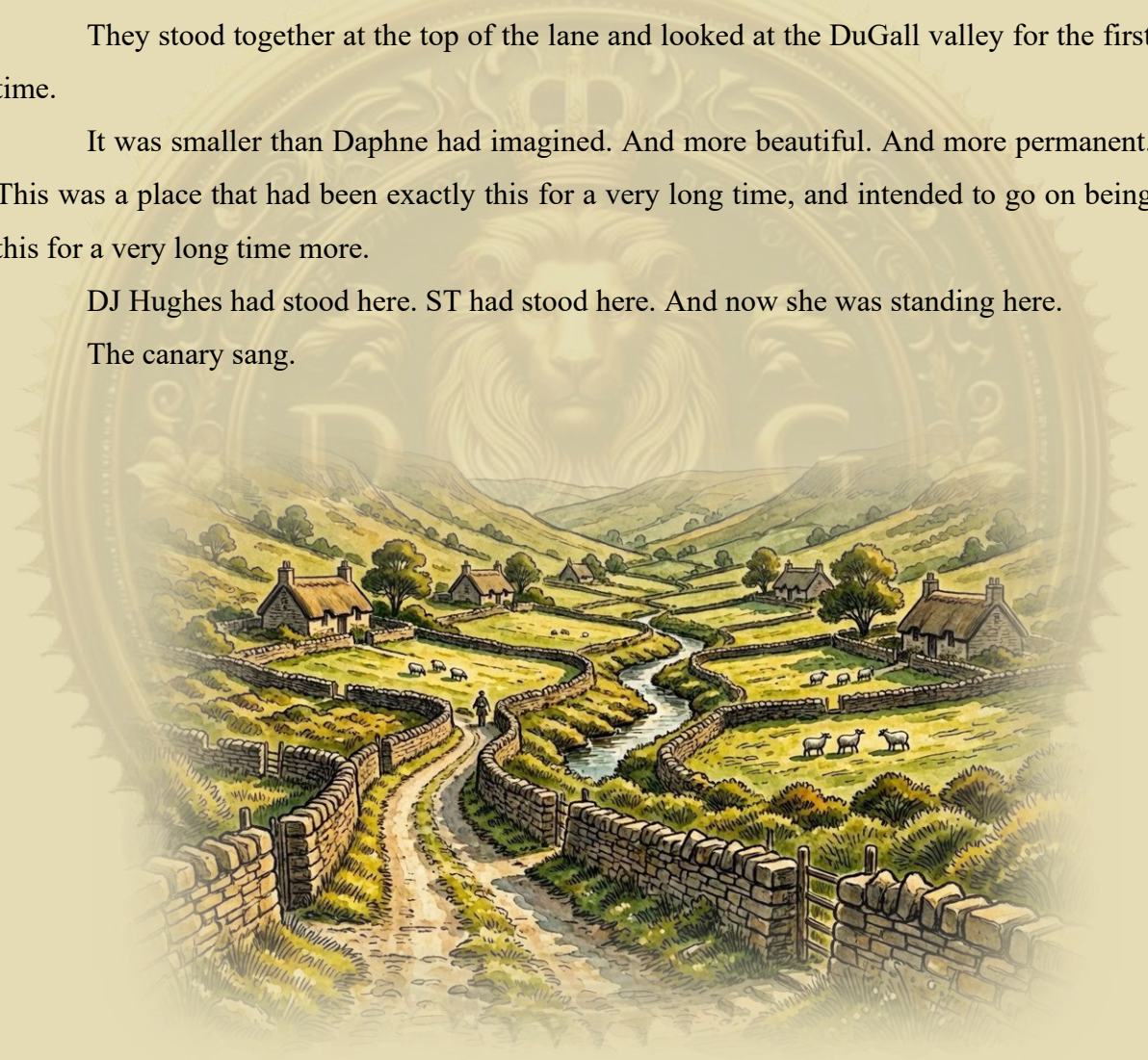
"The plants on the hillside. I think so."

They stood together at the top of the lane and looked at the DuGall valley for the first time.

It was smaller than Daphne had imagined. And more beautiful. And more permanent. This was a place that had been exactly this for a very long time, and intended to go on being this for a very long time more.

DJ Hughes had stood here. ST had stood here. And now she was standing here.

The canary sang.



~ ~ ~

The farmhouse was at the valley's fold, where the land curved inward and the stream turned. A whitewashed stone building with a slate roof and a yellow door.

Yellow.

Daphne noticed it from fifty yards away and felt something expand in her chest.

ST had painted doors yellow. Or he had chosen yellow things as markers. Or he had adopted the colour from the Durban dock and made it his own. But this door had been yellow for longer than ST had been alive — the paint was old, layered over old paint, the colour of something that had been renewed so many times it had become structural.

This was not ST's yellow. This was the original.

She understood, for the first time, where ST had learned to love the colour.
She walked up to the door and knocked.



CHAPTER TWO

Emrys

THE DUGALL VALLEY FARMHOUSE — THE SAME AFTERNOON



Emrys was older than anyone Daphne had ever met.

Not old in the way that Old Joseph was old — Old Joseph was weathered, patient, a man whose age had settled into him comfortably over decades. Emrys was something different. He was old the way the stone walls were old — as if age itself had become a form of density, a compression of time into a smaller and smaller and more essential space.

He was sitting by the fire when his daughter — a woman of about fifty who had opened the door and introduced herself as Mair without apparent surprise at finding a fifteen-year-old South African girl on the step — led them in. He looked up as they entered.

His eyes were extraordinary. Clear and very still, the colour of the valley itself — grey-green, deep, containing more than the surface suggested.

He looked at Daphne for a long moment. Then he said something in Welsh.

Mair translated:

"He says: she has his eyes. Exactly as he said she would."

"Whose eyes?" Mair asked Emrys. He answered. She translated:

"DJ's eyes. Samuel Thomas's eyes. The Hughes eyes. He says it skips a generation sometimes, but it always comes back."

Daphne sat down in the chair Mair indicated. Her mother sat beside her. The canary, in its cage on the table, regarded Emrys with bright attention.

Emrys looked at the canary for a long time. Then he smiled. It was a slow, complete smile that rearranged his whole face. He said something in Welsh. Mair translated:

"He says: good. The canary came. He has been wondering for years whether Charlie would keep it that long."

~ ~ ~

"You know Charlie Mokoena?" Daphne said.

Mair translated. Emrys answered. Mair said:

"He says: he has known Charlie for thirty years. Charlie was ST's — he uses a Welsh word — the closest translation is perhaps guardian. The person who watches over something when the owner cannot."

"Charlie was guarding the trail."

Emrys nodded when Mair translated this. Then he spoke again at length.

"He says: the network was built carefully. Different people in different places, each holding one piece. The Johannesburg piece — Charlie. The Shannon piece — Old Joseph. The Bloemfontein piece — your sister. The South African coast piece — a man who would appear in his own time, who did not yet know his part. And the Welsh piece — himself."

"He says ST trusted the right people."

Daphne looked at the old man by the fire.

"Did ST tell you everything? Everything he found?"

Mair translated. Emrys thought for a long time before answering.

"He says: ST told him what he needed to know to protect the valley's piece. He told him about the island. He did not tell him about the third flower — he says he understands now why ST kept that separate. He says ST was very wise about what he told each person."



"He says there is something here that ST did not know he was looking for until he found it. Something in this house that has been kept since before DJ Hughes came to Africa. That is what he has been holding. That is your piece."

CHAPTER THREE

The Book

THE DUGALL VALLEY — THE SAME EVENING



The book had been kept in the DuGall valley for two hundred years.

This was not a guess. The first entries were dated 1743, in handwriting so old the letters were formed differently from anything Daphne had been taught to read. Emrys showed her, page by page, through Mair's patient translation, what the book contained.

It was a botanical record — plant by plant, the cultivars grown in the DuGall valley, their properties, their uses, how they were prepared and for what ailments. Generations of a Welsh family had maintained it, adding their own observations to what the previous generation had recorded. The handwriting changed every thirty or forty pages. The commitment to the record did not.

And recurring throughout, in every generation's section, the same plant. Drawn with careful precision. Labelled in Welsh and English and Latin. The orange flower, papery-thin.

On the first page it appeared — 1743 — there was a note in the old Welsh script that Mair translated slowly and carefully:

This plant was taken from this valley in 1738 by a Dutch trader who gave us no name. He said he was taking it east. We do not know where east. We kept what we had. We record here that it was taken, so that those who come after will know that what grows in this valley grew somewhere else first — and that somewhere else may still grow it.

1738. The plant had been taken from the DuGall valley to somewhere east. It had adapted, grown, changed in new soil. It had become the Congo flower that ST found on the boot-shaped island two hundred years later.

And it had also, somewhere along the journey, produced a variant. The Namaqualand flower. The one the old Nama people called the one that remembers where it came from.

Three flowers. One origin. Two hundred years of separation.

And in this book, the formula — not yet complete, but the foundation of it. The Welsh cultivar's properties, precisely recorded by generations of people who had understood that the plant worked differently in combination than it did alone.

"The formula," Daphne said.

Mair translated. Emrys nodded and said something.

"He says: half the formula. The Welsh half. The other half requires the Congo plant and the South African variant together. ST understood this when he found the island. He wrote to Emrys and said: I have found the second piece. I am going back to confirm. When I return we will have what we need."

"But he did not return."

Emrys shook his head slowly. He said something quietly.

*"He says: ST sent one more letter. From Johannesburg. He said the situation had become complicated. He said the piece on the island was still safe. He said he had made arrangements. He said: keep the valley safe. **Daffodil will come.**"*

Daphne looked at the book. At the orange flower drawn two hundred years ago by someone who had loved it enough to record it precisely and mourn its loss.

"He called me Daffodil," she said.

"Yes," said Mair, without needing to translate. "He always did."

~ ~ ~

They stayed that evening in the farmhouse, in a room under the eaves with a window that looked out over the valley in the last of the light. The hills were the colour of the heather and the stone walls were silver.

Daphne sat at the window for a long time after her mother slept. She had the Welsh half of the formula. She had the full map of the Congo route. Old Joseph's note about the Namaqualand flower. Jan's knowledge of the exact location above Kamieskroon.

Three flowers. She had the knowledge of all three.

But she did not have the third flower itself. The formula was still incomplete in practical terms. And the Congo island was still the Congo island: a boot-shaped piece of land in a vast and dangerous river, reachable but not by a fifteen-year-old girl, not yet, not for years.

There was still much to do.

But for the first time, she could see the whole shape of it. The full picture. What ST had been doing. What DJ Hughes had been doing before him.

She understood, looking out over this valley that her family had come from and left and been trying to find their way back to ever since, why ST had called her Daffodil every day of her life.

She was the daffodil. The symbol of homecoming. He had been telling her, in the only way he had, what her purpose was.

Come home. Finish this. Bring it back together.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Other Name

THE DUGALL VALLEY — THE FOLLOWING MORNING



Emrys took her out to the plants in the morning.

The DuGall valley's hillside was extraordinary up close. What had looked like heather from the lane was a complex community of plants, each one occupying its particular niche in the slope, the whole system maintained by the valley's particular combination of rainfall and soil and aspect and the long attention of the people who had lived here.

The orange flower — the Welsh cultivar — grew in one specific area of the upper slope, sheltered by an outcrop of rock that caught the afternoon sun. It was smaller than Daphne had expected. More delicate. In August, Emrys indicated through Mair, the hillside would have been full of them. Now, in September, they were past their peak but still present — small flames among the green and grey.

She crouched down and looked at one very carefully. She took out her notebook and the pressed flower from the tin trunk. She held them side by side. The same family, beyond any doubt. The same papery texture, the same exact shade of orange-gold.

"This is it," she said.

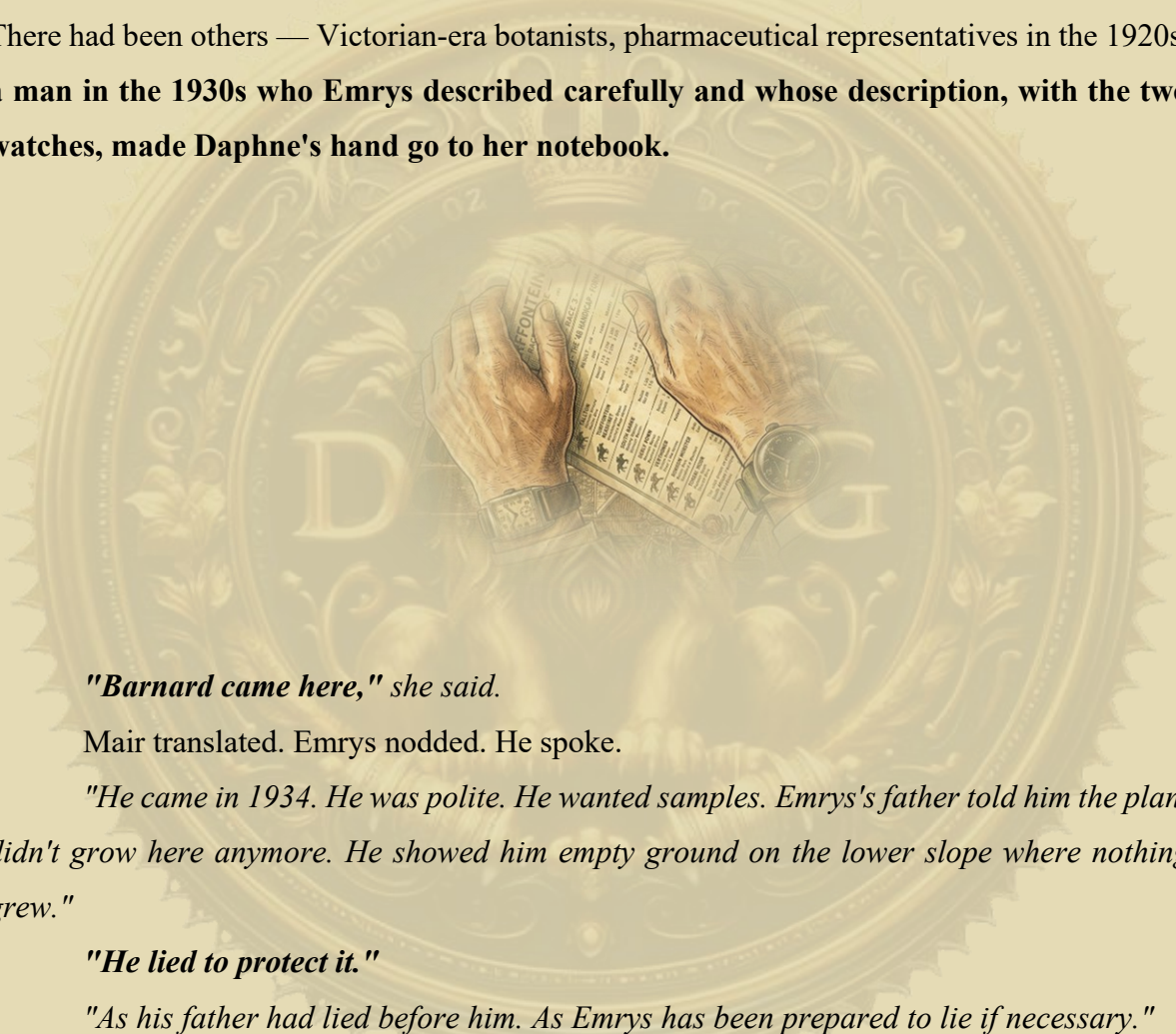
Emrys, watching her, said something. Mair translated:

"He says: yes. This is where it began. Everything else came from here."

~ ~ ~

They walked for an hour. Emrys showed her how the plants grew, how they were harvested, how the valley's community had maintained them through times of difficulty and times of forgetting and times when outside forces had tried to claim what grew here.

The Dutch trader in 1738 had not been the only person who had tried to take the plant. There had been others — Victorian-era botanists, pharmaceutical representatives in the 1920s, **a man in the 1930s who Emrys described carefully and whose description, with the two watches, made Daphne's hand go to her notebook.**



"Barnard came here," she said.

Mair translated. Emrys nodded. He spoke.

"He came in 1934. He was polite. He wanted samples. Emrys's father told him the plant didn't grow here anymore. He showed him empty ground on the lower slope where nothing grew."

"He lied to protect it."

"As his father had lied before him. As Emrys has been prepared to lie if necessary."

"He will," said Daphne. "Barnard will come back."

She said it with certainty, not fear. Emrys, when Mair translated, nodded slowly with the same certainty.

~ ~ ~

They were sitting on the rock outcrop, looking down at the valley, when Daphne remembered.

"Emrys. Charlie Mokoena told me to ask you about the other name. Not DuGall. The other name. The one that connects it all."

Mair translated. Emrys went very still. He looked at Daphne for a long time. Then he looked at the valley. Then he looked at the canary — which, at this moment, sang three particularly clear and deliberate notes, as if it had been waiting to do so.

Emrys smiled. He said one word in Welsh. Mair said the word again, as if hearing it properly for the first time. Then she said:

"It means — in Welsh it means — the place where the river meets the valley. The confluence. Where things come together from different directions."

She looked at Daphne.

"It is the old name for this valley. The name before DuGall. The name that the Hughes family used in their oldest records, before the name was simplified."

Emrys spoke again. Mair translated:

"He says: DJ Hughes — your great-grandfather — left this valley in the 1880s. He changed his name slightly when he left. He thought it would help him move in a wider world without the valley's history following him. But he kept the connection. And he passed it to his son. And his son kept it, in the way he named things and the way he signed himself. And the connection was kept."

"What is the old name?"

Emrys said it again, clearly. Mair translated:

"Du Gallan. Two words, in the old form. Du — meaning dark or deep, in the way the valley is deep. Gallan — meaning confluence. The deep place where things come together."

Daphne stopped breathing for a moment.

Du Gallan

The deep place where things come together.

She looked at the valley. At the place where ST had come from, and DJ before him. At the place the family had spent three generations trying to reconnect with, through flowers and maps and clues and networks and a trail that had wound from Wales to South Africa to the Congo and back again.

She thought of the word on the publishing house that would one day carry these stories. The name that a grandson would choose without knowing why it felt right.

Douglas Allan. DuGallan.

He would not know, when he chose that name, that he was choosing the valley's name. That he was doing what DJ had done — keeping the connection, carrying the valley forward into a new form, hiding it in plain sight.

She could not know this. She was fifteen years old in 1941 and her sons had not yet been born.

But she felt the shape of it. The way that some things close in on themselves across time, like a river finding its way back to the sea.

"The deep place where things come together," she said quietly.

The canary sang.



CHAPTER FIVE

What Emrys Gives Her

THE DUGALL VALLEY — THREE DAYS LATER



She spent three days in the DuGall valley.

Three days that she would remember, in every detail, for the rest of her life.

Each morning Emrys took her out to the hillside and showed her something new. How the plant grew in different conditions. How the valley's microclimate maintained it through the cold Welsh winters. Which parts of the plant were active and which were inert, and how the balance between them changed with the season.

Each afternoon she sat at the table with the two-hundred-year-old book and her notebook and Mair's steady translation, and she copied. She copied everything Emrys indicated — the formula's Welsh component, the Welsh cultivar's specific properties, the preparation method that two hundred years of observation had refined, the notes about what it did alone and what it required in combination.

On the third afternoon Emrys gave her something else.

From a box under his bed — produced with the care of someone who has been waiting to produce it for a very long time — **he took a small packet of seeds.** The orange flower. The DuGall cultivar. Wrapped in paper, sealed with wax, labelled in Welsh in his careful hand.

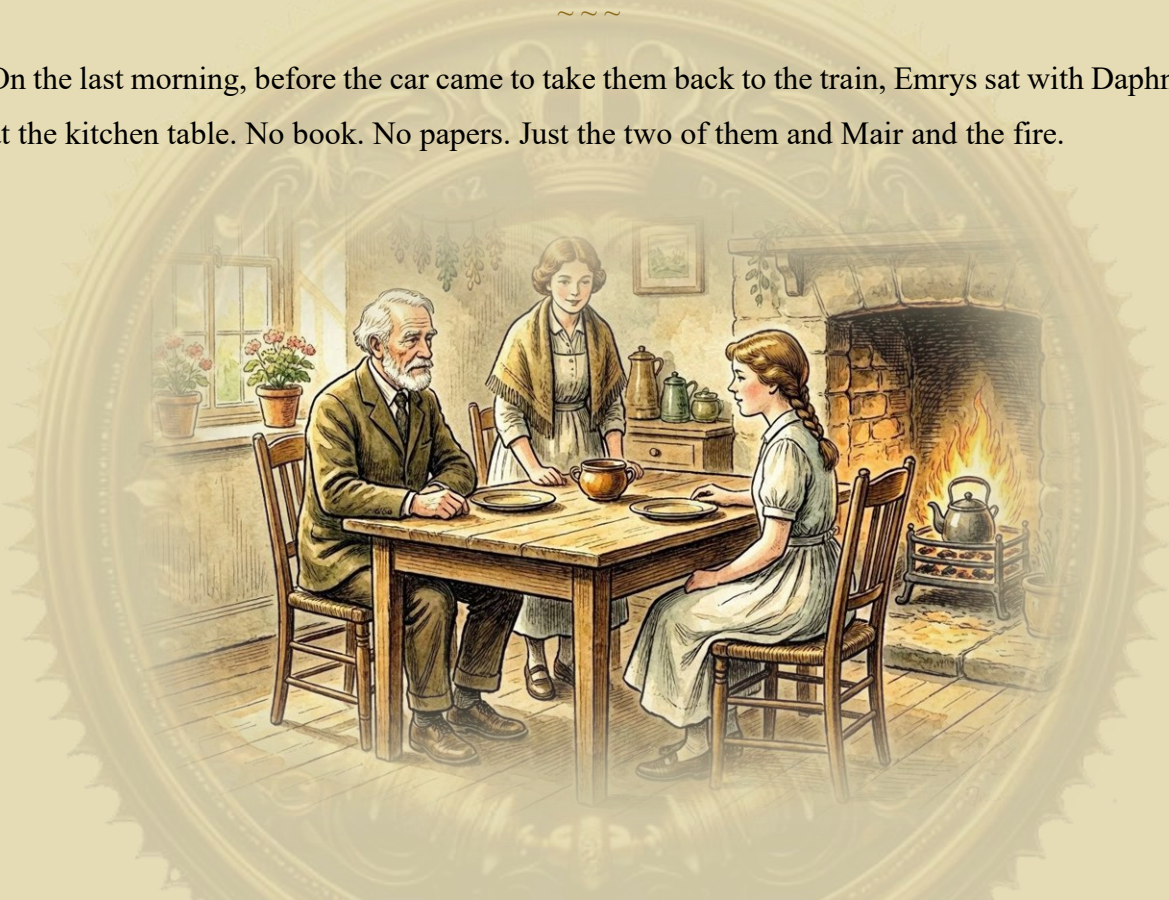
"He says: take these home. To Shannon. Grow them. The climate will be different but the seed is strong. He says: his father grew them in conditions that should have been impossible and they survived because the seed remembers where it came from."

"The one that remembers where it came from," said Daphne, thinking of Jan's translation of the Nama name.

"Yes," said Mair.

"He says it is the same in every language that has a word for it."

On the last morning, before the car came to take them back to the train, Emrys sat with Daphne at the kitchen table. No book. No papers. Just the two of them and Mair and the fire.



He spoke for a long time. Mair translated in sections.

"He says: what ST found was not only a botanical formula. It was proof of something that the DuGall valley has always known but could never demonstrate to the wider world — that knowledge which is separated finds its way back together, if the right people carry the pieces."

"He says: Barnard and the Hartmann company want the formula for what it can make. They understand it as a commercial asset. They do not understand that the formula is only one expression of a much larger truth."

"He says: DJ Hughes understood the larger truth. ST understood it. He believes you understand it."

Daphne looked at the old man.

"What is the larger truth?"

Mair translated. Emrys looked at her for a long time. Then he said something short.

"He says: the deep place where things come together. That is not just a name. It is a description of what happens when separated things find their way back to each other. It happens with plants. It happens with people. It happens with knowledge. It happens with families."

He said one more thing. Mair was quiet for a moment before translating.

"He says: ST is not gone. He says: a man who understood Du Gallan the way ST understood it does not simply vanish. He says he cannot tell you where ST is. But he says: the canary has been singing."

Daphne looked at the canary in its handmade cage with the initials scratched inside. She looked at the old man who had held this valley's knowledge through decades of waiting. She looked at the yellow door.

"Tell him thank you," she said.

Emrys nodded before Mair translated. He answered.

"He says: no. Thank DJ Hughes. Thank ST. Thank the girl who was brave enough to follow the trail. He has only been keeping the door open."



CHAPTER SIX

The Deep Place Where Things Come Together

THE TRAIN SOUTH — SEPTEMBER 1941



She wrote it all down on the train south.

Not just the formula and the notes and the Welsh vocabulary and the valley's history. Those were already in the notebook, copied precisely. She wrote her understanding of what it meant.

Three flowers from one origin. Separated two hundred years ago and carried in different directions by people who did not fully know what they carried. Maintained by different communities with different languages and different knowledge, each understanding one part of a larger truth.

DJ Hughes had come to Africa carrying the Welsh piece — not the plant, which was too delicate for the journey, but the knowledge of the plant. He had not known, when he left, that the plant had already been taken east. He had thought he was the only keeper.

Then ST had found the Congo flower and recognised it. He had held the Welsh piece in his head and found the Congo piece on the island and understood what they meant together.

And then Jan, on his West Coast routes, had been driving past the third piece every August for years. The Namaqualand variant. The one that had branched off from the journeying

plant somewhere between Wales and the Congo, rooted itself in the southern African soil, and become something related but distinct.

Three pieces. Three communities of knowledge. One formula that none of them could complete alone.

This was Du Gallan. Not just a name. A description of what had happened and what needed to happen. The deep place where things came together.

~ ~ ~

She wrote until the light began to fail and the Welsh hills gave way to the flatter English countryside and then to the grey outskirts of Cardiff.

She had the formula's foundation. She had the seeds. She had the three pressed flowers, side by side, for the first time in the history of anyone who had understood what they meant.

She did not have ST. She did not have the third flower in its living form. She did not have the Congo island.

But she had enough. Enough to carry forward. Enough to give to her children, one day — to the sons she did not yet know she would have, who would take each thread and follow it further than she could go alone.

She looked at the three flowers on the seat beside her.

Orange. Orange. Orange.

The same family. Three expressions of one original thing. Separated and adapted and maintained by people who understood that some things are worth keeping even when you cannot explain why.

"Mama," she said.

Her mother opened her eyes.

"I know what to do next."

Her mother looked at her — at the notebook, the flowers, the canary, the seeds — with the expression she had worn since the tin trunk.

"Tell me," she said.

"We go home. We plant the seeds. We write everything down — everything, exactly as it is. And we tell the right people the right pieces. The way ST did. The way DJ did before him."

She looked at the canary.

"And we wait for the moment when it can all come together."

Her mother was quiet. Outside the window, England passed — grey and green and entirely ordinary, entirely unaware of the conversation in the railway carriage.

"How long will we wait?"

"I don't know," said Daphne.

"But the canary will tell us when it's time."

The canary sang on the seat beside them as the train moved south toward the ship and the ocean and the long journey home.

South Africa. Shannon. The veld. The tack room with its two sets of initials and its patient tortoise. The seeds that needed planting. The formula that needed completing.

And somewhere — in the Congo, in a place that was too dangerous and too far away and too complicated to reach alone, but not forever — the boot-shaped island and everything ST had left on it.

Three generations had followed this trail. It would take at least one more.

But the deep place where things came together was waiting. It had been waiting for a very long time. It could wait a little longer.



Daphne's Clue Keeper

Everything we know — Books One through Five
New clues from Book Five are marked NEW!



From Books One through Four:

THE COMPLETE MAP:

Both halves. Boot-shaped island marked 'Here. Nov 1938 — ST'

THREE FLOWERS:

Congo island, DuGall valley Wales, Namaqualand near Kamieskroon

JAN HEYNEKE:

The last key. Knows the West Coast flowers completely.

BARNARD / HARTMANN:

Two of the three pieces. Does not know about the Namaqualand flower.

DJ HUGHES:

ST's grandfather. Carved his initials in Shannon. Started this search.

THE CANARY:

Still singing. Going the right way.

New in Book Five:

NEW THE YELLOW DOOR:

The DuGall valley farmhouse has a yellow door. This is the original. ST did not invent the yellow — he inherited it from the valley.

NEW EMRYS:

Met at last. Very old. Eyes like the valley. Has kept the Welsh piece for decades. Knew ST would send the right person.

NEW THE TWO-HUNDRED-YEAR BOOK:

The DuGall valley botanical record, maintained since 1743. The orange flower documented in every generation. The formula's Welsh foundation recorded precisely.

NEW 1738:

The Dutch trader who took the plant from DuGall valley to 'somewhere east'. The origin of the Congo flower and the Namaqualand variant.

NEW THE WELSH HALF OF THE FORMULA:

Copied into Daphne's notebook. The DuGall cultivar's properties, preparation and combination requirements.

NEW THE SEEDS:

Emrys gave Daphne seeds of the DuGall cultivar. To plant in Shannon. To grow. To keep.

NEW DU GALLAN — THE OLD NAME:

Du Gallan means 'the deep place where things come together.' It is the ancient name of the valley, before DuGall. DJ Hughes carried this name when he left for Africa. It is also the name DuGallan — the author — carries without knowing why.

NEW BARNARD IN 1934:

Barnard came to the DuGall valley in 1934. Emrys's father lied — said the plant had died out. Barnard left believing the Welsh piece was gone.

NEW EMRYS'S CERTAINTY:

'ST is not gone. A man who understood Du Gallan does not simply vanish. The canary has been singing.'

Big Question: With the Welsh formula and the seeds, what does Daphne do next — and when will the full formula finally be completed?

What Would YOU Do?

The seeds are planted. The formula is written down. Wales is behind her.

Back in Shannon, Daphne plants the DuGall seeds in the sunniest corner of the farm garden. They grow — slowly, stubbornly, exactly as Emrys said they would. By the following year there is a small patch of orange flowers in the Shannon soil, thousands of miles from Wales.

Daphne is sixteen years old. The war is still going. The Congo is still unreachable. Jan Heyneke is still driving his bus routes. And one morning, a letter arrives from an address in Johannesburg that Daphne does not recognise.

Inside, three words in handwriting she would know anywhere:

Not yet. Wait.
— ST

No return address. The Johannesburg postmark is smudged. The handwriting is ST's. He is alive. He knows she went to Wales. He is telling her to wait.

What would YOU do?

- A) Write back to the Johannesburg address immediately — tell ST everything and ask him why he cannot come home
- B) Take the letter to Hendrika at the post office — she will know if the address is connected to anyone in the Shannon network
- C) Wait, as ST asked. Plant the seeds. Grow the formula. Trust that he will make contact again when it is time.

Find out what Daphne decides in Book Six:

The Hughes Chronicles, Book Six:

"Not Yet"

Available at DuGallan.com

Fun Facts For Curious Readers

Wales — The Country

Wales is a country in the west of the island of Britain, with a population today of about three million people. It has its own language — Welsh, or Cymraeg — which is one of the oldest living languages in Europe and is still spoken by hundreds of thousands of people. The Welsh landscape is famous for its deep valleys, ancient mountains, and stone walls that have divided small farms for hundreds of years. Welsh people have a long tradition of moving to other parts of the world — particularly to places where there was mining work, like South Africa — while maintaining a fierce pride in their home country and its language.

Botanical Records and Plant History

For centuries, people who grew and used plants kept careful written records of their observations. These records — sometimes called herbals or botanical journals — described the plants' appearance, where they grew, what conditions they needed, and what effects they had when prepared in different ways. Some of these records are hundreds of years old and are now kept in libraries and museums. Scientists today still use them to understand which plants were grown where, and how knowledge of their properties was maintained across generations. A two-hundred-year-old botanical record, like the one in Emrys's farmhouse, would be considered an extraordinary historical treasure.

How Plants Travel

Plants have been moved around the world by humans for thousands of years — for food, medicine, trade and curiosity. The Dutch East India Company and other trading companies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were particularly active in collecting and moving plants between continents. When a plant is taken to a new place, it sometimes adapts to its new environment over generations, developing slightly different characteristics from its original form while keeping its fundamental nature. Scientists call this process adaptation, and it is one of the reasons that plants in different parts of the world can be related to each other even when they look quite different.

The Welsh Language

Welsh — Cymraeg — is a language with a long and complicated history. It is related to Cornish and Breton, the languages of Cornwall in England and Brittany in France, because all three descended from the ancient Celtic language spoken across much of Britain before Latin arrived with the Romans. Welsh has survived centuries of pressure but it has never died. Today it is taught in schools across Wales and used in everyday life by a growing number of people. The word Du Gallan, meaning the deep place where things come together, is an example of the kind of poetic, landscape-rooted naming that Welsh is particularly good at.

Seed Saving

For most of human history, farmers and gardeners saved seeds from their best plants to grow the following year. This practice — called seed saving — is how plant varieties were maintained across generations and why some varieties have survived for centuries. Seeds can remain viable for many years if stored correctly — kept dry, cool and dark. When Emrys gives Daphne seeds from the DuGall cultivar, he is participating in a tradition that stretches back thousands of years: passing living knowledge from one generation to the next in a form small enough to carry in a pocket but powerful enough to grow a whole hillside.



Three generations. Three flowers. Three continents.

The trail leads home.



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