

PROLOGUE



My dearest Nova,

There is so much I'd like to say, so much to thank you for, that I don't really know where to begin. The day we found you in the woods was one of the best days of our lives. You brought so much joy and love into our home. We didn't know we were missing anything until you filled the void in our hearts.

The day you left was bittersweet. We knew you didn't belong in our world, but that didn't change the fact that we wanted to keep you close and safe forever.

Your letters these past years have meant the world to us and I thank you for them. It's comforting to know that you are healthy and safe. We are so happy that you are getting closer to finding the family you lost so long ago. We couldn't be prouder of you, Nova.

From what Castor has been able to tell us, you won't be able to send or receive further correspondence, so I'm entrusting him with this last letter to you in hopes that it finds you happy and, most importantly, loved. You have such a beautiful heart, don't ever let anyone make you feel otherwise.

I can only hope that we have provided you with enough knowledge and support over the years to prepare you for what awaits you in this new life. We did the best we could.

I must admit that it does bring me much comfort to know that Castor will be with you on this journey of yours. Please don't misunderstand, I know that you can take care of yourself and that you don't need to be watched over. I am thankful for the bond the two of you share. It gives me peace of mind knowing that, no matter where this journey takes you, you will always have someone who loves and supports you by your side. Hold onto each other, that kind of friendship doesn't come around often.

Now, I know that you are a bit old for the birds and the bees talk, but please make sure whatever or whoever wins that beautiful heart of yours is worthy of it. Don't settle for anything less than everything. You are worth the effort. Life may not always be kind to you, I know in the past it hasn't been, but don't let life's struggles change who you are. Use them to learn and guide you.

Thank you for completing our little family. The laughter and love you brought into our lives is priceless. I will cherish the memories until my last breath.

Never say good-bye, only see you later. In this lifetime and the next, we will watch over you always. I/we love you forever.

*All our love,
Mr. & Mrs. Hammond*

CHAPTER ONE



Years, it has been years since I escaped. Even though I escaped, I still wasn't *home*. Even after I escaped, I still felt trapped, trapped in a world where I'm a stranger, an intruder. I'd spent the following eleven years living among humans, raised as one of them. All along knowing that wasn't who I am. Leaving the house I'd grown up in behind was not hard, but I'd be lying if I said I wasn't scared. The Hammonds understood my need to find where I came from, but they still don't know who I am or that someone is looking for me.

An old forgotten cottage, deep in the forest, is where I've lived since leaving the Hammonds. It's situated not so far off the beaten path that I can't make it to town regularly, but not so close that the town's people would bother me. Call it paranoia, but I've been living off the grid since leaving the Hammonds. Living off the land has its advantages, I don't need money because I don't have bills and I have plenty of time to read and study anything related to magic and the supernatural. Downfalls? No electricity, no phone, and honestly, I miss my best friend.

It's not a lot, but I've made it my own.

I may not have all the pieces, but I've learned to listen to my instincts. Those instincts have been on high alert for as long as I can remember.

When I was five years old, there was a war between my people and the Wraith. That war escalated and the fighting came close to our compound. Fearing for my safety, my father had instructed his second in command, Diemos, to take me away from the violence, but that also meant I was being taken away from everything I had ever known.

It's hard to remember much before that because I was so young, and my memories of the following few years are fuzzy at best. What I do know is that the Hammonds took me

in when I was seven years old. They found me in the woods while on a camping trip and immediately took me in. They cared for me as much as the elderly human couple could until I left in search of my people, with their blessing, on my eighteenth birthday.

Castor, my best friend since the day we met, lived in the house across the street from the Hammonds. Not only is Castor my best friend, he is more like a brother. He lived with his mother until he enlisted in the human army one year before I left, looking for answers of his own.

I knew the moment we met, that Castor wasn't entirely human. Those with magic in their blood tend to be able to sense each other. Castor is a shifter, or rather a half-shifter, a fact his mother ignored, and has never been willing to admit or even discuss. He is the only person who knows everything about me, the only person that I trust implicitly. There were so many unanswered questions, but we had each other. As far as I'm concerned, he is and always will be family, my big brother. We were only kids but we knew we would never be able to live a normal life in that town. We are too different.

The Hammonds barely made enough money to take care of themselves let alone a child they found in the woods but for them, there was no question, they would take me in. For that, I will forever be grateful. They owned a small plot of land, which I helped them maintain and even farm. Mr. Hammond is a retired police officer and insisted I, along with my new friend Castor, learn self-defense, as well as wilderness survival skills. Self-defense came naturally to me, and it was something I not only enjoyed practicing but also, something that I excel at.

I will miss them, but they understand. Though they never pressed the issue, they suspected by my appearance that I was something "other" and they didn't care. My ears are slightly pointed, not as dramatically as an elf but more so than humans. My eyes are a bright and vibrant teal. My canine teeth are sharper and slightly longer than the rest, but not as long as Castor's when he shifts. They loved me no matter how different I was.

Without anyone to teach us about magic, and who or what we are, we spent a great deal of time at the local library. Unfortunately for us, the humans in our town were as much in the dark about supernatural beings as we are, and the best we could come up with were superstitions and fairytales.

A deep-seated fear has clung to me for as long as I can remember. Either I really don't know or I simply cannot remember the root cause of my fears. There is a constant nagging voice in the back of my head compelling me to stay one-step ahead of my invisible faux. *Stay aware and vigilant.* Some days the fear is so intense it verges on debilitating and I struggle to find the will to get out of bed in the morning. If only I can find some answers to who I am, then maybe I can find some reprieve to the dread.

Who am I? Starting with what I do know; my name is Nova and I am a Seeker. A name and a race of supernatural beings are the only pieces of information I have to the puzzle that is my life and who I am meant to be. I don't even know what it means to be a Seeker.

Time is running out. From what little information Castor and I have been able to uncover, Seekers are rumored to have unique abilities that manifest around their thirtieth birthday. The glimpse into my people was both frustrating, because there was nothing to help me find them, and exciting because it validates their existence.

What I can't quite reconcile though is if my abilities shouldn't develop until I turn thirty, then why have I been able to communicate with Castor telepathically since my sixteenth birthday? Is telepathy something all Seekers are capable of? Can I expect to develop more abilities or is that the only thing special about me?

Learning to control my telepathic connection with Castor was a process of trial and error but it came in handy. At first, I could only send him a feeling or an image if we were in the same room but after a great deal of practice, we can now effectively communicate with ease up to a distance of ten miles away from each other.

Until I met a young witch in the town nearest my cottage, I never had a reason to try to communicate with anyone else. The day I met Iris, I was stocking up on supplies in the village. As I made my way to the dried meats store, I noticed a young woman in the shadows, watching me with curious eyes. She blushed at being caught but didn't move out of the shadows. This young woman is unlike anyone I've seen in the village, and I must admit, curiosity got the best of me. She appeared to be alone and after a quick scan of our surroundings I felt safe enough to approach her.

"Why are you following me?" I ask, not wanting to beat around the bush.

"Because you're new here and I think you could use a friend." She says.

Now that I'm standing so close to her, I know she's not human. The feeling isn't as strong as when I met Castor, but there is definitely a sense of clarity and I instinctively know that she is different. Just how different is she, and does she know what I am? My breathing accelerates as excitement flows through me. This is the closest I've ever been to a solid lead, and I won't let my fear and mistrust of people get in the way.

Taking a deep breath I say, *"I think you're right, I could use a friend."*

Her gasp of surprise at my telepathic ability is followed quickly by a bright smile full of flat white teeth, confirming that even though she is different, she is not like me.

In the years that followed, Iris has become a very good friend, and one more person that I feel as though I might be able to trust. She and I can communicate telepathically, but we have to be in the same room. She thinks I'm a witch like her, and I haven't corrected

her. The magic lessons she insists on giving me are rather fun even if, after all this time, I can only complete the most basic spells.

There is no way of knowing what ability I may develop, but I'm believing more and more that I will develop at least one additional ability. In addition to telepathy, I have noticed that some of the events in my dreams often unfolded in the days following them. Initially, these vision dreams were so sporadic that I didn't recognize it as anything more than *déjà vu*. One particularly convincing "dream" had me on edge the whole next morning. Despite a clear blue sky on a bright sunny morning, I worked well into the afternoon to repair a small hole in the cottage roof, completing it only minutes before a three-day long rainstorm hit. Most of the visions have been about the weather or basic tasks around the house but every now and then, the subject matter becomes more pressing.

Living among the humans never felt like an option for me.

I often wonder if finding a cottage after several hundred miles of traveling, was luck or if I was subconsciously following an early vision.

Castor comes to visit me twice a year for at least a week at a time. He hasn't been able to find the answers to his own questions but it doesn't seem to bother him, not the way it bothers me. Not a lot of things get to him. When it comes down to it, Castor plans to stick with me. He's ready to be done with the human world too. During Castor's last semi-annual visit, we spent the whole week discussing and planning what my next move should be. It's easier said than done, especially when you don't even have a breadcrumb trail to follow. How do you begin a search for people and a home you can't remember?

On the last day of his visit, a slight hum began to radiate from within me.

The hum began like a warm sensation in my chest and gut, it felt similar to the feeling you get after taking a drink of strong liquor. With only two years until my thirtieth birthday, Castor and I assumed that the feeling could be a precursor to whatever ability I am supposed to develop. It's scary to be confronted with the fact that life is only beginning to make things interesting.

Gradually, the feeling had begun to radiate all over my body, a slight vibration I can feel all the time or a tingling feeling in my fingers and toes. It's been two months since Castor left and I've spent every waking moment gathering supplies and mapping out possible routes to take in search of my people. It's time I take my fate into my own hands.

Combat boots, sturdy cargo pants, tank tops, long-sleeved tee-shirts, warm jacket, socks, underwear, dried meats, bread, apples, extra canteens with fresh water, matches, rope, maps, basic first-aid kit, sleeping bag, and a small tarp, were all crammed into a military issue backpack Castor got for me when he first enlisted. Summer is coming to a rapid close, if I don't set out on my journey now, I won't be able to leave for months and

that's not an option. On my kitchen table, I leave a detailed plan for Castor. With that information, he should be able to find me easily, hopefully catching up to me in the first town I'm planning on traveling to.

That voice in my head, the one telling me to move on, only escalates with each passing day.

I am so thankful to have met Iris. She has taught me so much about the supernatural world. An invisible Veil separates this world from the supernatural one. Humans populate most of the cities and towns on this side of the Veil, rarely crossing paths with supernatural beings. Less populated villages near the Veil often have a mix of both humans and secretive supernatural beings. Crossing the Veil is actually quite simple for anyone born with magic. If a human approaches the Veil without an escort, they become disoriented and get turned around until they are on a path in the opposite direction of the Veil.

What the humans do not know is that the world is a far larger place than they ever could have imagined. The ancients-of what race I do not know-created the Veil as a permanent barrier between humans and those with magical abilities. Most humans cannot handle the truth and most with magic can't stand humans. Iris has given me navigational charts and maps of the towns and cities within the veil that she is familiar with. One of these will hold the answer to who I am, and maybe I just might find my family.

