

Prologue: Life Crumbles Away

Auralie smiled as she ran outside, carrying her new book with her. It was titled, "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone," and she was eager to start reading it. But her books would have to wait, because her twin brother Lucian had come running after her, to tell her it was time to wash her hands for dinner.

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Auralie sighed, "Oh come on! Five minutes of Harry Potter, please!"

"Sorry Ali," Lucian smiled, "but mum and dad said so."

"Alright," Auralie gave in easily, "you know, just because you're 7 minutes older doesn't mean you're the boss."

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"I know that," Lucian laughed, "but you still have to eat dinner."

Auralie sighed, and closed her book, "alright Luca, I'm coming." The twins ran inside together. Their mother and father, Jenna and Christopher Shadow, were waiting for them. Jenna was plating mac and cheese, and Christopher was putting napkins on the table.

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"How's the book," Jenna asked Auralie. Auralie grinned, "I haven't started it yet, but it looks really good."

"So good birthday present," Jenna smiled.

Auralie nodded, her blonde hair getting in her face, "yeah, thanks a lot mum. Thanks dad."

Auralie and Lucian were born in the United Kingdom, but when they were two years old, their mother, a marine biologist, had gotten a promotion that sent their family moving to suburban upstate New York, where they had lived happily ever since. But those two years had been enough for both twins to start speaking like their parents, with British voices. Jenna found it amusing that her children were so American in other aspects, and couldn't even remember England but would probably have the accent for life.

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The twins looked like their parents in some aspects. They had incredibly sensitive and fair skin like their father, and a timeless sort of features like their mother. Auralie was small like Jenna, and Lucian would probably grow to be medium height like Christopher. They both had blue eyes like their parents as well. But while Jenna had dark brown curls and Christopher had light brown choppy hair, Lucian and Auralie were both blondes. Neither of their parents had any clue where in the family their light hair had come from.

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That day was the twins 7th birthday, a cool day in October, and everything was calm and peaceful. Lucian and Auralie raced to the bathroom to wash their hands. Auralie had the satisfaction of reaching it first, and triumphantly made a show of running her hands under the warm water.

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Lucian sighed, "just use the soap already Ali, I'm hungry."

Auralie smiled and turned to squirt the foamy soap into her hands, but what she found was shocking. Her hands were glowing, and not in a "they were super shiny" way. Instead, there was actual light streaming from her hands, warm and bright against the dim bathroom.

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"Luca," she cried, suddenly scared. Her hands had never started glowing before, and she was worried that she had done something wrong. Maybe she had eaten something she shouldn't have, or had touched something funny. She was just seven, she couldn't have predicted this power, or known where it came from.

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Lucian's eyes grew wide as he looked at his sister's hands. But he didn't have a chance to say anything, because the ground began to shake, in one of the most violent earthquakes any of the Shadow family had ever felt.

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Auralie screamed and ran for her parents. The shaking was becoming more and more violent, but Auralie didn't realize how bad it was. Her hands were glowing, the earth was trembling, and the little girl was terrified. What she didn't realize was, the shaking was so horrible, the house was breaking apart. No seven year old should have been able to withstand that. But Auralie did.

She spotted her parents, clutching each other in desperation. She was trying to go to them, but at that moment, part of the upstairs floor came in and crashed down on her parents. She screamed and cried, as more gave away behind her. She turned to look for Lucian, but they had been separated by the debris.

"Luca," she screamed. Auralie was only seven, but she knew her parents were gone. She knew that it was almost the same as when they sat her down and told her her grandmother was gone. But worse, because instead of tragedy being an ocean away, it was two feet in front of her, crushed under a ton of rubble. She didn't want her brother to be gone too.

The little girl climbed under the table, clutching her book, which had fallen on the floor at her feet. She sobbed and sobbed, but no one answered her calls.

It would be almost 24 hours before they managed to reach her. The brave first-responders were shocked that the girl had survived. They assumed it was the table that had protected her.

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What they didn't know was how violent the shaking had been or how the effects had only really been felt at Auralie's house. What they didn't know was how the girl glowed, her power incinerating the rubble that should have crushed her. They didn't know that as she cried, she shone, and she only stopped hours later, when she was exhausted.

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People made plans for her to be sent to an orphanage in NYC, where she would be cared for and maybe even find a new family. They looked at the small girl they had found clutching her book as though it was a lifeline with pity. She had lost her parents, and her home, and it was devastating.

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But Auralie still had hope, at least until the moment when a kind firefighter took her aside and told her that she was the only one they found in the wreckage. And at that moment, Auralie's hope was destroyed, like her life had crumbled away, like her parents had been crushed, their bodies beyond saving. She knew why she was the only one, and it broke her heart, because it meant that she would never see her other half again.

Auralie's twin was gone. Lucian was dead.

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