

i. Status Quo

Auralie's blonde hair fell in her face as she sat on her narrow twin bed. She was 13, and had been living in the orphanage for 6 years. She had given up hope of ever being adopted. When she was little, people had thought she was too quiet, too weird, and too sad. When she got older, they didn't really even notice her. But whereas most of the permanent residents at least decorated their area of the dorms, Auralie's was plain and neat (unlike her hair, and everything else in her life). She kept all her possessions in a single du el bag, so she could run at a moment's notice.

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Why she would run when she had a roof over her head, food in her stomach, and a decent education? She got good grades, and with dedication she would be able to make it in life. But Auralie knew she didn't want that.

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She knew that while she was smart enough to make it, others weren't. She had seen people at her school being bullied, and she hated it. Everyone knew she didn't care what people thought of her, and she always had a thoughtful comment ready to prove her opponent wrong, in a polite way. Because of that, people le her alone. And she could use that skill to help other people in bad situations, like she had been doing. But it wasn't enough. Auralie wanted to make a real di erence in the world, and the orphanage wouldn't let her do that. So she kept her bag packed, in case an opportunity to change the world showed up.

Auralie also kept that bag packed in case anyone ever found out about her powers. She had read enough stories to know she had to hide them. In secret, in the dead of night, the insomniac had passed the time two ways, by reading and learning to control her powers. Auralie had a good grasp on how to use them, to control them, but she still feared them being found out.

If she was found out she would be hidden away at some government agency. They would never let her make the change she wanted to. Auralie would be forced to be someone's pawn, something that she would never do.

The bag was stashed under her bed, and all it contained was odds and ends, her personal hygiene stu , clothing, and her books. She didn't get much money, just a little for her birthday and the holidays from the orphanage each year, but she always spent it on books. Auralie owned the first five Percy Jackson books, Books 3-5 of the Wings of Fire series, Books 2 and 3 of the Books of Beginning Trilogy, and of course, the entire Harry Potter series. Harry Potter was her favorite. The 7th book was the best in her mind, but she loved them all. In fact, her first crushes had been on Hermione Granger and Ginny Weasley. She smiled a bit. Auralie tended to like fictional characters more than real people. Sure she had fleeting crushes on girls in her school, but nothing had really stuck. She just didn't have time for a real girlfriend. In fact, Auralie rarely felt like she had time to relax, she was always so stressed, her fears about her powers playing around in her head.

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She took out the book she had been reading last night, the Sorcerer's Stone. She was particularly fond of it because it was the last relic she had of her peaceful old life. It always brought about a sense of nostalgia that was bittersweet. Auralie sighed and sat on the floor, pulling her bag from under her bed, and putting the book away.

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Auralie also grabbed a hoodie, because it was a little cold. She smiled as she pulled it on, enjoying the warmth of the so blue fabric. The hoodie was Harry Potter themed, and had the Ravenclaw crest on it. Obviously, Auralie was a Ravenclaw.

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"I like your sweatshirt," a voice came from behind her.

Auralie turned, expecting it to be one of the older girls coming back from wherever they spent their a ernoons. Instead it was a young woman, who seemed very professional, but also had the hint of a smirk on her face. Her dark brown hair was pulled back into a ponytail, and she was looking at Auralie with a curious expression.

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"Thanks," the younger girl said, keeping her expression neutral.

The woman's lips twitched into a smile, "I'm assuming you're Auralie Shadow?"

"Who's asking," Auralie replied.

The woman answered, "My name is Maria Hill. I work for Shield, and we need to talk. It's about your brother Lucian. He's alive, and wreaking havoc."

Auralie's mind went blank for a second, then she realized what Maria had said, and burst into tears.

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