

## A New Home

The drive hadn't been as bad as I was expecting. Driving from my home in Nevada to my great aunt's home in southwestern Oregon was beautiful. I went through sage covered high desert and tree covered mountains. Sometimes I drove next to a river and watched the birds swooping over the sparkling water.

It was only an eight-hour trip to get from my hometown to the city where my great-aunt's shop was. I had a u-haul trailer hooked onto the back of my truck. It wasn't a terribly old truck. I'd bought it used when I was eighteen. It was only ten years old at the time and in really good condition.

I took very good care of it. Being a witch didn't pay very well when you start, so using all of my graduation money on this truck had been an investment in my future. It had four-wheel drive and a manual transmission, so I didn't really have to worry about anyone stealing it, most people I knew couldn't drive a stick.

At about three in the afternoon, I pulled up in front of the shop on the old main street. This was a quieter part of town. Still busy on weekdays and Saturdays, but it was Sunday and Auntie Tonya said the sidewalks were rolled up on Sundays.

Nothing was open. That was why I was able to park right in front of her shop. I got out of my truck and locked the door.

The shop was sweet looking with a large window in the front and giant old stone bricks climbing all the way to the top. Next to it was the add-on where the teahouse resided. Between the two doors, there were stone cauldrons lled with owers. There were planters on the second story window that I knew were lled with herbs and plants for spells. They rested above a white and green sign that read 'Sit a Spell: Potions, Teas, and Charms'.

Auntie Tonya had been running this mix of magic shop and teahouse since she was in her twenties. She was now eighty and wanted to travel in her nal years. That was where I came in.

She had no children, deciding to remain single and childless. Her focus on her business and craft taking up all of her attention. I was her favorite of her sisters' grandchildren.

My grandmother had four sisters. She and the other three had all married and had their little families. My father was the rst boy born into the family. The rst re witch with plant magic.

I took after my father in that. I was the oldest and the only girl. I have two brothers. Yarrow and Sorrel. Mom likes plant names. Like mine. Clover.

She could have picked cool names for the boys like Sage and Mace, but she wanted soothing names, so she picked two plants that were used for soothing pain or swelling. Mom said she picked my name because bees and butteries would land on her belly when she was pregnant with me. 'It was a sign from the goddess'.

I was born during the celebration of Litha, or Midsummer. The longest day of the year. My mother went into labor the day before and I was born when the sun reached its zenith.

This is a very important thing for re witches.

Because it's the day and time that the sun is at its strongest, our powers are magnied. It was considered a blessing for them. For me, it meant a lot of accidental res when I was little.

Auntie Tonya was the one who found out I also had plant magic. Everyone always paid attention to my re, but nothing else. She saw me revitalizing some clover owers in the patch we had on our property when I was ve. What she didn't notice, was that I was talking to the bees.

That was when she started taking me to her home in the summers and teaching me plant magic. My father barely used his because it wasn't as strong as his re magic. Auntie Tonya said it was because he didn't use it that it was weak.

It took until I was twelve before anyone else noticed that I had never been bitten by an animal or insect, never stung, or threatened either. I would wander off and go talk to animals who lived in the sparse forest surrounding our house. Sometimes I would take them snacks. I would always warn them when it was almost hunting season.

The rst time I met a shapeshifter, I fainted. They felt like a person and like an animal. My little brain could hardly keep up with the information.

Auntie Tonya had been the one to teach me animal magic as well. That was her. Plants and animals. She had the strongest connection to our fae ancestors, magically speaking. My own grandmother was plants and earth magic. Two types that really went well together.

I raised my index nger and made a tapping motion. One of the plants in the planter tapped on the window. I saw Auntie Tonya smile out the window and wave me up.

Going to the side entrance, I climbed the stairs that I had climbed hundreds of times since my childhood. When I entered the door, the scent of fresh cookies hit me. Auntie Tonya spoiled me.

"There's my precious one! I'm so happy to see you!" She grinned as she swept me into a hug.

Witches had a lifespan similar to humans. Dark witches could live longer because they used spells to give themselves unnaturally long lives. My whole family was light. We would only have about one hundred years. A little more than the average human, not as much as a shapeshifter.

Even at eighty, Auntie Tonya didn't look her age like a human would. She actually looked about twenty years younger. Her thin frame wasn't bony or spindly. She reminded me of a small bird, delicate and cheerful. Her long, salt and pepper hair was braided and seemed to almost have a life of its own.

"Auntie! I missed you so much!" I smiled and hugged her back laying my cheek on top of her head.

At 5'10", I was taller than all the women in my family. It meant I didn't get to wear heels on most of my dates, as most men were usually either my height or a couple inches taller. No one really wants to date women who they have to tip their head up to kiss.

Not that it stopped me from dating. I'd had boyfriends ever since I was thirteen. I just never really connected with them enough to form a longer lasting relationship. That was how I ended up at twenty-two without a husband. My younger brother was in a relationship he'd had since high school.

"I love what you've done with your hair, sweetheart." Auntie Tonya said as she pulled back and looked me over.

I smiled. Nothing said witches had to have long owing locks. My mother seemed to take it as a bit of an insult when I'd cut my hair into the sweet looking pixie cut six months ago. I loved not having all of that in my way, but missed my fat blonde curls. I'd grown it out and now it reached just above my shoulders when straightened.

"Are you excited for your trip?" I asked.

"So excited! I've always loved the ocean and a cruise around the world is exactly what I need to start my travels off. You remember how to run the shop still, right? I have all the paperwork from the lawyer to get it put into your name. We can le it tomorrow and get the bank all updated. Did I ever show you how to do the books?" She asked.

"I remember everything. I know how to do the books. I really want to get my things unloaded and get settled." I replied.

"I've cleared out of the master. I'm keeping all of my things in the guest bedroom. You can help yourself to anything in there when I'm gone. I remember how much you love my scarves." Auntie Tonya chuckled.

I blushed. "I was seven, Auntie. Everyone plays dress-up at that age."

"You tied every scarf I owned to your arms and legs and danced around like a buttery. It's one of my favorite memories." She said, her eyes twinkling.

I remembered. The pictures were hung in her house and in my grandmother's house. No one would ever let me forget it.

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We spent much of the afternoon carrying my boxes into the house and unpacking them. I didn't have a lot. I was still living with my parents, having not decided where I would go to practice my craft yet.

Once everything was settled, it was getting close to dinner time. Auntie Tonya ordered pizza. I was happy that she'd remembered that I didn't eat meat. Most animal witches didn't, at least, not the light ones. She was a rare exception. Her magic was more aligned to a predator, if it was something that another animal would eat, she'd eat it.

We ate together while she talked about the path her ship would take, the days they'd spend in different locations, her plans for after the cruise. I loved seeing her so excited about her future. I was excited about mine, too.

The shop had always felt more like home than home did. That was probably why I didn't go nd my own path. This was my home, now and forever.

I couldn't wait to get started on organizing and cleaning up the magic portion of the shop. I would hire someone to take on the teahouse. Auntie loved talking to all the customers who would come in for her special brews. She did tealeaf readings for some people.

That wasn't my strong suit, most plant witches could do it, but I only ever saw one thing when I looked at the tealeaves. Auntie said it was because my future was so powerful I couldn't see anyone else's. I gave up trying and decided to leave the divining to the water witches.

As I lay in my bed, deciding to denitely get a new mattress as soon as possible, I smiled. This was going to be perfect. I had my own place and my own future to look forward to. Nothing could be better.