

Luna and the Masters of Magic

The Trials

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and the Masters of Magic

The Trials

A Fantasy Novel by

M.T. Fielding



To my beloved friends & family,

You are my light, my inspiration, and my greatest joy.
With this book, I offer you a piece of my soul,
hoping that it may inspire you, just as you inspire me.

With all my love

Foreword

Welcome, dear reader, to a world where magic is not just a myth, but a hidden force woven into reality. This is the story of Luna, a young woman searching for her path amidst the mysteries of the unknown, the echoes of her past, and the promise of a grand destiny. In *Luna and the Masters of Magic: The Trials*, we follow Luna as she steps into the halls of Mooncrest Academy—a sanctuary of ancient knowledge, concealed between shimmering lakes, lush valleys, and whispering forests. But magic is not merely a gift; it is a test. A force that will challenge her heart, mind, and very soul. Yet, the greatest trials Luna must endure are not just of magic. They are trials of trust, courage, and self-discovery. Shadows move unseen, alliances shift, and hidden truths threaten to unravel everything she thought she knew. In this world, where nature breathes and secrets lurk beneath the surface, her fate—and perhaps much more—rests in her own hands. As you turn these pages, prepare to journey with Luna through deep valleys, feel the restless waves of enchanted lakes, and uncover the enigma of Mooncrest. Let her story remind you that true strength is forged in perseverance, that light is born from darkness, and that destiny belongs to those who dare to seek it. The path is perilous. The adventure awaits. May the magic carry you away.

~ **M.T. Fielding** ~

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The Stranger in the Snow

It was a bitterly cold winter evening. Twilight crept over the city like a blanket of grey. Fresh snow covered the streets, muffling all sounds, as if the world itself were holding its breath. Luna Seren walked along the pavement, her fiery red hair a striking contrast against the monochrome landscape. The colour seemed to burn against the backdrop of white and grey. Her face held a delicate, almost elusive beauty—accentuated by high cheekbones and soft, light pink lips. Her green eyes, flecked with gold, seemed to glow in the dim light. She radiated a powerful blend of curiosity and unwavering determination. Her skin was soft and fragile, yet it possessed an undeniable glow. She looked timeless—a young woman of the present, yet with an aura that could have belonged to an ancient legend. Her emerald-green coat shimmered under the streetlights as her boots crunched softly against the snowy path. The cold air nipped at her cheeks, turning her breath into tiny clouds. Luna looked up. Above her, clouds gathered—dark and heavy, looming. Something hung in the air. Something unusual. An invisible tension tugged at her senses, indefinable yet tangible. A restless feeling settled in her chest as she continued walking. Her thoughts swirled like snowflakes—fast, fleeting, without direction. But one thought remained... the emptiness she could not seem to fill. Life in the city was as routine as ever. The

winding streets, the hidden squares, and the nostalgic cafés held their charm, yet they no longer satisfied her. More and more, she felt trapped in a pattern that was not her own. As she neared the apartment complex where she lived, her gaze fell upon a figure standing in the shadows. Her steps slowed. The building itself was stately, bearing the marks of its age. Weathered stone walls glistened beneath a thin layer of melting snow. The wooden door, adorned with stained glass accents, faintly reflected the glow of the streetlights. But her attention was entirely consumed by the silhouette near the broken lamppost. Someone was there. Motionless. Waiting. His silhouette was sharp, as if he were a part of the night itself. The flickering light of the streetlamp cast erratic shadows, making his form waver in and out of focus. Luna slowed her pace, her gaze locked onto the stranger. Her hand instinctively reached for the amulet around her neck—the only tangible link to her mother. The metal was icy against her skin, yet at the same time, it filled her with an unexplainable sense of strength and protection. Luna stopped and asked, "Who are you?" Her voice was calm, yet a sharp undertone sliced through the silence. The man turned his head slowly, just enough for his face to catch the faint glow of the broken street lamp. His eyes—icy grey and intense—held hers captive. A strange warmth lurked within them, a paradox against the evening's chill. His voice cut through the silence. Deep and resonant, as if it had risen from the earth itself. "Perhaps you should ask why I am here, rather than who I am." Her breath caught. There was something about his presence that unsettled her—yet intrigued her all the same. An unseen force surrounded him, some-

thing that sent sharp warnings through her intuition. "Then why are you here?" Her fingers curled tighter around the amulet. The man smiled faintly. Not mocking, not friendly. A smile as enigmatic as his words. "I wait," he said simply.. His tone was warm, yet laced with mystery. "And you... you carry something you do not fully understand." Luna's eyes narrowed. Her heart pounded faster. "How do you know that?" She sounded sharper than she had intended. Her muscles tensed, ready to react to any danger. His gaze drifted to the amulet. "Some things you just know." The wind brushed against her cheeks. The cold felt sharper than it had a moment ago. "What you carry is more than an heirloom. It is a key." "A key?" Her breath grew shallow. "A key to what?" she asked, her voice barely audible. Her heart thundered in her chest. A flicker of sorrow crossed his gaze. "You will discover that when the time is right." His voice had softened, almost... sorrowful. "When you are ready." He turned away. His shadow seemed to merge with the falling snow. One blink of her eyes, and he was gone. His silhouette faded among the swirling snowflakes, his footsteps barely audible on the frozen ground. It was as if he had never truly been there. Luna remained. Her breath heavy in the icy air. She lowered her gaze to the amulet in her hand. Its soft, silvery glow seemed almost comforting, as if it wished to tell her something. But what? The stranger's words echoed in her mind. They felt heavier than ordinary speech, as if they carried a hidden meaning. Was this merely a chance encounter, or the beginning of something much greater? Slowly, he disappeared into the distance, swallowed by the darkness of the approaching night.



The snowflakes formed a veil around his figure until he vanished completely. Even his footsteps left barely a trace in the snow. Luna shivered. Her thoughts whirled like a storm. Who was this mysterious stranger? What did he mean with his cryptic words? Why had his voice left such a deep impression on her? How could he know so much about her amulet? A tight feeling crept into her chest, as if he had given her a warning she did not yet understand. Once more, she stared at the amulet. It lay cool in her hand, a silent witness to this strange encounter. Something inside her told her this was no coincidence. The unease that had gripped her moments ago gave way to something else. A quiet, unwavering determination. The answers to her questions would not come easily. But she knew... she had to find them. Luna walked on, stepping through the familiar entrance of her apartment building. The transition from the freezing, desolate world outside felt almost unreal. As she entered, the scent of roasted vegetables wrapped around her like a warm blanket, soothing and familiar. Her aunt Kitty's apartment was a reflection of her eccentric spirit—a cosy space filled with eclectic treasures. Vintage trinkets lined the shelves, multicoloured fabrics draped like a patchwork tapestry along the walls, and plush armchairs were scattered invitingly across the room. The living room was a vibrant symphony of patterns and textures, as if every detail had been chosen with care to radiate joy. The walls were painted a warm honey-brown shade, and the floor creaked gently beneath Luna's feet—polished to a deep shine by years of love and use. In the corner stood an imposing, old-fashioned bookcase, packed to the brim with books, photographs, and tiny curiosi-

ties. Among the shelves sat a small aquarium, home to a single goldfish, Frummel, who playfully swam through the water, his fins flickering like liquid gold. At the stove, Aunt Kitty stirred a spoon through the simmering stew, her bright pink cat-eye glasses glinting in the warm kitchen light. Aunt Kitty had a style unlike anyone else. A style that was entirely her own. Her clothing seemed to have come straight from a vintage dream—a masterful combination of second-hand treasures, undoubtedly discovered after hours of searching through thrift shops. Today, she wore a bright yellow skirt with an extravagant floral print, twirling cheerfully as she moved around the kitchen. Her turquoise satin blouse had playful ruffles and buttons that looked like tiny pearls. Over it, she wore an oversized purple cardigan, handmade and adorned with knitted appliqués in the shape of stars. As if that wasn't enough, she completed her outfit with vibrant green boots, adding just that extra touch of quirkiness. Around her neck hung a large necklace with a pendant shaped like an old clock—a timeless piece of history she carried with her. But what made her most remarkable were her eyes. Those wondrous, otherworldly eyes. They had a pearlescent shimmer, shifting with the light in the room. Sometimes they were a soft blue, then silver, and at other moments, they glowed with a subtle lilac hue. When you looked into Kitty's eyes, it felt as if you were being drawn into a universe full of secrets and possibilities. As if she could see things you could not. Aunt Kitty radiated a sense of freedom in everything she wore. She didn't seem to care what others thought of her, as long as she felt good in her creations. Her clothing told stories—tales of a life filled with colour, courage,

and a love for the unexpected. She looked as if she had stepped straight out of a painting, a living work of art that could not be overlooked. “Luna, darling! How was your day?” Kitty called cheerfully, not even looking up from her cooking. Luna gave a faint smile as she hung up her coat. “It was... interesting,” she murmured, her mind still on the stranger she had met earlier. Kitty looked up, her purple curls bouncing slightly as she tilted her head. “Interesting, you say?” Her eyes narrowed just a fraction—barely noticeable, yet present. “Come, sit down and tell me, love. What’s on your mind?” She gestured towards a chair at the kitchen table. Luna hesitated for a moment but then smiled and sat down. “It was... different from usual,” she said softly. Kitty slowly turned, her curiosity immediately piqued. “Different? Tell me everything, darling.” But Luna noticed a subtle change in her tone, as if the question carried more weight than she let on. She frowned slightly, gathering her thoughts once more. “I saw someone... A man near the building. He was... different. It felt like he knew me, but I’ve never seen him before.” Kitty pulled a chair closer and leaned forward, resting her elbows on the table. Her movements were measured, but something about her posture felt unnatural—like she was forcing herself to remain calm. “What do you mean, different? Was he frightening?” Kitty asked. Her voice remained light, but her gaze was just a little too sharp. “Not exactly frightening,” Luna said, instinctively reaching for the amulet around her neck. “More... intriguing. His eyes were so intense, as if he could see right through me. And what he said, it felt like it held a hidden meaning.” Kitty nodded slowly. Her face remained calm, but Luna caught a glimpse of

something—tension, perhaps? As if her aunt was carefully considering her reaction. She looked at Luna with a smile that was just a little too tight to be reassuring. “Hmm... It seems your intuition is trying to tell you something,” she said slowly. “Maybe this isn’t a coincidence, Luna. Maybe he has a message for you?” Luna leaned back, letting her gaze rest on Kitty, her thoughts racing. Something wasn’t right. The subtle hesitation in Kitty’s voice, the way she had glanced at the door as if checking whether they were alone... It didn’t feel like mere chance. She studied her aunt’s face, searching for hidden signs, like a detective looking for unseen clues. She couldn’t quite put her finger on it yet, but an unexplainable tension hung in the air. “What kind of message?” Luna asked slowly, her eyes fixed on Kitty. “Do you have any idea who he might be?” Kitty smiled again, but this time, there was a pause—just a little too long—before she answered. “Sometimes, the answers don’t come right away, love, but you’ll know when the time is right.” Her words were soft, almost a whisper, as if she was deliberately holding something back. Luna’s gaze flickered to Kitty’s hand, which was unconsciously tapping against the edge of the table. A small gesture, barely noticeable, but to Luna, it felt like a sign. Kitty knew more. She was certain of it. Now she just had to figure out what. But for now, she held back. “Would you like some tea?” Kitty asked. Luna shook her head. “I’ll go to my room for a bit, Auntie. Call me when dinner’s ready.” Kitty nodded understandingly and turned back to her stew. But Luna saw how her shoulders remained just a little too tense... and how her hands gripped the ladle just a little too tightly. As the evening passed, Luna sat in her room,

clutching her amulet tightly in her hand as she stared ahead. Her thoughts lingered on her aunt's strange behaviour. The walls of her room, painted in a soft cream shade, usually exuded a sense of calm that soothed her. But now, they felt like nothing more than a silent backdrop to the turmoil in her mind. Her gaze drifted to the polaroid photos pinned to the wall above her bed—snapshots of joyful memories. For a moment, they distracted her, but they couldn't erase the gnawing questions circling in her head. Her bed, covered in a blanket of soft pastel hues, beckoned her, yet her mind refused to rest. Her room had always been her sanctuary, a small, personal oasis. A vintage lamp on her bedside table cast a warm, gentle glow across the space, while a large mirror with an elegantly carved wooden frame stood in the corner. Near her desk, books and notebooks lay in an organised chaos, reflecting the storm of thoughts in her head. At the window, where the light curtains hung half open, the cold night air drifted in. The snow shimmered beneath the soft glow of the streetlights, casting dancing reflections on her walls. But Luna's mind kept circling around the words of that man—and her aunt, Kitty. How strange it all was... There was something about him. Something that felt familiar, yet at the same time, terrifyingly unknown. Why had his voice left such an impression on her? Why did it feel as though he knew more than he was willing to reveal? The memory of his intense gaze and cryptic words held her captive in a constant state of confusion and curiosity. At that moment, the scent of Aunt Kitty's famous stew drifted through the door—a warm, earthy aroma that pulled her back to reality for a fleeting second. "Luna, darling! The stew is al-

most ready!" Kitty's off-key singing voice rang through the apartment, followed by the scraping sound of a spoon against the bottom of a pan. A few moments later, the soft clinking of cutlery against plates revealed that Kitty was setting the table. "Come to the table before I eat everything myself!" she called again, her voice playful but firm. Luna remained seated for a few more minutes, as if her body was trying to catch up with her thoughts. Then, a knock on the door made her look up. Aunt Kitty stepped inside. Her face was serious—a rare contrast to her colourful outfit, a contradiction that was almost comical. Even now, with a shadow cast over her usually cheerful features, she remained a vibrant presence. "Luna, I know you have many questions. But some answers only come when you're ready, so stop overthinking." Kitty placed a hand on her shoulder and gave it a gentle squeeze. "The only thing I can tell you is that the stranger plays a role far greater than you can understand right now. Trust your instincts." Luna looked at her in surprise. Kitty turned and walked towards the kitchen. "Come on, let's eat." Before Luna could respond, a sudden exclamation rang through the room. "Frik-kels!" Kitty shouted, her voice filled with panic. Luna looked up and saw her aunt rushing towards the stove. The stew was on the verge of burning. With a frantic yet swift motion, Kitty grabbed the spoon and stirred furiously. "Always the bloody thyme," she muttered to herself, unable to suppress a chuckle. Luna smiled briefly, but her aunt's words offered her no reassurance. On the contrary, they only raised more questions. Something was happening. Something big. She knew it. She felt it. Her life would never be the same again. All she had to

do was piece the puzzle together. After dinner, Luna helped with the dishes, but her mind remained restless. She retreated to her room—or at least, that was the plan. Halfway down the hallway, she changed her mind. With renewed determination, she walked to the entrance hall, grabbed her coat, and slipped it on. As she opened the door, she called out to Kitty, “I’ll be back soon!” Without waiting for a reply, she stepped outside. The cold greeted her instantly, but she ignored it. Her feet carried her instinctively to the place where she had seen the man. She stopped by the streetlamp. This was it. She closed her eyes and let her senses do the work. The air still carried that strange energy. It was subtle, barely noticeable—but it was there. Like a whisper in the void. When she opened her eyes, something caught her attention. A glimmer in the snow. She knelt down and carefully brushed away the loose snow. There, half-buried beneath the white flakes, lay a small ring. It was silver in colour, with an engraving that made her breath catch. The same symbol as her amulet. A wave of warmth surged through her hand as she picked it up. A slight tremor shot through her fingers, deep and penetrating, as if it had been meant for her. As if it were speaking to her. Not with words, but with a silent promise she had yet to understand. Luna’s breath hitched as her gaze fell upon her left palm. The crescent moon mark. For a brief moment, it seemed to glow—a faint silver light pulsing in harmony with the ring. It felt strangely familiar. As if the mark and the ring spoke a language only she could feel. She ran her thumb over the mark, her heart pounding in her chest. There had to be a meaning behind this. And then... A presence. Invisible, yet undeniable. The air see-

med to stiffen, filled with an inexplicable chill. A shiver ran down her spine. Luna barely dared to turn around. Her breathing quickened. The snow beneath her feet felt like it was sinking. As if she were about to step into another dimension. And then... A voice. Soft. Whispering. "You are closer than you think." The words were barely more than an echo in the night. Her head snapped up, her eyes scanning the darkness. Nothing. No shadow. No movement. Only the snowflakes drifting gently down, like hidden messengers of something yet to be revealed. But the voice... The voice lingered. Luna knew she was on the right path, but the answers would not come easily. She slid the ring into her pocket. It felt heavier than it should. A constant reminder of the stranger. Of the mystery weaving itself around her. As she resumed her steps, she felt the ring pulse once more, radiating a subtle warmth. A silent encouragement. Keep going. Her thoughts spun around the cryptic message and the symbol, which seemed to hold far more meaning than she had initially thought. She was certain of it. This was only the beginning. An adventure awaited. A truth that would change her forever. Luna hurried upstairs, finding her aunt already waiting for her return. "Where have you been, love?" Kitty asked. "I went back to the place where I saw the strange man... I found something... a ring." Aunt Kitty looked surprised. "What kind of ring?" Luna pulled the ring from her coat pocket and placed it on the kitchen table. "This ring—it has the same symbol as my pendant, Auntie... Strange, don't you think?" Kitty hesitated for a moment before speaking. "Luna, sweetheart, sit down. I need to tell you something. Just promise me you'll listen with an open mind and not be too critical." Luna

nodded, feeling a sense of gravity settle over her. Whatever Aunt Kitty was about to reveal, she knew it was important. Kitty took a deep breath, her eyes locking onto Luna's as she spoke. "The man you saw outside our apartment, Luna... I've seen him before, many years ago. And this morning, he came to see me." Luna stared at her in shock. "He was a good friend of your mother's—someone she trusted deeply." Kitty's voice took on a melancholic tone, laced with memories of the past. She spoke of Luna's mother—her laughter, her warm smile—and of the deep bond she had shared with the mysterious stranger. Her eyes darkened as the memories surfaced. Then, she revealed his name. "Alexander." Luna's heart skipped a beat. Kitty paused, as if gathering her thoughts before continuing. "For years, he was an important part of your mother's life." Luna listened intently, her confusion and curiosity growing. Perhaps Alexander's presence in her life was far more significant than she had initially thought. A heavy silence filled the room. Luna leaned forward slightly, eager to hear the truth. Kitty's voice dropped to a whisper, her words barely audible as she began to unravel the mysteries surrounding Alexander's identity. The weight of her family's secrets pressed heavily on Luna's shoulders. She couldn't shake the feeling that her entire life was about to change. Her family's story was woven with hidden truths and mysteries, and Kitty's words felt like loose threads slowly being pulled apart. Piece by piece, a complex tapestry of concealed stories began to reveal itself—stories that had remained in the shadows for years. Luna felt herself being drawn deeper into a web of intrigue. Alexander's presence seemed like a catalyst—a spark igniting long-bu-

ried memories and hidden truths. She couldn't help but wonder what other surprises awaited her. Kitty's eyes shimmered with a trace of sadness as she continued. Her voice dropped even lower. "Alexander was once a protector. He swore to keep your mother safe from the forces that sought to harm her." Luna's breath caught. "Their bond was more than just friendship," Kitty went on. "It ran deeper... something unspoken, something hidden." A wave of confusion and fascination washed over Luna. She had always known that her mother had a remarkable past, but these revelations went beyond anything she had ever imagined. For years, the truth and its secrets had been shrouded in darkness. And now... Now, they were finally coming to light. The room fell silent. Kitty's words hung heavy in the air, like a veil of old memories. Luna's thoughts swirled. There was something inexplicable drawing her to Alexander, as if their stories were intertwined on a level beyond her understanding. Her mind spun, caught in an endless carousel of thoughts and suspicions. Her curiosity burned stronger than ever. What did all of this mean? How did Alexander fit into her life? And most importantly... What was she supposed to do next? Luna was determined to learn more about Alexander and his connection to her family's past. The fragments of the story were beginning to take shape, but there were still so many loose ends—so many unanswered questions. Her desire to uncover the truth grew with every passing second, fuelled by Kitty's words. She knew what she had to do. She had to confront Alexander. Only he could help her unravel the mysteries surrounding her family. It felt as if she was standing on the threshold of a revelation that would not only bring answers

but change her life forever. As Luna made that decision, Aunt Kitty's expression shifted. Her eyes grew serious—a silent warning of the dangers that lay ahead. Secrets that had been buried for years were on the verge of resurfacing. Kitty wanted Luna to be prepared for what was coming. The silence in the room grew heavy, laden with unspoken tensions. The air felt thicker, saturated with the weight of revelations that had only just begun to unfold. Luna gazed outside, her eyes resting on the city below. The sounds of Brussels blended with her thoughts. She thought of the countless afternoons she had spent exploring the winding streets of Paris. The stories her mother had told her about their family's history echoed in her mind, as if the past itself was calling to her. But that past carried its own weight, an inheritance that was slowly beginning to wrap itself around her. Her fingers trembled slightly as she touched the cold glass of the window. Her thoughts spun in a dizzying whirlwind of questions. What would she discover if she confronted Alexander? What if the truth led her to a past she wasn't ready to face? But she had no choice anymore. The truth was something she could no longer avoid. It was time to uncover the secrets her mother had hidden. Secrets that Alexander had guarded all these years. Luna slowly turned to Aunt Kitty, her eyes filled with determination. "What exactly do you know about Alexander's past? And why is he appearing now, after all these years?" Kitty's face softened. Her gaze drifted, lost in distant memories, as if she were turning back time to those summers in Paris. Her thoughts filled with recollections that only she could see. Then she began to speak, her voice steeped in the bitter truth of times long gone. "Alexander wasn't

just a friend of your mother's," she began, her eyes still locked onto a memory only she could recall. "He was her protector... and more than that." "They met in Paris when they were young. The bond they shared was stronger than I could ever understand. It went beyond friendship—perhaps even... a little dangerous." Luna's breath hitched. "Sophia trusted him completely," Kitty continued, "but there were always things she couldn't—or wouldn't—tell me." Luna's eyes widened in wonder. What exactly did Aunt Kitty mean? What had happened in Paris? Why had Alexander returned now, after all these years? Kitty's voice softened, as if she had momentarily lost herself in her own memories. Luna sensed there was more—far more—than what was being said. Kitty's words offered only a glimpse of the bigger picture. "Your mother and Alexander were inseparable. They met when they were young, full of dreams and a desire to explore the world. Their friendship grew into something much deeper. A bond that neither distance nor time could break." A slight unease settled in Luna's stomach. Her mother had always felt like a mysterious and elusive figure—someone who never quite seemed tangible in her memories. And now... now she was hearing of a hidden connection, one deeper than she had ever imagined. What did this mean for her? What had Alexander shared with her mother that remained in the shadows? Aunt Kitty took a deep breath before continuing. "Their friendship was special, Luna. They would never have abandoned each other, no matter how far life pulled them apart... but..." She paused for a moment, carefully watching Luna's reaction. "There were always secrets. Things your mother never shared with me. Things I never fully understood."

She fell silent for a moment, the weight of her words heavy with meaning. "I believe the time has come for you to uncover those secrets yourself." Luna clasped her hands together. It felt as if she held the key to a door she had always wanted to open—but one her mother had never led her to. What was the truth behind that bond? What role had Alexander played in her past? It was clear now that he was much more than just the stranger she had seen outside her apartment. Kitty's gaze drifted again, her thoughts lost in memories of Sophia. "She was something special, you know?" "Her long, curly chestnut hair... it fell over her shoulders like a warm sunset." "And her eyes... those deep, hazel-coloured eyes. They weren't just beautiful, they radiated kindness. Everyone around her felt safe in her presence." Luna closed her eyes for a moment, trying to picture the woman she had only known through stories and the few fleeting memories from her childhood. It felt strange to hear her mother described so vividly by someone who had truly known her—someone who had witnessed the bond between her and Alexander firsthand. "And then there was Alexander," Kitty continued. Her voice dropped to a whisper, as if saying his name summoned a landslide of memories too complex to fully grasp. "He had something intense about him, Luna." "His grey eyes... so sharp, so piercing. It was as if he could see right through you." She smiled wistfully. And his hair—dark and unruly—fell over his forehead in waves... He had a rugged charm. Something mysterious. As if he always remained just out of reach. But when he was with your mother, she said, that rough edge softened... or something like that. Luna felt a pang of curiosity, a deep yearning. So this was

the man with whom her mother had once shared such an intense bond. The image of Alexander's piercing gaze and the allure of his rugged presence began to form in her mind. She couldn't help but wonder what had truly happened between them. What had drawn her mother to him so strongly? What was the true nature of their bond? "Together, they were... powerful," Kitty murmured, almost to herself, as she described the magic that had existed between them. "You could feel the electricity in the air when they were together. It wasn't just attraction; it was something deeper. Something unspoken... yet undeniable." She paused, her gaze soft but distant. "And yet... somehow, they were always kept apart. Life, circumstances... secrets." She took a deep breath. "I think your mother wanted to protect you from everything she couldn't control." Luna's thoughts raced. Her heart pounded in her chest. Secrets. That word kept coming back. What had her mother hidden from her? Why had she been so determined to shield her from this part of their past? Aunt Kitty finally looked at her, her eyes filled with sorrow and determination. "Luna, sweetheart, there is so much you need to know, but you must also be prepared." Her gaze grew more intense. "Alexander isn't just a figure from your mother's past." "He is also a part of your future... whether you are ready or not." Luna nodded slowly, a sense of determination settling deep in her chest. The search she had begun—a silent journey into the past—had suddenly taken a sharp turn. She would have to face Alexander. She would have to face the truth. Whatever happened—she had to unravel it. Kitty drifted further into her memories. A tale of passion and devotion, so strong that everyone who knew

them had been captivated by it... Including Alexander himself, whose unwavering loyalty to Sophia had remained intact through the years. Yet, there was always a mystery surrounding Sophia's family. Whispers of ancient traditions and primordial powers passed down through generations. Even to Kitty, the true nature of it all had remained largely unclear. Her eyes took on a faraway look as she recalled the strange occurrences that had haunted Sophia's family for centuries. The inexplicable connections to the lunar cycles. The eerie sense that their fate was inextricably tied to the mysteries of the moon. "It was said that Sophia's ancestors possessed a unique gift," she whispered. "They could harness the energy of the full moon. Channel it into extraordinary abilities... It was both a blessing and a curse that ran through their bloodline." Luna's gaze drifted to her left hand. The mark she had carried all her life—a crescent moon on her palm—seemed to glow with an otherworldly energy. Every time the full moon graced the sky, she felt it tingle, as if it were trying to tell her something. Kitty suspected that Luna had inherited more than just a family trait. Perhaps the moon mark on her hand was the key. The key to unlocking the secrets her mother had hidden. And perhaps... also the answer to Alexander's true intentions. Why had he suddenly returned? Alexander's reappearance didn't seem like a coincidence. Everything pointed to the approaching full moon. Luna felt it in the deepest part of her being—he knew more than he let on. something that could change her life forever. His sudden presence felt unsettling. Like a distant relative unexpectedly showing up at a family reunion. Uninvited... unpredictable... and capable of stirring up a great deal of chaos. Aunt Kit-

ty sighed and leaned back in her chair. "It will become clearer, love. Give it time. But be prepared for what is coming." Her voice trembled slightly as she met Luna's gaze. How could she tell Luna that the moment was approaching faster than she dared to hope? How could she explain that Luna was more than she had ever realised—that she was born to carry the power of their bloodline? And how could she reveal that she, Kitty, had felt this magic her entire life, had guarded it, had learned to control it? No. It was not yet time. Luna had to discover it step by step. As Luna pondered her aunt's words, Kitty slowly stood and walked to the window. Outside, the moon hung low in the sky, half-hidden behind a veil of clouds. She felt the tingling in her fingertips, the soft call of the power coursing through her blood. Her hands itched to summon it, to show Luna who she truly was. But she held herself back. It had to happen at the right moment. Too soon, and she would irreversibly alter Luna's fate. She turned around, a calm smile on her face, as if nothing was wrong. "Know this... whatever happens, I am here for you. Always." Luna nodded slowly, but her mind buzzed with thoughts. Something had changed. Something in Kitty's expression, in her voice, in the way she spoke. As if her aunt knew things she couldn't—or wouldn't—share. Luna was certain she wouldn't rest until she uncovered the truth. That evening, peace had returned to the house. Kitty sat knitting, her fingers moving effortlessly over the wool, while Luna had retreated to her room. Suddenly, the silence was broken. The sharp, unexpected sound of the doorbell echoed through the apartment. Kitty immediately stood, setting her knitting aside, and walked to the intercom. She pressed

the button, her voice clear but curious. "Hello? Who calls this late?" A brief silence followed before a deep, calm voice replied. "Alexander. I have come to talk." Luna looked up from her room, her heart skipping a beat. Alexander. She held her breath as Kitty pressed the door opener without hesitation. "Oh, Alexander! Of course, come in!" she called. Moments later, footsteps echoed in the hallway. Steady, purposeful. Alexander was approaching. Luna froze. From where she stood, she had a clear view of the living room. The warm glow of the lamps illuminated the figure standing in the doorway. There he was, wrapped in the same dark coat, his grey eyes just as intense as they had been earlier that evening. Her gaze remained fixed on him. Alexander. For a moment, the world stood still. His eyes found hers, and an inexplicable shiver ran through her. "Good evening, Luna," he said, offering a slight bow of his head. His voice was low, reassuring, yet it carried something... something elusive. "Sit down, Alexander," Kitty gestured, as if his visit was no surprise to her. She walked to the kitchen, her colourful scarf trailing behind her as she hurriedly began preparing tea. Her finest porcelain cups appeared, a tray was filled with biscuits, and soon after, she carefully placed everything on the coffee table. She smiled warmly. "I thought you might come, Alexander." Luna still stood at the entrance of the living room. Her feet felt rooted to the floor. Kitty patted the couch invitingly. "Come, Luna. There is so much to discuss." Hesitantly, Luna stepped forward and sat beside her aunt. Her gaze remained locked on Alexander. "Tell me, Alexander," Kitty began, handing him a cup of tea. "What brings you back to our little corner of the world?" But she already knew the

answer. Alexander settled into one of the comfortable armchairs. His posture was relaxed, yet there was a guardedness in his eyes. Luna took a deep breath. Her thoughts swirled. “Why are you here?” she asked. Alexander held her gaze. “We share a long history, Luna,” he said. For a moment, something flickered in his eyes. Luna leaned forward slightly. Her curiosity was mixed with a hint of frustration. “You say this has something to do with me.” Her voice was steady, determined. “What do you mean by that?” Alexander looked directly at her, his voice calm but laden with meaning. “Luna, there are things in your past, in your family, that you need to understand. Secrets that have remained hidden, but are now coming to the surface. My task is to guide you through what is to come.” Aunt Kitty took a sip of her tea, breaking the tension with her signature lightness. “Well, Alexander, that all sounds very mysterious. But maybe you could be a little less cryptic for our Luna. She already has enough on her mind.” Alexander offered Kitty a brief smile, a flicker of admiration in his gaze. “You’ve always had impeccable timing, Kitty.” His focus returned to Luna. “I know this is a lot to take in. But believe me, I am here to help. It all begins with trust.” Luna’s intuition whispered that Alexander’s arrival was no coincidence. Everything seemed to align with the approaching full moon and her aunt’s story. There was something he wasn’t telling her—something that could change everything she thought she knew about herself and her family. She didn’t know it yet, but her determination to uncover the truth was drawing her closer to Alexander. For a fleeting moment, his eyes glimmered with something—an almost imperceptible spark of mischief and chaos. His

lips curled into a lopsided smile—an expression Luna couldn't quite place. Did he realise the power he held over the tension in the room? Or was this simply who he was? Luna felt her heartbeat quicken. Alexander took a deep breath, as if preparing for what was to come. He locked eyes with her, his gaze intense, his expression unreadable. "Luna," he began, his voice low and enigmatic, "there is something you need to know." The air in the room grew heavier, thick with unspoken words. Luna swallowed. It felt as if the walls were slowly closing in, as if everything she thought she understood was slipping from her grasp. "What do you mean?" she asked. Her voice was barely audible, but her eyes spoke volumes. The dim light in the room seemed to fade into the background as Alexander began to reveal what had remained hidden for years—a truth that would shake her perception of her family, her heritage, and herself to its core. His voice softened, carried by an ancient, forgotten power. "There is a prophecy," he said. "One that speaks of the return of a powerful moon goddess. Her descendants would possess abilities that... are beyond imagination." Luna's breath caught. Slowly, the realisation began to sink in. This wasn't about some distant legend. This was about her. "Your family," Alexander continued, "is connected to this prophecy. Your fate is inextricably woven with that of the moon goddess." Luna felt the ground beneath her shift. "But... how?" Her voice trembled. "What does this have to do with me?" Alexander held her gaze. "Everything." He let the silence linger for a moment before continuing. "The prophecy speaks of three moon phases. Each phase is linked to a trial. Your crescent moon... the mark on your hand... is the key. It unlocks the first

phase.” Luna glanced at her palm. The symbol she had carried her whole life, the one that sometimes pulsed under the moonlight, suddenly held a far deeper meaning than she had ever imagined. “What is the first trial?” she asked, her voice barely a whisper. Alexander’s gaze deepened, his voice almost hypnotic. “The First Trial,” he said slowly, “is the Light Awakening.” His words hung heavy in the air, as though they were part of an ancient spell, meant only for those who understood its true meaning. “It is about confronting the shadows within yourself. Not just overcoming your fears or doubts, Luna, but embracing them. Acknowledging the darkness that shapes you into who you truly are.” His gaze remained fixed on her, unwavering and piercing. “Only by accepting your darkness can you unlock your true potential. Only then will the power that lies dormant within you awaken.” A shiver ran through Luna. The first trial was not something external. It was something that lived inside her. If Alexander was right... Then this was only the beginning. Luna shivered again. But deep inside, she felt something stir—a silent, almost imperceptible call. Shadows had always followed her. There had been moments when the world felt too heavy, too strange, as if something was hidden beneath the surface. But she had never truly understood it. Now, it seemed she had no choice. She had to face them head-on. “Why me?” she asked. Her voice was barely more than a whisper. “Why am I the one chosen for this trial? For this... prophecy?” Alexander’s eyes softened with an emotion Luna couldn’t quite place. “It is not about being chosen, Luna. It is about being ready.” He paused, his gaze deep and searching. “You are the heir of this family—your blood, your mark,

your bond with the moon. The full moon... is a catalyst. A reminder of what you carry deep within." Luna frowned, her mind racing. "But what do you mean by embracing the darkness? What exactly do I have to do?" Alexander was silent for a moment, as if choosing his words carefully. "You will know when the time comes." His voice was soft but laden with meaning. "Darkness is different for everyone. It is not just a symbol—it is a part of you. Something you may have avoided. The first step is understanding it. The trial will bring it to the surface." A knot tightened in Luna's stomach. The idea of facing her own darkness—whatever that meant—was terrifying. Yet, deep inside, she felt an undeniable pull. She didn't know it yet... didn't understand it. But she felt it. "I don't know if I'm ready for this," she admitted, her voice barely audible. The weight of what lay ahead was beginning to sink in. Alexander regarded her calmly. "I understand," he said. "Do not be afraid, Luna. You only need to be willing." Luna stared at him, unsure if she could trust him. He knew more than he was letting on—that much was clear. But were his intentions pure? Yet, in the silence of the room, with the moonlight casting its soft glow through the window, she knew she could no longer ignore this path. The mystery, the trials, the legacy of her family—everything was connected to something greater than herself. Alexander stood. He took a moment to look at her, as if assessing her. "The full moon is approaching, Luna. Time waits for no one." With that, he turned and disappeared into the night. His silhouette merged with the darkness. Luna remained behind. Alone with her thoughts. Alone with the knowledge that her life was about to change forever, in ways she could not yet imagine. That

night... as the moon hung high over the city, casting a silver glow across the rooftops, Luna felt her world shift. The threads of fate wove themselves around her, pulling her into a mystical world where ancient prophecies and lunar power reigned. The trials awaited. She didn't yet know what they entailed, but one thing was certain—there was no turning back. Luna took a deep breath. She would have to prepare herself. Outside, the muffled sounds of the city echoed—a soothing melody against the storm raging inside her. A mixture of curiosity, fear, and determination. It felt as though the universe itself was tightening around her, leading her toward an inevitable confrontation with herself... and the secrets her mother had left behind. Three trials. Each designed to test her courage, her insight, and her heart. The first was already at her doorstep. The Light Awakening. Luna's hand rested on her palm, where the moon mark lay hidden. She would have to face the shadows within herself. She would have to embrace the darkness. Only then would her true potential be unlocked. Alexander's enigmatic smile still lingered in her mind. He knew more than he had revealed. Luna knew that the answers he had not given might be even more dangerous than the questions she had. Luna stared at the crescent moon mark on her palm. In the dim light of her room, it seemed to faintly glow—a constant reminder of her lineage, of the power slumbering within her, waiting to be awakened. She felt it pulse with every heartbeat, as if urging her to take the first step. But what if she failed? What if the trials revealed parts of herself she wasn't ready to face? Her mother's legacy was proving to be far more complex—and dangerous—than she had ever realised. Now that the shadows of