

P R O L O G U E

It all started when the spoon bent.

I didn't mean to do it. It just happened, completely out-of-the-blue at Stanford University's Christmas party, amongst mom's nerdy colleagues and their families. One second I was staring at my reflection in my coffee spoon, waiting for my boyfriend Charlie to stop talking to my mom about college; and the next moment the spoon was bent at a ninety-degree angle in my hand.

“Where we you thinking just then?” a voice asked inches from my ear. Suddenly kneeling by my side in the festive dining hall was a washed-up looking hippie, with stringy blond hair and stubble of a beard.

I tucked the spoon into my purse before anyone else could see it.
“I was thinking how stirring coffee has just become problematic?”

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I glanced over at Charlie and mom to make sure they hadn't notice the bent spoon. They hadn't. Not that they would, with mom trying to convince Charlie of the hundred reasons he should stay in San Francisco forever, rather than taking her only child away from her. It struck me that the problem with being an only child is the word *only*.

"Can you do that again?" the hippie asked, and reached for the spoon in my purse.

I put my hand over my purse. "You do realize that I don't know you, right?"

He sighed and withdrew his hand. "You're right. I should spend the next hour explaining how I know about the migraines that paralyze you several times a week, and how, when you're falling asleep sometimes, you suddenly know things that you shouldn't know, things that are in other people's minds."

I feel my mouth falling open in surprise.

"And then I should explain how you sometimes guess what's going to happen long before it does," he continues, "and you see really terrifying things happening to people, and how you've tried to hide these things from the people you love, scared they'll call you a—"

"—Freak," I whisper.

"And after we've gone through all that, assuming we won't have been interrupted by your mom or boyfriend, I'll ask you to bend the spoon

again, and you'll do it because you'll know that someone finally understands you, and that your future is going to be very different from now on than how you had ever imagined it to be."

I took the spoon out of my purse and handed it to him. He straightened it between both hands, and as he handed it back to me, he said, "Name's Indigo."

"Mine's Callie," I said, and then, when he smiled in response, I added, "But you probably already know that."

He nodded, and I quickly glanced over at Charlie and mom, who were still in a passionate discussion about college.

"The things you see in your mind – they're real," Indigo said. "The fact that you can see them makes you a target, and if the people you love know the truth about what you can do—" he nodded towards mom and Charlie—"They become targets too."

I swallowed hard. "Targets?"

Indigo nodded. "You know what I'm talking about."

That was just it: I did know what he was talking about. I had seen people in my mind dying in the most horrible ways. Somehow I knew that those people were targets, but of whom or why, I had no idea.

Around us, the room buzzed with activity. Kids ran around, spilling sodas out of their plastic Stanford cups, and parents yelled vague instructions to them while carrying on conversations about left-wing

politics. In the midst of it all, we sat on the floor, completely unnoticed by the party-goers.

I first checked to make sure Charlie and mom weren't watching, and then I held the spoon out in front of me. In the curved metal surface, I could see two faces side-by-side: my confused face and Indigo's smile. When the spoon bent again, his smile got bigger.

"Focus that same energy somewhere else," he said. "Test it."

At the time, I didn't know exactly why I was doing what he told me to do, but it was as if I couldn't do anything else; like this moment had been waiting for me all these years, and I just had to live it. When I focused on a metal light switch across the room, I felt this intense confidence, this feeling that my life was mine alone, and that I could go anywhere and do anything with it. As this feeling surged through me, I felt heat sliding down my arm into my fingertips.

"Test your power," Indigo said.

It was like the word "power" flipped some switch inside me. I lost focus, and my gaze slid a few inches over, to a small metal box.

The fire alarm went off.

Everyone screamed and ran for the exits, grabbing their kids along the way. Across the room, I saw Charlie and mom headed towards me, and when I looked over, Indigo was no longer by my side. As the sprinklers turned on, and ice-cold drops of water pelted my skin, I closed my fist, and

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where the spoon had been, there was now a card with a phone number on it. Right then, I knew that everything had changed.

I would never be normal again.

CHAPTER ONE

NORMAL

“Callie?” Indigo says from across the darkened room. I open my eyes, suddenly realizing that I’ve underlined the word *normal*, and I’m drawing a dark box around it. “What are you seeing now?” he asks. Indigo’s voice is so familiar by now it amazes me that I’ve only known him for a little over a year. So many things have happened since the Christmas party; things I can never say aloud to protect the safety of our nation, and the people I love.

I look at the word *normal* stretched across the white copy paper, mingling with the drawings of cargo ships and parts of radioactive bombs.

“Sorry,” I whisper, wishing it wasn’t too late to hide the paper. I focus again, this time on what I’m supposed to be looking at. *The aircraft carrier.*

I let myself sink into a trance again, and my mind feels like it is twisting, stretching. The world slips past me, faster and faster, until the blur makes me dizzy. I fall into the shattering of it, the rough pieces of images real and imagined merging into a kaleidoscope of colors. As the dizzying colors get brighter, my mind wanders to places thousands of miles away, to an ocean I’ve seen a hundred times, but never with my own eyes.

“Callie? Are you okay?” The voice comes from far away, as distant as a dying star, and I’m suddenly remembering the day mom told me dad was never coming back, and the way the truth crushed me under its unbearable weight. That was back when I valued truth, and finding out I had been lied to meant something; back before I knew everything was a lie.

“Callie?” the voice says, and now faster, dizzier, into a white space, a space without anything, no walls, no boundaries, just the deep blue ocean, and the reflection of something (me? a bird?) skipping across the water. “She’s not responding,” the voice says, and the backwards count begins. “Ten...nine...eight...”

I feel myself being sucked out of this world, and I’m grasping onto

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nothing, my arms flailing out like a bird, and

“Seven...six...five...”

and then I see it.

Weaving in and out of reflections, the aircraft carrier coasts almost motionlessly across the waves. I swoop closer, constricting myself until I fit through the carrier tower’s solid steel roof.

I taste metal. I am vapor. I am moving and not moving, all at once.

When I emerge into the control room, I see the Russian captain directing aircraft activity from his stately leather chair. “He’s still there,” I say aloud.

The counting stops abruptly. “Where’s the target?” Indigo asks.

I am aware of the pen in my hand, and the sheets of paper I’m pressing the pen against, but I don’t watch as my hand moves in jagged lines across the paper. I just feel my way through the sketch, slowly developing what I see in my mind until it’s a clear picture on the paper, a picture of a control room with the captain in his chair and the helmsman steering the ship, and on the deck directly below them, a wispy red smoke. The red smoke is why I’m here. Unlike the other psychic viewers, I can see a rare type of electromagnetic radiation. This type of radiation is found in several different metals, many of which power your standard X-ray machine, TV set, or computer chip. Or your deadly, military-grade laser,

on a Russian aircraft carrier miles across the ocean.

“I see the target,” I say.

The radiation is the reason only I can work this case: I’m the only psychic at Branch 13 who can see it. We all have our own specific talents, and this very one just happens to be mine. This is why Indigo calls me his secret weapon. But I don’t like thinking of myself, of my mind, as a weapon. Something created to hurt people.

“What’s the target's location?” Indigo asks, “and which direction is it facing?”

“It’s on the fantail,” I respond. “Facing the bow,” I say.

“Good,” Indigo says, writing down the location on an index card and slipping it into a sealed manila envelope. “We’re done for the day.”

There are some clichés that are true.

One of them is that people are like books, full of adventure and romance and dark moments. But if we are all books, my book is more fiction than non-fiction. Even the index is all lies; each chapter is invented to make me look like a normal girl.

The truth is that I’m the kind of book most people never open. I don’t blame them, not really. According to my boyfriend Charlie, I don’t allow

LIES I LIVE BY

anyone to get close enough to me to let them peek inside. Unlike him.

Charlie is one of those people with nothing to hide. He assumes the world is an open book, a place where all is revealed if we just read it. That's one of the things I love about him.

He's easy to lie to.

These are the basic facts about me:

I am 17.

I live in San Francisco.

I work for a secret government agency.

I am a psychic spy.

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