

A movie poster for "Quantum Spirit: Apocalypse" featuring Sallie Haws. The central image shows a young woman with long brown hair, wearing a blue denim jacket over a yellow top, looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. She is framed by a large, glowing, multi-faceted crystal structure that resembles a pyramid. The background is dark with blue and purple light rays emanating from behind the crystal. The title "QUANTUM Spirit APOCALYPSE" is written in a stylized font at the bottom, with "Spirit" in a cursive script. The name "SALLIE HAWS" is at the top in a gold, serif font.

SALLIE HAWS

QUANTUM  
*Spirit*  
APOCALYPSE

# Quantum Spirit Apocalypse

Sallie Haws



Austin

Los Angeles

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## Dedication

To my family, without whom this journey would not have been possible.

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Quantum Spirit – Apocalypse is a dream come true . . . literally. However, the dream that inspired my story was only the beginning. You wouldn't be reading it today if it wasn't for the encouragement and support of my husband, Jim, my daughter, Marquise, my son, Terry, my sister, Amy, and my mother and father, Jackie and Terry Haws. Amy and Marquise spent countless hours reading, editing and offering suggestions and advice.

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I hope you enjoy reading about Salena's adventures and journey as much as I enjoyed writing about it.

*Apocalypse: The imminent destruction of the world and the salvation of the righteous.  
From the Greek "apokalupsis" that means lifting of the veil or revelation.*

Quantum Spirit  
Apocalypse

## CHAPTER ONE

### *Menarche*

OMG! You'd think that with all my freaking psychic abilities I would have had more warning! I looked down at my messed-up bad kitty panties. Gaawd! I wrinkled my nose in disgust. Now what am I going to do? I mean I knew it would come sometime soon, but my friends, whose moon time had arrived months if not years ago, were already calling me a "late bloomer." In fact, it had become a kind of joke with my Sisterhood of the Silver Moon friends. I just thought I'd have some kind of premonition or something. Honestly, what good is it to be psychic and have a spirit guide you can actually talk to if she doesn't give you a heads up about important things like getting your first period during Eighth-Grade Algebra?!

"Next time Angeni shows up, I'm going to give her a piece of my mind!" I said out loud to no one in particular. *I could have at least come to school today prepared for this momentous occasion.*

Thankfully, I was the only one in the bathroom at the moment. I scrunched up my nose as my brain sorted through the rather fetid mix of smells that typically inhabited the girl's bathroom. The aroma of some kind of pine scented cleaning fluid permeated the other less desirable odors of what origin I had no desire to know. I looked around at the stall. No new scratched messages on the pink partition walls. I wondered randomly if AH still loved DP. With a sigh of resignation I started pulling the stupid little squares of toilet paper out of the dispenser to start cleaning up. I'm pretty sure it was some annoying old man who invented these totally aggravating paper squares. He probably never learned about female biology and the occasional need for a gob of toilet paper.

I carefully removed my ruined underwear and held them between my thumb and middle finger. Grossed out, I looked around for a place to set them down temporarily. I didn't want to put them on top of the tiny pieces of rolled up toilet paper, dirt, hair and other unidentifiable stuff that was covering the floor. Suddenly, a swift surge of nausea engulfed me like being caught in an undertow from an angry wave. I closed my eyes when the disorientation and dizziness that followed almost knocked me off the toilet. No longer caring where I put them, I dropped the panties on the nasty floor and used the partition walls to brace myself. *Okaaay . . . I don't think that's normal. I know girls get cramps, but I didn't think they were like this. This isn't going well at all,* I thought as I slowly opened

my eyes, which only added to my trauma.

“Hey! Did somebody turn off the lights?” I asked the empty room as my voice echoed back to me. The bathroom had suddenly become very dark, and what was visible was extremely blurry.

My ears pounded as my heart began to beat faster and faster. I shivered as I broke out in a cold sweat, my panic rising. I never heard of blindness being a symptom of PMS!

“Salena?” A familiar voice called my name as the door to the girl’s bathroom opened. A sigh of relief and unprecedented gratitude washed over me. My BFF, Keia, came to check on me.

“In here,” I barely squeaked out between gasping breaths I took in an attempt to calm the tornado creating havoc in my stomach.

“Geez, are you okay? What happened?” She asked quickly stepping into the room and closing the door behind her.

“Umm... I don’t think so,” I managed to reply before the queasiness hit again, and I shut my eyes tightly and inhaled deeply to keep from losing my lunch all over the floor. “I,” deep breath, “got my period,” another deep breath, “but now I feel like I’m going to throw up,” deep breath, “and I think I’m going blind!” I exhaled in a pitiful whine.

I looked up. The blurry edges of the bathroom stall door were moving back and forth. Then I realized Keia was talking to me because I heard her, but I couldn’t understand her. It was like I was at the bottom of a pool while she was talking to me from above. My panic moved up another notch. I started to hyperventilate. Apparently, I was so special that my definition of PMS included not only going blind but deaf as well! Through the density of water in my ears and a shaking stall door, I thought I understood Keia say, “Open up!!!” I managed to slide the latch back. She stumbled in and looked at me.

“Oh, my God girl! What’s happening to you?!”

I looked up, with tears streaming down my cheeks. Her words were muffled, but I sensed her concern as her blurry lips moved. I opened my mouth to tell her what was happening when I was assaulted again, this time by an excruciating migraine headache that caused what little eyesight I had left to be obscured by flashes of light like fireworks going off in my head.

“Help me!” I pleaded as those fireworks exploded in a fierce finale and everything went dark.

## CHAPTER TWO

### *Outbreak*

A beautiful meadow enveloped by craggy mountain peaks and flowing waterfalls surrounded me. Then consciousness slowly began to intrude upon my peaceful dream. I noticed a smell that didn't quite fit in with the environment. The last thing I remembered was being in the bathroom at school, but this didn't smell like the North Hall girls' bathroom at Swope Middle School in Reno, Nevada anymore. No, it smelled more antiseptic-like, and I was lying in a bed. I definitely wasn't home. My best guess was a hospital. Suddenly, I remembered that when I was in the bathroom, I couldn't see or hear. *No problem in the smelling department, it seems.* Blurriness floated around me in an array of strange muted voices and beeping noises. *Definitely, I'm in a hospital. How did I get here? Oh my gosh! I can hear again!*

I concentrated on what else I might be able to hear. Soft rhythmic breathing was coming from near my feet. Somebody was sleeping in the same room with me! Then I got a whiff of a familiar mango citrus scent. *My mom is here!* The intoxicating aroma of roses wafted through the air, arousing my curiosity. A throbbing ache on the left side of my face, combined with the fact that I could only breathe through the right nostril, told me that something was stuck up my nose. I was dreadfully thirsty. My teeth felt like somebody had glued hairs on them, and I was afraid to move my lips for fear they would crack. *Not my best day.* I stretched my legs and received immediate negative, achy feedback. *Wow! Was I hit by a car after I passed out in the bathroom or what?* I rotated my ankles and stretched which released some of the stiffness.

So far, I could hear, feel my arms and legs, and smell through one nostril. I was apprehensive to open my eyes. *What if I was still blind?* My eyelids felt like they were attached to dumbbells; they were sealed shut. I lifted my hand to rub my eyes. A resistant tug on my arm kept my hand from reaching its destination. My other hand was free of any tethers, so I gently rubbed my eyes opening them one at a time.

"Mom?" My voice was barely more than a whisper and croaked unattractively like an ugly bullfrog. I tried to swallow. Saliva was conspicuously absent.

I heard her breathing hitch and a slightly incoherent "Mmm?"

"Mom? Are you awake?"

"Salena?" Her sleepy eyes found mine. "Oh! Thank the Heavens! You're

awake!”

She stood up and grabbed my arm. “What’s stuck in my nose?” I asked with a decidedly nasal voice as I gently felt the tube that had been shoved up inside it.

“It’s a feeding tube. Don’t pull it out,” she said casually moving some strands of my hair off my face and then she gently gripped the hand that was examining the tube.

Looking past my mom, I examined my new surroundings. The downtown city lights of Reno twinkled through the darkened window. My dry lips cracked as they stretched into a grin. *I could see again!* Several vases of flowers supporting a multitude of roses sat on a table next to the chair where my mom had been sitting. I turned my attention back to my mom. Her dark brown hair was in disarray as odd strands of gold, stuck up in various angles, glinted off the brighter casino lights that pierced through the open mini-blinds. However, her unkempt hair wasn’t the only thing I noticed. Surrounding her was the most amazing vortex of swirling colors! I was so startled by what I saw; I just stared at her with my mouth hanging open. The energy emanating off of her was mesmerizing. I had never seen anything like it before.

*I wonder what that means? Am I seeing her aura? I’ve never been able to see energy fields around people before. I had seen ghosts and spirits, and carried on conversations all day with them, but they always only had a white glow around them that sparkled on occasion. I had never seen colors before. Apparently my vision had come back and then some!* I wondered briefly if there was an on/off switch for this new “talent.” I exhaled a deep breath, blowing a random hair out of my face. *Dang, I need to brush my teeth.*

Worried brows that were past due for a waxing, accentuated my mom’s forehead. Tears welled up in her devoted stare as she absently tucked her hair behind her ears. Her red T-shirt and sweat pants looked like they had a rough night. It was obvious that she hadn’t just come from the office.

“You okay?” I managed to croak out with a weak smile.

“I am now!” she leaned over me, placed her cheek against mine and breathed me in. Squeezing my arms tightly, she finished up with a kiss on my cheek. “I’m so relieved you’re awake. I’ve been so worried!”

“Sorry,” I sort of mumbled because my sticky tongue felt kind of fat. I was pretty sure the vacuum had backfired in my mouth while I was out. “Water?” I mumbled.

“Here. But just a bit,” she said as she quickly poured water from a pitcher into a tiny plastic cup that was sitting on a bedside table. I watched the straw swirl around the rim. She held the straw where I could reach it and I sucked down the lousy tablespoon of liquid.

“Can I have some more?” I licked my sandpaper lips.

“Not just yet. Let me get the nurse in here,” she said as she pressed a button.

“Does anything hurt?” Mom asked taking a hold of my free hand again.

“Umm, I don’t think so, except maybe whatever is in my nose,” I mumbled. I did a mental full-body scan. I could see and hear again. That was a relief. I didn’t have a headache, and the unplugged other half of my nose was definitely working. I noticed that when I moved my lower body it felt as though somebody had glued my spine in place and put concrete boots on my feet. “What time is it?”

Mom squinted at her watch, “Two-thirty a.m. . . . on Wednesday. You’ve been in here for thirty-six hours. We’ve been worried sick. The doctors said you were in a coma, but they didn’t know why, what caused it or if you would wake up!”

“What?! No way! It can’t be Wednesday!” I exclaimed, and then gagged a little on the tube going down the back of my throat. “Gah! This nose thing is horrible!”

“Don’t pull on that, young lady,” said a woman who walked in wearing a nurse’s uniform. Her nametag said she was Stephanie. “We’ll get it out of you right away. You seem to be recovering quickly.”

I spent the rest of the early morning getting poked and prodded, and then the fun really began when my doctors arrived for their morning rounds. They scanned me, x-rayed me, and took samples of every bodily fluid imaginable. Dad showed up sometime during the morning, but we didn’t really get much of a chance to talk. I drifted off to sleep after lunch, finally free of every attachment but an IV.

The afternoon sun beamed through my hospital room window and I slowly pried them open, blinking rapidly to allow my eyes to adjust. Mom was reading in the chair where I found her when I woke the first time.

“Hey there,” I said. Mom looked up at me and smiled. “How long was I out this time?”

“Not long. Just a couple of hours. It’s almost three o’clock.”

“Wednesday, still?”

“Yes,” she smiled. “It’s still Wednesday.”

I stretched, yawned and rubbed my eyes. My mouth felt nasty again.

“So, I can’t believe I missed a day and a half of school because I got my period. How totally wrong is that? Mom, when you got your first period did you go into a coma?”

“Don’t be silly. You think this had something to do with getting your period?”

“Duh,” I said. It made perfect sense to me. “It wasn’t like I drank a potion I whipped up in Science class.”

Mom scrunched up her face at me. “Very funny. You didn’t slip and fall, and hit your head? “

“No, no slipping or falling occurred. Unless, I hit my head when I fell off the toilet after I blacked out, but then that would have been the result of the blackout not the cause. This totally had something to do with getting my period. I’m sure of it,” I said with conviction.

“Salena, just because one happened right after the other doesn’t necessarily mean that one caused the other. It’s highly unlikely. Women have been getting their periods since the dawn of time, and I’ve never heard of it being the cause of a coma,” my mom said with exasperation.

“Just because it’s never happened before, doesn’t mean my initiation into womanhood has to be like the rest of womankind. In fact, it almost seems fitting that getting my period would turn into some city-wide spectacle since I’m the last person who wants to draw attention to herself,” I grumbled.

“Maybe somebody at school slipped something into your soda during lunch,” my mom said completely ignoring what I felt to be perfectly sound reasoning.

“Really, Mom? I mean do you seriously think that Keia, Leah, or Katrina slipped me something like a date-rape-drug during lunch? They so don’t swing that way, and neither does Sam. I’m not convinced he swings our way at all,” I said scrunching my eyebrows together in feigned concentration.

“Honestly, Salena,” my mom said in exasperation. “You know I didn’t mean Sam or the girls. I see the coma didn’t cure your sarcastic tongue.”

“I know, right?” I said as the door opened and I heard the unmistakable footsteps of my father, James Hawthorne, coming into my room.

“You know, right, what?” He said as he quickly approached my bed. My dad always had a presence that I could feel when he walked into a room. At five foot ten, he wasn’t usually the tallest guy in a crowd, but as a professor of Quantum Physics at the University of Nevada Reno (UNR), he had that commanding confidence about him. His charcoal hair had thinned out so much that he liked to tell everyone that he had “pink highlights.” He couldn’t bring himself to shave his whole head (even though it is so popular now) because he really liked his hair, what he had left of it anyways. Behind his wire-framed glasses, the bright sparkle in his gaze increased in intensity when he spotted us, but to my surprise that wasn’t the only bright light I saw. Dominant fire and flame colors surrounded him as an irrepressible energy flared. His energetic field kept building up and then bursting, little sparks of color flying off. I felt as if I were watching my own little volcano erupt.

“Our daughter’s sarcastic tongue survived her ordeal,” my mom replied as she walked around the end of my bed to give my father a hug and a kiss. My parents could be so mushy sometimes. As they embraced each other, I watched in unabashed delight as their auras increased in intensity and blended together. Bolts of clear red electricity shot out from their energy fields attracted to each other magnetically and intertwining together like a double helix. The gold and turquoise of my mom’s aura blended, mixed, and vibrated with my dad’s orange spectrum in such a passionate embrace. I flushed red like I had walked into their bedroom without knocking.

“Yo, people! Get a room!” I interrupted their reunion.

“Ahh, yes, I see. Well, I guess that being cured was probably too much to

hope for,” he said with a smile as he leaned down to give me a kiss on the forehead. “It’s good to have you back, Moonling!”

“Hi, Daddy,” I said. He looked down at me, his eyes searching for something as he picked up my hand and held on tight. “So, do you have a theory as to what happened to me? Mom and I can’t agree,” I said looking from my dad to my mom in hopes that he might support my theory.

“Why don’t you tell us what you remember and then we’ll fill you in on what we know,” Dad replied.

“Ok,” I proceeded to give them a run-down of the events in the school bathroom. “So now, it’s apparently Wednesday. Since when is a coma a side effect of getting your period? That’s crazy!”

“You’re not crazy, little one, just special,” I heard Angeni’s voice before I saw her. *Better late than never!* My spirit guide slowly materialized and floated at the foot of the bed. Sometimes her “other worldly” glow was so intense it would make my eyes hurt, but today I noticed that I was seeing more around her than I had before. Either her energy had changed or my ability to see her energy had changed. It wasn’t just sparkly and white anymore. Now I saw a bright and clear metallic gold mixing in with the white. It was beautiful! Her familiar compassionate and kind expression warmed the chill from my anxiety. I relaxed even more as I watched her ebony hair flow perfectly around her face and down to her elbows as if orchestrated by an invisible conductor. I guess being a full-time resident of the spirit plane means you don’t have to worry about such mundane things as wind or static creating a bad hair day. I don’t know where she was on Monday, but I was really glad to see her now.

“So special I’ll have to ride the short bus?” I asked her.

“What?” Dad said, confusion causing his eyes to narrow and his brows to pucker.

“Angeni’s here, Dad,” I said to him.

“Hi, Angi,” Dad said calling her by the nickname I had given her years ago while looking across my bed to the other side.

Mom’s own psychic abilities allowed her to see and hear Angeni just fine. My mom decided the best use of her psychic gifts was as a supplement to her psychological practice, which made her very successful. Sometimes her clients’ dead relatives or friends really helped to move the healing process along . . . and sometimes they didn’t. Because her psychic experiences began when Mom was really young, she kept a close watch on me for any sign of the “Family Gift.” I was extremely grateful that I could talk to her about all the strange things I heard and saw.

“She’s floating by my feet,” I said as Dad quickly looked to his left to try to acknowledge Angeni. Mom was not very successfully disguising her amusement.

“Does she know what happened to you?” Dad asked me and then turned to look in Angi’s direction.

“I can’t say for sure,” Angeni said to those of us who could hear her as she

shook her head. "It's too early to tell."

I grunted. *Could she get any more cryptic? She knows something, but as usual, she can't say. I wonder who makes up the rules over there.*

"Not really," Mom told dad. "At least nothing she can tell us at the moment."

"Okay," Dad said. "Well let's start with what we do know. After you passed out, Keia went out into the hall to yell for somebody to get help. She told us that she didn't want to leave you at all because she was so worried about you. One of the teachers heard her yell, your math teacher, I think. Anyway, your teacher rushed into the bathroom and then just as quickly left to go get the principal who called 9-1-1. He escorted the paramedics to the bathroom, and they rushed you here. The doctors have been running all kinds of tests and scans to try to find out what happened to you. They know that something is very different in your brain and your heart compared to most people based on the Functional MRIs they ran, but they don't know why it happened or what might happen after you woke up . . . if you woke up. They said they had never seen anything like it."

Dad sounded annoyed, a tone with which I had more than a passing familiarity. Being a physicist, Dad has a very structured and organized mind. He really doesn't like it when people can't explain themselves, or cop out with an "I don't know." He thinks that if you don't know, then you should at least have some hypothesis that you could support and test through a series of experiments. Yes, science fair projects at my house were just a ton of fun!

"Did somebody dress me before Mr. Green showed up to see my butt cheeks hanging out?"

"Don't worry Sistah! I totally had you covered!" I heard as Keia and Leah burst in the room. They both squealed, as only we girls can do, and exploded onto my hospital bed with giant grins and laughter, flying right through Angi. I don't think I'll ever get used to seeing that firefly sparkle shattering when humans pass through spirit energies.

"You're okay! You're okay! I just totally knew you'd be okay. You had to be. There just wasn't any other option!" Keia exclaimed. Then she stopped, gave me a hard look with a frown and half-heartedly slapped my shoulder as she and Leah scooted off the bed to stand at my feet. Angi had moved to hover next to my mom and dad.

"What was that for?" I asked Keia.

"For scaring me half to death. Don't you ever do that again!" she scolded me.

"Sure, okay. Next time I get my period I'll be sure to do a 4-1-1 over the school intercom letting everyone know to be prepared for my next scene stealing moment!"

"Oh, ha ha, yeah, you do that! We'd get to watch Victoria Love go into anaphylactic shock again in an attempt to steal the scene back from you!" Leah exclaimed in a fit of giggles.

“Yeah, there’s nothing like being deathly allergic to a lack of attention,” I said, with contempt thinking of my nemesis.

“You’ve been the talk of the school for the last couple of days,” Keia said more seriously.

I moaned. “I bet. Let me guess. Miss Love was telling everyone I faked it all just to get attention.”

“Yeah, pretty much. She’s such a Ho. Can’t handle anybody else making headlines,” Leah chimed in.

“So, you got me dressed, maybe, before Mr. Green came into the bathroom?” I asked Keia hopefully.

“Well, I didn’t put your undies back on you, those things were seriously gross, dude. I wrapped them up in a paper towel and tossed them in the trash. Then I got your pants back on, and even though you were going commando, you weren’t doing any major exposure or anything. I was pretty freaked out, Salena. You were just lying there, totally passed out, and naked from the waist down. I did the best I could, but I think I was a little hysterical.”

“Um, a little?” Leah sarcastically chimed in.

“Shut up. You weren’t there. I did the best I could under the circumstances,” Keia retorted.

“You did remarkably well, Keia,” my mom replied in that calm, motherly type voice. “I’m so glad you went in to check on her when you did. She could have been there until class was over.”

“Umm, thanks. What happened to you Salena? What did you mean when you said you thought you were going blind?”

I retold my story to Keia and Leah, while Mom, Dad, and Angi listened for any details I might have missed when I told them.

“Does that usually happen to girls when they get their first period?” Leah asked my mother.

“Um, no, Honey. That doesn’t usually happen to anyone, and we’re not convinced that’s what caused Salena’s coma either,” my mom replied. “Don’t worry.”

“Yeah, sure. Okay,” Leah mumbled under her breath. I don’t think she was convinced. She’s a late bloomer like me—the last one, now, in our Sisterhood.

As Keia and Leah continued to talk to my mom, I scanned my two BFFs with my new Sight. Their auras were dancing and mixing together in a happy, energetic symphony. A rush of love and gratitude for them swept over me and settled into my core. They were indeed more than just my best friends; they were my soul sisters.

Keia and I became fast friends in daycare. I think we were attracted to each other because we kind of looked alike. We both have light brown hair with streaks of golden highlights, although hers has always been just a little shorter than mine. Neither one of us has any real style or layering in our hair, it’s all just one length all the way around except she has bangs and I don’t. Little specks of gold randomly

scattered throughout the iris of her eyes remind me of dancing stars. We've always been about the same height and weight even as we have grown up. I think half the clothes in my closet are hers and vice-versa. I noticed that Keia's aura was predominantly a soft glow of pale yellow with lavender rings that encircled her and gently pulsated. We were convinced that we were twins separated at birth, but our parents staunchly denied it.

Leah joined us in kindergarten. She's always reminded me of an extra large pixie, so much so that we sometimes call her Tink. In keeping with her pixie image, she cut her chestnut-colored hair like Alice in the *Twilight* movies. She styles it like Alice too, kind of flippant and fun. No matter how she shakes her head, her hair always lands perfectly back in place. It's really annoying. She's about four inches shorter than Keia and me; not to mention way skinnier too. As I said, she's a pixie. In fact, while Keia and I always seemed to default to being a witch at Halloween, Leah's fall back costume was always a one of those tiny magical creatures. Her pale skin, however, keeps her from the same sun-worshipping status as Keia and me. She just burns. I love to watch her when she's being clever or mischievous, her eyes light up like a Fourth of July sparkler. Leah's encompassing energy field pulsed with a rainbow of bright emerald green, forest green, and a yellow-green. They had both evidently come directly from school since they were still in their school uniforms.

The other two members of our "Sisterhood" were conspicuously absent. "Hey, guys, where's Sam and Kat? How come they didn't come with?" I interrupted.

"They so totally wanted to, dude," Keia informed me, "but Sam had his Tai Chi class and Kat's dad was pulling one of those tug-of-war custody tantrums again. She decided that the best thing would be to just go to her dad's today to save her mom from having another mental breakdown. He's really an ass. I feel so majorly sorry for Kat. Anyway, we promised that we'd give them both a full update when we got home." Leah nodded in support.

Sam Jung, our token male in the Sisterhood, had been Keia's best "boy" friend since birth. Their moms are really good friends and next-door neighbors. They were pregnant together and gave birth to Sam and Keia three days apart from each other. Sam is half Chinese and half Anglo-American. His Chinese mother dominated his genetics, so he has straight black hair that he wears above the ear with long bangs that perpetually flop in front of his dark eyes. He and Leah are continually arguing over who is taller. Due to his height and propensity to sit and study, he had always been a little pudgy until he started martial arts training. Now he loves to teach us the new moves he's learned. Sam is easily the smartest kid I ever met. I know that's kind of cliché, but it's true. He felt totally abandoned and left out when Keia, Leah, and I officially named the Sisterhood in fourth grade. He begged and pleaded for a year before we relented and invited him to be our honorary "sister." We may have to consider changing the name to the Society of the Silver Moon, especially if we ever want any more boys to join.

Katrina Drake joined our group in sixth grade. Her family moved to Reno from the Bay Area that summer, so we didn't know her for most of our elementary school years. Her African-American heritage was heavily influenced by her father's southern Baptist upbringing and her mother's California Catholic influences. Both her mother and father were products of interracial marriages, which gave Katrina the most gorgeous caramel-colored skin that I spend hours in the sun trying to achieve. What I love about her is that she is easily one of the most exotically beautiful girls at school and she never lets it go to her head. I wondered what colors I would see in her aura.

"Mom, Angi, do you know anything about auras?" I asked.

"Angi? Angeni's here?" Keia and Leah squealed.

"Um, yeah, she's floating next to Mom," I replied.

"Cool! Hi, Angi," Keia said as she squinted her eyes in yet another attempt to try to see her.

Angi smiled at Keia and Leah. "Auras?"

"Uh huh, since I woke up, I not only have my hearing and eyesight back, but my eyesight appears to be, umm, more enhanced than it was before. I'm seeing all these amazing colors and swirling energy patterns around all of you. That's an aura . . . right?"

At first nobody said anything and they just stared at me, but then they all started talking at once.

"Okay, Okay! EVERYBODY STOP TALKING!" I yelled, and they all stopped and stared at me again. "Look, I'll tell you more about it, but first I'd really like to get out of this bed, go to the bathroom and brush the disgusting hair off my teeth. I feel like I've been cleaning the cat box with my tongue."

"Eeew! Salena! You can be so disgusting sometimes!" Leah exclaimed.

"Yeah, well, how do you think I feel?" I retorted.

When I stood up, I wobbled a little, but my equilibrium restored quickly. With the help of my twin, I headed into the sterile bathroom. The white and graphite composite tile floor was cold on my feet. My, oh-so-attractive, hospital gown that tied in the back completely failed to cover my buns. I felt a discomfoting draft before Keia pulled the gaping shirt closed behind me. Keia stood guard at the slightly ajar bathroom door while I took care of Mother Nature's call. After washing my hands, I set them on both sides of the white porcelain sink for support as I leaned in toward the mirror.

I only filled the mirror up about half way. I was way taller than a lot of the guys in school, especially those whose voices still sounded like girls. I shot up to five-five in sixth grade, but hadn't grown at all since then. I wondered if I would gain any more height. My almost fully-dilated pupils glared back at me with a jolt. In that moment, I discovered being in a coma wasn't the same as forty-eight hours of beauty rest. My own eyes kinda gave me the heebie-jeebies; it was unnerving.

Something had changed in me. I felt different. The mirror reflected my ancient Mayan blood flowing through my veins. The copper star of family legend

encircled my dark pupils, and the points faded into an iris of various shades of khaki green. My maternal history was traced back to a priestess of the Mayan Moon Goddess, Akna-U, who was wed to one of the Spaniards that conquered the Mayans. My mom gives her credit for our psychic abilities that have been passed down through the generations. I tried to do a little research on the Mayan Moon Goddess a couple of years ago, but it seems her real name was lost to history as she took on the name and personification of Mother Mary after the Spaniards imposed Christianity upon the native people of Central America. My mom's side of my family has called her Akna-U for generations. Akna means revered mother and refers to the Goddess of Fertility and Childbirth and U means Moon. She's one of the reasons my parents decided to name me after the Greek Moon Goddess Selene. I'm very grateful they didn't decide to name me Akna-U. That would have been the worst!

Being the genetic mix of Spanish, Mexican, and Native American on my mom's side and mostly English on my dad's side, my natural skin tone is a nice golden color. I like it because I love the sun and I don't burn too easily. You would think that being named after the moon, I would prefer the moon and night, but that's not how it really worked out. Another reason I was named after Selene was as a tribute to my mom. Her name is Miakoda (although everyone calls her Mia), which means moon in one of the Native American languages. So, it seems I have a long familial history that connects me to the power and presence of the Moon.

I've always considered my relationship with my parents to be a little different from what most of my friends seem to have with theirs. No matter my age, my mom and dad have always treated me with respect and have given me the opportunity to freely express my opinion. They rarely ever stifled me, which may account for my over-zealous tongue. I tend to say whatever comes to mind with very little filtering.

I gazed at my light brown hair that was not quite long enough to cover my chest. My normal highlights were dull, probably because they were greasy, and there were random hairs going every which way except the way I wanted them to go. I sighed and blew my hair out of my face. I was really looking forward to a shower.

After brushing my teeth and seeing to the rest of my bathroom duties, I went back into the room, pushing my IV cart with me. Someone had turned on the television, and everyone was watching it intently. They didn't even notice I was back. Even Keia had bailed on her guard duty.

The images on the screen were dreadful. There were dead bodies, or what we assumed were dozens of dead bodies, encased in black bags lying on the ground distantly behind the reporter who was standing in front of a small village in the tropics someplace. A ticker tape ran along the bottom of the screen "Breaking News! Outbreak in Malaysia! Half of village population decimated by unknown disease!" The reporter on the TV was saying that the W.H.O. and the Malaysian Center for Disease Control had quarantined the village and its

inhabitants until they could determine how the disease was spread. The bodies were bagged and moved to an outbuilding awaiting removal and transportation instructions. There are ten more villagers showing flu-like symptoms who are being quarantined and transported to a nearby medical facility. The villagers not showing any signs or symptoms are being asked to stay in the village under observation until further notice. I noticed several black body bags being carried into a building behind the reporter as he was finishing his telecast.

*The government of Malaysia is stressing the importance that its people not panic. They are directing all resources necessary toward identifying this illness as quickly as possible, and they ask for everyone's cooperation with authorities to prevent further spread of this disease.*

My dad shook his head and looked concerned as he clicked off the TV. "I sure hope they get a handle on that situation soon." The rest of us mumbled our agreement. After that uplifting moment, everyone's attention turned to back me, but my focus was on Angeni. She stared at me with her eyebrows and her lips pinched together like she was trying, yet unable, to find the perfect piece in a puzzle.

"What's up Angeni?" I asked her.

"Salena, I have a really bad feeling about that outbreak. I don't think that's the last we'll hear about it. Energetically it feels bigger than just a small village incident on the other side of the world. It's troubling me," she said as she trailed off and looked up as if listening to somebody from heaven.

"What did she say?" My dad asked for the benefit of the non-psychics in the room. My mom's face was filled with worry and concern as she repeated Angeni concerns to the group.

I had a pretty good sense about what Angeni meant when she said that it felt somehow "bigger." It felt as though a dark shadow had engulfed that brief newscast. I shuddered in an attempt to shake it off. Desperate to change the subject and inject a little badly needed humor, I asked, "So, what do I have to do to get expelled from this place?"



## CHAPTER THREE

### *Enigma*

It was several more boring hours before I was able to put on my clothes and check out of the hospital. After I went into as much detail about my new aura-scapic eyes as I could, Angeni did her usual disappearing act, and then Keia and Leah rather unsuccessfully attempted to do homework. In between various examinations, I ineffectively tried to locate the off-switch for my personal energy-viewing channel. Seeing people's auras was as mesmerizing as it was distracting. I was sure if I didn't figure out how to turn it off and on, I'd never be able to function in school. So, in between my doctors and the nurses trying to find some reason to keep me in the hospital, I attempted, to no avail, to figure out the secret formula.

We had just finished a delightful selection of gourmet hospital delicacies for dinner (*NOT*), during which my father negotiated my release with my doctor. My doctor didn't want to discharge me, but Dad managed to convince him. Leah's mom, Lisa, an emergency room doctor at this hospital, stopped by to see me just as the food trays were being cleared out of the room.

"Hi Mom!" Leah said joyfully as she popped up out of her chair, left her books on her seat, and headed toward her mom. Doctor Lisa smiled at her daughter as she leaned her five-foot-seven frame over to give her a big hug and a kiss on the forehead. Her chestnut curls fell forward enough to shield the affectionate gesture.

"Hi Salena!" Lisa said as her hazel eyes scrutinized me from head to toe as only a doctor, who's also a mother, can do. "How are you feeling?" she asked me.

"Just peachy considering the circumstances," I replied as I gazed back at her, studying her aura. It was a swirling mix of bright emerald and turquoise flames dancing to their own silent song.

"I'm so glad to hear it!" She exclaimed looking at my parents sharing their parental concern. "I stopped by your room a couple of times during my breaks over the last few days. Leah wouldn't stop pestering me for status updates," she said as she looked pointedly at her daughter who only shrugged her shoulders. She then spotted Keia still sitting in her chair quietly watching us. Lisa crossed the room quickly to Keia and squatted down to be eye level with her as she placed her hands on Keia's knees. "Hi Keia. How's your mom? We

sure miss her around here,” Lisa said as she lowered her voice.

Lisa’s comment reminded me that Keia’s mom, Lesley Von Housen, had been the Executive Director of Reno General Hospital until about three months ago. Poor Keia was so stressed out watching her totally distraught mom go through the drama and trauma of stupid political crap at her work. Keia had explained to me that some years ago her mother’s family had sold a portion of the ownership of the hospital to a big pharmaceutical company in Carson City called Trader Pharmaceuticals. They had promised money that the hospital needed to improve the facility and services, so Leah said it seemed like a good deal at the time. Mitch Trader, the founding big-wig and majority owner of Trader Pharmaceuticals somehow became Keia’s mom’s boss and then he maneuvered his son-in-law into an unearned (Keia’s word) top management job in operations, or something like that. Anyway, a few months ago, Mr. Trader had somehow managed to fire Keia’s mom and make his son-in-law the Executive Director. It was all very complicated, and I was just glad it happened at the beginning of summer so that the Sisterhood of the Silver Moon could support Keia without having to worry about homework.

“She’s doing okay,” Keia replied softly. “She loved this place and all the staff and patients. It’s been hard for her to let it all go. Every day it seems like maybe it gets a little easier, though.”

“That’s good to hear. She is a great lady, your mom, and she was the best Executive Director of any hospital I’ve ever worked at.” She glanced furtively over her shoulder at the door to be sure nobody else was entering the room or standing within earshot. “Tell her we all miss her,” Lisa practically whispered to Keia. I watched the turquoise in her aura reach out and touch the pale yellow and lavender pulses of Keia’s aura. It was like somebody put kaleidoscope glasses on me and kept turning the wheel.

“I will,” Keia smiled, grateful for the kind words.

I was itching to go home. Lucky for me a rather cute orderly entered my room pushing a wheel chair. “Can we leave now?” I asked.

“Your chariot awaits, m’Lady!” The cute guy said with a smile, as I clambered into the chair.

There was a sudden affirmative babble in the room as all six of us headed through the door and poured into the hallway.

We were a chatty, energetic group as we headed past the nurse’s station to say goodbye, when suddenly Keia and Lisa stopped in their tracks and stared straight ahead at a guy walking toward us. That nasty salty taste that happens right before throwing up suddenly crept into my mouth. It was quickly accompanied by a heavy brick feeling in the pit of my stomach and cold, clammy skin.

*Now what was happening to me?* I hoped I wasn’t having some sort of relapse. Then I looked at the guy Keia and Lisa were intently watching. The first thing I noticed was the dark outline around him, a graphite membrane pierced by

thorny black spikes. A collection of colors—dark and muddied navy and olive green—flowing in and out of a storm cloud, were suddenly engulfed by a foreboding tornado. The darkness of his energy field reminded me of an insatiable black hole that sucked up the light. It was probably that vampire-like power that was causing my nausea. *What a creeper!*

His negative energy was having the same effect that Victoria Love's had on me. I remembered how, after an early encounter with Vicky in elementary school, Angeni taught me to mentally construct a kind of force field around me by visualizing myself inside a room surrounded by bright and shiny mirrors. Instinctively, I imagined reflecting his negative energy back to him and shielding myself at the same time. I felt instantly better and shook off the residual harmful vibrations.

This man really disturbed me, especially when I finally focused on his face, and he was smiling. It was a patronizing smile; the kind you imagine the wolf having in *Little Red Riding Hood*. He was really tall, like over six feet. His originally dark hair looked like he had stuck his head in freshly poured concrete and then shook out what he could. I didn't think he looked old enough to have that much gray hair. At least his salt and pepper hair matched his salt and pepper aura. He looked at me as if I was some kind of lab specimen he could dissect in Biology class. Then he noticed I was unabashedly staring back at him. His invasion of my personal space made me feel like there were a thousand black mountain ants crawling all over my body nibbling at my flesh.

"Hello, Mr. Black," I heard Dr. Lisa say drawing his attention away from me.

"Dr. Robins, aren't you supposed to be in the Emergency Room?" He asked her as he looked down his rather large hawkish nose at Leah's mom. His nostrils flared like he smelled something sour. Unfortunately for me, by sitting in the wheel chair, I had the bad luck to be just at the right angle to see the nasty hair in his nose. I looked from Dr. Lisa to Keia and saw these sudden spikes of a muddied red color erupting from around both of them. I could simultaneously feel and see their anger aimed toward this yucky dude. He must be the one who took Keia's mom's job. That gave me even more of a reason not to like this guy.

"I'm on my break and thought I'd see how my daughter's best friend was doing. I presume that visiting a sick friend during our break times is still permitted." Lisa said as she defiantly looked the man straight in the eye and dared him to disagree with her.

He reengaged his self-righteous smile. "Of course it is, of course," he said as he nodded and grinned. He made me feel as if I had been held captive for weeks as a fast food fry cook who was never allowed to shower. Then he looked down at me again. "You must be Salena Hawthorne," he said letting the "n" in Hawthorne run on for too long. His penetrating and patronizing glare made the hairs on the back of my neck stand on end. "Just out for an evening stroll with your friends?" He asked eyeing the vases of flowers in everyone's hands with

intense curiosity.

“Uh, yeah, I’m Salena Hawthorne, and no I’m not out for an evening stroll. Why do you want to know?” I asked straightening my back against the chair and looking him directly in the eye.

“Well, I’m Todd Black, the Executive Director here at Reno General,” he informed me as he matched my posture and then literally stuck his nose in the air. *Wow! This guy’s a real piece of work.* I snuck a peek at the nurses in the area who were covertly watching this exchange. “If you’re not out for a stroll, then what are you all doing roaming the hallways?”

“Mr. Black,” my father intervened. “We are taking our daughter home now. It was kind of you to introduce yourself, but we’ll be on our way.”

“Mr. Hawthorne, I appreciate your desire to take Salena home, but I’m afraid we can’t allow her to leave just yet,” Todd replied moving his body in front of our group to clearly block the exit.

“Excuse me?” My father replied, his voice rising. “*Mis-ter* Black, Salena’s doctors have signed her release papers. What authority do you have to keep her here?”

“I’m the Executive Director of this hospital, that’s all the authority I need,” he claimed.

“Well, that’s nice for you. How do you know who I am, and why do you care if I leave?” I interrupted demandingly.

“Well, you’re kind of an enigma around here,” he looked at me to see if I understood what that meant, since he couldn’t read my expression he asked me anyway. “Do you know what an enigma is?”

*Seriously? Is this guy for real? My mom’s a psychic psychologist and my dad’s a physics professor. How stupid does he think I am? I’m thirteen not three! What a turd.* “Umm, yeah, I think so,” I batted my eyes at him for effect. “Isn’t that what people who are full of crap use to wash out their poop chutes? Do you need an enigma, Mr. Black?” I asked in the highest pitched, dumb blond voice I could muster all while trying to look innocent and sincere.

There was a moment of stunned silence as what I said sank in, and then a riot of laughter erupted in the hallway not only from my entourage but from the eavesdropping nurses as well. I watched Mr. Black’s eyes widen in shock until he realized he’d been played. Then anger flushed his face red while he tried to regain his composure. I saw a muddy crimson hue settle over his energy field. I decided anger looked like dried blood on an aura. My poor parents were flabbergasted at my behavior, so my dad reinserted himself into the conversation.

“Mr. Black,” my father said with a slight cough to clear his throat. Todd turned his heated face toward my father as he continued, “I’m not sure what business it is of yours what my daughter’s mysterious health challenges are, and I do not agree with your purported claim that you can override her doctor’s release since you are clearly not one. If you don’t mind, it’s been a long three

days, so we are going to take Salena home now.” *My daddy, my hero.*

“Mr. Hawthorne, I assure you I do have the authority, but I will make an exception for now. I will be contacting you regarding bringing her back in for more tests very shortly. Have a good evening,” he replied, his nose pointing toward the heavens. He looked around at my group with a flustered and annoyed expression on his face when he noticed Keia glaring at him defiantly with a triumphant grin. He hadn’t noticed her before, and he suddenly looked very uncomfortable. I watched him turn around, nod at the nurses and then tilt his chin up as he walked away.

Mom and Dad wasted no time in heading toward the big electronic sliding glass doors that promised freedom. Once outside, I took a deep breath and savored the scent of autumn in the air. The Fall Equinox was only two days away. The evening was cool, but not cold and there was just a slight breeze that lightly touched a few strands of my unkempt hair. As I gazed westward at the mountains, I noticed that the sun had once again lost the Battle of Dusk to the night as the sky over the Sierra Mountains went from an aquamarine twilight to a deep indigo providing a majestic backdrop to a perfect half-moon. The parking lot lights violated the darkness and caused my eyes to constrict. When my dad brought the car around, I eased myself out of the wheel chair and thanked the cute orderly as I settled into the backseat. As soon as he was out of earshot, Leah and Keia converged upon me.

“That’s was absolutely the most hilarious thing I’ve ever heard!” Leah exclaimed.

“Oh My God, Salena! That was totally epic! I wish my mom could have witnessed that. I can’t wait to give her the play by play! It’ll be better than Christmas!” Keia was laughing so hard tears were streaming down her face. “Todd Black is such a pompous ass! How did you ever pull off that insult with such a straight, innocent face?”

“It’s just one of my many talents,” I laughed.

“It’s just a sharp tongue, that’s all it is,” my mother said with a half-hearted scold in her voice. “You’d better watch it. That wicked tongue might get you in trouble some day.”

“How did we raise a daughter to have such little respect for her elders?” I heard my dad ask my mom as he opened the passenger side door of our car for her.

“I don’t know, but I’m positive she didn’t get it from me!” My mom dryly replied. Dad just chuckled and shook his head as he closed her door and headed around to the driver’s side. I don’t think my parents respected Mr. Todd Black any more than I did, and I was really hoping that Dad wouldn’t agree to bring me in for more testing, especially if it involved Mr. Black in any way. Something about that guy set my teeth on edge.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### *Vanishing Point*

“We have a surprise waiting for you at home,” Dad said after we dropped off Leah and Keia at their homes.

“Really? Awesome! What is it?”

“If we told you, it wouldn’t be a surprise,” Mom said.

“No, duh, but why say anything at all then? Why not surprise me completely?”

“Cause it’s more fun to tease you a little,” Dad explained.

“Entertainment at the expense of your daughter. You two are model parents,” I grumbled squirming in my seat now desperately anxious to get home.

I noticed that the living room lights were on when we pulled into the carport. The double wood doors to the house were located across a sky-lighted, brick-lined entrance.

“Would my surprise be human?” I asked.

“Could be,” My mom said with a mischievous smile.

I scrambled out of the car and over to the front door. It was locked, but I heard the latch click and then the door swung open. A very large, practically bald man towered over me with a giant grin spreading over his face. Dark brown eyes reflected his smile. My Uncle Jack reminded me so much of Vin Diesel that *The Pacifier* became our favorite movie to watch together. His big burly arms wrapped around me, squishing my face into his chest as he lifted me off the ground with a breathtaking squeeze. The room spun as he whirled me around.

“Uncle Jack!!!”

“Moonling!”

“What are you doing here?!” I asked as he set me back down.

“I heard my most favorite niece wasn’t feeling well, so *here* is the only place in the world I had to be!”

“Jack Hammer! ‘Bout time you got back here! How the Hell have you been, Bro?!” Dad said as they embraced in a big man hug complete with back slaps. Jack’s last name is really Hammond, but when he joined the Army after college his call sign became Jack Hammer.

“Been good, man, but not as good as you,” Jack said, his expression softening as he looked at my mom. I think he always had a thing for her. Dad

and Jack were best friends growing up and then they were fraternity brothers in college. Mom and Dad met at UC Santa Barbara where they both went for their undergraduate degrees, it was Jack who introduced them.

None of the grown-ups talk about it much, but Jack's first and only wife died shortly after they were married. For some reason, he never got married again. His parents also died a long time ago, and being an only child, we were the only family he had. Curious, I studied his aura. Through my new sight, Uncle Jack looked like he was a giant seed inside a freshly picked orange. I started to salivate as I imagined how good a glass of orange juice would taste about now.

"Jack, thanks for coming out! It's great to see you! It's been too long," Mom said also warmly embracing the big man. "Let's catch up in the living room. Can I get you a drink?"

"No thanks, Mia, I already helped myself. Made myself at home as you instructed. My bags are in the guest room."

"Perfect! I do think that James and I could use a drink though," she said while she headed down the single step that led into the dropped living room and over to the bar to pour my dad and herself a glass of wine.

"I'd like a glass of orange juice," I called to Mom.

"Help yourself! It's in the kitchen," she told me, not taking the hint. Scowling, I turned my attention back to Uncle Jack.

"How long can you stay?" I asked.

"Not long, I'm afraid. Just tonight and tomorrow night, little one."

I pushed my lower lip out in a well-practiced pout. "Bummer."

"I know, but we'll have a chance to watch *The Pacifier* together tomorrow, I promise!" he said.

"Awesome!"

We spent awhile catching up, and I told him what happened to me and about my new ability to see auras. Both of my parents are only children, and since Uncle Jack never had any children, he considers me the closest thing he's ever going to get to a daughter, and I love him like an Uncle. It was so good to see him! His government job takes him away for so long, sometimes it is months or maybe a year before we see him again. He always tries to come to Reno at the end of November each year so he can celebrate Thanksgiving and my birthday with us. He completely spoils me rotten which is totally okay by me. I decided to let the grown-ups talk a little longer, so after kissing them all, I left to go get ready for bed and take that desperately needed shower, orange juice forgotten.

"Ahhhhhh!" I exclaimed as I flopped on my cushy mattress. It was so good to be back in my own bed, clean and in my favorite PJs. Leah and Keia assured me they would call the rest of the Silver Moon members and fill them in so I wouldn't have to. I was very grateful, although I was kind of dreading the re-telling of my story again at school. My mom, dad and Uncle Jack were

hovering in my doorway.

“How do you feel?” Mom asked me.

“Great! Now that I’ve finally had a shower and my scalp stopped itching,” I said. “I’m not super tired, but tired enough considering that I was unconscious for the last three days. Hopefully I won’t have too much trouble falling asleep.”

“Ok, good to hear. Remember we promised your doctor we’d keep you under observation tonight and all day tomorrow as a condition for being discharged today,” my father said. “Mom will take the first night shift, and I’ll take the second.”

I was actually kind of disappointed that I wasn’t going to be able to go to school tomorrow. “What about you, Uncle? Going to give up a few hours of your night to watch me sleep? That tops the list of exciting things to do in Reno on a Wednesday night!”

“It is a tempting offer, but your parents didn’t want to give up any time with you,” he said and almost managed to pull off a sincerely disappointed look. The only thing that gave him away was the sparkle in his eyes.

“Yeah, I’m sure,” I said and turned to Mom and Dad, “Thanks for looking out for me. I feel fine, but it will be nice knowing you’re here if I need you. Lucky for you that lounge is still in here,” I said sweeping my hand toward the super cozy, yet slightly stained, recliner in the corner that my mom bought when I was a baby. When I was little I used to crawl up into her lap on that chair, and she would read me all kinds of stories. Although my favorites were the “Harry Potter” stories, they all had magic and adventure, and I was delighted and enchanted by each one.

I crawled under my sheet and comforter as mom settled into the chair for the first watch. She had her Kindle with a book light illuminating the page. Hopefully, it was a good book that would keep her awake for the next four hours. Dad was going to switch with her at 2:00 am. The clock said it was just a little after 10:00 p.m. when I closed my eyes with a sigh.

*I was really happy and in a state of pure bliss. It was sunny and warm in this beautiful mountain meadow. Majestic, snow-capped mountain peaks jutted up toward the sky reaching for the heavens, and I was surrounded by my family and my Sisterhood friends: Keia, Leah, Katrina, and Sam. We were all smiling, laughing, and thoroughly enjoying ourselves. I heard the distant rush of a river and thundering of a waterfall, but the stream that ran through the meadow was quiet. I could see and feel energy coming up from the earth and radiating off of the abundant coniferous trees surrounding the meadow and the plush grasses with the vibrant wild flowers poking their petals out to face the sun.*

*Taking a deep breath of the fresh mountain air, a familiar scent of pine and grass mixed with bark filled my senses. I plopped down on my back in the middle of the meadow and looked up at the sky. The long grasses blowing gently in the slight breeze tickled my legs and arms. A scattering of small puffy clouds surrounded the gleaming sun. A jet pierced the clouds like an arrow shot from the Goddess Artemis, leaving a stream of smoke in its wake. Mom, Dad, and all my friends settled themselves down around me. We made our own sun with me at*

*the center. The palpable energy from our circle pulsed through me. I felt so full of love, compassion, and gratitude for my friends and family, I thought I'd simply burst! It was blissful, until I heard something scratching at the edges of my thoughts.*

*The voice was familiar as it intruded into my euphoric sanctuary. It was my dad. I noticed he wasn't in the meadow anymore. He was panicked and yelling. I couldn't possibly imagine what his problem was. After all he was just here in the meadow with me only a moment ago.*

The yelling got louder as my dream began to fade and I slowly regained consciousness. Comprehension of his words gradually started to sink in.

"Salena! Salena! Oh, my God! Salena! Where are you?!" I heard my dad frantically yelling as I opened my eyes.

He was standing right next to my bed looking down at me. I sat up rubbing my eyes. "I'm right in front of you. What's the problem? Geez, stop yelling. You'll wake Mom," I chastised.

"James! What's wrong?" My mother called as she ran down the hallway and came to a halt in my doorway. *Too late*, I thought wryly.

"It's Salena. She was just here and now she's gone!" He said as his voice cracked.

"Don't be silly, honey," my mom said in her professional psychologists voice. "Are you sure she didn't just go to the bathroom?"

"No, no. I swear it! I was just sitting here, watching her and she just disappeared. Literally, she just vanished!" He exclaimed.

"Hello!! Yo! Mom! Dad! I'm right here!" I yelled, waving my hands in front of their faces. Then I saw my hands. They were glowing. *What the Hell?* I started to panic; fear hit me like a giant frigid ocean wave, as the last vestiges of my wonderful dream faded away.

"What, in God's name, is going on?" My mom exclaimed as her eyes widened in shock while she looked directly at me. *I've been wondering that too*, I thought ruefully as mom rushed over and grabbed both sides of my face with her hands forcing me to look her in the eyes.

"How did you do that?" She asked in awe.

"Do what?" I asked sleepily with a slightly groggy voice relieved that she was touching and holding me.

"Disappear." Mom and Dad said in Dolby 5.1 surround sound.

"I disappeared? Seriously? As in, like, invisible? You couldn't see me? Or hear me? I was right in front of you!" The words poured out of me, the incredulity of it not sinking in.

"You were not in that bed when I walked in, and then I watched you materialize right in front of my eyes. It was like you were beamed in from the Starship Enterprise," my mom attempted to explain.

"That's exactly what it looked like," my dad chimed in, trying to wrap his brain around what was happening.

"Yo! Can you keep it down? You have guests that are trying to sleep

here!” Uncle Jack shuffled into the room wiping his eyes.

“Sorry to wake you Jack, but our unusual daughter just vanished into thin air and then rematerialized,” Dad explained.

“Interesting trick, Salena. Been studying magic and illusions lately?” Uncle Jack asked taking my latest oddity completely in stride.

I just stared at them. I was utterly speechless (which is very rare for me). Tears started to well up in my eyes as I tried to digest yet another freak-a-zoid thing that was wrong with me. How could somebody who wanted to be so normal be so completely abnormal? My body felt unusually heavy, hot, and sweaty as if I had just walked out of an over-heated buoyant ocean into the Sahara Desert in the middle of summer. I felt a headache coming on that promised to be a doozy, and I was desperately thirsty. *This sooo sucks!!* Then, I had a hopeful thought that maybe this latest experience wasn’t my fault. Maybe my quantum physicist dad was using me as a guinea pig.

“Uh, no. I haven’t. Not at all. I really don’t have any idea what they are talking about,” I answered Uncle Jack. “Daddy,” I prefaced as I wiped at my tears and sniffed my nose, “are you working on some new transporter device at work you haven’t told us about?” I asked hoping for a logical answer instead of an illogical scary mystery. Mom and Jack looked over at Dad expectantly. That thought apparently hadn’t occurred to them.

“I’m afraid not, honey. I wouldn’t have been so freaked out if it was some experiment I was testing,” he said with a hint of a smile. “Not that I would test such a thing on my daughter anyway. It seems, like your new ability to see auras, you have developed another very unique talent to add to your repertoire. How did you do it?”

“I have absolutely no idea,” I looked at him, my eyes begging him to believe me. “I was just dreaming. That’s all. The dream wasn’t anything special, nor was I doing anything intentional. I woke up because you were frantically yelling for me. I tried to answer you, and I waved my hands in front of your face, but you didn’t see me. That was when I got worried that something was wrong. Then I apparently re-materialized, or whatever.”

“The full-body MRI’s the doctors did at the hospital were definitely not normal. They had never seen the sort of wide spread electrical activity that your brain and heart were emitting. That’s why the doctors couldn’t give us any prognosis while you were in a coma. They had no idea what they were looking at. Obviously something triggered some kind of cascade effect throughout your body that has given you abilities beyond normal humans,” my dad explained.

“Yeah, I keep telling you that the ‘something’ was getting my period. I’m sure of it.” I said, still sniffing.

“Well, if it was your period, we can’t turn it off now, so we’ll just have figure it out . . . somehow,” My mom promised. “It’s 4:30 in the morning, a little early for you to get up. Why don’t we all try to catch a few more hours of shut-eye and we can reconvene at breakfast?”

“Okay, I’ll try, but I have to admit, this really scares the crap out of me. I wish I knew why all of this is happening. What if I disappear again, and I can’t or don’t come back? Do you think that I was dead for those brief seconds? I didn’t feel dead. My arm was glowing, but otherwise I felt pretty normal. I just don’t know if I can take any more of these special surprises. I wish Angeni were here. Maybe she would have some explanation for this.” I replied as my mom, dad, and uncle gave me a big hug. I looked at them and read the concern and love in their eyes.

“I’m sure she’ll show pretty soon, and if she doesn’t know when you first ask her, it’s likely she’ll be able to find out for us,” my mom said obviously trying to reassure me as well as herself.

“No worries, my little moonling,” my dad said using his pet name for me while he stroked my hair. “With Angeni’s help we’ll definitely get this mystery solved.” Since my dad’s an über-smart scientist, I believed him.

To my surprise I was actually able to fall back to sleep for several hours. Dad continued to keep watch over me, so that helped.

“Good morning, sleepy-head,” Dad said as I stretched my legs and feet hearing my ankle crack as I rotated it.

“Mornin’. Did I disappear again?”

“Nope. Not even a flicker,” he said. Well, that was a relief. “Your mom and Jack are up. She’s making breakfast and Jack is harassing her.”

“Nice to know things are back to normal,” I said sitting up in bed and letting my feet hit the floor.

“Yeah. It is. Do you want to take another shower before breakfast?”

“Yup!” I said as I padded across the room feeling the soft carpeting squish between my toes.

“Okay, I’ll see you in the kitchen for breakfast.”

I was blow-drying my hair when Angi materialize behind me in the mirror. She noticed that her sudden and unannounced entrance made me jump and tried to suppress her laughter. “Not funny,” I scowled at her as I turned off the hairdryer and turned around to face her. “Where have you been? How come you are always conspicuously absent when I need you the most? Is there such a thing as an angelic cell phone? If there is, how do I get one? I had another incident this morning. I need your help!” I said to her probably more whiney and annoyed than I should have been. None of this was her fault, after all.

I watched several emotions cross her sparkling face as I ranted away. Her initial smile at making me jump was replaced with annoyance and then concern. “What kind of incident?” She asked.

Her eyes widened in surprise as I told her about my latest adventure. “Well, if it’s any consolation, I’ve never heard of anything like that being a symptom of impending death,” she said in a half-hearted attempt to calm me down. It didn’t really work.

“You’ve heard of this happening before, as in real life, not science fiction?” I incredulously asked. She was suddenly looking uncomfortable.

“Well, um, there are stories, but I’m pretty sure they really wouldn’t or couldn’t apply to you. You’re too young . . .” she trailed off in thought.

“You know, Angeni, as cool as it is to have a guardian angel or whatever you are, you frustrate me endlessly!” I said as I slammed my hairbrush down onto the bathroom counter in aggravation. She jumped. I think it’s kind of funny when you can make a spirit jump. She scowled at me.

“Salena, it’s not my intention to frustrate you. As I’ve told you before, there are some things I’m not at liberty to tell you, and being a spirit guide doesn’t make me omniscient! You know the future is unpredictable and malleable based on choices you make every minute of every day. I’ve told you before that each person comes into this world with a purpose, but the only one who can discover it is . . .”

“Me. Yeah, yeah. I know. You’ve said that before,” I grumbled.

“I think your purpose has not only arrived on your door step earlier than most people, but it’s actually trying to kick the door in!” She said with compassion and sympathy. That is just so not what I wanted to hear.

“Tell you what, I’ll go back to the Otherside and ask around to see if I can come up with any answers that I can share with you. And, I’ll try to come around more frequently, at least for a little while. You know time works differently over there, so I often don’t know I’ve been gone so long. Does that sound like a deal?”

*Like I had a choice*, I thought. “Yeah, sure,” I said. “It’s a deal.”