

# Chapter One

*Lake Claret, New York—Nana's Cottage*



“It’s magical, Amelia. On an evening like this, it is when the angels come out from behind the stars to guide the moon.” Nana Landray’s voice was as sweet as an angel. With a warm smile, she brushed back her granddaughter’s long, dark blonde hair. “Magic, my love. Inhale it, and treasure it by keeping this moment tucked in your heart.”

Eight-year-old Amelia smiled with fondness at her grandmother, known as Nana. Her gentle voice and demeanor comforted Amelia and with age, her face became soft. Her oval, cobalt blue eyes sparkled.

The wooden porch swing came to a halt as dusk approached. From across Lake Claret in the New York Adirondacks, Amelia could see the sunset through a gap in the treetops. Her hair tickled her cheek as a balmy

breeze met her.

She lay on the swing with her legs curled up under a blue and black plaid wool blanket while Nana hummed a lullaby. She was safe in her world as she nestled next to her grandmother. Nana always put a homemade meal on the table and made sure she kissed Amelia goodnight. She Band-Aided her cuts with an endless love more profound than all the stars in the universe. Amelia was her shining star.

Yawning, Amelia settled her head down onto Nana's pillowy lap with a gentle smile as she fought off the sandman, who insisted on taking up residence.

"Nana, what is the name of the song you were humming? I like it."

"Just a sweet song your Papa and I love, called Blue Moon," Nana said as her warm fingers weaved through Amelia's hair and across her small shoulders.

Amelia had moved into her grandparents' cottage months earlier. Papa had filled Amelia's summer days with fishing trips to the creek down the road. Carrying a bucket of water filled with squirming trout, they would return to show Nana the day's catch.

Oily smoke then filled the kitchen as Nana fried the trout in a cast-iron skillet. Propped up on the Formica counter, swinging her legs, Amelia would pinch her nose. When that fish landed on her dinner plate, piled with tartar sauce, she fought with her fork to get it near her mouth. Nana would assure her the fish suffered no pain. Amelia feared that if she ate them, she would turn into a trout. Papa would whisper to her, saying she could

transform into a sparkling mermaid.

Amelia had a collection of Blue Dashers and Eastern Pondhawk dragonflies. With pride, she had pinned them to a board that was nailed up on the wall across from her bed. Papa never told her the truth about the dragonflies and how they succumbed. He told her they would fall asleep and wake up in heaven. Whatever her grandparents said, she believed without hesitation. She called them little angels and would pretend the largest one in the center was her mother, who watched over her.

Amelia had a reason to believe that. She had lost her mother to a drunk driver. That driver was her father. After the funeral, he dropped her bags on the front porch of the cottage. With a hard knock on the door, Nana and Papa had answered it with their arms extended. She began her new life in the country with loving, kind people.

Amelia often dreamed of a strange, dark-haired man who kissed her on the cheek. His face was bristly, and his hands were large. That was her father.

Cuddled by Nana's side on the swing, she watched the sky grow dark. This was a special night. It only happened once in a few years. Papa sat on his twig chair with his pipe clenched between his teeth, eager for the evening to unfold. Slowly, he got up and reached for his cane. With a slight limp, he made his way inside the cottage and over to the old record player on a side table. He turned it on and placed the needle on the warped vinyl record. As it spun, finding its way out onto the porch, Billie Holiday's distinctive voice sang Blue

Moon.

Amelia sat up, wrapping the wool blanket around her shoulders. She rested her head on Nana's soft arm and asked. "Why is this night so special?"

Papa came outside sucking on his pipe. Cherry-flavored smoke lingered as he leaned on his cane with his eyes steady on the glowing orb in the sky.

"Tell her, Nana, tell her what tonight all is about." He walked over to stand beside Nana. Placing his hand on her shoulder, he leaned in for a gentle kiss on her cheek, which showed the lines of time.

From the tips of the trees, the brow of the moon crested. The stars all but disappeared to what was about to take center stage.

"Amelia, my love, it is on a night like this, when the stars hide in the heavens, that it happens. The magic of love begins. It's when a heart flutters with anticipation. It's a night you will never forget, as if angel dust sprinkles down, and whomever it touches will forever sparkle. On a night like this, I met papa that led to falling in love."

Amelia picked her head up and pointed to the trees.

"Nana. Do the angels have wings like the dragonflies and Mama?"

Papa raised his brow as he shot a look at Nana. "Yes, honey, just like your mama."

Amelia's face lit up brighter than the Christmas tree at Rockefeller Center as she turned to her grandfather. "Papa, look. It is so big and bright. I can feel the angels. I do!" Her body flooded with chills. She shot up off the

swing, “Look, Nana, look!”

Nana reached for Amelia’s hand. “Honey, it is something, isn’t it?”

Claret Lake was aglow with moonlight.

Her eager eyes fixated on the giant orb that rose over the treetops. “Does it mean Mama is coming with the angels to tuck me in?”

“Honey, one day, you will understand this moment. It brings more than angels and your mama to your dreams and bedside. It brings a pure sparkle to the heart.” She looked up at her husband of forty-two years. His grip on her shoulder tightened. “Amelia, my love, remember this night and the joy the sapphire moon brings us at this very moment.”

She squirreled up her face. “Why a sapphire moon?”

Nana turned to Amelia. “My little love, when Papa looked into my eyes a long time ago under that blue moon, he said it turned them sapphire blue. A kiss under the Sapphire moon will bring a love that will last an eternity.”

*That was then...*