

Prologue

May 31, 1969

Respect your body's wisdom. He'd probably been told that every day of his eighteen years, yet One Reed's racing heart simply puzzled him.

The girl entering the museum's Music Room looked nothing like the silver-haired woman he sought, the Daughter of the Moon. She wasn't even the prettiest girl he'd seen this week, though she had a wide-eyed beauty all her own. Her shoulder-length hair glowed like cornsilk against her bronze skin. Tiny purple flowers covered her mini-skirt, which barely reached her fingertips. It bore no resemblance to the full-length teal gown he'd seen in his vision, yet he couldn't take his eyes off her. She followed her parents to the second row of damask-draped folding chairs and claimed the aisle seat.

What if it was a false vision? The thought made him miss a note and the flute screeched, earning him a scowl from Grandfather. One Reed avoided his eyes, remembering how Grandfather had insisted on him coming even after Dumbarton Oaks refused to pay the additional airfare.

"We must honor the prophecy," Grandfather told the Elders. They had drained the village's emergency fund to send him. One Reed and Grandfather had arrived in Washington, D.C., almost a week ago for the Pre-Columbian Studies Symposium. Tomorrow they would leave on the long flight back to Lima and then endure an equally long bus ride home to the coastal desert region nestled between the Pacific and the Andes. This ceremony was One Reed's last chance to find the Daughter of the Moon.

About thirty chairs nestled between burgundy Victorian couches and ornately carved walnut tables, and most were filled. Floor-to-ceiling arched windows showcased the lush garden outside the Music Room. Tapestries draped two marble walls from the coffered ceilings to the parquet floors. Hallways lined with Pre-Columbian artifacts flanked the massive stone fireplace at the front of the room, where he and Grandfather sat cross-legged on the floor.

Grandfather chanted in Quechua, their native language. "Pachamama, who brings life, bless your children," echoed in the cavernous room.

The girl tucked a strand of hair behind her ear and looked at One Reed with eyes the color of the ocean on a summer day. He nodded at her. She bit her bottom lip and turned away, but kept glancing back. Judging by her shyness and the way she kept fidgeting, she might be a couple of years younger than him.

Grandfather had finished another chant before the girl acknowledged One Reed's stare with a slight smile. He wondered what she thought of him, not that it mattered. He couldn't look away. Those were *her* eyes, the eyes of the woman from his vision. Grandfather was right to honor the prophecy; the Daughter of the Moon was here.

He knew little about the prophecy, except what Grandfather shared in a brief conversation after One Reed returned from his first shamanic journey to the Ocuaje Desert. It had something to do with opening the portal to the Labyrinth of Time, but only the Elders talked of such things. He knew it would be many years before he would learn why the Daughter of the Moon was important.

Grandfather placed small squares of red, blue and yellow wrapped candies on a white silk scarf. Then he rose and took five coca leaves from the pouch at his waist. He fanned them so his breath would touch them evenly. He faced south and blew over the leaves, then repeated the ritual facing each of the cardinal directions to honor Tayti Inti—Father Sun—and the four winds

that caress Pachamama—Mother Earth. Grandfather walked between the three rows of chairs. He paused in front of each person to say his words of blessing and mark the air with the Condor's sacred black feather.

One Reed put his flute down and followed, allowing each person to choose a coca leaf from his pouch. When he reached the girl, One Reed felt a power surrounding them so strong he expected the air to shimmer. It started as a cold prickling at the base of his neck and ended at his tingling fingertips. He smiled at her.

"Hi." She lowered her radiant eyes and reached for a coca leaf.

That's when he saw two pale circles, one above the other, on the inside of her left wrist. Grandfather lowered the Condor feather and turned in time to see her strange birthmark. He nodded at One Reed and then moved to the next person to give his blessing.

The girl held the coca leaf and raised her eyes to his. For a moment, his vision of the Daughter of the Moon returned. He saw the image surrounding the girl like an aura--the silver-white hair and flowing teal gown. Only her eyes were the same. His body's wisdom had led him to the one he sought. He felt humbled to have found the Daughter of the Moon and awed by the energy surrounding them like a tidal force.

The girl's father cleared his throat, drawing One Reed's attention. Grandfather waited at the other end of the aisle. Her father reached for a leaf from One Reed's pouch, and the power surrounding the girl and him snapped. He almost ached from the loss, and the girl's eyes widened as if she felt it, too. He steeled himself and took another step away. The trance broken, One Reed followed Grandfather down the third row and returned to face the audience.

Grandfather said, "Say a blessing and blow your breath across the leaf three times."

One Reed translated and then demonstrated with a whoosh of his breath across the leaf in his hand.

"Come, make your offering to Pachamama." Grandfather gestured toward the scarf.

"Do as I do." One Reed placed his coca leaf on top of the candies and motioned for the others to join them. When the girl walked to the front, she lingered next to One Reed. Her father placed a hand lightly on her shoulder, guiding her back to their seats.

As the last person filed past, Grandfather pulled the scarf's four corners to the center. He bound the packet with a thick, flat rope made of dried maize stalks. "Your offering will be burned tonight when the blue moon rises above. This is a time foretold, sacred to Pachamama and Tayta Inti."

When One Reed finished interpreting, the audience murmured words of appreciation. The words had surprised him; Grandfather had not mentioned the sacred time at their other ceremonies.

Grandfather turned his back to the audience and raised the bundle above his head. He lowered his voice so only One Reed could hear.

"Beware the second blue moon's rising. Stones will speak to men, and the song of Pachamama and Inti will fill your hearts. Tremble at the dark moon, which heralds the Light's return. Only those who tread the Path of Knowledge may rise among the First Men and quench the flames of doom."

One Reed recognized the words of the prophecy, though he'd only heard them once before. Grandfather said it had been handed down from shaman to shaman for generations.

Grandfather lowered the offering bundle and faced the audience. After a few hushed comments, people gathered their programs and purses to leave. One woman placed her hands

together in a prayerful gesture of thanks and bowed to Grandfather. Several nodded their heads as they passed.

One Reed's anxiety grew by the second. The Daughter of the Moon was leaving and he didn't even know her name. He'd never be able to show his face in the village. He had to say something—anything—to keep her from going.

Then Grandfather pointed at her. "Come tonight!"

The girl mouthed "me?" and gestured toward herself.

Her father stepped protectively in front of her.

"Wha...?" One Reed stuttered. It was all he could do to keep his mouth from gaping open. He'd never heard his Grandfather speak English. Grandfather winked as if he knew he'd saved One Reed from making a fool of himself. One Reed walked over to the girl's parents.

"Grandfather means no harm. It's the first time he's invited anyone to join us for the offering ceremony."

Her father relaxed a little.

"We can meet back here after the moon rises," One Reed suggested.

The girl's mother smiled at Grandfather as she patted her husband's arm. "How very gracious of you to invite us. Of course, we'd be honored."

One Reed translated, though now he wondered just how much Grandfather understood.

She wrapped an arm around the girl's shoulder and turned back toward him. "We're from St. Louis—I'm Mary Ann, and this is my husband George. And, of course, our daughter Nina."

Nina, One Reed thought. Her name was Nina.

"Perhaps you'd be our guests for dinner?" Mary Ann said. "We have reservations at our hotel. It's just down the street."

"The Four Seasons has a very fine restaurant," George added. "I'm sure two more would be no problem."

When One Reed translated what they said, Grandfather smiled and nodded. They followed the family out to the cab stand.

"You kids go on ahead," George told Nina, motioning to the waiting cab. "We'll take the next one."

One Reed couldn't believe his luck. He scooted onto the bench seat next to her. "Have you ever been to Peru?"

She giggled. "No, this is the farthest I've been from St. Louis. You're the first person I've ever known from outside the States."

"It's the same for me. This is my first journey outside my village." He paused, unsure how much to tell her. He would like to know her better before telling her why he was here, but realized this was his only chance. One Reed gathered his courage and began. "Last month I had a vision—a waking dream—about meeting you."

She frowned. "Are you teasing me?"

Panicked, he vigorously shook his head. "No, I would never do that!"

"Okay," she said hesitantly. "What kind of vision?"

"I don't quite understand it either," he said. "You looked much different in the vision, older but still beautiful."

She blushed.

"But I have no doubt you are the one I seek." He took her left hand and gently turned it so the birthmark showed.

She drew back. "I know...it's ugly."

Stunned at her reaction, One Reed said, "No, it's beautiful. It's amazing. The blue moon has claimed you as its own."

"It has?"

He nodded. One Reed took her arm again and traced the circles on her arm.

She shivered at his touch and sucked in her breath.

"I came here just to meet you," he said.

"Really?" she said. "And there's a blue moon tonight!"

"Yes," he said. "The second visit this month of Mama Killa—Mother Moon—is no coincidence. Our meeting tonight was foretold."

They arrived at the restaurant sooner than he would've liked, and the second cab came moments later. One Reed barely had time to eat while fielding questions and replies for Grandfather, whose command of English seemed to have mysteriously disappeared as quickly as it appeared. As he walked to the taxi, he choked down the last bites of a hamburger big enough to feed his whole family.

"Ride with us," Mary Ann said, pulling him aside.

Grandfather had already entered the first cab with Nina. He was trapped.

"How long have you played the flute?" she asked.

"I can't remember when I didn't play," One Reed said. "It's something Grandfather expected me to do, so I did it."

When they arrived at Dumbarton Oaks, they cleared security outside the wrought-iron gates and walked through the gardens toward the dome-topped buildings. In the full moon's brightness, the trees left shadows on the curving concrete walkway. Blooming shrubs and flowers crowded the sidewalk, their red, yellow and purple blossoms as vibrant as at midday. The gardens provided the perfect setting for their offering to Mother Earth.

Grandfather stopped and placed the silken bundle inside an earthen circle bounded by stones where they'd done the ceremony the four previous nights. He took flints from his pouch and, with only a few strikes, the maize rope caught fire. Soon the pungent aroma of burning coca leaves and the sweet scent of melting sugar filled the air. "Pachamama, Inti, accept our gifts."

He blew across the flames, sending the white smoke wafting upward. "We send our blessing to others, as we seek your blessings upon us."

One Reed glanced over at Nina as he repeated Grandfather's words. Her focus seemed to be somewhere far away. He wondered if Pachamama had touched her heart.

As they watched the flames burn down, One Reed pulled Nina aside. Grandfather began walking back toward the entrance gate, escorting Mary Ann with a touch of his hand to her elbow. George followed. They disappeared behind some bushes as the sidewalk curved, leaving him alone with Nina.

Standing so close was intoxicating. One Reed lifted her chin and leaned down, light-headed as he breathed in her flowery scent. His lips barely touched hers when he heard Grandfather cough. One Reed reluctantly backed away just before George peered around a bush.

"Coming, Nina?"

She bit her bottom lip and gave One Reed a sideways glance. "I'll be right there, Dad."

One Reed whispered in her ear, "How can I reach you?"

She rummaged in her purse, then jotted down her address on a scrap of paper. "You'll write?"

"I promise. And here." He reached into his pouch. "It's a gift to remind you of me." Before they'd left the village, Grandfather told him the Daughter of the Moon must find her own path,

but he didn't see why he couldn't help her. He handed her a smooth black stone with two white circles engraved on it. "It's my blue moon stone."

She gasped and lifted her wrist next to it. "It's just like my birthmark!"

"I didn't know why I found it in the desert, but now I understand." He took her hands in his. "We are linked, you and I. You are *my* Daughter of the Moon."

Chapter 1

Friday, March 30, 2018

Grams stared out the window as our Mystical Journey tour bus parked in front of the Museo Carrena. She looked as happy as a little kid at Christmas. "I can't believe I'm here," she said.

"Uh huh." My thoughts exactly, but *so* not in the same way. I first heard of the museum two weeks ago when Mom called me into the kitchen, interrupting my daydream about spending spring break with Garrett at Lake of the Ozarks.

Grams, all smiles, handed me a brochure. "Guess what? We're going to Peru!"

When I saw the dates, I panicked. "I thought you were going with your friend."

"She's sick, and this is the only tour that includes Ica's museum of engraved stones," Grams said. "We'll be there during a blue moon—a special time for a special trip."

I turned to Mom. "But what about school?"

"Since it's over spring break, you'll only miss a week." When I started to say something more, she scowled and put a hand on her hip. I got "the lecture" after Grams left. I knew it had been a hard year for Grams since Papa died. I missed him, too. But I'd been looking forward to seeing Garrett again. He lived six hours away, so we hadn't seen each other since summer vacation. What if he met someone else while I was here in the middle of nowhere?

I followed Grams onto the sidewalk. A tail-wagging brown dog that looked like a Chihuahua on steroids jumped at me like I was a giant doggie biscuit. I scurried away, but I could feel Grams eyeing me. After rooming with her for a week, I knew what she was going to say before she did.

"It didn't lick me, Grams." I sighed, and she patted me on the shoulder. If she warned me again about the danger of rabies from these Peruvian strays, I might not be able to keep from biting her myself.

I lingered by the small bus as Grams made a beeline for our guide. Maria Theresa counted members of our tour's earlier group as they exited the museum, which was so tiny only ten could enter at one time.

I stepped to the side of the building to try my iPhone again. Not a single bar. I was desperate to reach Garrett, but I hadn't had service since we arrived in Lima days ago. Had he texted me? Would he think I wasn't interested when I didn't respond?

By now, he was at the lake, boating, hiking and dancing with our friends. With our families' vacation homes side-by-side, we'd been pals for as long as I could remember. We'd gotten closer just as last summer ended when Garrett's folks let us take the boat out alone. Since then, we texted all the time, but it was nothing like being together. Remembering our first kiss, I touched my lips.

It just wasn't fair. Instead of Garrett and me finding a secluded cove, my bratty ten-year-old brother was having fun with his friends. And I was spending spring break with my grandmother. To make matters worse, this was about as far from a lake as you could get. Our guide said kids Robert's age had never seen it rain, and from what I'd seen, I believed it.

"Miss, please come this way."

I looked over. A guy with large brown eyes and a gentle smile, probably a couple of years older than me, held the door open. I couldn't help noticing he was cute.

"I'm Felix." He motioned for me to go inside. "Please, the director has already begun her talk."

"Of course." As I put away my iPhone, I felt a little guilty when I realized I was suddenly a lot more interested in looking at rocks than talking to Garrett. As I expected, Grams stood up front by the director. I wandered around to get a better look at the two ramshackle rooms they called a museum. Engraved rocks of various sizes filled shelves propped up by tree limbs. Flimsy chicken wire kept the rocks from sliding off.

Felix made his way toward the back room, squeezing past a couple in matching blue-checked shirts.

The director held up a black stone bearing the white image of a prehistoric fish. "My father—Dr. Andres Felix Carrena—began his collection about twenty years ago, soon after a friend gave him this stone paperweight. It was the second engraved stone he'd seen. Workers plowing his father's land discovered the first engraved stone when he was sixteen."

Two knee-high boulders flanked the doorway to the back room, each engraved with what looked like maps of continents. I recognized Africa, but the other continents weren't quite right.

Felix walked over to where I stood. "Where are you from?" he whispered.

"Missouri."

"Home of Mark Twain," he said.

"Well, yes." It impressed me that he knew something about where I lived when I knew so little about Peru.

"We read *Huckleberry Finn* in English class," he explained.

"It's a classic." Struggling to find something to say, I asked, "So, have you ever seen it rain?"

He grinned. "Twice. How about you?"

"Well, yeah, a few more times than that every month. I can't imagine what it would be like to live in the desert." I felt my cheeks turn red. I sounded like an idiot.

In the background, the director continued. "Because it is illegal to sell archeological artifacts, peasants who found the stones said they carved them."

I turned toward the nearest shelf and pretended to study a smooth, black stone. Although I was just trying to hide my embarrassment, I found it surprisingly interesting. The white engraving depicted an axe-carrying warrior wearing a feathered headdress. He stood on the back of what appeared to be a cross between a stegosaurus and apatosaurus—dinosaurs I easily recognized from helping Robert build models. The longnecked dinosaur looked back at the warrior, and a flute player followed them.

"It's okay to pick it up," Felix said.

As soon as the stone rested in my palm, I felt dizzy. The room seemed to shift in and out of focus. A humming noise like electrical interference grew louder and louder. I struggled to understand the director as she continued to talk.

"In 1967, my father had a laboratory analyze thirty-three stones. They found those were heavier than most river stones and were engraved not long before being placed where they were found. By studying the soil strata of the archeological sites where they were discovered, scientists determined the stones were created more than a hundred million years ago."

"So this rock's really old," I said. The words came out slurred and I tottered unsteadily.

"Are you okay, Miss?" Felix slipped his arms around my shoulders to keep me from falling.

"I just feel so woozy." While mentally I felt disconnected, my physical state was another matter. My senses zinged at his touch like a taser hit me. My heart pounded. I'd never felt this way around Garrett, even both times we kissed. I glimpsed Grams heading our way, pushing a woman aside in her haste. "You're pale as a ghost," she said. "It's that darn pilot's fault. He must have a running bet with the other pilot about who can make the most tourists turn green."

I managed a weak smile. She could be right. After the four-seater plane landed from our kamikaze tour of the Nazca Lines, even I had been nauseous. That was something Six Flags' best roller coasters hadn't managed.

But this felt much different than the queasiness I'd experienced from this morning's plane ride over the ancient geoglyphs--designs drawn in the rocky desert that can only be seen from the air. It felt unlike anything I'd ever experienced, almost like I was out of sync with my body.

"Maybe some fresh air would help." Felix escorted Grams and me through a doorway into a narrow alley. We crossed the street and claimed an empty bench on the square. I breathed deeply and soon began to feel better.

"You had me worried." Grams gave me a slight smile, but the fine lines around her blue eyes deepened with concern.

"I'm fine now."

"Looks like some of your color's coming back," she said.

"Don't miss the museum because of me, Grams. I know how much you wanted to come here."

She scrunched her eyebrows as she considered it, then turned to Felix. "You'll stay with her?"

He nodded.

"I just want to see about getting one of the books the director mentioned. I won't be long."

As Grams walked toward the museum, I grew dizzy again, and the buzzing sound came back, even louder. Instead of just feeling lightheaded, this time it was like viewing a picture coming into focus. I tried to clear my vision, but couldn't. What was going on?

Frightened, but fascinated, I watched the scene unfold. I recognized the image engraved on the stone I still held, but the figures looked real in every detail. Sweet, high tones of a flute filled the air as I focused on the man next to the dinosaur. Woven reeds dyed in bright colors—mostly red and yellow—formed his headdress and thigh-length tunic. Instead of feathers, broad, waxy green leaves pointed up from his head, making him look eight feet tall. Compared to the dinosaur, though, he looked like a toy doll. He carried a black stone axe, but not to attack the dinosaur. Somehow I knew it was his companion, much like a horse or dog, just as I knew the man had a message for me.

"You see it, too," Felix whispered in my ear as he took the stone from my hand.

The image disappeared. Startled, I looked up at him. I didn't know when he'd moved so close.

"You saw what was on it."

I nodded, not trusting my voice. What had just happened to me? I'd heard of people having hallucinations, but usually it was from taking drugs or drinking too much. Not from holding a rock.

"I thought they only talked to me."

"But stones can't...do that," I said. But it had. My insides twisted. "How can they?"

"Something embedded in the stones—whatever makes them heavier than other rocks—makes them able to project images." He kept his voice low. "At least, that's the best I can figure."

I looked around. No one was near enough to overhear us, but I kept whispering, too. "Do you mean if I picked up any of those stones, I'd see the image on it?"

"Just like it was a movie. Sometimes I know things, like I'm receiving messages, even though I don't always hear the words."

"Yes." My voice grew louder with excitement, but inwardly the questions remained. How could this be happening? It made no sense. I knew there was a message for me, too. Not from what he said, but I just knew. I felt excited, breathless.

A creaking door drew our attention back to the museum. Grams headed our way.

"I wish we had more time to talk," Felix said. "It would mean so much to me."

When I looked in his eyes, I saw it wasn't just a lie. Sharing time with me was important to him. *I* was important to him. I hadn't felt that way since Robert's birth, when he became the center of my parents' universe.

Feeling fiercely independent, I reached for the stone where it lay on the ground. A half-baked plan guided my actions. "Do you have a health clinic in town?"

"Yes. My aunt runs it."

"I hate to worry Grams, but in my place, I know she'd do the same thing." I was rationalizing, but I was pretty sure it was true. Mom always reminded her how curiosity killed the cat, but that never stopped Grams from going on her "adventures." I wanted to know what message the stones had for me. Besides, Grams owed me for messing up spring break. "Just follow my lead."

By the time my grandmother crossed the street, my vision blurred and the buzzing sound had grown louder than ever. What was I doing? Despite having second thoughts, I still clutched the stone.

"Jade!"

I felt a twinge of regret when I heard Grams' worried voice.

"The clinic's just down the street," Felix assured her. I felt his arm around my waist and Gram's hand on my back as they guided me down the sidewalk. They didn't seem as real as the image forming before me.

This time it was like I had stepped into a movie as one of the characters, and the warrior didn't look happy to see me.