

Chapter One

May 20 - Mornings, Mishaps & the Myth of Ordinary

“Happy big 4-0 to me,” Seraphina Blackthorn muttered as she scanned her final divorce papers with mixed emotions. Freedom lay in those documents—a clean slate to start anew, but it also marked the death of a dream. Fifteen years with Evan Stanford—love of her life turned snake in the grass—and nothing to show for it. “Not a damn thing.”

She squared her shoulders even as her nails beat a rhythm on the table. Love had shattered the moment she found him “celebrating” their anniversary with his young admin. She’d left her home, her job, her marriage, and his powerful family had made sure her career lay in ruins.

Sera stuffed the paperwork back into the envelope. Evan’s betrayal still stung, but it was his baby—his new son, born just last week to the mistress who stole her life—that twisted the knife. Anger. Sadness. Regret. It all churned. Even if she admitted the marriage had been dying long before the affair.

“Breathe,” she ordered herself, shoving a golden-red strand of hair behind her ear. She clutched the heart-shaped crystal at her neck. Its warmth calmed and grounded her. “What a fool I was.”

She slapped the table with the envelope before tossing it away from her. It slid into a vase of roses, lilies, and sunflowers. A cheerful *Happy Birthday* balloon poked out from the

blooms. The gift from her mother provided a cheery splash of color, but its sweet scent couldn't mask the townhouse's musty air of neglect.

Compared to the mansion she'd shared with Evan, the cramped townhouse reminded her just how far she'd fallen. She inhaled deeply. "Not fallen—freed," she said aloud as she squared her shoulders and thumped the table with her knuckles. "I have my life back. But now what?" Accounting was all she knew, but the thought of working for another big firm left her feeling cold. Maybe she'd start her own CPA business—or leave numbers behind and try something new.

Elbows planted on the table, chin resting on her interlaced fingers, she blew out a breath and considered her options. The townhouse came fully furnished, as she'd taken very little from her marriage. No sense in accumulating stuff until she found a permanent place to settle.

A screeching sound, like an owl with laryngitis, interrupted her thoughts and broke the silence. Her head whipped around to the front door. "Stupid doorbell needs replacing," she muttered, "along with the refrigerator and stove—all on their last legs."

Crossing the room, she peeked through the peephole. A man wearing a delivery driver uniform stood on the tiny porch, holding an enormous bouquet of purple blooms. A smile tugged at her lips. More flowers for her birthday? She opened the door, a welcoming smile in place. "Good morning," she said, eyeing the bouquet with pleasure.

"Delivery for Seraphina Blackthorn," the driver announced, his soft voice carrying the hint of a musical accent nearly drowned out by the whooshing sound of a bus braking behind

him. He bowed his head slightly, touching the brim of his hat with two fingers in an informal greeting.

“That’s me.” The scent of peppermint made her draw a deep breath. Her heart clenched as it reminded her of her father, who’d loved to suck on the red and white candies. He’d always shared his stash with her, even though her mother disapproved.

Tears stung her eyes. She swiped a finger beneath her eyes. In front of her, the driver’s form shimmered faintly, as though there were two of them. “Sorry. You remind me of someone.”

The driver’s eyes flickered with something she couldn’t quite name—recognition?

Familiarity? She blinked, and the strange feeling vanished.

“Then these should cheer you.” He extended the bouquet with a smile and another head bow.

Sera stepped out onto the tiny square porch to accept the heavy crystal vase, wrapping both hands around it. Her eyes widened with pleasure. “Wow. These are beautiful,” she said, studying the vibrant purple blooms with glowing blue centers. Their scent hit her like a wave—heady and intoxicating. She laughed softly. “Like catnip to a cat,” she imagined aloud, as she’d never owned one.

He tipped his head, indicating her necklace. “The flowers match your *aestralite* crystal,” he offered, his voice deepening.

Sera touched the purple and blue crystal, comforted by its warmth. “I’ve never heard of that stone. I thought this was either Alexandrite or Aqua Aura.”

“*Astralite* of the Celestial Gate,” he affirmed. “A very rare stone,” he added with a smile.

She tilted her head to one side. “Hmm, okay. Whatever it is, it’s ... it’s special to me.”

“More than you know,” he murmured, his tone heavy with meaning.

Sera frowned, but before she could respond, he pulled a wrapped package from inside his jacket and held it out. She switched the vase to one arm and held out her hand. Their fingers touched as he passed her the wrapped parcel—soft brown paper tied with black twine. “A gift,” he murmured, eyes too shadowed to read. “Old truths wrapped in silence ... gifts once lost, now returned. Let memory bloom, and the new take root.”

A shimmer in the air followed by the snap of static electricity startled her. She gasped as a pulse shot up her arm, spreading through her body in a searing wave that flushed her skin. The words lodged deep—not just in her bones, but in her chest, her mind, her memory. They echoed in her skull like a song she’d forgotten the lyrics to but somehow still knew by heart. She froze, the cadence of his voice threading through her—strangely familiar, hauntingly intimate. She swayed slightly, disoriented, as though something important hovered just out of reach. Something she should know. Or remember.

The warmth from their contact wasn’t unpleasant. It was familiar, like stepping into sunlight after being in the shadows. She shook her head to clear her mind. A strangled laugh escaped as she pulled her hand free, the package clutched tightly in her grasp. Her fingers twitched as if reaching for something unseen. “Wow, the air must be really dry or something.” None of it made sense—her reaction, the heat, the ache in her chest.

Her smile faded when she noticed the haunted look in the driver's deep green eyes, as though he carried a heavy burden that had suddenly become too much to bear. His eyes flickered with something unreadable, watchful, waiting.

"Or something," he offered with a sad smile before drawing himself to his full height. His casual demeanor shifted, replaced by something sharper, more resolute. His gaze deepened and held hers with unnerving intensity. "Seraphina Blackthorn." His casual air vanished. "It is time to remember."

Sera clutched the gift to her chest. The command rippled through her, chilling her spine. "What? Remember what?" Her voice was barely a whisper. She cleared her throat. "Who are—"

"*Remember.*" The word struck like a bell tolling in the distance. With another bow, the delivery driver tipped his hat, turned on his heel, and hurried down the steps, whistling a lilting, almost whimsical tune that was at odds with his formal, old-school behavior.

"Okay." She frowned. "That was weird. Nice but quirky old guy." She tried to put him out of her mind, but confusion gnawed at her as she stepped back inside and closed the door. The familiar tune stuck in her mind. Something about the jaunty tone resonated within her, almost a sense of *déjà vu*. "That tune," she murmured. "I know it, but from where?" She shrugged as the melody wrapped around her like mist and the words swam to life in her mind.

When the stars light up the night,

dreams will take their flight,

in the moon's garden,

we'll be together soon.

She closed her eyes as more verses, along with the tune, played in her head. Suddenly, she remembered. Her father used to sing that simple song to her! Another memory surfaced of her sitting on her father's lap while unwrapping her peppermint treats. Sera whirled around and stepped back outside.

She scanned the street for the driver, but there was no sign of him. Her breath caught.

Something about him tugged at a memory she couldn't quite place—too familiar to be a stranger, yet impossible to name. She pressed the door closed and leaned her forehead against it as if the wood might steady her. Her chest ached with an old longing, the kind stirred by forgotten songs and half-remembered faces. Whatever her heart wanted, it was impossible.

Turning, she held the vase up and studied the bouquet. Who sent it? Frowning, she searched for a card but didn't find one. "Not from Mom, as I already received flowers from her, and The Cheating Bastard wouldn't remember that today was my birthday. Okay, very strange." Reflected in the cut-glass vase, her crystal glowed and fractured like a turning kaleidoscope. A shimmer of memory tugged at the edges of her mind: her as a child skipping down a forest path. She swung a basket filled with flowers, just like the ones in her arms.

Hurry, she called out to a shadowy figure. Sera's brows drew together as she tried to recall more, but the memory slipped away, leaving her chest tight with unease.

She shook her head to clear away the fanciful notion. "Enough. Back to reality. You have plans to make." She put the strange encounter with the driver and the unsettling return of a childhood memory behind her as she sniffed the flowers. Once again, she jerked her head back as the overly sweet scent went to her head.

"Wow." She cautiously sniffed again and felt slightly drunk on the heady scent.

She set the vase on a small table displaying her birthday cards. Today should be a celebration—forty years old, single, free. A new beginning. Yet, unease coiled in her chest. The flowers, the package, the song. They didn't feel like coincidences. Something was happening.

She wandered into the poorly lit living room; her gaze fell on the ripple-patterned crocheted afghan draped over the sagging couch. Her grandmother had given it to her when she was ten. Decades later, it still looked as new as the day she'd received it. A couple of crocheted pillows, along with a lap throw she'd just finished, added her own personal touch to the otherwise dreary room.

Plopping down onto the couch, avoiding the spot with the broken spring, Sera set the wrapped package on the worn coffee table and leaned forward to study it. She was eager to open it, yet strangely reluctant. Her encounter with the driver left her with a vague sense of unease.

“Maybe there’s a card inside.” Sera ran the pads of her fingers across the wrapping—which wasn’t paper after all, but a giant leaf? Or softened bark? With trembling fingers, she untied the twine and slowly peeled away the wrapping. She gasped with pleasure. A journal gleamed in the dim light; its golden-brown leather cover was etched with intricate Celtic designs.

A luminous moonstone sat in the center of an embossed Tree of Life. Six glowing gemstones: emerald, amber, sapphire, amethyst, ruby and opal each pulsed faintly with an otherworldly energy and surrounded the tree. Sera picked up the journal with both hands and blinked as a faint vibration ran up her arms. “Wow,” she breathed as she stroked the cover, tracing the intricate patterns.

The journal felt alive, and the moonstone reminded her of a moon peeping out between the tree branches. She touched it, surprised that it felt warm, as did each of the gleaming, polished gems. The stones and design gave the journal a magical, almost ethereal feel.

Her gaze followed the curling tree roots that intertwined in complex, vine-like patterns that anchored the entire design. The Celtic knots framing the cover gave the journal a protective and ancient appearance, as if it held secrets waiting to be unlocked. The overall effect was one of elegance and mystique.

Closing her eyes, she brought the journal to her face and inhaled the scent of ancient parchment and rain-drenched earth—magic and nature intertwined. As though waking from a dream, she opened her eyes and shook her head. “Okay, that is pure fantasy,” she

murmured. In her mind, she heard her mother admonishing her to be sensible and not foolish.

Sera frowned as she studied the unexpected gift. She tilted her head to one side. Was it her imagination, or was the journal larger than when she'd first picked it up? She juggled it in her hands. It also felt heavier. Instead of a small, diary-sized book, it now appeared to be the size of a family Bible.

Spooked, she dropped the leather book back onto its wrapping and stared, mouth agape.

Not her imagination. It *was* larger. Leaning forward, she tried to re-wrap it, but there wasn't enough wrapping to even cover half the front. "Not possible," she whispered, scooting back on the couch. The ancient-looking journal hummed faintly, as though alive and begging her to open its cover.

Her hands flew to her throat. Her heart skipped a beat, and she shivered. "How is this possible? Objects do not grow and change size! Or act alive." Rubbing her arms to rid herself of the chill, she murmured, "not real." She pinched herself.

"Ow! Okay, I'm awake." Her attention shifted to the small table near the door where she'd placed the vase of flowers. "Am I drugged? Hallucinating?" Was it the flowers? She shook her head to clear her mind. "No more sniffing those until I find out!"

Warm air blasted into the room and swirled around her. The gust flipped the cover of the journal open. Startled, she glanced up toward the ceiling, toward the vent. Weird. The furnace had quit weeks ago. Shrugging it off as just another malfunction in her life of

imperfections, she rested her palms on the table and read the single line of script flowing across the page in gold ink that shimmered faintly:

Do you accept?

Sera blinked once. Twice. “No way,” she breathed. Surely the words hadn’t just magically appeared as if written by an unseen hand? She shook her head. “Ridiculous,” she scoffed as she tipped her head to one side as she considered the question. “Accept what?”

Her voice wasn’t much more than a whisper as her gaze darted to the page that held three images: a golden quill, an ornate key, and a small, pale blue envelope. Though wary, curiosity had her leaning closer to make sense of the odd gift. After all, if this was some sort of weird, drug-induced dream, it couldn’t hurt her. Could it?

She focused once more on the three words that pulsed and shimmered on the page as though waiting for her answer. Reaching out, she touched the quill and gasped when she felt the downy softness of feathers. The key felt cool. Hard. So real, she swore she could pluck it from the page. The script on the envelope was too small for her to make out, so she carefully picked up the journal as though it were as fragile as a bird’s nest.

Squinting, Sera still couldn’t bring the handwritten lettering into focus. She sighed. One drawback to hitting the big 4-0 was the need for reading glasses, and she’d left hers on the dining room table. “Too bad I can’t just snap my fingers and have them appear!”

She snapped her fingers as she stood to fetch them, when a faint sound drew her gaze back to the coffee table. Her jaw dropped when she spotted her reading glasses. She glanced

from one table to the other. “I swear I left them over there.” She’d needed them to read over her divorce paperwork.

“Wow, I’m being totally forgetful today. Must have dropped them here when I went to answer the door.” Shrugging it off, she snatched them and put them on. Peering at the tiny graphic of the envelope, she read:

To Seraphina Blackthorn

Newly Divorced Granddaughter

Guardian of the Moondragon

“Woah!” Sera reached out and slammed the journal closed, the sound sharp and unnaturally loud in the room’s silence. “Is this a joke? Some kind of trick?” Who knew her divorce was final? Evan, of course, but this gag, or whatever it was, was far beyond his scope of imagination. Leaning forward, she gingerly opened the cover once more and focused on the last line. “What is the Guardian of the Moondragon? Sounds like a role-playing game.”

She snatched her cellphone from the table, intending to call the florist and demand answers, and just as quickly, she lowered the phone. Without a card, she didn’t know where the flowers had come from. And the man who’d delivered it ... he didn’t feel like a typical delivery guy. No logo on his uniform or hat. And no delivery van either.

The driver. The flowers. The journal—none of this made sense. And the look in his eyes when they'd held hers had seemed very personal. How could someone be a stranger and yet feel so ... familiar?

“Get a grip, Sera. It’s just a weird birthday present,” she told the room at large, but her instincts screamed it was more than that. Her gaze shifted to the bouquet. The blooms appeared to give off an ethereal glow. She shook her head, blinking hard. Must be a trick of the light spilling in from the bent window blinds.

Unnerved, she stood and paced from one end of the tiny room, across the dining area, into the kitchen, and back. She wanted to brush it off—brush all of it off—as a prank, but there was a nagging pull in her chest, a feeling she couldn’t ignore that unsettled her. She strode into the thumb-sized kitchen to fix a soothing cup of tea. Maybe some caffeine would counteract the strange, lingering mental fuzziness she attributed to the flowers.

For a moment, she rested her palms on the counter and took several deep breaths. Her reflection in the toaster’s brushed steel looked older, paler—more tired than she remembered. Not broken, but not quite whole either. Shaking off the past, she filled the electric teakettle, grimacing as the pipes banged in protest. She prayed the fuse wouldn’t blow when she plugged it in. The fridge shuddered to life and let out a grinding growl.

Sera set the pot down with a bang. “Nope, no tea.” The electric kettle and fridge could not be on at the same time, and her stovetop only worked now and again, as did the oven. Frustrated with a large dose of mad building inside her, Sera jabbed her finger into the fridge door.

“Knock.” *Jab*. “It.” *Jab*. “Off.” *Jab-jab*. “I do not need you to burn out another motor. Work for another week! That’s all I ask. Play nice, and I’ll soon be out of here.” She gave the appliance a small kick for good measure.

To her shock, the fridge fell silent. Just like that. Her breath caught. No hum, no grinding, no electrical stutter—just instant obedience. That. Was. Not. Normal. Grasping her crystal heart-shaped pendant in one hand, she stepped back and stared at her still-tingling finger that pulsed with heat, as though she’d burned it. Instinctively, she pressed her palm against the fridge, half-expecting—what? Yanking her hand away, she whispered, “Never mind. Don’t want to know.”

Quickly, she plugged in the kettle, casting a wary glance at the fridge as though expecting it to roar back to life. When the water boiled without incident, she scooped a spoonful of Earl Grey Lavender into the teapot, the citrusy-sweet scent familiar, comforting, as though memory itself had a fragrance.

When the kettle whistled, she poured the boiling water into her porcelain teapot, the one covered with enchanting and dancing fairies. The whimsical tea set usually made her smile. It was one of her prized possessions she’d taken with her when she moved out of Evan’s home, but today, even the familiar ritual of brewing tea couldn’t steady her nerves as nagging thoughts of the strange delivery driver tugged at the edge of her mind.

Once again, the tune he’d whistled played in her head, a reminder of her father.

“Coincidence,” she muttered. “The dead don’t return to life.”

After the tea leaves had steeped, Sera poured the rich, golden-brown liquid into her teacup. The scent of lavender and bergamot should've calmed her. Instead, it felt like wrapping herself in a favorite sweater that no longer fit—familiar, but wrong somehow. Her gaze kept straying across the room to the journal where it waited, innocuous yet unshakably present, as though waiting for Sera's next move. Sera paced the room. She couldn't get the three words out of her head.

Do you accept?

“Accept what? The question pulsed like a riddle, its answer just out of reach. She threaded her fingers through her hair. “Can't refer to the journal or flowers as I obviously already accepted those.”

The question hung in the air like a puzzle, and no matter how hard she tried to dismiss it, something deep inside her whispered that this was more than just an unusual birthday present. The journal felt ... alive. She could feel its energy radiating clear across the room. But more than that, it felt as though it belonged to her; a long-lost treasure newly returned. Which was ridiculous, as she'd never set eyes upon it before.

Old truths wrapped in silence ... gifts once lost, now returned. Let memory bloom, and the new take root.

“Old truths ... gifts once lost, let memory bloom ...” she recited.

“What did all that mean?” she asked the empty room. Her tea forgotten, she continued to pace, her gaze flicking back to the journal where it waited. But for what? The question, *do*

you accept, echoed in her mind, pulling her closer with each step. Returning to the couch, she sat and reluctantly pulled the journal onto her lap and opened it. The gold-inked words on the first page still shimmered, asking the same question: *Do you accept?*

Once again, she traced the quill with a trembling fingertip and again felt a strange vibration deep in her very soul. Her breath caught in her throat, and she snatched her fingers away. A mix of awe and trepidation tightened her chest. This wasn't just an *old journal*—it was infused with purpose.

“Come on, Sera. Now you're being fanciful.” Yet, deep down, she knew it to be so.

Before her eyes, the words faded, and new text flowed across the page as if written by the same invisible hand. Sera gulped, her hands flying to her face as she stared in disbelief.

No. Not disbelief. Recognition. Deep inside her, beneath the layers of logic and numbers, she had always known she was meant for more. That the world had secrets no one else could see. The ink shimmered, and her pulse thumped in sync with the flickering gold letters. A voice not quite her own whispered inside her mind: *Remember*. Her fingers sought and found her crystal as she read:

Seraphina Blackthorn, you are a hereditary witch, gifted with a lineage woven with magic. You are in line as the seventh Guardian of the Moondragon, a title passed down through generations, with each Guardian sworn to protect and uphold the balance between realms. This legacy is as old as our family itself, a binding call that marks us as both protectors and keepers of ancient magic. The tapestry of our world is woven with threads of magic and the hues of countless dawns and dusks. A light, bright and steadfast, marks the legacy of our

lineage. This light, so delicate yet strong, is now entrusted to your care, as it once was to mine and to those who walked the path before us.

Sera's eyes widened as she reread the words: *You are a hereditary witch*. She chewed her lower lip, rejecting the declaration. "A witch?" Her voice rose with disbelief as she stared at the journal's shimmering words. Her laugh was sharp and hollow. "I'm a divorced forty-year-old woman living in a townhouse, not some mystical being guarding a castle. Witches belong in fairytales."

Yet what if it were true? A witch? Her? She laughed, a dry, incredulous sound that filled the silent room. "Okay, this was definitely a joke." She'd lived her whole life grounded in reality, in numbers, logic, and the comfort of proven facts. Witches were characters in stories, in fantasies, not ... family. She'd locked her imagination away the day she started college, trading daydreams for deadlines and make believe for financial statements.

The words *ancient magic* jumped out at her. She shook her head in denial. She said them aloud, as though tasting the foreign words. A faint thrill ran through her, mingling with a surge of skepticism. Her practical side rebelled—she was Seraphina Blackthorn, an ex-accountant from Boston, not some spell-casting, mystical protector. And yet, another part of her, long buried and almost forgotten, responded to the words as if they were an answer to questions she hadn't known existed deep within her.

"I should toss this book in the garbage and get on with planning the rest of my life." She groaned. "What life?" Drawn almost against her will, she traced a golden sentence and, holding her breath, she continued to read.

I, Elowen Blackthorn, bear the title Guardian of the Moondragon—a role held with pride, humility, and an unbreakable resolve to protect the magic within our veins. This journal is more than mere pages; it is a vessel for our ancestors' magic, their triumphs, fears, sorrows, and joys. But above all, it holds their dreams, woven into this sacred book to guide, protect, and empower you, the next Guardian.

Today, I pass to you the title of Guardian of the Moondragon, a birthright and sacred responsibility. You, my granddaughter, are more than worthy. Your courage cannot be taught, and your spirit is as fierce as our family's love. Each stone on the cover, borne by the Guardians before you, holds their strength and wisdom. May these stones be a well of strength in times of need and a reminder of the indomitable spirit that dwells within you.

This power is meant to be wielded with honor, compassion, and the knowledge that you are never alone. Shadows move within our world, and I fear they will break free. The time approaches for the true Guardian to stand, or all will be lost.

As the words pulsed on the page, the air in her lungs left with an audible whoosh. Sera's heart thudded in response. What shadows? Breathing shallowly, she continued to read.

My heart aches for the burden you bear, but I know you alone are capable. You are our only hope, and my pride in you is boundless.

Remember, once accepted, this legacy cannot be undone. It is a vow, a bond, tying you to the protection of our realm and to the Guardians who came before.

The final line shimmered, golden and steady: *Do you, Seraphina Blackthorn, accept the title of Guardian of the Moondragon, with all the honor, power, and sacrifice it entails?*

Sera leaned back and chewed her lower lip. “Guardian of the Moondragon? What does this even mean?” she whispered as she reread the words, half-hoping they’d change. But they remained, golden and shimmering, waiting for her to accept a reality she couldn’t quite grasp.

The question shimmered before her, as unyielding as fate.

Sera’s breath caught. Her gaze jumped from one word to another.

Legacy? Shadows? Sacrifice?

Grandmother? She fingered the afghan beneath her. She’d grown up believing she had no other living family except her mother.

Needing a moment to think and absorb everything, she set the journal back on the table.

The words on the page stirred something deep within her. Logic told her to laugh it off, wait for someone to own up to the best prank of the year, yet a long-buried part of her—a part that used to dream—ached to believe. She ran her fingers over the smooth page, feeling the weight of the words sinking in. Was this real? Could it be? She closed one hand around her crystal. It pulsed, throbbing in sync with her heartbeat—low and insistent, like it *wanted something from her*. Like the journal was somehow alive.

Accept your birthright, your legacy. She tapped her front teeth with one nail as the words popped into and out of her mind.

Shadows threaten our world ... True Guardian to step forward ...

Sera swallowed hard, her hands trembling as she closed the cover, studied the leather design, and admired the stones nestled on its surface. Leaning forward, she touched each one, gasping as they glowed faintly, their warmth radiating a soft hum that sent a thrill up her arm, leaving her feeling breathless.

“Witches? Magic? Legacies?” Sera muttered. “Nope. Not real.”

Yet, as she opened the journal again and the shimmering words refused to fade, her doubts wavered. Accepting this would mean accepting all of it: magic, realms, quests—things from fantasy fiction. But what if it were true? She had always craved more—more than spreadsheets and safe choices. Once, she’d dreamed of being the hero in her own fairytale, before her mother’s sharp words chased those dreams into silence.

Some part of her, long buried under practicality and logic, still wanted to believe. She pressed her palms against her knees, her mind spinning, her gaze held by the shimmering words: *Guardian of the Moondragon*. It was absurd, impossible. There was nothing special about her. In fact, her life had crumbled—from a prestigious VP position to an out-of-work divorcee. How could she be some heroine or Guardian of ancient worlds? Yet there it was, a formal, elegant document, as legally binding as her divorce decree.

The page opposite shivered. Her eyes widened and her jaw dropped when the golden quill rose from the page, its sharpened tip glowing faintly as it etched the final question, unyielding and eternal.

Do you accept?

The room seemed to hold its breath. Sera swallowed hard, her pulse hammering in her ears as she sat back and drew her knees to her chest. The weight of the words settled over her as a feeling of destiny took hold. The ending lines echoed in her mind, unshakable:

Once accepted, the legacy cannot be undone. Do you accept?

Sera didn't move. Not yet. But something inside her already had.