

Amber Shadows
and the
Missing Wands

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*I dedicate this book with love to my children,
my mother and father, and all those who have
given me moral support and encouragement
throughout the years*

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Warning!

My dear children, in *Magia* there are two types of magic—Dark Magic and White Magic. I shall not preach as to which is which; it would be most insulting to your intelligence, and you would most likely put this book down out of boredom. That being said, I must point out the following about the story you are about to read. In *Magia* things are not always as they should be. Terrible things happen that are not of our choosing . . . *things* that sometimes befall us against our will, causing loss and suffering.

If you are expecting to read a story about a medieval princess, forced to marry a Dark wizard more than twice her age, or missionary knights setting off to fight and conquer a monstrous dragon guarding two stolen wands of power and glory, then you would be very much mistaken. Although these stories would be exciting to read, they must be left for another time.

It is a terrible thing to be at such a young age in ones' life, when you find yourself utterly helpless, having your life placed in danger, and living through terrifying situations beyond anything you can possibly imagine. And it is a far worse thing to have to endure the wrath of Dark Magic entities, striving to take what

doesn't belong to them for the sole purpose of revenge, power, greed, and dare I say . . . immortality.

If you find you do not wish to read about the emotional trials and tribulations of a thirteen-year-old White Magic witch-in-training; one that is left in the care of her older sister and brother while her parents are off searching for her grandparents; one who, along with her two best friends, face numerous conjured up beasts and life threatening events managed by the Dark Magic hand of Lady Gondara, then might I suggest you properly place this book back upon the bookshelf, and leave its story for someone else.

As for those of you courageous enough to continue along with Amber and her friends on their magical journey, please keep the following in mind at all times . . . being born a White Magic witch or wizard is *not* all wishes granted, wand power, and magic spells to do our bidding as one might believe.

Chapter One



Privy To The Family Secrets

For several centuries in the forgotten lands of England, a magically hidden town populated by White Magic witches and wizards, battled Dark Magic. This town was called Magia and its inhabitants were known as Magians. You cannot travel to this place, seeing as its existence is not visible on any map. However, you *can* travel there by way of imagination.

Let me take you back twenty-five years, nearly as far back as the creation of Magia, when the Magians were up in wands and

magic spells. White Magic witches, wizards, faerie folk, and dwarves rotated in shifts, protecting their homes, magical treasurers they may have possessed, and most importantly their families and family secrets. One White Magic family in particular, hid two of the most wanted secrets of the age. Their name was the Shadows family. Those practicing Dark Magic sought and terrorized the Shadows family more so than any other family in Magia.

Oliver Shadows stood six-foot-one, had blondish-gray hair, hazel eyes, and a striking, angular face. He worked at the Magia Law Offices of Magical Offenses in Downtown Magia. It was his job to represent White Magic witches and wizards who misused their magical abilities for crime.

His wife Anna Shadows was the love of his life. She had elfish ears, emerald eyes, and long, dark red hair surrounding her egg-shaped face. During the first year of their marriage, she was a well-known author who took on the position of assistant editor-in-chief at the *Magia Chronicle*. It was her job to proofread submitted articles, and approve the final typeset layout for the paper before sending it to the printer. Although she was twenty-three years younger than her husband, one would never know the age difference by the way they harmoniously got along. And when she looked at him, you could see the passionate adoration she felt for the man she was in love with. Their love affair was one most could only dream of.

For the last eighteen years, the Shadows hid two secrets in their

attic, secrets they hoped their three children would never need to find. And it was these two secrets that led to another secret hidden within the eldest rings of wood, just beyond their back yard. Neither they nor their children were privy to this mysterious secret. However, it was these three secrets that were interlaced by the same quill, and would unfold a whole series of dangerous events.

The Shadows lived on a hidden hill within walking distance from town in a hundred-year-old house. The gray shingles on the roof were still in unbelievably good condition, yet the white siding was peeling, in dire need of a paint job. Torn and worn screens on the windows needed replacing (seeing as they were as old as the house), most of the windows were yellowing, and yet each was still in usable condition, all except for the bedroom window of the youngest Shadows sibling, Amber.

If you looked at her bedroom window, you could see in the bottom right-hand corner a mouse-sized hole stuffed with a towel to block out the cold weather. This made the cold somewhat difficult to keep out in winter and the unbearable heat difficult to keep out in summer months. Whenever the Shadows children complained it was too hot to sleep, Mr. and Mrs. Shadows told their children they could only afford to run one air conditioning unit from the living room, and nothing more could be done or said about it. However, this past summer Mr. and Mrs. Shadows weren't home to remind them of this fact. In fact, they hadn't been home since Halloween of the previous year.

It was the twenty-sixth of October when Mr. and Mrs. Shadows

decided to search for Anna Shadow's parents, the Chessmans. On the day they left their three children, Oliver and Anna Shadows instructed their children to never go off searching for them, as it was too dangerous, to attend school as if all were normal at home, and to stay together no matter the amount of time it took for them to return home.

At the time, the Shadows hadn't expected to be away from their children longer than a week. However, hours turned into days, days turned into weeks, and weeks turned into months as the three Shadows children went about their business, acting as though nothing were wrong.

As each day passed, it was getting more and more difficult to pretend all was normal. In fact, it was anything but normal. Each felt abandoned in his or her own way; internally dealing with the anxiety of having parents away for so long, and the possibility that they may even be dead. Yet, the children did as they were told and each privately prayed their parents would soon be home, safe and sound, along with their grandparents.

Crystal Shadows was the eldest child at age eighteen. She wore her dark red hair short and sassy, and had flashy emerald eyes. Most everyone who befriended her labeled her a control freak. However, if you asked her how she portrayed herself, Crystal would simply say she saw herself as being responsible. And she most certainly was.

Mr. and Mrs. Shadows put Crystal in charge of her younger siblings and the household until such time as their return. In

addition to her responsibilities, she was a full-time senior student at Candlebury High during the weekdays, and a full-time student in her sixth and final year at Magia Sessions for White Magic Witches and Wizards. Seeing as Magia Sessions were only on the weekends (Friday nights and Saturdays), students were in session year-round. It was this hectic schedule that preoccupied Crystal's time and thoughts, and long days became a little more bearable when she found herself overwhelmed and missing her family.

Willow Shadows was the second eldest at age sixteen. He wore his blondish hair in an Einstein fashion and had the same flashy emerald eyes as his sisters. If you asked him why he was so antisocial, it would go in one ear and out the other. Now, if you were discussing potions and alchemist theories with him, you would have his undivided attention. However, you would stand the risk of not getting a word-in-edgewise. For you see, potions and alchemist theories were his passion ever since he was thirteen years old. These days, it was common to see him with his nose buried in books, notes, and experiments more than usual. He, too, attended Candlebury High, where he was a junior, and Magia Sessions, in which he was in his fifth year.

The youngest Shadows member was thirteen-year-old Amber. She had the same flashy emerald eyes as her sister and brother, and long, dark red hair, as nearly all the Shadows women throughout the centuries before her. She was uniquely talented in White Magic spells and very singular when it came to her intellectual knowledge of the magical world. She could figure out how to reverse spells

quicker than her sister and brother, who had been attending Magia Sessions since the age of thirteen. This, among her other unexplainable talents, sometimes provoked jealousy from her brother and sister. And it was this jealousy that sometimes brought on petty squabbles, ending in all three snubbing each other for hours at a time.

As for Amber, she thought she was quite brilliant and clever as far as White Magic witches go, thank you very much! She had no clue as to anything extraordinarily brilliant blossoming within her persona as she grew older. Yet, her parents, and all the head faeries living in the faerie realms of the Bewitched Forest, were privy to just how extraordinarily brilliant she was about to become in her White Magic abilities, ever since the day she was born. Unfortunately for Amber, the Dark Sorceress was aware of her uniqueness too. And it was only a matter of time before Amber found out for herself, and would be forced to call upon her unknown endowment.

These days, you could tell that everyone appeared to have been consumed in befuddlement as to the mystery of the survival of the Dark Sorceress, Lady Gondara. Even more obvious than usual was the mystery of Lady Gondara's hatred for the Shadows family. Amber, too, was caught up in the curious dilemma. She read about the events that took place over the centuries several times, trying to figure out what everyone else couldn't: the reasons the Dark Sorceress continually fought and tortured the Shadows women—the spells she used to survive, and theories of magical spells experts believed she

may have used to cheat death, time and time again.

However, reading biography books only made Gondara's survival more of a mystery to Amber and aroused her curiosity. The only thing she managed to memorize without effort (seeing as envisioning it stained her memory) was Lady Gondara's appearance. The Dark Sorceress had gaunt reptilian skin from several regenerations. Her face now appeared to resemble a serpent, her eyes were outlined in black and purple hues, and dark green and purple attire draped over her deformed body. Her hair was wild and blackish-gray, and her fingertips were sharp; resembling long, narrow daggers. And no matter how many times Amber tried to forget the horrible image of Lady Gondara, she simply couldn't.

Thinking back, Amber remembered a dozen times over the past year she found herself eavesdropping on her sister and brother when they were discussing the Dark Sorceress. Yet, she was under the impression (by the bits and pieces she could hear) that they were talking of Lady Gondara's legend, *not* her existence. But perhaps the one thing Amber couldn't stop contemplating the most, was the possibility of Lady Gondara having something to do with her parents and grandparents' disappearances. In fact, it made perfect sense to Amber, but how could she prove it? And if she could, how in the world could she save them before it was too late? Then an even worse thought occurred to her . . . *what if she was too late?*

On the stormy Thursday afternoon our story begins, Amber Shadows traipsed up the winding road, leavened with flyaway

crimson and auburn leaves. She hurriedly unlocked number 416 and dashed into its dark entry, escaping the possibility of being struck by lightning. She flicked the light switch on only to find the electricity had gone out, as it always did in terrible storms. She laid her things down on the floor and pulled out a box of matches from the hallway table drawer.

As Amber lit the candle centerpiece just under the mirror above the hall table, she replayed everything in her head that went wrong that day. She had missed her ride home, came home from the Great Hall of Magian White Magic Records empty-handed, and now, here she was standing in the middle of a candlelit living room, drenched to the bone.

She yanked off her muddy gym shoes, and carrying the candle with her, slipped off her drenched pants in the laundry room. All the while she complained to herself (seeing as no one was home yet) about the number of passing cars that splashed her. Grabbing a bath towel from the linen closet, she wrapped it around her body, and headed back into the living room. As Amber entered the room, odd noises occurred in various places throughout the house. Cautiously looking about the room, she picked up and examined her school things miserably. “Crystal? Willow? Anyone home?” she called out into the surrounding darkness. No one answered. Amber lit the pillar candle center on the coffee table and looked about the room, calling out again in a braver-than-she-felt voice. “Hello? Anyone home?” Again, no one answered. All the rooms except the living room remained utterly dark.

She continued gathering her wet books and notes, still uncertain if she was alone in the house. Perhaps her mind was playing tricks on her. Yes, of course, that had to be it. The imagination can create something out of nothing, especially when you find yourself alone in a dark house, during a storm. What else could it be? Of course she wasn't truly alone; Zappy the family cat was somewhere in the house. Perhaps he was the one making the odd noises. Possibly he was chasing a mouse; then again, what if it wasn't Zappy?

Amber shook herself and muttered, "Stop it, Amber! You're acting like a child afraid of the dark."

She inhaled and exhaled deeply, turned on her heel, and headed to the fireplace hearth. A trail of water plopped on the wood floor in a zigzag pattern behind her, enticing Zappy, who was hidden under the coffee table. He followed behind, playfully pawing at the plops before they hit the floor. Then his paw accidentally brushed the back of Amber's heels, startling her.

A few papers floated to the floor as Amber stopped dead in her tracks. Her eyes widened in fear over what had brushed her heels. Jerking around quickly, she stepped on Zappy's front paws, not expecting the feline to be there. He let out a nasty meow and flattened his ears as a few drops of water plopped directly on his head.

Instantaneously, the long-haired black and white feline leapt onto the couch, and settled with his back turned to Amber. He began an hour-long licking ritual, starting with his forehead.

Amber picked up her things with a sigh of relief—it was only

the cat. She watched the feline in the candlelight for a short spell and called to him, wanting to explain her stepping on his paws was an accident. “Zappy . . . here kitty, kitty. . . .”

He refused to acknowledge her and continued his feline ritual.

“I didn’t mean to step on your paws . . . I didn’t see you.”

Zappy stopped licking his leg for a second, repositioned himself, and continued his bathing ritual.

“Oh, never mind. I’ve a more important problem to attend to. These things are never going to dry. I might as well have thrown them in the river, for as long as it’s going to take to dry them.”

Using the hairdryer would have been one way to dry her things; however, there was no electricity, so Amber thought it best to lay out her books and notes on the hearth and floor, letting everything dry at the same time. She gathered wood, paper, and kindling, opened the glass doors, and struck a match. It was only a matter of minutes before the room became toasty warm. The old fireplace always did put out a good amount of inviting heat, thought Amber. She shook and wiped the excess rain from each book and numerous papers, then laid them every place possible near the hearth. By the time Amber was finished laying everything out to dry, it looked as though she’d wallpapered half the living room.

Satisfied that the fireplace would dry her things in no time, Amber picked up the candle and headed to her room, mindful of her steps. Clothes flew through the air as she rummaged through her dresser for a pair of sweats. She dried her hair and focused her thoughts on her thin reflection in the mirror, debating on whether

or not she should have her hair cut short like her sister. The only problem she could foresee was that everyone would make comments on how much she resembled her sister. This in itself convinced Amber it would be a major mistake. She was quite content being her own unique person. And the idea of resembling her sister anymore than she already did, made her toss the haircut idea straight out the window, and get dressed without giving it a second thought.

Amber tossed the damp towel into the hamper, gathered her hair into a ponytail, and then stretched her arm muscles as high as she could. Settling her hands on her hips, she decided she needed something . . . something to help her forget the dreadful day. Now that she was feeling a bit more comfortable, she made her way by candlelight into the kitchen to make a glass of chocolate milk. On the dining room table sat a plate of ghost-shaped brownies and Halloween biscuits shaped like cauldrons and broomsticks. Several bites later, her frustration was down to a fraction of what it was when she first walked through the door.

As flickering shadows from the fireplace danced on the beaded-board dining room walls, Amber sat in serious befuddlement as to where her jean backpack was. She had to find it, her Magia assignment guidelines were in there. After a quick search, Amber found it tossed in the corner of the dining room, behind a chair, under the cauldron wall clock. No wonder she couldn't find it this morning. Looking at it was only a painstaking reminder of how she waited until now, two nights before her essay was due, to do her

Magia assignment. And not having her assignment turned in on time would certainly get her into loads of trouble.

This was Amber's first year attending Magia Sessions for White Magic Witches and Wizards. It was truly an exhausting and exciting schedule she managed. And although she found it rather difficult juggling two different schools, she maintained a B average in seventh grade at Candlebury junior high, and an A average in Magia Sessions. Of course, there were times when she found herself daydreaming of going off on quests to find her family. This always seemed to happen in the middle of studying, and she would lose all track of time. She would then have to race through her homework and hope she'd pass the test given the next day.

Then there were the daydreams of her coming home one day to find her parents safe and sound. These daydreams filled her muse more often than naught these days. She simply couldn't help it; she missed her parents. Unfortunately, for Amber this daydream had been nothing more than just that—a daydream. Every day she got up early and stared out the living room window before school, praying for her family's return. And every night, when it was quite clear they were not coming home, Amber buried her intellect in homework.

The silence of the house was almost deafening. The only sound Amber could hear was the crackling of the fireplace, and the ticking of the grandfather clock in the hallway. At first, she sat calmly. Then, as the minutes passed, she grew annoyed at the clock's echo. She began tapping her fingers on the table in

subconscious synchronicity with its ticking, wishing the clock had no sound at all.

As Amber sat thinking of how her efforts to find information for her assignment ended vainly, the ticking of the clock gradually faded. She couldn't get over how she had just wasted two hours researching her family history. Most descriptions were too vague or had nothing written beneath their pictures. And other relatives she'd known since she was born weren't even mentioned. There had to be some documented information on someone, somewhere, but where? And what if there wasn't any information to use? Would her professor excuse her from the assignment?

Amber tossed the last bit of biscuit and grabbed her backpack. Fumbling around for some writing materials, she pulled out three leaves, an almost empty bottle of ink, and a black feather quill. Creative thoughts spun around in her intellect as she attempted to pen details of a relative who lived ages ago.

“Let's see now . . . it should be a woman . . . no, a man . . . no, definitely a woman . . . and she has to have extraordinary powers in healing.” Her concentration abruptly broke from crumbs smashing beneath the parchment as she pressed the quill to write. Amber looked at the leaf stained with baking grease and rolled her eyes. “Oh, well, guess I can rewrite this once I'm finished.” She quickly lifted the leaf, shaking her head in a bothered state as she dusted the crumbs from the table onto the floor.

Just as Amber was about to continue penning her muse, a place she hadn't thought of came to mind.

“Of course, why didn’t I think of it before?” Amber muttered, turning around and staring into the dark hallway behind her. “Mom and Dad’s room!” That’s where she’d find the information needed; she was certain of it. The only problem was she had been warned to never go into her parents’ room without permission. And Crystal wasn’t home to ask permission.

Just then, Zappy rubbed against Amber’s leg, purring romantically. He seemed to have gotten over Ambers’ drowning him with drops of water earlier. One thing she loved about this feline was the fact that he always purred to distract her when she came home from school in a disgruntled manner. No matter how awful the day may have been, this display of affection soothed her nerves, and always made her feel better. She bent down to pet his arched back.

The grandfather clock bonged 5:30, drawing Amber’s attention to the fact that her sister and brother were not home as of yet. She’d never known them to be home later than 4:30. Then again, midterm finals were coming up in Magia classes, and most likely, her siblings stopped off to study at a friends’ house, or went to the school library to do research. Yes, one of those two reasons had to be it.

Even though Amber appeased herself with these conclusions in mind, it was times like these she wished her family had a telephone. But no matter, there were more important issues to deal with, like getting her assignment written before Saturday afternoon. Pushing her worries to the back of her mind, she shifted

her thoughts back to the problem at hand.

“Maybe Mom has books of family history tucked away in her bedroom closet,” Amber said to Zappy, who had just lain across her feet, playfully attacking her toes. “She’d never know I looked in them, so it should be all right. What say you, Zappy . . . should I have a look?” Amber stopped scratching Zappy and stood with candle in hand. She was about to head toward her parent’s room, when at that precise moment, Zappy did something extraordinary. For you see, Zappy was not a normal house feline. He was ancient in years, had a glistening wizard birthmark on his chest, and was magically endowed.

Vaporizing into wizard form, he bowed and said respectfully, “If there’s anything I can do to help Mistress—”

“Thank you, Zapphorya,” she said appreciatively. She always addressed him by his full given name whenever he appeared in wizard form, “but I’ll have to sneak a peek into Mom’s room for family history if I’m to finish this report for Whittlesworth. Otherwise, *I’ll* be history in his class. Crystal or Willow must never know either, so please, *please* don’t breathe a word of this to them, okay?”

Zapphorya nodded.

“Speaking of which, don’t you think it a bit strange they’re not home yet?”

“Yes, it does seem a bit unusual for them,” he replied. “Perhaps they stopped off at a friends’ house to study?”

“That’s what I thought for a bit,” said Amber, “but then why

wouldn't they send me a message of some sort telling me what time to expect them home? There've been loads of rumors floating around school that Lady Gondara has been lurking about. Not that it makes me worry . . . but . . . it *does, make* me worry. And it would be a bit of help to know *where* to look for the information I need for this assignment."

"I am quite certain they are fine, Mistress. Pertaining to your dilemma, what is your assignment about?"

"I have to write about someone in our family who led an extraordinary life as a White Magic witch or wizard. So far, I've come up with nothing. There was no info on the relatives I thought would be perfect to write about. At least not at the Great Hall of Magian White Magic Records, for that matter, not that there were many, but I needed at least *one*."

Zapphorya cleared his throat and eyed his cat claws. Even though he was in wizard form, there were still two characteristics that remained feline. His cat eyes were one, and the other was his fingernails, which still resembled cat claws.

"I happen to know of a place where two secrets are hidden, secrets you may find indubitably helpful in writing your assignment, Mistress."

"Secrets, huh . . ." Amber furrowed her brow in curiosity. "What secrets?"

"I am sworn to uphold their secrecy," Zapphorya said curtly. Shifting his catlike eyes from side to side, he gestured for Amber to come closer. "If they ever found out I broke my promise and

revealed the secrets, they'd magically take my nine lives away."

"*Zapphorya* . . . spill it," Amber said, folding her arms. "You know you're bursting to tell someone, so it might as well be *me*."

Zapphorya shook his head as though he shouldn't have opened his mouth.

"I promise not to tell anyone these secrets you speak of. So c'mon and tip the catnip out of the bag. *What* secrets?"