

SHADOW LANDS



EMILY

A COVEN BOOK

LISA BENJAMIN

COVEN

Emily

Lisa Benjamin

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Series Editor: Holly Melton

Editors: KC Moore, Steve Shea, Elly Rabben

Designer: Deborah Anker

Cover Design and Illustration: Kirk DouPonce/DogEared Design

Interior Illustrations: Kevin@KJA-Artists

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Deep in the Dark Forest, near Hidden Falls, there is a group of witches.

They meet to practice magic. They meet to get stronger. They meet to stay safe—and to keep others safe.

*Jane. Grady. James. Tamsin. Emily.
They are the Coven.*

The Coven knows that the Dark Ones are out there. The Dark Ones are witches, too. They want power—and they will kill to get it.

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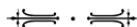
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CHAPTER 1

Birthday

I didn't ask to be a witch. I didn't know I was a witch. That is, until I turned 12.

My name is Emily, and this is my story.



It was the day before I turned 12, and I was walking home from school. When I got home, I checked the mailbox. There was something in it. It was a box, covered in red paper.

*Maybe it's a birthday present, I thought.
Maybe it's from David!*

I took it out of the mailbox. It *was* a present! My name was on it, with a note. The note said, *Open on your 12th birthday.*

The present wasn't from David, though. I know my brother's writing. David writes fast, like he's in a hurry. This writing was careful.

I took the present into the house.

My mom was home. I could hear her in the kitchen. I was going to show her the present.

Then I got a really funny feeling. It was like there was a voice in my head. *Don't show your mother*, it said.

Why not? I thought.

All of a sudden the present got very hot. It started to burn me! I tried to let go of it, but the red paper stuck to my hands.

Don't show your mother, the voice said again.

I decided not to show my mom the present. As soon as I decided that, it stopped burning me.



All of a sudden the present got very hot.

It started to burn me!

I took the present upstairs to my room. I was a little scared of it. I hid it under my bed.

I went downstairs to the kitchen. "Hi, Mom!" I said. I gave her a hug. "It's almost my birthday!"

"Really?" Mom asked. "I mean, that's nice!" she said. She had a funny look on her face.

I should tell you about my mom. She always gets weird this time of year.

Mom *tries* to make my birthdays fun. Last year, she was going to take me shopping for my birthday. In the morning, I got dressed to go. I went downstairs, but she wasn't home. She forgot all about the shopping plan.

Then there are the presents. One year Mom gave me a sock. Not a *pair* of socks, just *one* sock.

Another year Mom gave me a pet rat. I hate rats. Mom knows that, but she seemed to forget.

The birthday cakes are always weird, too. Last year my cake looked like a dead fish. Mom didn't want it to look like that. It just turned out that way. "Isn't that funny!" she said in a surprised voice.

It's not that Mom *wants* me to have a bad birthday. It's like something is in her head, mixing things up.

So I'm used to Mom being weird on my birthday. Until this year, I was used to another thing. My big brother, David, was always home to make it better.

David always took me to a fun place on my birthday. Last year we went to a water park. It was great!

It's different now. David moved away to go to college. So did his friend Lilly. I

liked her, too. Now it's just Mom and me at home. Not much of a family.

Where's my father, you ask? He's been gone for years. He left the day I was born. He just walked out of the house and never came back.

Maybe that's why Mom always acts weird on my birthday. Maybe she just can't forget the bad things that happened the day I was born.



Anyway, it was hard to get to sleep the night before I turned 12. I was thinking about my birthday. There was also that weird present. It was still under my bed.

I got to sleep at last, but I woke up in the middle of the night. The stars above me were so bright!

Wait, I thought. Why are there stars above

me? I'm in my bedroom! So how can I see the sky at all?

I looked around. I wasn't in my bedroom.
I wasn't in my house at all.

I was in the middle of a forest.

CHAPTER 2

The Coven

One minute I was in my bed. The next minute I was in the forest.

I wasn't alone. Two boys and two girls were standing around me in a circle. They were saying weird words together. The words didn't sound like real words.

They stopped saying the weird words. They looked happy to see me.

"Hi," said one of the girls. "I'm Jane."

"I'm Emily," I said.

"Yes, we know," Jane said.

Jane had purple hair and a nose ring. She acted like she was the leader of the group.

There was a tall boy next to Jane. "I'm Grady," he said.

Grady and Jane looked about 18. The other boy and girl looked about 15. They had dark red hair, and the boy wore glasses.

"I'm James," the boy said, "and this is my sister, Tamsin."

"We're twins," said Tamsin.

"Hi," I said. I thought, *Why am I here?*

"We brought you here," Jane said.

It was like she could hear me think!

"You're one of us," Grady said.

"One of *you*?" I asked. "What does that mean?"

Jane looked around the group. "We're witches, Emily," she said. "And you're a witch, too."

Just then something moved in the trees. It was a bear! The bear ran toward James.

Then the bear saw me. It stopped. It got bigger and bigger. Its eyes turned yellow and started to glow.



Then the bear saw me. It stopped.

It got bigger and bigger.

The bear was huge and scary. It looked like it wanted to hurt me. I yelled really loudly. I had heard you should do that if you saw a bear. I had heard it would make the bear run away.

The bear didn't run away. It growled and took a step toward me.

James stepped in front of me. "It's OK, Bear," he said. "Emily won't hurt us. She's one of us."

The bear got smaller. It looked like a normal bear again. James gave the bear a pat.

Tamsin said, "Bear is our friend, Emily. He lives with us."

"Um ... OK," I said. I was still scared!

Jane said, "We know this is all very surprising, Emily. But we are witches, and so are you. We want you to join our coven."

"What's a coven?" I asked.

"It's a group of witches," Grady answered.

“We do spells together. We did a spell to get you here.”

“How can I be a witch?” I asked. “I can’t do spells.”

“You can, but you need a token,” Jane said.

“What’s a token?” I asked.

“A token helps us do magic,” said Grady. He took a gold coin out of his pocket. “This is my token.”

Jane held up her hand and showed me her gold ring. “This is my token,” she said.

“If I’m a witch, then where’s my token?” I asked.

“You’ll get it when you turn 12. You’ll find it, or it will find you,” said Grady.

I thought about that weird present under my bed. Before I could say anything, Jane said, “Tokens are passed down through families.”

"That means your mother or your father is a witch," said Tamsin.

Jane looked up at the sky. "It's late. We need to send you home."

"Come back when you have your token," said James. "Then you can join the Coven."

The Coven got in a circle around me. They said a spell together. A minute later, I was home in bed.

CHAPTER 3

The Present

The next morning, when I woke up, I thought, *Today is my birthday. I don't feel any older.*

I looked down at my feet. They were covered in dirt. *It wasn't a dream*, I thought. *I was in the forest last night!*

Then I heard my mother calling. "Emily! Can you come downstairs?"

I ran downstairs. Mom was in the kitchen fixing breakfast. She was moving around the room, singing a funny song.

Tamsin said my mother or my father is a witch, I thought. *Could it be my mother?*

Mom smiled at me. "Look, Emily, I made you a birthday breakfast!" she said.

She set my plate down on the table.

I stared at the plate. Mom *had* made me breakfast. It was too bad that she forgot to cook it! There were wet eggs that looked like yellow soup. They were covered in smelly brown dog food.

“Um, thanks, Mom,” I said.

Somehow I didn’t think a witch would make a breakfast like that.

Mom smiled and said, “I hope you like it! I have to go to the office now.”

“But Mom, it’s the weekend!” I said. “I thought we could do something fun for my birthday.”

Mom gave me a hug. “I’m sorry, Emily,” she said. “I forgot to finish a report for work.”

She picked up her keys and rushed toward the door. “We’ll do something fun next year,” she said.

The door slammed and she was gone.

I looked around the empty house.

Another normal birthday, I thought.

I looked back at my smelly plate. I was not going to eat wet eggs and dog food for breakfast. I got a glass of milk and went upstairs to my room.

I thought of the present under my bed. I took it out. *Open on your 12th birthday*, it said.

I ripped off the red paper.

Inside was a plain wooden box. I couldn't figure out how to open it. I pushed on the top and I pushed on the sides. It didn't open.

I was starting to get mad. I laid my hand flat on the top of the box. *OPEN!* I thought.

The top of the box slid open. It was as if the box could hear me.

Inside there was a man's gold watch. It looked old. Next to the gold watch was a photo. There were three people in the photo.

My mother was in the photo, but she

was much younger. She was holding the hand of a little boy.

That boy looks just like David did when he was little. I thought. *That must be him.*

There was a man in the photo, too. He had his arm around my mother. I studied his face. He looked a little bit like David.

That man must be my father! I thought. I had never seen a picture of him. Mom threw away all the pictures of him when he left us.

My father had a gold watch on in the picture. It was the same gold watch that was in the box.

I took the watch out of the box and put it on. It got hotter and hotter against my skin. Sparks shot out of the watch! The watch was burning me!

I tried to pull the watch off, but I couldn't. The harder I pulled, the tighter the watch got. It felt like my arm was on fire!



*Sparks shot out of the watch!
The watch was burning me!*

Then the sparks stopped shooting out of the watch. The burning pain stopped, too. I pulled at the watch again. This time it came off.

There was a dark burn mark on my skin. It was in the shape of the watch. Then, in only a few seconds, it turned into a light scar.

I stared at my father's gold watch. He had given it to me the day I turned 12.

This must be my token, I thought. My father is a witch—and so am I!