

# THE Shape Shifters



CHAPTER 7

## The Enemy

Colin sat, glad to regain support underneath him. The sounds around him suddenly became quiet again. Within the next moment, as if to prove themselves, the entire family stood and transformed. Five white mists stood before him. Where their eyes would be, yellow radiance stood out. Colin could not speak. He couldn't even blink. They were beautiful. Their center was a brilliant white that faded slowly as the brightness reached their extremities. All together, the white just blended from one person to the next, and they were all uniform.

In the blink of an eye, they separated, becoming five beings in mist form. Colin had no idea what to think. He just watched and sat frozen, unable to even react. They all became themselves once again.

Jenna was first to speak, "Don't be afraid."

"I'm not," Colin replied. Jenna put her hand on Colin's shoulder, facing him, searching his face to see if he was telling the truth.

"We are never able to tell anyone, but you saw what I did the other day. I had no intention of showing you anything. There has always been a risk for me to have friends because of what I can do."

Colin gulped, thinking he may regret asking. "What can you do?"

Jenna smiled. "A lot," she answered. "I can disappear, I can cloak someone to protect them, I can heal wounds, I can...scare away things..." She looked out the window to the forest from where they ran back from just a few days ago.

Lucas chimed in, "We all can do that. We all have these abilities to protect people by keeping bad things from happening to them. If someone is sick, or hurt, or is about to be hurt, we can provide a buffer to make bad things go away. Or we can try to."

Colin sucked in a deep breath. He felt nervous at all the new information.

Jenna spoke up. "We protect because that is who we are. We keep cars from crashing, thieves from stealing, and dogs from attacking. We keep evil from happening." She paused, "No one sees us. We can make the color of our mist dim so people don't see us. We try to keep evil from happening when it is causing problems."

"Evil, huh? You think it is evil that causes problems?" Colin asked, jokingly almost. He only knew that people could cause problems. Case and point, his own mother.

"Yes, evil. You can't see it, but it's there. It's not little ghosts and creepy noises. No," Lucas informed.

"It's families that fight and hurt their

children. It's people who hurt others. It's lying and the damage it causes. It's moms leaving their children," Mrs. Hartsook said. She looked right into Colin's eyes with her yellow-blue hued ones. Colin shivered a little.

"It is the sorrow on the earth that causes men and women, boys and girls, to do wrong things to others. That is evil. That is the enemy," she continued.

But how could they protect? Colin wondered, but not aloud. He stood up. He wanted to understand, but it was just too weird for him. He walked to the door, ready to leave. The words from Mrs. Hartsook were strong in his mind as he silently left the group. "It's moms leaving their children," he heard in his mind. He didn't care anymore about the explanation of Jenna. He wanted out. He had to process it all, to get some fresh air.

He ran out of the front door, even though the family tried to call out for him. He ran down the road to get away. Far away. Why did nothing ever make sense? He passed by the trees that lined the side. There weren't any neighbors close by, so he'd have to run until he found a house so he could call G'ma.

Just then, it whizzed by. A white mist. Cold. Angry. Colin stopped walking. He couldn't move. The mist, another shape-shifter, stood facing Colin with glaring red eyes. "Surely not..." he said aloud.

Colin, finding his feet, began running away from the shifter. It felt like a dream. He ran, but his feet felt heavy and the pace felt so slow. The frigid mist made Colin feel a sense of desperation. He felt the frosty chill as it gained on him. It was so freezing cold that it made him shutter at the thought of sensing it again. But then it came closer and Colin knew the shifter was at his heels. He tried running harder, but the shifter still seemed to gain on him.

He felt the icy mist become hands on his torso, and within two seconds, his body was lifted into the air and roughly tossed to the side of the road. He kept his eyes open so he wouldn't miss a thing. There it was: a mist, not as bright as the Hartsook's had become, and with red, gleaming eyes that Colin knew was evil. It looked ready to charge at him.

"It is you!" Colin yelled out, at once afraid he might anger it.

You are part of the blood!! Colin heard the mist in his head. You are part of the blood!! Colin was horrified that this thing actually communicated with him. "Help!! He--"

Colin saw the mist look up, and its red eyes got wide. It saw something and, in an instant, it was gone, as if it was never there. Something scared it away. Colin knew what.

Jenna appeared. "Are you alright? Don't do that ever again," she said. She knelt down next to Colin, grabbing his hand and hugging him.

Colin looked in the direction of where the evil shifter was and then back at Jenna. "Was that...?"

"That was an evil shape-shifter, like the one we saw the other day. They'll be around, because we are here." She hugged Colin tightly.

"The evil mists have red eyes, and they shine not as brightly in daylight. He was after you because now you know. Now you know what we are. He's mad. No one is supposed to know."

Colin was slowly understanding.

"Most times, people have no idea they're around," she continued.

Colin sat and frowned. He couldn't believe it was all happening!

Jenna sat down next to Colin on the ground. "I can never let you go. It's too dangerous. That shifter will be back." She held onto Colin. Colin couldn't speak as they both stayed on the ground, trying to calm down.

Colin felt a rush of sincere gratitude and love for Jenna. She cared for him. He could see it. He'd never seen that look in his mother's eyes. Not once. But, Jenna cared. He melted. He couldn't turn his back on this discovery. Partly

because he knew now it would haunt him forever, but also because he knew there was genuine love to be had.

"I think I get that now. I don't understand everything, but I get that there's more out there, and it will take my life faster than I can think." Colin told Jenna.

"Yes, you're right. And I'm here to protect you. I will take care of you forever," she said.

"Jenna?" Colin asked.

"Yeah?" Jenna rested her head on Colin.

"I am so happy you are mine. My friend. I've never had someone to call my own before." Colin truly meant it.

"I know, Colin. Me too." And they sat hand in hand.

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Colin and Jenna walked through the front door of her house. Colin was ready to face the family once again. No one was in the family room when they both reentered the room, and Colin was worried that they were disappointed in his reaction to their reveal. After his encounter, he was ready to listen, to embrace them and their gifts.

"Hey you two," Colin whipped around to see Lucas coming down the fairly grand staircase.

Colin looked down, but then realized he didn't want to seem ashamed for what he'd done. "Yeah, hey. Sorry about that. About running out. I was just, kind overwhelmed," he said. "I'm ok now. Jenna and I talked it out."

Lucas looked relieved. Colin couldn't tell if he knew anything about the evil shifter, but he wasn't going to offer information about it. Not unless Jenna brought it up first. He was just going to let everyone assume that he and Jenna had just "talked it out."

He understood that the Hartsook family was different, was safe, but more importantly, they were the ones who made bad situations better. They kept people like him safe, something he'd always been, even among the hurt and pain in his life. And now, everything was starting to fall nicely into place.

"Well, good. I know it's hard to know about. No one else knows about us except for an exceptional few. People like you who 'by accident' saw something once – they know about us." Lucas explained.

Colin raised his eyebrows in understanding. Jenna smiled and led Colin to the kitchen where she got him a snack. Colin kept seeing the shifters eyes, his gray-white mist, in his mind. He kept feeling chilly over how cold the mist had been.

"It's gonna be ok. I'm here," Jenna looked at Colin, obviously sensing his worry. Colin relaxed, "I know." He smiled. "It's not something that is so easy to get over, you know? And your family. I don't really want them to know. At least not right now. Too much drama, I think." The Hartsook family knowing about the evil shifter would only uproar everything.

"Yeah, I know. I'm gonna keep that quiet for now. I'm just glad you are kinda getting it. You see that there is good and bad out there, and we are just here to keep it from getting really bad."

Colin smiled, and took a bite out of the sandwich Jenna passed to him on a plate. Everything would be ok. He hoped.

NEXT WEEK ... CHAPTER 8

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