

Chapter One

Death leaves a heartache no one can heal; love
leaves a memory no one can steal.

—From a headstone in Ireland
Schull, August 2009

As Moira picked her way through the cemetery,

no breeze came off the bay to explain the now-familiar, sudden chill despite the stifling heat of the day.

Waiting for Deirdre to catch up, she stopped at an area free of headstones, where the tall grass was matted down, perhaps from some animal – an acceptable spot to enjoy the picnic their younger sister, Nuala, had prepared for them. She unfurled the lightweight quilt she carried, sank down with a sigh, and gave an involuntary shudder. She glanced back at Deirdre, carrying the picnic basket.

Their eyes locked as Deirdre’s eyebrows raised in the unspoken question: again?

“I saw that,” Deirdre said, as she plopped down next to her sister, her linen wrap culottes billowing out around her. “I thought you weren’t working today.”

“I’m not,” Moira returned. “I have no clients at the moment, but I definitely just felt something ...”

“Why pick a cemetery for our picnic spot then, if you weren’t trying to reach someone?”

“I’m drawn to cemeteries. I’d rather come to this church ruin than one where I may run into a vicar. I love the peaceful atmosphere here—well, peaceful when I can’t feel them reaching out to me,” Moira said, as she

took off her sun hat and fanned her face, loose curls falling from her messy bun and sticking to her neck.

“Have you seen anyone yet? Or just had the feeling?”

Deirdre was always curious about the process Moira went through when communicating with ...ghosts? The departed? Spectres? Spirits? She didn't know what to call them, so she just avoided being specific. She practised yoga and meditation, hoping that through being still, shamanic drumming, her special Blue Lotus dreaming tea, or any number of other hoops she jumped through, she'd finally get to meet a departed ancestor, but it hadn't happened yet. In some ways, she was a bit relieved. It just seemed to come so easily to Moira, who referred to these phantom visitors as the Others, as in Otherworldly.

At twenty-four and twenty-five, with only ten months between them, Moira, the middle child of three girls, and Deirdre the eldest, were Irish twins. They shared the same grey-green eyes and auburn hair, though Deirdre's tended more to strawberry blonde. They were also close in friendship, developed over the years as they often sided together against their younger sister, Nuala, who came along five years after Moira and garnered special attention as the baby.

Now, to appear a bit older, Nuala wore her chestnut waves in a soft pageboy. She was forever vying for her sisters' attention and dreamed of being a bigger part of their lives and pursuits. Her passion was cooking, which she indulged in regularly, helping out their mother, Dymphna Gallagher, at Sea Breeze Inn, the family business.

Deirdre remembered the day, ten years ago now, when

she and Moira were teens walking home from school, and the conversation between them that transformed her from being a supportive and protective older sister, to a believer.

“Did you know Nana Brigid had two husbands?”

Moira had said without preamble.

“What? No way. Where did you hear that?”

“Nana told me. She said Da reminded her of her first husband, who died young because of his smoking and drinking.”

Deirdre had stopped in the middle of the road. “Wait. What do you mean? Nana died a few years ago. When did she tell you? And why wasn’t I in on that conversation?”

“She told me recently during one of her visits. Like Julia. Though it’s been quite a while since I’ve seen Julia ...” Moira had a faraway look in her eyes.

Deirdre’s tone brought her back. “You mean it’s real? You can actually see people who’ve died?” For Deirdre, believing that Moira believed in her visions had been enough. If they brought her comfort, what was the harm? But this, this was something else. She had overheard a conversation once between her parents about Da’s more and more frequent visits to the pub. Ma had shouted, “You’re just like Thomas O’Riley! You’ll find yourself in an early grave and me a widow, like my ma, if you keep this up!” At the time, Deirdre was confused, as she knew Ma’s ma was married, not a widow. Deirdre had never told anyone of this eavesdropped conversation, but now it all made sense with Moira’s revelation.

“You believe me, don’t you?” The shy glance Moira

had given her had touched her deeply.

Deirdre had taken her sister's face in her hands, and looked into her eyes, searching for something there that would guide her next words. Then she'd smiled and said, "Of course I believe you. And I think it's amazing!" Moira's body had relaxed and a broad smile lit up her face. Since then, they had not only been sisters and friends, but allies in this amazing adventure of receiving help and guidance from the world beyond.