

EVERY PHOENIX



YEAR

2

BRIGHTEN MAGIC
ACADEMY

REFLECTIONS OF ME

Contents

BLURB

Beginning of a New Cycle

Nightmares and Reconnection

Hidden Misery

Alone Time with A Hint of Advice

Sense of Danger

Date and Troubled Truth

Kindness and Tenderness

Braxton's Insecurities and Winning Bet

Grow Up and Fix It

Loneliness and Make Things Right

Try Again and Fever

Intolerable Bullies and Showdown

Key and Hope Isn't Lost

Nixon's Past

Double Comfort

Challenge as A Team

I Love You and Brighten Elite

Stay Connected

About the Author: Avery Phoenix

Also by Avery Phoenix

Reflections of Me

YEAR TWO

BRIGHTEN MAGIC ACADEMY

AVERY PHOENIX
YUMOYORI WILSON

This is work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents either are the products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, businesses, companies, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

Copyright© Avery Phoenix, 2023

All Rights Reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or used in any manner without the express written permission of the publisher except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

The publisher is not responsible for website (or their content) that are not own by the publisher.

This eBook/Paperback is licensed for your personal enjoyment only. This eBook/Paperback may not be re-sold or given away to other people. If you would like to share this book with another person, please purchase an additional copy for each recipient.

Cover Design by Covers by Juan

Contributions: Yumoyori Wilson

Formatting by: Avery P.

BLURB

*Surviving my first semester at Brighten Magic Academy
wasn't as simple as I thought it would be.*

Being a male was HARD, especially for a girl like me, but who would have thought I'd enjoy the pleasures of being a male, such as learning how to aim my weenie correctly in less than a week?

As adventurous as it all sounds, it led me down a path full of trials and a near-death incident I'd never want to experience again.

After four weeks, two of which I was unconscious and recovering from my wounds, I struggled to regain what I'd forgotten, which left a strain in my friendships; or should I say relationships?

With bullies from Maximus' past returning for round two, Braxton dealing with personal issues he'd rather fight alone, Kage being followed by a mysterious person, and Nixon experiencing nightmares nightly, I had my hands full.

Logan tried his best to keep us from tearing at one another's throats, but with the tension of the next set of classes and with expectations rising higher with each passing day, his attempts only acted to add fuel to the fire.

It's Zane's turn to prove himself and help bring us back together.

But with crazy mage competitions, intense familiar battles, and haunting silver eyes that continued to watch my every move, would we even last long enough to find the real culprit of this game?

Or will we die trying?

Beginning of a New Cycle

“Daddy!” I exclaimed, running into Father’s arms. He laughed with glee before he lifted me up, a wide smile on his face as I pulled back to stare into his red eyes.

“Were you good while I was away, Princess Jewel?” he asked.

“YES! I was very good, and I’ve been trying to read Daddy spells!” I exclaimed happily, feeling proud of myself. Father grinned, but I noticed a glint of worry in his eyes.

I tilted my head as I frowned. “Was I not supposed to?”

“No, no. I love that my Jewel is working so hard.” Father soothed me with his words and pressed a kiss on my forehead.

“YEAH!!! I want to be a Mage warrior like Daddy! I’m going to save people and then eat ice cream.”

Father grinned as he nodded in agreement, but I still didn’t feel reassured that he was proud of me.

I pressed my little hands on his cheeks; his identical eyes held confusion at my gesture. “Daddy, don’t worry. I won’t say anything about the secret,” I reassured him, my voice barely a whisper.

He gave me a sad smile, pressing his forehead against mine and spoke in a hushed voice. “I’m sorry Jewel. I know

you want to tell Mommy and Gabriel, but this has to stay between us. We have to protect special ones like us.”

“Are we weird?” I asked with a sad expression.

“No, sweetheart. We’re just so rare, not everyone wants us to be living,” Father murmured.

I wrapped my arms around his neck to hug him, and he stroked my head comfortably.

“I want to live, Daddy,” I confessed.

“Me too, Jewel. Me too.” Father held me for a long time, continuing the comforting strokes that helped ease my sadness.

I knew we were different, but I didn’t want to leave Mommy and Gabriel over it. We were good. Why did we have to hide something that could help many people?

“When you’re older, I’ll explain everything to you. There’ll be people who will protect us, and you won’t need to hide what we are from anyone anymore.”

I leaned back to meet his proud gaze. “I’ll be able to tell Gabriel and Mommy?”

“Yes. You’ll even be able to tell your Prince.” Father chuckled, rubbing his nose against mine.

“Logan!” I giggled. He smirked as he lifted his hand to brush my cheek.

“I’ll protect you, Jewel. Even when all hope is lost,” Father whispered. I stared into his eyes and smiled.

“Okay, Daddy. I’ll protect you too.”

No one will hurt us for what we truly are.

* * *

“We gather here today to discuss a serious topic that seems to have been ignored over the years at Brighten Magic Academy. The same issues from the past were forgotten or ignored by both students and professors alike. Today, that HAS to stop!” Ms. Landsford exclaimed.

I tried to remain calm as I sat in the front row. I was unsure if this was a good idea, but I knew awareness had to be raised about the bullying issue at Brighten.

I sat in my male form, Logan to my right while Nixon sat to my left. I was grateful for the dark auditorium because I had trouble keeping my nerves at bay until Logan and Nixon held my hands.

The first semester was over and done with and the second semester started with this mandatory meeting and award ceremony.

Four weeks had gone by, two of them spent with me being unconscious and the remaining two was my recovery period. My recovery was generally comprised of strict bed rest and Logan and Nixon arguing every day over who'd feed me the daily soup special at my house.

Though I wasn't back to my usual self, and I was still at risk of seizures, I'd insisted on taking part in the ceremony. I needed to make a point to the student body, professors, and to myself, that I'd ended the cycle. *Or at least initiated the end of something that had been going on even after my brother's senseless death.*

“You all may have heard of the incident that occurred a month ago. A group of students decided it would be fun to

attempt to fly off the tower as proof of strength, or whatever their motives were. Thanks to some brave students who didn't turn a blind eye to the events that were brewing, a catastrophe that had once plagued the school years ago was avoided. However, a few students were still injured as a result, and this entire incident could have become a lot worse." Ms. Lansford's gaze swept the room as she explained

I glanced to my left, noticing Braxton and Kage leaned forward to check on me. I grinned, giving them a reassuring nod before they leaned back in their seats to pay attention to what Ms. Landsford was saying.

Off to my right, I saw Maximus shoot me a confident grin as he winked at me, and the girl side of me wished to giggle at his effort to lighten the mood. My gold eyes couldn't help but glance at the boy next to Maximus. The guy I was having difficulty remembering.

Zane Park. He was Braxton's and Kage's younger brother. He'd been a part of the fiasco that occurred on the tower, and I'd originally known who he was. It had been two weeks since I woke up and I'd yet to regain those memories of him.

It made me feel like he was more of a stranger or just the "brother of my current boyfriends." The thought made me feel bad, but that was literally how I felt.

None of the guys had brought the topic up yet, but I knew it was going to be a discussion in the near future. I returned my eyes to the stage, tuning back into what Ms. Landsford had to say in the auditorium full of students who survived their first term classes and professors.

"As of today, any forms of bullying and violence will NOT be tolerated. We are in the process of updating our surveillance methods on and off campus, as well as implementing more

security measures on weekends. Everyone is still welcome to train on campus during the weekends, but certain areas will now be off limits. The tower has been shut down until flight lessons are in session and there must be four professors within the premises at the time of those classes.”

A few sighs and whispers circulated through the crowd, but Ms. Landsford continued. “I do not care if any of you disagree with our new methods. I’ve already discussed these precautions with the headmaster, and she approves. Maybe to some of you such increase in safety is a hindrance, but I wonder if you’d say the same if your friend or family member is killed because a group of students decided they deserved it?”

The room went quiet and I looked away, biting the side of my lip at her words. Since the last dream I had of Gabriel, I’d yet to see him in my dreams again. It was as if he’d finally moved on, and though I was happy that he was at peace, my heart was sad.

I’d gotten so used to the dreams that sometimes led to me screaming at night, that now that they were gone, I wished to see his face once more. He was truly like a guardian. Now that we’d stopped Lark’s brother from attempting to do the same as he had done years ago, he could finally rest without the lingering fear.

Maybe people will dislike these measures, but it’s for the best. I’d never wish someone to watch their friend or family member’s death with their own eyes.

“Jinn.”

I glanced at Logan. He was studying me with a worried look on his face, and he gently squeezed my hand. I gave him a small smile and realized that my eyes were getting blurry

with tears. Quickly composing myself, I swallowed the lump in my throat.

Nixon's eyes were on me, but I didn't say anything as I tried to keep up with Ms. Landsford's speech.

"I encourage you all to think carefully of your actions this semester. Brighten Magic Academy holds its level of honor and rank because of our strictness. However, it seems like many of you have forgotten that this school is a PRIVILEGE. It does not matter if you are from the richest household in this town or if you have a family member who helped you get in. To be able to wear the uniform you all are wearing at this moment is NOT a right. Just as it's not your right to graduate from this school and become a Mage warrior."

The silence lingered, everyone taking in Ms. Landsford's words and she nodded in understanding. "Jinn J. Starfire, please come to the stage."

I almost flinched at my name. My eyes met Ms. Landsford's as she graced me with a reassuring smile. I swallowed and squeezed Logan and Nixon's hands a final time before I rose to my feet and took a calming breath. *Confidence, Jewel.*

"You can do it, Jewel. I'm here if you need me." Alice's soft voice flowed into my mind. I wouldn't deny how her little reassuring statement helped settle my racing heart and gave me the confidence to walk towards the side stairs to the stage.

Once I reached the platform, I turned to face the large crowd. I didn't focus on the number of students before me; my eyes lingered on the front row where my men stared at me with pride.

“Many of you may know Jinn. Some of you may see him in the halls while others have fought him in class sessions. Even though Jinn comes from a strong family background, he has to work like every one of you.”

Ms. Landsford took a deep breath, and her expression darkened as she continued. “On the Sunday of the incident that occurred on the tower, Jinn and his fellow comrades had stopped another bullying attempt. However, the fall out led to Jinn being knocked off the tower to plummet to his death.”

Multiple gasps could be heard, and I noticed a few angry expressions. I knew their anger and rage wasn't directed at me, but at the fact that I'd almost been killed.

My brother's death happened years ago, but people didn't forget what the Starfire family had gone through. Even with my cousin disguise, I could see a few sympathetic looks and pained expressions from many of the professors who'd once worked with Charlotte, my Mother.

“Thanks to his comrades and their quick thinking, Jinn survived. However, watching a student almost perish a second time made me realize how serious this issue has become,” Ms. Landsford stated, clearly struggling as she blinked her eyes.

I had to mask my emotions, but I knew she was referring to Gabriel's death. She quickly composed herself before her confident expression returned.

“Today, Brighten Magic Academy will be rewarding Jinn J. Starfire the highest award given to a first year. It's called the Bravery Award of Excellence.”

My eyes widened, and I glanced at Ms. Landsford in shock as several people gasped and even more cheered.

“What?” I whispered. Ms. Landsford smiled at me before she turned her attention back to the crowd.

“For those who don’t know, the Bravery Award of Excellence is an achievement that’s normally been unlocked during a student’s final year. The requirements of such honor usually involve the student maintaining perfect scores as well as displaying an act of bravery worthy of a mage warrior. Jinn has shown perfection in both his studies and his demonstration of skills in combat. His actions in saving the victims in this incident have earned our recognition as well as consideration to join the Mage Warrior Organization.”

Ms. Landsford looked to her left, and two other professors came on the stage. One professor held an open box with a medal in the colors of the Brighten Magic Academy symbol, and the other professor held a glass trophy with “Bravery Award of Excellence” on the clear crystal design.

Ms. Landsford nodded to her co-workers before she picked up the medal and walked over to where I stood. I tried to ignore my clammy hands as I turned to face her, still stunned to have been chosen.

She smiled, her purple eyes glossy. They held as much pride as if she were my parent instead of my professor.

“Lower your head, Jinn.” I did as instructed, and Ms. Landsford took a deep breath.

“I, Rosette Landsford of Brighten Magic Academy, honor Jinn. J. Starfire with the Bravery Award of Excellence. Let this medal be proof to his fellow peers and future comrades of his courageous actions. He has proven he could honorably handle what a Mage Warrior would be challenged with. Jinn will continue his studies at Brighten but will be accepted as a Mage Warrior upon graduation. May we all be witnesses today, and

may this moment inspire others to confront the wrong going on and praise the right.”

I expected the room to remain silent, but cheers of encouragement roared through the air as many of my peers stood and clapped.

Ms. Landsford hung the medal around my neck, the gold ribbon holding the somewhat heavy medal as it glittered from the stage light.

I turned to bow my head before everyone, giving them a small smile as they clapped and continued to cheer.

My anxiety dimmed as my gaze swept around the room, most of the guys appearing pleased and happy for me.

“Jinn, would like to say anything?” Ms. Landsford asked.

“Sure,” I replied, moving to the platform to speak. I took a quick glance at the front row; Kage, Nixon, and Logan raised their hands with thumbs up while Braxton and Maximus wore broad grins, their eyes focused on me with pride.

I couldn’t help glance at Zane, my mind telling me I needed his acknowledgment like the others. Even though I’d yet to remember, he had a wide smile on his face as well. Our eyes locked and he slowly nodded, the action giving me the courage to speak.

“I never expected to be standing here...on a stage in front of my fellow peers. It’s only been four months since I stepped onto Brighten’s soil, and I’ve seen a lot of good. I’ve seen many of you do what a neighbor would do to help someone in need. I’ve seen kindness that led to friendship, and I’ve experienced the fun of get-togethers and parties that brought many of us together to celebrate different achievements

throughout the semester.” I paused and took a deep breath before I continued.

“However, I’ve also seen the downside. I’ve seen the competitive side of Brighten, and though I was warned when I arrived here, I never imagined the pressure, anxiety, workmanship, and sheer dedication that was required to be able to last the first semester. To me, when I think of first in anything, whether it’s a class or a game, I assume it’s supposed to be the easiest. Why? Because after that, it gets harder and more challenging since the weak are left behind, and the strong continue forward to the top.”

I let my gaze travel the room as I spoke. “Being here for four months and starting the fifth month with a new semester, I know by looking at many of you, these next four months are going to be twice as hard. The person sitting next to you or your best friends and partners, may not be with you four months from now. It took Brighten’s first semester for me to realize that.”

I looked down at the medal around my neck. “As a student of Brighten for such a short time, I can only imagine the hardships many seniors have experienced. Regardless, we’ve all made it to this moment where I, someone who still needs to learn and grow, am taking a moment to elaborate on what we have to deal with as students. With that being said, don’t you guys think we have enough on our plate?” I asked. Heads nodded, and a few people exchanged words.

“A few of you may know the history behind my surname. For those of you who don’t, my cousin died on that tower. He died from the same events that I almost died from.” I revealed, blinking my eyes in an attempt to compose myself.

Glancing around the room as I paused, I saw many of the guy's shocked and sympathetic expressions. "Maybe to a few people, a death in the family that isn't directly your mother, father, or sibling doesn't affect you. I'm here to tell you it does. Gabriel's death haunted me daily. When I closed my eyes to sleep, I wondered to myself, 'what could I have done to prevent his death?' Even though there was no way I could have been there for him as he plunged from the ledge, it haunted me. Even now, it still hurts."

Logan stared up at me with his guarded expression, his gold eyes showing his share of hurt.

"Bullying isn't a game. It's not something to laugh at or feel proud of. Every action we deliberately take against an individual out of spite, envy, or even jealousy, creates a step. The steps add up, building a staircase of self-doubt, insecurities, and hatred. That hate isn't 100% directed towards those who continue creating steps for the victim to climb on. No, it's a fraction of the amount of hate that person harbors for themselves."

I lifted my head to look at my peers, the silence giving me enough strength to finish. "You won't be good enough. You'll never survive the challenges here. You're this and that, a series of negative comments that bring your peers down rather than building them up. What's the end result? They reach the final step of the large staircase of insults they've taken, and now they have no courage left to continue climbing. They're tired, and no matter how much love is around them, it can't help them climb back down. So all they need is that final push, and they fall into despair. When someone explains it like that, does it make any of you happy?"

No one said a word, and I gave up on fighting the tears that threatened to fall. “Brighten Magic Academy is a place many of us have dreamed of graduating from. I think it’s better for us to carry the load that this school delivers to us, rather than add more to each other’s plates. I hope these new rules will end acts of hate and sometimes death because there is no way anyone can become a true Mage Warrior if they’re fine with contributing to someone’s death with words and insults. No one can enjoy the benefits of graduating from this school, when you can’t accept your own flaws, work on what you want to achieve, and build bonds with your classmates and friends, because who knows? Maybe one day the same person you pushed to the edge survives, graduates from here, and becomes the one who determines whether you live or die on a mission as a warrior.” A few tears rolled down my cheeks as I concluded.

“Thank you.” I moved away from the platform to bow before everyone, and when I rose up, everyone began to clap and stand up.

I didn’t think my words would get a standing ovation, but it happened. Everyone stood cheering for me like I’d done something world-changing instead of the simple speech I created based on my feelings and honesty.

I turned to bow towards the three professors before heading to the back of the stage. I wasn’t comfortable going back to my seat, especially when tears spilled from my eyes.

“The assembly is now over. Please enjoy the one week break that has been implemented thanks to Jinn’s courageous efforts. Classes begin next Monday. You are all dismissed.” Ms. Landsford gave a sharp nod and made a sweeping motion with her arm toward the exit.

I found a quiet corner that was a perfect hiding place thanks to the black curtain that was spread out, concealing me from anyone's eye.

I swiped my tears off my face as I tried to take calming breaths. *Gabriel, I hope I made you proud. I really wish this ends the cycle.*

Something soft stroked my short, red and black locks, encouraging me to look up. Braxton's green eyes glittered with a hint of gold.

"Brax..." I whispered.

"Seeing as Logan and Nixon were spending more time arguing over who'd come comfort you, I decided to be sneaky and volunteer." He matched his low pitch to mine.

I stared into his eyes, trying to think of something to say. Anything that could make it seem as if that speech and the acknowledgment that my guardian angel of a brother was finally gone hadn't affected me.

Nothing. No words came out. Instead, tears continued to roll down my cheeks, blurring the perfect image of Braxton's handsome face. I wanted so badly not to cry. I begged for the tears to evaporate rather than remain as evidence of weakness in front of Braxton.

As a female, if I cried I didn't feel guilty or bad for expressing my emotions. As a male, a type of stigma presided over boys and men that they couldn't cry, otherwise they were thought less of. But I couldn't contain my sadness and hurt. It felt as if Gabriel's death had happened yesterday, and the wound was raw and bleeding uncontrollably.

I tried to compose myself, to do anything to hide the shame I felt for shedding tears, but it was no use. Braxton,

however, didn't look sorry for me. He was proud, and it left me even more confused and emotional as I cried.

He pulled me into a tight hug, patting my back as I sobbed into his blazer. "It's okay to cry, you know. Even men cry, and that's perfectly acceptable Jinn. Cry as much as you want. I'll be right here to hold you," Braxton whispered.

I did exactly that, crying for my brother who I knew within my heart was finally at peace. It would take a while before I finally took that step forward into a new mindset, but I realized with my boyfriends' comfort and love, I'd actually be able to accomplish it.

That thought alone would help me take the first new steps in this semester and all the challenges I knew were yet to come.

Nightmares and Reconnection

I stood up on the now forbidden tower, my eyes gazing around Brighten Academy as the sun began to descend.

My mind was having a hard time understanding why I was having this dream again, and a little part of me wondered if Gabriel had come back to comfort me.

“Sweetheart,”

I turned around, leaning my back against ledge wall as I looked at the man at the end of the hall. I could tell the person was wearing a dark red cloak; the hood covered their head as they began the agonizingly slow walk towards me.

“Gabriel?” I asked, hesitation in my voice as I cautiously watched the person get closer and closer to the light. I waited, feeling my heart pound against my chest, and I struggled to keep my breathing at an even pace.

The person finally walked out from the shadows, but I still couldn't tell who it was. They were tall like Gabriel once was, but something told me it wasn't him.

“Who are you?” I asked as they were footsteps away from me. I bit my lip, wishing that I could see the face that was hidden thanks to the hood the person wore. They stood before me, and I struggled to breathe as I watched a smile form on their face.

The smile wasn't scary, but my mind had seen it before. It was a loving smile that made my heart blossom with relief and happiness, yet I still couldn't identify who the person was.

"Protect those you cherish the most, Jewel. The clock is ticking, and it's only a matter of time before those same selfish people come after you." The voice was deep, but I couldn't recognize it.

"Who is coming for me? When? Who are you?!" I snapped and reached out to pull the hood, but my body was pushed back into the brick wall that broke upon impact.

I gasped, my body slowly falling while my eyes trailed the windows of the tower, one level after another. I wasn't frightened by the fact I was falling to my death again.

I was terrified of the pair of silver eyes locked with mine for that split second and the sinister smile that formed on their dry, cracked lips. As I fell, I heard the words that escaped their lips.

"You're next, Jewel."

Next? Next in what?! Who is he?! WHO ARE YOU?! I tried to use magic to stop my fall, but each attempt failed. Crippling fear speared through my body like a shard of ice.

"No! NOOOO!" I screamed.

"JEWEL!"

I gasped, my eyes opening wide before I shot up. Logan and Nixon were both sitting and staring at me with worried expressions, but I wasn't concerned about that. I was more concerned with trying to breathe.

“Jewel, breathe. Look, you’re safe.” Logan tried to calm me down, but I shuffled myself to the end of the bunk bed, pressing my back against the wall as I tried to fill my lungs.

No. No. Where is he? Where is he?!

“Jewel.” Nixon’s firm voice seemed to catch my attention for a second, somehow cutting through the chaos happening in my mind. “No one is here. I won’t hurt you. Logan won’t hurt you. But one of us needs to come over there and calm you down.” He spoke slowly, trying to make sure I understood what he was saying.

“But...he. He’ll come. He’s after me. He’ll hurt you. Yes. Hurt. Hurt...” I panted as tears rolled down my cheeks.

“Jewel, no one will hurt you. We’re fine, see?” Nixon said raising his hands up. Logan followed his lead, and my fear lessened slightly. “We just want to help you, but you have to let us.”

“Help...I need help...I think.” I inhaled slowly, my mind still foggy from the dream. My eyes scanned once more around the dimmed top half of the room. From the corner of my eyes, I noticed the door open, but I knew it wasn’t the man after me.

Nixon slowly crawled to me and lifted his hand near my face, but he didn’t touch me. “I’m going to place my hand on your cheek. It won’t hurt.”

I took a few breaths before I was able to comprehend his statement, and I nodded my consent. He pressed his hand against my cheek, the cool touch grounding me and helping me to realize I wasn’t in danger anymore.

“Do you know who I am now, Jewel?” Nixon asked.

“Nixon.” I said his name on an exhale before sobs escaped me. “I was falling. Fuck. Falling like before. The tower. Gabriel...he wasn’t there. I fell! I fell in his place. I...so scared.” I cried, my body trembling. Nixon nodded and gently pulled me into his arms.

“You’re not on the tower, Jewel. Remember, it’s banned. No one is allowed to go there anymore. You’re safe in your bedroom with us.” Logan’s calm voice broke through the sound of my weeping.

I nodded my head in Nixon’s hold and tried to slow my breathing. My body felt cold, yet I was drenched in sweat, feeling as if I’d been exercising rather than sleeping.

“Just breathe, Jewel. Focus on breathing,” Nixon urged. The room was quiet as I finally began to relax, my once loud sobs and panting turned to soft whimpers.

I felt exhausted now and just wanted to sleep, but I hated how drenched I was and wished to have a warm bath instead. Logan must have read my mind as he spoke. “Kage you there? Can you run a warm bath?”

“Sure,” He replied, and I heard fading footsteps.

“Same dream?” I heard Maximus ask.

“Ya,” Nixon answered. He hadn’t stopped rubbing my back, the soothing motion really helping me remain relaxed as I closed my eyes.

“I think we should take her back home this week.” Braxton’s voice reached my ears, but I didn’t open my eyes.

“I agree. She was recovering well before, but I think with the assembly and all the attention, Jewel isn’t getting the necessary rest. She needs a break before school starts,” Maximus suggested.

“I’ll talk with her when she’s alert. I think it would be a good plan. Ms. Landsford said her therapy with Savannah would start on Monday, but going home to a familiar environment that isn’t a trigger for her current nightmares may help,” Logan explained.

“With school starting, she also needs to rest her magic.”

It took me a few extra seconds to put the voice to the face, Zane’s name coming to my mind. Of course, he bunked with Kage, but I hadn’t seen him much.

“Jewel?” Nixon whispered.

I stirred at his call, wanting to lift my lids to see those black eyes, but my body was so drained. I just wanted to go back to sleep, but I was still conflicted about wanting a warm bath.

“Let her rest. She’s probably mentally exhausted, and her panic must have added to her physical exhaustion. Can you move her to the ladder?” Braxton asked.

“Ya. Hold on,” Nixon replied.

“Here. I’ll hold her,” Maximus offered.

I heard shuffling sounds, and I felt my body being moved from one person’s hold to another as they lowered me into a third pair of arms.

“I can bathe her. You guys okay with that?” Braxton asked.

“No objections here,” Maximus said.

“Sure. Use her favorite soap,” Nixon urged.

“I’m fine with it. Just don’t make the water too hot. She’s still prone to seizures, and I know when we were young in summer, the heat would trigger them,” Logan explained.

“Got it. Kage was suggesting earlier that you guys should sleep on the regular bed. At least until her nightmares cease or at least diminish,” Braxton suggested.

“That’s a good idea,” Logan replied.

“We’ll figure it out in the morning. Logan can stay with her in the regular bed tonight. I’ll take the top bunk.” Nixon stroked his thumb along my cheek as he spoke.

“I’ll take the bottom,” Braxton added.

“It can be three of us in the bed, you know.” Logan’s voice held a hint of amusement.

“Let Kage stick around. At least he’ll sleep. He’s been all worried and barely sleeping.” Maximus adjusted his hold on me, gentle in his movements.

“I can hear you guys,” Kage mumbled from what I presumed was the hall.

“Good. You’re sleeping here tonight.” Braxton huffed, his tone brooking no argument.

“Fine with me,” Kage replied.

“I’m gonna head back to my room. Uh...if you need anything, just call. I’ll be awake for a bit,” Zane put forth quietly. I heard his footsteps fade and there was a moment of silence.

“We’re gonna have to confront this issue soon,” Logan pointed out.

“The bath is ready,” Kage announced, seeming uninterested in what Logan was implying.

The others were quiet for a few seconds before Nixon spoke. “Jewel is the priority right now, but once she’s stable,

we ALL need to talk. Understood?”

The others murmured their agreement before my body began to sway. I wanted to fight off sleep, afraid to dream about the silver-eyed man, but once my body felt the warm water, it gave up.

I fell back asleep.

* * *

I snuggled closer to the inviting aroma of caramel, my arms tightening around Logan’s waist while I inhaled deeply. I loved how the sweet, yet gentle scent eased the number of troubles that were beginning to pile in my mind, especially now that I was semi-awake.

I’d been awake, trying my best to go back to sleep for the last hour and a half, but even Logan’s slow heart rate that normally helped me return to the land of sleep wasn’t working.

My thoughts were a chaotic mess of worry, fear, and guilt. I was worried about the future at Brighten, realizing once again, I’d have to try my hardest to maintain my male identity as Jinn Starfire.

I’d enjoyed the journey, in the beginning, intrigued by the idea of having a penis and seeing the dramatic difference a male life was compared to a female’s. However, in an environment like Brighten with the challenges I knew we’d have to face now that the “easiest” semester was over, the fear of screwing up was beginning to settle in.

The guilt I felt wasn’t about Brighten but was more focused on the guys. I was well aware that I’d been having nightmares the last couple of weeks. Many times, I had no

recollection of what happened in them, but a few nightmares lingered, as well as my recent dreams and memories of my childhood.

I didn't know why I was having dreams about my Dad, but I didn't even understand what they were about. Either way, I knew the guys weren't getting the sleep they deserved thanks to my loud awakenings and the panic attacks that followed.

Savannah said my reaction and nightmares could be a part of the PTSD I'd gained from my near-death experience, and the guys wouldn't let me apologize for it.

It wasn't my fault I was having dreams of falling from the same tower, but I felt guilty for troubling the guys. With school starting next week I wanted to get things under control, but I didn't know how.

Even in a world with magic, some things couldn't be cured by a simple spell or even medication. I was relieved that my medication was working to control my seizures. I hadn't had one since my admission to the private medical ward of Brighten, but I wasn't going to take any other chances by stopping my medication either.

I sighed quietly, knowing there would be no way I'd sleep at this point. I unhooked my arms from around Logan and opened my eyes.

The room was still dark which told me we had a few more hours before sunrise. I rolled over, hoping the switch to laying on my side might prompt me to go back to sleep. I smiled at Kage's peaceful expression. I had not even realized I was sleeping in the same bed as him.

I assumed that if Logan was sleeping on one side, that my strawberry smelling Nixon would be on the other. Even with

them being completely opposite, they were the perfect sandwich in bed, though I wondered if that was the same with more intimate scenarios.

Alice had been sleeping in Kage's room with Koa, both of them having their own little spot to rest in since my recovery. I had encouraged Alice to sleep in Kage's room instead of mine, knowing she'd probably be anxious all night long, waiting for me to wake up from an expected nightmare.

Once that happened, I knew she would stay up for the rest of the night, and that just wasn't fair to my familiar. She deserved some sleep just like the guys, but my stubborn familiar at least listened to me when I explained my reasons.

The guys just dismissed my concerns for their lack of sleep, saying it was their duty to ensure I was safe and comforted. I was grateful for their kindness and the love shown to me in the last month, even when I was unconscious.

Mother had explained to me how the guys had alternated watching and taking care of me, which was a big relief for my mom who'd been so worried about me. She'd returned home after I reassured her I'd get some rest and take my meds in a timely manner.

I did miss her and wished I could go home even for a little bit to try and get away from here. I loved this school, but with everything that had happened, I really could use a break from it all. Especially knowing once school started, we'd be stuck here for another four months.

I rubbed my thumb lightly against Kage's cheek. He'd been super quiet lately, and I could tell that he wasn't in a good mood. He did do his best to present himself like everything was fine, but I knew better.

We hadn't gotten a lot of time to spend with one another last semester, and I hoped we'd have a few moments alone so that I could find out what was troubling him. With my absent memories, I could barely recall the tower incident or the reason for me going there.

Even with the guy's explanations, I couldn't remember, and Savannah urged me not to force myself to try. All it led to was me getting a headache, and we wanted to avoid that in case it would trigger a seizure.

Kage stirred and a dreamy smile formed on his lips, but I knew he was still in a deep sleep. I pulled my hand back and sighed again, really wishing I could fall back to sleep.

Arms wrapped around my waist as a warm chest pressed against my back. "Jewel," Logan groaned, his husky voice made me shiver.

"Hmm?" I asked, wondering if Logan was sleep talking. I knew I sleep talked once in a while, mainly when I was deep in sleep, but Logan usually didn't.

"Can't sleep?" he asked.

"Not really," I whispered. I didn't want to discuss the reason I couldn't sleep.

I turned in his hold so that I could look into his gold eyes. The need for reassurance filled me, and I knew Logan would be able to give it to me with those lovely eyes and his gentle touch.

Logan met my gaze with a small smile and slowly leaned down and pressed his lips against mine.

"Want to go have some hot chocolate?" he asked.

“Ya. I think that would help.” Even though I was enjoying the warmth of his body and Kage’s soft breathing, I thought a nice cup of cocoa might help me to sleep.

We slipped out of bed and my eyes caught on Nixon’s red locks popping out of the blanket on the top bunk. Braxton was on the bottom, and it took me a few seconds to notice Maximus was pressed against the corner; Braxton took up a good portion of the bed.

I grinned at the sight, wondering when they started sleeping in the same bed. I hadn’t noticed before as everyone was usually awake before me, with the exception of Nixon, who’d rather sleep all day than get up.

I glanced back to Logan who sported only a pair of black boxers. I wore a loose black shirt which I could tell from the mixed scent of Irish soap and specific cologne that it belonged to Braxton. I couldn’t recall why I’d changed out of my black boy shorts and red crop top, but it must have been a good reason for Braxton to change my outfit.

Logan walked over to my side and slipped his hand in mine before leading the way out of the room and heading downstairs. As we passed Kage’s room, I saw Alice and Koa sitting on the window sill, both of them fast asleep.

I couldn’t see if Zane was asleep or even in the room from my quick observation, but I wondered why he wasn’t in the room with everyone else.

We reached the kitchen, and Logan let me relax while he made two cups of premium hot chocolate. Once they were both prepared, we moved to the living room and sat on the couch.

“How are you feeling today, Jewel?” Logan asked as he took a sip of the hot liquid. I stared at the steam that rose from the pink mug, wondering how to answer that question without worrying him.

“Alright?” I suggested, realizing my somewhat questioned statement failed at not making him worry as he gave me a look.

“I...can we...maybe all of us...” I trailed off, unsure how to ask if all of us can take a trip away from Brighten. I so desperately needed to get away, but I felt that was asking too much from them.

“Let’s go on vacation.”

I blinked at Logan’s words, lifting my once pleading eyes to meet his serious gaze. “What?”

“Let’s go somewhere. Anywhere. Just somewhere far from Brighten for a week. We can leave today and come back Sunday night.”

“All of us?”

“All of us. We talked about it a few hours ago.”

“Did I have another nightmare?” I asked.

Logan stared into my eyes for a long time before he sighed. “Ya.”

“Sorry.”

“Nothing to apologize about, Jewel,” Logan whispered.

My eyebrows furrowed as I stared at my drink, lost in thought. “I just...I really need a moment away from the school. I’ve been trying to remember what I dream about, and I can’t. It’s all fragments and makes no sense to me. I just want

to be somewhere else for a few days and not have to worry about people looking up to me now that I'm an automatic Mage Warrior."

Logan nodded, allowing a few minutes to pass as we drank our hot chocolate in comfortable silence. He was probably concerned about my mental health at this point, and I honestly didn't blame him.

I was worried about how I was going to manage acting normal again for school, especially with more watchful eyes and more challenges from students who weren't as excited about my guaranteed spot as a Mage Warrior.

"Do you want to go back home?" he asked.

"Yes and no," I replied. "Yes because it's comforting, but no because I don't want to bother my Mother or yours if she decides to come over. Plus, it's rather crowded for all of us, and I like having long baths and don't want all of you competing on who gets to pee first."

Logan grinned, knowing exactly how the last time the guys stayed at my place went down. Washroom could be a damn Olympic sport, especially with three brothers who all seemed to need to pee at the same time. ALL the time.

The thought of it reminded me of Zane, and I looked up at Logan. "What about Zane?"

"You don't want him to come?" Logan asked.

"No, I do. I mean like, there's been some tension hasn't there? You know, because of the memory loss thing."

"Zane and Kage are in a bit of a rough patch right now. The others seem more forgiving, but I guess the tension between the brothers is adding its own effects. I feel it'll

resolve itself soon, but that's between them. If they can't figure things out, I'll get involved."

I stared at him for a long time, and he raised an eyebrow at me. "What?"

"I'm really happy you're mine. No matter what happens in my life, you support me and try to keep things together. I could practically feel like I'm drowning in whatever situation I'm in and there you would be, fixing everything around me so that I float and then swim against the current of challenges," I whispered.

I finished my hot chocolate and placed it on the coffee table before I met his gold eyes. "Even when I proposed the idea of being a guy for the sake of pleasing my mom, you supported me, and when I said I was interested in trying out this whole polyamorous relationship with the others, you agreed. I just...words really can't express how thankful I am to have you in my life. You're literally like a prince who is always able to save me from my insecurities and struggles."

Logan gave me a sweet smile as he reached out to place his half-filled cup on the coffee table. He then stroked my head with his right hand before he leaned in to give me a tender kiss.

I closed my eyes, realizing how long it had been since we'd kissed more than once a day. The guys had all been cautious, especially after Savannah's apparent long talk about what can trigger my seizures and her emphasis on how important it was for them to remember the information that she gave them.

I'd been dozing in and out, but I could clearly remember something about kissing and sex, and I knew whatever Savannah said made me frown, even in my half-asleep state.

I kissed him back, the slow sensual movement of our lips growing deeper with each passing second. I truly wished my words made him understand how amazing of a man, best friend, and lover he's been.

I trusted him with my life, and I just wanted him to know that. To understand how rare he was compared to many men, and even women, out there who wouldn't do half the things he'd do for me.

Not everyone would be willing to share their lover with five other individuals or work towards patching things up when everything got chaotic. To have someone like Logan was a blessing, and he needed to understand that. *He needs to know how happy I am to have him in my life.*

He moaned, slipping his tongue into my mouth while his hand ran through my long brown locks. When we finally broke apart, we were panting loudly, our eyes both hooded with lust for one another.

"I think sex is banned at the moment." Logan frowned.

"Who said that?"

"Savannah."

"I knew she said something that made me sad in my sleep!" I grumbled, and Logan chuckled, pressing his forehead against mine.

"If I go nice and slow, maybe that's allowed?" He cupped my face in his hand.

"You're not the type to go against the nurse's orders," I whispered, my eyes lowering to his lips as he teasingly licked his bottom one. I silenced him with my mouth, needing to enjoy his taste yet again.

He broke the kiss to give me a peck on the nose and grinned. “Sex is an exception. I’ve missed touching you.”

I bit my lip, as I tried to ponder where we’d have slow sex. “And where are we going to have pleasurable slow sex that won’t cause a seizure or wake up the house?” I asked.

“Right here.” Logan grinned seductively, and I had to remind myself to breathe. I adored this sexy side of him and the dominance in his voice. He stood, and I took every advantage I could take to speed the process by lifting my shirt over my head, leaving my body almost naked.

My nipples were hard, and my pussy throbbed with anticipation. I lifted my hips to remove my laced underwear while I watched Logan slip his boxers down, revealing his cock that looked more than ready to slide right into me.

I laid down on the soft material of our couch and Logan hovered over me, positioning himself at my entrance. His eyes lingered above my head for a long moment, before he reached out to grab something at the edge of the couch.

“Lift your head, my Precious.” He commanded. I did as he asked and when I lowered my head, felt the soft material of a pillow.

“Really?” I asked, my heart soaring with happiness over the simple gesture. Logan grinned widely, and his eyes darkened even more.

“Just because we’re going slow, doesn’t mean I’m not going to make sure I’m as deep as I can be. You’ll thank me later.” He winked.

He didn’t give me a chance to reply, sliding himself inside me with ease. I moaned, arching my back at the sleek movement and the wonderful fullness of his cock.

His lips claimed mine, and I placed my hands on his shoulders, lifting my right one to slide into his silky locks.

“You sure you can keep this slow and quiet?” I teased through kisses, neither of us moving, and I was trying my best to keep my excitement level contained.

Logan bit my lower lip, tugging it gently before he gave me a sexy grin. “Can’t be loud if I’m kissing you. As for slow, we’ll just have to wait and see.”

I gave up on asking more questions, my body ready to enjoy the pleasure I knew Logan would deliver at an agonizingly slow pace.

In the end, it was totally worth it.

Hidden Misery

“I wonder what it’s like to masturbate as a guy,” I mumbled as I relieved myself, making sure my cock was aimed properly so that the stream went right into the toilet and not everywhere. *I’m a pro cock aimer.*

I sighed when I finished and stared down at my length, wondering if I could give myself a hand job. *It shouldn’t be that hard, right? It’s the same thing as how I please Logan. Just me pleasing myself. Hmm. I feel this could go horribly wrong.*

Right at that thought the door of the washroom opened, and my mom poked her head in. “Jewel! Oh, you’re still in your boy form?” Mother exclaimed, and I gawked at her as she lowered her gaze to my visible cock.

“Wow. Magic does wonderful things. Imagine when you’re all hor-”

“MOM! I’m peeing!” I pointed out.

“Oh, right. I’m going out with Antoinette to see the Park family. Just wanted to let you know before you head to the cottage with your boyfriends. It’s five o’clock now so make sure you’re all prettied up and packed in an hour. Alice is helping find clothes for you!” Mother hummed in delight,

looking beyond happy that I was going to the cottage for the remainder of the week.

“Thanks, Mom.” I sighed as I tried not to think about how embarrassing her intrusion was.

“You’re welcome, sweetheart. Have fun. I told Alice to buy you condoms earlier. Well if you’re a guy, I doubt you need condoms. Hmm, I should search on goo-”

“Mom! Need. To. Pee!” I huffed.

“Right! Anyways, have fun and safe sex. Love you!” She winked and closed the door. I waited till her footsteps faded and the washroom was completely silent before I groaned. *I can’t believe this.*

The door opened once more, and I lifted my head to see Alice’s wide grin as her shoulders trembled.

“Nice length there...BAHAHAHA!” She completely lost it, falling to the floor in a frenzy of laughter.

“UGH! How do men live with females?!” I snapped. I got a glimpse of Alice rolling around with her arms clenched around her waist before I shut the door, ensuring it was locked.

Alice’s roaring laughter continued to be background noise, and I let out an angry huff. “So much for testing hand jobs out,” I grumbled to myself, reaching for the toilet roll to wipe myself.

I finished my business and washed my hands. Taking a final glance at the mirror, I opened the door and came face to face with Alice, a stupid grin gracing her face as little giggles escaped her.

“Are you finished?” I asked.

“Just about,” Alice replied, and I shook my head.

“I love how my embarrassing moments make your day.”

“Make my day? Your embarrassing moments make me glad I’m alive. I wish I caught that on camera. Koa said he’s gonna get me a phone!”

“What happened to your phone?” I asked.

“Uh...it um, exploded?” she replied with a sheepish grin.

“Meaning you probably tried carrying it in your owl form, dropped it, and it fell to the ground with such force, it broke on impact.” Alice wasn’t good with electronics.

“Everything you said, but after it broke, it exploded,” Alice confirmed.

“I wonder if they make familiar-proof phones.” I sighed, walking down the hall to my room.

“Does that mean you’re gonna buy me a new one?” Alice asked. Her fast footsteps told me she was following me to my room to pester me.

“Nope. Let your boyfriend get it for you,” I retorted. Reaching my bed, I noticed the multiple sets of clothes neatly folded upon it—half the bed being girl clothes and the other half boy clothes.

“He’s not my boyfriend, and please?! Jinn, you love me!” Alice whined. She wrapped her arms around my neck and whimpered over and over again.

“Pretty please? Mom won’t get me one either. It’s either you or Koa, but I don’t want to bother him. PLEASEEEEEEE.”

“You know I spoil you? And why is Mom going to the Park’s? Like Braxton, Kade, and um...Zane’s parent’s house?” I asked, looking back at the clothes on the bed. “And thank you for setting my clothes up. I appreciate it.”

“You’re welcome my lovely Mistress slash Master who adores me and will buy me a new phone!” Alice hummed happily, giving me a quick kiss on the cheek before she unraveled herself from me and moved to sit on the edge of my bed that didn’t have clothes on it.

“As for Mom, who knows?” Alice shrugged, but I felt she knew something.

“Are you sure?” I raised an eyebrow and narrowed my eyes.

“Yup. Mom said she wants to get to know all the other families who are dating you so she can plan some huge epic wedding! The Parks cover Braxton, Kage, Zane, and Maximus if I remember correctly, so that’s four down with Logan making five.”

“Oh...” I replied, wondering about Nixon’s family.

All I knew was his mom used to be a Mage Warrior and used the same technique that I was currently using to maintain my male image. She wasn’t alive anymore, and I had no idea if Nixon had a dad or any other family members. *I need to learn more about Nixon.*

“Okay,” I replied, dropping the topic. I had to make a mental note to try and spend more time with the guys, particularly Kage, Nixon, and Zane.

I felt like I had a good understanding of Braxton and Maximus, and even though I knew bits about Kage and Nixon,

it wasn't enough. I wanted to learn more about their pasts as well.

As for Zane, I wasn't sure what to do. I'd had an early therapy session today with Savannah, and she explained how therapy would go. I'd be doing two sessions every week, or more if needed, and she stressed that I come to see her if I felt unwell or suddenly got headaches.

One of the activities was to try and talk about each of the guys and what I loved about them. When it got to Zane, I'd just have a blank, and aside from knowing what he looked like and that he was related to Brax and Kage, I felt like I knew nothing about him.

Even though we lived in the same dorm, it seemed like he'd grown distant. I knew after the guys gave me a detailed explanation of everything that had happened leading up to the incident, that Zane had distanced himself and had been getting close to his "new friends" because they had threatened to hurt me, and he didn't want that to happen.

I didn't know if it was due to my family background as a Starfire, but I basically narrowed the whole incident down to Zane trying to prevent me from getting hurt, or the common term of "taking one for the team."

Whatever his reasoning, it clearly backfired in some way. Even though we caught the guys involved and they had all been expelled, some facing charges for abuse of property and magic, the damage was already done in our relationship and contributed to this riff between all of us.

I felt bad that Zane looked so lonely at times. I'd take quick peeks during group conversations, or even when he chilled around the house. It seemed like he had a sad aura

around him, and his facial expression was usually filled with regret.

Kage and Zane barely looked each other in the eye, and after my last nightmare on Sunday night, Kage had been sleeping in my room. I could tell it was beginning to affect Braxton, as he too had appeared a bit frustrated since Monday evening.

I wanted to help solve all the problems that were happening, but I felt helpless. One, because I couldn't remember enough about Zane to have a deep, personal conversation with him, and two, I was dealing with my issues and attempting to recover before classes began next week.

I needed everything to be solved, but I was just one person, and there was only so much I could carry on my plate.

“Jewel?”

I glance at Alice who had a worried look on her face, the expression making me frown. “What's wrong?”

“That's the third time I've called you.”

“Ah...sorry, Alice. I was just thinking about something,” I confessed. I walked over to grab my pink suitcase before I laid it on the bed and began putting my clothes inside.

“I think this week you should stay in your female form,” Alice suggested.

“Are you worried?” I asked, knowing Alice didn't suggest anything unless she wanted to annoy me or she was seriously concerned for my safety.

“Yes,” Alice said with certainty, the tone unusual even for her. I turned to look into her purple eyes and sighed.

“I need to work on staying in my form for school.”

“Yes, but the point of the trip is for you to relax, not spend too much mana trying to maintain your male form, especially when you’re still recovering,” Alice countered.

“Did what happened to me scare you?” I spoke quietly, focusing on packing my clothes.

Neither of us had taken a moment to talk about the incident, either because I didn’t want to relive what happened so soon, or because everyone was trying to focus on preparing me for the next semester rather than linger on the past.

“Yes,” Alice whispered, the vulnerability in her voice so raw that my heart ached for my familiar. I glanced over to see sadness etched on her face as she stared at her hands in her lap.

“Alice,” I murmured, but she remained where she was, and I knew if I didn’t comfort her she’d be depressed for the rest of the evening.

After I placed the t-shirt I was holding in my bag, I moved to where she sat. Instead of sitting next to her, I knelt down before her, my eyes meeting her tear-filled gaze.

“Alice. I’m not going anywhere, see? I’m okay.” A tear escaped her left eye and rolled down her cheek. I lifted my hand and pressed it gently against her left cheek, sliding my thumb to catch the next tear that rolled down.

“I watched you fall, and I couldn’t do anything,” Alice whispered, sorrow lacing her tone. “I literally saw everything happen in slow motion as if my life was about to end, and I couldn’t even move to try and catch you...or stop you. Or do anything! Koa even reacted and tried to catch up to you, and then Nixon, all while I hovered there in shock. What a pathetic familiar I am for not being able to protect my Mistress when I

needed to the most.” She cried, tears rolling down her cheeks as her body quivered.

“Alice, it’s not your fault.”

“Yes, it is! I watched Gabriel fall and couldn’t do anything! To watch my own Mistress fall... and I couldn’t even do one spell. I couldn’t even heal you when Nixon was able to stop you guys literally inches from the ground.” Alice spoke vehemently, lifting her gaze to meet mine.

“You were a second away from death, Jewel. Not a few seconds or minutes. One second. Yet your familiar did NOTHING. Why? Because I couldn’t process that I was about to lose another person I loved. I knew how hard it was for you to lose Dad. Then there was Gabriel...but when I saw you... and realized that there was no magic spell I could do to save you, I...I just froze like a fucking deer in headlights.”

I stood up from my kneeling position and sat next to her, wrapping my arms around her. She wept, pressing her head against my chest. “In that one second it seemed like it lasted minutes, and I saw all the good times we had—the childhood we shared and your cute, mischievous self laughing with your bright eyes. I remembered everything, and I watched you grow as if I was watching a playback of your life. All of that happened, and STILL, I couldn’t do anything. I was hopeless, and if Nixon...if...if...” She couldn’t finish, sobbing harder into my shirt.

I blinked back tears as I tightened my hold on her, rubbing her back gently.

“Enough, Alice. Please, don’t blame yourself for what happened. I understand. I don’t resent you or anything.” I tried to reassure her, to soothe her with my words.

After the five weeks that had passed, I hadn't imagined her to have such negative thoughts about herself as my familiar. I hadn't thought badly about her after the incident. Even though I knew she had been there, I didn't hate her or despise her for not trying to save me.

Alice and I had been through so much together, and I could only imagine what it was like to be in her shoes watch the person you vowed to serve fall to their end. We'd both seen Gabriel's end, and it was a memory that haunted me for years until he finally passed over.

I could envision Alice watching me fall and experiencing the same emotions during my impending doom that she felt when Gabriel fell to his death. The helplessness and the agony of the memory of Gabriel's death compounded with my ultimate fate would have wreaked havoc on her.

“Alice, please don't beat yourself up. You're such an amazing familiar who contributes to my life every day. What happened was out of the blue and fast. With our past and everything we've experienced, if I were in your shoes...I'd probably freeze up too. I love you so much for always worrying about me. One incident doesn't determine whether you're a good or bad familiar, Alice. Look, you took all that time when I was catching up with Mom and Ms. Landsford to come up here and organize clothes for me. Male and female clothes. You make me laugh whenever you can and brighten up my day if it's been shitty. You never left my side when I was in the medical center, and you've been the rock I needed many times in my youth when Dad and Gabriel died. You're the best familiar I could ever ask for. Please don't think otherwise.”

She nodded, and I continued to hold her in my arms. I couldn't be more thankful for Alice as my familiar and best friend.

I didn't know what awaited us this semester, but I knew she'd remain at my side the entire way.

Alone Time with A Hint of Advice

I stared up at the starry sky, my mind drifting as I thought of Alice's breakdown.

After I'd calmed her down, we just talked for a long time. I told her about my insecurities with Zane and my concerns about Brighten while she shared similar concerns about the magic academy and Koa.

She said Koa seemed a bit down lately, and it may have been due to everything that was going on between the brothers. She did share her interest in Koa and that he had asked her out, but with everything that happened recently, they hadn't been putting that as a priority.

I felt bad that I was holding her back. She'd been so loyal to me, and now that she found someone who was interested in her not for power, but actually wanted to date her for who she was, my problems were popping up left and right.

Logan came on time to pick us up and Nixon had joined him, saying he just wanted to nap in the car. I thought he just didn't want Logan to be alone during the somewhat long ride from the cottage back to my place and that's why he'd tagged along.

The original plan had been to go straight to the cottage from Brighten, but I wanted to at least see my mom and

reassure her that I was okay and recovering.

I was also curious about how her treatment was going and was surprised at the progress that the new medication and therapy sessions that Logan's mom, Antoinette, had created.

It made me happy that Mom was getting better and trying to mingle with other people now. She'd cut ties with a lot of friends over the years who mocked her behind her back, the talk of her illness getting more disdain than empathy. I guess it showed my mom who her loyal friends were and who was just there for personal gain.

I put my hand into the cool water as I stretched out on the unicorn float I was chilling on. When we'd arrived at the cottage, it was already evening, but there was no way I was going to miss out on getting some well-deserved swim time.

I'd forgotten how nice it felt to wear a bikini, and it was fun to see the guys' expressions, half of them looking completely shocked and the other half having sexy grins on their lips.

Savannah had given all of us a LONG talk and even added the whole safe sex speech which was totally uncomfortable, during my checkup before we left Brighten, but I wanted to spend this week relaxing and enjoying their company.

Zane was supposed to be with us, but before we even left the campus, he and a boy named Nick were called to a meeting with the headmaster.

Braxton had tried to find out how long it would be so we could wait, but Ms. Landsford, who'd come over to deliver the message, advised us to go ahead to the cottage and Zane could follow after.

We still hadn't heard when he'd be arriving, but I hoped everything was okay. My goal was to at least connect to him somehow or maybe have a more in-depth conversation than simple morning and night greetings.

I lowered my gaze to the navy blue bikini with gold stripes, observing how the gold sparkled in the moonlight above.

There were still so many things I worried about, and my main concern was the orange haired man I'd seen around campus and in the window before the whole tower incident.

Lark Huntley. There was absolutely no way he'd been released, so I figured everything I was seeing was either a hallucination of some sort, or someone was just playing games with me.

I'd yet to tell anyone, but if it got worse, I might have to talk with Logan about it. I didn't want to give the impression that I was crazy or something, but the image of those silver eyes and sinister smile continued to haunt me in my weird dreams of the cloaked man.

When Logan was driving us here, I'd had the same dream, but Nixon had woken me up before it reached the falling to my death part.

The same cloaked man was there, but I didn't know what his purpose was. Was he good, or evil? There were so many questions running through my mind but not enough answers.

“Jewel!”

I tipped my head back, leaning backward on my float so I could see who was addressing me. My eyes landed on a bare-chested Maximus standing on the sandy shore. I figured he

was calling me in for dinner, but I was enjoying my moment floating on the gentle water.

I fixed my gaze on the flamingo float drifting closer to the shore and pointed to it. Maximus followed the direction of my finger and, even from afar, I could see his stunning white-toothed smile.

At least he was still wearing his black swimming trunks from before, so spending a little time in the water wouldn't be too bad. He waded into the cool water and moved to get the flamingo float. Mission accomplished, he swam towards where I continued to float on my plastic unicorn.

Once he reached me, he popped his head out and raised an eyebrow. "We could have just shared the unicorn float you know." A smirk formed on my lips before I answered.

"This isn't the Titanic, Maximus. This unicorn floaty truly fits ONE person."

"It totally could fit two people." Maximus pouted which only made me giggle.

"How would you manage that? Would we need to get some chalk and draw out all the different ways we'd both fit?" I suggested.

Maximus chuckled, shaking his head from side to side. "I'd get on first, and then you'd sit on my lap. It would work, trust me."

"What mathematical logic are you using? You plus me will equal this float sinking down under."

"It's a unicorn float. Let it use its magic or something." Maximus huffed.

“That’s not how it works.” I laughed as I sat up and crossed my legs, shooting him a challenging look. “Try it.”

“You need to come in the water with me first.” Maximus grinned.

“Not even. I dominated this unicorn float first. Nixon already had it all afternoon while he was napping on here. If it weren’t for Logan noticing a unicorn float on the other side of the lake, Nixon would have drifted away forever.”

“That was funny though, you have to admit.” Maximus snorted, probably imagining the scenario in his mind.

“You guys are horrible.” I sighed with a smile still on my lips. He smiled back before he rested his arms on the edge of my float.

“See? You haven’t sunk yet.”

“Uh huh. Keep goi- EEP!” I didn’t finish my sentence as Maximus tried to lift himself onto the float and, instead, I fell forward into him and we both crashed into the water.

I swam back up and gasped when my head reached the surface, my unicorn float now upside down and already drifting away.

“Maxi!” I huffed, and his head popped out in front of me, making me gasp. “My heart!” I exclaimed.

“Is perfectly fine. I think I miscalculated that one,” Maxi admitted sheepishly.

“I told you. Not the Titanic.” I laughed, unable to stay mad at him.

He grinned and looked at my upside down unicorn. “Let me get that.”

I watched him swim over to retrieve my float, but I reached out for the flamingo float and lifted myself onto it.

My hands moved the wet strands of my long hair that stuck to my face, the thought of cutting it short came to my mind. *Short hair. Hmmm. Could be a good change? Maybe...*

“What are you thinking about?” Maximus asked, reaching the flamingo float. He ended up lifting himself onto the unicorn float and sighed in relief as he outstretched his hands on the circular edges. “Much better.”

I giggled before I replied. “Cutting my hair? Maybe.”

“Have you cut your hair before?” Maxi asked.

“No. I just kinda feel like doing it. Uh..spontaneous thoughts I guess.”

“Just want a change?” Maxi spoke quietly, and I slowly nodded my affirmation, my eyes meeting his hazelnut ones that held hints of gold and red.

“Is it bad for me to feel completely lost as to what I should do?”

“No. Not everything has a clear path for you to stroll on. Some journeys in life are longer and more confusing than others. One way can be short and easy to follow. Another can be strenuous with dead ends and hurdles that slow you down. Feeling lost sometimes happens. You just need to find someone or something to help you if you can't figure something out,” Maximus replied.

I nodded, looking up at the sky. “Can you be the someone that helps me figure things out?”

I felt his large hand grasp mine. I lowered my gaze to our joined hands, Maxi having reached out for my dangling hand

that had been chilling in the water.

“Sure.” He squeezed my hand and shot me a reassuring smile. I gave a responding squeeze and took a deep breath.

“I feel like I’m doing a pretty poor job with balancing everything. It took me more than two weeks to realize Alice was blaming herself for the tower incident. She broke down and cried like I’d never seen in my entire life. Logan seems to be handling everything okay, but he’s the type to lead and doesn’t share if he’s struggling. Nixon is so quiet and carries all his worries and concerns within him, and I’ve yet to have time to ask if everything’s okay with him. Braxton would rather comfort me than rely on me if he has problems, which is normally fine because he works it out so smoothly, but my gut is telling me something’s going on with him that he’s not sharing with me. I get he’s dealing with what happened with Zane, but I think I’m missing something completely.” I paused, thinking over what more to share before I continued.

“Kage and Zane. The tension between those two is palpable, and I don’t know what to do to stop it. Kage acts fine when he’s around us, but when Zane is in the picture, it’s like his whole mood changes and he doesn’t want to be near anyone. I know it’s affecting Koa and that leads back to his new relationship with Alice, and she’s worried about him too. Zane is just putting himself out like he committed a crime, but with all the facts presented to me, he was just trying to protect me. Having no memories about him just makes everything worse, and I feel if I don’t do anything...maybe we’ll lose him to another group of friends who will give him the attention he needs and deserves.”

I turned my gaze on Maximus and gave him a sad look. “And you, Maximus. You’re so damn kind and patient. We

have barely had time with each other and yet you haven't made a fuss or complained. I'm just doing such a shitty job as a girlfriend, in my mind, but all of you are able to deal with my nightmares and panic attacks. You make sure I eat and nap on the days I barely sleep. All of you, including Zane, are trying to help me, but I can't seem to give myself equally to each of you along with my familiar, family, and now add in school again...I just can't do it," I admitted, frustration lacing my tone.

"Maybe if I had the full month break and it wasn't spent with me being unconscious for half of it and the other half recovering, I would have been able to spend time with everyone. We could have enjoyed breakfast together and beach dates during the day. We'd have campfires and float on the lake just like we're doing now. We have to squeeze all of that in a week now, and once school starts...I don't know where everything's going to go."

Maximus was quiet, nodding his head as he appeared deep in thought. He was probably taking in my long explanation and attempting to break it down.

"Jewel. You don't have to juggle twenty things all the time. The guys and I talked about this long ago, and even with everything that happened, we remind each other over and over again that you're one person. Having six boyfriends is hard, especially with everything that happened. We all have our own insecurities and problems that like to rear their ugly heads into our lives, especially when things are already chaotic. However, none of us expect you to share yourself equally with us."

Maxi smiled and looked up at the sky. "When you look at the stars, for example. There could be one bright star among

thousands, but just because that bright star can't reach the stars that are at the edge of the sky, doesn't mean they're neglected. It's thanks to Logan that we're able to share you to begin with, so we all know you will be close to Logan no matter what. He knows everything about you, just like you know everything about him. And in times of need, he'll always be the first person that would come to your mind. None of us will decide to hate you or Logan because of it. Could be the same as you talking to me right now, or if you talk to Brax, or Kage or anyone. We don't feel neglected or unloved because we can't spend days or hours with you, Jewel."

He looked at me and smiled, squeezing my hand once more. "It's the little moments that count. Right now, I'm floating on a unicorn float with my girlfriend. To someone like Nixon, his little moment is getting to nap with his arms around you. Braxton loves classes with you because he gets to tease you about showers all day." Maxi winked, and I groaned as my cheeks flushed.

I allowed him to continue, keeping my comments about Braxton's love of our shower moment in my mind.

"Kage enjoys explaining all about his familiar knowledge or studying with you every evening. I bet even Zane has a little moment he thinks about. All that matters to us, your boyfriends, is that you're healthy, happy, and loved. Doesn't matter if Logan gives you more love than Braxton, or if Kage takes you out for a date and I don't. As long as we get to see you smile and hear that wonderful laugh of yours, that's all that matters. Love isn't just dates, gifts, and all the time spent together. Sometimes, you need a bit of space to realize how much you adore a person, so when you get that opportunity to be close to them, you cherish every second of it."

“So none of you are upset with me?” I worried my bottom lip as I waited for his response.

“Why would we be? Jewel, you’re fucking amazing. Your mom accidentally signed you up to attend Brighten, an all boys school. Instead of refusing, you not only attended, but thanks to you, so many students who survived last semester aren’t being pushed against lockers, sabotaged in changing rooms, and being outright insulted in public. We haven’t gotten a chance to show you the number of letters we’ve received at our dorm thanking you for what you did. People travel from different countries to attend Brighten, and the last thing they need is to be bullied because of their differences. All of us are proud that we get to love and be with a girl who can turn into a guy and bring change and awareness. I know for me, as a person who’s dealt with being the victim of bullying, I would have wished there were more people like you.” His voice had turned into a whisper by the last part of his statement.

He pulled my hand, bringing my float to rest against his, and his eyes locked onto mine. “From now on, I want you to understand that we love you. All of us, even Zane. When school starts, everything is going to go fast, and it’s going to feel like you’re drowning in work and assignments. We may not have time to have individualized moments alone like these, but our love won’t falter. I don’t want this to end, and I know the others don’t either. So be confident in yourself like you always have, Jewel, and let your instincts help you choose the right path. I’m always here if you need me.”

A tear rolled down my cheek, and I gave him a broad grin. “Thank you, Maxi.”

“I still think Maxi is a weird nickname,” he mumbled. He leaned forward, his eyes lowering to my lips. My body moved toward him, and my lips pressed softly to his.

I pulled my hand out of his to rest on the edge of his float, wanting to be closer to him as our kiss deepened. He groaned and rested his hands on my hips, our blazing kiss making me moan into his mouth.

He lifted me off the float with ease, and I wrapped my arms around his neck as he leaned back and continued to ravage my mouth. He broke the kiss, leaving a trail of hickeys down my neck and along my left shoulder as he turned his attention to the rest of my body.

“Maximus,” I gasped, my voice breathless as I enjoyed every suck he delivered and the lingering bites that made me tremble with need.

“Jewel. It’s really hard to resist you,” Maxi murmured, returning to devour my mouth once more. I’d completely forgotten the fact we weren’t on the beach or anything but floating on the unicorn float.

I pulled back to lift an eyebrow at him. “Hey. We didn’t plunge to our deaths.”

He rolled his eyes but laughed. “Magic, Precious.” He winked.

I glance over to see the gold and red magic circles peeking beneath the unicorn float. I laughed, shaking my head. “Smooth, Maxi. Smooth.”

“Anything to get to kiss our Jewel,” he replied with a silly grin.

“GUYS! Dinner!”

We looked to the shore to see the others. Kage and Logan waved their arms while Brax and Nixon had wide smiles. I searched for Zane, but he wasn't present. *Zane's not here.*

"Koa said Zane isn't coming. Since he didn't inform the headmaster or professors about what happened, he has to help clean the school as a punishment with Nick. Guess it's better than being expelled," Alice quiet voice replied.

Oh...okay. Thanks, Alice.

"Don't worry, Jewel. You'll get a chance to talk with him during school," Alice suggested. *"And you're welcome."*

"What's wrong?" Maxi asked.

I turned my attention to him and gave him a sheepish smile. "Zane's not coming. He's on cleaning duty for his involvement. Alice just told me."

Maxi sighed. "I guess it makes sense. Better than being expelled. The headmaster is normally super strict."

I nodded, but the thought of him all alone in the house while we had the rest of the week to have fun made me sad.

"Hey," Maxi whispered, cradling my face with his hands. "Don't worry. One step at a time. We'll work this all out soon enough. Alright?"

"Okay," I replied. He leaned in to give me a tender kiss.

"I'M HUNGRY, STOP MAKING LOVE TO HER MAXIMUS!" Braxton shouted.

"I got a picture!" I heard Kage yell out.

"Hey, that's not bad. Kage, you have to take pictures of all of us!" Logan suggested.

"Nixon?! Don't sleep on me!" Braxton huffed.

I snickered, breaking the kiss to laugh at the boys' loud conversation and Maxi sighed. "You are ALL talking loud on purpose! Leave me and Jewel in-AH!" Maxi started before the magic circles disappeared and we both sank into the water with the unicorn float.

I gasped, shaking my wet strands as I kept myself afloat. The guys' laughter echoed in the night air and Maxi finally popped up, the unicorn float once again upside down and drifting away.

"Dammit! Next time we're getting those floats that fit six people!" He huffed and ran his hands over his face, removing most of the water.

"There's seven of us," I pointed out.

Maximus grinned, swimming over and stopping right in front of me. "Yes, but you'll sit on my lap, so that counts as one."

I giggled. "If you say so. Just make sure your calculations are right next time."

"I'm normally excellent at math!" Maximus countered but sealed my reply with another kiss. He pulled back and we shared an intense look.

"Enjoy this week, Jewel. We'll handle all the other stuff when we get back," he encouraged me earnestly. We glanced toward the others, and I grinned with happiness.

Yes. I'll just enjoy this moment with my boyfriends and deal with everything when school starts. Zane...I hope you're patient enough to wait for me. I'll learn about you soon enough.

Sense of Danger

“Y ou okay?”

I opened my locker before I glanced at Braxton standing to my right. “I’m fine. Why?” I replied, grabbing the books I needed for our next class.

The halls were busy, everyone rushing and, to my surprise, no one was lingering outside the classrooms. Now with the new rules, people were cautious. It was already the middle of the first week, and at least twenty students had been expelled from Brighten.

I guess they assumed Ms. Landsford and the other professors were joking about their initiative to eliminate bullying, but they proved their point on the first day. Now that it was Wednesday, no one wanted to get caught even talking to one another.

I didn’t care to be seen conversing as I knew I wasn’t bullying anyone, but I did want to get to class and rest my head for a bit.

I’d been having annoying headaches all day, and it was starting to get to me. A good power nap before class would make up for it.

“You’re pale, and you looked like you couldn’t concentrate last class.”

“I have a headache,” I admitted.

I tried to close my locker, but Braxton laid his forearm on the door as he gave me a stern look. I let out an annoyed groan.

“Brax, not today.”

“What did Savannah say?” Brax countered.

I rolled my eyes but knew Brax wasn’t going to drop it.

“She said if I wasn’t feeling well to see her immediately,” I muttered. Brax lifted an eyebrow at me, and I continued. “Especially if I have headaches because it could be a sign that I’m about to have a seizure.”

“Exactly.” Brax’s tone was firm as he punctuated the word with a sharp nod.

“Brax, I KNOW when I’m going to experience a seizure. I don’t feel that way,” I argued, lifting my hand to ruffle my hair.

“I know you do, but we don’t need to wait for you to ‘feel’ like you’re about to have a seizure before you go see Savannah,” Brax scolded.

“You’re acting like Logan.”

“I’m trying to protect you, Jinn. Maybe you’re not concerned, but we are,” Brax snapped.

I didn’t say anything as I peered into my locker to avoid looking into Brax’s green eyes. I sighed, knowing I shouldn’t be upset with his concern.

Braxton had been watching me like a hawk, and it was just his way of protecting me, but I didn’t want to worry anyone.

My health was my own concern. I didn't feel like I needed to bother other people.

"I'm just a little irritated today. Sorry," I mumbled. Brax nodded, and I felt his left hand slip in my right.

"We're in public."

"I don't think anyone gives a hoot about either of us right now," Brax countered, squeezing my hand gently. "Plus, can't see our joined hands when we're facing the lockers."

I pressed my lips together and squeezed his hand back, needing the extra reassurance. Even with my headache, I'd been feeling uneasy, but I couldn't pinpoint why.

Was it from my dreams? Or was it just a lingering fear of being watched or jumped? I could defend myself just fine, and with all the installments of security cameras, the likelihood of it happening was slim, but it was something to keep in mind when walking the halls alone.

I wasn't going to depend on the guys to always be with me, especially when I was a guy myself. I needed to handle my shit on my own, just like a guy would.

"Promise you'll go to the nurse's office before class," Brax whispered.

I lifted my gaze to look at him. "Kage will worry." I knew the excuse wouldn't get me out of Brax's order, but it was worth a shot.

Brax grinned, catching onto my attempt. "I'll text him."

"Fine," I capitulated. Braxton was stubborn, and there was no way I'd get my way.

"Good," he replied with a quirk to his lips. I glanced to my left, noticing the hall was getting quieter as the number of

students walking up and down the hall lessened.

My eyes caught a glimpse of an orange head, and my heart skipped a beat while my mind pondered if it was the same person with silver eyes.

“Jinn?”

I waited for the student to turn and to my relief, it wasn't the person whose presence I still felt was around the school. *Could that person be Lark, and is he after me?*

“Jinn,” Braxton said again, the hardness of his voice bringing me out of my thoughts. I turned my gaze back toward him, and I noticed how close his face was to mine.

“Wh...what?” I stuttered. He frowned, glancing in the direction I'd just been staring at before his green eyes locked onto me.

“Are you still seeing Lark randomly in places?” Brax asked with a low voice. I bit my lip and gave him a little nod.

“A part of me wants to come to terms with the possibility that I'm seeing things...but this is the fifth time this week, Brax. I told Savannah, and she thinks it could be my anxiety or a hallucination of sorts, but each time I've spotted him, he's looked directly in my eyes...the same way he did when I fell off the tower.”

My lip trembled as I explained, and I squeezed Brax's hand so tightly, I wondered if I'd stop his blood circulation.

“I haven't told the others, because I don't want them worrying. But...I don't...I...” I let out a frustrated grunt. “As a guy, I shouldn't have to rely on you guys, but I'm freaking the fuck out by keeping this in, and I'm honestly scared to walk to class alone. Stupid right? Like...I can defend myself.

Why the fuck am I acting like a ‘pussy.’ Or that’s what all you guys like to say to call us weak.”

“You know pussy is a really poor example of weakness,” Brax pointed out which made me chuckle.

“Ya, ya, pussies can take a pounding.”

Brax leaned in and pressed his forehead against mine. My eyes grew wide, and I desperately wanted to look around to make sure no one was watching. “Brax, we’re in the hall.”

“Jewel,” he whispered. I froze at his gentle voice while I got lost in his lime green eyes with the beautiful specks of gold that seemed more vivid than usual.

“Just because you’re a guy, doesn’t mean you have to feel afraid and alone. Your gut has never steered you wrong, and if you think that Lark is somehow free and walking around school, we won’t turn a blind eye to it. He shouldn’t be on campus period, but I’ll look into it. Understood?”

“But Brax, you’re dealing with a lot.”

“I’m perfectly fine. Now, off to the nurse’s office you go,” Brax urged. He pulled back with a confident smirk, and I shook my head.

“I don’t know how you do it.”

“Do what?”

“Make everything somewhat better? You can walk into a situation with no knowledge of what’s going on but give such confident answers and deal with the problem at hand like you have all the evidence regarding the situation.” I sighed, tension draining from my shoulders and allowing me to relax a little.

“I’m used to it,” Brax said with a small smile, but I noticed the sadness in his eyes.

Braxton?

“Get going.” Brax slipped his hand out of mine so I could grab my remaining books. I nodded, snagging one more book before I quickly placed the old texts from earlier that I knew I wouldn’t use for today back on the shelf.

Brax moved to help close the door of my locker but put his arm over my shoulder as if to give me a half hug. “Brax? What are you-” I began, turning my head to look at him once more, but his soft lips pressed against mine.

If it weren’t for the door of my locker and how closely we both stood to the row of gold-tinted lockers, we would undoubtedly be seen kissing. I still was trying to get a grasp on the thought of kissing another guy and doing my best not to get hard from the simple action, but it was harder than I thought. *And I wasn’t referring to my cock, but it was getting there.*

For a second I let go and kissed him back, my body craving his touch. But just as quickly, I pulled away.

“Brax! Someone could see,” I murmured. He merely grinned as he pulled away and helped close my locker.

“Don’t see anyone,” he replied and ever so slowly licked his lips. “Kage should be here in a minute, but I have to head to the other side of the school. You’re going to be okay?” he asked.

I nodded but gave him a confused look as I put my backpack on. “How do you know Kage is coming? You didn’t pull out your phone.”

“My familiar told Koa, who told Kage, who’s on his way.” A wide grin spread across Brax’s face.

“I’ve yet to meet your familiar,” I grumbled.

“In time, grasshopper. In time.” Brax chuckled and I groaned, punching his arm playfully.

“Go to class.”

“I’m going, Jinn. Make sure you head straight to the nurse. Kage will tell me.” Brax raised his brow, staring me down.

“Whatever. I hope your three-way communication fails.” I raised my chin and huffed, and Braxton merely laughed.

“See you later, Jinn,” he replied, waving his hand as he walked away.

I looked around, thankful that there was no one left in this section of the hall. I sighed, turned to rest my head against my locker, and lifted my right hand to press my fingers against my lips.

He doesn't even take into consideration that I'm a guy right now. Ugh...that kiss turned me on though. Damn boy hormones. Wait...boys have hormones, right? I give up.

“Shouldn’t the guaranteed Mage Warrior be getting to class?”

I had to hold back an annoyed groan, my headache deciding to come back with force. *Really, headache? When I was busy wishing for Braxton to keep kissing me, you didn't bring your ugly head out to play?*

I lifted my head and opened my eyes to look at the person standing behind me. I frowned when three different pairs of eyes met mine, and this time I did groan as my shoulder sunk.

“C’mon guys. Are we seriously picking fights today? I’m not in the mood, and last time I checked, the new rules were put into place.” I rested my back against the lockers. I gave them the ‘I really don’t have time for your pettiness right now’

look, and my chilled body language was already making the two guys that stood next to the black-haired dude with green highlights nervous.

“My brother got expelled because of you!” The middle guy snarled.

I stared at him with a clueless expression which I figured looked like I was already bored out of my mind.

“Who? Sorry, there were at least ten other guys, and if you didn’t hear the full story from your apparent brother, I crashed into a wall, hit my head, and later fell off the tower, so I’m still working on the whole therapy aspect. Why don’t you lay out the information for me because my ass ain’t wasting time trying to remember who your brother is,” I replied.

“Eric! He worked his fucking ass off to get into this school, and you fucking ruined it.”

“Oh, Eric? WHAT?! I, as in me, Jinn Starfire, was the reason why your brother fucked up? I’m sorry to let you know, I don’t have controlling powers. I didn’t force your brother to chill with the wrong crowd or go to initiation ceremonies to jump off a tower and try to fly. Maybe if he had been found dead, you’d be looking for the real culprits who made sure your brother was caught instead of them. For example, why don’t you go talk to Lark’s brother who was in charge of everything?”

I pushed off the locker and stood right in front of him. “Listen. My head is killing me right now, and unless you want to deal with my seizure trembling ass and being responsible for it, I suggest you get off my back,” I growled and saw his eyes widen.

I could feel my magic gathering in my eyes and knew they displayed a bright red from the slight reflection in Eric's brother's black eyes.

Not waiting for any of them to answer, I began to walk away, going in the opposite direction of where Braxton had gone. *Ugh, totally going to the nurse's office. Alice?*

"Jewel? I'm almost there with Koa. You don't sound so good," Alice answered, a hint of worry lingering in her voice.

I'm fine, but I'm heading to the nurse's office. My head is bothering the fuck out of me.

I was ready to turn the corner, but I came to a stop, my magic senses kicking in just before I took the next step.

"For fuck's sakes," I exclaimed, staring at the gold barrier that was blocking my path. I turned around to face the three guys that were a few lockers down.

"Did any of my words get through to your small brains? Headache equals seizure? I have to be a good boy and go to the nurse's office before Braxton kicks my ass. No, actually, all my dorm mates would kick my ass, but Brax would especially kick my ass extra hard," I complained, trailing on as I thought about what would happen if I didn't get out of this shit.

No, I should be worried about Kage. Silent but deadly. Or Logan. He'll give me a lecture for days. Maximus wouldn't let me out of his sight with Braxton and Nixon...he'd probably follow me to every washroom. That wouldn't be quite so bad. We can do a lot...I mean no! No washroom with Nixon. I know how to aim this thing. Don't need a second round of lessons... Maybe.

“Are you seriously talking to yourself right now, or did you forget I can hear what you’re thinking,” Alice asked through our connection.

ALICE! There are these guys trying to beat me up!

“Huh?! But your head! Don’t use any magic. You could trigger a seizure,” Alice scolded.

Um, sorry to burst your bubble but I’m kinda a sitting duck right now. Maybe if I have a seizure now, I’ll get it on video and the professors will feel pity for me and kick out these losers too.

“THAT’S NOT HOW IT WORKS! You can DIE from your seizures, you idiot!” Alice shouted.

Ah, not so loud Alice and that’s only like, what? 50% chance? I’m good.

“Is he ignoring us?” one of the guys questioned the other two.

“HEY JINN!” Eric’s brother snapped. I raised my hand up to signal them to hold on.

Alice, I gotta deal with Eric’s brother and his two lackeys so if you’re in the area, come to help me, please? Can’t guarantee I won’t have a seizure though.

“One minute! Distract them for ONE minute!” Alice huffed.

Fine.

I didn’t know what she was planning, but I could easily distract these three for one measly minute.

“Sorry, I was attempting to remember the spell that creates floods. I think it would be pretty cool to flood this hall right

now. Seeing as you guys boxed us in, the water would just be in this sectioned area until it reached the top. It would be the perfect match to play, *'Who Can Hold Their Breath the Longest?'* I've been told I'm pretty good at it." I let the strap of my bag that hung loosely on my left arm fall, and I tossed it to the left wall before I cracked my neck.

I could already see the nervousness in their expressions, and I began to roll up the sleeves of my white dress shirt. *Good thing I left my blazer in my locker early in the morning.*

"I'll tell everyone you're gay."

I paused in my sleeve rolling, lifting my gaze to meet Eric's brother's wide grin. "I'll let everyone know that you like guys. You're dating that shy redhead kid, right? I'll make sure every student and teacher know that their honorable, brave Jinn likes cock rather than pussy."

The other two boys laughed and pointed at me.

"Damn, you're gay?! How does it feel to have a cock up your ass?!"

"Maybe you're into Braxton too? Oh, he wouldn't like to see you flirting with another guy."

Eric's brother grinned in satisfaction as he crossed his arms, the cocky look making my eye want to twitch. "When everyone knows you like guys, they'll all stay away from you like a toxic disease. You don't want that right? So, why don't you go to the headmaster herself, and tell her that my brother was innocent and MAYBE I'll let you off the hook."

"Man, blackmailing someone feels so sweet," the guy to his left said.

"Right. About time Will got his revenge." The other guy smirked.

I blinked, staring at the three of them for a few seconds before a snicker escaped me. I slapped my hand over my mouth while my shoulders shook, doing my best to hold in the waves of laughter that threatened to spew out of me, but their confused expressions were even more amusing.

In seconds I burst out laughing. The rich sound echoed around the barrier walls, and I had to clench my stomach as I continued my laughing fit.

“Um...Will? Did he lose it?”

“Maybe we should have let him off. Could be a side effect of that head injury of his.”

“Shut it you two!” Will snapped. “Why the fuck are you laughing, Jinn?”

“You...hahaha. You think I give a fuck about people knowing I’m gay?! BAHAHA!” I laughed so hard tears rolled down my cheeks, and even if my head was killing me, this moment was pure gold.

“What?” Will ground out from gritted teeth. I opened my eyes and lifted my hands to wipe away my tears.

“Go ahead. Tell the whole damn school I’m gay. In fact, I’ll even make a damn announcement on the intercom! You think this is what? FIFTY YEARS AGO, where you couldn’t kiss a person of the same sex? Did you guys really think I’d be shunned out of Brighten for liking cock? I can’t. Oh, this is gonna be a fun discussion when I tell Nixon.” I had to take a few breaths to calm myself before I continued.

“Listen, boys. I like cock. Amazing, long, seven-inch cock that I can suck nice and slow like a mother fucking popsicle. And guess what? It’s a fucking turn on, and I get more dick and sex than any of you. In fact, I had sex, what? Three days

ago? Nah, two days because it was Monday early morning sex. You know, where your lover pins you down on the couch and fucks you nice and slow sex. AH, it was hot as fuck.” I smirked, enjoying their shocked expressions as they gawked at me.

“Now don’t get me started on the threesome business. It’s complicated at first, but one mouth sucking your cock at the perfect pace while the other cock is up in your ass and you’re being bitten on the neck...and the combined moans. You are all just missing out on the orgies happening with my Nixon, and he LOVES it,” I stressed. *Thanks to all the gay porn and Yaoi I’ve watched and read recently.*

I sighed, ruffling my hair as I composed myself. “So again, feel free to tell all of Brighten that I like cock. Perfectly fine with me and if you didn’t know, girls actually LOVE gay guys like me. In fact, I might as well say I’m bisexual and I’ll let them join in the fun.” I winked.

Teasing men is so entertaining.

“You...you!” Will tried to speak but he looked horrified.

All three of their eyes widened, and I was confused as to what I had said that was so horrific to make them freeze in place like statues. *Jeez, are people really scared of gay people? It’s not like I have claws or something. I just like cock...well that’s the girl side of me talking, but nevertheless.*

I felt something land on my shoulder, and I mentally sighed, knowing Alice had arrived. *Took you longer than a minute, Alice.*

“Huh? I’m not the-” Alice replied, sounding confused. I turned my head right as lips claimed mine; red eyes with black magic circles locked onto my now gold eyes. *NIXON?*

He closed his eyes and continued the firm kiss that made my cock grow hard which was both exciting and a bit uncomfortable at how my cock pressed against my boxers.

I kissed him back and my lids lowered, forgetting that we stood in the middle of the hall in front of Will and his two lackeys who were completely silent through it all.

“Nixon. Don’t hog Jinn all to yourself,” Kage complained, and I felt a hand run through my locks.

Nixon broke the kiss, and I turned to see Kage’s seductive smile, the look reminding me of when we’d been at the party, hiding in the washroom.

I wasn’t even given time to think before he pulled me in for a hot kiss, slipping his tongue into my mouth. Again, I forgot to think, feeling lost in the dominating kiss that sent shivers through me. A deep groan escaped me, the feel of a hand gripping and rubbing the bulge of my pants sending tremors of pleasure and anticipation through me. *Fuck, fuck, fuck.*

“Well you could all fuck now, but I think you guys are gonna make those boys faint. Also, I’m totally recording this,” Alice announced.

“HEY! We’re, we, wer- dammit! WE’RE STANDING RIGHT HERE!” Will struggled to speak, and I heard a loud thump.

“Aww, fuck. Tim? Tim?”

Kage broke the kiss and glanced down at my pants where Nixon’s hand still laid comfortably against my cock. I studied Nixon and noticed his flushed cheeks, but he turned his gaze away to hide his embarrassment. His hand held firm in its

position. “Oh? Our bad. Did you guys want to watch?” Nixon asked innocently.

Kage chuckled. “I think they should take their friend to the medical ward instead. It might get a bit hot in here. Don’t wanna make anyone else pass out,” Kage pointed out with a smirk that looked extremely hot to me but probably appeared deadly to the others.

“How did you even get through the barrier we made?” Will snarked.

“Easyyyyy,” A smooth voice declared, and two guys walked past us to lean on the row of lockers.

My jaw went slack as I stared at the mesmerizing men before me. The first one had long gold hair that shifted to brown with silver on the ends. He stood at 6’6” with an oval face, tanned complexion, and had a medium build. Regardless of his build, we could see the muscle of his biceps in his white shirt with gold trimming and gold buttons, the silky material tucked into his black dress pants. To complete the look were black dress shoes and a silver feather in his hair which seemed to fit him perfectly for what some would have called a girly accessory.

His eyes were mismatched and were the reason why I knew exactly who this man was; the right eye a vibrant plum purple and the left a beautiful gold. *K-KOA?! Oh hell no! That means...ALICE?!*

I turned my eyes to the male who was holding a phone in his hand, my mind immediately realizing he was recording us.

He stood at 6’4 with shoulder-length hair that was tied up in a ponytail; a few pale purple strands rested on both sides of

his angular face. His face was flawless, complexion pale, and his lips were the perfect shade of rosy pink.

He wore a loose white dress shirt, the first three buttons undone to give us a teasing view of his chiseled chest. Even though he had a slimmer build than Koa, it suited him perfectly. Adding in his black pants and white dress shoes, he gave off the model vibe, and his purple eyes were the definition of model worthy.

I glanced up and down the two of them, my eyes locking on Alice. *Alice?! My familiar Alice? How the hell are you a guy? No wait, don't answer that yet. How is my familiar taller than me? I definitely did a miscalculation here. I should have made myself taller.*

"Is that really what you're pondering?" Alice voiced in my mind. Her, or should I say his, face was calm with a slight grin, but her tone was filled with exaggeration.

"Who the fuck are you two?!" Will shouted, pointing at Koa and Alice. They turned their attention from us to Will and his friend, who was currently lifting a still unconscious Tim off the floor.

Alice pointed her phone at Will and chuckled. "Hey Koa. Who would have thought we'd see a bully on the first day of our transfer."

"Hmm. Wasn't there some new rule going on? Something to do with no bullying will be tolerated?" Koa said quietly, sounding extremely bored.

"Yes! The new law of Brighten. I'm glad you told me to video the place. It would be rather saddening if this got to the headmaster's office. Actually, weren't we going there to fill out our forms?"

“Yes, Ali. It would be a shame if we presented this evidence to the headmaster when we fill out our forms. I guess these guys would be suspended right away?”

“Suspended? No, no. Expelled, Koako. Means bye bye to ever graduating from Brighten. Total shame,” Alice, or Ali, declared.

Really? Ali and Koako? Couldn't you be more creative?

“Uh huh. Jewel and Jinn both start with J. Can I also add your middle initial is J for Jewel?” Alice mumbled into my mind.

“DON'T share it to the headmaster! Um...we....we weren't doing anything,” Will quickly defended.

“We're innocent! It was Will's fucking idea. Leave Tim and me out of this,” the other guy exclaimed.

“Shut the fuck up, Neil!” Will snarled.

“Hmm, what to do? Where we come from, we do give second chances.” Ali appeared deep in thought with the camera still directly on the three of them.

Koako sighed, sliding his hands in his pockets before his mismatched eyes locked on the pair, the look enough to send shivers through me. *And not the pleasurable kind.*

“Don't go near my friend and his friends again. If you do, whatever comes your way is yours to bear. Now get out of our sight before I change my mind,” he said with spite.

Neil was already racing down the hall with Tim on his shoulder like he weighed nothing, and Will quivered in his place, looking back to see Neil turning the corner to what I assumed was the way to the larger medical ward.

“I’m not afraid of you!” Will cried, pointing at Ali and Koako but a second after turned around and raced down the hall, disappearing from our sight as he rounded the corner.

“Damn. He ran like an Olympic sprinter,” Ali commented.

“Good. Wasting our experimental time. Which reminds me,” Koako pointed out before he turned my way. “Afternoon, Jewel.”

“It’s Jinn at school, Koa,” Ali reminded him.

“Oh. Sure. Uh...” Koako replied before his eyes scanned our position. Ali grinned and hooked his arm around Koako’s.

“We’ll leave you three alone! The cameras still aren’t working in this blocked section, so you can have all the fun you want. Kage will explain to you later, Jinn. Love you!” Ali cheered. We watched them walk away like they were taking a stroll in the park instead of the hall of the school, Ali’s arm still wrapped up in Koako’s.

I looked back down to my crotch and blushed. “Um... Nixon. As much as I’m enjoying this, I think we should leave before someone sees us,” I admitted shyly.

Nixon’s face grew red, and he immediately moved his hand away. “My bad,” he mumbled.

“Admit you liked it just a little bit,” Kage stated quietly. I looked at him and ruffled his navy-blue hair.

“And you! When did you get so bold all of a sudden? Was that whole thing planned? Why is my familiar a man? And Koa too?! Actually, no. Let’s talk about this after I have an aspirin and lay down,” I dismissed, my headache once again taking the opportunity to rear its ugly head in the conversation by reminding me of the need to see Savannah.

Kage and Nixon both frowned. “Headache?” Nixon asked.

“Seizure coming?” Kage asked.

“No. I mean yes. I mean...let’s just go,” I replied, heading off first as I ran my hands through my hair. I heard their following footsteps and turned the corner, Nixon and Kage slowly catching up.

Kage moved ahead while Nixon lingered behind. “You’re okay though, right?” he whispered. I met his now black eyes, the fear in them making me sad.

I reached out and slipped my hand in his, squeezing it tightly. “I’m fine, Nixon. Just a headache. Those guys didn’t bother me.”

“You’re...um...still okay with me, you know?” he asked hesitantly.

“Being your male boyfriend at Brighten?” I elaborated. He nodded.

I stopped for a moment, which made him stop as well. He gave me a confused look, but I didn’t let him think for long as I leaned in and gave him a gentle kiss. I pulled back to see the surprise in his expression.

“You are mine, Nixon Rose. If any guy wants to take you, they can enjoy having my foot up their ass,” I declared.

His cheeks tinted red, but a small grin formed on his lips as he slowly nodded. “Okay.”

I smiled in return, and he squeezed my hand before he took the lead, his smooth confidence returning after my firm declaration.

I glanced over my shoulder at the feeling of someone watching us, and I noticed the end of a gold cape, the silly

cloth material disappearing from sight. I frowned and swallowed the lump in my throat, wondering who that was, but I knew if I checked, I wouldn't find the answer to my question.

I returned my attention forward as we reached the nurse's office, Kage waiting for the two of us. *Must be my imagination. I seriously need to sleep. I think I'll do just that.*

At least I avoided a bit of danger.

Date and Troubled Truth

“Kage!” I waved my right arm in greeting.

Kage lifted his gaze from his phone and turned it in my direction; those blue eyes widened as his jaw went slack.

I looked both ways before I crossed the busy streets of Natala, walking over to where Kage leaned against a bright yellow car.

He wore a navy-blue golf shirt, the sleeves and neck outlined in light blue. He sported white jeans and blue Nike’s, and his tinted blue shades rested on his head. His blue hair was gelled back neatly and fit his overall casual yet classy look.

My outfit was an off-the-shoulder dress. It was tight at the waist and made my breasts pop out with a little cleavage exposure while the bottom half flared out. The white dress had navy blue lines running down it, and I matched it with wedges; the heels had the same striped pattern as my dress.

My makeup was simple—red lipstick with a hint of magic gloss to keep it as it was regardless if I ended up kissing Kage on our date and silver eyeshadow to make my red eyes pop out. I loved the dress because it showed my flower tattoos that I always enjoyed having on display, but when I was a guy with our usually short-sleeved, long-sleeved, or blazer attire, the tattoo I had on my arm never showed.

I added simple gold jewelry pieces to my wrists and gold earrings that were visible thanks to my new hairdo.

Four weeks had flown by, and we were enjoying a three day weekend thanks to the holiday. I couldn't believe how fast time had breezed by us, and I was taking this opportunity to have a date with Kage.

I hadn't had too many incidents after my confrontation with Will and his friends since Braxton and the others took turns walking with me to class. It was a weird thing to do as a guy, but I sucked up my male pride and accepted that it was safer, and it relieved the stress of me being jumped.

Zane had been hanging at home a lot more than previously. Maximus explained that he used to stay out at other friend's places. Most of those friends either failed the first semester or were expelled due to being involved with the tower incident. Whoever was left didn't want anything to do with Zane, which proved to me that not everyone is in your life for friendship. Clearly, those guys were there to get some type of benefit or leverage in their goal to be a part of the cool kids and have the "easier" life.

As for the tension in the group, it was healing slowly. Kage and Zane could actually stay in the same room for longer than an hour, but Kage was still sleeping in my room.

Now that we were going out today, I could maybe find out what was going on with him and why he'd been what Logan called 'moody.'

There must have been a reason for Kage's random mood swings, and I vowed to figure out what it was. I'd also noticed Braxton leaving campus a few times last week, but whenever I asked, he said everything was fine.

Once I figured out what was going on with Kage, I'd check in with Braxton. He wasn't hard to talk with, but it was a bit of a hassle to get him to open up when he wanted to carry his burdens on his own rather than rely on others.

Logan decided to go home and check on his parents. Surprisingly, he took Nixon with him, saying that if he left him, he'd probably nap all day long which I knew was true. Zane was struggling with a few subjects, so Maximus was spending the day helping him out, and Braxton said he'd go home and check on his parents.

Kage still had a shocked expression on his face when I reached him, his eyes lingering on my short brown locks.

"You cut your hair?" he asked in astonishment.

I gave him a nervous smile. "Ya. Actually, did it thirty minutes ago at that hair salon," I confessed, turning around to point at the hair salon front with the blinking sign.

"Did you book an appointment?" Kage inquired.

"Nope. I came a bit early because I didn't want you waiting too long since you were coming from your parents, and when I saw they were doing a sale today, I decided I'd take the chance. Does it look bad?" I asked, biting my lip as I waited for his answer.

He blinked a few times, and his cheeks tinted a rosy red before he replied. "No, it looks really good...and you look super-hot, Jewel."

I blushed at his compliment, not expecting him to be so honest. "T-thanks," I stuttered, feeling a bit awkward. It was the first time for us to be enjoying some alone time outside of school, which ignited the first date nerves.

Kage smiled and took a step forward, closing the distance between us. He raised his hand to brush against my left cheek as his expression softened.

“Seriously, Jewel. You really look mesmerizing.” He hummed and gave me a soft kiss. “And don’t be nervous,” he added with a seductive grin that made my stomach flip. *Well damn. Car sex? No, wait! I can’t just think of car sex when he just kissed me. Maybe it’s that sexy voice of his? Yes, the sexy voice. That’s the reason for my body wanting to have sex this instant.*

“Thanks, Kage,” I squeaked, taking a few seconds to push my horny thoughts into the corner. I glanced at the yellow car we were standing in front of before my curiosity kicked in.

“Kage, you drive?” I asked, a little intrigued. I knew that Braxton and Maximus could drive, but I hadn’t asked the others.

As people who could use magic, there were various ways of traveling from one place to another. Logan could teleport, but he preferred to drive unless it was important. I’d have to ask Nixon and Zane if they knew how to drive, but now I was intrigued as to where we were going.

“Yup. Brax taught me last year, and I got my license before we came to Brighten.” Kage slid his hand in mine before we moved to the passenger side of the sleek sports car. He opened the door and gestured for me to enter.

I thanked him and began to put on my seatbelt while he closed the door and walked to the driver side. The interior was super clean and cloaked in black leather, and I noticed the little keychain that hung from the rear-view mirror.

I reached out to look at the gold medal, noticing the Brighten symbol on it. “You have a Brighten keychain on your rear-view mirror?” I asked, turning my head to see Kage blush.

“When we all got in, my mom became obsessed and went to the school and bought everything you could think of that had Brighten on it. She even bought Brighten underwear.” He sighed, looking embarrassed.

“I’d rather have that in the car than avoid her three-hour lecture of how she survived to raise three boys which ended up being four with Maximus and all the trouble we caused. Brax got the lecture though, since there was no way he was going to deal with that.” Kage chuckled at the last part, and I joined in.

“I can imagine Brax being the typical ‘my car is my life’ guy,” I replied.

“Yup. He loves his car. I almost thought he’d never get a girlfriend because he was more obsessed with his car. Guess that was proven wrong.” He winked, and I blushed.

Kage put his seat belt on, and his smile grew sad as he looked at the metal. “I won’t have this car for long though.”

“Why? It’s so nice,” I pointed out. Kage grinned and shrugged, turning the car on and signaling to enter the street.

“Complicated. Guess there’s no point in having a nice car when you’re not using it. The money could go to something else,” he replied.

I wanted to push the topic, but I decided to wait until later. Ruining the mood of our date was not something I was willing to do. Kage looked back at me with a small smile.

“Ready for our date?” he asked.

I nodded quickly. “Definitely!”

* * *

“Ice cream was made by the devil.” I licked my lips, enjoying the mocha, cookie crumble ice cream that was layered with chocolate sauce, brownies, and caramel bits.

“Uh-huh. Did he invent chocolate too?” Kage asked, appearing immensely amused by my comment.

“Oh yes, that too. Sinful combination of utter delight,” I moaned, and he laughed.

We were sitting on top of the hood of his car, enjoying the cool evening on the cliffside of Natala.

Today was amazing, relieving me from some of the stress I had thanks to our crazy classes. Kage had taken us to the beach, both of us enjoying the shore and clear blue waves before we got to try out a well-known seafood place that served the best lobster I’d ever had.

After lunch, we’d spent time at an art gallery and then shopped along the busy streets in the middle of town. We saw many students from Brighten, a few recognizing Kage and greeting him. Kage was rather popular at Brighten, and that was something I hadn’t realized.

Many of them complimented him for his help with assignments and questions, as well as his strength both in spellcasting classes and familiar-based training sessions.

Our classes were a lot different from last semester. The majority of them focused on our own magic abilities, which gave Alice and Koa tons of free time.

Neither of them seemed to mind, enjoying their time together. Now that they could change into humans, it let them

have more freedom to explore Brighten or anywhere else they wanted.

Kage had explained to me that any familiar with a strong relationship with their Master or Mistress could change into a human for as long as their Master or Mistress had a good amount of mana. He'd been testing it out with Koa, and Alice got excited and wanted to try too. He didn't think it would work, and that was when Brax's familiar notified Koa to tell Kage that I needed to go to the nurse's office.

Since then, Alice and Koa had been testing out the human thing on and off. They tried to do it on weekends, knowing we wouldn't be using our magic, but still stayed conscious of how long they stayed in their forms to not drain us.

We also talked about the decline of bullying and the calmer atmosphere that lingered in the school. There had been a few more incidents, but they were resolved very quickly with the new security enforcement.

I'd made sure to take this weekend to read all the letters people had sent when I'd been recovering, and the new bunch sent to me after it was revealed at the assembly.

I'd never imagined so many individuals were being bullied daily. It was performed by students you never expected would feel threatened by people who weren't up to their level of "class."

Once we had finished shopping, we'd eaten at a family restaurant. One of the parents who was working stated his son looked up to Kage and was trying to make his bond with his own familiar stronger so he could be like him.

It was rather sweet to see how happy the mother looked, and it was adorable how Kage got all shy and embarrassed at

her praise. We'd gotten dinner for free, but I made sure to leave a big tip, wanting the family to receive something for their kindness.

Kage had asked if I wanted to go home yet, but the night was still young, and the idea of enjoying the sunset with him was too appealing. He'd decided to take me to a cliffside that was, thankfully, empty and walked over to the nearby ice cream parlor to get us dessert.

"The way to win a woman's heart is through ice cream and chocolate," Kage confirmed.

"I approve," I mumbled as I chewed on the rich brownie. "Soo good."

He looked pleased with my enjoyment, and we focused on finishing our dessert before we laid back to watch the stars that began to appear in the dark blue sky.

His hand was in mine, and I listened to the crickets and other night wildlife coming out to play while we stared at the beautiful lights of the town, with Brighten further away.

"Kage?" I asked.

"Yes, Jewel?" Kage replied.

"What's going on?" I asked, turning my head to the right to stare at him. He was quiet, keeping his gaze on the sky.

"Nothing."

"You know I can tell when you're lying," I whispered. "Look me in the eye and tell me everything's okay."

He didn't budge. I was still able to get a glimpse of his face, and I could see the conflict in his expression. My eyes lowered to his neck as I watched him swallow, his Adam's

apple moving up and then down before he finally turned his head to meet my gaze.

My eyes widened to see the tears in his blue orbs. “Kage...” I trailed off, immediately raising my arm and reaching out to wipe the tear that began to roll down his right cheek with my thumb.

“Everything’s not okay...but I don’t know how to fix it,” he confessed, more tears rolling down his cheeks. He sat up and I followed, turning my body to face him before I continued to help wipe away his tears.

“What’s happening, Kage? Can’t you tell me? Maybe I can help,” I suggested, my stomach sinking at the sight of Kage crying. He was always so quiet and even with his mood changes of late, I’d never seen him shedding tears like this.

The expression he wore was as if someone had died, or he’d lost something dear to him. The thought alone made me frightened to know what the truth was.

He tried to speak but sobs escaped him, and I couldn’t help but pull him into my arms. “Everything’s just getting out of control. Fucking Zane...he should have just asked for help if those bastards threatened to hurt you. But no, he wanted to be a man and take the burden. Now everything’s fucked up.” Kage’s tone was laced with frustration, his hands clenching my dress as he held me tightly against him.

“I’m trying not to explode. Trying to let Brax handle it, but it’s so unfair. So fucking unfair. Brax does everything for us. He sacrificed so much to make us happy. To keep us safe. The abuse he took from our biological Dad. The multiple jobs he took so we could eat well and go to a decent school. Fuck, he paused his opportunity to go to Brighten years ago for us! He could be a Mage Warrior by now, enjoying what he dreamed

of becoming, but no! He's here still taking care of us," Kage confessed.

I allowed him to sob in my shoulder, rubbing his back as he let the tears fall. I didn't want to rush him to go into more detail, knowing right at this moment, he needed my comfort and support.

"It's okay, Kage. I'm here to listen," I whispered, pressing my lips lightly to his neck and holding him tightly. He needed to know I was right there and wouldn't leave him over his honesty.

For a man to cry the way he was, told me he'd piled up his worry, fear, anger, and other emotions, until there was no space left and he needed an outlet. All I did was trigger the feeling that begged for an escape, and now he was finally able to let it all out.

It took him a while to calm down, but once he did, he pulled back and hung his head like he'd committed a shameful act. "Sorry, Jewel. I shouldn't have-" he began, but I shook my head, putting my arms up into an X sign.

"Oh, no you don't," I huffed, and he looked at me like I'd lost it.

"Just because you're a guy, doesn't mean you can't cry or express your feelings. I learned that after the assembly. You guys didn't let me apologize for holding you up because I was crying and Brax was comforting me. I won't let you apologize for being human, Kage."

"But-"

"Nope!"

"Our date-"

“Was a wonderful day filled with laughter, fun, and moan-worthy ice cream,” I replied. He smirked at my comment and sighed.

“My mom has cancer.”

I opened my mouth to speak, but his words hit me like a brick. *What...?*

“I didn’t know about it until after the tower incident. Braxton had gotten a call when you were recovering, but he was distraught about what happened and was trying to make sure we were okay. It wasn’t until you woke up and were recovering before he went down to see our Mom and Dad.”

He took a deep breath, looking up at the sky. “My mom told him she was diagnosed after she’d passed out from having a headache. She has a tumor...on her brain. I don’t know what it’s called or the fancy medical terms for it, but it’s at stage four? My father immediately asked to start treatment, but...it’s expensive. My parents used to be rich, but after my biological dad left, my mom had to work twice as hard to save enough money for all of us to attend school, as well as covering for Maximus until he was settled.”

Kage closed his eyes and sighed. “I never concerned myself with money or thought about it. I thought we were okay. My car was a gift from my parents. Same with Brax’s. Because we both waited for Zane to get into Brighten, we didn’t have much else to do, so our parents gifted us those cars so we could basically live and enjoy getting to wherever we needed to go. I never thought they used a bunch of their savings to buy them before purchasing the extra supplies we needed for Brighten that weren’t covered by our scholarships.”

“Essentially, my mom ran out of money. Our stepdad is working hard to compensate, but the treatment is expensive,

and magic can't really help," Kage whispered.

He lowered his gaze to meet my sad eyes. "You notice how Brax has been a little absent lately?"

I nodded. "Ya. He says he's going out, but he doesn't come back until really late. Sometimes in the early morning."

I'd noticed his early morning entries because he was still sleeping in our room. The last time he'd come in at four in the morning, he had slid into his side of the bed with Maximus and me. I tried to ask him, but I was half asleep, and I couldn't even remember his reply before he kissed me goodnight.

"Brax's been taking jobs in town. Some magic ones outside of town. He's been helping around the school as well. He's doing it to make more money for Mom's treatment."

"Brax...why didn't he say anything?" I asked.

"Because it's Braxton. The one thing he sucks at is relying on people. If he could shoulder the damn world, he would. It wasn't supposed to be like that. My mother, she was really active in the community, and they had raised money for her when they found out what happened...but then..." he trailed off and lowered his head to stare at his hands.

"What?" I asked.

"Someone began spreading rumors about the tower incident."

"Wait, what?! What did they say?!" I exclaimed, anger beginning to boil inside me.

"Instead of saying that Zane had helped catch the bullies, they flipped his role and stated he was the one who pushed you off the tower," Kage whispered.

“WHAT! That’s not what happened!” I snapped. Kage gave me a sympathetic smile.

“I know. Brax told them that and said he was there, but because this involves his family, no one wants to believe him.”

“So, what happened with the fundraiser money?”

“Proceeds were donated to charity. As they put it, they won’t support a family who raised a bully and potential murderer.”

I was left speechless and he smiled. “It’s okay, Jewel. Guess it goes to show that anyone has the power to fuck up someone’s life. People love you when you give your time and life to them, but when you need help, one small thing can prompt them to turn their backs on you. Who needs evidence? Just create a rumor. Talk shit and spread it around and boom. You’re considered the devil’s advocate and don’t deserve a chance of redemption to prove your innocence.”

“That’s why you want to sell your car,” I whispered.

“I don’t need a fancy car when my Mom is fighting every day to live. Luxurious things are only nice when you can share them with people you love. My mom worked hard and took a lot of bullshit to give me the privilege to enjoy this car. I should return the favor.”

“Does Zane know?” I asked.

“Nope.”

“You guys haven’t told Zane?!” I emphasized.

“My dad doesn’t want Zane near Mom right now,” Kage confessed.

“But they need to know the truth!” I argued.

“I know, Jewel...but my dad is having a tough time. He lost his job...” Kage trailed off.

“Don’t tell me these fucking rumors reached your Dad’s workplace, and they fired him?”

Kage’s lips quirked up, but he slowly nodded. “Whoever these people are, they basically want to make sure Zane regrets turning on them. Now Dad is unemployed, Brax is working his ass off to balance school and all the jobs he’s picking up, and I can barely keep up with my classes from worrying. I can’t handle stress like Brax. I freak out, and that leads to me being angry one day and depressed the next.”

He reached out to grasp my hands, lifting them up to kiss them softly. I knew it was because I was trembling with rage and he wanted to calm me down, but I was so upset. This wasn’t fair to anyone. Not to Braxton, Kage, their family, and especially not to Zane. One lie was going to wreck his entire family when he was trying to do a good deed. *Why was no one else trying to see that?*

“I’m trying so hard to act like nothing is going on...but with the way it’s going, I’m scared. Frightened even. I’m gonna need help, Jewel. I feel like I’m helpless. And...if we lose our mom...how can I forgive Zane? We did everything together. He promised to never leave me, yet he basically abandoned me. I know he was doing it to protect you, but that was closer to the end of the semester. He chose this path and now...it may break our entire family.”

“Have you gone to see your mom?” I asked.

“No...I’m scared to go alone,” he admitted as he tried to blink back tears.

“Can we go?”

He lifted his head to give me a shocked look. “But...but... we have school tomorrow. We can’t go now.”

“I need three hours of sleep and a glass of coffee to function. I’ll be good. Let’s go,” I urged.

“Jewel yo-”

I cut him off with my lips, giving him a gentle kiss. Pressing my forehead against his, I whispered, “Kage, I’m your girlfriend, right?”

“Ya,” he replied.

“Then can you let me support you? Your family is important to me, and there’s no way I’ll be able to sleep until you see your mom.”

He looked into my eyes and sighed. “If I say no, you’re going to be all stubborn and lecture me, aren’t you?”

“You’re correct.” I infused confidence into my voice as I replied.

That brought a smile to his face, and he slowly nodded. “Okay.”

Alice.

“Yes, Jewel?”

Can you do me a favor?

“Just say the word. I’ll get on it,” Alice assured me. I smiled, giving her a mental nod.

Thanks, Alice. This will help make things better.

Kindness and Tenderness

“Kage. You didn’t need to come all this way. Don’t you have school? You’ve been crying, haven’t you? My motherly instinct tells me you have. Is the pretty girl your girlfriend? Have you been eating? You look like you lost weight. Is Brax not making sure you eat?”

“I’m fine, Mom. School is tiring and requires a lot of physical work. You know I lose weight easily. Braxton makes sure we eat, and no, I wasn’t crying. There was something in my eyes. Yes, that’s my girlfriend. Mom, Dad, this is Jewel Starfire. She’s Charlotte’s daughter,” Kage explained.

I smiled and bowed my head in greeting to Kage’s mom who was in bed and then to his stepdad who was sitting in the corner chair.

“Good evening,” I said in Korean, trying to be respectful.

“Oh? She’s Korean,” Kage’s mom exclaimed, looking pleased

“She doesn’t look Korean,” Kage’s father pointed out.

“I’m half. I took more of my father’s traits,” I confessed.

“That’s delightful.” Kage’s mother sighed. “Please, call me Diana. My husband is Taemin. I’m so honored to meet you. I’ve heard a lot about you from Brax.”

I blushed, wondering if she knew I was dating all three of her sons. Kage grinned, easily reading my expression. “They know you’re dating all three of us, Jewel.”

“Oh. Um...you’re okay with that?” I asked hesitantly, looking between them.

“No worries here.” Taemin shrugged, looking unconcerned.

“It’s wonderful. At least I have one wonderful daughter-in-law. I don’t need to worry about female drama.” Diana sighed again.

Kage’s face went bright red. “Eomma! We aren’t engaged. Jeez,” Kage mumbled, his Korean accent coming out.

“Minor details. Make sure you buy me the best hanbok to wear. I need front row seats, and your father has to walk Jewel up the aisle three times. It’ll be a mixture of Korean and Western culture. Ah. It’ll be so wonderful.” Diana beamed at me, and Kage and Taemin gave me sympathetic looks.

“Sorry. Once my wife accepts someone, you’re pretty much doomed.” Taemin sighed.

“Hey. I accepted you and look. We got married. Not doomed yet.” Diana giggled.

Taemin smiled back. “That’s true.”

“Don’t worry honey. I have to work extra hard tomorrow at chemo, so I can live long enough to see my sons marry such a wonderful woman. Even her name is beautiful. Does that mean when she marries she’ll be a Park because there’s three of them? Hmm, three against three.” Taemin rose up to sit next to Diana on the bed while she went on and on, and Kage walked back over to me.

“My mom sometimes gets lost in her imagination,” he admitted, giving me a shy smile.

“She’s adorable.” I smiled at both of Kage’s parents as they talked quietly.

“Jewel?”

“Hmm?”

“Thank you,” he whispered, pulling me into a hug. I hugged him back and decided it was time to do what I wanted to do.

“I haven’t even given her my gift yet.”

“Gift?” Kage asked, leaning back to give me a confused look.

I swiftly nodded before I leaned over to my left side to look at Diana and Taemin. “I have a gift for you, Diana.”

“Me? I don’t need anything. I have my family and real friends in my life.” Diana gave me a broad smile.

“True, but I think this will help,” I admitted. I turned to the door. “Alice. You can come in now.”

The door opened, and Alice popped her head inside. “Finally! I thought I was going to die from loneliness.” She sighed dramatically, and I rolled my eyes but giggled. I directed Kage to stand next to Taemin and moved back to stand at the end of the bed.

Alice held a gold wrapped box with a pink ribbon on it. “I got here on time! Good evening Park family. I’ve brought a gift on behalf of the Starfire family. Please accept it.”

Alice bowed her head before she walked up to Diana’s left side of the bed and presented the gift.

“What is it?” Diana asked, looking surprised by the present.

“You have to open it!” Alice beamed, walking back to stand next to me. I gave her a quick hug in greeting, and we watched Kage’s mom begin to open her present. Taemin and Kage seemed just as intrigued as Diana.

She finished unwrapping the box and opened it up to see an envelope. She picked it up and frowned, appearing even more bewildered.

“What is it?” she asked.

“I think you should open it, honey,” Taemin encouraged. Kage turned his gaze on me, and I gave him a sweet smile, hoping I looked innocent enough.

Diana opened the envelope and pulled out a brown sheet of paper. She opened it up, and her blue eyes scanned the paper as she read it out loud.

“Diana Park. We are happy to inform you that all...all of your medical treatment plans have been approved and paid... for? We will be upgrading your room...tomorrow...and you will start the gold standard plan for cancer patients. The success rate with such treatment method is 99%...we are excited to aid in your recovery back to excelled health.”

Tears rolled down Diana’s cheeks as her hands that held the letter trembled uncontrollably. Taemin and Kage both looked at me, seeming completely shocked.

“When I was younger, I was in the hospital a lot. Aside from my seizures, I had a few scares myself, one of them being cancer. I didn’t really wrap my mind around it back then, but I always tried to contribute a bit of my allowance whenever I could. My family was very involved, and when my

Dad died, we invested the majority of the funds in this program. The reason why my mother had passed by, was to see how bad your condition was and if you'd be eligible for the fund. You were, but the fund only covers the basic treatment," I explained.

Alice nodded and continued. "Jewel asked me if I'd be able to talk with Mom and see if there was anything else we could do. Our Mom had Alzheimer's a few months ago, and thanks to the new medication and treatment that's supplied by the Cross family, her Alzheimer is almost eliminated. The Cross family has similar methods to help slowly remove cancer without aggressive methods like chemo. It's just expensive, that's why they never bring it up."

"When Gabriel, my older brother died, we'd gotten a lot of donations. Though we have savings to help us live rather comfortably, we put a large portion aside just in case we needed any medical assistance. So uh, basically, our family covered the rest of the expenses."

All three of them stood there with open jaws. "We just wanted to help. I know you just met my Mistress, and well me, her familiar. Oh...I'm a familiar by the way. Alice Starfire. Uh...we hope you aren't mad," Alice whispered, hiding behind me and poking her head out. I looked at all three of them and smiled.

"In my life, I experienced a lot of hospital trips and two funerals. The hardest part of it all is knowing the people who once supported you, leave you when you need them the most. It's thanks to your sons that I've survived my time at Brighten and that tower incident. Zane wasn't a bully or a part of it. Those bullies were trying to hurt me, and he took the blame. I don't know how bad things are with what's being spread, but

please know, that your three sons are amazing people and would never hurt someone deliberately. Please accept our gift so one day we can dress you up in the nicest fabric for your hanbok.” I bowed my head after I was finished speaking. Alice moved back to my side and bowed as well.

I closed my eyes, hoping I didn’t offend them, and I heard slow footsteps. I slightly raised my head to see Taemin before me. Hesitantly, I looked up to see his tear-filled eyes and watched as he knelt to the ground, bowing his head to the floor. It was my turn to gawk at him. Kage made his way over and knelt to the ground, bowing his head to the floor as well.

“Thank you...thank you so much,” Taemin cried.

“Thank you, Jewel,” Kage whispered, his voice barely audible as he held back his sobs.

“Please, get up. Don’t cry, both of you,” I urged, kneeling down to rub their backs as they sobbed. Alice hurried over to Diana who was still staring at the letter, tears streaming down her flushed cheeks.

“They’ll start tomorrow. 99% success rate. I’ll...I will be cancer free. I’ll see my sons become Mage Warriors and marry. Maybe even see my grandchildren...I’m going to live?” She forced the words out as she sobbed.

I lifted my head to see Alice nod, her own tears rolling down her cheeks. “Yup. Remember, we’ll get you the best hanbok too,” she whispered, leaning in to give her a hug. Taemin rose up and enveloped me in his arms, hugging me tightly as he wept into my shoulder. “Thank you for saving the love of my life. Thank you...so much,” he whimpered as he continued to cry.

“She deserves it, and I hope you continue to make her happy,” I replied. He pulled back and nodded before he moved to the other side of Diana’s bed.

Alice pulled back and allowed them to hug, Diana sobbing uncontrollably with Taemin who continued to say how thankful he was. I looked to Kage who had stood from his kneeling position, and I opened my arms to him.

“Hug?” I asked quietly, remembering how I loved giving hugs when I was younger to cheer people up.

He chuckled before he walked into my arms, squeezing me tightly before he began to cry in earnest. “How?” he whispered.

“How what, Kage?”

“How do I repay you? I’d never make that kind of money, Jewel. Even if I sell my car, our house, my Brighten underwear.”

I giggled at the last comment and leaned back to look into his glassy blue eyes.

“You don’t need to repay me. All you have to do is show kindness to others and keep being you, Kage,” I murmured.

He nodded and pulled me back into his warm embrace. “Thank you, Jewel. Just...thank you.”

“Ya Logan, we had something to do and it ended super late. We’re staying at a hotel. Not a love hotel like those crazy ones in movies. We’re in a suite! Someone canceled last minute, so we were able to get an upgrade for free. It’s cheap for one night, so I’d rather sleep here than deal with no sleep at all. Yes, I had fun. Yes. Kage is showering. Okay. I love you more.

Bye.” I grinned at the phone as the selfie of Logan and me stayed on the screen for a few seconds after the call ended.

We reserved a hotel room for the night, making sure it was close to the road to Brighten. We’d stayed at the hospital till two in the morning, chatting with Diana and Taemin. I explained everything that had happened, and Kage assisted me with the areas I couldn’t remember.

We’d at least been able to clear Zane’s name, but there was still the problem with Taemin’s job. I reassured them I’d think of something, but for now, they should focus on the treatments, and if they had any questions, my mom or Logan’s mom would be able to assist.

Now we were relaxing in a suite, and though I’d been exhausted in the car, I felt wide awake after speaking with Logan.

I had wanted to call him to make sure he and the others knew where we were. In a relationship like ours, I wished to at least be open, and even if I didn’t need to tell Logan or the others, I felt they deserved to know because it was a sign of respect in my mind.

“Was that Logan?”

My eyes lifted to see Kage walk out of the washroom, just a towel around his waist. Small, lingering water droplets rolled down his chiseled chest, and he was ruffling his hair with another towel, giving me a great view of his flexed biceps. I took a long, leisurely look down his frame like he was a piece of art in a gallery for sexy men.

I had to thank whatever powers were playing their role in granting me the chance to see the V of his abdominal muscles,

and his six-pack I must have forgotten about because it was tugging my attention with force.

I bit my lip before I licked my lower lip, wondering how the rest of him looked under his white towel.

“Jewel?”

How did I last an entire semester without seeing Kage butt naked? Damn, are all three of the brothers hiding such chiseled bodies? Has he been working out?

“Jewel?”

I guess familiar training counts, right? Gotta walk around with a hawk on your arm or shoulder. How does that keep his abs so tight though? This seems far more complicated than I thought. Maybe he does secret ninja training and none of us know about it. That's it! Kage is a fucking ninja!

“Jewel? Earth to Jewel?” Kage waved his hand at me, and I blinked out of my thoughts.

“Kage, are you a ninja?” I asked.

“How did the conversation go from me asking about Logan to me being a ninja?” he asked with a playful smirk.

“Um...it was a random thought. Ignore that.” I brushed the topic off, realizing my throbbing pussy was messing with my logic and making me spew out nonsense. “Yes, that was Logan. Just wanted to tell them we were staying in a hotel tonight.”

“Was he okay with it?” Kage asked.

“Yup! He asked if I had fun, which I did, and then he asked where you were. I said you were showering, and he said to make sure we reach home half an hour before we have to head to class.”

“Half an hour, meaning Jewel needs her coffee or she’ll kill everyone time. Got it,” Kage replied with a nod, and I blushed.

“I’m not that bad?!” A hint of hesitation crept into my voice.

Kage gave me a look. “If you were a dragon, you would burn all of us to a crisp if you didn’t have coffee before school. In fact, you’d burn the whole school and aim for world domination until you got a cup.”

“I wouldn’t mind burning the school down. I’d get away with it as a dragon, but I’d make sure no one was on campus. Make it a weekend or something. I wouldn’t burn you guys to crisps though.” I winked as I gave him my teeth-showing smile.

“Now she gives the innocent look of death,” Kage mumbled. I giggled, standing up to walk over to him. I only wore a loose t-shirt, thankful that Kage kept a spare set of clothes in the car for emergencies.

“I’m innocent, Mr. Park,” I hummed, doing my best not to sound needy. But having a front row seat to his almost naked body was making me excited in all the right places.

His eyes trailed down the thin white t-shirt, and he licked his lower lip at a teasingly slow pace that made me aware of my urge to do more than just talking.

With how hard my nipples felt against his shirt, I knew they were surely visible and doing their share of teasing.

When I reached him, I placed my hand on his chest, my eyes unable to move away from his blue ones. I was going to kiss him, but he beat me to it, impatiently kissing me so hard that I moaned just from the impact of our smooth lips.

I pressed my body against him, loving how warm his body was and shivered at how the remaining bits of water began to seep through my shirt.

My right hand glided up his chest and brushed his cheek before sliding into his wet blue locks. His hands tugged at my shirt, and I only broke the kiss to give him enough time to pull the shirt off me, freeing my breasts from the torture of feeling its rough surface rather than the enjoyment of Kage's body.

In a second I was back in Kage's arms, my body pressed firmly against his slim muscular frame while our lips fought for domination.

"Jewel..." he groaned, breaking the kiss to suck the nape of my neck. I moaned loudly, lifting my head for him to continue to nibble on my feverish flesh.

His hand gripped my right breast, beginning to massage it slowly as he started to leave kisses along my shoulder and then trailed down my collarbone.

"Ah. Kage," I whimpered as his mouth latched onto my left breast, his tongue lazily teasing my hard nipple with circular motions while he continued to fondle my right breast.

The warmth of his mouth and the way his tongue expertly played with my nipple was contributing to the wetness pooling between my thighs.

"Kage," I begged, already out of breath. He looked up and his eyes darkened. He left open-mouthed kisses and swirled his tongue to lick at my skin as he made his way down my stomach and lowered to his knees. His hands skimmed down my waist and stopped at my lower hips.

"Spread your legs, Jewel," Kage ordered, the dominant side of him turning me on like a light switch. *He isn't...no,*

he's gonna...

I didn't dare delay, even though my thoughts were in a frenzy. I spread my legs slightly, giving Kage enough of an opening for him to do whatever he wanted. His fingers trailed my entrance, and I trembled at the cool touch.

"You're really wet, Jewel. Is that because of me?" Kage questioned, his words more of a statement, his tone laced with approval. He didn't let me answer, sliding not one but two fingers inside me right away.

I gasped before I sighed in relief, my pussy throbbing around his fingers. "Keep making those nice moaning sounds, Jewel," Kage rumbled. He began to glide in and out of me, his fingers pumping at a steady pace before they increased in speed.

"Yes. Ah...more...more," I begged. It was amazing how male fingers felt so different than when I masturbated with my own, and his rapid movement was bringing me closer to an orgasm quicker than I'd ever been able to accomplish on my own.

"So good. Yes, yes...fuck..mhm...Kage.." I practically screamed, about ready to cum. A few more pumps of his fingers and I flew over the edge, an orgasm hitting me hard and throwing my body into ecstasy.

I cried out, thinking Kage would stop, but he kept going until my legs trembled and my juices streamed all over his fingers and down my thighs.

"Kage! AH!" I cried out, close to another orgasm, but he pulled his fingers out and replaced it with his mouth. *SHIT, AH.*

I whimpered at the way his tongue licked me up; Kage purposely teased the bud of my clit from time to time. My legs were shaking, and I was panting like an animal before he finally pulled away, but I already felt the build of another orgasm, and I didn't want him to stop. He rose up and met my needy wild eyes, and before I knew it, my arms were around his neck and my legs wrapped around his waist.

We kissed like we were battling against each other while he carried me over to the bed. Once he laid me gently on the soft sheets, he released the towel around his waist and I smirked in a wild frenzy at the sight of his cock that looked ready to pound me right into another orgasm.

“Fast or slow, Jewel?” he questioned.

I didn't even think. “Fast and hard.”

I saw that twinkle in his eye like it was exactly what he wanted to hear, and he crawled onto the bed and hovered over me.

“Good, because I'm way past the slow sex with how hard my cock is,” he growled, positioning his cock at my entrance.

He let us both catch our breath and leaned down to give me a passionate kiss before he thrust himself inside me. I gasped at the movement but was glad it didn't hurt like my very first time with Logan. Kage's length was longer than Logan's, and with how hard he was, I'd wondered if it would fit.

Now that it was inside me, I was already going crazy as my body felt like it was on fire with electricity.

He ended up going slow in the beginning, maybe knowing from how tight I was that I hadn't had a lot of sex. “I'm gonna go faster, Jewel.”

I merely nodded as I closed my eyes and bit my lip.

He began to move, the slow thrusts growing faster. My wetness helped his cock glide in and out with ease, and my moans became louder.

“Kage, faster. Please...more!” I begged, opening my eyes to give him a pleading look. It seemed that ignited a blaze inside of him. He leaned back to change his position, and when he thrust his cock it hit a different spot, but it was so perfect I gasped.

“Shit, yes!” I cried out, my body begging for him to keep going. Then he did something unexpected. He paused with his cock almost out and gestured for me to turn on my left side.

I did just that, and he pulled out for a second to properly rest on his knees before he slid himself inside me once more. This time he didn't go slow, fucking me hard and so deep I almost came right there.

“Shit! Kage, ah,” I cried out, but my whimpers didn't stop him from wildly pounding into me.

“You like that Jewel,” he breathed.

“Yes. So much. Fuck me more,” I urged as my breasts bounced with his rapid movements. We were both beginning to work up a sweat. He suddenly lifted my right leg to rest on his shoulder, using his free hand to circle my clit while he remained deep inside me.

The stimulation of his hand rubbing my clit while he thrust even faster was pushing me to the edge, and the dual stimulation did just that.

“KAGE!” I screamed, my body locking up as I came hard.

He didn't stop as his moans and grunts got louder and faster, and I cried out again as another orgasm vibrated through me, my body trembling with the aftershocks.

“JEWEL-AH!” Kage growled and gave a final thrust. His hot cum pooled inside me, the sensation making me quiver as a silent cry escaped me.

Kage pulled himself out, our combined release slowly flowing out of my pussy before he lowered my leg and laid down next to me, both of us catching our breaths.

“Fuck Kage...I...did...NOT...expect that...” I declared through pants. Kage let out a weak chuckle, trying to catch his breath too.

“Just because I'm shy and quiet doesn't mean I don't do my research Jewel.”

I let out a breathy laugh, turning my head to give him a small smile.

“That was amazing.”

“You're amazing.” He countered and gave me a tender kiss. “And that was really hot. I think we should date more often.” He grinned against my lips.

“Yes. More dates,” I whispered. He pulled me into his arms, leaving tender kisses on my neck and shoulders and thanked me once again for what I'd done.

“Just promise if you need someone to talk to, you'll rely on me?” I asked quietly, fighting off the exhaustion of our lovemaking.

“I promise. ” Kage spoke softly, then gave me another tender kiss.

“I love you.”

“I love you too, Jewel.”

I nodded my head slightly and snuggled deeper into his embrace.

The last thing I remember before I fell asleep was the tenderness of Kage's kisses.

Braxton's Insecurities and Winning Bet

“Ugh. Note to self, Jinn. Running on barely any sleep is a bad idea and my body aches. What possessed me to think morning sex before school was a good idea? No, I just underestimated how amazing morning sex is. I wish I had another cup of coffee.”

I sighed, resting my head on the locker. Class had ended a while ago, and I was so exhausted. Kage and I'd barely slept, and after morning sex, we talked for a good hour about different things.

He wanted to forgive Zane and act like everything was okay again, but he wanted Zane to realize what he did was good and wrong. Good because his actions did help prevent me from getting hurt early on, but bad because of the chaos that was happening without his knowledge.

I advised Kage to confront Zane about it, or at least the three brothers needed to have a talk. He agreed with my suggestions and said he'd speak with Brax later in the day and together, talk with Zane after classes.

I opened my heavy eyelids and groaned. *I need a fucking nap.*

“*Are you okay, Jewel?*” Alice asked, her voice indicating she was half asleep. We'd been preparing for the end semester

exams, one of them being familiar focused, and we knew it would be a pain in the ass.

I sent Alice home to rest, knowing I wouldn't need her for my second class and she too could barely stay awake. I must have been out of energy and needed to reset or something.

I'm fine. Super tired. Go back to sleep. I'll be home in a bit.

"Okay. Night," Alice replied. I turned around and leaned my body against the lockers. I knew if I sat on the bench, I'd be asleep for hours. At least standing would delay my need to sleep. *Or I hoped it would.*

I pulled my phone out, my half-opened eyes scanning for the phone icon. Took me a full minute to find it and the last contact I'd spoken with from today was Braxton when he'd called to ask if we were on our way home.

I pressed the button and sighed, listening to the ring which was like a lullaby to me. He picked up on the third ring. "What's wrong, Jinn."

"I'm tired," I replied, not even bothering with typical greetings. "Like I can barely move at this point."

"Where are you?"

"Changing room."

"Which."

"South one with the stupid poster on the door," I mumbled.

"Jinn, switch back."

"To what?"

"Switch back to Jewel."

“Hmm...female form.” I yawned, struggling to keep up with what he was requesting of me. *Maybe I can sleep for five minutes?*

“Jinn?”

“Hmm,” I mumbled, my head nodding forward.

“Jinn? What are the chances of you sleeping standing up?” He sighed, sounding like he was running.

I wouldn't sleep standing. Nope...totally wouldn't.

I heard the sound of the door open, but I didn't care. My mind was drifting, and I wouldn't be able to stop it.

I fought to open my eyes, and another pair of red ones met mine. I tilted my head in my disorientated daze. They wore a gold cape that covered their face and body. The person was taller than my male form, looking to be almost Braxton's height of 6'7" but an inch shorter.

He looked familiar, and I didn't know if I was dreaming or still in the changing room. “Jinn? Jinn?” Braxton continued to call my name through the phone that was pressed against my ear, but his voice sounded so far away, like an echo.

“You're the man. The man in my dream?” I muttered.

“Do you think this is a dream, Sweetheart?”

“Why are you calling me sweetheart? Look, I'm a male. Male. Jinn...Starfire.” I countered, unable to keep my eyes open.

I leaned forward, unable to keep upright anymore. Arms caught me, and my body was pressed against a warm body. *Cinnamon.*

“You know. My dad loved cinnamon,” I mumbled. The person didn’t say anything, and I didn’t expect them to. I didn’t feel like they would hurt me, but I wished they could reveal who they were.

“There’s not much time, Jewel. They’ll find you next.”

Find me? Who’s looking for me? Braxton...

I gave up staying in my male form, my magic wilting. My exhaustion was taking a huge toll and sleeping in my normal form would help. I knew the change was complete when I felt my short locks against my face.

The sound of the slow heartbeat was soothing, and I began to wonder who this person was. *Why was he always in my dreams? What is he warning me about?*

The person exhaled, and I felt my body being lifted up. I was lowered to a flat surface, and it took me a few seconds to open my eyes slightly.

I still couldn’t see their face, but a drop of water fell onto my cheek. “I’m out of time. They’re coming for you Jewel. Remember.”

The person’s body began to fade into little particles until nothing was left.

Out of time? They’re coming for me? Remember what? Who...who are you?

* * *

“Jewel?”

I stirred awake, the smell of Irish soap and the light scent of cologne tickled my nose. *Braxton*. My eyelids lifted and

Braxton's worried eyes met mine. He sighed. "You're okay. I thought I'd need to call Logan," he admitted.

"Why?" I asked before a yawn escaped me.

"You've been asleep for a while. About two hours to be exact. Any longer and I would have called him before taking you to Savannah," Brax explained

"I think I just needed a nap," I admitted. I realized Braxton was sitting on the bench and I was resting in his lap.

"Who were you talking to?" Brax asked.

I frowned, giving him a confused look. "Talking to? You," I replied, not understanding what he meant.

"No before. When you called me, you were talking to someone, but I couldn't hear anything." Brax pointed out.

"Oh...um." I scrunched my face as I tried to recall what happened. "It may have been me sleep talking," I admitted.

"Are you sure?" Brax asked.

I nodded before rubbing my eyes. "Must be. Everyone was gone before I called you. I've been having weird dreams lately."

Braxton helped me stand up, and I stretched my arms out. "My muscles ache," I grumbled.

"You were sleeping on the bench." Brax brushed a strand of hair behind my ear.

"I don't remember laying down on the bench. Oh, well."

"What have you been dreaming about?" Brax asked with a serious look.

I pondered about it for a bit. "Well, I keep having this dream. It's on the balcony of the tower, kinda like my dreams

involving Gabriel. It starts out the same with the person walking towards me like Gabriel once did. However, this person is wearing a cape. I can't tell what kind, sometimes it's gold, other times it's red or black. I can never see their face; it's like a shadow is making it impossible for me to see their identity." I walked back to my locker and began gathering my stuff while I continued.

"They call me 'Sweetheart.' Not in a romantic way, but more like a family member would. They tell me that someone is coming for me and other times they say I know a secret? I don't really understand it, but essentially some bad people are coming for me and time is ticking away. I think the person is a he? Maybe. His voice is a bit monotone so it's not like I can tell who it is. Either way, he doesn't feel like he wants to harm me, but whenever I want to reach out and touch him, I hit some barrier that's strong enough to push me back and then I'm falling off the tower like before. Sometimes I see Lark's silver eyes...those are usually the dreams where I scream awake," I admitted. My hands gripped my blazer as I stared into the locker.

I took a deep breath and exhaled. "I don't get it Brax. Don't know what I'm supposed to do."

"I think you'll understand in time. We just have to be cautious and maybe this person will introduce themselves? Just focus on getting enough rest," Brax urged.

I glanced over my shoulder and gave him a relieved smile. "That sounds like a good plan. That cup of coffee didn't help much."

"That's because someone probably didn't sleep last night," Brax replied with an accusing look.

I blushed and turned back to the locker. “Don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Mhm,” Braxton hummed, and just from the tone of his hum I knew he’d figured we did less sleeping and more lovemaking. I finished putting my clothes in my bag and lowered it to the side of my feet before I closed the door.

“Jewel.”

“Yes, Brax?” I asked as I put the last lock number in. I felt Brax’s warm body press against mine from behind, his hand resting against my locker as his breath tickled my neck.

“Why?” he whispered, pain lingering in his low voice.

“Why?” I repeated, staying completely still while my mind tried to think of what he was referring to.

“You paid for my mom’s treatment.”

“How’d you find out?” I asked. I knew Kage hadn’t told him because we shared morning class together, and he’d been so exhausted I urged him to go home and sleep.

“I went to see my mom at lunch. She had her first session of the new treatment plan, and it’s as if she didn’t have cancer to begin with. She can walk...before she couldn’t even stand. She told me you and Kage dropped by late last night, and you and your family paid for the treatment.”

“Are you mad?” I asked. He didn’t say anything, and I closed my eyes, turning to face him before I opened them again. Those lime jewels held so much pain and hurt as the first drops of tears rolled down his cheeks.

“All my life I had to sacrifice what I wanted. Being the eldest meant I had to grow up fast and constantly make sure Kage and Zane were okay. I took the blame for everything.

Always put them first. I didn't want to bother them. It's not their fault that Mom was sick. Or that those fucking bullies spread rumors and got Dad fired. I couldn't burden them," he whispered.

I hugged him tightly and nodded into his shoulder. "I know."

"Kage keeps everything inside, and Zane would rather do everything by himself. They don't think things through, and sometimes I worry that with me protecting them they'll never be ready for the real world. But I can't help it. I've done it all my life because I was told to take care of my brothers," Brax confessed.

"I get it, Brax, and there's nothing wrong with that. They do need to learn about their flaws and acknowledge them, but I think they need to discover that on their own instead of having their amazing brother save them from the pain in case you're not there to shoulder their fallouts," I explained, leaning back to look up into his eyes.

"Braxton. You're an amazing brother. One I know many would dream to have in their lives. But you need to live. You can't keep holding yourself back for the sake of your brothers. You're always striving to make everyone happy but yourself. Are you happy with how your life is now, Brax? If today was the last day we'd breathe oxygen, would you have any regrets?" I questioned, gazing deep into his green eyes.

He bit his lip, and the conflict that flickered in his sad expression told me his answer.

"You deserve better, Brax. You deserve to put your needs first rather than other people's. You've done everything from taking care of your brothers to protecting Maximus from being bullied. You make sure that if Logan and Nixon miss anything

in class, you take notes for them. Then there's what you do for me. You're always checking on me and volunteering to help, even at risk to yourself. I could guarantee that if something happened and one of us had to drop out, you'd be the first to volunteer and take that role. I want you to stop being so selfless and enjoy life the way you want it. You can still be a caring brother, a supportive friend, and a passionate lover. I just want you to make sure you take time for yourself and enjoy life."

"Doesn't that make me selfish?" he asked.

"Not one bit. Sometimes you have to focus on yourself and achieving the things you want to do before you can give yourself to other people. 'You have to love yourself before you can love another person wholeheartedly' as the saying goes," I replied.

He nodded in understanding and gave me a small smile. "Can I do something I feel like doing now?"

"Sure."

"Can I give you another hug?" I giggled before I quickly nodded. He pulled me into his arms once more, hugging me tightly.

"I'm glad I met you, Jewel," he mumbled. "And I kinda miss your long hair."

I smirked and tightened my arms around him. "You said I looked cute."

He pulled back to give me a teasing look. "I did because you do look cute. However, I like you with long hair."

"Why is that?" I questioned. He leaned in to whisper in my ear.

“It’s nice to slide my hands into it, and it would be nice to tug on it while I fuck you.”

I liked my lips and gave him a seductive look. “There are other ways to be playful, Brax,” I purred.

He chuckled and lowered his head so our lips could meet. “Did you shower after class?”

“Nope. Was way too tired. Why?” I questioned with a playful grin, knowing exactly where this was going.

“Would it be a little weird for our first date to be in the shower?” he asked.

“Hmm. I did say you should do what makes you happy. Would that please you?” I countered.

“Very much,” he whispered against my mouth, nibbling on my bottom lip with his teeth before pressing those smooth lips to mine yet again.

“Someone can come in.”

“I locked the door,” he replied, and in one quick swoop I was in his arms as he walked to the showers.

“Just because you locked it, doesn’t mean we’re safe. What if the janitor comes?” I questioned through giggles.

“I wrote an out of service sign and posted it on the front. We are good.” He chuckled.

“Very sneaky,” I mumbled, and he lowered his head to give me a peck on the cheek.

“When this semester is done, and we have some time off, can we go out? Just you and me.” He spoke quietly, lowering my legs to stand on the tiled floors.

“Yes. I’d like that,” I admitted.

“Me too.” His eyes trailed down my body as he bit the left side of his lips in desire. He stepped back and began to unbutton his uniform while I pulled off my loose red shirt and slid down my sweatpants.

My bra was next as I watched Braxton toss his shirt to the cubby to my left and unbuckled his belt in haste. His pants and boxers slid down his muscled legs, and my eyes enjoyed ogling his dazzling nakedness.

I slid my panties off and dropped them to my left where my other clothes were in a messy pile. I turned and made my way over to the same spot we’d first shared when I’d been a guy. The memory was fresh in my mind of exactly how he’d firmly held my cock and slid his hand up and down before I’d switched back.

Now that we were together, I wasn’t afraid to try to enjoy how it felt to have an orgasm as a male. I was a little disappointed that I couldn’t switch to my male side to try it, but I hoped there would be an opportunity in the near future for me.

Facing Braxton again, I watched as a knowing smile spread across his face. I reached out and turned on the shower head and enjoyed the spray of the cool water as it landed on my hot skin.

Brax’s eyes darkened as he approached. My back pressed against the tiled wall to give Braxton a chance to get soaked by the stream of water.

I appreciated how the droplets trickled down his muscular chest before my eyes followed their path down his six-pack, V-lines, and of course his massive cock

Now that I got a good look at it, I knew he was 7.5”, maybe even 8”. Either way, I knew I was about to get a very good fucking by this man who clearly knew exactly what he wanted.

He reached where I stood, lowering his head to caress my lips with his own. I gave him a tender kiss while I raised my hands to rest on his biceps. His hands that rested on my hips ever so slowly skimmed up my sides and began to fondle my breasts.

Our lazy kisses grew into intense hunger, our bodies pressed against each other before we moved back into the stream of cool water.

Those cold droplets weren't doing anything to cool the heat running through me and the pulsating warmth growing between my legs as I wrapped my arms around his neck and melted in his hold.

I could feel his cock between my legs resting against my entrance, and I was in a hurry to feel every inch of him ease into my wet pussy. Brax moved us back to the wall, pressing me firmly against it as he lifted his hand to slide through my short locks. He gripped them tightly, sending pleasure spearing through me. I arched slightly, leaning my head back for him to suck on my neck and leave bite marks that I could guarantee would linger for a few days.

“Brax,” I moaned through gasps, my body begging for him to fulfill my growing need for him.

“I should try to resist you,” he commented.

“Resist huh? I bet you wouldn't be able to resist me giving you a blow job,” I playfully declared.

“Bet? What happens if I can’t and you win?” he asked. I went on my tiptoes, and he lowered his head slightly for me to whisper in his ear.

“You’ll need to lift me up, pin me to this wall, and fuck me with every ounce of power in you,” I purred, using my teeth to tug at his ear. He shivered at my touch.

“If I resist?” he moaned, clearly enjoying the way I was now sucking on his neck.

“You can do whatever you want with me,” I murmured against his flesh. I reached his nape and bit him a little harder than I normally would. I immediately sucked on the tender section.

His loud moan thrilled me, and I could feel he was going to lose this bet really fast.

“I accept your challenge. I won’t lose.” He grunted, and I smiled against his flesh before giving the same spot a peck.

“We’ll see about that, Brax,” I warned, my eyes locking onto his. Our gazes didn’t budge as he moved back a little, giving me enough room to lower to my knees. I grinned at the way his chest rose and fell, his lustful eyes giving me their full attention.

I grabbed the base of his cock, stroking it up and down before I guided it to my mouth. He inhaled sharply as I teased the tip of his hardness, drawing circles over and over at snail’s pace before I latched my lips onto the head of his cock, forming a tight grip. I moved forward as slowly as I could.

“Fuck.”

I could feel him tense up while his cock hardened. The water that was pooling beneath my legs wouldn’t cool me off with how hot his words made me feel.

I began to move forward and back, making sure every move counted. His cock was so big, but I wouldn't dare lose this challenge. I wanted him to cry out and cum into my mouth because of what I was doing to him. I wanted him to lose control.

As I increased my pace, I knew Braxton had lost when he let out a frustrated grunt and his hands tangled into my short locks. I thought he'd tell me to stop, but he merely kept my head still before he moved his hips, fucking my mouth at an accelerated rate.

“Dammit, Jewel! So damn good. How am I supposed to win?” He moaned and then grunted while he kept pumping his cock.

His legs trembled, and I could feel the tension in his cock as it grew harder and harder, signaling to me that he was going to release his load in my mouth at any second.

“Jewel, I'm gonna cum. Shit!” He lost it with a final moan, his load shooting into my mouth jet after jet. I took every drop of his warm cum and swallowed. *Shit...*

I didn't think a guy could cum so much until now. Brax slowly pulled out, and I caught my breath, attempting to ignore how horny that whole process had made me. I looked up and grinned.

“I wi-mhm?!” I began but was cut off by the fierce kiss Brax delivered.

“Stand up,” he ordered and released his hold on my hair. His husky voice only made me giggle as I stood, flicking my short locks.

“Short locks aren't bad, are they?” I teased. He had a playful grin on his face before it turned into a heated gaze as

his eyes trailed my naked body once more.

I pressed my back against the wall again. “Your expression tells me I’m about to be fucked senseless,” I mumbled. My mind told me I might have a bit off more than I could chew, but my body was prepared for a lustful shower filled with exotic pleasure.

He smirked as he reached me, and I lifted my arms again to hook around his neck. His hands glided down my body until he reached my ass, slapping it once before hoisting me up and resting my backside against the tiles.

He held my weight with ease and shot me a confident grin. “Ready, Precious? Don’t complain later.”

“Do your worst, Brax,” I purred.

Grow Up and Fix It

“So fucking sore,” I complained, as I lifted my arm to try to stretch the tight spot in my shoulder.

After winning the bet and getting fucked senseless, we waited for me to have enough energy to switch back to my male form.

Even though it was the evening, we didn't want to risk me being on campus and people wondering why I was with Braxton instead of Logan.

There were a few students who knew Logan was my boyfriend from the party we attended during the first semester.

At least as Jinn, I blended in as usual. We headed home afterward, and Brax texted Kage to ask if he could leave us something to eat, knowing the others must have already had dinner without us.

“I warned you,” Brax said with the biggest grin on his face.

I groaned, both of us coming up to the corner of our street.

“Yes, but fuck. No sympathy? Remind me not to make bets with you.”

“If they're pleasurable bets, I'll make sure I forget to remind you.” Brax chuckled. I grinned, shaking my head.

“Brax? Jinn?”

We turned to see Nick walking towards us with two other guys. I studied them carefully, unsure why Nick was hanging with senior students.

They definitely weren't first years like us, their blazers having a different front badge that I'd yet to see.

Brax must have noticed my uneasiness. He rested his arm on my shoulder as he stood right at my side.

“Nick, what's up? Were you looking for Zane or something?” Brax inquired. He looked slightly irritated, and I figured it was because Nick hadn't used his full name.

“Nah. Think Zane is arguing with his bro? I knocked on the door, but the quiet redhead said Zane was busy with shit or whatever. They haven't been getting along, huh?” Nick replied.

Brax and I both frowned at the news but tried to keep our worry at bay. “Siblings fight all the time. They'll get over it. I didn't know you had senior friends?” I pointed out, looking at the two individuals whose focus was directly on me and not Brax.

“Oh yeah. They are my homeboys. They help outside of campus. You know, get the word out and everything about the latest at Brighten. I think our exams this semester are going to be off campus like they did three years ago. I think when you were in Brighten, Brax,” Nick pointed out.

I felt Brax's body tense, and he replied. “And where did you hear that from?”

“Zane told me! Said that you attended Brighten before, but you stopped and waited for him to be accepted which was like

two and a half years ago or something like that. Man, you're such an awesome brother, Brax," Nick praised.

"It's Braxton. Don't know who said you could call me Brax, but not just anyone can use my shortened name. And thanks," Brax mumbled.

He didn't wait for Nick to reply, urging me to start moving. "Uh, tell Zane I'll see him tomorrow!" Nick replied.

I looked over my shoulder to see them begin to walk away, the two seniors laughing and taking turns ruffling Nick's hair. *What the hell was that about?*

"I seriously need to beat some sense into Zane. He can't be telling people about my past just because he thinks it'll make him friends," Brax muttered.

"You think that's the reason?" I asked.

"When you want to fit in, anyone can ask you something and you share to please them. You're gaining their trust. I know those guys."

"The seniors?" I asked.

"Ya. They aren't senior students, they're alumni. They were in my year when I started, so they've graduated."

"When you graduate, aren't you supposed to be a Mage Warrior?" I asked. We stopped in front of the house and Brax turned to face me.

"Mage Warriors are chosen based on a number of factors. It isn't all about grades and whether you graduate from Brighten. The school acknowledges everything you do, both at school and in the town of Natala. It's not like they have spies or anything, but people observe your behavior and how you interact with friends, family, all that stuff. Either way, 75% of

us can graduate from Brighten, and only 25% get hired as a Mage Warrior.”

“What happens to the remaining graduates?” I asked

“They have to apply. It’s obviously an easier process, and there’s no limit to how many times you apply, but their judging panel is strict, and the headmaster of Brighten reviews all applications.”

“So, if you had major shit with the headmaster, you’re essentially screwed.”

“Yes and no. They say they aren’t allowed to ‘judge’ you, so that’s where the no comes in. But yes, you’re pretty much screwed if you piss off the headmaster. She’s a woman. Women hold grudges.” Brax emphasized the last part of his statement and shot me a look.

I lifted an eyebrow at him. “Really?”

“Don’t deny that you don’t remember arguing with Logan five years ago at the exact time, date, and location,” Brax countered.

I pouted my lips and rolled my eyes. “Something along those lines and it was four years ago since we’ve had a major argument. He bought me a bouquet of roses that were actually chocolate! Oh man, those were really good. I shared them with Alice and my mom, but Alice ate most of them.”

Brax sighed. “Exactly my point. Women are dangerous. If I ever piss you off, tell me right away.”

I chuckled. “I’ll keep that in mind. Maybe you should remember not to kiss me when I’m a g-”

My eyes widened at the touch of his lips, and he pulled back with a wide grin. “What?”

“Oh c’mon. You knew what I was going to say dammit!” I huffed, punching his arm. *He’s always kissing me when I’m a guy!*

“Ow! Jeez, Jinn. I think I should have been rougher on you,” he grumbled.

“Rougher?! You were holding back?!” I gawked at him.

He gave me a seductive grin. “Let’s go deal with my brothers before Kage starts breaking shit.”

“You’re avoiding my damn question, Brax! And Kage breaking stuff? Kage is quiet and innocent, he wouldn-”

CRASH

We looked at the front door, and Braxton sighed. “Yup. Zane must have ticked Kage off for him to break something. If I don’t intervene, Zane will get a black eye.”

We rushed up to the front door, and Brax opened it. I entered first, heading for the sound of shouting coming from the living room. I didn’t even make it to the doorway when a strong arm wrapped around my waist, pulling me back.

I looked up to see Maximus with a frown. “Maxi? What was that-” I began, but something soared past us into the wall. I gawked at the broken glass and then Braxton there with us.

“This is gonna be a pain in the butt,” Brax grumbled.

“Stop fucking throwing shit!” Zane’s loud voice exclaimed.

“Why don’t you stop fucking pissing me off you fucker!” Kage roared. All three of us exchanged looks and cautiously moved to the doorway where Logan was watching the two brothers face each other.

I glanced at Zane who had a cut on his cheek, the blood already rolling down and staining his white shirt. I looked at Kage whose eyes were filled with so much anger he almost looked like a different person.

He was trembling, and things around him were levitating off the shelves and counters of the drawers. *Well shit! What the fuck happened?*

“Uh, Zane said something stupid and Kage snapped.” Alice calm voice entered my mind. I didn’t know where Alice was, but knowing the situation at hand, she was most likely upstairs with Koa.

I knew from when I was upset it was never a good idea for your familiar to be so close. One, because our feelings affected theirs, and two, they could react in a defensive way and attack the person in question by accident.

With how angry Kage must have been to start breaking stuff, I think the house would be at risk if Alice weren’t with Koa.

“Jewel, switch back,” Brax advised.

I didn’t fight his command, closing my eyes and pulling back my magic. I was in my female form in seconds, wearing the sweatpants and red t-shirt from before.

“Alice said Zane said something, and Kage snapped,” I explained, looking at Brax who had a troubled expression on his face as he bit his lip.

“Has Kage gotten this mad before?” I whispered.

“Yes, and it’s not pretty. It’s a bit dangerous actually, and his mom isn’t here to calm him down. She’s basically the only one who could when he got THIS mad,” Maxi explained.

I looked at Logan who noticed us, and my eyes found Nixon at the kitchen island, watching everything with a blank expression. *This isn't good at all.*

Brax walking into the living room, catching Zane's attention, but Kage kept his eyes locked on Zane like he was a target.

"Kage. What's wrong?" Brax questioned cautiously. Kage didn't answer, and Zane scrunched his face.

"Brax?! Why are you asking what's wrong with Kage when he's fucking throwing shit," Zane demanded. Brax rolled his eyes and looked at him.

"Because every single time Kage gets mad like an erupting volcano, it's because you say or do something fucking stupid!" Brax snapped back. He was now in older brother mode, and with Zane's tone, it looked like Brax wasn't going to have any of it.

"Why does everyone always blame me for shit?! I've been trying to do everything to make up for what happened at the tower, and yet it's like you all are blind or something!" Zane snapped back.

"Duck!" Logan shouted, and Zane looked back just in time to duck to the floor as three flying glasses soared past him and crashed into the wall. Maximus moved me out of the way and we both hurried to the kitchen island where Nixon was.

Nixon got off the stool and stood protectively in front of me with Maximus doing the same. I rolled my eyes but wasn't going to scold them at the moment. I looked back at Kage who clenched his fists.

"You, you, you! That's all you fucking care about! Do you even stop to fucking THINK what your 'heroic' actions have

done?! You're trying to act like the fucking victim. ALWAYS acting like a damn victim and wanting people's sympathy!" Kage yelled.

"I was only close to those guys to protect Jewel! Why the fuck are you getting all butt hurt because Nick wants me to come to the fucking party?! What, I should just live here like I'm in jail?! We were going to catch those guys without anyone's help! Jewel wouldn't have gotten hurt," Zane snapped.

I frowned at his words, unsure if his explanation was true or not. Nixon's hand reached out to find mine, and I held it with my trembling hands. All the shouting was hurting my head but what worried me more was I didn't have any memory of the incident to solve this accurately.

"Don't fucking try to blame us, ESPECIALLY Jewel! You think you would have been just fine! How can you even trust Nick?! You're friends with him for one semester, and you can put your fucking life on the line for him versus your own brothers you've known your whole life!" Kage screamed.

"Two brothers, one who is barely home for me to even ask for help, and YOU who fucking ignores me!" Zane argued.

"Zane, enough!" Brax barked. Kage laughed, the sound sending shivers through me like he was an evil mastermind.

"Ignore you. Oh, I'm sorry Prince Zane. WHO IGNORED WHO FIRST?! When Braxton got into Brighten and was living his life, you were all miserable saying how you didn't want to be alone. You didn't want to go to Brighten and not have friends like you were experiencing in school! Braxton fucking put his FUTURE on hold for US! Especially your ungrateful ass! He could have gone back with me and left you,

but NO! I don't want to be alone, we should stick together like BROTHERS!" Kage shouted.

"Yet the moment we start school, who goes off on their own to make NEW, COOL FRIENDS? Who abandoned their brothers first? YOU DID, ZANE! And don't you fucking dare start with that Braxton wasn't here bullshit. Brax is ALWAYS cleaning up after your garbage."

"Kage, enough," Brax replied, using a hushed tone but Kage glared at him.

"No! Let him hear the fucking truth! I'm tired of you sacrificing everything for us and his ungrateful ass thinking he can use it as an excuse!" Kage retorted.

"I'm not making excuses, and he's not cleaning up my garbage! I paid my dues, I did some cleaning of the campus, everything is good! Why don't you stop being a hurtful jerk just because I decided to have a few friends without you!" Zane argued.

"Paid your dues? You're fucking-" Kage took a step forward, and Brax immediately stepped in.

"Kage! Enough! It's not worth it."

"Go ahead! Let him do whatever he wants. I'm not afraid of him!" Zane snapped.

"Brax. Move," Kage said in a deep voice, and the floor felt like it was trembling.

"Fuck, Brax move. The floor is fucking shaking!" Maxi exclaimed. Nixon took a step forward.

"Kage. Jewel's here," Nixon said quietly. Kage and Zane both looked at Nixon before noticing I was standing there.

Kage lowered his eyes to my hands, and I quickly hid them, knowing they were shaking uncontrollably.

I wasn't scared of Kage, but all the noise, broken glass, and wild energy was beginning to get to me. Not to forget Alice's anxiety that was starting to bother me, her feelings only heightening my response.

Kage bit his lip, glaring at Zane once more before he took a deep breath; the remaining pieces of furniture lowered to the ground. The floor stopped trembling, and we all sighed in relief. Logan stepped forward to stand next to Braxton.

"Guys, this has to stop. Zane, Kage has a serious point. I don't know if Nick can be trusted, even if he tried to help at the tower. We can't trust anyone but each other. This is the second semester, and we really don't have time for parties," Logan explained.

"Again, you choose Kage's side over mine!" Zane huffed.

"Zane, grow up!" Maxi snapped. We all looked at him as he let out a grunt. "You're acting like a fucking two year old right now. Take a moment and listen to what Logan has to say!"

"There's nothing TO say! Yes, I admit that when those guys had threatened me about hurting Jewel, I should have told you guys, BUT I had everything under control! I didn't ask for anyone's help!" Zane countered.

"YOU CAN'T FUCKING USE A PROPER WIND SKILL!" Braxton roared. We all stared at him wide-eyed, his lime green eyes now gold.

"You would have DIED Zane! Dead! You think they were joking? You would have jumped off that tower, attempted to

use that skill, and guess what? NO ONE would have helped you! Not even fucking Nick!”

“You don’t fucking know that!” Zane snapped.

“IT’S ON THE FUCKING REPORT!” Brax snapped back.

“Report?” I asked, looking at Logan. Nixon sighed and ran a hand over his face.

“What report?!” Zane shouted.

“Wow. So you didn’t even read the fucking report. Of course, that’s our brilliant little brother for you,” Kage commented with a laugh.

“Fuck off, Kage!” Zane countered.

“No, YOU FUCK OFF ZANE! This is exactly why you always need someone to hold your fucking hand because you can’t take five seconds to use that DAMN brain of yours! You don’t know anything! You don’t know why Brax is never here. You don’t know what your actions fucking did to our whole damn family! Yet, you’re sobbing and whining that we’re ignoring you and NOW you want to be all brotherly after you abandoned us. Everyone always has to sacrifice shit for you, but you can’t even see the wrong in the apparent GOOD DEED you did!” Kage argued.

“It’s thanks to me that Jewel wasn’t hurt during the school year!”

“JEWEL CAN TAKE CARE OF HERSELF!” Nixon exclaimed. We all whipped our heads at Nixon who looked just as lethal as Kage did.

“That’s literally your excuse. I protected Jewel this and that?! LOOK!” Nixon snapped. The guys looked at me and I

frowned, unsure what Nixon was trying to point out.

“She’s fucking frightened right now! What did Savannah say when she sat all of us fucking down?! Anything can trigger her seizures! Bursts of anxiety, super loud noises, energy exhaustion. Fuck, did no one pay attention?” Nixon snapped.

Logan frowned, appearing hurt by Nixon’s words. I knew Logan understood my health the most, but with him trying to referee the situation, it definitely slipped his mind.

Nixon turned to Zane. “Fuck Zane, just stop and think! You’re saying everyone is taking Kage’s side. WHY? What would make us all take his side? Maybe because he’s seeing the BIG picture. You wanna know why Braxton’s always busy or out? He’s fucking working! You call yourself a brother, but you can’t even take five seconds out of your self-pity to see what your brothers are even doing for you?! People WISH, no DREAM, to have siblings who give a shit about them! Let alone Braxton who works in silence without any reward. Now Kage is trying to help you see what the real problem is and you’re thinking everyone is choosing sides!”

Nixon walked up to Zane and punched him. We were all speechless, and Zane looked even more shocked.

“Now that I’ve punched you, maybe you’ll snap out of whatever lies those ex-friends fed you. When Jewel fell off that tower, what did you do?”

Zane was quiet, his right eye already beginning to bruise from the punch. Nixon huffed. “Exactly. You stood there watching her fall. Not because you didn’t have the guts to jump. It was because you didn’t stand a fucking chance to reach her in time. Your weakest element is wind. Instead of being a hero, you’d be a casualty,” Nixon revealed.

“I...” Zane trailed off.

“Exactly. All those friends fed you the whole ‘you can do it’ bullshit. REAL friends tell you where your flaws are and help you fix them! Not throw you off a fucking tower and say fly. Jewel could have handled whatever shit those assholes were planning. You know why I know that? Because we’re not her babysitters! She can fucking change into a guy and defend herself, and if you had told us, we would have taken the right precautions to avoid ALL of that. Instead, you got caught up in feeling wanted and loved by people who don’t give a shit about you. You know where your real friends are? RIGHT HERE. People who have to fucking punch you before you understand how lucky you are not to be alone! I wished to have a family who’d even look my way, let alone care for my wellbeing. Grow the fuck up before you lose everyone you care about!”

Nixon walked away, and in seconds we heard the slam of the door. Logan bit his lip before he cursed. “I’m going after Nixon,” Logan said, but walked over to me.

He pulled me into his arms and hugged me tightly. “You okay?” he whispered.

“Ya. No seizure feeling. Go check on Nixon. I don’t want him alone right now,” I admitted.

With what he’d just said and did, I realized something had hit a nerve, and from his words, I knew it had to be about his past. *What happened to you Nixon? How troubled was your childhood?*

Logan nodded, pulling back to give me a quick kiss before he dashed off after Nixon, the door closing shut in seconds. The room was silent before Kage whispered.

“Mom has cancer.”

Zane’s eye widened, and his expression was a mixture of confusion, anger, and sadness.

“What?”

“Kage, don’t-” Brax began, but Kage shook his head.

“I’m not babying him anymore, Brax. You shouldn’t be either. You want to know why Brax has been working his ass off, picking up every job he can find? After the tower incident, your ‘friends’ spread rumors that YOU were the reasons Jewel got hurt,” Kage confessed.

Zane visibly swallowed and opened his mouth to speak, but Kage shook his head. “No. I’m not gonna hear any excuse you have. Dad lost his job because of those rumors, and the people who were raising money for Mom’s treatment after she disclosed she was sick, donated the money to a random charity. Why? Because they don’t support bullies or the better term, murderers,” Kage explained.

“Does...Mom think...” Zane trailed off.

“They did. What do you expect them to believe when everyone’s talking and spreading the same rumor? If it weren’t for Jewel, they would probably still believe them. It didn’t matter if Brax and I said otherwise because we’re family. But Jewel and Alice had to explain everything before our parents believed you were innocent. Either way, the harm is already done. Dad lost his job, and we don’t have any more savings, Zane. You happy now? See why I’m so fucking pissed at you?” Kage exclaimed.

Zane nodded and looked to the floor. “Sorry.”

“Sorry. That’s exactly what you do when you finally see the light. Fix it, Zane. Fix the shit you’ve caused. When you’re

ready to be my brother and put family first, then we'll talk," Kage whispered.

He headed for the stairs but stopped. He turned around and walked over to me. "Sorry, Jewel. I didn't mean to scare you or Alice. I'll apologize to her when I get upstairs." Kage wrapped his arms around me, enveloping me in his warm embrace. I nodded, squeezing him back.

"It's fine, Kage. I'm okay," I reassured him. He placed a gentle kiss on my neck and pulled back with a sad expression.

I gave him the best smile I could, lifting my hand to brush against his cheek. "I'm fine. I'm not mad. Go make sure Koa and Alice are okay."

He nodded, blinking back his tears. I gave him a tender kiss on the lips before he pulled away and headed towards the stairs. Once we heard the door from upstairs close, Brax sighed.

"Maximus. Can you help me clean up?" he asked.

"Sure," Maxi replied. Brax looked at Zane who stood staring at the floor as he absorbed the news.

"Zane, can you take Jewel to Savannah?" Brax asked. Zane nodded.

"I don't need to go to Savannah," I grumbled. Maxi sighed, walking over to me. I looked up at him with a defiant glare, but he kissed me, pulling back to give me a sad look.

"Sorry, Precious. This is a non-negotiable request. We don't want you experiencing a delayed reaction to all of this and having a seizure. Go get checked. Please?" Maxi suggested.

I wanted to fight, but I was exhausted by all the arguing. My head was still pounding which wasn't a good sign. "Fine."

Zane headed to the door, not saying a word, and Maxi started moving the furniture to make sure all the glass shards were picked up from the hidden places. Brax ruffled his hair before he rubbed his eyes.

I walked over to him and gave him a quick hug. "You okay?" I whispered, noticing he looked paler than normal.

"Ya. I'm good. Go get checked. I'm in your bed tonight, so if you come back, I'll be napping." I nodded in understanding, but his words didn't take away my concern for him.

He sighed again and hugged me tightly. "Don't give me that worried look, Precious. Cleaning up won't take long, especially with Maximus' help. Go get checked and enjoy some air."

"You sure?"

"Positive," he replied.

"Okay. I love you," I whispered.

"I love you too." He kissed me once on the lips and then on the nose as well.

"I also love you, Jewel!" Maxi emphasized, causing both of us to grin.

"Love you too, Maxi," I replied with a soft giggle.

All I wanted was for us to get along. The tension had built until it was too late, and now it felt like everyone was separated into teams. *Can't we get back to how it used to be?*

"We'll be back in a few," I announced, heading to the door.

I paused at the entrance and closed my eyes, shifting back into my male form with little issue. I did feel tired, but I'd at least have enough magic to stay in my form for a few hours now that I'd had a little break.

Zane opened the door for me and we headed out, slowly closing it behind us. I looked at Zane who had a blank expression on his face. I took a deep breath and reached out to grab his hand.

He glanced out our joined hands. "People are gonna see," he whispered.

"Does that bother you?" I asked.

"No," he replied.

"Then let them see."

We walked onto the main sidewalk, and I directed us to a back route to the school. Once I decided it was a good time to talk to Zane, I turned to face him.

"Zane?"

He swallowed, his guarded expression still present. I placed my hands on his shoulders. "Zane. You can cry if you want. Or scream. Just don't bottle it in."

"I'm sorry Jinn," he whispered. "I'm sorry...I...I thought...they said I was cool. They said how I was strong and had so much potential. I never expected it would lead to this."

"I know. They fed you what you wanted to hear."

Zane raised his head to look into my eyes; a tear rolled down from his dark green eyes.

"Mom...is dying...and Dad lost his job because of me. You got hurt...and Brax is probably fed up with me. I used to

do everything with Kage, but now he's the one getting the attention from real friends and classmates, and I'm alone. My grades are shit right now...and I may lose everything. Will I lose you too?" he asked, more tears rolling down his cheeks.

The desperation and fear in those emerald eyes made tears pool in my own eyes as I pulled him into a hug. "I'm not going anywhere silly. I may not remember everything about you...it could take some time, but I want to try again. We can fix this. I know we can," I whispered.

He nodded into my shoulder as sobs began to escape him. "I'm sorry," he cried.

I rubbed his back and closed my eyes, letting my tears fall as I comforted him the best I could as a man.

We'll fix this. We have to for the sake of our team.

Loneliness and Make Things Right

“It’s good you came by. The meds should help with your headache, and you’re clear from seizures. Lay down for a few minutes, and then you’re free to go home. I’ll talk with Ms. Landsford to see if you can be excused during the second half of your classes on Wednesdays,” Savannah stated.

“You don’t have to. I’m fine,” I argued, but Savannah shook her head.

“Your magic is straining, Jewel. It’s going to be hard for you to maintain Jinn if you keep up at this pace. You aren’t giving your body enough time to replenish your mana. Even if you have a large amount, everyone has a limit. I also suggest Alice uses very little magic until I can give you the all-clear.”

“What happens if Jewel continues as is?” Zane asked.

“Jinn Starfire may fade away permanently. Jewel won’t be able to switch between genders. I’m already impressed with how long you’ve been able to switch back and forth. It’s a demonstration of how powerful you are, which is both good and bad,” Savannah replied.

“Why would it be bad?” I asked.

“The more powerful an individual is, the more at risk they are. There are plenty of Mage Warriors who’d dream to change their appearance with magic, let alone still have

enough mana to function normally and cast spells. That's only one of your abilities, which you'll learn when you become a Mage Warrior yourself. You're truly gifted Jewel, and a lot of it comes from your parents. Just be careful." Savannah gave me a small smile.

I nodded before I lowered my body back down and laid against the pillows of the bed.

"I'll be off. Zane, make sure she goes straight to bed when you two get home," Savannah advised.

"Understood. Thank you," he replied. She grinned, turned around, and headed for the door. I let out a long sigh and closed my eyes.

"I don't like nurses," I mumbled.

"Why?" Zane asked.

"They're always so caring and concerned about people they don't know," I admitted.

"Isn't that a good thing?" Zane asked.

"Sometimes. I guess I'm a bit antsy with what she said."

Zane was quiet for a moment. "Do you want to talk about it? We have a few minutes of chill time before we head home," Zane suggested.

I pondered the idea and smiled, "Ya. That would be nice."

He grinned and looked around for a chair, but I shuffled over to my right and patted the bed. He gave me a hesitant look.

"But you don't remember me though."

"I know you're Zane Park who was concerned enough to try and protect me in your own way," I replied.

He smirked, looking at the spot. “But...”

“Zane, I don’t bite. Come here.” I huffed.

He chuckled and gave me a wide grin. “Okay.”

Once he was comfortably lying next to me, we both stared up at the white ceiling.

“I’ve been having weird dreams lately. The same dream of a cloaked man, but his face is hidden. His voice is monotone, so it’s not like I know who it is. He keeps saying people are coming after me. I still can’t figure out why. What would someone want from me? I don’t remember anything that can make me so special that people would want to harm me,” I confessed, letting out my thoughts.

“Do you think it’s Gabriel?”

“No. I have a feeling Gabriel moved on already. That’s why I don’t see him in my dreams anymore. Before I woke up the first time, I had some type of dream. I guess it was a dream, or maybe Gabriel’s way to say he was crossing over. He told me I had to go, saying I didn’t belong on the side he was on. I didn’t understand it in the dream, but now that I think about it, it was probably him saying I didn’t belong among the dead. The other side was life, and he was dead and moving forward. But there’s one thing that bothered me,” I confessed.

“What?” Zane asked.

“I said Dad was there with Gabriel. I even pointed to his grave which was where we stood. I knew that my mom wasn’t there. It was kinda like my gut telling me she was fine on the living side. Gabriel shook his head and said he was the only person there and that I’d make Mother cry. I didn’t want to

leave him because I knew he'd be lonely, but if Dad wasn't there...where is he?" I whispered.

"It may be an invasive question, but when you guys were told your father had passed, did they deliver his body?"

"To be honest...I don't know. He had a ceremony and everything, but I don't think there was a viewing or anything. I just remember going to visit his grave many times after that, and I try to go whenever I can or need to make a big decision. I doubt my dad is alive though."

"Why is that?" Zane questioned.

"I don't know. It's been, what...sixteen years since his death? Why wouldn't he come home?" I turned my head to meet Zane's eyes.

"What could be stopping him from coming home other than death itself? They said his partner died too, and I don't really remember anything else and haven't inquired about it. Mom hates talking about it and still doesn't mention it. Why open a sealed wound if you're not 100% sure if an assumption or guess is true?"

"Are you scared of being disappointed?"

"Yes," I said with confidence. "The first year when Father had passed, I assumed he'd just come back. I had vivid dreams of him somewhere in a castle or dungeon or whatever it was, and simply thought he must be trapped and he'd escaped. As a Mage Warrior, you get into sticky situations. I just figured he was in one of those and boom, he'd be back home."

I looked back at the ceiling and sighed. "But then Gabriel died. I never told my mom this, but I had a dream. Same dungeon and everything. My dad was there, and he noticed how sad I was. He was in those chains you saw in movies and

had a magic circle under him for extra emphasis. Probably because I was really into magic circles back then. I told him everything that happened. How I couldn't summon the wind... how I couldn't save him. Mom's crying, Logan's defense, and revealing Lark was the culprit. The...blood. And I cried."

I let out a laugh. "I felt so pathetic. There I was crying to my dream dad because everyone was comforting my mom and saying sorry for her loss."

I turned my head toward Zane again, catching a glimpse of his eyes filled with sadness and remorse. He lifted his hand and brushed away the tear that I hadn't realized was rolling down my cheek.

"No one said sorry to me or comforted me when I wanted to cry. I kinda just acted like the tough girl, and everyone praised me for being so strong." I sighed and crossed my arms, hugging my body. "All I wanted was to get a hug and cry."

"A silent plea that your dad saw," Zane whispered.

"But he's dead."

"Maybe. Whether he was real or not, the good thing is he saw that his little girl needed a hug and he was someone who would let her lower those tough girl walls and cry. In the end, did it help?"

"Yes. A lot actually. Even with his chains on, he listened and comforted me. However, he said I couldn't come back anymore."

"Why?"

"He didn't want me to get hurt. Maybe with me seeing him, it would hurt me more because he was dead too. Who knows?"

Zane nodded slightly and looked up at the ceiling. “Well. I don’t know if anyone is after you, but it could be some type of forewarning? My friends...well, ex-friends, were a bit obsessed with you. I guess they wanted to know how you were so powerful. Either way, I think we’ll be okay for now with the new rules, but we can never be too careful.”

“True,” I replied.

We were both silent, lost in our own thoughts. “Are you okay now, Zane?” I asked.

“After I ugly cried in a guy’s arms? Ya. It was nice,” he admitted, turning his head to smile at me. I giggled.

“You weren’t ugly, and I was crying too.” I gave him an admonishing look.

“Brax and Kage were right. Heck, Nixon, Logan, Maximus—everyone was right,” he admitted. “I wanted so desperately to fit in. I was never the type to have friends when I was little. I guess you can say an incident happened and I gave up trying?”

“Incident?” I asked.

“I honestly can’t remember how old I was then. Maybe six? Or seven? I was trying my best to make friends at the school we were in. I have never been good at making friends while Kage, even though he’s quiet, can get along with everyone. Essentially, it came down to me being bullied by a few of the kids at school. At first, I just assumed that was how I’d get accepted. You know, get them all juice boxes and bring some snacks from home to give to them when they were hungry. Little things.”

He raised his hand up to look at it, spreading it out before turning it to see the back of his hand. “I just desperately

wanted to fit in like Kage. I looked up to both of my brothers, but I wanted to feel what it was like to have friends. It wasn't until later I came to understand they were using me. I didn't realize that till they cornered me in a section outside of the school where teachers don't check during evening recess. They kicked my ass."

"What? But they were SIX or SEVEN! Or whatever! That's just horrible." Shock and disgust infused my words. How could kids be so cruel?

Zane lowered his hand with a grin. "To be fair, there weren't any other Korean students at the time, so I think it was more of a racial thing. With Kage, even though he knew everyone, he didn't necessarily hang out with people. It's kinda like being in the room and knowing everyone there, but not having your own section to stand in. You're just in the middle, and all the directions are open to you. I guess to them Kage wasn't a threat. What's the quiet boy going to do?"

I frowned, and Zane turned over to lay on his side to face me. I did the same, our eyes never leaving each other.

"What happened? Did Brax come? Or your Mom?"

"Nah. I was knocked right out, but when I woke up, I almost thought I was dreaming," Zane replied. He had a wide grin on his face like the memory was flashing before his eyes.

"There was Kage standing in front of me, and his hands were clenched in fists, trembling with blood and bruises. He looked so mad. Like how he was in the living room today. All the bullies, even the tallest one that everyone was afraid of, were on their knees begging for Kage to let them go."

"Damn."

Zane smiled proudly and nodded. “It was pretty epic. Until my Mom came. I knew we were both going to get in big shit, especially with our biological dad. By that time, Brax was with us, and our mom asked Kage how he’d learned to fight. We played a few fighting games at the time, and Kage read a lot of books, so I knew that he’d just used what he learned, but there was no way our mom would listen to that.”

I could tell where this was leading. “Brax?” I whispered.

Zane grinned. “Took the blame and the beatings from our alcoholic dad. I don’t know if Braxton ever said it, but that was why Mom put her foot down. Our biological dad beat Brax so bad, he couldn’t go to school for a week. My mom was worried if he even went with the bruises and she explained the situation, they would take us away and deport her.”

“I’m sorry, Zane. That must have been hard for you, as well as Kage and Brax. Not to mention poor Diana.”

“That’s why I was so clingy. I knew as long as my brothers were there, I wouldn’t need to worry about bullies and people who just didn’t like me. Brax and Kage were my sword and shield, so I never entered a situation feeling worried because my brothers had my back. But when we came to Brighten and I was getting attention, I thought I’d finally found my group. I could let Brax and Kage live without me always holding them back. When I realized it was a way to hurt you, I...I was so pissed off. It was as if my childhood was happening all over again,” he sighed and rubbed the back of his neck with his hand.

“Payback was my main goal, but I needed to do it without my brothers’ help for once in my life. I wished to be like Kage who stood up to the bullies and proved that he wasn’t some

pushover. I really wanted to protect you. To kinda impress you? I knew I had distanced myself from everyone, but in my vision, it would have paid off because the bullies would have been reported and you'd be safe. I didn't imagine it would cascade into this horrible mess, to the point where the girl we have the privilege of sharing can't even remember me. Where my brothers can barely be in the same room as me. To living parents who can't even tell me that my mom has cancer and my dad lost his job because of me. Essentially, thanks to my attempt at making everything right, I fucked everything up. I literally almost lost everything I care about and love. Ironic, isn't it?"

"Zane. We can make it right. As I said before, they haven't won. We can fix all of it. Your mom is getting better with the new treatment. I can tell Braxton isn't too upset with you. Even though Kage looked upset, I bet if you two talked, you'd understand that he just misses you. He wanted to get the brother that actually acknowledged him back. He doesn't care about being popular or those friends who only say hi in the halls. He cares about the people who truly want the best for him and his family," I explained.

"And my dad? How am I going to fix that? That job meant a lot to him, and without it, I don't know how we can balance attending Brighten and making enough to support our parents," he admitted.

I sat up and gave him a determined look. "We'll solve it right now."

"Right now?" Zane sat up, curiosity evident in his expression.

"Yup! Right now. You have to trust me." I swung my legs over the edge of the bed and stood. Zane followed my lead on

the opposite side, and I walked over to him and presented my hand.

“Do you trust me?” I asked, meeting his gaze.

“Yes. I trust you,” Zane replied without a second of hesitation. He put his hand in mine, and I squeezed it.

“Then let’s see the headmaster and make things right!” I vowed.

Try Again and Fever

“Thank you so much, Headmaster!” I exclaimed, bowing my head once more.

“Thank you, Headmaster. I greatly appreciate your assistance,” Zane declared, his voice filled with gratitude.

“Make sure you two don’t stay out too late, and Jewel. Week off. Understood?”

“Yes, Headmaster,” I replied with a shy smile. We bowed our heads once more, and I slowly closed the door of the headmaster’s office.

We made it out to the main hallway where I grabbed onto Zane’s hand and swiftly navigated him to the side entrance of the school. Once we were outside in the cool night air, I squealed and turned to Zane, pulling him into a hug.

“We did it!! I’m so happy for you, Zane. Everything’s going to be okay!” I said excitedly, not even realizing I was crying.

I pulled back to see the happiest smile I’ve ever seen plastered across Zane’s face, and he nodded while blinking back tears.

“It’s thanks to you, Jewel. There’s no way she would have believed me if you weren’t there,” Zane pointed out.

I shook my head, and my short locks flicked my face from the rapid movement. “Not even! You explained everything from start to finish. All I did was reinforce what you’d said. I can’t believe those damn alumni are spreading rumors! I knew they weren’t good.”

“Ya. I wasn’t expecting the headmaster to even know about what was going on. I guess she wanted to see if I would come forward and ask for assistance.” Zane suggested.

“Hm. I think she wanted you to realize who your true friends were and which ‘friends’ were really your foes? I know you’re close to Nick, but as the others said before, you can’t trust him. Especially when he’s hanging out with those guys.”

We walked down the stairs and began to head home. “Nick’s been hanging out with them?” Zane asked.

“Huh? You didn’t know?” I asked.

“No.”

“But he came to ask about the party.” I reminded him, remembering what he had said during his argument with Kage.

“That was during the day. I’ve never seen him hanging with anyone when I’m around,” Zane revealed.

“He looked pretty close to them when I saw them while I was walking with Brax. He wasn’t pleased, saying something about knowing those guys from when he was in school. From before he dropped out of Brighten to wait on you and Kage.”

Zane frowned and looked slightly hurt. I squeezed his hand and smiled.

“It’s fine. Means you know where you stand. Your real friends will never abandon you,” I whispered. He squeezed my

hand back and smiled.

Zane came to a stop, prompting me to halt as well thanks to our joined hands. “Zane?” I asked.

“Jewel, can I do something?” he asked.

“Is it painful?” I asked.

“No,” he replied.

“Then, okay,” I agreed. He released my hand and took a step back. I tilted my head in curiosity as he tried to fix his ruffled locks and took a few breaths.

“I know we all agreed to share you, but I feel I haven’t done my portion in this...um...harem? That’s the word, right?” He blushed with embarrassment.

I nodded, hoping he’d continue. *Does he want to break up?* The thought alone made my heart clench in pain and fear trickle through me. I guess it would make sense since I didn’t remember the past about him, but it still hurt.

Zane must have noticed my expression, and he hurried to continue. “Aww, no. Don’t give me that look, Jewel. Hear me out first.”

He took a few more breaths and went on. “I’ve never asked a girl out before. I know we agreed to share you, but you don’t remember me being a part of that. I feel it’s not fair to you to have so much compassion and care towards someone you don’t remember is your boyfriend. Well, one of your boyfriends. So what I’m trying to say...well...I want to ask you formally if I can date you? I mean, you’ll still be dating the others, but at least you now have a memory of me agreeing to want to date you too.”

I gave him a blank stare, taking in his words. His face grew red, and he looked to the floor. “You may not remember, but last semester I was barely home. I stayed out with those friends, helping them out with anything they wanted. I didn’t think it would come to bite me in the ass later, but the one thing I vividly regret to this day is losing time with you. Sure, I missed the guys, but it was just missing a friend and, of course, my brothers. But with you, I missed your presence. Even when you were a guy, I so desperately wanted to be near you, yet I stood afar and watched.”

He raised his gaze to mine with a sheepish smile. “Even at the party, when Kage took you to the bathroom...which you may not recall I was there, I was so upset. Not with you or Kage, but myself. I was upset that because of my actions, I’d isolated myself and may have lost the chance of loving a girl who was as beautiful and kind-hearted as you. Now that I have a second chance, I don’t want to fuck this up. I don’t want to lose the relationships I’ve dreamed of gluing back together. I just want to try again.”

He moved closer to me and offered his hand. “Would you give me that chance to try again? Can I date you, Jewel Starfire?”

A smile lifted my lips as my expression softened. I placed my hand into his and squeezed it tightly.

“I’d love to date you again, Zane Park,” I replied. His face blossomed with excitement, and he pulled me into a hug.

“Thanks, Jewel. That makes me so happy. So damn happy,” he exclaimed, picking me up and twirling around. I squealed and hugged him back.

“We should have our first date, right now!” I said eagerly. He pulled back to give me a questioning look.

“You have something in mind? The headmaster said we should go home,” Zane reminded me with a furrowed brow.

“It’s on our way home. Please?” I jumped up and down to emphasize my enthusiasm.

He sighed and smiled.

“Alright. Lead the way, Precious.”

* * *

“Ice cream! Yum,” I hummed, swinging my hand that Zane held as we walked home. I wasn’t concerned about anyone seeing us because the campus was nearly empty so late at night.

Since the new rules had been implemented, students would rather go off to Natala and hang out there rather than be caught by security and potentially lose their chance at Brighten.

“Ice cream makes you so happy,” Zane mumbled, eyeing me with a smirk.

“It does! So glad he had chocolate sprinkles.” My reply was filled with glee, and I continued devouring my chocolate ice cream cone with chocolate and rainbow sprinkles. It was so delicious, I practically inhaled it, and it was already near the waffle cone.

“I should have paid though.”

“Hmm, why?” I asked. Zane hadn’t realized he’d forgotten his wallet at home until we’d ordered. Thankfully, I always carried an emergency card with me, usually hidden in my phone case so regardless of whether I was a boy or girl, I had something on hand.

“It’s technically our first date. I’m supposed to pay,” he pointed out.

“Is that a male rule?” I paused and quirked a brow at him.

“Um, no. I just heard it’s like that.” Zane replied, appearing deep in thought.

“Doesn’t matter to me. Dates, to me, are spending time with one another. I don’t care about who pays the bill, though I don’t think as a guy you should always pay for a girl. Or vice versa. It should be a balance of roles, but I may be wrong. Aside from you guys and Logan, I never really dated anyone, so I don’t know enough to talk about dating etiquette.”

“You’re really easy going.” Zane shot a smile my way as he complimented me.

“I try to be. Don’t need diamonds and pearls to be happy. I like chocolate though. Oh, and coffee!” I added.

“At least you have a week off to rest. No early mornings.”

“Yes. I’ll need lots of sleep,” I replied followed by a yawn. “Like when we get home.”

Zane chuckled, and we turned onto our street. Once we reached our house, I noticed Kage relaxing against the wall next to the door with Maximus.

Maxi saw us first and grinned. “Welcome back you two.”

I looked at both of them and turned to Zane who was looking at the floor with a worried gaze. “What are you guys doing here?” I asked.

“Kage was worried about his bro-OW! Fuck Kage. Didn’t Diana tell you to keep your hands to yourself when you’re mad? Jeez,” Maxi whined. Kage just pouted his lip and crossed his arms.

I giggled, shaking my head at Kage's cute expression. I knew they were worried about me, but they were also concerned about Zane.

I leaned in to whisper in Zane's ear. "Just be honest with your feelings. Let him understand you, just like how you made me understand."

I leaned back to stare into his green eyes, and he gave me a reassuring smile. "Okay. I will. Thanks, Jewel," he replied, leaning in to give me a kiss on the cheek.

I blushed at the gesture and gave him a shy smile before I made my way up the stairs to where Maxi and Kage stood watching our little moment.

"Jewel and Zane, sitting on a -OW!" Maxi began as I reached him, but was cut off when I elbowed him. "What's with everyone abusing me today?"

"Stop over exaggerating," I huffed with a smile. I moved to give Kage a hug in greeting and leaned back to look into his eyes.

"Everything was okay?" he asked.

"Yup. I even get a week off to rest." I winked. Kage and Maximus gave me worried looks, but I shrugged. "Savannah wants me to have a week off to rest my magic because midterms are coming, and my body needs it. If I keep being in my guy form all the time, Jinn could fade away."

"Fade away?" Maxi asked.

"It's complicated. I'll explain it tomorrow. Let's go inside Maxi." I pulled away from Kage and moved toward Maxi, slipping my hand into his. I glanced back at Kage who was catching on to my plan. Though he looked a bit irritated, he had a tiny smile on his lips.

“Just listen,” I mouthed to him. He took a deep breath and nodded.

“Get some rest, Jewel. You too, Maximus.” Kage motioned towards the door with his hands, encouraging us to go in.

“Night,” Maxi replied. I gave Zane a quick glance and noticed he looked more confident than before. I knew they would work it out, they just needed to sit down and talk.

We headed inside, and Maxi talked me into going to sleep early while he finished cleaning up. Braxton hadn't been feeling well, so Maximus made him go to sleep early too.

I reached the top of the stairs and walked over to Brax and Maxi's room, poking my head in to check on Brax. I had a hunch he was in our room at the end of the hall, but it didn't hurt to check.

My eyes scanned the room, landing on the empty beds. *No Braxton.* I moved down the hall to our room, walking in to peek in the bunk bed first. I saw Nixon on the bottom bunk with Logan asleep at the edge of the same bed, his head facing up. Nixon was sleeping on his side.

Those two are getting comfortable sleeping in the same bed. I guess it's better than Logan complaining. I checked the bed I'd temporarily claimed when I was recovering.

I loved the bunk bed, especially when I was in my male form, but the big bed meant I'd always be sandwiched between two guys. *Who would complain about that?*

I quickly stripped out of my clothes, putting them in the hamper before I unhooked my bra and sighed in relief. *One thing I don't miss when I'm a guy is this diabolical thing.*

My eyes lingered on it with spite before I placed it in a separate hamper for my delicate laundry. *At least they make*

them super pretty now.

After kidnapping one of Brax's t-shirts resting on one of the drawers and going to the washroom to brush my teeth, I finally slid beneath the sheets. I noticed Brax was cuddled up in the blanket, which was rather odd for him. He liked to sleep just in his boxers, or nude if he could because it was too hot.

"Brax?" I whispered, reaching out to move a few strands of his hair from his face. I grimaced when I touched his forehead. Heat emitted from his skin and sweat rolled down the side of his face as he trembled. Brax was sick.

"Hmm," he groaned, squeezing his eyes like he didn't want to get up.

"Brax, you have a fever." I worried my lip as I studied him. He opened his weak eyes, staring at me for a few seconds before he replied.

"Jewel. You better?" he asked.

"You should be more concerned about yourself, silly." I tapped his forehead gently. He gave me an adorable look, appearing a bit lost.

"So, not better?"

"I'm fine, Brax. I'm better. I need a week off, though. Guess I'll spend it making sure you're better. Let me get a cold cloth." I turned over to get out of the bed, but his hand wrapped around my waist, pulling me into a warm embrace.

"Brax?"

"My Jewel-Jinn-Precious."

"I don't think you can use all three of those together, Brax."

“Why? I like it,” he mumbled against my skin, resting his head on my shoulder. I sighed, giving up on trying to argue with him if he liked the three-combo name. He most likely wouldn’t remember this anyways.

“Brax, I need to get you a cold cloth. Also, no school for you tomorrow,” I said firmly.

“In a few minutes, and only if you’re staying home with me.”

“I’ll be home with you. And fine, just a few minutes.” I emphasized the last part of my statement. I didn’t want him to keep a fever. He didn’t reply but tightened his hold around me. I decided to relax and wait till he fell asleep before I got him a cloth.

Hey, Alice? You still awake?

“I’m watching something,” she replied.

Watching what?

“Kade and Zane making up. Koa and I are watching to make sure it goes smoothly,” Alice said. “You going to sleep?”

In a bit. Brax has a fever, but I’m a bit stuck and can’t get up to get him a cold cloth right now.

“Sleep. I’ll get one in a few minutes and put it on him.”

Are you sure?

“Yup! Just because I’ve been chilling with Koa doesn’t mean I can’t help. Did Savannah say you’re okay?” she inquired.

I’m forced to take a week off. No changing into Jinn either. Oh, she also suggested for you not to use too much energy. At

least until she says I'm clear. Is that okay? I know you're enjoying the human life, but it's just for a few days.

"Being human is overrated. Koa and I haven't been in our human forms much. We only do it to play pranks on those silly alumni." I mentally groaned.

Please don't tell me you're causing trouble?

"Not at all. Can't cause trouble when you technically don't exist." Pride filled Alice's tone as she bragged.

I'm going to sleep.

"Jewel?" Alice asked.

Ya?

"I'll be good. You're my Mistress and come first. Just wanted you to know that." She spoke softly, and. I wished I could hug her for those reassuring words. Deep in my mind, I knew there would come a time when Alice might find another familiar that she would love and want to build a life with, but I always tried to push away the thought. Maybe I was afraid to lose her.

Even if I knew in my heart that she'd always be my familiar and love me, it was nice to hear her state it again.
Thanks, Alice.

"You're welcome. Sleep well, Jewel. Love you."

Love you too. I let out a yawn, feeling the sleep begin to take me away.

One conflict down. I just hope there's no more. Six weeks left in the semester.

Intolerable Bullies and Showdown

~T HREE WEEKS LATER~

“Fuck, I needed that nap. Today was shit.”

I glanced up from the table with a piece of jerky in my mouth to see Maximus enter the kitchen.

Midterms had thankfully gone smoothly, and though it was a bit difficult, all of us had passed. Zane and Kage had made up after their dispute and now did everything together, like at the beginning of Brighten.

Nick had come by last week asking if Zane wanted to attend some event for seniors that he'd been invited to, but Zane immediately refused. I'd been napping with Nixon at the time, but from Maximus' explanation, Nick didn't seem too pleased.

I'd enjoyed my week off, half of it spent serving a sick Brax chicken noodle soup and enjoying warm cuddles. Zane and Kage felt horrible, but they did their part by ensuring we didn't miss anything in class, each of them making separate study notes for us so it wouldn't be hard for us to catch up.

I think the baths were the best part, being less therapeutic and more pleasurable than anything. Overall, I was glad to

have had the week off, especially with how the remaining three weeks were starting to look.

The final test was going to be off campus and would involve each group having to find three magic circles. Every group was assigned a different area to avoid teams clashing, as the main focus of the test was on teamwork and utilization of all members.

I didn't see the difference between the two, seeing as you needed to utilize your team members to work together, but we'd figure it out when the time came.

Kage and Zane were sitting on the floor, their backs against the bottom half of the sofa as they had multiple books open and magic spell spreadsheets scattered on the table. Zane was struggling with a few things, so Brax and Kage were helping out.

I wanted to help too, but I decided the brother study bonding moment was good for them. I'd been distracted by Nixon playing with my shoulder-length hair while Logan had been resting his eyes after a long day. They both went to get everyone dinner since we all knew this would be a long night of studies and practicing magic spells outside in the backyard.

I continued nibbling on jerky, putting my 'Hidden Jewel' bookmark between the pages to keep my spot in the chapter regarding different transportation spells.

"Why was today shit?" I asked.

"I unexpectedly saw some of my old bullies after I went for a jog," Maxi admitted. This caught the brothers' attention, all three of them stopping mid-conversation to look at Maximus. He lifted his hands in defense.

“They didn’t do anything. I’m not the scrawny little kid I was before. Still gave me a weird vibe though. What’s with all these random students being on campus, lately? Weren’t there stricter rules?” Maxi complained, walking to the fridge and grabbing the orange juice container.

“That’s a good point. Do you know if they graduated from Brighten?” I asked.

“The main guy who bullied me? Hell no! He can use his fists, but his magic ability sucked balls, even back then. I doubt he goes to Brighten, but he was wearing the uniform. Weird right?” Maxi pointed out.

“Now that you mention it...” I trailed off, turning to Braxton who was sitting on the couch with his legs crossed and a book in his lap. “Brax? Those Alumni guys. Do you know for sure they graduated?” I asked.

“Not sure. I simply assumed because Nick said so. My only problem with seeing them, was why didn’t we see all these alumni last semester? We would have seen them once, or even at the assembly,” Brax replied.

“Everyone had to attend the assembly,” Kage acknowledged.

Zane scrunched his face and nodded. “Ya. Now that you mention it, Nick was sitting beside an Alumni. They have unique uniforms. Their blazers have red outlining, so you know they’ve graduated. Did those guys have that?”

“No,” Brax and I said together. I reached out for my phone and dialed Logan.

“Are you calling Logan?” Maxi asked.

“Ya. My instincts are all weird right now. Did you see those guys in the afternoon Maxi?” I asked.

“Yup. They looked like they were heading to the library, but I wouldn’t know why,” he admitted. I nodded and grimaced when the phone continued to ring.

“He’s not picking up?” Brax asked, closing the book on his lap. Zane and Kage glanced at each other and rose up, giving Brax space to get off the couch.

“No. Which is weird for Logan.” I hung up and tried again. Maxi looked concerned and pulled his phone out. He tapped at the screen and lifted his phone to his ear, giving me the impression, he was calling Nixon.

Again, Logan didn’t pick up, and now I was getting worried. *Alice.*

“Yes, Jewel?”

I need you to find Logan asap! It may be me overreacting, but I have a really bad feeling.

“I’m on it! Tell Kage, Koa’s coming with me.” Alice declared. *Thank you.*

I turned to Kage. “I told Alice to find Logan. Koa’s with her.”

He nodded in understanding, but the guys all seemed worried. “Maybe he left his phone?” Zane suggested.

“Logan always carries his phone on him. Even to the washroom. He always picks up when I call because of my history of seizures,” I confessed, dialing one more time as I slid off the stool.

“Nixon isn’t picking up either, and he normally has his phone on him unless he’s napping,” Maximus declared.

We all exchanged looks, and Braxton sighed. “Let’s go and check the campus. They left a while ago. Even if they were

snail walking, they should have been back by now.”

“Or they would have at least called if they were running late or something was wrong,” Kage added, voice a tad lower than the normal.

We all nodded, and I quickly ran upstairs to change to something more appropriate for the outside. I could have easily used magic, but why waste energy on clothes? My instincts were telling me I’d need it for something more important.

We were out the door within two minutes and decided to go to the main building first. “Let’s stick together. I know it may take us longer, but at least if anything happens everyone is close by,” Braxton suggested once we were inside.

We all agreed and ran down the hall.

Fifteen minutes of searching and we’d yet to find them. We headed to the library, cafeteria, and changing rooms and couldn’t find either of them.

We also noticed we hadn’t seen one security guard or patrolling professor either. I bit my lip in frustration, continuing to call Logan’s phone over and over again. *Logan, Nixon. Dammit, where are they!*

“*JEWEL!*”

I flinched and almost tripped. Kage let out a grunt and slid to a stop. “Fuck, Koa. What have I said about the shouting.”

Ow. Alice, did you find them?

“*Maybe? Logan’s energy! In the West corridor, Class 3 room!*” Alice exclaimed. Kage was already running ahead and we all followed, turning to our left at the end of the hall before entering into the West corridor.

I saw Alice and Koa fluttering in front of a door. Kage was there first, and he didn't hesitate to kick the door. It opened with ease, and I followed him in with the rest of the guys.

My eyes landed in the corner of the room; familiar gold locks peeked out from behind the wooden desk. The tune of Logan's phone ringing echoed through the empty classroom.

"Logan!" I shouted. Kade was quickly at his side, immediately checking his pulse. I held my breath, bracing myself for what Kage was going to say but he sighed, looking relieved.

"He's okay. His magic level is super weak. Maxi! Do you have Savannah's number? We need her!" Kage explained.

"Got it!" Maxi replied, pulling out his phone. I moved to Logan's side and carefully put his head on my lap.

"Logan? Can you hear me?" I asked. He let out a weak moan and moved his head slightly. He was pale, and I could tell with one glance that his mana was low.

I leaned down and pressed my forehead against his, holding back my tears. "It's okay Logan. Just rest. We'll find out what happened, okay?" I whispered, hoping he could hear me.

I felt a gentle stroke on my hair, and I pulled back slightly to see Logan struggle to open his eyes. They barely reached halfway, and his gold eyes seemed so dull. "Prec...ious?"

"Hey, Prince. You're gonna be okay. We're getting help," I explained, quietly.

"Nix...they...have Nix." He fought to speak. *Shit, Nixon!*

"We'll go find him. Just rest, please?" I encouraged. He stroked my head one more time before his eyes closed and he

was unconscious again.

I looked up at the others and Maxi met my gaze. “You guys go get Nix. I’m fine on my own.”

“Koa, Alice. Stay with Maxi and be back up. If anyone comes here, you don’t let them enter this room unless it’s to help,” Kage ordered.

“HOOT!” Alice replied in her owl form.

“KIKU!” Koa agreed.

I pressed my lips against Logan’s forehead and took off the leather jacket that I’d put on. I rolled it up and slid it under his head.

Moving to the hallway, I bit my lip again and glanced in both directions. *They could be anywhere. Literally anywhere! I need help! Where are you, Nixon?!*

I whipped my head to my right, and my eyes barely caught a glimpse of a gold cape. *Wait!* I didn’t think. My body moved forward on its own as I sprinted towards the hall the cape had disappeared down.

“Shit, Jewel!” Brax called out.

“Fuck, she’s fast!” Zane shouted.

“Maybe she saw something,” Kage exclaimed.

I knew they would catch up, but maybe this cloaked man was helping me. If he wanted to hurt me, wouldn’t he have done it before?

I turned the corner and saw the end of his cape disappear into another corridor. My feet moved before I processed where I was going, my eyes catching a glimpse of “POOL CORRIDOR” on a white sign in red letters.

I moved forward and skidded to a stop, seeing three boys running off to the next room. Kage, Zane, and Brax were at my side in seconds, but I didn't have time to explain.

“THERE! After them!” I yelled. One of the boys turned around, his eyes locking onto mine.

“That fucking ass!” Kage snapped, and he was the first to rush towards them. Zane and Brax followed, and I was ready to do the same when a sharp pain vibrated through my head. *Shit!*

“*Jewel?*” Alice questioned. I waited till the other guys were out of sight before I groaned, clenching my head between my hands. *Not now. Please not now.*

“*Jewel? What's wrong?*” I knew Alice could sense my sudden panic, but I couldn't think. *No. Need to focus on finding Nixon. He's in danger. I know it.*

“Time is running out, Jewel.”

I lifted my head, and the cloaked man was two steps away from me, his red eyes locking onto mine.

“Who are you? Where's Nixon? Is he hurt?” I asked.

“Not yet, but you're running out of time,” he replied.

“Tell me who you are.”

“You know who I am, Sweetheart.” Instead of his monotone voice, the familiar rich sound of my late father came out.

I stood there speechless, my eyes wide with fear and confusion. “D-Dad?”

“There's no more time, Jewel.”

“Wait! Dad. Like...no...where are you? Why are you alive? Are you alive? How do I find you?!” I spewed out the flood of questions in a blur of words, both panic and relief running through me.

“Save Nixon. He has the answer. I love you, Jewel. Be safe until we meet again,” Dad said and lowered the hood of his cape to reveal his face.

I stilled, my eyes pooling tears as I saw his similar dark brown locks, the bottom ends both red and purple. He had a medium beard, and he seemed utterly exhausted. His tanned skin was paler than normal, and his lips were cracked and severely dry. Regardless of how weak he appeared, I knew that he was my father; the same exact red eyes as mine stared at me with both pride and a hint of sadness.

I could feel his magic, and a part of me could feel something resonate due to his presence. “Dad, wait!”

“The key is inside you,” he whispered, and I watched his image fade like little grains of sand being carried by the wind. He was gone, and I fell to my knees, trying to calm my breathing.

“*Jewel! What’s wrong?! Maximus is coming!*” Alice exclaimed.

I tuned her questions out, my head pounding almost at the same intensity as when I’d hit my head back at the practical test with Zane and Maxi.

I looked to my left, taking deep breaths as I stared at the clear water of the pool. *Just breathe, Jewel. You’ll get through this. Calm down. You need to find Nixon. You have to find him before you have a seizure. Please body, don’t fail me. Pleas-*

I stopped my train of thoughts when I caught a bubble reach the surface. I narrowed my eyes, knowing there wasn't a filter in the middle of the pool. From where I was I couldn't see anyone, so where did the bubble come from?

I waited, thinking I was seriously hallucinating, but another one made it to the surface, followed by another one. My gut dropped, and I cursed.

“FUCK! NIXON!” I screamed, hoping one of the guys heard me as I darted straight towards the pool.

In one swift movement, I was gliding through the icy cold water, my mind not understanding why the water felt like I'd jumped into a frozen pond when it was the school pool. My eyes immediately noticed Nixon at the very bottom of the pool, his ankles having some type of chained weights.

Nixon's fearful red eyes met mine, the black magic circles looking like they were moving, but I couldn't feel any magic vibrating from his body. *What the fuck?!*

I reached him in moments, pressing my hands on his cheeks. The panic in his eyes was killing me, and I realized he must have been down here for longer than a minute or two. I pressed my lips against him, giving him some of the air I'd gathered before in the two-second sprint to dive into the pool.

I pulled back and went to touch the chains, but he caught my arm and shook his head rapidly. I gave him a confused look but didn't fight, returning to face him. *Maybe the weights are what is canceling his magic.*

I tried to swim around to his back, putting my arms under his armpits and attempting pull him up, but he didn't even budge. *Fuck! We don't have time for this!*

I swam back to him, and he put his fingers in the shape of a circle. Circle....like a BUBBLE!

My eyes darted down to the weights, realizing it could be risky to have a bubble that included his feet. I swam slightly higher. My feet were at the height of where Nixon's head was. I crossed then stopped, trying to keep myself in place, lifting my legs to cross them in Yoga style.

Before my body began to sink to the pool floor, I closed my eyes and imagined a bubble that would circle all around Nixon and me, but I ensured his ankles would be left out. I squeezed my eyes shut and concentrated on my vision of the bubble, realizing it had worked when I heard Nixon cough.

My eyes snapped open, and I maneuvered myself in the small space to be on my knees. I took a few deep breaths and hugged Nixon at the same time.

"Nixon! What happened? What's with the weights?!" I demanded through pants. Nixon hugged me back, taking a moment to catch his breath before he answered.

"Logan and I got jumped. Some fucking seniors were chasing after us. We were cornered on both sides of the hallway, so we went into the classroom to try and escape. They left, but those three assholes from before were hiding behind the teacher's desk and attacked us," Nixon explained quickly. He inhaled another deep breath before he continued.

"We tried to fight them off, but they got this fucking weight shit on me. It sealed off my magic before I could help Logan. They knocked him out with a combined spell and carried me off to the pool. These things weren't even heavy before, and I tried to fight them off when I realized they were going to throw me into the pool. I tried to stall as long as I

could, but they just lifted me up and threw me as far as they could.”

“If I touch it, will it seal my magic too?” I asked.

He quickly nodded his head. “Yes. You can’t take it off with your hands. Unless I’m out of the water,” Nixon stressed.

I tried to reply but groaned, my vision going in and out. *Ow...this isn't good.*

“Jewel? Shit, did you hit your head or something?” Nixon asked. He pulled away and pressed his hand to my cheeks. I opened my eyes slowly, and I saw double of Nixon in front of me. I waited for his image to clear.

“No...when I entered here my head was pounding really bad. I mean, maybe it was before. Uhh...my dad. I saw my dad, Nixon. He said you’d have the answer. He said I was a key. I don’t understand Nixon. My dad’s dead. Why is he here?! Fuck, this isn’t the time for this. I need to get you out, but I don’t know how!” I rambled, trying my best not to panic, but my body was shaking from the cold and my anxiety.

Nixon bit his lip and pulled me into a hug as I tried to breathe. “Okay, calm down, Jewel. Breathe. Just breathe. We’ll figure this out,” Nixon soothed.

“Nixon, I can’t hold this...this bubble for long,” I confessed, my lips trembling. I could feel my magic weakening with each second due to my lack of concentration.

I leaned back, and he placed his hands on my shoulders. “Jewel. I need you to take one deep breath.”

“But-”

“Please, Jewel,” he urged, and I bit my lip. “Just trust me.”

I stared into his eyes, and I realized he must have a plan. I nodded and took a deep breath, but noticed the bubble was beginning to fill. *Oh no.*

Nixon lifted my head up with his hand under my chin. “Don’t worry. You can do this,” he whispered. I took another calming breath and gave him a firm nod. *I trust Nixon. I want to save him. Dad said to save him...and I will!*

Nixon must have noticed my determination, and a relieved smile formed on his lips. He gave me a quick, hard kiss to my lips before he pulled back and started to explain.

“My parents. They were Mage Warriors. I don’t know if this will work, but they were able to do a specific spell that can teleport an individual like we do in class to go from one place to another.”

“Isn’t that normal? Why is that special?” I asked.

“It’s special because it has no boundaries. Doesn’t matter if you’re imprisoned, locked in a case or stuck underwater. If you have a strong connection with the individual and have enough concentration, you can teleport them to where you want to go. If my father was in a dilemma and wasn’t able to get out of a place, my mom could teleport to him and bring him back with her. I don’t know if you’d be able to teleport both of us on your first time, but try to focus on teleporting me to the platform of the pool and swim back up.”

“I’ll try...but Nixon, I don’t know if I can do both,” I admitted, trying not pay attention to the water that had reached our waist.

“Try, Jewel. If you can’t, hold your breath for as long as you can, and I’ll come to get you after I take these off.

Hopefully, it will cancel out the spell when I'm above the surface," Nixon explained.

"Alright. I'm going to try it. But...but if I fail..." I tried to speak but trailed off.

"You won't fail, Precious. You never do," Nixon whispered and gave me another kiss. "I love you," he said quietly, the shy side of him coming out.

I smiled at his confession and pressed my forehead against his, the water at our chest level. "I love you too," I murmured and closed my eyes.

You can do this, Jewel. Just concentrate. I focused on Nixon first, the urge to save him growing stronger and stronger. I envisioned the platform where I confronted my dad, remembering the exact spot.

The place deep within me that had reacted to Dad's presence rekindled, the power growing until I couldn't hold it anymore. *Save Nixon!*

The weight of Nixon's hands on my shoulders disappeared, prompting me to open my eyes to see him gone. *I...did it?*

I didn't have time to ponder, the water level already at my neck. I uncrossed my legs and took a few deep breaths to keep calm. *You can do this, Jewel. Just hold your breath and help will come. The guys always come when I need them. If Nixon can't get those weights off, someone will come. I'm sure of it.*

With one final deep inhale, the bubble burst, and I began to sink to the bottom. I didn't move, realizing it would take more energy from me. I just stared at the surface, my head still pounding like a drum.

I closed my eyes and waited, my dad's image coming to my mind. *Dad. You're alive? How, why, where? So many*

questions yet there was no one to answer them. Dad, did you not want to see me? To see your family? Did you hate us?

“Do you hate me, Dad?” I whispered.

“I’d never hate you, Jewel.”

It took a moment for my brain to catch up, unsure of why I just spoke when I’d been underwater seconds ago. I snapped my eyes open, and I stood in a dimly lit dungeon. The walls were filled with mold and vines, and I could smell the strong odors of body sweat and blood.

I slowly turned around to see Father kneeling down on the floor. He wore the same gold-like cape, but it was ripped, covered in dirt, and had a few spots that were stained with blood.

His hair was a mess of tangles, and his beard looked to be in similar shape. His weak red eyes locked onto my wide ones as I stood there trembling, my body dripping with water.

“Dad?”

“Sweetheart. Did you save Nixon?”

I nodded, lowering to the ground and slowly crawling to where he was. I realized why he couldn’t move; old, bronze chains that reminded me of the ones on Nixon’s ankles were wrapped around his wrists, and I assumed the same was done to his ankles behind him.

“Yes. I...teleported him. Dad...why am I here? What’s this place? And why are you locked up but you’re able to watch me in the halls? How do you know the guys? I have so many questions, Dad.”

He gave me a sympathetic look, and I reached close enough to press my forehead against his. “Daddy. I missed

you,” I whispered. My voice cracked as tears welled up in my eyes.

“Oh, Jewel. There’s so much to tell you, but no more time. You have to go back. Don’t let anyone but those boys and the headmaster know what you did. Not even the nurse. Please. I can’t lose you too,” Father begged.

“Go back? I was in the pool, Dad. How do I get back?” I frantically asked. A loud noise rang through the dungeon before the sound of footsteps followed. My father’s eyes widened and filled with panic as they met mine.

“Jewel. Think about the guys. Think about returning to your body where your friends are,” Dad coached.

“Dad...they’re more than friends,” I admitted, knowing it wasn’t really the time for it, but I wanted to make it clear. He smiled just slightly and nodded his head.

“I know. Now go, my sweet Jewel. We’ll meet again. I know we will. I love you.”

“I love you too, Dad. I’ll come back, I promise,” I whispered. I shuffled up and went into the corner of the room, taking a few deep breaths before I closed my eyes.

Go back. I need to return to the guys. Nixon? He has to be okay. I need to go back and ensure he’s okay.

Please...go back.

Key and Hope Isn't Lost

“Daddy!”

“Jewel? How did you get here? You were at the hospital.” Dad looked at me in astonishment and moved to close the door of his office before he stood in front of me.

I looked up at him with tear-filled eyes, my little hands shaking.

“I don't want to go to the scary machine. It's scary. Gabriel isn't there.” I began to sob uncontrollably. I lifted my hands up, and Father sighed, kneeling down to lift me up into his arms and hugged me.

“Shh, it's okay Jewel.”

“I don't want to go back to the scary machine. Please, Daddy?” I begged, holding onto him for dear life.

“How about if I come with you?” he asked.

“It's still scary,” I argued through sniffs.

There was a knock on the door before it opened up slightly. “Honey, the hospital called. Jewel's playing hide and seek again and they can't...Jewel?” Mother's eyes locked on Father and me.

“Mommy. I don't want to go,” I whined, leaning back to rub my eyes with my little hands. Mom bit her lip, looking at

Father before she slipped inside and closed the door.

“Jewel, how...” Mom trailed off, and I began to cry again.

“I don’t want to get in trouble. I don’t want to go to the scary machine.”

“Sweetheart, you’re not getting in trouble. Shhhh,” Father whispered. Mother was quiet, looking at Father. She made her way over to us and rubbed my back.

“Shh, Jewel. Here, give Mommy a hug. I’ll tell the hospital you used a hiding spell because you’re scared of the machine,” she soothed.

I reached out with my arms, and she picked me up from Father’s hold, letting me wrap my arms around her neck and rest my head on her shoulder. She swayed me back and forth, rubbing my back soothingly until I calmed; my sobs turned to quiet whimpers.

“Cedric,” Mother said in a low voice. I heard Father sigh.

“She has it, Charlotte. I didn’t want to worry you.”

“How strong is she? Like Gabriel’s?”

“No. Stronger like mine. Gabriel had about 10%, and Meredith said when he’s older it’ll lessen or disappear altogether.”

“Do you think hers will disappear?” Mother asked.

“No. She’ll be able to do exactly what I can, Charlotte.”

I listened quietly, unsure of what they were talking about, but I knew it had to do with the secret. Daddy said I shouldn’t tell Mommy or Gabriel. He wanted them to be safe.

Will Mommy and Gabriel be in danger now?

“Maybe she’s just doing what Logan can do,” Mother argued.

“Charlotte. Logan can teleport because it’s genetic. He doesn’t need to use magic if he wants to get to where he needs to go. I’ve already talked to George about it. Jewel’s able to do both. She’s a key.”

They were both silent, the quietness of the room making me afraid. I pulled back to look up at my mother’s face, noticing the tears that began to pool in her eyes.

“Mommy? Are you and Gabriel going away?”

Mother blinked, a tear rolling down her cheek before she looked at me. “Why would we go away?”

“Because you know the secret. You’re in danger now, right? I’m sorry,” I apologized. My lip trembled as I blinked my eyes.

“Oh, Sweetheart, we aren’t going anywhere. We are not in danger.”

“But I’m a key? That’s bad. I won’t use the magic anymore,” I mumbled. Mother sighed, walking us over to the couch where she and Daddy always read to me. She sat down, put me on her lap, and gave me a kiss on the forehead as she wiped away my tears.

“You see, Daddy is a key too,” Mother said. I looked at Dad as he sat down next to us, a sad expression on his face.

“Daddy doesn’t look like a key,” I pointed out. “A key is for the door!”

Mother smiled. “It’s a different key. A very special key, Jewel.”

“Special?” I asked. Father reached out to stroke my head and nodded.

“There aren’t a lot of people like us, Jewel. Your teleportation powers are just one of the very rare abilities.”

*“Prince Logan can teleport,” I pointed out quietly. **He wasn’t in trouble for always coming to see me.***

“Prince Logan can teleport because his father, King George, can. To everyone, they think it’s just magic, but to teleport is very tiring and needs a HUGE amount of magic. Logan can teleport wherever he wants because his daddy can,” Mother explained.

I frowned, staying quiet as I tried to understand. Father gave me a smile, leaning in to kiss my left cheek. “Don’t worry, Jewel. Mommy and Daddy will work it out.”

“But, am I in trouble?”

“No, Sweetheart. Why don’t we put you to bed?” Mother suggested.

“I want to see Logan,” I admitted, giving them a sad look. “I miss Logan.”

“I’ll call and see if he’s still awake. It’s late. But Jewel, you can’t tell anyone that you’re a key. You have to promise me,” Mother stressed.

“Even my Prince?” I asked, looking at them with worried eyes. Mother and Father exchanged looks.

“Even Logan. Just for a little bit. Until we figure everything out, okay?” Father suggested.

“Hmm. Okay! Jewel will be good!” I stressed with a wide smile. They both seemed relieved before there was a knock on the door.

“Mom. Logan teleported to Jewel’s room again,” Gabriel called out.

“I didn’t. I, ummmmmm, wanted to see Jewel.” I heard Logan’s voice and I squealed, hopping off Mom’s lap and moving to the door.

“Prince Logan!”

“Wait, what?” Gabriel asked.

The door opened slightly, and Gabriel stood there with a shocked expression while Logan wore a wide smile.

“Princess Jewel. I missed you,” Logan cheered.

“Me too! Hi Prince Logan,” I replied, opening my arms to give him a hug. I pulled back and put my hands in his. We looked over at Mother and Father who appeared confused.

“Mommy! Daddy! I’m going to go read bedtime stories with Logan. Bye!” I exclaimed. We walked out, and I glanced up at Gabriel with a wide grin. “Hi, Gabriel. Bye, Gabriel.”

“Uh...hi and bye. Don’t stay up too late you, two and don’t excite Alice too much either. I don’t want to hear her hooting all night.” Gabriel shot us a stern look.

“She’s a kitty!” I pointed out.

Gabriel sighed. “You keep changing her.”

“I’ll come to tuck you two into to bed later,” Mother announced.

“Okay!” Logan and I said together. We turned around and walked down the hall towards my room.

“Mom? How...she was....” Gabriel asked.

“We’ll explain later,” Mom replied.

We reached my room and I grinned, looking at Logan who had a pleased smile on his face. "Let's read lots about fairytales and magic!" he exclaimed.

"Yes!" I cheered, excited to have a night playdate with Logan.

I don't need to be in the scary machine, and now I get to play with Logan. Mommy and Daddy said to keep my secret. I won't tell anyone I'm a key. No one will know.

* * *

I gasped and began to cough, my lungs burning like I hadn't filled them with oxygen in a long time.

"It's okay Jewel, just breathe."

My eyes opened slightly to see someone's face above mine, water dripping from their purple locks. *Zane?*

I wanted to say something, but I continued to cough, and he turned my head to the side as I spit out bits of water.

"What happened? Why did it take so long to get her out?" I heard Savannah ask. She sounded worried, but Father's words came to my mind.

"Don't let anyone but those boys and the headmaster know what you did. Not even the nurse. Please. I can't lose you too."

No. Don't tell them, Zane. Please.

I discreetly grabbed his arm and squeezed, hoping he would understand.

“She...that’s not the issue right now. At least she’s breathing. We need to see the headmaster and get Jewel to the hospital,” Zane argued.

“Jewel hates hospitals. She won’t recover well there.” I heard Logan’s weak voice.

“Logan?! How the...” Savannah’s shrill voice asked, sounding spooked.

“Logan, you shouldn’t be using magic to teleport,” Maxi scolded.

“I’m not going to rest until I know Jewel’s safe and those three lowlifes are fucking put in custody!” Logan snapped.

“We don’t know if they-” Savannah began, but was cut off by Kage.

“Nixon’s RIGHT there. He saw everything, and there are three cameras that clearly caught them throwing Nixon in the pool AND them trying to escape.”

“Why are we even defending ourselves? You’re not the headmaster. You’re a nurse,” Zane snapped. “Get us the headmaster, or we’ll take this to the higher-ups. I know Brighten doesn’t like their business all over the place, but I’ll make sure every damn person knows about this incident before the sun rises!”

There was a moment of silence, and I heard a door open. “What’s going on?”

I recognized the voice, the image of the headmaster coming to my mind. “Is Jewel breathing now?” Brax asked, sounding out of breath.

“Ya. Zane did CPR. She’s breathing, but she needs medical attention. So does Nixon,” Kage explained.

“I’m fine. It’s nothing big. Headmaster, Jewel needs to be seen by a specialist ASAP. She may have had a seizure.”

Something about Nixon’s tone was off, like he was trying to say something more. *Savannah is right there. Why are they being so hostile to her? Is she bad?*

“I can take care of her of her ma’am. I’ve been doing it all last semester and this semester,” Savannah argued.

“No, I need you to call the patrol guards. I’m gone for one week on business, and there are no guards on duty at ALL. It’s only eight at night, Savannah, and I left you in charge of security. Would you like to explain now, or fix that issue before I get extremely upset?” Hardness entered the headmaster’s voice as she snapped at the nurse.

“I’ll look into it now, Headmaster. I’m terribly sorry,” Savannah quickly apologized. I heard the quick taps of heels leading further away and the door closing shut. There was a moment of silence before Nixon spoke.

“She’s not good.”

“What do you mean?” Logan asked, still sounding exhausted.

“Jeez, Logan, sit down at least,” Maxi huffed.

“Fine.”

“What do you mean Savannah isn’t good, Nixon? What am I missing?” the Headmaster asked.

“I can’t explain it here, and Jewel needs to be monitored. We can’t stay on campus either. I’m only telling you this,

Headmaster, because you knew my parents. You knew what they really were.”

“Wait...you mean Jewel’s...” She lowered her voice so only we could hear. “She’s a key?”

“Huh?” some of the guys asked.

“Yes, and no one say that word out loud. We need to take her somewhere safe. At least until I can explain this to you properly. It’ll explain why, since the beginning of school, a specific group of people have been interested in Jewel, or I should say Jinn,” Nixon replied with urgency.

“I will take you all to a safe location,” The headmaster announced.

“Wait. Brax, get Alice and Koa. They’re waiting outside,” Kage instructed.

“On it,” Brax replied. I heard the door open and the others sighed.

“How can we trust you then, Headmaster? Your nurse may be the reason why Jewel’s hurt, or why Logan was knocked out and Nixon was thrown into the pool. He could have died, by the way,” Zane pointed out, defensively.

“Exactly. We could be walking into a trap,” Kage added.

“Why should we trust you?” Maxi inquired.

“If you don’t question if I’m loyal to the good or bad side of all magic, I’d question if the path of becoming a Mage Warrior is right for you. I have no ill intentions towards my students, which includes yourselves. I’m on the good side of what’s been occurring in the magic world,” the headmaster replied.

“What you mean by ‘occurring in the magic world?’” Kage asked.

“There’s a lot to this world you won’t see or understand until you become a Mage Warrior. We’re wasting time, and I don’t want to repeat myself. The place I’m taking you is safe. Nixon, I’m assigning you to stay with Jewel when the others have to go back to classes.”

“Wait, why Nixon? And we have to go back to class?” Zane asked.

“Nixon has perfect scores. The rest of you, including Braxton, are lacking in a few areas and I simply can’t grant permission for you to miss class. Especially when your exams are in less than two and a half weeks. I will make a way for you to portal through to this safe place at your dorm if you’re worried about Jewel. However, you cannot tell a soul about the place I’m taking you, or there’ll be extreme consequences,” the headmaster explained.

Everyone was silent, and I heard the door quietly close.

“HOOT!” Alice announced. In seconds, I felt something soft rub against my cheek. *“Jewel? Jewel....are you okay? Please tell me you’re okay?”*

Alice...so loud. My mind wasn’t having too much trouble keeping up with the conversation, even though my body felt lethargic and I was beginning to doze off from my tiredness.

“Hoot,” Alice replied. *“Sorry. Are you okay?”*

Ya....but I’m gonna go to sleep. I think.

“What’s Alice saying?” Zane asked.

“She’s talking to Jewel,” Kage replied.

“Is Jewel still conscious?” Brax asked.

“What Jewel did takes a large amount of magic and effects the person physically more than mentally. She should be alert, but unable to speak or open her eyes. If you’re listening, Jewel, you should rest. It’ll take her body a couple of days to recover from what she accomplished without proper training,” the headmaster explained.

“Maybe we should go,” Logan mumbled.

“Not with you barely keeping your eyes open,” Brax commented. “I’ll carry Logan. Maxi, help Nixon. Zane, carry Jewel. Kage, hold onto Alice. I don’t want her flying around or exerting energy with Jewel in the state she’s in.”

Everyone said their form of agreement and I felt my body being lifted up. “Just rest, Jewel. We’re going somewhere safe, and we won’t leave you alone,” Zane whispered.

His words were comforting, and I decided to trust in them. I knew when we met the headmaster and she willingly agreed to clear Zane’s name, that she wasn’t a bad person. I just had to trust my gut, or I’d delay the time it would take to find out about everything that just happened.

Dad. The headmaster is helping us. I hope we’re making the right decision. Please, wait a bit longer. Please don’t lose hope.

Nixon's Past

“Jewel?”

I was so deep in my thoughts, thinking about everything that had occurred in the past week, that it almost felt like a blur.

We'd been brought to a small cottage at the outskirts of Natalia. It was privately owned by the headmaster, whose real name was Meredith. It had level three security during her stays.

She informed the staff that she had Elite students on site and had given them our names and pictures to ensure we weren't shot or attacked by them by accident.

None of us knew what Elite was referring to, but I didn't want to be shot or assaulted by those seven-foot giant guards.

I'd been going in and out of consciousness throughout the week, feeling like a rag doll of chills and fevers. I finally recovered on Saturday, which was yesterday.

I'd awoken to a note from Nixon saying he was talking to Meredith outside of my room. It was cute that he wrote a message and even drew a smiley face on it. He wrote on the back that the others were doing a night class to make sure they were ready for our exams that were a week and a half away, but Logan would be back in thirty minutes or less.

A part of me was curious to join whatever conversation they were having, but the moment of alone time was helping me sort my thoughts. I rested my arms on the rail of the balcony, watched the sunset on the horizon, and enjoyed the warm breeze that blew by on occasion.

The clear water of the lake was a pleasant sight to see, aiding in my attempt to clear the pile of questions and anxiety that lingered in my mind.

“Jinn?”

I blinked, slowly looking over my shoulder toward Nixon with a worried gaze. He gave me a long glance, scanning me from head to toe before his black eyes locked onto mine once more.

“What? I know I imagined wearing clothes, so I know I’m not naked,” I pointed out, lowering my head to make sure I wore the loose black shorts and the unbuttoned Hawaii-inspired shirt. *Maybe my abs are distracting him?*

“Why are you in your male form? And I called out your name before, but you didn’t respond,” Nixon said.

“Oh, you did? Sorry. I was just thinking. As for why I’m Jinn and not Jewel...it’s kind of a stupid reason,” I admitted, glancing back at the sunset.

Nixon walked to stand next to me and rested his arms on the ledge like I had. I could see from the corner of my eye that he was watching me carefully, and even if I was in guy form, my face did a poor job of concealing what was going on in my head.

“I doubt it’s stupid,” Nixon replied.

“Totally dumb.”

“Can I know why?”

“You’re going to laugh,” I whispered, turning my head to meet his eyes.

“I won’t laugh, Jinn,” Nixon said in a calm voice. He looked serious, and his eyes held the gentleness he always carried in his expression, especially when he’d just awoken.

“Promise?”

“Promise,” he replied, placing his hand on mine.

I gulped and nodded, looking back at the sun that was almost gone. “I feel like if I’m Jinn...like if I’m a guy, maybe I’ll feel courageous enough to accept what’s going on? It feels unreal, and even though all of you explained the situation over and over again, I still can’t seem to wrap my mind around it. I’m trying, I really am.”

“That your dad is alive, and you’re most likely the key to get him out,” Nixon concluded.

I nodded, turning around to lean my back against the rail. Tilting my head back, I gazed at the sky that was a mix of navy blue and orange.

When I’d woken up and was alert enough to understand what was going on, Meredith explained everything.

We all knew Mage Warriors went out to get rid of groups or organizations who used magic to cause destruction and wreak havoc. Even those with evil intent would be watched closely by Mage Warriors to prevent major disasters.

They were a group of Mage Warriors called Elites. Brighten had their own division, one half consisting of alumni chosen by the headmaster herself due to their magic level,

grades, and overall performance judged by the rest of the professors.

There was another half that happened once in a while where students who had high potential were allowed to spend one year as a Mage Warrior. It was a major privilege to be a part of, giving those students an understanding of what the requirements would be as a Mage Warrior and the time, power, and how seriously dangerous the role was.

Meredith revealed that she'd been the advisor for the Elite unit for thirty years, which I felt was crazy because she didn't look older than 30. Either it was her dual Asian and African descent, or she took care of her skin since she was a teenager.

Regardless, she had been the advisor in charge of my dad and Nixon's parents' units for years before disaster struck.

She explained that there were very few individuals who they termed "keys." Those people would have a skill or number of skills that they would be able to do with very little to no magic involved.

If they were able to do one skill without magic, they would call them "half keys." Being able to use multiple skills and have an enormous amount of leftover mana gained the full title of being a key.

She then broke down why keys were so important or sought out by both good and bad, using the best example—my father. Cedric Starfire excelled in everything. Grades, magic, casting speed. He was the ideal person everyone would want on their team.

Father had chosen to stick with Brighten because he'd met my mother and after they married, it only made sense for him

to stick with them since my mother had become a professor there.

Father's key ability was a way of teleportation, but the benefit that made it extra amazing was he could go anywhere. With teleportation spells, they took a significant amount of mana and could render the person useless if they teleported a long distance like between countries.

Father, however, didn't have that issue. He'd been able to travel anywhere around the world with barely any thought, and if it was a place he'd never stepped foot in, all he needed was a picture of the current area. A vision, as Meredith referred to it, was all he needed to take his body from A to B.

Another skill included the ability to teleport out of magical restraints—an item used many times when Mage Warriors were caught or trapped accidentally.

This topic is what leads to what was so special to me and how I'd be able to rescue my father, who Meredith confirmed after my lengthy explanation of what I'd seen, was trapped in a dungeon by an organization that was known to kidnap and kill Mage Warriors.

“Think about it. I'm apparently linked to my father because he's a key too. All I should need to do is think of where he is in that dungeon. That mold filled, cold, smelly dungeon that he's been trapped in for years, and be able to teleport him back here. It sounds so fucking simple. Yet here we are. I've tried and tried...and I can't do it,”

I ran my hands through my black and red locks, feeling frustrated and even angry at myself. My dad was stuck somewhere, with barely food and water, and chained like some type of animal because some organization didn't want to kill him.

Or what Meredith believes is a trap to lure me in.

“You know Meredith doesn’t want you going without being prepared, Jinn. These people holding your dad captive aren’t just students or weak people. They’ve been able to hold your dad, a key just like you, for sixteen years,” Nixon pointed out.

“I know Nixon. I, ugh!” I groaned, wishing I could just punch something. I pushed off the rail and headed back inside, Nixon followed me without a word.

“Nixon, sixteen fucking years! My poor dad, trapped in a place like that because some bad people want to use him? Do you think they waited sixteen years to pray that I would hopefully be the one to have my dad’s power but strong enough to teleport anywhere in the world to steal or even kill whoever they wanted me to? That’s a real fucking risk to take,” I emphasized.

“Jinn, they don’t care how long they have to wait. If they have enough evidence to believe you may be a key too, they’re willing to wait as long as they need to,” Nixon argued.

“Nixon, how do you know this?!” I snapped, turning around to glare at him. “How do you know that they would do everything in their power to see if a Mage Warrior’s CHILD is a key?!”

“Because I’m a key too, Jinn,” Nixon said calmly. I already had tons of comebacks for whatever he was about to say, but my mind went blank at his words, and I stared at him.

“What?”

“My mom had the same ability that your father has. She was able to teleport out of any type of magic restraint, except for the ones these organizations have created...which must

have been thanks to their experimentation studies on my mom during her capture. My dad had the ability to memorize anything—any spell, the entire dictionary, anything. He could walk into a library and memorize every single book and carry that knowledge with him for life. He was what some called a walking book of knowledge,” Nixon explained.

He walked over to the bed, sat down at the edge, and gestured for me to join him. I took a calming breath and let my temper go, realizing Nixon wasn't the cause of my anger and didn't deserve me shouting at him for my frustration.

“My parents met when my mom accidentally teleported into a library and crashed on top of my dad. I guess they fell in love at first sight, and after a few years they got married and had me. They went on a mission together for the International Organization of Mage Warriors, and I was left with a nanny for that period of time. The problem was, they never came back.”

“They never came back? Meaning...” I trailed off.

“They found my dad's body first and brought him home. I guess having tons of knowledge wasn't helpful to the organization that had caught them. My mom, however, they couldn't find. They tried for a year and decided they would have to pull some strings to get the information they needed.”

He turned his head to look into my eyes, his black eyes slowly beginning to transition to red as his black magic circles began to appear.

“Eventually, they found the organization who held her captive, but it was so well guarded, even their top Mage Warriors couldn't infiltrate it. They finally found two individuals who could,” Nixon admitted.

It finally clicked, and I gawked at him. “Don’t...you’re not saying...”

“Your dad’s mission was to help save my Mom. They were still experimenting, but individuals who are keys have a special connection with each other. Even if they’re a half key, someone with a power like your dad or yourself could be able to handle teleporting that individual out of their restraints. A bit harder, but not impossible. The only problem was that when they created the new restraints, they used my mom’s blood and magic to make them,” Nixon confessed. He looked down at his hands and sighed.

“Ironically, you’re suffering because of my family. Sad right? I used to have dreams about my mom. I’d see her in a dungeon, locked in these chains and appearing so exhausted. I didn’t know I’d obtain her ability. The same ability you have, Jinn. I could have gotten her out, but I had no idea how.”

He lifted his head to stare at the ceiling, blinking his eyes that were becoming glossy with tears. “When your nightmares shifted from Gabriel to your dad, I knew what you were, right away. I felt it, but I didn’t want to bring you into this hidden world if you were only a half. I don’t even think Logan realizes he’s a key either. Or the others who feel like half keys.”

“You...know who’s a key and who’s not?” I asked, still stunned by his words.

“Ya. That’s why they want me. Well, they did. Essentially, I had to disappear, in order to lose them. You see, after your father was trapped, they wanted to make more of the metal and assumed your father’s blood, and magic could do the same. But it failed. They had no choice but to take as much from my mom as they could, but they weren’t giving her food or water

to replenish her blood supply. So...day by day she was slowly dying, until they took her last drops of blood,” he whispered.

Nixon lowered his head to take a deep breath, allowing his build-up of tears to drop to his spread-out hands.

“The night she died, I’d dreamed of the same place, but I felt in my heart that it would be my last. I knew she’d die. Her pale skin that was sinking in. Her sunken eyes, blue lips, brittle hair. Her body was like a skeleton compared to my beautiful mother that I remembered. That was when I had the strong urge to save her. I didn’t care what it took, I’d save her and get her help.”

He blinked a few times and smiled. “I’d given her a hug and told her how much I loved her. She said how proud she was, pointing out how I looked like my dad but had her eyes and nose. She gave me the best hug she could, and said she loved me, but whatever happened, I’d have to hide. She told me that Meredith would know how to help me. Just when she said that the door opened and these men in white suites held some type of gun or weapon. I didn’t wait for them to shoot before I felt something deep inside of me burst. Like an energy I never really knew was there.”

He raised his hands up. “Poof,” he said as he spread his hands out to make an arch in the air. “Just like that, we were in the safe house I’d been staying at. Help was called, and they rushed my mom to the medical center...but it was far too late. No magic could possibly shove enough blood into her before death came to take her away.”

“Nixon...I...I’m sorry,” I whispered. I didn’t think my selfish words of frustration would bring forth such a traumatic past from Nixon. It made sense now. His words during Zane and Kage’s argument. He’d had to live with the thought he

could have saved his mom, and because they were special, they were killed for it.

“No, I should apologize on behalf of our family. I know it may not be enough seeing as I’m basically the only Rose of our family left living, but um....I’m sorry that your dad’s been trapped because of my family.” He bowed his head.

“Nixon! You...no. You’re a victim in this too. Why should I get an apology for something that’s out of your control?!” I exclaimed.

“But I indirectly hurt you,” he admitted.

“You did no such thing, Nixon. I know my father and how kind he is. If he chose that mission to save your mother, that was his decision to make. No one else could take credit for that. I hate that he’s stuck and trapped, but no way should you apologize for it. Thanks to this fucking organization, your parents are gone. You had to live in isolation until it was safe enough for you to be able to live life again. Dammit, Nixon....why the hell are you so kind?” I huffed, tears welling in my eyes.

He shrugged. “Wish I knew, but some say it’s a quality from my mom.” He smiled.

I reached out and pulled him into a hug, patting his back a few times before I whispered, “No matter what happened... I’m glad you’re still here. I’m sorry for being angry before. I’m just frustrated. I don’t want to be in the same predicament or get any of you hurt. I just want to get my dad back, especially now that I know he’s alive. It was stupid for me to think it would be so simple.”

I pulled back and Nixon nodded, using the back of his free hand to wipe his tears. “I think they want you because you’re a

female, and they could use your blood to make the weapons. Those could make billions of dollars and help them catch more Mage Warriors, specifically female ones. Even if they aren't necessarily keys, they could potentially help them make lower resistant weapons. That's what I've talked about with Meredith while you were recovering."

"I have a question though. How would they know I'm a female? Mother applied with me as a male and with the name Jinn Starfire. Are they assuming that because I'm a relative of a Starfire that I'd be a good candidate or something?" I asked.

"Brax asked the same thing after I'd explained everything to them. I think we're being watched by Lark Huntly's brother, Joey. The one you blinded on the tower," Nixon revealed.

"Wait, why would Joey or even Lark be involved with any of this?" I asked.

"Meredith looked into their history, and their dad used to work with one of the organizations. I don't know how Lark got involved, but he must have found out that your father was connected with Gabriel and we believe that was the reason why Lark pushed your brother. It wasn't over a mere dispute. It was to get rid of Gabriel just in case he was a key and had the same ability as your dad."

"I'm still confused. I could connect to my dad and teleport to him, but that would be a useless thing to do because he's wearing those special locks, right? How could I, or even Gabriel, be able to get him out?" I asked.

"Meredith believes because you inherited the ability from your dad, it's already at the same level. However, you're powerful like your mom, maybe even more so. The combination can essentially be like two keys. You'd be able to override those locks and get him out."

“So, Lark found out somehow, and because Gabriel was already excelling in multiple classes, Lark assumed Gabriel was a key and would be able to get my dad out and reveal Lark’s dad was a part of whatever organization that’s doing this?” I summarized.

Nixon nodded. “Bingo. Lark thought he’d get away with it, but then you interfered, and he got arrested and imprisoned. His brother, I believe, only did what he did out of spite for you. I doubt he saw the correlation of you as Jinn since you were in your female form that day.”

“But...why am I still seeing Lark? He’s in jail, right? Why do I see him lurking on campus when I’m there, or hiding in places like the house across the street?”

Nixon frowned, looking confused. “When did this start?”

“I don’t know, like the first couple of weeks of Brighten. I told Brax about it, but with everything going on, I didn’t think it would be super important. I honestly thought I was just hallucinating, especially after the incident,” I confessed.

“Hmm. Maybe he’s a key too? He may not have the same ability as you, but perhaps he can project his mind to where he wants to go?” Nixon suggested.

“Can I do that?” I asked.

“Yup. You should be, seeing as how your dad can,” Nixon replied.

“Wait, so that’s how my dad was able to watch me? Or even how he knew you were in the pool. Actually, now that I think about it, I think he helped me even before the pool incident...maybe when I wasn’t feeling well in the change rooms,” I admitted.

“Change room?” Nixon asked looking confused.

I blushed at the memory and glanced away. “Nothing. My brain is just spurting nonsense at this point.”

Nixon smiled, clearly catching on, but he did me the favor of not saying anything about my steamy time with Braxton. “For now, I think we’ll be okay. Meredith said everyone involved in the pool incident is in custody, and if anyone asks where you are, the guys are using the excuse that you need a week off to check if your seizures have stabilized.”

“When having seizures benefits you,” I huffed and rolled my eyes.

“Sorry. I know it’s an annoying excuse to use, and we don’t like trying to give you a label just because you have occasional seizures. It was the only excuse we think people wouldn’t question. Simply saying you’re sick is too suspicious when it comes to Brighten protocol, or that’s the word going around,” Nixon apologized.

I gave him a sweet smile and chuckled. “I know. Don’t need to apologize. I guess it just reminds me of my younger years, that’s all,” I admitted. With a sigh, I laid down on the bed, looking back up at the ceiling. Nixon followed, both of us being quiet for a moment.

“Hey, Nixon?”

“Ya?”

“Can I know more about you? I know a bit about your past, but can I know more about you as a person? What was it like growing up? Why did you decide Brighten was right for you? Just...I really want to know more about who you are.” I turned my head to look at him.

He met my gaze, and a shy smile formed on his face. “Um...there isn’t much. You already know I like to nap...and

I, um like guys...and you. Like the girl you and the guy you. Hmm. This is hard,” he admitted. His face grew beet red as he shyly looked away.

I chuckled, reaching out to turn his head to face me once more. “Just start from the beginning then. I want to hear everything, Nixon. The good and the bad. What makes you super happy or really sad? I want to know all about Nixon Rose, who is shy, powerful, loves guys, and both Jewel me and Jinn me,” I whispered, leaning in till our lips barely brushed one another.

“And the Nixon who’s really good at kissing.” As I finished, I sealed his lips with my own. I watched Nixon close his eyes before I shut mine. His lips took control as they pressed firmly against mine.

The steamy kiss was longer than a minute but felt like seconds before we finally pulled apart, both of us panting quietly. He stared into my eyes and a small smile formed on his lips.

“Even if I’m boring?”

“I don’t think you’re boring,” I said quietly. His smile widened, and he closed his eyes and nodded.

“Okay. Guess I’ll start from the beginning.”

Double Comfort

“You did not!” I laughed so hard I had to wrap my arms around my stomach.

“I did. Read the whole chapter from my mind right to his face. Then I walked out of class, and he never dared wake me up in the middle of class again. Perfect lesson for all the professors. Still got perfect scores,” Nixon declared as he laughed.

We’d been talking for an hour now, waiting for Logan to eventually come back. We ended up drinking a few beers from the fridge that Maximus had bought for everyone.

We only started with one, but that ended with three cans for each of us, finishing the first pack.

Didn’t know if we were allowed to be drinking, but it was doing wonders in helping me relax. With how Nixon had acted with each can of beer, I figured it was having the same effect on him.

Nixon told me everything. He told me about his childhood after his parent’s death, and how he stayed with a foster family until he was sixteen.

He was then allowed to live on his own, inheriting the money both his parents had left for him along with all their assets.

He didn't mind the loneliness side of living alone, but when he had nightmares once in a while, it was hard. He never tried to make friends, many people either saying he was too quiet or the common "you're too smart to hang with us" phrase.

Nixon inherited his father's ability to retain knowledge just from one read through, making school a breeze. It made sense now, why he'd sleep in class and why he enjoyed lots of naps. School life was essentially boring when you already knew everything that would be taught in the semester.

We talked about our likes and dislikes, and I went into more detail about what my childhood had been like with the mixture of hospital visits, times with Logan, and my time with my family.

Nixon explained in more detail about Logan being a key and the others half keys. He hadn't revealed it to them yet, explaining that Meredith wanted us to do a scan when the exams were over to confirm it, but it made me wonder if that was the reason we'd been paired up for our entrance test, to begin with.

Now we were talking about silly stuff and what our plans would be after Brighten. Even if I was a guaranteed Mage Warrior, I'd most likely keep my male form and alternate between Jinn and my real self as Jewel. It was weird to think about or decide, but there was something unique about being able to be a male in some situations and a female in others.

I also secretly wanted to reassure Nixon that he didn't just have to accept dating the female side of me. I think all the prejudice around the topic had made him really shy about confessing he was interested in guys more than girls.

He'd explained he never really tried dating anyone, just a few flings here and there, but it never led to the person being confident enough to be in public with him or acknowledge they were together.

I admitted that it pissed me off, knowing how amazing and loving Nixon was, but people would rather keep their sexuality on the low and pretend in the outside world. Nixon was shy, but if he was truly challenged on his sexuality, I knew he'd be able to say he was bisexual.

I sat up from the bed and sighed. "I need to pee. This laughter is gonna cause accidents if I don't go now."

Nixon chuckled. "Go pee. I'll clear the cans before Logan or the others get back."

I nodded and walked to the washroom. Seeing as we were both guys, I didn't care if the door was open, especially when I only needed to piss.

I pulled down my shorts and began to do my business, listening to Nixon gathering the cans, and from the sound of it, tossing them into a plastic bag.

I wonder if Logan is going to stay at Brighten tonight? He's not back yet, but I don't think he's in danger. Alice is with Koa. I doubt either of them will be back tonight. Hmm. Maybe it'll be just Nixon and me? Would be nice to snuggle with him tonight. Maybe do other things?

"Jinn?"

How do you even get freaky in the sheets as a guy with another guy? There's only one hole too...hmmm. I bet it's really pleasurable with three guys. One on the back, one on the front... but where would his cock go?

"Jinn?"

Maybe if we add four guys...two holes...wait. Does a mouth count as a hole? Oh boy, I'm gonna lose count of body parts here if we add another guy? Why isn't there a book for this stuff? A girl needs to be prepared. Oh, wait! I can solve that problem by going back as a girl, and then I have TWO HOLES! Wait...mouth...three?

“Jewel, you can't be zoning out when you're taking a piss,” Nixon's seductive voice whispered in my ear. I flinched and turned my head to see Nixon right behind me. *Fuck!*

“W-when did you get there?” I asked.

“A minute ago. I called your name twice, so I assumed you fell asleep standing or were thinking about something that probably isn't as complicated as you're making it seem.” Nixon grinned as my cheeks burned from embarrassment.

“I...was thinking about lost body parts. NO! I mean about holes. No...oh fuck it.” I huffed, giving up. “I need toilet paper,”

“Why?”

“To wipe?”

“What? Your ass?”

“My cock.”

“Why would you wipe your cock?” Nixon asked, looking completely confused.

“Why not? What's wrong with wiping my cock with tissue?”

“Guys don't do that,” Nixon pointed out.

“But you just peed.”

“Ya, you just shake it a bit and call it a day,” Nixon revealed.

“Um, no. You don’t see women squatting and then doing the shaky dancing and calling it a day,” I argued, rolling my eyes. Nixon blushed and shook his head.

“Women and men are different. Do you see toilet paper rolls next to urinals?”

“No...”

“Then? When I showed you how to aim last time, you didn’t use any tissue.”

“That was because...you distracted me!” I grumbled. *Dammit. Why is being a guy so fucking complicated?*

He pressed his body against my back, and I froze when his hand gently wrapped around my cock. “Why is that, Jinn?” he whispered, pressing his lips to my neck.

I didn’t fight my moan, the deep sound reminding me that I was still Jinn. *Shit. He’s not going...he wouldn’t.*

The thought of Nixon giving me a hand job with me as a male was already making me grow hard, and from the way Nixon’s hand slowly began to trail down my length, I knew he realized he was the culprit of my growing hardness.

“Nixon,” I moaned with a hushed voice, unsure if he was teasing or serious.

He didn’t reply; he sucked on the right side of my neck while his left hand started to move back up to the base of my cock.

I bit my lip as I tried to stay still, my female instinct to arch my back trying to kick in as he increased his pace. His

tongue trailed down my right shoulder, and he gave me a firm bite. Instead of it being painful, it did the opposite, sending waves of pleasure and excitement through me as his hand began to slide down my cock again.

“Fuck! Nixon,” I moaned loudly, lifting my head up. I prayed he’d do that again.

He did just that, moving closer to the nape of my neck and sinking those teeth into my feverish flesh. It sent another wave of prickling pleasure through me. He then kissed the spot so tenderly it made me shiver while my moans got louder.

I knew I was going to cum, but it felt different—the way my chest rose and fell, my rapid exhales and how my muscles tightened. I didn’t know if the intensity of my soon to be orgasm was because being given a hand job by my boyfriend was such a new and unique experience, but it somehow made me feel even more turned on.

“Nixon- I’m gonna cum,” I admitted, warning him now as if he’d stop. Yet, deep down I knew he wouldn’t, and I personally didn’t want him to.

Nixon didn’t reply, and I turned my head in time to be caught in a blazing kiss, his tongue slipping right into my mouth. The deep kiss was enough to make me cum, my loud cry muffled by his mouth.

My cum shot out, jet after jet, and Nixon didn’t stop until every last drop was released. He broke the kiss to let me breathe, and I tilted my head back to rest on his left shoulder as I caught my breath.

“Fuck...Nixon, that was so intense.” I exhaled slowly.

“Different from when you’re a girl?” he asked.

“A bit,” I admitted. “For me as a female, I can experience more than one orgasm. In this case as a male, it kinda feels like one explosion of pleasure, and then you have a minute or two to calm down.”

It was hard to explain how I felt, but I was now curious how it would feel with his cock in my ass.

“You two having fun?”

We both turned to see Logan relaxing against the doorway. He seemed amused, but I could see the hint of desire in those gold eyes that trailed down my body.

I blushed, trying to think of a response, but Nixon replied, “Ya. Did you know Jinn wipes his cock.”

Logan lifted an eyebrow at me, and I groaned. “Oh, c’mon! No guy in the universe uses a tissue to wipe their cock?” I exclaimed.

“Uh...no? We shake and that’s that.” Logan smirked.

“Men!” I huffed, pulling away from Nixon who grinned.

“Keep your pants off, Jinn.”

I paused, giving him a confused look. “Why?”

“I’m not done with you.” He his grin widened, and I saw the lust in his eyes. They once again began to switch from their black appearance to red, making me realize they changed when he was aroused. *Well damn, that’s hot as fuck.*

“But...Logan’s here,” I stood up straight with my pants still at my ankles, and I rested against the sink. My hand pointed at Logan for extra emphasis. *There’s no way Logan would want to be in on this.*

“So?” Nixon replied.

I turned to study Logan. He stared directly into my eyes before he perused my body. I was glad I'd taken my shirt off earlier because of the alcohol making me feel super hot, but now that I was standing there butt naked, I didn't know how to feel. *Nervous? Excited? Happy to have Logan looking at me in the nude as a male?*

"I- don't know? Logan...um." I didn't know what to say, unsure how to even act in this situation. I didn't feel awkward being naked in front of both of them, but I was having a harder time ignoring how hard I was getting already. *How am I hard again? Isn't there like a satisfied period?*

Logan walked up to me until his body was pressed against mine. My eyes locked onto his, and I knew from his now orange eyes that my male-self wasn't a deterrent in arousing him.

My worries were replaced with relief when he closed the distance between us. Those firm, smooth lips pressed firmly onto mine. His hands trailed down my chest, leisurely taking his time feeling the lines of my pecs before skimming to my abs.

Our lips fought for control, our hot exhales and moans echoing off the washroom walls. Logan's hand reached my length, and I gasped. Kissing him harder rewarded me with a low growl from him.

We finally pulled apart, both of us breathless. When I turned my gaze on Nixon, his eyes shone red with black magic circles on display. I scanned down his body to see the bulge in his shorts, exciting me further over what would happen if we continued. *I wanted us to continue.*

"Bedroom," I whispered my announcement to both of them. They exchanged looks and nodded, Logan slipping his

hand in mine. Nixon followed as we moved to our shared bedroom.

By the time the door was closed, Logan and I were already kissing again, my hands tugging at the white shirt of his, desperately yearning to remove the thin fabric.

I wanted to feel his body with my large hands, and even tease him like Nixon had with me in the washroom. He broke our heated kiss, giving me enough time to pull his shirt over his head and throw it in the corner of the room, our lips reuniting once more.

I pulled away from his mouth to moan as I felt Nixon's lips press against the left side of my neck. He began to leave a trail of bites and kisses along the column of my throat. My mind seemed to switch gears, the sudden urge to kiss Nixon overpowering my thought process.

I turned around and met Nixon's wild eyes. The hunger in them was so intense, and I reached out to run my hands through his long red hair that was left down and pulled him toward me to smash my lips against his in dire urgency.

It was his turn to moan while Logan began to suck my flesh. My hands enjoyed the smoothness of Nixon's front side, starting at his abs and making my way up until my arms rested on his shoulders and our tongues swirled against one another.

We finally pulled apart, both of us out of breath and panting hard, and I heard the rip of something. I looked over my shoulder to see Logan with a seductive grin as he held up the small packet of lube. He looked at Nixon, and I turned my head to see the slight glint in his eyes which only contributed to my buildup of desire and desperate need to be fucked.

A tiny part of me was scared, maybe of the anticipated pain that would come with my first anal experience, but I knew the guys would make up for it. Somethings were worth the pain if they brought double the pleasure.

“Jinn,” Nixon whispered.

I turned my gaze back to him, and he lifted his hands to press them against my cheeks, leaning in to give me the most tender kiss. He pulled back, and I gave him a confused look.

He smiled. “Are you sure you’re okay with this? You know... ‘this’? If you aren’t, you can change-”

My lips silenced him, and I hoped the firmness of the exchange was enough to prove how badly I wanted this; so badly it almost felt like a need.

“I want you. Both of you,” I whispered and looked back at Logan who appeared pleased. Nixon gave me a quick kiss to my neck before he reached out for the lube.

I couldn’t help taking a glance at Nixon’s length, and I watched him pour the clear liquid slowly down his cock while using his other hand to coat it.

Nixon’s hand rubbed down my back, signaling me to turn and face him. The question from before popped into my mind, and I pondered what Logan’s purpose would be.

“Logan? What do you do then? I only have one hole,” I admitted. Logan grinned, but it wasn’t a mocking smile. It was one filled with mischief as if he wanted to keep his secrets safe.

“You’ll see, Sexy Jinn,” he hummed, and my abs tightened at the use of my male nickname. *Fuck, that was hot.*

I felt Nixon's chest press against my back and his cock at my ass. I couldn't help but tense up, the slight fear of pain once again entering my mind.

"Jinn," Logan whispered, pulling my attention to him. He began to kiss me with the intention of making my body loosen up.

"It'll be good, Jinn," Nixon reassured me, nibbling my neck a little as his cock teased my ass.

"Okay," I replied, just before Logan pulled me in for a rough kiss. I felt the tip of Nixon's cock slowly enter my ass. I groaned at the tightness and hint of pain as his large cock inched deeper and deeper until he was fully in.

"Fuck," I cursed, but my cock twitched with need while my tight ass clenched around Nixon whose hot breath was tickling my flesh.

"Nice and tight, Jinn," Nixon whispered, his hands lowering to my hips. "You want me to start moving?"

"Yes," I begged, my body aching to feel his cock move in and out of me.

Nixon moved slowly, inching out until only the head of his cock was inside me before he took the same slow pace back in. He continued this a few more times, allowing my body to get used to the feel.

I wondered if anal was the same as when I was a female, and now I was tempted to try it after this. *That is if we all had any energy left.*

"Mhmm," I moaned between Logan's lavishing kisses, the sensation of pleasure now dominating the pain I'd once felt.

“You like this, Jinn?” Nixon grunted as he began to increase his pace.

“Yes. Keep going,” I encouraged and tilted my head back. Nixon took the opportunity to leave more bite marks on my shoulders and back as he kept his cock deep inside and made smaller but rapid movements.

Logan began to nibble down my chest, taking a few seconds to tease my hard nipples before he licked down my abs and reached my cock. I whimpered as he stroked my length with his hands. *Fuck. So sensitive. Shit.*

Logan’s tongue teased the tip of my erect cock, swirling around and over. I let out a long moan as he encased my cock in his warm, wet mouth while his fingers wrapped around the base and lightly squeezed.

He began to suck on my cock, bobbing his head up and down at a steady pace, and then he matched Nixon’s speed.

“Ah, shit!” I groaned, the sensation of Nixon’s cock thrusting inside me and Logan’s intense blow job was making my whole body buzz. Sweat rolled down my skin, and our pleasurable moans grew louder.

“Faster,” I begged, lowering my head and reaching out to grip Logan’s hair. I couldn’t keep my hips still, beginning to thrust my cock in Logan’s mouth. Nixon changed his pace until he thrust inside me when I pushed my cock back into Logan’s mouth.

We kept at this pace for as long as we could, my anticipated release building up so much that it hurt. “I can’t hold back,” I grunted, needing to cum so bad.

“Cum, Jinn,” Nixon ordered, fucking my ass so ruthlessly I had to stay still. I couldn’t hold back any longer as I cried out,

flying over the edge and my hot cum shooting into Logan's mouth. I thought he'd release me, but he took in every shot of cum that came out.

I was still catching my breath as I lowered my gaze to watch him swallow every bit of my release. He pulled my cock out and licked the over sensitive tip before he released me. Nixon had stalled to let Logan finish, and then he moved us so that I had my hands pressed against the end of the bed, and he began to fuck me nice and hard.

"Nixon, Nixon- fuck!" I exclaimed. Nixon finally came, his cum shooting inside my tight ass and causing shivers of delight to course through my body. I stayed as still as I could with my heavy breathing as Nixon slowly pulled out.

"Fuck. That was intense...but good." I breathed deeply, needing a few seconds to calm down. I felt a hand rub my back, and I opened my eyes to see Logan's smile.

"I think you were too rough, Nixon." Logan pointed out.

I felt the creak of the bed, and I lifted my head to look at the other side where Nixon was sitting, still trying to catch his breath. "I didn't mean to. I just kinda lost control," he admitted, his cheeks growing red.

I looked back at Logan and we chuckled. "You guys tired?" I asked, rising back up and ruffling my hair. Logan and Nixon glanced at one another before they looked at me.

"Not really?" Logan replied.

"No...?" Nixon replied.

Both of them sounded hesitant, not catching on to what I was thinking. I smirked and closed my eyes, pulling back my energy. I opened them to see Logan and Nixon's eyes slowly

descending down my now female body which I'd made sure was naked.

“Round two? At least now I have two holes,” I shrugged.

Nixon snickered, and Logan grinned. “Technically three.” Logan winked.

It took me a moment to catch on, and I groaned. “Human anatomy wasn't my favorite subject. Are you going to fuck me or not?” I huffed. They both gawked at me and quickly stood up.

“Back,” Logan called out.

“Front,” Nixon said right after.

“Middle?” I added with an eye-roll, causing my two naked men to laugh.

“I can go as hard as I want right?” Nixon hummed, moving to stand in front of me as his hands rested on my hips.

“That wasn't hard?” I asked in astonishment. Logan walked over with what looked like a wipe and grinned. “Not really. He was holding back.”

“What do you need a wipe for?” I asked, a bit confused.

“To clean my cock that I just fucked you in the ass with?” Nixon replied.

“So you wipe if you give, anal but you don't when you pee? How about if you pee five times a day?” I asked. Logan chuckled, and Nixon shook his head as he held back his laughter.

“I think we need a lesson in male do's and don'ts,” Logan suggested, walking to my backside.

I heard him rip open another pack of lube, the sound making my pussy throb and my ass was more than ready for another round of fucking.

“You better,” I mumbled, and Nixon chuckled, unable to hold his laughter any longer. He pulled me close, his cock at my entrance, and he gave me a sensual kiss.

“Thanks, Jewel,” he whispered.

“For what?” I replied, our lips barely touching.

“Accepting me. Like...really accepting me. It’s nice to have people who are fine with who you are. Really nice,” Nixon confessed, and his eyes showed just how happy he was. I smiled, giving him a tender kiss before I lifted my arms and hooked them around his neck.

“That’s how it should be. No thanks needed,” I reassured him.

Logan’s cock was at my backside, and he rested his head on my left shoulder. “Exactly. Now, no more stalling.” I giggled, readying my body and mind for the next round of hot passionate loving.

“Impatient,” I whispered.

Challenge as A Team

~EXAM DAY~

“Why is he following Kage? Is this a part of the exam?” I asked, keeping my eyes locked onto an obviously irritated Kage.

“I don’t know. There isn’t just one. Two others are near that brown building, and another guy is a few blocks north of Kage.” Nixon ran a hand behind his neck as he announced his observations.

“They’re trying to corner him?” I concluded.

“Must be. Makes no sense. We sent Zane back with the flag to clear us. Why are they trying to jump Kage?”

“My instincts are telling me it’s a setup. Even if Zane brings back the flag, we all need to regroup,” Nixon explained.

“Dammit!” I cursed, frustrated by our current predicament.

Today was exam day for first-year Brighten students. During exams, the whole town would be used as a testing ground. The residents would have to stay indoors until signaled that the exams were over. Shop owners had to follow the same rules for the safety of themselves and the people who would come to dine.

After our few days at Meredith's cottage, I was allowed to return to class. Savannah was still doing checkups on me, but I made sure I was always with one of the guys. I noticed the change in her behavior, but the guys' protective body language was more than enough to eliminate any ideas Savannah could be thinking up.

I spoke with Meredith yesterday, and she said she'd be looking into Savannah and other staff members in the school. Till then, we'd act like we didn't know what was going on.

Our exam was really simple. We had to find a rainbow flag and deliver it to the headmaster's office. I pondered if Meredith had done that on purpose, seeing as she wanted to see all of us after the exam was over, but with the way things were going, we'd need to get our hands dirty.

We'd been trying to regroup, but someone began to follow Kage's trail. Kage had picked up on it and told Koa who transferred the message to Alice.

Once she told me, Nixon and I decided to keep watch from a tree with Alice hovering around and giving Nixon and me a vision of the ground thanks to a magic spell that created a mirror for us to see.

My phone began to vibrate, and I quickly pulled it out and placed it against my ear. "Brax. Problem."

"I know. We just got fucking jumped by these alumni assholes," Brax disclosed. I frowned, giving Nixon a worried look.

"Where's everyone? Are you okay?" I asked.

"I'm fine. So is Maximus. We're heading towards you guys. But I don't know where Logan is," Brax explained.

“I can track him with my phone. I’ll let Nixon go, and Alice and I will keep track of Kage. He’s being followed by at least four guys,” I admitted.

“Five minutes, and Jinn stay out of sight. They’re looking for you,” Brax revealed.

“Why?”

“Savannah. She’s the one ordering the Alumni to keep an eye on you. I think she has a relationship with that organization. I doubt she was able to tell them you are Jewel because of the magic contract oath Meredith created, so this is her way to get you,” Brax explained.

Nixon was listening in, his eyes darkening as they shifted to red and those black magic circles revealed themselves.

“Maybe they want to catch Jinn turn to Jewel for evidence?” Nixon suggested.

“Evidence?” I asked.

“Savannah can’t tell the organization that Jinn and Jewel are the same people, but if she can show it, that works perfectly. Think about it. Jinn and Jewel have never been at the same place together. The exam has cameras essentially everywhere, except for a few hidden spots like the one we’re in now,” Nixon explained.

“Since Meredith hasn’t confronted Savannah yet, she could have access to the cameras and be waiting to gather that evidence? Or, if that doesn’t go as planned, they’ll just beat me up or something and take me?” I elaborated.

“That’s what the alumni dude said before I knocked him out!” I heard Maximus exclaim in the background.

“Maximus. Can you go back to school and tell Zane and Meredith. At least she can shut down the surveillance cameras, even for a short time,” I encouraged.

“Got it. Be careful Brax,” Maximus called out.

“I’ll be fine. You watch your back,” Brax replied. “At least Zane is securing our flag. I’ll head over to you, Jinn. Nixon, find Logan, and both of you head back to the headmaster’s office. Jinn and I will handle those pricks trying to jump Kage, but knowing my brother, he should be fine.”

“Sounds like a plan,” I said. “See you shortly, Brax.”

“Stay in place, Jinn.” Brax’s voice held a hint of warning.

“Sure,” I huffed, and I heard him chuckle before the line went out.

I looked at Nixon who nodded at me. “I’ll see you in a bit.”

“Wait. Don’t you need the coordinates?” I asked, midway of opening my tracking app.

“Nope. We all have it on our phones now. I decided on it when you were recovering from the pool incident. We should be able to find each other when we need to.” Nixon winked.

“You guys didn’t tell me that,” I grumbled.

He blinked, realizing I was right and gave me an apologetic smile. “Sorry, Sexy Jinn.” His voice was quiet as he leaned forward to kiss me.

I pulled back and gave him a look. “There’s cameras.”

“Kissing isn’t against the exam rules.” He winked before he hopped down from the tree. “Be careful, Jinn.”

He took off back to where we'd come, his phone in his hands. *They hated each other before, and now they're best friends. Amazing how things can change.*

"I agree!" Alice added, her soft voice entering my mind.

Are they moving in, Alice? I can only see one angle from where you are.

"Yes! Sorry, Koa's on the other side, but we can't get closer. There's something blocking us."

Fuck! They put a barrier up? Great. I can't wait for Brax if they're going to jump him now. Kage can't handle four people! Even if he's good at fighting.

"I have an idea, Jewel. Walk into that shop. The fashion one. Have your phone to your ear like you're looking for someone," Alice instructed.

Okay!

I dropped to the ground and casually walked towards the store, the phone pressed to my ear as I pretended that someone was on the line.

I reached the fashion store, impressed that it was unlocked, and moved to the change room section. *Alice? What are you planning?*

"This!"

I froze at the deep voice, the tone sounding identical to mine. I blinked and glanced to my left to see an exact copy of me walk out of the last stall.

"No way!" My eyes widened as I studied myself—Alice.

"Yes way. Now switch back," Alice ordered.

“At least you did a good job looking like Jinn. Is my cock length the same?”

“How am I supposed to know? Stop stalling,” Alice huffed.

“Are you going to explain this plan to me?” I asked, noticing a pink and gold flower dress on the rack. I picked it up and ran into the change room, pulling back my magic.

It took me twenty seconds to put the dress on and make sure my now shoulder-length hair wasn't a complete tangled mess.

I imagined comfortable pink flats with a gold bow on top of my shoes and a simple gold watch and bracelet on my wrists. A tiny purse hung on the rack of clothes, and I took it and put it on to rest on the left side of my body. *Perfect!*

“Yes. Go out there with your phone as you did before, and head straight to where Kage is.”

“But they'll know I'm the same person coming out,” I argued.

“That's what they'll think. Trust me! Go on!” Alice encouraged. I nodded and ran out of the change room and back outside, my phone pressed to my ear again as I speed walked to where I knew Kage would be.

I turned the corner and crashed right into someone, the lingering scent of Irish soap and mint hitting me. *Kage!*

“Huh? Jewel?!” Kage's surprised voice exclaimed. His arm remained around my waist as I recovered, opening my eyes to meet his surprised blue ones.

“Kage! I'm looking for Jinn have you seen him?” I asked, lowering my phone and pretending to hang up.

Kage looked even more confused, but he frowned and shook his head. “No. We’re doing an exam right now. You aren’t supposed to be here,” Kage explained.

He moved back but offered his hand to me. “C’mon. I’ll take you back to the school. Jinn will be there,” he encouraged. I nodded, placing my hand in his and we both turned to go back the way we came, but three guys came out from their hiding places.

Their uniforms were just like the ones Nick’s alumni friends had been wearing when Brax and I saw them on the evening of Kage and Zane’s fight.

“Wait just a minute there, Kage Park. Who’s the pretty girl? Or should I say Jinn Starfire?!” The main dude with red locks exclaimed.

“Huh? Jinn? Have you seen where Jinn is? I’m supposed to meet him,” I replied innocently, looking back to see two others appear.

Kage protectively stood in front of me, turning our bodies so we could see both groups. “What do you need from Jewel? As for Jinn, he’s not here. We’re doing an exam, and last time I remembered, none of you guys were invited,” Kage said with a harsh voice.

“Oh, don’t play dumb. We finally caught you red-handed. Now Jinn, why don’t you let Kage run off so we can go see Savannah and get that gender shifting checked.” The redhead leader grinned.

I almost rolled my eyes at the way his tongue licked his bottom lip as he attempted to check me out. Kage took a deep breath, trying his best to maintain his cool. That’s what I

assumed, but the way his hands were beginning to tremble with anger proved he wasn't doing a good job.

“Move it, trash. Jewel and Jinn Starfire are cousins. You know the rules of the exam, especially if you graduated from Brighten. Get a civilian hurt, and there are serious consequences,” Kage reminded.

“Did you just call me trash, pipsqueak?” Redhead huffed.

Kage cracked his neck, and I had to take a step back from the amount of magic beginning to leak off him in waves.

“I did call you trash, TRASH, and last time I checked, my ass is taller than you so who is the pipsqueak? Cause I know I'm not,” Kage replied.

Alice? Um, things are gonna get ugly.

“Coming! she replied, her voice normal like before.

What's taking you so long?

“You'll see.”

The redhead took a step forward as he cracked his fingers. “Why don't we make this easy. Give me Jinn, or I'll beat the shit out of you and take Jinn by force.”

“Neither, Trash. I don't mind a third option though.” Kage shrugged. They both were ready to pick a fight and I gulped, trying to figure out what to do.

Suddenly the ground trembled. “Huh?”

I heard fast footsteps, and we all turned to see Jinn, or should I say, Alice, running towards us. I smiled in relief. “JINN!” I exclaimed, waving my hands. He looked relieved and ran towards us.

“Jewel, dammit! Why are you here? It’s exam day,” Jinn huffed, putting his hands on his knees to catch his breath.

“Jinn? Where’d Nix and the others go?” Kage asked.

“They’re back at the school. Let’s go! There’s a fucking dinosaur here.”

“Um wait, what? Jinn, are you not taking your meds for those hallucinations? There’s no such thing as dinosaurs. They’re extinct.” I narrowed my eyes at him in fake concern. “Which reminds me!”

I took a quick glance at the other alumni guys who all wore shocked expressions, looking between Jinn and me. I pulled open my purse and grinned, pulling out two bottles of medication. *Thank goodness for magic.*

“Here, Jinn! I saw your mom early this morning and promised to bring these to you. That’s why I came down here. I thought if I was going to see Logan, I might as well look for you. I was on the phone with Logan, but this place is a maze when you’ve only come around here once.” I shook my hand dramatically, offering the two bottles.

Jinn sighed and reached out to grab the two medication bottles. “Thanks, Jewel, but let’s go! I’m fucking serious about the dinosaur.”

“HELLO!”

All three of us turned to the group of guys. “What?” I asked.

“You think we’re going to believe this trick! YOU-” Redhead pointed at me. “Are HIM!” he exclaimed and pointed to Jinn.

We both blinked, looked at each other, and laughed. I walked over to Jinn and gave him a hug. “Aww Cousin, he thinks we’re the same person. Doesn’t he see I’m more beautiful than you?”

Jinn groaned, seeming annoyed. “Yes, Jewel. You’re the prettier one. Hey, dude! Do you need some of these or did you just smoke something? Also, why the fuck are people here, especially alumni? You know the shit you’re gonna get into for disrupting the exam. There are cameras.”

“We aren’t going to get in trouble. Savannah’s got our- OW!” the redhead replied, but his blond friend hit him in the back.

“You idiot! You’re not supposed to say Savannah’s watching the cameras!”

“You JUST said it stupid!” a black-haired dude on the left declared.

“Does NO ONE care about the fucking dinosaur?” Jinn exclaimed.

“There’s no dino-” the group of guys began, but the ground shook, causing me to lose my balance. Kage’s arm wrapped around my waist, holding me steady, and Jinn held the wall as the floor began to tremble as if something were approaching.

“What the fuck?!” Redhead exclaimed, the guys scrambling together as we all looked to our right. *Oh hell nah.*

Our heads tilted back to look up at the tall tyrannosaurus that came out from the side street, its head turning to peer down at us.

“Oh shit,” I whispered.

“RUN!” Redhead screamed. They ran off in opposite directions, and Jinn moved to press his hands over my ears before the muffled loud roar vibrated the buildings and street.

It took a few steps forward, and I watched the alumni scramble until I couldn't see any of them, but it didn't get rid of the fact there was tyrannosaurus in front of us. It lifted its head and roared again, the glasses of the nearby shops began to crack.

“Rex, stop roaring! Jeez, you're spooking Jewel,” Kage huffed. *Rex?*

“There you guys are.” Brax's voice came from our right, all of us turning to see him walk up to us with his hands in his pockets.

“Braxton, dinosaur!” I pointed out.

“Hmm? Oh, it's just Rex,” Braxton replied. The tyrannosaurus lowered down to us, its nose just slightly poking Braxton's whole body.

“Good job, Rex. You can go back to normal now,” Braxton encouraged.

“You have a dinosaur familiar?!” I exclaimed, looking at the tyrannosaurus and wondering if I could touch it. Kage chuckled, let go of his hold around me, and slipped his hand in mine.

“Wanna pet him before he goes back to normal?” Kage asked.

“Yes! Oh! Alice, come pet him too!” My body buzzed with excitement.

“Jeez. A minute ago, she was scared shitless,” Alice mumbled, still acting as male me.

“I didn’t know there were dinosaur familiars. Hey, tall guy. You scared me,” I said with a soft tone, reaching out to pet his nose. He lowly growled but looked unbothered as I continued to pet his nose.

“You okay, Jewel? Also, why does Alice look like you?” Braxton asked.

“Um, long story,” Alice replied.

“I’m fine, Brax.” I grinned at him, still stroking Rex’s nose.

“My brother doesn’t even care about me. So much hate,” Kage grumbled.

Brax huffed. “Your ass would have been fine. Stop over exaggerating.”

“Rude,” Kage mumbled.

I finished my moment, and we moved back. Rex made one more loud roar as if to make it known he was still around and not a joke before his body was engulfed in blue light and began to shrink. He got smaller and smaller until a small ball of blue remained.

When it dimmed, my jaw dropped, and I slowly turned toward Brax who stood there with his arms crossed. “If you want to laugh now, you can.”

“Wait. So...hehe.” I covered my mouth with my hand, trying to stifle my snickers. Alice walked next to me, his eyes on Rex and his shoulders began to shake.

“Oh...my...heart.” He snickered.

“Why does everyone laugh when they see my familiar?” Brax pouted. Kage sighed, walking over to pick up Rex from the cement and bring him over to us.

“Because he’s a BUNNY! You called your white and black bunny, Rex?! BAHAAAAHA.” Alice erupted in laughter. Light emerged around him and when it dimmed she was back into her usual appearance. She fell over to the floor and continued to laugh her head off, her giggles prompting me to lose control and laugh as well.

“Rex, the BUNNY! BAHAAAAHA!” Alice cried out.

“Rex is gonna...hehe...hate us. We shouldn’t be laughing. Sorry Rex, but...hehe.” I couldn’t finish, my giggles vibrating through me as I wrapped my arms around my waist.

“You guys are hurting Rex’s feelings,” Brax grumbled, and I only laughed harder.

“Brax, my 6’6” tall, long cock boyfriend who looks like he’d have a dinosaur for a familiar actually has an adorable bunny! You know how weird that is? I would have never, and I mean NEVER, guessed it.” I wiped away the tears that had formed in my eyes.

“REX THE BUNNY!” Alice exclaimed. “I need that on a damn shirt!”

“Did we break your familiar?” Kage asked, looking at a still laughing Alice.

“Ya. She’ll eventually calm down,” I replied with a grin. I walked up to Kage leaned down to stare at Rex who looked sad.

“Aww, I’m sorry, Rex. You can just blame Braxton. It’s his fault,” I soothed, reaching out to pet him once more.

“Why is this my fault?” Brax asked.

“Out of all the familiars you could want, you got a bunny?” I pointed out.

He blushed and Kage chuckled. “He had an obsession with bunnies when he was four.”

“Ah,” I replied.

“Let’s go end this exam. I’m tired,” Brax grumbled, already turning around and walking away.

“Hey, don’t abandon Rex,” I called out, taking the cute bunny in my hands and chasing after him.

“You’re abandoning your own familiar,” Kage pointed out.

“She’ll be fine,” I called back. “Sacrifices have to be made.”

“Fuck you!” Alice called out, and I giggled. I knew Kage wouldn’t leave her, and I could sense Koa was nearby.

“Brax. Rex wants a hug.” I giggled.

“I’m gonna tell Diana you’re teasing me,” he huffed.

“Oh, c’mon. I bet your mom laughed when she realized you called your bunny familiar Rex,” I argued as I reached his side. He slowed down his strides and came to a stop when we arrived at the front of the fashion store where I’d borrowed my outfit.

“She did. I just want a moment of sympathy before she agrees with you, and then I’ll have my mom and my girlfriend laughing at me.”

I grinned, leaning up to give him a quick kiss. “Thanks for coming.”

That made him smile. “I told you to wait for me.”

“I was a little impatient,” I confessed.

“Uh-huh. Pass Rex over and leave this on the table inside,” Braxton suggested, pulling out his wallet and a few bills.

“You’re paying for the outfit?” I asked with a broad smile.

“You look cute. When we go on our date, wear that.”

“Okay,” I whispered. I handed Rex, who looked like he was dozing off, to Brax, and he gave me another kiss.

“Good job, Jewel. At least we’re finally done.” Brax sighed.

I smiled up at him. “Yes. Finally!”

We finished this exam as a team.

I Love You and Brighten Elite

I placed the cash on the glass counter next to the cashier, taking a final glance at the handwritten note I made, saying the items I'd borrowed for the exam, and this was the amount and tip.

I sighed, turning around to head to the exit when my phone rang. I pulled my phone out of my purse and saw that it was Maximus calling.

“Maxi, what’s up? We’re about to head back.”

“Zane isn’t here,” Maxi announced, sounding out of breath. My stomach dropped at his words as panic rattled through me.

“Not there? Where is he?” I asked.

“I don’t know! I arrived and told Meredith that the cameras were being watched by Savannah. We went together to catch her red-handed and had to call the police and stuff. We went back to her office and Logan and Nixon were there, but Zane hasn’t even entered the property,” Maxi explained.

“Did you guys track him?! I’m on my way back!” I exclaimed, running out of the building. I looked for the others, but they weren’t outside the fashion store.

“Logan already called Braxton and Kage. They’re heading to the site now, but Jewel...” he trailed off.

“What? What’s the problem?”

“I don’t think we can make it. There’s no way we can teleport there. It’s off limits. We have to go around the property.”

“Where is Zane?” I demanded.

“The train station,” Maxi replied.

“Huh? The train station? Is he going home or something?” It wasn’t making sense to me. Everything had been solved, so why would Zane want to go home? Especially in the middle of the exam when he had the rainbow flag.

“We checked the cameras. Nick...”

I groaned at the name, already putting together what must have happened. “Don’t tell me Zane trusted Nick and got caught in some shit?” I snapped.

“No. From what we could tell from the tape, Zane didn’t want to go where Nick was suggesting. There was an argument, but Zane got knocked out with a bat, and they dragged his body into a car and drove off. Savannah was watching the cameras and made sure that screen didn’t show up for any of the professors who are also keeping track of the exam areas. Logan tried teleporting multiple times and he can’t.”

“Then I’ll go. I mean, I can, right? I just need a few minutes,” I suggested.

“We have three minutes, Jewel.”

“Why do we have three minutes?!” I shouted, my anxiety spiking up. I began to run as fast as I could, but there was no way I’d get to the train station by foot. Even if I summoned

Alice for help, neither of us would get there on time. It was virtually impossible.

“The train’s coming,” Maxi whispered.

“So?!”

“Zane’s tied to the tracks, Jewel.”

I came to a stop, my rapid exhales the only confirmation that I was still breathing. “What? No...no, no, no! Why can’t anyone teleport there?!” I tried to keep calm as tears pooled in my eyes.

“You remember those restraints Meredith had explained organizations use? The ones Nixon had on his ankles in the pool? They tied Zane to the tracks with them, and the area is squared off. We can’t even get nearby. It’s like teleporting just gets canceled out. Logan and Nixon left the moment we found out, but it’s twenty minutes from the school. No one will make it,” Maxi revealed.

“I’ll make it.”

“You can’t, Jewel.”

“I can! I’ll just think really hard and do it!” I countered.

“Jewel,” Maxi whispered, and I could hear the defeat in his voice. “Even if you’re a key. Your ability works on family and people who you have a close bond with. You don’t remember meeting Zane, and it has only been a few weeks since you guys got close again. Meredith...said that you wouldn’t have a strong enough bond.”

I clenched my trembling hand while I tried not to break my phone that was shaking. *Not strong enough. Why? Just because I can’t remember. It’s not my fault I can’t! Why is that stopping me from saving Zane? I should just let him die?*

“Jewe-”

I hung up the phone, my fingers typing away to Zane’s contact, and I pressed the tracking icon. It loaded up, and I saw the blinking purple dot. I immediately closed it and checked the train times. *Please be delayed. PLEASE!*

My eyes landed on the TRAIN 58 icon and darted to the side to see DELAYED. I thought I’d have a moment of relief, but I noticed the red number. *Two minutes. Really? You call a delay two fucking minutes?*

I glanced around the empty streets, wishing someone, anyone, could help me. *I need help! I have to get to him. I can’t let him die. He’s...mine too. He’s my boyfriend. Even if I can’t remember the beginning, he introduced himself again. We hugged and made up. We laughed, cried, ate ice cream, and studied together. Why are my lost memories the decision maker regarding life and death?*

Zane doesn’t deserve to die. No. He doesn’t deserve that for his mistakes. Help...Dad? Dad! I need help! Please!!!

“Sweetheart?”

I snapped my eyes open, and I was back in the dim cell, Father’s wide eyes staring at me.

“Dad,” I whispered, moving down to kneel before him. “Dad, I only have a minute. Zane. He’s strapped to the tracks of the train station. No one can get to him. I need to save him, but Maxi said I have to remember Zane from the beginning, but I can’t! I’m scared, Daddy. He’s going to die, and I can’t do anything. No one can help me. Please, Daddy, help me,” I begged through sobs, my whole body trembling as I tried to breathe.

“Shh, Jewel. Concentrate. Don’t think about me helping you. Think about Zane. All the memories you shared.”

“I don’t remember them all, Dad,” I reminded him, and he smiled.

“Just remember the ones you do. Remember how they made you feel. The happiness, the sadness. You don’t need to have memories to reach Zane. Feel the emotions attached to him, Jewel. Now concentrate.”

I nodded, closing my eyes and pulling deep within myself. I remembered Zane’s voice, the way his emerald eyes filled with tears when he wished to fix everything he had caused. I remembered how sad I was, and the way my heart ached for him. I wanted to make things right for him, to see him smile rather than shed tears.

The image of his wide smile flowed into my mind. Zane was overjoyed after Meredith assured us she’d explain everything to the town, clear Zane’s name, and get Taemin’s job back. I envisioned the way his joy made me so happy, and the feeling of his arms wrapped around me as he lifted me up and twirled me around.

Memory after memory flowed through me after that, from when he’d asked me on a date, to us eating ice cream together as we walked back home, his hand in mine. The memories went by faster and faster, feeling like seconds despite my mind thinking they were minutes. Then the memories I’d forgotten returned.

The exam, the dorms, the distance that began to grow between us. Zane’s hurt-filled expression in the club as I walked away with Kage, and the pain that morphed on his face when he apologized on the tower. Finally, the fear of shock

that lingered in his emerald eyes, seconds before my body was thrown back and off the tower.

I remember...I remember!

CHOOO

My body jumped, and my eyes snapped open as I glanced around, realizing I wasn't in the town of Natala, but at the train station. I immediately found the tracks and saw the oncoming train that was blaring its warning sounds. I turned my head to the left, my eyes landing on Zane who was struggling with the metal chains on his ankles and wrists.

I could see his panic, and the tears running down his cheeks as he looked towards the train that was approaching.

“ZANE!” I screamed, running at full speed towards him.

He dropped his head to look back as I approached, fear taking over his once panicked expression. “Jewel, no, no. Don't touch the metal! It'll take your magic,” Zane revealed. I reached him, skidding to a stop at his words before I hopped carefully around him and onto the tracks.

We both looked at the train that sent another warning signal, and I waved frantically, trying to get the attention of the driver.

“There's no one in there!” Zane shouted.

“What?!”

“They made it so it was an automatic train! It's not supposed to run today. It was a setup. Jewel, go. It's okay. It's my fault. I can die...as long as I know you're safe,” Zane admitted.

“You're not dying!” I snapped, moving over him so that I sat on his waist and began to examine the chains. I bit my lip,

knowing they were the same as the ones on Dad. *Shit, Shit, shit!*

“Jewel.”

I looked at Zane, and he shook his head. “You can’t. If you use your power, you’ll only be able to teleport one of us. The guys would kill me if you died in my place. Please, Jewel? Just let me die. At least maybe I’ll be known as a hero rather than a bad guy. Please,” he begged.

“No. No...” I whispered, leaning down to press my forehead against his. “We haven’t gone on another ice cream date, or had time off to go to the cottage with the others. Remember, you couldn’t go. We have to make up...the time... Zane.”

Zane leaned up and gave me a soft kiss. He pulled back as the tears rolled down his cheeks. “Next time. Maybe in the next life...or if I’m good...I’ll visit in your dreams. Just... please Jewel. For me?” he whispered.

The next warning signal went off, and the train was probably thirty seconds from us. I gave him one last glance, my tears falling on his cheeks as I finally admitted defeat.

My leaned down and gave him one more kiss before I stood up and moved away from the tracks. I turned around and watched his wide smile, the tears in his eyes continued to run down his face.

I knew he was hiding his fear. Hiding the reality that, in seconds, the train would take his life. As much as I wanted to turn around, to avoid watching his death with my own eyes, I couldn’t do it. I’d watch the moment as punishment for not being able to do anything. Zane deserved at least that much.

“Zane! Jewel!” Braxton’s voiced called out. I looked up to see Brax and Kage at the top of the hill, their eyes both wide as they locked onto Zane and then migrated to meet my defeated ones.

I knew they understood what predicament we were in. Brax’s lime eyes filled with tears and Kage fell to his knees, his whole body trembling. Nixon, Logan, Maximus, and Meredith arrived, but I zoned everything out, lowering my gaze to Zane as the final warning sound went off, the noise so loud my ears rang. Zane’s eyes didn’t leave mine as he gave me a final smile.

“I love you,” he mouthed.

I sensed something break within me, the power that I’d felt when I confronted my father was back, but with so much force it took over my body like an infection.

Two seconds. That’s all I need.

I didn’t know why I thought that, but I didn’t let the thought delay me as my body pushed forward. Everything went in slow motion; the sound of the other guys’ screams and shouts were muffled as I got on the tracks and laid my body on Zane’s.

“Jewel!” Zane shouted, but it sounded like nothing but a whisper.

“I love you too,” I murmured and let the power out, imagining somewhere safe. *Anywhere but here.*

I didn’t know if it would work, but I would rather die protecting Zane than watch his selfless act of love.

I loved him, and I hoped that love would save us both.

* * *

Jewel...

Jewel, c'mon...don't die. Please. I'm not ready to lose you.

Jewel- please...

Please...breathe. I beg you.

*I'm...sorry. So damn sorry. Just open your eyes one more
time?*

Please...universe, if there's truly a being of power up there.

Don't take jewel away.

Let her live.

I love her.

She's our Precious Jewel.

Our Sexy Jinn.

The one who makes us smile and hold us when we cry.

Please...

Save our Jewel.

Live Jewel.

Live.

* * *

“Jewel?”

I slowly opened my eyes as a pair of emerald ones looked down on me. I felt a drop of water fall on my cheek. One after another, droplets of water that didn't feel warm or cold.

It took my sluggish brain to realize those droplets that continued to fall were tears that were coming from the boy who held me in his hands.

The Korean man with navy blue hair that was a mess.

The man who shed tears from those dazzling emerald eyes that held passion and relief.

The man who wanted to do what was right, even if the plan didn't execute the way he'd wished for.

The man who was willing to do anything to fix the mistakes he made, even if he never received redemption for them.

The man who loved his brothers and had a lonely heart that craved friends.

The man who loved me, even when I'd forgotten who he was.

That man...who now held me in his arms.

“Zane.” I smiled, my voice barely audible, but it was loud enough to reach Zane’s ears as a sob escaped him.

“Jewel. You’re alive. I’m so grateful. So damn grateful.” He sobbed, lowering his head to press his forehead against mine.

I could barely move, but I gathered the strength to lift up my hand and gently stroke his wet, tear-stricken cheek. He leaned back slightly to look into my eyes, and I smiled weakly.

“You’re an ugly crier.”

“Really?” He smiled at my comment, the tears not stopping their flow down his cheeks.

“Ya....but you’re still handsome as fuck,” I mumbled, and he laughed through his sobs.

“Dammit, Jewel. Those contradict each other.”

I smiled, and Zane closed the distance between us, kissing me so gently, I wondered if he thought I’d die if he kissed me too firmly.

“Welcome back to the living, Jewel,” he whispered against my lips.

“I died?”

“Yes. For a few minutes, but I was able to get your heart to work,” Zane explained.

“How?”

“My mom used to be a healer. She can’t heal herself but can heal those who are close to her. All three of us were able to heal just a little bit, but it wasn’t a strong enough skill to heal a person’s broken leg or revive someone. I didn’t think it would do anything...but I had the strongest urge to save you. You died because of me. I wouldn’t be able to live with myself. I wished so hard. So damn hard for you to breathe. I don’t know what I did, or how it happened, but when I opened my eyes again, you were breathing. You had a heartbeat.” He took a shuddering breath, trying to calm down.

“Zane. Don’t cry. I’m here. See? Right...here,” I said weakly. I was fighting off sleep, but I didn’t want to drift off until I knew Zane was safe.

“I know,” he whispered, holding me close to his warm body. I relaxed against him, breathing in and smiling at the same scent of Irish soap as his brothers, but with the added lingering hint of lemon.

“Do you guys all use the same soap?” I asked randomly, hoping it would keep me awake for help to come.

“Ya, but I use lemon body lotion. Kage likes mint, and Brax is all over the place with his fancy cologne and body lotions,” Zane replied, his voice holding a hint of happiness.

“Hmm. Good to know,” I mumbled.

“You brought me to the cottage.”

“Cottage?” I asked.

Zane nodded and helped me sit up just a bit so I could see where we were. We were at the cottage, the same one the others and I’d been able to spend a week at when Zane hadn’t been able to come with us.

“It’s peaceful here,” he whispered. I nodded and rested my head against his chest.

“I’m glad we’re here.”

I closed my eyes, unable to hold them open any longer, but I did my best to stay awake as I counted the beats of Zane’s rapid heart. As minutes passed, it began to calm, and Zane occasionally asked if I was awake, in which I’d make a small sound to let him know I was still here.

“JEWEL! ZANE!”

A smile formed on my lips at Maximus’ voice that seemed far off in the distance. *The others are here. At least Zane won’t be alone.*

“*Jewel?! My Mistress, you’re okay?*” Alice questioned. Her voice was softer than it was on other occasions, and the thoughtfulness of that alone made me smile slightly.

Yes, Alice. I’m okay. Zane’s okay. We’re all okay.

I don’t know what she said after that, my mind drifting away, but the last thing I remembered was seeing my dad’s

gentle smile and red eyes that were filled with pride.

You did well, Jewel. Now rest.

* * *

“Did we actually pass? We’re technically all here. Just a week late.” Maximus grinned sheepishly.

We smiled, all three brothers chuckling softly while myself, Nixon, and Logan shook our heads.

One week had gone by since the final exam, and we were currently in Meredith’s cottage. I’d woken up last night and was able to stay awake long enough to have something to eat and get a general explanation of what happened after I’d lost consciousness.

All the alumni involved in the incident were arrested and charged. We didn’t go into details of what their consequences entailed, but the guys involved didn’t hesitate to rat Savannah out.

Meredith had found the organization that was connected to Savannah, and it was being raided by Mage Warriors and police force for International Magic Affairs. Meredith didn’t go into too many details regarding what happened, saying we’d have to be Mage Warriors to discuss such matters, but she reassured us justice would be delivered for what had happened.

As for the exam, in order for us to pass, Logan had to teleport us back to the school and carry me and the rainbow flag to Meredith’s office before Zane and I were able to receive treatment. Meredith ended up teleporting all of us to her cottage, and thus, a week later, we were finally about to

discuss what Meredith wanted to talk to us about after our exam.

“Yes. Thankfully, you all did well on your written exams prior to the test and gained a perfect score thanks to what you all did during the exam. Your teamwork was exceptional, and even with the surprising events that occurred, you handled them as Mage Warriors would in the real world,” Meredith praised.

I smiled, looking down at Alice who was asleep in her cat form. Her little body was wrapped around Koa who was also sleeping in my lap. Maxi, Brax, and Nixon were on the right side of my bed while Zane, Kage, and Logan sat to my left.

Meredith stood at the end of the bed, wearing a black and white business suit like she would at school, along with black framed glasses. Her blonde and purple locks were curled and left down, and she smiled sweetly at us, her gold eyes glimmering with pride.

“Now, I have a proposition for you all.”

We all exchanged glances, looking confused as to what Meredith would want from us.

“What is it?” I asked.

“Well, I was going to announce this for people to apply for during the break and choose the accepted individuals before the next semester began. However, I believe you seven will fit perfectly, but I’d like to give you guys the choice,” Meredith replied, looking at each of us.

Once she did, her head nodded in approval and she smiled. “The professors and I have taken the week to discuss this, and we’ve come to the unanimous decision to ask if you seven will

be a part of Brighten's Magic Academy Elite Division for your second year."

We were all silent, everyone as shocked as I was. Our shock must have been strong because Koa and Alice woke up, lifting their heads to glance around. I reached out and stroked both of their heads, urging them to go back to sleep.

Alice was still tired from everything that had happened, and she, as well as Koa, deserved some rest time. They were asleep before we exchanged glances once again, the guys all looking to me for a general answer.

"If we accept, what would this entail? Are you saying we'd be Mage Warrior recruits for a year?" I asked.

"Yes. You won't be allowed to do everything Mage Warriors would do, but once you've received a semester of training and studies at the head corridors, the other semester will be strictly in-field work. You would be working as a team for most cases and would have a teacher on standby. Ms. Landsford, who hasn't been in the field for some time, has offered to go back on your behalf."

"Ms. Landsford is going to come?" I queried.

Meredith nodded. "I must say, I was rather shocked because others have begged for Ms. Landsford to be their teacher supervisor for the Elite many times, and she's denied every single one until yesterday. That, to me, says your group has potential, and she'd like to see it firsthand."

"But..." I trailed off, trying to think of words. Zane met my gaze and spoke up.

"Even with everything that happened, you think we're ready? We weren't all flawless like Mage Warriors are, and

we've made mistakes a few times as well. Not all of us get perfect grades, and we're not all amazing at magic or combat."

"What you're trying to say is, you don't feel confident enough that you're perfect for the role?" Meredith summarized.

We nodded in unison, and Meredith smiled. "No one is perfect. We may have high expectations at Brighten, but perfection is not what's going to help you save a comrade or a group of innocent individuals in need. You may not be perfect, but you all are willing to accept your imperfections and work on them. That is one of the key aspects a person needs to go from a Brighten graduate to a Mage Warrior."

I understood her words, and I glanced at the others; all of them appeared deep in thought. A minute went by before the guys turned their attention toward me, their once hesitant expressions were replaced with confidence and determination.

I smiled at them and looked back at Meredith as she spoke. "This isn't an opportunity that comes often, but I'm offering it to you all because I believe you deserve the chance to grow and excel. We at Brighten have watched you all tackle many challenges, and instead of running, you recovered and kept going. No one dropped out, or gave up, even in the instances where you felt that a damaged situation couldn't be fixed."

She looked at Zane and me, taking a deep breath and continuing. "Now, I'll ask again. Would the seven of you be interested in joining the Brighten Elite? You will have a few weeks off before you begin, giving you guys enough time to rest, pack, and get documentation reviewed and signed. You'll also be able to inform your parents before your departure. When you return after the second year is up, you will be given two weeks to recover before your final year at Brighten. There

will be challenges, and I can't guarantee you will return alive, but this will be an opportunity to strengthen yourself both individually and as a team."

She looked around at each of us again, and her gold eyes landed on my red ones. I met her gaze with confidence as a smile formed on my lips.

"One question?"

"Yes, Jewel."

"Can I still alternate between Jinn and uh...well me?" I asked.

"Yes. If you accept, they will have both your identities on file. You can switch to whichever side of yourself you'd like," Meredith confirmed.

The guys smiled, and Nixon looked especially happy with the news.

"Well then." I shrugged, giving one last look at my men who surrounded me. "We have nothing to lose."

I looked back at Alice and Koa and thought about my dad and his predicament.

Dad, I know where you are is horrible, but I'm not strong enough yet to get you out. However, I think this opportunity will give me a chance to save you. I want to get stronger, so I can enjoy your hugs once more. Can you wait a bit longer? I promise I won't fail you this time.

Next time, we'll come home together, and you'll get to meet my boyfriends.

I took a deep breath and gave Meredith a serious look.

“We accept. Please allow us the opportunity to join the
Brighten Elite.”

TO BE CONTINUED.

Preorder the final installment in Brighten Magic Academy.

REFLECTIONS OF US

PREORDER NOW

Stay Connected

Did You Enjoy **Reflections of Me?**

Please feel free to leave a review on AMAZON and preorder the next book (*Reflections of Us*) if this book was worth the read!

The best way to stay up to date with anything regarding **Brighten Magic Academy Universe** is through my social media platforms!

Feel free to join my Facebook group here:

[Avery Song & Avery Stone Reader Group](#)

- Avery P.

About the Author: Avery Phoenix



Avery Phoenix is the new pen name of USA Today Bestselling Author, Yumoyori Wilson.

With multiple bestselling series, Avery Phoenix's mission is to bring back many of bestselling smash hits to your kindles!

From YA/NA Paranormal Academy Romance to Dark Shifter Romance, you don't want to miss the addicting stories coming your way!

Fall in love with her revamped creations once again.



Also by Avery Phoenix

THE STARLIGHT GODS

Dark Wish

Tainted Rose

Poisonous Dream (Oct 2023)

BRIGHTEN MAGIC ACADEMY

Reflections of You

Reflections of Me

Reflections of Us (Oct 2023)

ASLAN ACADEMY: UNICORN BLESSED CHRONICLES

Celestia: Year One

Celestia: Year Two

Celestia: Year Three (Oct 2023)

Celestia: Year Four (Dec 2023)

CRIMSON STORM CHRONICLES

Taming the Storm

Calming the Storm (May 2023)

Facing the Storm (October 2023)