

Chapter 1

"We were kids! We were never meant to be heroes!"
"Maybe you. But not me."

I was never really afraid of the dark. On the contrary, I loved it. The dark, quiet, gentle feel of shadows around me, whispers heard but never understood. Oh, yes, there are monsters. Creepy crawly little things that scuttle around your feet. Large looming beasts who haunt your every step. And the ones in between, who don't really do much. They simply watch.

But none as such as me.

The golden light trickling through the window hit my eyes, disrupting my dreamless world. I furrowed my brow in frustration, and covered my eyes with my hand. I had hoped to gain just a few more minutes of sleep.

But that wasn't in the cards for me. Not today.

I groaned and rolled out of my bed, nearly falling flat on the floor had I not caught myself. I stood up straight and stretched, letting the new day flow into my bones. I drew the curtains of my window back a bit, throwing my heterochromatic green-and-black eyes into sharp relief. My fingers absent-mindedly traced the scar running down my right eye. It hadn't rendered me blind, thankfully.

The heavy greenery of the surrounding forest greeted my eyes as I drew the curtains back, birds seen in the trees, singing their hearts out. The canopy was dense - we lived in the middle of Erida Forest, after all - but not so, in a few places. The sun was able to shine through onto the green carpet of these woods, illuminating various woodland growth. The clouds moved a bit, letting the sun shine directly onto my eyes. I scrunched up my face in discomfort, and let the curtains fall back over the window. As an afterthought, I reached up behind the heavy fabric and touched the glass, recoiling almost instantly. The glass was cold, very cold, meaning it was very cold outside.

I rubbed my eyes and finally turned away from the window, blearily stumbling to my wardrobe. My bedroom was small, with the bed pushed up against the corner and my desk right next to it. Not really a lot of room, but I got by with it. I rooted around in the drawers of the wardrobe for my sweater, growing annoyed when it showed up naught.

"Where in the heck..." Mumbling to myself, I dropped to my knees and groped around underneath my bed, effectively covering my arm and hand in dust bunnies. However, I let out an exclamation of triumph as my hand emerges, grasping a dusty,

peach-colored turtleneck sweater. I stood up, shaking both my arm and sweater to get rid of all the dust bunnies. I watched in slight dismay as the particles dusted my bed.

I sighed. It was all too much.

I glanced over at the floor length mirror I had hung on the wall, taking in my slight form. Standing tall at 4 feet. Impressive, yeah? I ran a hand through my short, messy green hair, my paper white skin setting a stark contrast against the bright green strands. I blinked. My pajamas consisted of nothing more then an extremely long (and large) dark purple t-shirt, hanging awkwardly on my too-small frame.

Oh yeah, I forgot to mention who I am.

My name is Penny. Penny Cartwell.

I'm not a human.

Nor a Monster.

I'm a Starling.

Starlings were all over the place, but there was no place with as large as a gathering as Erida. Erida, and it's surrounding woodland, was the largest known place in which the Starlings lived. My family - my mother, my father, and my twin sister - and I lived in Erida Forest. We lived all the way out here due to the fact that I had a rare disease called Oria. The Oria sickness swept the Starling race about a few 500, give or take, years ago. Since then, cases of it were positively unheard of.

Until I was born.

The illness usually contracts in beings with high amounts of magic in them. Being me, I found that very hard to believe. Oria spreads throughout the body, effectively getting everywhere, then lies dormant. Depending on how long it stays like that, it's attacks are usually swift and devastating. It can stay quiet for a few hundred years or a few months. Or hours. With me, being at the lovely age of 315, it would strike every few months.

It was tiring. To me, and my family.

Cherry, my twin sister, didn't really understand why my parents gave me so much attention early on. In fact, until recently, I didn't either. It was only the night before, when our parents had sat us by the fire, that we found out.

I was dying. Slowly, swiftly, we didn't know. But either way, I was dying.

However, there was something else.

The day Cherry and I were born was the exact same date of when the Goddess Azeria and her twin sister, the Goddess Azula, had their great battle. My mother told me about it once, and I'll do my best to recount it here.

Azeria and Azula ruled over the skies, their home sitting among the clouds (yes very cliché shit just roll with me here okay). They were absolutely inseparable. And very influential. Whenever the other gods had a dispute, they took it to the sisters. Whenever a Starling asked for something, they answered in some way. And, boy, were they mischievous.

They had a penchant for pranks and goofs. Ever constantly, be it Starling or ethereal being, someone somewhere was as the receiving end of some sort of joke the Goddess' had played on them. Usually, the others took it in good faith, the sisters being oh-so-popular.

However, there was one that did *not* take it in good faith.

Their father, Reon, was a strict, somewhat ill-tempered god. Seeing as he was the king god, much like Zeus in Greek mythology, pretty much everyone feared him. Even Azeria and Azula, who often had such disregard for rules.

And then one day they went too far.

Mother never really told me when the prank was - it can vary from story to story, so she just left it up to imagination. I don't think it matters, really. Anyways. Reon cast the sisters out of the kingdom, due to the fact they basically undermined his rule. Azula and Azeria had an argument, Azula claiming that it was Azeria's fault they were cast out. Afterall, she was the mastermind of every joke they pulled. Azeria refuted this by saying it was Azula's own fault for going along. She could've backed out at any time, yet she didn't. So what does that say?

The sisters got so mad at each other that they began a duel. A fight that lasted a thousand years, so others say. The sky lighting up with lightning every time their weapons clashed. Thunder booming every time they landed a hit. The rain fell like the blood from their wounds. That's why it was called the Thousand Year Storm.

Eventually, Azeria landed the final blow, and the land shook with Azula's final breath. Azeria, realizing what she had done, gathered her sister's body, and walked for 100 years. She buried Azula deep in the forest, a place where no-one had even gone before.

Then, there, she took her own life.

People say there's a huge tree there that grew on their grave. A willow tree, with pink, wispy leaves, and bright golden fruit. That's only in legend, though. No-one's ever seen it.

Cherry never really paid much attention when Mother, or Father for that matter, told us stories of old. I did. I loved the old legends and testaments. There was something

about them, something deep, that made me think there was so much more to the Starlings than what meets the eye. And one day, I pledged, I would find out what.

However, in order to do that, I needed to live.

The Oria disease was fatal. Always was. I may have survived 315, but that didn't really mean I was gonna see 316. There was no cure for it, only preventions. Things that would stave it off for a few decades or so. When that will no longer work, will be the day I die.

Now, dear reader, you may be think that this is a very heavy ass book. It's not. The author is a lazy fuck who often prioritizes things that are not important to her life whatsoever. I'm not from anything, I'm merely a character she made. Yes, I'm breaking the fourth wall, it's the end of the chapter, dumbass. I do what I want.

What do you mean it's only 4 pages.

Shut up.

Chapter 2 (WIP)

“Don’t you see? This is how I’m supposed to be!”
“That’s not how I see you.”

The day had grown darker by the time I left my room, the clouds smothering the weak, wintery sun. My feet, clothed in my usual socks, made no sound as I softly crept down the stairs. I heard no sounds in the house, not from my parent’s room, nor Cherry’s. I had no idea of the time, but judging from my sleepy behavior, I gauged it to be sometime after dawn.

I made my way to the front door, the house still as quiet as a tomb. I opened the door slowly, the whole apparatus protesting with old hinges. I rubbed my eyes and yawned as I stepped outside, the cold air hitting what skin I had exposed with a snap. I shivered, pulling the door shut behind me.

Being off by myself was a rare occurrence. Mother and Father were so caught up in taking care of me that they practically smothered me. And Cherry? She didn’t understand. She just thought I was the favorite. They barely paid her any attention, at all.

I felt so bad for her.

Anyways. Being alone was a treat. The early mornings were always quiet and still, perfect for my overactive mind.

The sky was completely overcast as I walked down the forest path, and I sensed rain. You see, every Starling has something about them that is their special trait. Think of it like elements. Or Avatar! Remember that show? Think of it in terms of that. I mean, it is more than just those four things, but you get the idea? Good.

Anyways, Starlings have a special thing, an ability, that is unique to them. For me, I’m very attuned to nature, specifically, the weather. I know when it’s going to rain, where, and how long. It’s weird, I know.

(note: the author did not sleep at all the night before writing this, nor has she eaten, and yet she decided to devote a good portion of her morning on this stupid thing. she is still very much not over her ex, and is currently crying over the fact. somebody for God’s sake please give her a hug.)

My breath emerging as mist, I walked along the forest path, trailing my hands along the rough bark of the trees. Most critters were holed up from the cold - not to mention it was just after dawn - but here and there, I could hear birds singing their morning songs. A sense of urgency in their melody, begging you to listen. As if a great calamity would occur if you failed to pause and heed.

Snap.

I was startled out of my thoughts by a sharp sound. A twig. Breaking. Meaning someone was here. Someone had followed.

I whipped around, but saw no-one. I furrowed my brow. "Hello?" I hesitantly called out, the mist emerging from my mouth fading almost instantly. I heard no reply.

I heard a noise behind me. I whirled around. Nothing.

Now at unease, I slowly turned around-

"GAH!"

Something- someone had tackled me, knocking me to the ground. The coldness of the ground seeped into my clothes, my skin. I pushed my assailant off of me, hearing a sharp "oof" come from them. Then... laughter?

I looked up in surprise to find a small figure, only a few inches taller than me, doubled over in laughter. Her pink hair was over her face, blocking identity-

Wait.

"Cherry! That's not funny!" I exclaimed, sitting upright.

She looked at me, tears of mirth in her eyes. "Oh- the look on your- your face-" she wheezed.

I rolled my eyes. "Yes. Haha. Good joke. Good laughs. I told you not to do that!"

She straightened up, wiping away her tears. Her heterochromatic pink-and-black eyes shone with unshed moisture. "C'mon, you know I can't resist! You're such an easy target."

"Yeah. Well. I'm sick. Remember?" I retorted.

"That doesn't stop you from sneaking out, does it?" She responded calmly.

I opened my mouth to speak, but no sound came out. Instead, I just closed it. I pushed myself off the ground, brushing off dead leaves and other woodland growth.

"What are you even doing out here, anyway?" I questioned, after a moment of silence.

"What do you think, dumbass? Making sure you don't get yourself hurt. Or killed." She waved her hand at me, as if my question was a bothersome gnat.

Looking back, I realized that, in one way or the other, Cherry always looked out for me. She may have feigned indifference to my illness, but deep down, I'm pretty sure losing me would be the worst thing to happen to her. And losing her would be devastating to me. We're twins. We basically needed each other to survive.

And we didn't realize that until far too late.

The air grew awkward as the silence grew. It was only the night before that we found out I was dying. Cherry nervously adjusted her jacket, keeping her left sleeve rolled up. I never understood why she had it like that. Maybe it was because she had a glove on that hand? I don't know.

I cleared my throat. "So, you, uh, wanna head to the lake? Pretty sure no-one's gonna be there."

She raised an eyebrow. "The lake? This early?"

I tossed a shrug. "Why not?"

She pinched the bridge of her nose, giving a resigned sigh. She walks past me, calling out over her shoulder "You fall in there, I'm not fishing you back out."

I grin and run after her.

The slate colored sky reflected off the deep blue surface of the lake, making it seem a darker color than usual. The old dock creaked and groaned as I skipped a rock across, trying to think on how long it would take for it to rain.

"Five skips," I called out to Cherry, my sister being seated on the worn boards of the old structure, reading a book she had brought.

"Three," She amended, not even looking up.

I rolled my eyes and walked off the rickety dock to find another stone, softly humming to myself. It was rare that we got these kinds of days. Just me and her. Often, Mom and Dad would isolate me from others. As if my condition was contagious. Or crippling. I could still function.

But to have a day, or even a few hours, with just my sister, that was a treat.

Neither of us really understood how precious these moments were until it was too late.

A smooth, rounded stone caught my eye, and I stooped to pick it up. I turned it over in my hand, lost in my thoughts.

"You know," I said out loud, "Doesn't it make you wonder?"

"What do you mean?" Cherry said, turning a page.

"My sickness. You know how it only forms in beings with high amounts of magic?" I asked.

"Yeah?" She looked up, furrowing her brow.

"Well. Do you think I have high amounts of magic?"