

Chapter 1

When Dusk's wings and claws retracted and he tumbled to the ground, knees scraping the asphalt, his mind raced. *I trusted her and this is what I get. Maybe you were right about Enchantment mages, Kuro.*

Kuro's voice echoed in his mind. *I'm sorry that she hurt you, but I don't think it was intentional.*

Dusk shook his head as he placed a hand on the outside wall of the cafe. *Intention doesn't matter. The fact is she hurt me. I realize she's sorry, but I'm not ready to forgive her. I don't know if I ever will.*

Kuro answered. *And that's within your rights. Do you still wish to go through with the plan without Amy?*

Dusk ran a hand through his hair. *Yes. I need to know what our clan did to you to trick you into becoming familiars. Dusk sucked in a breath. But I have no money and everyone I cared for is gone. How are we going to get to the portal? We can't walk there and I don't think I can fly any further.*

Someone shuffled at the cafe and gave a sideways glance to Dusk, wrinkling her nose as she took in his pained expression and tattered clothes.

The pocket watch on Dusk's hip glowed. *You might be able to catch a ride from someone or use your magic to convince someone to help you.*

Dusk put a hand to his gem bag. *I don't feel comfortable using my magic like that, but maybe we can find a place with other shifters or mages. One where people don't recognize me as Opal's henchman. Dusk gulped. Hopefully there are places like that here.*

Kuro purred. *You can use a spell to locate any large sources of magic. Do you still have the energy for that?*

Dusk's stomach writhed against his skin. *Not in my current state, but maybe if we can find some food. A human might be willing to lend me a couple of dollars for something small.*

Dusk stepped into the bustling coffee shop. Several customer's gazes followed him as he made his way to the display filled with sandwiches and scones. One of the cashiers cocked his head to the side, taking in his hearing aid and then signed. "You want to eat?"

Dusk pressed his lips together and signed back. "No thanks, Just looking." Dusk placed a hand on his stomach as it complained yet again. The cashier's gaze slid from Dusk to the back room. "No money?"

Dusk nodded his head sheepishly.

He glanced down at the case and pointed to the case. "Take one. My gift."

Dusk said, "You sure?"

The cashier scrambled for the words to sign, and Dusk tapped the aid. "I can read lips but go slow please."

The guy smiled. "It's supposed to go bad after today any way." He smiled. "Don't worry about it. I want to help. And you can pay me back next time you're here," he said with a wink.

Dusk rubbed the back of his neck. "Thank you. It's been a rough day."

The cashier waved it away. "Don't worry about it. Do you want me to heat it up for ya?"

Dusk licked his lips. "Yes, that would be great. Thank you so much." Dusk hugged his arms to his chest, covering the gape in the fabric near his chest.

The cashier flushed and popped the sandwich in the toaster and Dusk stepped to the side as a woman came to the front and ordered a latte. The microwave dinged and the cashier slid the sandwich to Dusk. Dusk glanced at his shirt to see Oliver on his name tag. "Thanks so much, Oliver. Maybe I'll see you around."

"Ya. Oh, and I didn't catch your name. What was it?"

Dusk wrung his hands. "It's uh-Dusk."

He gave a small smile. "It suits you."

"Thanks,"

Oliver tapped a finger to his chin. "Come to think of it, you look familiar. Do I know you from somewhere?"

Sweat beaded on the back of Dusk's neck. "I'm sure it's just a coincidence." Dusk grabbed the sandwich and sat down at one of the chairs before Oliver could ask anymore questions. He glanced over at the counter occasionally as he nibbled on the sandwich. Oliver's studied him the entire time. When Oliver started talking to one of his coworkers, Dusk glimpsed the girl's enchantress necklace and almost choked on his bite of sandwich.

Dusk stood up from his seat and jogged to the door. His heart thumped in his chest as the girl locked gazes with him. She smiled and placed a hand on his shoulder as his hand reached the door. When he turned around to face her, she said through clenched teeth. "I know what you are and if you know what's good for you, you and Opal will stay far away from this shop. Got it?"

Dusk's grip on the door handle tightened. He spoke through gritted teeth. "I don't work for her anymore."

She scoffed. "Ya right. Like I'd believe that. Now get out of here before I decide you're the next special of the day."

"Already going. Sorry for imposing."

Dusk bolted out of the shop, cement smacking against the disintegrating soles on his shoes as he jogged down the sidewalk with no destination in mind. He kept glancing over his shoulder to make sure the woman from the shop wasn't following him. Dusk didn't stop until he reached a bench several blocks away.

He sank into the wooden seat and put his head between his hands. "I don't know if I can do this, Kuro."

Kuro's voice curled around his mind like a blanket. "You're stronger than you know. You were the driving voice that led that rebellion, not Amy. That map of the Council headquarters was yours. You're more than capable on your own."

Dusk stared down at his hands. "It doesn't feel like it."

"Well you got the food you needed. Now, let's go find a place for you to rest before we head for the magic world."

Chapter 2

Amy clutched onto the passenger door for dear life as Naru swerved Amy's car to the right. Amy wiped her tear-stained face and threw a glare at Naru. "I knew I should've driven home. Naru, be careful or you're going to get us both killed, magic powers or not."

Naru laid on the horn when a car that cut in front of them. "Watch where you're going, asshole. You almost hit us."

Naru clenched her teeth and sucked in a breath. She eased up on the gas, but still glared at the guy in the truck ahead of them. "Sorry Amy, but that kind of crap irritates me to no end. They're going to end up causing an accident."

Amy placed a hand on her shoulder. "Your temper is going to get us into an accident, hot head. And try not to flip anyone else off. I'm not looking to get shot today and damn near everyone here has a gun."

Naru sank into the seat. "Sorry. I know my driving stresses you out, but I couldn't let you drive like this. You wouldn't have been able to see the road when you were crying like that."

Amy sniffled and tilted her head forward, hiding her face behind a curtain of purple hair. "I know, but I was hoping driving would distract me." Amy bit her lip. "But your erratic driving works almost as well,"

Naru rolled her eyes. "Ha ha ha. Very funny." Naru placed her free hand over Amy's. "It's okay to be upset. I didn't particularly like or forgive Dusk, and I'm sure the feeling was mutual, but I know you cared about him."

A lump formed in Amy's throat. "It wasn't on purpose. I didn't know Garnet would do something like that and when I found out mid-mission...I didn't trust him after everything that had happened. Even though he'd trust me when he'd had no reason to." Amy's voice cracked on the last word.

Naru squeezed her hand. "You made a mistake. That doesn't make you a bad person, and you don't need to beat yourself up over it, but even if you didn't mean harm, he's still hurt. I'm sure you're upset about me leaving Dusk behind when Opal attacked, and that was years ago. I imagine he must feel angry and disappointed. But there's a chance he could still come around. Give him time and space to process."

Amy twirled a strand of hair around her finger. "You're probably right. I have a war that's only beginning, and I have to find my mother. But I wish I knew he was safe. I can't think of anywhere he could go now that he's separated from Opal. Can we at least make sure he's okay?"

"Hmmm. Do you have a spell that works kind of like a surveillance camera?" Naru said as she turned on her blinker and eased into the far-right lane so they could get off at the next exit.

Amy placed her finger to the bottom of her chin. "I guess I could use crystal quartz for a scrying spell when we get back. I think I still have a crystal ball somewhere for show."

Naru smiled. "That's the spirit. And we're almost there, so you can grab it when we pull into the driveway."

Amy placed a hand to her gem pouch. Her bracelet still felt cold, and she couldn't hear her familiar's voice. *That is if my magic is working by then. My little stunt might have fried those pathways...permanently.* Amy shook her head. *Think positive. It will come back eventually. It has to.*

Amy stared down at her hands, willing the magic spark into them, but her familiar stayed silent and her body hollow.

When the sign of her shop came into view, Amy sat frozen in the car seat, staring down at her hands. Naru threw her a worried glance and shook her shoulder. "Amy. Amy. We're here. You can get out now."

Amy shook her head. "Sorry. I guess I spaced out."

Naru gave her shoulder a squeeze. "Are you okay?"

Amy pressed her lips together. "Do you want me to be honest, or do you want the answer that won't worry you?"

Naru bit her lip. "I'll worry regardless, so what is it?"

Amy's voice came out a whisper. "I used up too much magic and... I can't feel it anymore."

Naru blinked. "Oh. Has this happened before? Do you think it will come back soon?"

Amy sunk her head into her hands. "I don't know, but I need magic to do the tracking spell, otherwise we're stuck. I don't know anyone else who could help me with it, any enchantresses." Amy's thoughts flickered back to the market. *But I know an enchantment mage. Alex. They might be able to help if I can get a hold of him.*

Amy patted down her pockets but came up empty. *She cursed under her breath. That's right, I dropped my phone when I was kidnapped.*

Amy tugged on Naru's shirt sleeve. "Hey, can I ask you a favor?"

Naru smiled. "For you? Of course. What's up?"

Amy glanced at Naru's pocket. "Did you bring your phone with you?"

Naru pulled out a smartphone in a neon yellow case. "Ya, of course. You need it for something?"

Amy nodded. "I know someone who can help us with the spell Garnet left me if I can get in contact with them."

Naru handed Amy the phone. "In that case, go ahead. It's all yours. Do you remember their number?"

Amy glanced up at the ceiling of the car. "No, but I think I've got it written down in the house somewhere."

Naru held out her hand. "You want some help getting out of the car, then?"

Amy's raised an eyebrow. "I think I can handle that on my own but thanks." She hopped to the ground and her head spun. She smacked into Naru's shoulder.

Naru gave her a smirk. "You don't have to play tough. You used up a lot of magic. It's okay to ask for help."

Amy buried her face in Naru's neck. "I know that logically, but considering two of the people I asked for help are now not speaking to me, can you blame me for not wanting to ask?"

Naru shook her head. "Well, I'm not going anywhere. You're stuck with me." Naru draped Amy's arm over her shoulder. "Now let's get you inside so you can sit down before you fall down."

"That's probably a good idea." Naru half-dragged and half-carried Amy to the front door. Amy glanced up. The magic barrier surrounding her home was gone or at least she couldn't see it. "Uh. Naru. I don't think I can disarm the enchantments in my house, but they shouldn't trip for me. I guess keep a hold of me and send me through the barrier first, just in case."

Naru's gaze widened. "Of course. Sure."

Amy pressed a hand to the front door. Nothing sparked when she did. She grabbed the hollow rock on her front porch and opened it to reveal the key. She fumbled with the lock and the door clicked open and swung forward, the sudden movement making her stumble over the threshold. When Naru tapped Amy on the shoulder, Amy jumped. "It's fine. The barrier didn't go off for either of us. I guess it's down or your idea worked. Now, where would you keep this enchantment mage's phone number?"

Amy's brows drew together. "I'm not sure, but maybe in my business card jar."

Naru glanced around the room. "And that would be?"

Amy pointed at the chest of drawers in her office. "It's the second one from the top inside the purple piggy bank."

Naru walked across the office and opened the drawer. Stacks of paper came tumbling out and Naru jumped back. "You could have warned me the thing was loaded."

"Sorry. I've been meaning to clean it, but I kept getting busy and then was kidnapped."

Naru scooted some receipts to the side and rifled through the drawer. After a couple seconds of scooping out papers and dumping them onto the floor, she came up with a purple piggy bank adorned with cats. "I'm guessing this is it?"

Amy nodded and held out her hands. Naru tossed it to her, and Amy scrambled to grab it, but it dropped from her hands and toppled to the ground. Amy frowned. "You should know by now that throwing things to me is a bad idea."

Naru held up her hands in surrender. "Sorry. I wasn't thinking, but at least it wasn't breakable."

Amy popped the lid off the jar and ran her finger along the business cards until she came across the one with silvery edges. She pulled it out and examined it. "This is Alex's number, all right. Can you hand me your phone?"

"What's the magic word?"

Amy groaned. "Stop teasing and give it to me."

Naru dangled it in front of Amy's face, but when she reached for the phone, Naru snatched it back. "Ah, almost."

Naru moved the device closer so that it was in reach and Amy yanked it from Naru's hand. "I don't like it when you do that."

Naru batted her eyelashes. "Sorry, won't happen again, but it was a little funny."

Amy huffed. "I guess." She grabbed the phone and started typing in the phone number. The phone rang a couple times and then Alex said, "This is Alex speaking, how can I help you?"

Amy cleared her throat. "It's Amy, Alex. Sorry, I know this is coming from a weird number. My phone kind of went missing."

He snickered. "Let me guess. Did you put it in the fridge again? Or forget it at the grocery store?"

Amy let out a sigh. "Not quite. I recently got back from being kidnapped, but I'm fine. My magic isn't though, at least right now. Do you think you could pop by to help me with a spell?" She held her breath while she waited for Alex's response.

A long pause had her rocking on her feet. She opened her mouth to speak right as Alex said, "I had no idea. I'm so sorry. I've got to close up shop, but then I'll be right over. Is it okay if it takes me a couple hours to get there?"

"Ya, that's fine. Thank you."

"I'll be right over." The phone beeped as he hung up. Amy passed the phone back to Naru and slumped into her cushy office chair. "Now we need to get the supplies together." Amy rubbed her temples and started pushing herself up from the chair, but her arm buckled. Naru pushed her back into the chair. "No you don't. I'll get the supplies. All you need to do is tell me what I'm looking for. You're in no condition to walk around yet."

Amy nodded towards the chest of drawers that held her work supplies. All the gems are in there. You can pull the drawers out and bring them over. I'll sort through them."

Naru yanked the stiff drawers out and hefted them over to Amy, setting them at her feet. "Be careful bending over. I don't want you to pass out."

Amy peered down into the drawer and pulled the piece of paper Garnet had left with the spell instructions. "We're going to need a map as well, it looks like. Can you run down to the store and grab one?"

"Sure. Need anything else for the spell?"

Amy glanced down at the paper. "It doesn't look like it."

Naru headed to the door. "In that case, stay here. I'll be right back."

Amy rested her arms on her knees. "Don't worry, I can't really run anywhere right now."

"Good," She quipped and then rushed out of the door and shut it behind her.

Once Naru left, Amy fished through the drawer for the green Moldavite that resembled moss more than it did a gemstone. She held it in her hand and closed her eyes, waiting for a spark of magic, but its surface was cold and lifeless.