

# Gemstone Binding - Chapter 1

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Lapis Lazuli couldn't grasp just how much a vast gulf of time like five thousand years could change even the seemingly stable and immutable Gem Empire.

All that time she had been trapped, her Gem used to power a piece of Gem technology in the form of a mirror. Half-conscious, weakened, unable to escape or communicate her desire for freedom to the outside world, Lapis had been in Hell - or the nearest equivalent for Gemkind.

Steven Universe, a strange half-human half-Gem boy associated with the Crystal Gems had befriended her while she was trapped in the mirror and broke her free from it. He had even used his healing powers to repair her gemstone to its proper state, giving her the ability to fly again and leave Earth.

Although she was grateful to him, the number one priority on her mind after escaping thousands of years of imprisonment was to rush back to Homeworld where she belonged.

Arriving in Homeworld's system however, things didn't go as she expected. Lapis encountered spaceships she could not recognize, utilizing technology she could barely conceive of. The whole planet appeared warped to her, deformed from the passage of time and the result of countless more Gems being born from its surface.

She was scared by the changed world, and was almost caught unawares as a large Gem warship approached her in space. It was formed in the shape of a hand and made from green crystal. There was no way for the ship to communicate with her, nor for her to do the same - so the ship locked onto her with a transmat beam.

She was caught in a beam of light, unable to fly away no matter how hard she pressed her wings into action. Her only option was to let herself be carried inward.

And that was how she ended aboard a Gem warship, a prisoner.

Her cell was simple. A blank, unfurnished cubicle with one whole wall consisting of a destabilizing field; a crackling energy barrier that could poof a Gem's hard-light body in an instant.

Simply being near the constantly active field sent shivers down her spine and made her nervous but she put up with it.

She didn't have much of a choice.

No Gem presented themselves to her. She was starting to get worried when a crackle of noise from hidden speakers in the walls foretold her captors finally speaking to her.

"Identify yourself!" The loud, grating voice commanded her.

"Lapis Lazuli Facet-3D5G Cut ARB," Lapis stated automatically, her identification code remembered off by heart.

There was a moment of silence - no doubt as whoever was listening to her was checking her code against their records. She didn't speak up to fill the silence. She had a feeling she should let the voice lead the conversation.

"An Era 1 Lapis Lazuli..." the voice returned. "You were last seen visiting Earth as part of Blue Diamond's entourage. What are you doing in this sector of space?"

Emboldened slightly at having the chance to explain herself, Lapis went all out in describing how she was separated from her fellow Gems during a Crystal Gem attack, how she should have been poofed and cracked by an enemy, captured, and was made into a battery for an insignificant piece of technology. How after five thousand years she had finally been freed by the Crystal Gems inadvertently and had just managed to return to Homeworld now. She omitted mentioning Steven in her story, unsure of how the Gems of Homeworld would take the news of a half-human half-Gem hybrid child. The voice did not interrupt her, and let her tell her story in full.

When she was finished, Lapis felt mentally exhausted. Recounting her traumatic experience on Earth made those thousands of years seem to pile up on her. With no face to look at, Lapis knelt on the cell's floor and looked up the ceiling where the voice seemed to emanate from.

"Standby for destabilization," the voice boomed out.

"What?!" Lapis cried out, rising up to her feet.

The destabilization field keeping her trapped in the room began approaching her; sliding inch by inch inwards. Lapis could only watch as her already tiny cell shrank until the field finally reached her.

There was a flash of light, a burst of momentary pain, and--

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--and Lapis' vision cleared, revealing her changed surroundings.

She gasped, a natural reflex as she realized she had been poofed and transported somewhere while her hard-light body had been recovering inside her Gem. There was no way telling how much time had passed.

Her surroundings had changed for sure - she was in a large green-coloured room - but that wasn't the first thing on her mind at that moment. Her clothes had been changed entirely, without her even noticing.

Her normal outfit upon taking a material form was a loose-fitting, comfortable sundress that showed off her bare arms and a lot of her back in order to expose her teardrop-shaped Lapis Lazuli gemstone which was positioned there. She always went everywhere bare feet; taking pleasure in the sensation of stepping in many different biomes and pride in how well-formed and beautiful her feet were. Vanity was not a strong trait among Lapis Lazulis but she still experienced a mild buzz of joy whenever she caught another Gem glancing at her feet.

Her current outfit was a complete nightmarish reversal. Whereas before she felt freedom in her loose clothing, and could show off much of her body with it, now she was restricted within a skintight latex cocoon from her ankles to her neckline. Only her head and her feet were exposed - and there was a lot more than just this first layer.

Thick golden bands encircled her legs and her torso at various points; they looked like metal with printed circuitry on their surface but when she tried to flex her legs and see how much freedom of movement she had left, the bands flexed and stretched slightly like something rubbery. They snapped back into position like oversized elastic bands no matter how she tried moving herself. A thick collar of golden material encircled her neck and marked the end of the latex suit. She couldn't see her arms, which were folded together behind her back, but she could feel the presence of more bands there which rendered her arms useless.

Her hands... also useless. The latex coating her body was formed into a pouch that fit neatly over her clenched fists. She couldn't open her hands or even wiggle a finger. The most movement still accessible to her was to move her head around and to move her feet.

The most fearsome part of her bondage outfit stopped just short of her feet; a solid block of blue-tinged crystal encased her lower legs, above her ankles. Just trying to raise her legs up, she could feel how heavy it was and the way her feet stuck out of the other end made it resemble a stock.

Before her imprisonment on Earth, Lapis would never have described herself as having a phobia... but now she realized just how afraid she was at being trapped yet again.

Her eyes roved over her surroundings, looking for anything - anything at all that could help her, or explain what was happening to her.

Somebody had dressed her up in these restraints after she had rematerialized? That didn't make any sense. The outfit had been on her instantly, as if she had reformed with it. But she couldn't understand why she would do that.

Her speculation gave her no rewards, nor did her investigation of the surrounding area. She was in a spacious green room, but nestled in some kind of rectangular cot that had short walls around her so she couldn't roll herself off. Like being stuck in a coffin with no lid.

*I need to get out of here*, was the sole overriding thought in her head. But what could she do?

Her main weapon was her control over water; the hydrokinesis unique to Lapis Lazuli Gems like herself for the purpose of terraforming planets. It made her powerful, strong, almost invincible when she had entire oceans at her command like on the Earth... but inside the sterile confines of a Gem warship, all of

that control meant nothing. There wasn't a single droplet of moisture in the room.

*My wings...* She considered. The suit enclosed her body almost entirely but maybe she could burst out of it by manifesting her water-based wings from her gemstone.

As if sensing the resistance she attempted to muster, the restraints began to glow and mysterious power. They seemed to contract around her, their inescapable grip becoming fractionally tighter before relaxing. Some kind of warning.

*What else? What else?*

Although she was not particularly practiced or skilled with it, Lapis, like all other Gems, had the ability to shapeshift her hardlight body to a degree. It was never something she needed to rely on before she was driven to desperation. She concentrated; willing herself to change her form, to become more compact and escape her bonds.

Nothing happened.

She moaned in renewed frustration as the bonds lit up once again with a fierce glow. She knew at once she didn't fail because she was unskilled at shapeshifting, but because the restraints on her gemstone were restricting her powers. Not just her hydrokinesis. All of her Gem abilities were being suppressed.

As if in response to her continual efforts to break free, a section of the wall opposite her glowed - forming the outline of a door which slid open.

A Gem stepped through the now open doorway, the first she had seen since leaving the Crystal Gems back on Earth.

A Peridot. That wasn't what she was expecting. She thought some soldier type like a Quartz would stride through the door. Peridot's were more or less social outcasts on Homeworld, at least in Lapis' time. Interested only in technology, and treated little better than the tools they operated for their superiors. And this one was strange even by what she remembered for the green-colored Gems; her limbs were encased in technological prostheses that made her taller and gave her floating finger-like manipulators at the ends of her arms.

"What is the meaning of this?" Lapis demanded, barely able to keep a tremor out of her voice.

She was tremendously afraid of her present circumstances but a lower-caste Peridot seemed easy to talk to.

"Your arrival is quite opportune. We have been looking for rebellious Gems to serve as the subjects for our Gemstone Binding experiments."

"Rebellious?" Lapis gasped, unable to believe what she was hearing. "I'm not a traitor to Homeworld!"

"A judiciary council of Zircons have determined that there is insufficient evidence for your testimony and that since you did not respond in time to the summons for the evacuation from Earth, you must have survived the Diamond's punishment by allying yourself to the Crystal Gems."

*The Diamond's punishment?* Lapis was only vaguely familiar with that concept. All of the Diamonds attacking in unison could produce an effect so as to eradicate all Gems on the surface of a planet. Lapis had no idea how the Crystal Gems survived the impact but she was just lucky enough to be shielded by the mirror she had been fused to.

It was a bit of cruel irony that being imprisoned like that would end up saving her from destruction; and an even crueler irony that it had landed her a place in a Homeworld prison.

"But... what is happening to me?" Lapis asked, a desperate need for understanding plain in her voice. What was it that Peridot had said? *Gemstone Binding experiments?* "What is Gemstone Binding?"

A flicker of a smile crossed the Peridot's otherwise dispassionate face.

"Oh. Well. I don't suppose there is any harm in telling you. It won't make too much difference." Peridot began pacing, looking like she was working herself up to something.

"Here." Peridot pressed a few sections of her floating holographic screen and conjured a shape out of thin air.

Lapis recognized the shape at once. It was herself - her Lapis Lazuli gemstone - rendered as a 3D hologram that hovered in the air above her. And yet, something was wrong. Surrounding her pure, polished gemstone were lines

of metal, surrounding and containing her gemstone. The metal glowed with the same bright circuitry as the golden metal encasing her hard-light body. It felt *wrong*, to look at herself like this. Her true self, her true essence was wrapped in machinery to an even greater extent than when she was bound to the mirror.

“This is a representation of the Gemstone Binding we’ve performed to your gemstone. Solid titanium struts infused with nanotechnology that meld perfectly to the surface and allow for programmable instructions to your gemstone...”

Lapis listened with horror as Peridot rattled on proudly through the complexities involved in creating machines that could so intimately allow for control over her body.

“... in essence, your subconscious perception is altered so that instead of the typical clothing you would manifest with your hard-light body, a customizable set of restraints come into existence. Shapeshifting the restraints off of your body, or your body out of the restraints is impossible because you cannot change your subconscious perception of yourself. The binding process locks that part of your mind in place. It’s neat, huh?”

Lapis turned and looked at Peridot who was leaning over her cot, both arms folded in front of her. She actually seemed to be enjoying herself, having a chance to reveal details of her work. Her casual attitude only scared Lapis more.

“But why would you do this? I hate this!”

Peridot looked at her begging face with a nonplussed expression. Now that she was done talking about her work, her whole mood had become soured.

“I’m only doing what I’m told. The Diamond Authority wants better ways to set an example to Gems who step out of line. Just poofing and bubbling them, or threatening to shatter them isn’t good enough. This method might be the solution they’re looking for. I just need to run some more tests. Which brings me to... this...”

Peridot interacted with her holographic screen again - dissipating the conjured hologram of the Gemstone Binding - and commanded the wall of Lapis’ cot to fall away by her feet. Lapis had to crane her head up to see what was happening by her feet.

A pair of strange looking creatures crawled up into view. They weren't like any kind of Gem she'd seen before, but they didn't look like biological life either. Some piece of technology?

"My flask robonoids are the perfect partners for assisting with today's tests. They don't tire, they don't get distracted, and they will help record all of your responses as the test is underway."

"Responses?" Lapis asked, confusion warring with fear in her mind. Did she even want to know what the techie Gem had planned for her?

"Responses to stimulation, like this." Peridot nodded to one of the spider-like mechanical robonoids and it leaned in against Lapis' bare foot.

As soon as a bit of its warm, spherical body was pressed against her feet, it began vibrating. Vibrating really strongly in fact, so that her whole foot seemed to be shaking with the sensations.

Lapis flinched, the feelings from her feet growing more intense as the flask robonoid settled into position.

*What is this? I can feel the vibrations all the way inside me.*

The worst part of it that was it didn't even feel *bad*. The vibrations sent the corners of her lips twitching, her mouth unwillingly curling up into a smile.

"It's-- ah! It's ticklish!"

"Good!" Peridot seemed to have gotten the response she desired. "Try to resist it."

She tried to fight it but denying the vibrations through force of will was an impossibility. The big crystal stocks that she was trapped in all served to separate her feet from each other by its width; stopping her from using her free foot to try and kick the robonoid or shove it away.

Her choked laughter became all-out giggling as the second flask robonoid joined the first; pressing itself against her other foot.

"Ahahahahahaha," Lapis laughed, and laughed some more. "I-- heeheehee, I, I can't!"



She shook her head violently, side to side, as far and as fast as she could. If only she could tilt her whole body, tilt that crystal stock onto its side so that at least one of her feet could be out of reach... But she couldn't manage it. As soon as she even tried the floating manipulators that served as Peridot's hands glided down onto her shoulders and held her still against the cot.

Her eyes flicked up, down, left and right, seeking out respite and finding none. The only thing that caught her eye was Peridot's face looming above her occasionally, observing her reactions intimately.

She was less than a prisoner. She was a lab rat; an interesting piece of data to Peridot.

The tickling was irresistible and only seemed to grow more unbearable the longer she endured it. And she was enduring it longer than she thought she would. How many minutes had passed since those two robonoids had stuck themselves to her feet?

Tears were definitely forming in the corners of her eyes now. She could barely see, but she could still feel. Her whole body was practically resonating with the twin vibrations bouncing up from her feet, through body and into her laughter-addled head.

"STAHAAHAP!" Lapis screamed out, her voice choked with laughter.

"Please, be sure to keep begging. Having more audio recordings will be highly valuable to demonstrating my work."

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Five hours.

It was five measly hours when Peridot decided to take a break from her initial round of testing.

At the whims of her scientific analysis, Lapis had been made to giggle and gasp, to thrash her head from side-to-side, to laugh and beg and cry and do it all over again. Peridot made sure to keep her efforts varied. Lapis never ran out of breath. She never ran out of tears.

Lapis Lazuli had endured five thousand years of tedious, soul-crushing isolation; and now that five thousand year span of time seemed almost pleasant compared to the past five hours with Peridot for company.

Peridot, in direct contrast to Lapis' exhausted, tear-streaked expression, was beaming with happiness from the results she had collected so far. She was rattling through questions about Lapis' condition and her feelings but was met with blank-faced silence.

Seeing that Lapis wasn't in a state to respond to her, Peridot pressed one of her manipulators against Lapis' sole and delivered a precisely aimed shock through the gadget.

The electric shock was infinitesimally brief but it was still a sore surprise. The hours of nonstop tickle torture had rendered her cyan soles extremely sensitive and Lapis' whole body seized up - her throat giving voice a strangled cry before she sunk back down and gasped.

Lapis looked at Peridot, her expression showing hurt at the seemingly unprovoked shock.

"You seemed unfocused," Peridot said by way of an explanation.

A curious look came over Peridot's face as she processed Lapis' reaction and the way her feet were now fidgeting. Lapis' felt like a rock was sinking through her as she realized exactly what Peridot was thinking.

Peridot's floating manipulator hovered closer to Lapis' feet once more and Lapis instinctively flinched; her feet shying away from the machine as far as they could.

"Nooo! Not more of-- that!"

"Hmm. Subject's responsiveness to electro-stimulation suggests a high susceptibility. The next round of testing will include additional electro-stimulation mixed into the tickling routines."

Lapis' whole body quaked in renewed fear - she didn't think her plight could get any worse but Peridot had managed to prove her wrong. Her robonoid servants inched closer to Lapis' feet, just waiting for the order to recommence the torture they had been programmed for.

Just before Peridot could open her mouth, an unexpected chime rang out followed by the door to the laboratory glowing once more and sliding open.

A new Gem entered the room, instantly drawing Peridot's attention and causing her to stand back from Lapis and form a salute.

Lapis had never seen her before personally but she recognized the Gem type; a Jasper. And not just any ordinary Jasper too. She was a perfect specimen of the warrior caste; tall, imposing, with naturally formed muscles and a mean look that could crack a stone with a fierce glare.

Peridot's commander, obviously.

"Hmph. Are you not done yet?"

"Oh! Um, Jasper, I'm still just in the beginning phases of my testing and--"

"Well, pack it in. I need to ask her some questions myself. I want this pathetic traitor loaded onto my ship," Jasper ordered, her tone to Peridot fully indicating that she expected her commands to be obeyed without question. "We're taking her with us to the Earth."

Her stern face broke into a smile as her eyes ran over the technological restraints covering Lapis' body. Somehow it only made her face scarier.

"And bring more of the Gemstone Binders too. We're going to need them."