

Introduction

- Luna arrives in the outskirts of Eden, The City of the Stars. Her father has become bedridden with a rare and dangerous illness, so Luna chose to make her way to the Church in the city center to find help. In the outskirts, known as the slums, she sees the owner of a noodle shop cart getting harassed by security guards. She gets in a fight with them and they leave. The shopkeeper tells her that those guys were working for Pandora Banking, hired thugs that collect protection money from everyone. Luna asks about the Celestial Church, telling her story about trying to find some help for her sick father. He tells her that the Church doesn't have any authority out here in the slums, its too far. The only authority out here is Pandora, and the various gangs. He thanks Luna for the help, and warns her that she shouldn't stick around the slums for long.
- Later that night, Luna continues her travels towards the center of the city, hoping to reach the Church. She gets ambushed by the same thugs from earlier, except this time they have backup. They don't like it when people stand up to them, and plan on teaching her a lesson. They restrain her with an energy weapon, shackling her. Before they can start the beating, Luna's body erupts in a flood of lightning. The thugs around her are thrown back and knocked out by the force of the explosion, and Luna falls unconscious.
- Luna awakes to gunshots. She bolts up, and sees a man shooting the knocked out thugs. Scared, she tries to get away. He approaches her telling her to calm down, introducing himself as Cassius. He saw the explosion and came to check it out. She asks what caused the explosion and he tells her that she did. The marks and burns on the floor are all coming from Luna. Luna doesn't understand how that could be possible. Cassius tells her that he can explain it to her, but that he needs to come with her because the streets are dangerous at night. Luna doesn't have a better option, and agrees to follow him.
- Cassius and Luna arrive at Cassius's base of operations, a large warehouse far away from the populated areas of the slums. He introduces her to his brother Caesar. Luna says that she wants to know what happened with the Pandora thugs. Cassius says that the large energy blast came from Luna's body, reacting to the energy used to restrain her. Caesar explains to her that she is something called a Human Engine, meaning that her body is able to use and control cosmic energy. Her abilities were awakened from being jumpstarted by the cosmic energy coming from the thugs' weapons. Human Engines are incredibly rare and powerful; he tells Luna that she should not squander her gift. She asks him how he knows so much about Human Engines if they're so rare, he tells her that his son Orion is one. Caesar and Cassius are the leaders of a group they call Stardust, hoping to create a better future by defeating the corporations that are holding the government hostage and creating a more effective government. They are raising Orion and honing his Human Engine powers to lead their revolution. Caesar asks Luna if she would be willing to join their cause and use her powers to help them fight; she responds that she only wants to get help from the Church for her father. Caesar is understanding, but warns her that she won't be able to reach the Church anytime soon; Luna won't be able to leave the slums to reach the Church now that Pandora is after her. It would be safest for Luna to stay with Stardust for the time being; in the meantime,

they'll train Luna and help her understand her new powers (and hopefully convince her to join them). Luna agrees to stay for now, until things cool off with Pandora.

- The next day, Luna is introduced to Orion. He is Caesar's son (Cassius's nephew), and he is a Human Engine. He gained his powers when he was very young, and has been training for Stardust's eventual coup since he could walk. Orion is in charge of teaching Luna about Human Engines, and training her how to use her powers. The two of them talk during training, trying to understand each other. Luna thinks that Orion is too serious and focused on the future, sacrificing his own happiness and wellbeing for the revolution that may never happen. Orion thinks that Luna is immature and shortsighted, unable to understand the obligation to society that her new powers have given her. Luna disagrees with Orion, who insists that her refusal to help Stardust's revolution is equivalent to keeping the citizens in oppression herself. The two continue to bicker and bond as they train; Orion is an amazing fighter who is in total control of his powers, Luna can't help but be in awe of his abilities. He teaches her to feel the cosmic energy around them, and how to control its flow. Every Human Engine is different in how their flow of cosmic energy is expressed; Orion calls this expression their flavor. Orion's is ice, Luna's is lightning; the lightning storm that appeared when Luna's powers awakened is an example of her flavor in action. Luna is a quick learner, and with Orion's help she is able to manifest her lightning; controlling it is a little beyond her ability at this point. Orion presses her hard in combat training, telling her that she has a long way to go if she is going to fight through Pandora's soldiers to reach the Church and help her father.
- It's been over a week staying with Stardust, and Luna is starting to get restless; Stardust keeps brushing off her questions about when things will be safe enough for her to leave and resume her journey to the Church. Orion argues with her that she's nowhere near ready to go out on her own, but Luna is sick of sitting around waiting. After getting brushed off by Caesar yet again, she makes up her mind that she's going to leave. She slips out the next morning, sneaking out before anybody can try to stop her. She makes it out of the facility, but gets intercepted by Orion; he noticed her leave during his early morning training and followed her. He asks her why she insists on being so selfish, abandoning everyone in the slums and the city to suffer instead of joining Stardust and using her powers to help them. He opens up to her about how much pressure he always feels, and how much anxiety and trauma he's been through being raised as the city's only hope. He was hoping that he could finally share the load with Luna and have someone to relate to, but she has no interest in helping him. It's unfair for him to have been forced by his father to give up his childhood and his happiness in order to save the world, but he accepted his role in life and sacrificed himself for everyone else. He was able to cope with that because he was the only Human Engine, the only person with the power to actually give the revolution a chance of success. Then Luna got her powers, yet she has no interest in the greater good; she just wants to help her father and go home. It mocks Orion's sacrifice.
- Luna and Orion's argument is interrupted by laughter; they are approached by a young boy and girl, perhaps a few years younger than them. They look like twins. The boy, named Cyrus, is carrying a large sword; Juniper, the girl, carries a large scythe. Cyrus projects a threatening aura, asking why Luna and Orion are hanging around in his

territory uninvited. Orion takes a defensive stance to protect himself and Luna; these two don't seem like ordinary gang thugs. Cyrus attacks Orion, who blocks the sword with a column of ice. Luna wants to help, but Orion tells her to stay out of the way and let him fight. This is when Orion is at his best; his anxiety fades into the background and he lets himself fade into the rhythm of combat. Cyrus is fast enough to keep up with Orion, much faster than anybody Orion has sparred against at Stardust, but not fast enough. Orion is able to catch Cyrus off guard and freezes his foot in place, leaving him open for a finishing blow. It doesn't land, blocked by Juniper who has now joined the fight. Two against one, the twins push Orion back, but his fighting experience means he never loses the upper hand. Luna watches them, barely able to follow their incredible speed. The twins are much faster than any normal person, moving and attacking with those giant weapons as if they were weightless. Cyrus can tell that Orion's defenses are too strong for him to crack, even with Juniper's help. Unable to find an opening there, he decides the best course of action is to split Orion's attention, and he changes course to attack Luna. Orion overextends himself to defend her and takes a bad hit, falling in defeat. Luna tries her best to defend him, but she can't stand up to Cyrus's power and speed; she doesn't have enough control of her powers to use lightning without risking hurting Orion either. Cyrus taunts her and winds up for a finishing blow, when suddenly a young man jumps down from the rooftops above to block it and protect Luna.

- The young man, Apollo, is able to fight Cyrus to a standstill. Even without a weapon to block the sword, he's able to utilize his high athleticism to dodge Cyrus's attacks. Luna checks on Orion; he has a nasty wound from Cyrus's sword and can't really get up. Cyrus has Apollo on the backfoot, when suddenly Apollo attacks with a blast of fire. Luna watches his movements and can see the cosmic energy flowing through him; she realizes that he must also be a Human Engine. Using the fire to boost his guard and enhance his attacks, Apollo is able to land a solid hit on Cyrus, which causes Juniper to reenter the fight. Apollo's fire is strong, but he can't stand up to both of them. The twins knock him down, but before they can finish him off, they get separated from him by a giant ice wall. Orion was able to use what little strength he had to cut off their attackers. Cyrus tries to get through the wall, but it's solid. Cyrus tells them that he'll remember their faces, then he and Juniper leave.
- Orion's stamina is drained, but he's able to get up with Luna's help. The two of them check on Apollo; he's in bad shape. Orion says that they need to bring him back to Stardust so the medics can help him; it's the least they can do after he saved them. Luna doesn't want to go back to Stardust, she wants to continue her journey towards the Church. Orion tells her that it isn't safe for her to go alone, especially with those twins out there; she needs to go back to Stardust with him. Luna begrudgingly agrees, and the two of them take Apollo back.
- Stardust base is on high alert when they get back, in search of the missing Human Engines. Cassius is furious with them for leaving and putting Stardust's entire mission at risk. He's too busy yelling to even notice Apollo on Luna's back until she defiantly walks past him. When he questions Luna on why she brought a stranger back to the base, she dryly replies that he's a Human Engine. She then passes out from exhaustion.

- Luna wakes to the sound of arguing. She opens her eyes; she's lying in the medbay, next to her on another bed is Apollo, trying to leave. Cassius and Caesar are trying to stop him and convince him to stay; they want to ask him about being a Human Engine and recruit him. Apollo is still in rough shape after his fight with Cyrus and Juniper even after getting patched up, but it isn't slowing him down. He keeps tearing out his IVs trying to stand, saying that he needs to go check on his mom. Apollo is strong even in this weak state, definitely an Engine; ex-soldier Cassius with all his strength can't keep him held down. Luna gets up and asks Apollo if he's okay. Apollo throws Cassius off of him with little effort and happily responds to Luna, excited that she's alright. She asks why he helped her, he responds by saying that he's lived in the slums since he was a kid and always lived in fear of the gangs. He saw her standing up to them and felt obligated to help. He then says that he was glad to be of assistance, but he needs to leave now. Him and his mother live in a really bad part of the slums, and there are dangerous people looking for them. He's grateful that Stardust fixed him up, but he needs to leave now. Caesar tries to convince him to stay, but Apollo gets up and leaves. He passes Orion entering the room on the way out; Cassius scolds Orion for not stopping him but Orion doesn't care.
- Caesar and Cassius turn their attention to Luna, asking why she snuck out. She says that she was getting sick of wasting time on her journey and needed to continue on to the Church. They don't understand why she would put their cause at risk by getting herself hurt, or her powers discovered by Pandora. They're shocked to hear Luna say that she doesn't care about Stardust, their cause, or Pandora. She has more pressing matters than joining their secret revolution; her father is sick and she needs to help him. She stuck around with them in the beginning because they saved her from Pandora, and because they were showing her how to use her powers. She's grateful, but she isn't their hostage. If they can help her father out, then she'll stick around instead of continuing onward to the Church. Caesar says that if she can just wait a little longer for things to calm down, they could organize an expedition out to the Industrial Zone to bring her father to Stardust and have him treated here. Luna hesitantly agrees, but Orion speaks up to tell her that Caesar is lying. Luna's father's illness is an advanced infection that can only be treated in state of the art facilities, not Stardust's medbay in the slums. Caesar is just stringing Luna along hoping that she'll eventually come around and join them.
- Luna asks Caesar if this is true; Caesar admits to her that they would need specific medical equipment to help her father, which they don't have. Luna is upset and leaves; Orion doesn't stop her.
- There's no point for Luna to stick around at Stardust if they aren't able to help her father. She's back to the original plan: heading to the Church for help. She heads toward the city center, using the bright lights in the distance to guide her. With Pandora and the gangs looking for her, the journey will be more dangerous than before, but Luna is prepared to do whatever it takes to help her father.