

## Chapter 9

This is a very important part of the story... so listen carefully!

Julie stalked her little blonde-haired self over to our table, eventually shutting us up.

"What do you want?" Talia hissed at her. Julie looked awful, to say the least. Her hair was frizzy and tied up in a loose bun, he eyes had dark rings underneath them, and he uniform was wrinkled. Something was wrong. Especially if she hadn't made any snide remark back to Talia.

"What do you need, Julie?" I asked a bit nicer, trying to cover up for Talia's rudeness.

"It's Rick, he's missing. Last night he went to explore the school and didn't come back at all. No one's seen him either."

Talia's mouth was hanging open so it was up to me to keep my cool and comfort her. I put my hand on her shoulder and said,

"We'll find him Julie. Rhea, Talia and I planned on exploring the school tonight, would you like to join us?"

"Thank you so much for offering, Ashton. I would love to. I don't know what I would do if something happened to Rick and I wasn't there."

She gave me a light hug and I hugged her back, feeling good for helping someone. Though, I could feel Natalia shooting daggers at me for allowing her to come with us. I ignored her and continued eating breakfast with a messed-up Julie.

When we got back to our dorm after school was done Talia quickly jumped on me,

"I can't believe you let that... that... snake join us!" she hissed. I had never Talia this angry.

"Calm down, Talia. The more eyes the better. We need all the help we can get right now, and if Julie's the one, so be it. You need to learn to hide your feelings from people you don't like and suck it up so we can move forward in life!"

I could see that my words affected her gratefully and Talia looked a little hurt.

"Sorry, Ash. I just don't know how to control my feelings that well and I really don't like Julie. I see your point. I'll try my best, okay?"

I sighed and said the one thing I could think of,

"I'm sorry too. I shouldn't have gotten so upset. I guess this school is stressing me out or something. Let's put this behind us. We have to prepare for our adventure in the school!"

I gave a small smile hopping to cheer Talia up. It worked and she gave me a big smile and we hugged.

I went into the bathroom to change into a pair of dark jeans, an Abercrombie t-shirt, and dark sweat shirt to walk around the school tonight. I walked out and saw Talia in similar attire, pulling her dark hair to frame her skin nicely. I had to pull up my hood to hide my blonde hair.

We walked silently to Julie's room. She answered and quickly slipped into the hallway, calling out to Bridget that she was leaving. Julie was dressed similar to us, but with light grey sweat pants on and a dark purple sweatshirt. She pulled her hood up and hid all her hair from view.

We ran quietly to the main hallway and up the stairs, starting at the 5th floor. Walking down the hallway I was really starting to get creeped out. It was even worse than the one with the classrooms in it! We opened every door and rummaged in every drawer, reading and coughing because of the dust. The farther we traveled down the hallway, the darker it got until we could barely see anything, and still couldn't see when or where the hallway ends. With each step we took it got colder and colder, scarier and scarier until something grabbed my ankle and I screamed, falling onto the hard, cold ground in terror. I was pulled into a room and the last thing I heard was Julie and Natalia screaming. I looked into the eyes of my captor and froze with terror.

"So nice to finally meet you in person, my beautiful Ashton." he said, pulling my hood down and brushing some hair from my face.

"J-Jake!" I stuttered out.

"Yes, it's me. I'm here to get you. We can go train together now."

"What about Natalia and Rhea and Julie and Rick?"

"Oh, I have Rick. I'll let him go as soon as you come with me."

"A-are you staying here?"

"Of course. Up in the attic. I'll lead you there."

"Okay, just let Rick go."

Jake snapped his fingers and I heard a door bursting open, and heard Rick's voice screaming for Julie and Rhea and Natalia. He was out. I guess I could trust Jake.

Suddenly I was picked up bridal style by Jake and we walked through hallways and up stairs until a door was opened and I was blinded by light. It was a room. All golds and yellows and browns, with a big bed and a lounge area. There was another door that I assumed was a bathroom and an open closet with clothes hung neatly on the hangers... my clothes. There were my things sitting on a table and my guitar case in the corner.

"Where did you get my stuff?" I asked turning my head to glare at Jake.

"I'm a powerful fire controller, what do you think?"

I sighed and went to sit on the bed.

"So, I'm guessing everything of mine is here? And now Natalia has a room of her own?"

"Actually, I moved Rhea into that room so she wouldn't be lonely and neither would Rhea."

I huffed.

"Okay, at least you did that. Will I still be attending school? What will I tell them?"

"Sorry to say, Angel, but you will not be attending normal school, only your fire element class. In order to get stronger you must go to that class... but you will also need to be with your friends because you have to save the world. We have 2 days to figure it out so for now, just go to sleep. I'll see you in the morning."

"Okay."

I went and got changed into my pajamas and slid into the bed. It was extremely comfy.

"Oh, Jake, where will you sleep?"

"I'm going to sleep on the couch for now, but I'll have another room for me made. Maybe I'll even enroll in the school just to blend in and be with you more." he winked and rolled down on the couch, making himself comfortable. I rolled my eyes and said,

"Night, Jake!"

"Night, Angel!" he yelled back chuckling.

I fell asleep peacefully, thinking that, maybe being kidnapped isn't so bad after all....

Instead of waking up to a singing girl and blasting music I woke up to a bunch of weight crushing me to the point where I could barely breathe. I slapped whoever was on top of me multiple times until the let out a yelp and jumped off me. I groggily opened my eyes to see a shirtless Jake looking down at me.

"Put a shirt on butt face!" I groaned and he chuckled.

"Not a morning person, Angel?" he asked.

"Nope now shut up and let me sleep!"

"Ummm it's almost 1:00 in the afternoon"

"Holy fudgeballs!" I yelled hopping out of bed. Jake fell into a fit of laughter. I rumbled something about Talia waking me up earlier and much nicer while stomping into the bathroom to take a shower.

After a long and calming shower I stepped out and pulled on a pair of light skinny jeans and a dark purple poncho top. I put my hair in a long side braid, adding some dangling earrings with hearts on the end. I walked out back into the main room and saw Jake opening my guitar case. Why is he touching my guitar?!!!! I felt my body heat up with anger.

"Why are you touching my guitar, Jake?!!!!" I yelled. He shot up startled and started stuttering some nonsense.

"Don't you ever, EVER, touch my guitar again!! Do you hear me?!!!!" I roared, walking up to him.

"Y-yes, Ashton, I'm s-sorry!" he said. He inched away from the case and looked at me again. I calmed down and sighed.

"Sorry for getting so mad. It's my life, really."

I could tell Jake was going to make some remark but he held his tongue and instead said,

"It's fine. I'm just glad you didn't kill me." he joked and cracked a smile. I smiled too and we went out for breakfast at iHop.

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Back in the room I was itching to do something.

"I can't stand this!" I said, pacing back and forth in front of the TV where Jake sat on the couch with an amused look on his face,

"Can't stand what?" he asked trying to look innocent.

"I want to get out and do something, now!"

"I don't know what to do, Angel."

"What have you done for however long you've been staying here?"

"Let me see, I sat here, and practiced my fire element. Also did the occasional prank on someone."

"Why can't we leave the room?" I stopped pacing to look at Julie with my hand on my hip, blocking his view of the TV.

"Fine! I'll just make up a story as to why you aren't with them. Okay?"

"Yay!! Let's go!!!"

I skipped out of the room and down the stairs. As I reached the bottom I ran into someone and was knocked down. Looking up into the eyes of the person I was hoping to avoid right now... Rhea. Jake came bounding down the stairs after me,

"What's wrong, Angel?" he yelled. I could here the thuds of his feet pick up as he saw I was sitting on the ground. I stayed in the same position, looking at Rhea. She did the same, even as Jake lied me up and set me on my feet. Once he did I broke eye contact and looked at Jake.

"Ya, of course I'm fine. It's just that it's well... Rhea." I ended dumbly.

"Well duh! Come on you wanted to go somewhere let's go." he said getting ready to walk away when I felt someone grab my arm. I turned around and saw Rhea gripping my arm tightly.

"What?" I asked. I could see her face redden slightly in anger.

"Don't 'what?' me, Ashton! You run away in that hallway and scare us, suddenly Rick appears, and then we don't see you for almost a day and you say 'what'?!!!! I can't believe you would do that! Natalia's actually in the room, that I'm now sharing with her, and Julie's actually in tears in the lounge with Rick. We've all be worried sick for you!!!!" she screamed in my face. I looked at Jake for help as a tear escaped my eye. He shrugged.

Having no idea what else to do, I fled. I ran around the school until somehow I ended up in Sir Flagsta's classroom. Since no one was in here I collapsed onto my seat and sighed. I can't believe how twisted this is.

"I see someone's a bit stressed," spoke a voice behind me. I looked around the chair and saw Sir Flagsta. I gave a small smile.

"Ya. Let's just say I ran and ended up here. Am I allowed to even be in here?"

"Of course you are, Ashton. Out of class you can call me Charles, by the way. Want to know something that will help cool you down?"

"Yes, Sir-err Charles, I would, thank you."

"Okay so, what you do is--"

We spent a few hours practicing things with fire and calming down. It really did help. At around 5:00pm my stomach was growling and I was ready to leave, being completely mellow.

"Okay, Charles, I think it's about time I go eat now."

"That's sounds great, Ashton. I'll see you around!" Sir Flagsta said as I walked out of the classroom and stood there, waiting for Jake to come around.

A few second later he did and he brought me to the room.

"What do you want to eat?" he asked.

"Pizza!" I said.

"Okay, I'll go order it."

Jake ordered a pizza and we had a movie night, watching Avatar and Alice in Wonderland, much to his complaint. At 10:00 I told him it was lights out and I went and changed into my pajamas and fell right asleep, mumbling a good night to Jake.

Today was a very, very long and tiring day. Of course, I didn't sleep too well.

"Ashton! Come on! We have to go, now!" Natalia yelled from across the line of fire.

"No, Angel, don't leave me. You know I can give you anything!" Jake yelled from across the other side of the fire.

I looked between them and didn't know what to do. If I go with Natalia I would have friends and I could continue on with the life I started. If I go with Jake I know he'll never leave my side and I'll always be happy. The draw towards him got stronger every day and it got harder and harder to be away from him. Something was wrong. I could feel it, if I didn't distance myself I would never be able to leave his side and eventually I would forget about my past. I couldn't afford to lose that. So, I took a step in Natalia's direction, seeing my great grandmother Whitney in the process. She's there. Each step I took, the fire grew higher and I saw more of my friends.

Finally, after what seemed like eternity I was right at the fire. I put my finger out and touched it. The fire didn't hurt at all. In fact, it was a blinding pleasure. This was the toughest part. I had to hold on to myself and my senses. I turned around and looked at Jake.

"I'm sorry, Jake. Maybe sometime in the future, we can meet again and be together, but not when I have to save the world. I really am sorry. Come find me, soon." I gave him a small smile and stepped into the fire, feeling my senses disappear in the process.

I held on to my train of thought and pushed myself forward, until I saw an opening in the blinding white light. I continued until I stepped through, and realized that no one was there.

Not one of my friends, not one single person. It was all a dream or an illusion. I had walked away from Jake, and towards what, I don't know.

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TA DA!!!! Vote comment and fan!!!! It took me sooo long to write this!!!! Sorry for any errors, I didn't edit!