

Chapter 2 – Geminate

Though they were still reluctant to invite the Magister in, the Avari family agreed to speak with him outside. He joined them on the porch, his watchful partner standing in the distance out of preference and keeping a cold black eye on the lands beyond the house. Ren and her father didn't let much conversation happen at first, waiting a few minutes until the sound of a car pulling into the driveway caught their ears. Once it had, her father gave a little nod to himself.

The Magister seemed content to sit on the back porch and stare out into the forest. The skeletal serpent on his arm curled around him, slithering up to rest on his shoulders, and the man barely moved. It looked almost as if he wasn't even breathing. But when the back door slid open, he took a deep breath and turned towards the sound.

Ren's mother stood in the doorway between the porch and the house, one hand holding the sliding door open and one pointed at the Magister. The petite woman was unhappy, not even having taken time to change out of her scrubs – her medical ID still dangling from her collar. Her eyes darted to her daughter, "Are you okay, Ren?"

"I'm fine, mom," The daughter replied, unable to break her look away from the interloper.

"Are we all here? Can we discuss this now?" The Magister spoke as he stood, pulling at the sleeves of his shirt and summoning his Familiar back down to his arm. He turned and gave a glance across each of the family members, "I have kept my end of the agreement, Mister Avari. While my time is not limited, I am still not comfortable in wasting it."

"You don't get to walk in here unannounced and make demands," Ren's mother stepped forward, the sliding door slamming shut behind her. Unlike her husband and daughter, she was almost aggressive in her stance – though she barely stood as tall as her husband's shoulders. And he was not a particularly tall man himself.

"Misses Avari, I mean you no harm," The Magister spoke with no clear tone. "I simply come of my own volition, unconnected to the Magisters themselves. I have a suspicion about the nature of your daughter's magic. I wish to discuss that with you."

"Fine. But don't try anything," The woman replied coldly. "Speak your part, and we can go back to our business."

"That is all I ask, for now."

"Just like a magister. For now..."

"Tarja," Ren's father held up a hand to calm down his wife. It took a second, but once his hand was on her upper arm, she seemed to calm down.

“For now, Solomon,” She parroted the Magister’s words to her husband, a glance to the side falling on the other man. “And the Athali?”

“He hasn’t moved from that spot since he got here,” Solomon said with a quiet shrug.

“And he won’t,” The Magister explained. “He’s here to protect me. I am aware of the feeling of the common folk towards us. Now,” He clapped his hands together, “May we begin?”

“Fine,” Tarja groaned. Ren just gave the man a single nod.

“You said you thought Ren was a Geminate. I’m not familiar with the term,” Solomon started.

“Ah, yes. How to explain this in common terms,” The Magister tapped a finger against his thin jaw. “All magic flows from our tether with the Familiars. For most people, their magic is limited. They will never bring their Familiar to this world, as you and I have,” He waved between himself and Solomon. “Their tether is limited. Either because of their own lack of capabilities or the lack of their Familiar. A young Familiar soul may not have much to offer, just as a young Mortal soul may not. Then, there are those of us with more powerful Familiars – souls reborn enough to be filled with the quintessence of magical power. From Accountants with a knack for magic beyond those of the common person to Magisters like me who rise to Magister society’s highest echelons, this is a vast scale. Though our places on the scale are clearly nearly opposite, we draw our strength from the same basic place – a single Familiar bound to us, its soul reborn when ours was and forever linked with our essence. Beyond this scale are the Apotheosis Magisters and Geminate Magisters. Apotheosis magisters are born with their Familiar’s soul as part of their own – like the Phoenix. Something happened in the past life, a sacrifice that drew that Familiar into life in this world. The Poet’s sacrifice, the Gunmaker’s trade...” He took a moment before letting his hand motion towards Ren, “Then there are the Geminate – magi born with connections to powerful Familiars, powerful enough to need to be shared between two living souls.”

The Magister cleared his throat, “Geminate magic is not the most powerful of magics, to be sure. That falls to the Apotheosis. But Geminate magic can be near it. In the right circumstances, two souls are connected to a single tether, binding a powerful Familiar. These two magi work in tandem, creating astonishing spells. They are not required to work together, of course. Most Geminate mages live entirely separate lives, only meeting one another through the Familiar’s astral connections. But, many travel as a duo – for one truth. Should one of the pair die, the power of the Familiar will eventually overwhelm the other.”

“And you believe that Ren is a Geminate Magister?”

“I do,” The Magister responded quietly. “She had a talent for magic early on, did she not? She showed all signs of a connection to a Familiar that was not yours?”

The parents nodded.

“And her birthday is the eighth of Harvest, correct?”

“It is,” Ren answered from behind her parents.

The Magister turned his gaze to her, "And your imaginary friend as a child tended to play rough, and when you got tired, it left to play with another?"

She nodded.

"And you started losing control of your magic when you were older. You first noticed suddenly, likely near the end of your school career, shortly before graduation – while you may not have noticed it was Midsummer seventeenth, three years ago, to be exact."

Ren swallowed and nodded nervously, "How do you know that?"

"How do you know that?" Her mother snapped at the man. "You sure know a lot about our daughter for an old magister."

"I know nothing about your daughter," The Magister snapped back, "Everything except the last statement was from the other Geminate. She was born on the eighth of Harvest. She had a talent, the imaginary friend,"

"And the last part?" Ren asked.

"She died on the seventeenth of Midsummer," The Magister took a deep breath. "And at the moment her last breath was drawn, you felt your control slip away."

"Don't," Tarja held out a hand quickly. "Ren, don't say another word," She turned towards the Magister, "I'm not comfortable with how much you know about Ren. Frankly, I'm not comfortable with you at all."

The Magister ignored the mother, "You know her name; you've heard it in your mind a thousand times but always put it aside as madness." He said simply, keeping his eyes on the young girl. "Few Geminate's can keep from being consumed by their Familiar after losing their twin. The fact that a nineteen-year-old girl was able to do so after her twin was violently murdered..."

"I said stop," Tarja sputtered, her face darkening just a bit as she stepped forward and waved a hand down.

"Yes, that is enough," Solomon added, holding a hand out towards the Magister.

"I want to help. I think with proper training, you, your daughter," The Magister turned towards her parents, "Can be one of the greatest Magistrix of our time. And I think without it, her Familiar will destroy her." He produced a small card, his business card. "Let her think about it. I will stay in the area for another couple of days."

Ren had frozen. Her parents' final statements to the Magister, his movement away and back out of their yard, vanished from her mind. At his account, she had gone elsewhere at the forceful recall of memories from the day she had lost control. He had been right. She did know her twin's name.