

((**Note:** This section takes during [Chapter 1.](#)))

Nick stood in the audience of the dragon fighting arena, standing at the retaining wall for the arena, the wall that separated the spectators from the bloodbath within. As the final fight began, he decided he could watch no more as he turned his back to the arena and leaned back against the wall so he did not have to watch as he closed his eyes. As he did so, the ground began to rumble. A massive roar rang out throughout the city and suddenly shit hit the fan. Everything began to shake as the dragons' Spell took effect, causing technology to cease function. Nick's brown eyes shot open as he tried to move forward, but he was too late; the retaining wall dissipated. It was just a force-field, a newer development in technology, but it was rendered useless after the dragons' Spell. As the wall vanished, so did the boy's balance. He had all his weight on the wall and when it disappeared, Nick fell right into the arena where the combating dragons started turning against the humans. It was not the best place to be at the beginning of a rebellion.

After the magi dragoness killed the security guards, she walked over to the brunette teenager and bared her teeth in an angry growl at him. Nick shot up and took a step back as the dragoness advanced towards him. But when he spoke, his voice betrayed no fear. His voice was soft and calming as if he was talking to an injured animal. "You don't want to hurt me. Your mind is just clouded by your anger. Take your leave while you still have your chance." With that said, Nick raised his hands and waited for her response. His fingers twitched slightly as thousands of spells raced through his mind, all of which he was ready to use should the dragoness in front of him choose to attack.

The magi snorted in response and challenged, "And why should I not hurt you?"

The boy answered, "Because I have tons of spells that I can use to fight back with. I don't want to have to hurt you with them, that's why I'm telling to leave peacefully."

The magi huffed and said, "Fine! I suppose I can spare you; besides, I got better things to do. Though I won't promise the other guy I fought won't do the same." She was hinting about the bleeding moon dragon, who was in the midst of trying to murder every human being in sight. Then the dragoness disappeared from the coliseum in a flash that exhausted purple clouds. During his rampage, the bleeding moon spotted Nick. He turned his attention away from the audience and went to snapping his jaws at him, trying to bite and eat the boy.

Nick almost smirked as the dragon attacked him. He didn't want to hurt the bleeding moon, but there was something about combat. The adrenaline rush, the quick paced movement, and the dangers of death; it was all intoxicating. Taking a leap back, he brought both his hands above his head and closed his eyes. He used his magic to raise the force-field again between the arena and the audience to prevent the bleeding moon dragon from hurting any more people. The confused dragon looked at it for a moment before he tried to break through the shield with his claws and horns, but it was just as hard as titanium. Then a ball of stone about the size of a bowling ball rose out of the ground right under the

bleeding moon dragon's head and hit him squarely in the jaw. The dragon growled in pain and turned his attention back to the boy. He raised his tail up and tried to jab it at the human.

Two more chunks of earth rose up next to Nick as he jumped back to avoid the venomous jab, nearly missing him by a hair's width. The bleeding moon's tail hit the chunks of earth instead. "Dragon," the boy called out. "I will give you two choices. Forget your bloodlust and cease your attack, and then I will heal you and allow you to leave. Or you can continue to let hatred guide your actions and I will end you. The choice is yours." And with that the mage raised his hands in preparation for magic.

The bleeding moon decided not to attack it seemed he saw that this human was unlike the others. "Fine, you win. But you better not be lying to me, boy. I trust you won't try anything funny?" he asked warily.

Nick nodded his head and started to think of a healing spell, but he was hesitant to get closer to the dragon. He didn't want to get within range of the dragon's claws and teeth, so he decided to use a less efficient, but just as powerful, healing spell than he had originally planned on using. It would take more energy to heal the same amount, but he could do it from a distance as opposed to having to touch the dragon himself. Both his hands rose up as a faint green mist rose out of them from his hands to the dragon's wounds directly, mending them. As he focused on his healing spell he allowed the force-field around the arena to fall. A bead of sweat ran down Nick's head as he channeled. Some of the injuries were worse than he had anticipated and as a result took more energy. It was, however, still within the range of his abilities to heal all the dragon's wounds. As the last of the injuries sealed themselves, Nick wiped his forehead.

Now the bleeding moon looked brand new before the fight with the magi. "Very good, human. I'm surprised to see one of you having the capabilities of a magi and white dragon, but yet you didn't try to kill me like all the other humans do. But I'm still suspicious about your mysterious nature here, but if it means me escaping out alive, so be it," the dragon said. Then he flew out of the arena and broke through the glass window above.

As the glass broke above, Nick moved his arm above his head to ward off the falling glass. With a hole now in the arena, the sounds of the chaos outside, previously muffled, were now louder than ever. *'I could leave now, but that would be suicide with all the dragons rampaging through the city still. Perhaps I'll just take a quick peak,'* he thought. Walking towards the exit, he took his time. He felt tired after healing that dragon and not to mention, he was a little dehydrated. He hadn't drunk anything in a while and was reminded of that when he forced a dry swallow. Nearing the front door of the arena complex, he took a deep breath before pushing it open a crack. The thick smell of blood mixed with fear combined with the uproar was enough to make his head swim. Pulling back, the boy let the door close and leaned against a nearby wall. *'Yup should definitely wait.'*

Nick's eyes were half closed, but he could hear someone coming fast. He kicked himself off the wall and to the side, even though the blade of the katana wouldn't have hit him, but Nick didn't know that. He

landed and rolled shoulder to hip ending up on his feet. But he stumbled at the end and had to catch himself on the wall to avoid falling. Turning his head to face his humanoid dragon assailant he let out an audible groan. "Hey kid," the creature greeted with a smirk, staring down at the human.

The boy looked at how odd the creature before him was and thought, *'Blade-wielding dragons, what's next? Are they going to start coming at me with guns?'*

((Note: This section takes place during [Chapter 4](#).)

Nick rolled over to his side turning his back to the morning light that streamed through the slightly parted drapes. He could only stay like this for so long though, because he was already awake and he knew he wouldn't be able to fall back asleep. After a few more minutes he pushed himself up. His body ached in protest, but he got up all the same; besides too much sleep can be bad for you. He walked towards the window, his first few steps wobbly and unbalanced. Upon reaching the window he cast open the drapes and shielded his eyes with his hand allowing his eyes a few seconds to adjust to the sudden flood of light. When he looked outside, he noticed the view was turned away from the burning city; in fact, he couldn't even see it from this side of the manor. A forest dominated the view from this window. But it was not like Nick was complaining though. Raising his hands, he channeled his magic and condensed the water in the air, washing his face and hair with the cool liquid. When he was done, he chucked the water out the window before turning to the door and leaving. He should figure he should probably go find something to eat.

Nick wandered around the manor aimlessly for a bit, just a little lost. It was a very nice place and very big too; he felt like he could wander around for hours upon hours without getting bored, but he would probably get even more lost. He was hungry anyways. He turned a few more corners before he eventually found his way to the kitchen. Standing at the doorway, Nick rubbed his eyes and watched as Rika set out the basic supplies for waffles. He leaned against the frame of the door slightly and groggily wiped some sleep out of his eyes. "Mornin'..." he offered her a weak smile as he talked. "I don't suppose I'll be getting any waffles from you, will I?" His tone was slow and even; he was after all, still waking up. After the white-haired young woman turned and set the bowl on the counter, her eyes locked on the mage with a glare. Nick's smile immediately faded and he wandered what he did to warrant that. *'Someone's not a morning person it seems,'* he thought to himself, but then he remembered his first encounter with her. *'Or maybe she's just perceptually grumpy.'*

"I suppose, yes," Rika said warily as she started to put the dry ingredients into the bowl. In another bowl, Rika mixed butter, sugar, eggs, and vanilla. She combined them together in the larger bowl and mixed until it was all smooth. When she brought out the strawberries, Nick could feel his stomach growling. Strawberries were the best thing in the world. This fact could not be argued against. The girl poured the big red berries into a pan and covered it. She waited a minute as the smell of strawberries

filled the air. The girl removed the lid and poured in sugar and corn starch, mixing it for a while. Then when she started to put the waffle batter in the waffle maker, Nick made his way over the table, finally sitting down as she finished the first batch. After a few more batches more made, Rika set the pile of waffles on a plate next to a smaller stack of plates. Then she poured the strawberry sauce into a glass container and set it on the counter. "One extra touch," she mumbled, going to the fridge. Rika grabbed whipped cream and set it on the counter as well as another quart of strawberries. "Take what you want I guess," she said, sounding indifferent. The mage nodded in thanks and took a few waffles onto his plate before pouring a good amount the strawberry sauce onto them before beginning to eat, picking them apart slowly with his fork. It felt good to eat after using so much magic the day before. It would do him good to finally have to food in him. "Like your strawberries I see," he heard the woman say.

Nick looked up from his food with a bit of strawberry sauce on the corner of his mouth and noticed the smile on her face. It almost looked unnatural on her as opposed to the frown that was commonplace for her. "Strawberries are the best thing in the world; undisputed fact," he stated as if it was the most obvious thing in the world after swallowing another mouthful of waffle.

After Rika paused to fill the coffee machine filter and turn it on, she continued, "Just so happens Albel REALLY likes strawberries." At that mention, the boy began to eat faster like no tomorrow. The girl seemed to notice him doing that as she smirked and said, "Hmm, careful. Wouldn't want any accidents." The coffee finished dripping down and she poured a cup, adding cream and sugar. Rika sat in on of the stools of the kitchen island with her coffee in hand. Nick poured himself some coffee as well and took a sip of it in between bites. It scalded his tongue, but he drank it anyways. Then he almost jumped when Albel came in. The mage took another sip of his coffee as he crammed the last bit of waffle on his plate into his mouth and swallowed.

The black hybrid sat down at the island with the two humans and said in an almost glad tone, "Strawberries... seems you remember something after all."

The whitette snorted and muttered, "Yeah whatever; it's easy to make."

Nick leaned back in his chair with a satisfied grin plastered across his face. The waffles were pretty good and they filled him up very well. He wouldn't be hungry for a while. The hybrid cocked an eyebrow at the boy curiously for a moment before he seemed to realize what the boy had done. "A petty effort, kid. I have the nose of a bloodhound," he chided.

The mage couldn't help but chuckling and jested, "I haven't the slightest idea of what you're talking about." He took another sip of the coffee; this time it wasn't as hot as it was before; at least it wasn't burning him anymore. Nick found it kind of humorous that just yesterday Albel was inches away from killing him. Now here he was, eating and laughing in the same room as him. Strange world, isn't it?

Albel cut off a piece of the waffle with his fork and ate it. He made a quiet hum of approval and said idly with a smug look at the girl, "All that barbecuing has made you a fair baker. I guess it's a good thing I

made you a hunter."

Rika gripped her coffee cup and set it down. Her fingers tapped against the sides of it. "May as well see what's left of the city after breakfast," she muttered, ignoring the hybrid's commentary. She raised her cup and sipped at it again.

Fayt entered next, taking a cup of coffee and sitting at the island. He ate the strawberries directly instead. "Morning," he greeted everyone.

Nick looked up and returned his greeting, "Good morning, Fayt."

Rika finished up her coffee and set her cup in the sink. "Mmm, well may as well see what's left," she muttered again. The woman left out the door and moved outside.

The hybrids finished their breakfast and put their plates in the sink. Fayt looked at Nick and asked, "Want to come?"

Nick sighed and gulped down the rest of his coffee before setting his mug down next to Rika's. He replied, "Yeah I'll come; nothing else to do anyways, is there?"

They left the kitchen and saw Rika come down the stairs in her normal armor and weapons. "Well come on," she grumbled. The woman left the house first and walked down the long lawn to the gates and out towards the city. The others trailed behind with Nick taking strides as they came upon the ruined city. The fires were all gone, leaving charred remains of buildings. It was unsettling that an entire city could be reduced to rubble in less than a day. It seemed quite a few dragons and humans were stumbling around the rubble. Most were trying to clean the rubble or reclaim lost valuables. No one seemed to be concerned about battling anymore.

Nick shook his head and wandered off, only to come back 5 minutes later with a brown rucksack slung over his shoulder. It contained all his worldly possessions; Mostly food, water, and various other magical odds and ends. He raised a hand, palm facing up and closed his eyes. A bright yellow translucent orb about the size of his fist forming and hovering just above his skin. "So what happens now?" he asked, throwing the ball from hand to hand casually.

Rika looked around at the debris and replied, "Well it would probably be productive to help. But I'm not a mage, nor can I lift a thousand pounds of rubble." She waved one hand off while the other remained on her hip. Fayt looked around and rubbed the back of his head in an uncomfortable manner. Nick noticed the white hybrid's behavior, but decided not to press the issue. Fayt would talk about it if he wanted to. Albel on the other hand looked quite apathetic. He didn't seem interested in the rebuilding of the city. Instead, Nick turned his attention to Rika, who asked, "And what about you? My standards for you are already rock bottom from yesterday. I don't know how a mage manages to get his ass kicked that bad and break two limbs in such short a time. Can you manage cleanup without falling on your face

again?"

The boy replied to her snide comment with a smirk, "Obviously you don't know much about magic." Turning towards a nearby building suddenly flung the golden orb in his hand at it. The pile of rubble glowed for a brief moment before it rose into the air and began to separate into different piles by material. Charred wood became pristine and whole again, ruined stone formed into smooth slabs. And other miscellaneous supplies formed into a separate pile. He had not only cleared the rubble, but also turned it into usable resources.

The woman smiled satisfactory and folded her arms across her chest. "Now that's more like it. If everyone could do that, this would go much quicker. Give them just a little time with the construction. It'll come around," she assured. "Maybe even better than before. Newer too," she said proudly.

Nick smiled and rose two more buildings before turning to Rika, only feeling slightly drained. "I can probably raise the entire city within the day," he said honestly. "It doesn't take that much energy anyways."

"One day, huh? Get to it then," the woman prodded. The other mages in the city raised more buildings. "See, told you it could be rebuilt. You worry too much," she said, waving her hand off.

Fayt smiled and tipped his ears back. "So, does that mean I won't have to wait long for the shop to open back up? I feel like there's going to be less to work on now that there's no weapons and such," he laughed quietly.

"Workshop huh?" Nick asked the hybrid. "Why don't show me where it is and I'll see if I can't fix it," he offered as he nodded back at the buildings behind him. "Can't be much harder than any of these buildings were anyways." In both hands two more orbs of energy formed in the boy's palms and he thought for a moment. "Why don't you use the workshop to start making more old fashioned weapons?" he asked.

Fayt laughed at Nick's suggestion. "Ah, now that's smithing. I'm not a smith, though I do have some experience with it. I'm a mechanic, an engineer," he explained. The hybrid looked around the rubble and suggested, "I can't even tell what's what anymore. May as well just organize things as you find them."

The boy chuckled and said, "Well, I would take up being a smith if I were you, not much to engineer now with the dragon's spell and all." As he talked, he turned to raise another house, but stopped mid-through as a burst of electricity rushed past him, narrowly avoiding hitting him. Nick jumped to the side, startled, and used magic to scan the area. *'Another attack on the city already? It's not even fully built yet!'* He closed his eyes, sensing another hybrid, but he could also feel another presence coming up quickly. His eyes narrowed as he realized who it was. The magi dragoness from last night in the arena. It didn't take a genius to realize that she was pursuing the hybrid. Raising his arms above his head he brought up a pillar of stone from under his own feet, raising him into the sky and into the path of the

magi. He had already warned her before and gave her a chance to leave, and now she was back. *'I guess some lessons have to be taught the hard way.'* Several Orbs of energy danced around Nick in a circular motion, glowing an ominous shade of red. "You've already been warned once! Your onslaught of the innocent will be tolerated no more!" And with that the deadly red spheres launched towards the oncoming dragoness.

((**Note:** This section takes place during [Chapter 6](#).)

After the fight with the magi, Nick had reconstructed a major portion of it all by himself. It was almost done, but there was still some work to be done. The boy decided to a break by going out into the woods for some fresh air. There he had encountered the mirror dragoness, who along with a black dragoness had aided the group earlier. He also had a rude run-in with the young teenage hybrid named Akuma again. The mage had almost activated the hybrid's hunter's mode, but was stopped by a black-haired man named Dion. Nick regretted trying to provoke Akuma and decided to find a way to remove the hunter's gene from all hybrids for good. After talking about Fayt and Albel, the two humans went inside the cabin as Dion carried the sleeping hybrid boy to the couch that he set him on.

The scientist rubbed the back of his head and told Nick the story of Akuma, "His parents were killed by scientists. Quite brutally..."

The subject of the hybrid's past made the mage feel uncomfortable. He felt bad for the kid, but at the same time he still didn't think that excuses his actions earlier. There was an awkward moment of silence before Nick changed the subject, "Well anyways. I asked Fayt if there was anything that could be done about the hunter's gene and he mentioned your name, although he thinks you're dead. Do you think anything can be done? I can use magic to complete any task that you would need lab equipment for."

Dion's hands went back to his pockets as he turned to look at Nick and said, "If a cure was actually found... I'm afraid I may have to ask you to deliver that. I'm aware they think I'm dead but..."

The mage rose an eyebrow before he told the scientist, "Well, Fayt actually thought he saw you the other night, walking through the ash of the city. But Albel is convinced you are dead, or at least it seems so."

"Ah yeah," Dion said with a chuckle. "I was visiting the city when that little... incident happened. Hard to find your way out without getting killed," he murmured. Then the man's hands came out of his pockets and grabbed the bottom of his black shirt. He pulled the shirt up partially to show 4 lines of scars that looked like a long, single clawing mark. Nick's expression changed to a cringe when he saw it. "I'm not on the best terms with Albel anymore. But yes, I'll help how I can," the man said, letting his shirt drop.

Nick replied, "Albel is... Albel. That's all I can say to describe him; but I'm not here for him, I doubt he would want to be cured of his hunter mode anyways. No, I'm here for Fayt. I really feel bad for him, to be at risk of losing yourself and killing anyone around you. To lose your free will and to become a killing machine..." He trailed off. "I can't imagine what that would be like. I've seen his hunter mode. He didn't even hurt me and it still really upset him. I want him to be able to live a normal life."

Dion walked to his desk and leaned on it. "Well, there are some easier ways to fix the problem on an individual basis. But you're talking about altering their genetic code. That would be both difficult and quite painful to the subject," he told the boy as he folded his arms across his chest. "They are bred with a sort of barrier to their prefrontal cortex. The smell of blood once recognized in the brain sent off a signal to agitate the prefrontal cortex and simulate severe injury to it, resulting in the guilt-less psychopathy. This barrier remains consistent as long as they smell blood," he explained.

Nick walked to the window and peered out. He asked, "So how do you propose we cure Fayt?"

The scientist shook his head and explained, "As for curing it... That will be an interesting task... See there is something they're born with to agitate their brain. So, the solution is to create something that will destroy that component without damaging anything else." He put a hand to his chin in thought and said, "I think something of a magical cure would be better. Rather, something magic controlled and animated to destroy this thing."

The mage said confidently, "I think I'm about as good at magic as it gets."

Dion explained, "You say you're good with magic, but the medical aspect may be out of your field... If we can find a hybrid named Chi, she's very good with the healing magic that would need to be implemented into the cure."

Nick let out a small sigh. He would have to go find someone whom he had never seen before and had no idea what they looked like or where he could find them. Although he wasn't much of a medic, he still didn't want to go on a wild goose chase, but didn't really have a choice. He shook his head and said as much, "Well I'm not much of a medic it's true, but I don't even know how to find this..." He paused, a concentrated look on his face before speaking again, "Chi, was it?" The boy turned back to face Dion and asked, "Do you have any idea where I can find her?"

Dion remained with his hand thoughtfully to his face. He leaned against his desk and looked at the ceiling. "Good question, actually... She's pretty easy to spot. You'd know when you saw her. But... let's see... She loves the river and fishes there often. Take Akuma, he could sniff her out for you," the man suggested. Nick bit his lip in response; he didn't want to have to deal with the brat's attitude anymore, but for Fayt's sake he would do it. Dion moved to the couch and lightly patted Akuma awake. The horned boy grumbled and opened an eye as Dion asked, "Akuma, would you please help Nick find Chi?" The hybrid stared at him flatly. "I'll throw in some dried meat treats. And marshmallows," the man added.

Akuma's eyes briefly lit up and he muttered, "Fine." The hybrid threw his feet over the side of the couch and stood up, wobbling from the sudden movement.

Nick chuckled, seeing how the scientist's bribe had worked. *'Marshmallows huh?'* he thought. *'I'll have to remember that.'* He followed Akuma outside and an idea popped into his head. Smirking, he decided he would annoy the hybrid boy a bit.

((**Note:** The following sections take place during [chapter 7](#).)

The hybrid sniffed the air. "This way," he muttered, walking into the forest.

Leaping to the air, Nick shifted his form into that of a humming bird before flying over Akuma's head and dropping down as a mouse right in between his horns. "Tally ho and away!" Nick cried out mischievously.

The boy snarled loudly at the mouse and raised his hands, extending his claws. They stopped over Nick, hovering and twitching angrily. Slowly lowered his hands, Akuma hissed, "Get off." The mouse ignored him as the boy continued to walk through the woods. Eventually they saw a pink-skinned halfling-like girl with dragon feet and a tail next to the black dragoness. But much to Nick's dismay, the magi dragoness was there as well. Akuma snorted at her, "Oh look, the sadistic psycho bitch, shouldn't you be spitting on puppies?"

Nick stuck his tongue out at the magi as she left, calling out after her, "Come back when you learn more than a few kiddy spells! Maybe I can show you what real magic looks like then." When Akuma left, Nick just stayed put, still parked on the hybrid boy's head. It was quite funny to him actually. Shapeshifting was such a fun spell.

It wasn't long before they were back at Dion's house with Chi following in shortly after. "Ah Chi, hello," Dion greeted. "I was wondering if you'd help out a little project. It may cure your hunter state," he explained.

Chi cocked her head and chirped, "Oh? Yes, of course I will!"

Akuma looked almost sickened by her upbeat attitude and flopped down on the sofa. The mouse smiled mischievously when he looked down and noticed the bag of marshmallows on the table in front of them. Making a dive off of the boy's head and into the bag he popped out seconds later plopping an entire

marshmallow into his mouth making his cheeks puff out comically as he stared Akuma in the face. The boy growled and raised a hand, swinging it around to smack Nick clean off the table as the mouse let out a panicked squeak from the hit. "Filthy rodent," he growled.

Chi blinked at the event as Dion shook his head. The man beckoned her to his desk, "Here, Chi. I'll show you my ideas."

Nick hit the wall hard and slid down to the wooden floor. He lay there stunned for a moment before getting up and shaking himself. "Someone's a little protective over their marshmallows, aren't they?" he taunted the boy as he teleported back to the bag, grabbed a marshmallow before teleporting onto the desk Dion and Chi were at. Apparently, they were talking about a magical parasite that would dissolve after completing its task of destroying the prefrontal cortex's barrier. "A parasite hmmm?" Nick asked as he downed his recent marshmallow steal. "I could maybe animate one out of pure energy, shouldn't be too hard, but I should probably get some sleep first and regain my own energy. Not safe to do magic like that when you aren't fully rested," he explained before elaborating, "If Chi enchants the rear of the parasite, then as it moves forward everything behind it will be mended. As for the parasite dissolving, I can dissipate the spell at any time if need be."

Dion nodded and explained, "Yes, one that would destroy that blockage in the front of their brain. But smart enough not to harm anything else. It's very delicate work."

The mouse explained, "Intelligent in a little harder to do when making a purely magical construct. I'll need to make something first to lay the framework for such a complex spell."

Nick's round ears perked up when he heard Akuma yell, "The mouse is dead!" The hybrid jumped off the couch and threw a ball of electricity at the mouse. Squealing loudly Nick dodged to the side, but was still caught by the electric ball. He twitched violently for a few moments before collapsing.

Dion glanced back, looking alarmed at the sudden movement. "Yes, perhaps a break would be best," he murmured. Chi fluttered and moved out of the way of the lightning, jumping up onto a chair.

Slowly the mouse pushed himself up and looked over in time to see the hybrid charging at him. His eyes widened and he wasted no time scurrying over to Dion and up his sleeve. "Protect me!" he cried out in half-terror, half-glee. Nick was having too much fun with this, despite the powerful shock he had just received. Akuma was set off so easily; it just made it all the more fun to push his buttons.

Dion flinched, pulling back against the desk as Akuma ran forward and stopped in front of him, staring angrily at the man. "Akuma..." the scientist muttered.

"Give him," the boy growled, holding out his now clawed hand.

Dion rubbed his temple with his free hand and said, "Look, I've already been clawed up by a hybrid, can

you guys take this outside if you must?" He pulled Nick from his sleeve as the mouse squeaked in protest and set him on the table.

Nick looked up and saw Akuma's claw swiping down for another blow. Flinching, he covered his head with his paws, but was not hit because he teleported once again to the bag of marshmallows. Standing up, he grabbed another one of the sugary pillows and dangled it threateningly. "Stop trying to kill me dammit or I'll eat another one, and another after that!" Akuma was such an angry person; he had to learn to let things go or his anger would just control him for the rest of his life. Nick said as much, "You need to calm down, you're such an angry person. You are making this too fun for me. Your anger will control you for the rest of your life if you allow it to."

The hybrid sneered at the mouse before he rushed towards him in a blink of an eye with his super speed. Nick at his third marshmallow before he turned to see Akuma grabbing at him. He tried to get out of the way, but was unable to. "And your death will only be that more painful, you cowardly rat!" the hybrid yelled.

Everything went dark for Nick as he was encompassed by the hybrid's hand, fully closing around him. He squirmed and tried to get free, but he couldn't. He thought about sinking his teeth into the hand that held him so tightly, but decided to wait and see what happened. "Let go and stop crying about your marshmallows, you big baby!" the mouse demanded. He tried to squirm free one last time before teleporting free of the hybrid's grip. Popping into existence across the room, but this time in his human form. He had decided he had enough and threatened, "Come at me again and you're going to start getting hurt."

Chi blinked at the mage and murmured thoughtfully, "Oh, it's not a mousy."

Akuma snorted and spat, "No, he's still a rat. Cowardly one, too." The hybrid once again rushed forward with his lightning dash ability, lunging at Nick for a tackle with his claws stuck out.

The ground beneath them rumbled and cracked as Nick forced a pillar of stone about as wide as a quarter rose from the floor, cracking the wood. "I'll fix that!" the boy said as he sidestepped Akuma and secured the staff with one hand yanking the weapon he had just created from the ground and swung it around at the hybrid. He didn't stop to see if it hit as he twisted his body around to deliver a blow with the opposite side of the staff, all the while keeping it between Akuma and himself. He didn't want to hurt the kid, but now Akuma had taken it too far and Nick wasn't about to let himself get mowed over by the hybrid and possibly killed. The hybrid had retracted and blocked the second blow. But when Nick wheeled around for one last kick, it had successfully landed on Akuma's chest and knocked him back. The mage peered over his shoulder out the window and teleported out to the front of the house. "You can stop any time now," Nick called out.

"Don't count on it! I've got plenty left in me!" He heard the boy yell. Nick watched as Akuma rushed forward again in his cloak, but this time three electrical charges burst from his cloak at the same

time. Two of them whizzed by harmlessly, but the third struck the mage on the shoulder and his entire body seized up and he stumbled forward, a sharp burning pain rushing through his body. *'Fucking kid has quite some temper,'* he thought as he fell, though he quickly caught his footing. Nick forced many pillars of stone out of the ground, all around the thicket, all different sizes. They were clustered close enough to make any projectiles useless and also making it so Akuma couldn't make a straight charge at him. Water condensed out of the air and began to form into spears around Nick and shot out towards the hybrid, weaving and dodging through the pillars. The mage heard the boy yelped outside; apparently the water spears got him.

Within the next moment, Akuma squeezed through the small openings and paused to pant before he sneered at the mage. "Not good enough," he spat, running forward again.

Nick threw a punch at the boy, who backed off away from it, before backing up to open more ground between them. Soon though, his back bumped up against a pillar and he found himself cornered. *'Fucking hell, he won't back off... I have to do something...,'* the mage thought about using his more powerful arsenal of spells, but he couldn't bring himself to use deadly force on Akuma.

"Got you!" the hybrid yelled, running forward at Nick with his claw out. The mage tried to shield himself by throwing his arms in front of him, but it was no use. Wincing as Akuma's claws sunk into the arms, he collapsed to the ground, already weak from the shock he had received earlier. Akuma smirked at Nick's pain. Letting out a groan, the mage tried to concentrate through the splitting pain and cast one last spell. A stream of water spurted into the glaring hybrid's face and nose to keep the smell of blood at bay and hopefully prevent him from going into hunter's mode. The hybrid protested, blocking the rest with his hands and snorting out water from his nose. His bangs clung to face from the water and he rubbed his face free of globs of water. Akuma balled his hands up, staring down at the human again. "Fight back you stupid coward! I'm not weak! I can fight for myself!" he yelled.

Nick grunted as Akuma's foot made contact with his side. Slumped back against the stone pillar behind him, Nick brought his limbs closer and protected his weaker spots. He coughed violently for a moment before replying gruffly, "I never said you were weak and I never doubted your fighting abilities, but maybe you don't understand that I'm not weak either and if I killed you, I could never forgive myself."

The hybrid's mouth teetered to a frown and muttered, "Yeah, so you take it easy."

He took a deep, wheezy breath before adding in one more thing, "You think that no one cares, but you would be surprised." He closed his eyes and looked the other way, expecting to be hit again. He would have cast a spell to get away or open some distance, but that shock he took really did a number on him and now that he was down, he couldn't do much.

Akuma bared his fangs at Nick bitterly and said, "That's a lie! We're just tools to you; worthless. I wasn't good enough for your kind, so they tried to kill me. And I'm still not good enough for you that you think yourself better in ability." His throat contracted painfully from the wave of emotion.

"The only lie is the one that you keep telling yourself. You hate me because of what my kind did, and my kind hates you because of what you were supposed to do. It's not that you're not good enough, it's the opposite really. But all the same I will never try to fight you, nothing in this world is certain, and if I killed you.... I can't kill you; I won't let that happen. I see all this hurt pent up inside of you, and it's just not healthy to keep it all in like that. You have to let it out somehow or else it will tear you apart. Trust me, I know from experience how much it hurts. You just have to find a way to let it all out without smashing my face in." Nick told Akuma somberly. "If you ever need to talk about anything, I'm always listening. Despite everything I still want to help you."

The mage turned his face to look at the hybrid. His eyes widened as he saw Akuma wind up for another strike from his claw, but thankfully Chi stopped him when she caught his hand. "I think that's about enough, hmm?" she asked. She pulled Akuma back against her. He relaxed a bit, sinking into the hug she had on him.

Letting out a deep sigh Nick closed his eyes, breathing softly. *'Why does everything have to suck so much?'* he wondered.

Akuma looked off to the side bitterly. Chi rolled her eyes and said, "Boys will be boys."

The female hybrid looked at Nick's wound and offered, "Let me get that for you." Chi gently pulled Akuma to the side and crouched in front of the other boy. She hummed quietly for a moment as she healed his arm over. Nick stood up slowly and let the pillars recede back into the ground. The pain from Akuma's assault faded away after Chi worked her magic.

The mage turned to watch the hybrid boy, who skulked back to the house and breathed, "I don't need anyone."

Nick let out a sigh and shook his head. *'What am I going to do about him? Nothing I suppose. I'll just get the cure for Fayt and be on my way, then I won't have to deal with him anymore.'* Inhaling deeply, he turned his attention to Chi and expressed his gratitude. "Thanks, I don't know what I would do without you, ah, Chi was it?" He was bad at remembering people's names, it kind of made him feel bad not to remember her name. But in the end, it didn't really matter; he doubted he would see her again anyways.

The pink & black hybrid laughed and poked to the water mask on her face. "Oh come to think of it, I never removed my mask did I? Oh, good thing though," she said before she removed it. "Yes, my name is Chi and you're Nick. I thought you were a mouse. Guess you're a mage. Doesn't really matter either way I suppose." She turned and skipped towards the house. "Well let's get this done and over with, yeah?" she said with a grin.

"Yeah, I'm a mage... Nice to meet you, Chi." Nick nodded as he followed Chi back into the house,

glancing at Akuma as he passed by. He seemed to have returned to the couch and was munching on marshmallows.