

Magic Reborn

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This book is dedicated to my support system. Thank you all for carrying me and keeping me together.

Trigger Warning

These writings may contain any or all of the following: mental abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, child abuse, rape, bullying, profanity, pedophilia, self-harm, violence, suicide, nudity, sex, death, PTSD, panic/anxiety attacks, addiction, kidnapping, and torture.

Please proceed with caution.

If you or anyone you know is suffering from a mental illness, depression, or suicidal thoughts, please contact the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-8255.

Likewise, if you or anyone you know is suffering at the hands of domestic violence, please contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233).

You are not alone, and there are people who can help.

Table of Contents

- Chapter 1 - Life at Wintermoor
- Chapter 2 - Anahera's Supervision
- Chapter 3 - The Storm
- Chapter 4 - Strange Connections
- Chapter 5 - Distractions, Distractions
- Chapter 6 - Explaining Myself
- Chapter 7 - Lies, Lies, Lies
- Chapter 8 - Paging Dr. Silver
- Chapter 9 - Key to the Future
- Chapter 10 - Ladislav's Return
- Chapter 11 - Surprise!
- Chapter 12 - The True Reality
- Chapter 13 - The Rules
- Chapter 14 - From Books to Blades
- Chapter 15 - Detectable Magic
- Chapter 16 - New Studies
- Chapter 17 - The Old Gods
- Chapter 18 - New Arena
- Chapter 19- Vampires and Lunch
- Chapter 20 - Strictly Speaking
- Chapter 21 - The Darkness Arrives
- Chapter 22 - The Ultimate Plan

Chapter 23 - Ladislav's Oasis
Chapter 24 - Fish Speak?
Chapter 25 - Anahera's Wrath
Chapter 26 - An Escape Plan
Chapter 27 - Jalai's Mistake
Chapter 28 - My Parents Died because of Me?
Chapter 29 - Dangerous and Aware
Chapter 30 - Company Comes to Wintermoor
Chapter 31 - Envy is a Fickle Friend
Chapter 32 - The Initiation
Chapter 33 - Time for a Move?
Chapter 34 - Betraying Morality
Chapter 35 - The Aftermath
Chapter 36 - It's Time to Flee
About the Author

Chapter 1 - Life at Wintermoor

The July sun streamed through my open window in bursting sunbeams. A gentle breeze wafted in, teasing my hair and sending tiny dust particles dancing in the light. In a rare moment of down time, I disappeared into another realm. The words on the off-white page painted a new reality in my mind. Fantastical beasts trotted across luscious green landscapes. Magic flowed down the creeks and rivers. *Magic must be nice.*

The front door across the road slammed loudly. Incomprehensible chatter drifted up on the air currents. *Mr. Conrad and Anahera.* Hushed urgency pricked along my neck, and I strained to hear. Anahera's distinct voice crawled like an army of ants across my skin.

Peeking through the curtain, I held my breath when they started my direction. Short blonde hair framed a narrow face always covered in makeup. Bright red lipstick clung to her lips, and silver hoops dangled from her ears. She had a charm that got her most of what she wanted. From my window, I saw her use her talents on many, and they all fell for it, except Mr. Conrad. My stomach dropped when their clear words stopped directly underneath my room. His anger didn't pause her challenge.

“- down to days before the binding wears off, and no one has a plan.”

“Unless you know a seer, we can’t foresee what will happen. Plans are useless.”

“We don’t know what we are dealing with. She could become unstable.” *Who are they talking about?*

“Don’t forget your place when you speak to me or what I’m capable of doing. I will minimize any damages.”

A sharp slap rang out followed by a soft whimper. A thud echoed through the wood beams into the seat under me. Blind to their confrontation, I strained my ears, craning out the window. Another smack, and a cry followed Anahera as she tumbled face first into the road. Quickly pulling myself back into the safety of the shadows, she brushed herself off. Flames of rage pulsed in her eyes as she wiped blood from the corner of her mouth. She stormed back to the house, and I narrowly made it out of the window before her gaze swept across.

The front door opened and shut, sending prickles down my spine. I bolted across the room to the couch. *Be calm.* Reopening my book, the words swam on the page, making no sense. It was my only respite from the farmhouse. Wintermoor was the only home I knew. Having full reign of the two story structure, I dared not step one toe beyond the threshold and disobey the rules.

His boots echoed through the silent house. My heart pounded in my chest. His footsteps grew closer.

The stairs creaked under his weight, and my hands turned clammy waiting for his presence to suck the oxygen from the room. My mouth dried up like a desert when his polished shoes stopped in front of me.

His black pinstripe suit and crimson tie rose to meet a stern, lean face with eyes so brown that there was no distinction between his iris and pupil. His warm chestnut curls bounced untamed and wild in stark contrast to the rest of his demeanor.

“Good morning, Millie.”

“Good morning, sir.”

Closing my book, I lifted my face to his. He loomed over me. Most of his features rested in the shadows, adding more weight to his presence. Bits of remnant anger flitted in his eyes. The prickles of fear sprouted into ivies of terror, creeping its way up my spine and down my bones. The book trembled in my grip. *Don't fidget!* He judged the state of the den. He faced the open window and took a few steps.

“Ladislav will be leaving for a few days. Anahera will care for you in his place. You'll be expected to keep your schedule.”

“Y-y-yes, sir.”

My cheeks heated, and my eyes diverted to the floor while I waited for his scorn. *Stupid! Speak proper!* His passing judgment left a heavy blanket in his wake. A few mutterings by the bookshelf, and his disappointment flooded the suddenly small room. He glanced back at me a final time with an unreadable expression. *Oh, I'm in trouble now.* I tensed waiting

for his reprimand. Instead, he silently left without another word.

My lungs slowly expanded with each faded footstep. The tension in my muscles released with the click of the front door. Rushing to the window and peeking through the bottom, Anahera stood by the door of the main house, arms crossed and face contorted. The fury sat a flicks distance from her mouth. The dry dirt road sent clouds with each of his steps towards her. He grabbed her by the arm, and they disappeared inside.

The book fell from my hands, and I sank to the floor in front of the window. Anahera's cruel smile flashed in my mind. Bringing my fist down hard on the floor, a scream rose inside, but exploded before it reached my mouth. The sparks rained down my back. Scrambling to my feet, I surveyed the living room. *What did he dislike?* Running my fingertips along the bookshelf, no dust clung to them. Checking every surface under his gaze, it escaped me. Staring out the window, I couldn't figure out what displeased him.

"Was that Conrad?" My body took flight before I registered Ladislav's voice. I sucked in a deep breath.

"He said you were leaving for a few days."

"Hm, I wonder where he's sending me this time. A week, tops."

"I don't want you to leave. Why can't you take me with you?"

“It’s not always pleasant business. You deserve to be here, where you’re safe.”

Safe. Ha! My eyes pleaded for understanding, knowing I would find none. Rolling them instead, I scoffed and gathered the cleaning supplies. Even though he stood well over a foot taller than Mr. Conrad, he lacked the intimidation. Ladislav was the only comfort I had ever known. Life in the farmhouse changed when he went away. Anahera stayed clear when he was around. Otherwise, she found any reason to scold me, and pressure breathed down my neck.

Rags over my shoulder and spray bottle in hand, he stood against the doorframe. Moving everything off the bookshelves, I sprayed, wiped, and checked for missed spots. Moving to the next shelf, I repeated the process. Fury and panic teamed up as I swept through the room, polishing every surface. Tears stung my eyes, but I willed them back behind the dam.

“Don’t be angry with me.”

“It’s not your fault. He’s the one sending you.”

Angrily motioning across the road, bubbles of rage popped all over my body. Ladislav’s head fell to his chest with a disappointing sigh. Silence filled the gap my words left behind. Uncomfortable, I finished shining the living room until it sparkled. If Anahera would be in his place, there couldn’t be a single particle of dust or dirt. I refused to give her a reason to delight in my punishment.

“It’s my job.”

“I thought your job was teaching me.”

“That’s only a part of it.”

Ladislav waited for a response, but I didn’t have one. The frequency of his away jobs frustrated me. The weeks torturously inched by while I walked on eggshells and avoided all possible interactions. Cleaning calmed my frayed nerves. After verifying that the room fit the strict standards, I sat at the piano. The cold and lifeless keys under my fingers calmed my panic. I readied to play the notes I knew by heart, letting my fingers drift from key to key. The music pulled a thread within me; a thread that had never been plucked.

My fingers pounded the keys, drowning out his presence. The piano whisked me away in an escape pod from my feelings. Lost in the melody, I failed to notice when he joined me on the bench. His arm brushed mine, and I jumped away from the keys. My foot stayed firmly on the pedal as the music grinded to a halt. The vibrations echoed between us. Tears threatened to fall, but I wouldn’t let him see. I ran to my room and locked the door.

Chapter 2 - Anahera's Supervision

Paradise existed in my dreams and surrounded me with safety. My bare feet sprouted roots deep within the earth with each step down, and they raced through the ground and back in time to step again. The trees spoke through the soil. They welcomed me as one of their own. Plunging deep into the water table, the waters bubbled up from below and drifted over my skin, drenching a barren land. I swam through the groundwater and back to my body.

The air danced around me in vibrant colors, playfully twirling my hair. Each exhale joined the wisps in their choreography. Soft whispers in an unknown language slipped into my ears. They brought serenity intertwined with the music of the grass. Its hum beckoned me until my back joined the ground. The blades reached up, encompassing me. The sky was filled with sparkling wind and my ears with the soft song of the earth.

A loud crash severed my connection to heaven. My pounding heart rammed my rib cage, urging movement, but my body froze in terror. Rain pelted the metal roof. A flash. Another roar. *Only a thunderstorm.* I went to my bathroom for a glass of water, wiping the beads of sweat that crowned my forehead. My soul lurched forward, pulled by an

unfamiliar calling. Stumbling, I barely held onto the counter top. Disoriented and confused, I downed a cup and pulled myself together.

Glancing at the clock, my stomach growled. With a sigh, I changed out of my pajamas and into respectable clothes. *Breakfast.* Forgetting about Ladislav's spontaneous trip, Anahera's presence added fuel to the anxious fear from the storm. In the normal place of my tray sat a brown envelope with my name written in large print. My stomach groaned loudly. *Please don't hear.*

"Did the storm wake you?"

"Yes, ma'am. Did Mr. Ladislav already leave?"

"That's why I'm here."

She leaned down and grabbed my assignments, never looking up from the file that held her attention. Taking it from her, I pulled out the paper clipped stacks. Scanning them, they seemed easy enough but not before breakfast. I threw them on the top of the coffee table and glanced at Anahera. My heartbeat drummed in my ears as she stood, ready to tackle me if necessary.

"Where are you going?"

"Downstairs for breakfast. Mr. Ladislav usually brings it."

"Well, I'm not him, and you must tell me where you're going."

Nodding an apology, I forced my feet forward as she took her seat. Trembling down the stairs, I narrowly saved myself from sliding through the last three steps. *Get a grip!* Urging myself forward, I

meandered through the hallway, noting the emptiness. Disoriented and hungry, my hand trailed down the wall. The pattern disappeared beneath my fingertips along with the feeling. *Am I dreaming?*

Humming to myself, I pulled the carton of eggs from the fridge while swirling oil in a pan. The stove ticked until flames erupted from the center. The oil quickly heated, and my hands went through the motion of cracking two eggs. They were my hands, but they weren't. The heat from the frying eggs avoided my skin. Slamming down two pieces of toast into the rickety toaster, I grabbed a glass from the cabinet.

The stairs creaked, and I sighed knowing that she would be joining me. Savoring my last moments alone, my back tightened as she graced the doorway. Sweet golden apple juice poured into the glass and raced to the top. Mesmerized, I almost didn't pull it back in time to stop it from spilling over the edge. Her gaze turned my hair into a wildfire. She jumped when the toast popped from its burning hell.

"Who taught you to cook?"

"Mr. Ladislav. We cook all the time together."

"Good skill for a young woman to have."

"Thank you, ma'am."

I cringed under the required pleasantries. Throwing the hot bread onto the plate, I checked the frying eggs and flipped them. Her watchful eye clocked each motion. The knife sliced off perfect butter pats, and I smeared them across the lightly browned surface. It quickly melted into the toast

while I scooped each egg individually onto the plate. Laying the paper towel over them like Ladislav taught me, I clicked off the oven and switched the still bubbling oil onto a cold burner.

Battling my fear with posture, my plate shook in my hands, and the juice threatened to slosh out on my way to the table. Maintaining attention to balancing my food, I ignored her overwhelming presence. The chair screeched in protest as I pulled it out. I cringed and waited for her reprimand.

Setting my food down, I scooted myself closer and dove into the deliciousness. Each bite was carefully lifted into my mouth to prevent spilling. The last thing I wanted was to give her a reason to lash out. She studied me carefully. Her gaze honed in my movements like a laser. Goosebumps raced across my back.

Using bits of my bread to sop up the inner yolk, I ate as quickly as polite would allow. Her eyes never left me. She inspected each bite, and I avoided looking up. A chill plunged my spine into high alert, setting off the internal alarms. My stomach turned, but I closed my eyes and willed my lungs to open up. *Three*. Inhale against the pressure. Hold. Exhale with intention. *Two*. Inhale deeper, pulling in the oxygen. Hold. Exhale with force. *One*.

She remained at the table as I cleared the remaining food and approached the sink. The cold water put a wall between us. Safety. The stream washed away the crumbs on the plate as I lathered up the sponge. The swirling tornado of bubbles

mesmerized me, and I wanted to jump down the drain with them. Putting the last utensil in the drainer, I regretted not dirtying more. I washed my hands one last time.

“Millie, do you know how old you are?”

“No ma’am.”

“Do you remember Mr. Conrad bringing you here?”

“Not really. That was over ten years ago, and I was little. Why do you ask?”

The soft towel absorbed the droplets from my hand, and a coldness descended as I thought of my family. At least, the few memories I had. When I turned around, she was gone without answering my question. Fear snaked up my spine, tightening in place. Taking a deep breath, they refused to dislodge. It was useless, and I knew it. They would release when she no longer stood as my warden.

Not wanting to join her upstairs, I gathered the same rag and sprays that I used to clean the living room. Every inch of the kitchen received my attention. The cabinets were wiped and organized. The backsplash was scrubbed, and I soaked the burner pans in a sinkful of soap and hot water. The metal pad quickly removed the dark splotches, and I set them in the dryer. The floors were last, and when I was done, I stood at the doorway admiring my work.

Satisfied, I bypassed the stairs, heading for the downstairs den. The repetitive monotony hypnotized my mind. The vacuum whirled as it

sucked up any foreign material in the carpet fibers. The wood cleaner tickled my nose, and I resisted a sneeze. The thin layer of dust on the bookshelf disappeared, and I ran the steamer down the curtains. Spritzing the room with fabric spray, I checked it off the list and continued to the conference room.

Not often used, a thick layer of dust settled on the glass table and surrounding chairs. The windows were foggy with dirt and repeatedly dried condensation. *When was I in here last?* I wracked my brain trying to remember the last time I cleaned it. Shrugging and continuing the calming motions, I forgot about the slave driver waiting on me upstairs.

The bathroom light clicked on, and I scowled. *No one uses this bathroom. How is it so dirty?* Spraying the mirror, the streaks fought to stay. The counter easily cleaned up as did the tub and toilet. I removed the bath mats to vacuum and readied the mop. The soon dirty water sloshed around in the bucket. I tiptoed over the freshly cleaned tile and dumped it down the drain. Turning around, Anahera stood at the door, blocking me in the small space.

“What the hell have you been doing down here?”

“Cleaning.” I held up the bottles and cloth. “Breakfast, cleaning, school work, lunch, training, school work. That’s the daily schedule. Did Mr. Ladislav not leave it for you?”

Her face narrowed. Her shadow grew. Each step she took sent shivers through my bones. *Why*

can't I keep my mouth shut? She towered over me, and I prepared for her response. Her talons dug into my arm as she yanked me forward. Her eyes illuminated in a sunbeam as her mouth contorted into a growl.

“Don't be smart with me.”

“I apologize. I-I didn't mean to be. That's the schedule Mr. Conrad set. I assumed you'd know.”

“That mouth will be the death of you.”

She threw me to the floor and huffed back to the stairs. Her anger pulsed around her with each powerful step. Breathing a small sigh of relief, I turned my attention to the remaining two unused rooms. Mr. Conrad didn't expect them to be maintained, but it gave me an excuse to stay away from the woman in charge. By the time I made it back upstairs, she continued combing through her files, paying no attention to me. *Ugh. I hate her.* Almost as if she heard me, she glared over the folder in her hand. I quickly turned my focus to my assignments.

Chapter 3 - The Storm

A deep, low rumble disturbed my dreamless sleep. My eyes popped open to a blinding light flooding the room. Curtains were no match for its intensity. It bathed me in a warmth that spread to my bones, awakening something within. Seconds later, earth shaking thunder deafened me with each crackle. In between the flashing bolts and blaring thunder, an eerie wind whispered ominous mutterings through every crack. The windows and doors shook against the message.

Rain slowly pelted the metal roof drawing my attention. I swam through the rain clouds, drenched in familiarity. An odd electricity webbed its way through my veins. *Why am I not scared?* Opening my eyes, the lightning flashed blue and purple. Curiosity, not fear, beckoned me out of bed. The storm called to me, reaching out a hand that I needed to touch. I needed it to sweep me away and encompass me in a terrifying embrace.

“Millie!” Anahera called as she threw open my bedroom door.

As I turned to her, lightning spotlighted her terror stricken face. The windows exploded with a shower of glass. As if spawned by rhythmic strikes, the ground under the farmhouse began to lift and

heave. It knocked me off balance, throwing me to the floor. Anahera braced in the doorway trying to maintain her balance. Outside, car alarms screamed in protest at the rolling waves. Mesmerized by the dancing electricity, I crawled towards the exposed air. Rushing water filled part of my focus, not so much a sound but a feeling in my bones.

“Millie!” Anahera’s voice barely pierced the call. “Millie, crawl to me!”

Her demands were no match for the lure. Ribbons of water flowed through the window on each gust of wind. The influx suspiciously matched my breathing. Each intake brought the river inside, and every exhale sent it flying out. *Surely not*. Captivated by its mystery, Anahera drifted to the edges of my mind. A siren's song rose from the cascading liquid. The flashes of illumination showered sparks throughout my vision. Oddly, I was home.

The energy around me crackled, and my heart was the epicenter of the earthquake. Her voice couldn’t cut through the song that filled my ears. Lightning struck repeatedly close to the houses, sending shockwaves through them. A particularly bright blast paralyzed me. Thunder? A scream? I wasn’t sure. Lightning shot through my body, through my bones, electrifying every cell. Paradise and reality blended as the soft flowery scent of a rose garden swirled around me.

The house creaked and moaned under each ripple of the earthquake. The ground reached up, higher with each pulse. Dust and plaster fell from the

ceiling. Cracks sprung across the floor, jutting up the wall. The floor sank under me, but I couldn't react. Under the storm's spell, I reached for the window sill. My grip slipped as the floor below me gave way, sending me tumbling

Boards hit my body, and glass cascaded down. Free falling, my descent slowed moments before I slammed into the downstairs floor. Debris and water settled on top of me, making it hard to breathe. Crushed. Heaviness on my chest. Pain, or something resembling pain, shot through my back and right leg. Screaming. There was screaming. Was I screaming?

The trembling earth grinded to a halt. The spider web lightning retreated to the sky, dragging the thunder behind in booming opposition. Rain continued assaulting the landscape in a downpour. Each drop of water called to me as it raced down from the spontaneous storm. The wind kept the whisper but faded in intensity with each shimmer of the tattered curtain.

My name. I heard my name, or did I feel it? Either way, I couldn't respond. My body swam in disorientation. My limbs disappeared, replaced with tree branches in my mind. The weight on me slowly lifted. My burning eyes begged to close, but I fought the impulse. Drifting in and out, time ceased to exist. Once the pressure on my chest disappeared, Anahera appeared above me.

"Millie, are you alright?"

Her usually pristine face glittered with rain, or were they tears? Her furrowed brow screamed concern for the first time in our interactions. Crouching down in front of me, dirt and blood streaked her clothes. She reached down and tore a strip off the bottom of her shirt. Her hand reached for my face and gently wiped it clean.

She cautiously checked me for injuries. My vision flashed and sparkled like the lightning was trapped in my sight. Air flittered down my windpipe, dancing in my body. The oxygen wove itself through my muscles like delicious cotton candy. Floating in a suspended animation, a connection outside of myself passed through my chest and grabbed onto my ribs. A kind, smiling face developed in my mind and then another. Two beautiful and caring people materialized in my mind. *Who are you?*

Vague tugging pulled at me. Their mouths moved, but I was too far from them to hear their words. Enveloped by unknown yet familiar power, I resigned, and it soaked into me, permeating every atom of my being. The more it soaked, the more I returned. The water dripped on the floor. The distant pur of thunder. Arms around me. Mr. Conrad's voice came to me from far away.

"Anahera, everyone ok?"

"In here!" She called back.

"Anyone hurt?" He asked before the flashlight beam burst over us.

The intense light sent a kaleidoscope of sparkles and colors swirling between us. Moving my

fingers, hands enclosed on them. Groaning, I moved to sit. He knelt next to me and supported my back with his hand. The edges of my body blurred with the air. My vision refused to sharpen. Flecks of dust and dirt flew around, impeding my vision.

Anahera's voice entered my ears, but her words didn't process as a language I knew. My ears rang, and exhaustion flooded my body. The air pushed against me like deep underwater pressure. They helped me up, but my feet refused to acknowledge the floor, sending me stumbling with each step. Two pairs of hands steadied me, and I struggled to balance myself.

Two steps, and we stopped. Arms wrapped around me, and the ground disappeared. Floating through the air, my eyes cleared up. I looked up into the face of Mr. Conad. My cheeks reddened, but I laid my head on his shoulder regardless. A strange comfort emanated from him, soothing my usual fear. Car alarms screamed their sirens above the rain and flashed their emergency lights over the wreckage. Two short beeps and the obnoxious wailing stopped without complaint. A strange silence laid beyond the gently falling rain.

The farmhouse was rubble. The majority of the second floor collapsed onto the first. A few walls still stood, but my home and all of my belongings were gone. Tears burned the corner of my eyes. The main house sat across the road, beckoning us to safety. Taking one more glance behind us, a hazy view of two people stood amongst the wreckage. I

blinked hard, and when my eyes refocused, they were gone.

The door creaked open then clicked shut behind us. Having never been inside, I took in the grandeur that lay behind the simplistic front. Rivers of color swam across the marble floors. A pulsing rhythm caressed the underside of my body. It lulled me into a trance until the bathroom light burst to life. The white tile violently reflected the bright light. He gently sat me on the counter and lifted my chin to inspect my wounds.

My mind drifted to the water in my bones and the taste of air in my lungs. My feet begged for bare ground, and a fire ignited in my soul. My thoughts drifted to Ladislav, and I wondered if the earth had shaken under his feet. I missed him. *He should have been here.* I drifted from my body in the newfound pools in my soul. A sharp sting above my eye brought me back.

“Owe.”

I furled my brow and pulled my face away. Anahera reached out again, but I knocked the cotton ball from her hand. Mr. Conrad grabbed my wrist. Not thinking, I glared at him and struggled to get my arm from his grip. She grabbed another and drenched it in alcohol. It burned my nose on the way to my forehead. Pain erupted with each dab. Panic rose within, and the next time I swatted her hand away, she flung backwards into the wall, and he was knocked into the cabinet.

Fear mixed with... something else and my balance disappeared. Up was down, and vertical didn't make sense. The edges of my vision grayed and pulsed towards the center. The pressure building inside my body threatened to tear me apart. All at once, water exploded, sending the metal faucets flying off their bases. Someone screamed. Maybe it was me. Mr. Conrad lunged for me as the world disappeared.

“Anahera, get the healer. Millie, can you hear me?” His words faded into nothingness.