

## CHAPTER ONE



**Rebel Academy,                      Saturday September 14<sup>th</sup> 1891**

### *MAGENTA*

I knelt before Hecate's Tree in the Dead Wood, ghosting my gloved hand across the trunk that pulsed with magic.

"Sweet Hecate, I crave..." *What didn't I crave?* Safety for every student in Rebel Academy, for Robin to love me with the same fierceness that I loved him and not simply as my best friend, and for father to escape mother's cruelty. I clenched my fists. "...*freedom.*"

I breathed hard, waiting for the lightning crack, earthquake rumble, or at least the frogs to stop hopping over my feet with mocking croaks.

Sunlight speared through the branches of the trees. Lily of the valley wrapped the glade in its intoxicating aroma. Butterflies flitted between violets, which held both the deadly power to kill or cure.

Like me, the entire wood hid both sides within it.

I hissed in frustration, as tears smarted my eyes. It wasn't like the goddess Hecate had helped me before. But tonight, I'd be wed to a fae prince who I'd never met. Mother was only using me to make alliances.

*I'd never even been kissed. How could I marry a stranger?*

I was the single Blessedly Charmed witch to have been born in the last

five hundred years. My magic as a baby had reached with its pink roots through the castle's grounds to bond with Hecate's. It'd created the wards that my mother, Henrietta Crow, had then used to establish the Rebel Academy. Perhaps, I didn't deserve *freedom* myself when my magic had led to the imprisonment of wicked supernatural males as Rebels within the academy. Yet I didn't believe the Rebels wicked but rather rejected, abandoned, and broken.

*Since I'd turned twenty-one last week, my magic craved to protect, venerate, and love the Rebels who my magic had trapped.*

*If I wasn't free, how could I do that?*

Mother would've been spitting crows' feathers for a week if she'd known that I loved any of the Rebels.

*Please, please Hecate free me...*

"Aren't your ancient powers mightier than the House of Crows?" I goaded the goddess. My heart thudded in my chest at my daring. "I belong to you. Take me!"

A rush of wind howled through the glade that was cool even in the warm afternoon. I gasped, as natural magic thrummed through the yew tree, lighting it up like a firework. I could sense its roots reaching through the estate and underneath the academy itself. Then it burst into me with searing strength, and I howled, falling onto my back amongst the foxgloves.

My black velvet dress with its billowing train, which mother had gifted to me for the Enchanted Ball tonight (where I'd first meet my fiancé, Prince Titus), would no doubt be stained.

*It appeared that I'd be closer to Cinders than Cinderella at the altar.*

My long blond hair broke free of its clips and tumbled around my shoulders. My own magenta magic glittered around me like fairy dust, just as it had since I'd been in the cradle, which is why I'd been announced *Blessed*.

It was father who'd named me *Magenta*, and I'd always been grateful for that.

Certainly, goading a goddess had been foolish. *But had she just rejected me with a witch slap?*

I pulled myself onto my elbows. "Now see here..."

Then I yelped, as Hecate's Tree wrapped her glowing branches around my middle and dragged me struggling into the air. She yanked me above the canopy, slithering her branches down me, until I was dangling by my ankle. I blushed, lifting my dress away from my face.

My crow familiars who were twins, Flair and Echo, flapped around my head. They'd been another *gift* from my mother for the ball and just as unwelcome. Their midnight feathers *thwapped* across my nose, as they *cawed* like they were snickering.

*"Pretty stockings, petticoats, and drawers,"* Flair's mocking London voice broke telepathically into my mind.

*"For a witch,"* Echo added with a tilt of his head.

As captured vampires (which were in fact Fallen angels), my mother had only transformed them into familiars on my twenty-first birthday. I didn't blame them for gloating now. After all, they'd been forced into becoming my familiars. Although Echo was too gentle natured to derive satisfaction out of my misfortune. When *their* freedom had been stolen because of me, I almost wished that he could enjoy the reversal.

I flushed, squirming harder.

"Kind of you to notice," I wheezed. "Could you be awfully chivalrous and help me to escape?"

Flair settled with a flourish on my boot like it was a perch. *"Not a fuckity fuck's chance in feathered hell, boss."*

*Black cats, chivalry was dead.*

Although, if that meant riding on horses and waving a sword around like a big manly prick, pillaging, and boasting about holding doors open for maidens in between slaughtering dragons, then I imagined that was a good thing.

*"Excellent view, this. By my blood, you can see all the way over the river Thames to Oxford."* Echo's tone became achingly wistful. I hadn't even asked him where he'd lived before his capture, but had he been snatched from the Oxford vampire court? *"If you don't look down, you don't even have to see your scary academy."*

Of course, I looked down.

*Mage's balls on a stick... Too high, too high, too...*

My pulse thundered in my ears, and I clenched my fists in my bunched dress. The Gothic gray walls of the ancient Rebel Academy, which hid the truth of what lay inside, bulged alarmingly as my vision blurred.

*A witch who doesn't cope with heights is like a werewolf who doesn't cope with howling.* That was Number 73 in my mother's **Principal's Motto Book**.

*I hated mottos with a witchy passion.*

When I glanced up, Echo was peering at me. Was that concern in his beady eyes?

*"You look pale. As I have Fallen, are you quite well?"* He asked, softly.

*"I'm hooked like a worm. It's the perfect answer to all my prayers."*

*"You're up shit's creek all right, and sarcasm is useless as a paddle. Did no one teach your bouncy bosom to be careful what you pray for?"* Flair's voice had become steely. *"What's freedom for one, is a prison for another poor bastard. Did you wish freedom from your corset, opera, or...?"*

My eyes widened. “True freedom is death.”

That was Number 21 in the **Principal’s Motto Book**.

I screamed, as the branch slithered around my ankle, loosening. I jolted down a couple of inches.

Had I risked everything to sneak out today only to ask for my own death by mistake...?

*Well, Merlin’s prick.*

My life flashed before my eyes: *cup of tea — embroidery — cup of tea — piano lesson — cup of tea — reading — cup of tea.*

*My goodness, that was boring.*

I clenched my jaw and forced myself to look up once again at the academy. Inside there, the men — Immortals, Princes, and their whipping boys like Robin — were allowed a magical education at Oxford’s secret college where the most dangerous witches from across the world taught those in most need of reform. An education that’d been denied to *me*, even though I was more powerful than all of them combined.

Today, the Rebels would be studying a class in Shifter and Familiar Training. Flair was lucky that I’d missed that. He wouldn’t like the methods, which the covens used to break unruly familiars like him.

*But I didn’t want to break anyone.*

“Go on then,” I hissed at Hecate, even though my breath was ragged, “drop me.”

*Two could bluff like a goddess...*

Echo flapped his wings, wildly cawing. “*Ignore the witch, Hecate. She’s got too much blood rushing to her head and doesn’t know—*”

Hecate’s Tree let go of me.

I screamed, bouncing through the branches and wincing at each crack to my ribs, shoulders, or hips. In shock, I could feel the bruises blossoming.

Well, I’d make a battered corpse in a ripped dress. *That’d horrify mother.* I *almost* smiled.

“Oww, son of a mage...” I snatched at the branches as I fell to slow my descent.

The floor of the glade rose like a flowery grave. The bizarre thing about your last thought before you died, I discovered, was that you have no control over it. Mine was: I shall come back as a ghost to haunt Robin, so that he’ll have the satisfaction of saying *I told you so*. He’d always wanted to hold a séance to prove that ghosts were real.

Then I closed my eyes.

Only, I didn’t hit the hard earth in an explosion of agony but a soft cushion that caressed me in fizzing waves. I carefully opened my eyes. Then I laughed, and euphoria flooded me.

*I wasn't going to die...*

My Blessed magic reached out of the earth and the plants to catch me on all sides, before lowering me to the ground.

*Had Hecate known that my magic would save me?*

I sighed, kissing the earth. *Yuck*. I grimaced, smacking my lips. *Why did people do that?* Oh yes, because I hadn't splattered to my agonizing death from a great height like I'd always feared in my nightmares. But still, every inch of my bruised body ached. I groaned, rolling onto my back. My twin familiars fluttered down, landing on my chest.

Flair cocked his head, staring at me far too intently. I squirmed.

*"Well, paint me pink and call me a bitch, that was close."* Flair blew out a breath in relief. *"One day I'm a free Fallen just minding my own business, and the next I'm transformed into a bird and saddled with a crazy witch, even if she is beautiful."*

*"Don't dare a god,"* I admitted. *"I've learned that they won't blink first."*

When Echo rubbed his soft head against my chin in comfort, I stilled in surprise. *"She's still our crazy...beautiful...witch,"* he muttered fondly.

I smiled, rubbing my thumb over his feathers.

*"Traitor,"* Flair hissed.

Unexpectedly, the pink around me glowed, before worming out like roots and tangling above my head into brambles that trapped me beneath my magic...and safe from Hecate's Tree.

Yet the goddess' tree had always been my refuge. This wood was forbidden to the Rebels, but that'd never stopped Robin and me sneaking between the trees' hushed darkness whenever we could. I'd spent hours swinging from those branches, which had just swung me upside down and then dropped me.

*Hecate's Tree was the traitor...or had she been trying to ignite my magic?*

Suddenly, I stilled. Something rustled in the branches of the yew tree. My breath caught, and my pulse pounded. Had I been followed?

*Keep calm, Magenta, no punishment could be worse than being forced to marry, could it?*

I squinted up at the branches of the tree. Then a bird darted overhead with a silvery burst of song like laughter. The robin circled the web of pink brambles that protected me, pecking at them like they were worms, as they in turn wiggled away from the bird's sharp beak.

I squirmed myself at the strangeness of the sensation.

*"Desist, Robin, you're always hungry."* I chuckled.

I should've known that Robin would find me here in his bird shifter form. It was our secret meeting place, after all.

With a sweep of my gloves, the magic parted enough for the small bird

to dart inside and settle on my stomach. My familiars swiveled their heads towards Robin with menacing intent.

*Wait, did crows eat robins?*

"I have a gentleman caller," I tried for mother's haughtiness but I'm certain that I failed, since I'd never admitted a caller in my life before, "so take your feathery backsides hence."

*Certainly, my etiquette was perfection.* Then again, possibly *not* because Robin let out that silvery laugh again, at the same time as the crows *cawed* their outrage and hopped away to the edge of the glade.

I studied the pretty bird who was (with far too deliberate intent) pecking between my tits and up my neck. I sighed. If I imagined it just right, it could be kisses.

My eyes widened. *Why was Robin's beautiful red breast plucked of feathers?*

Robin was the only mage who'd ever been allowed into the academy. He was also a rare and powerful *shimage*: A mage who could also shift into animals. Yet witches had rules, and they included that mages were their enemy. I'd long wondered if I was a failure of a witch, however, because Robin had been my best friend since I was a child, and for years I'd craved him as something more.

*More* meaning that I believed our immortal souls were knit together for eternity.

Yet how could you tell your best friend that you'd loved him for years as the one who made your heart and magic thrum with such excitement that flowers would burst awake from the soil? Especially when he was a mage and a Rebel. It'd be a crime for me to choose him.

*Why couldn't he be the man who I was marrying tonight?*

In a spray of golden glitter, Robin transformed back into his human form. My breath caught, and my skin flushed hot and cold.

I always forgot how handsome Robin was. He caged me with his hands on either side of my head. His muscled chest pressed to mine. I could feel the too rapid thud of his heart through his thin whipping boy uniform: black shirt and trousers with a pink **R** embroidered on the pocket. His tumble of red hair veiled me, and his intense emerald eyes caught me in their gaze.

I never wanted him to look away.

It was the most seductive thing in the world to be seen. If you only saw me, then I was yours.

*Was it wrong to crave love?*

Then Robin grinned cheekily and pecked at my neck again. His gaze softened. I pinked; my skin tingled at his touch, and warmth curled through me.

Robin drew back. "Well, you looked delicious." Then his eyes widened as if he'd realized what he said. A blush crept up his neck to match my own. "If you're not a worm, then are you a bird?"

I blinked. "Did the Princes hit your head even harder than usual?"

Then I winced when I noticed his swollen eye. I didn't care whether I was forced into marriage or not, I'd still find a way to free Robin.

Robin merely lowered himself closer to me. He smelled like sweet wild blackberries. As children, we'd sneak together into these woods and searched out the berries, feeding them to each other. The fruits burst when we'd bitten into them, then the juices had dribbled down, staining our chins.

Hexes and curses, I could feel Robin's hard-on rubbing against me. I imagined that it was only natural because he was lying so close and... Yet he'd never clutched me so tightly before, or allowed me to feel his desire in this way.

Robin's expression, however, had become stormy, and he was shivering. *Was he cold?* "Naturally they hit my head but not so hard that I can't see you're using that as a distraction. Funny, you don't appear to have wings."

"Awfully observant of you."

"Yet you just fell from the sky."

Robin had witnessed my near death. His shaking wasn't cold but fear...for me.

Or possibly anger, *whoops*.

Robin's fingers bit into my shoulders, as if he'd lose me as soon as he let go. When he rested his forehead against mine, I understood...because tonight, I'd lose him.

"I just..." *How did I explain that I'd prayed to escape my marriage to Titus at the Enchanted Ball?* "...had a little disagreement with Hecate."

Robin snorted. "You know, there aren't many who'd admit so casually to quarrels with a goddess."

"Ah, but then I *am* Blessedly Charmed."

When Robin drew back to look at me, his gaze was troubled. "I'm aware."

*Mage's balls, did he already know about my fiancé?*

I gazed at Robin's lush lips, wishing that I could simply pull him to me and kiss him, taking the pleasure that I'd dreamed about since I was young. But what if that changed the only friendship I'd ever had, wrecking it? Did Robin deserve me stealing his own first experiences, when I was destined to wed another?

When Robin's strong finger traced my grazed cheek, I jolted with the electric intimacy of his touch. In turn, I reached to cup his swollen eye, wishing that I could kiss away the bruise. If he'd only allow it, my magic *could*

vanish his pain. But he never let me risk my mother discovering that I'd healed him.

*How many years had he been protecting me now?*

Robin's breath gusted against my lips. I breathed in his blackberry scent like life, joy, and every moment of snatched, forbidden freedom from the Bird Turret that had been my gilded cage: laughing in the branches of Hecate's Tree, swimming naked in the lake at night, or walking the wards at the edges of the estate like we truly could break them and escape.

*Why in Hecate's name hadn't I realized that there wouldn't be a way to take flight, even falling from the air as a bird with no wings?*

When Robin tumbled to the side, sprawling on his elbow and studying me, I missed the warmth of his touch and the naughty feel of his prick against me.

What he didn't know wouldn't hurt him. I was awfully certain that was one of the Principal's Mottos.

Robin tucked his finger absentmindedly under my pearl choker. I bit back the gasp at his touch against my sensitive skin. "When I was tiny, mama would tell me tales at bedtime of the ghosts that she'd seen that day."

"Are you certain that the Head Coven didn't commend her with the Traumatizing Your Child for Life Award?" I crossed my legs.

Robin nudged my shoulder. "Surely, they'd already granted it to *your* mother."

I rolled my eyes. "How amusing. Also, most likely."

"It was mama's power to see the dead." Robin traced his finger along each pearl, slipping his finger beneath to caress the skin. *Black cats, he was barely touching me and I was aflame.* "I once played a game, where I whispered to my tin soldiers as if I was communing with the dead because I wanted so much to be like her. She nearly shrieked the place down because she was terrified that I'd inherited her gift and so become a mage."

I smirked. "Sweet irony." When his fingers stopped stroking my choker to touch my cheek, I struggled not to demand that they *get back to work for the love of Hecate*. Instead, I controlled myself with decidedly impressive restraint and asked, "Did you ever inherit it? Have you been hiding...?"

*Welcome hypocrisy, my friend.* How could I ask if he was *hiding* anything, when I hadn't admitted to him yet that I'd be wed tonight?

Robin huffed. "When do I hide anything from you? If I have the talent, it hasn't shown itself yet. Do you wish to know what shocks me about ghosts?" I leaned closer. "Mama told me that whatever is keeping them here means that they're always craving. *Eternally craving.*"

My stomach flipped. "I don't understand."

His brow furrowed, as he whispered, "I do."



Then he bit his lip, looking away quickly. My pink magic pulsed above our heads as if in warning but when I glanced around, the day was quiet.

"Wait for me," Robin breathed.

"Always," I grinned.

In a burst of glitter, Robin transformed into a red squirrel. Before he could escape, I clutched him by his tail and snuggled him like I always wanted to...or as if he was one of my china dolls. He chattered but still relaxed, allowing himself to be petted. He was soft, and his bushy tail wrapped around my arm like ivy, as if he never wanted to let go either. It was only in this form that he ever truly allowed himself to love me.

He looked up at me, rubbing his tufted ears against my hand with a soft *chuk chuk*.

I snickered. "Mr Tailsy has important business."

Robin twisted, before rubbing his large tail over my face, and I spluttered.

My familiars *cawed*, hopping towards Robin with a malicious glint in their eyes.

"*Time to catch the rat,*" Flair taunted.

*Flair wasn't jealous, was he?*

Robin squeaked and scampered for Hecate's Tree. My magic drew back on instinct to allow him free, and he skittered up the yew's trunk and into its branches.

I threw myself over the crows, before they could take flight after Robin.

"Are you insane?" I hollered. "You're a little squirrel. What could Hecate do to you if she...?"

*Don't let him be hurt because of me.*

Robin reappeared dragging a book between his puffy cheeks. I blinked.

*What in the ever-witching heavens...?*

I sat up, and my familiars shot me aggrieved looks, ruffling their feathers, before jumping onto my shoulders and holding on with their scaly feet like I was a statue. I winced, as their claws sank into my skin through the velvet of my dress.

*Were all familiars this possessive?*

Robin nudged the book with his nose, and it fell into my lap. Then he took a death leap, and I caught him. I stared down into his cute face in shock.

*The adorable...risk obsessed...bastard who I loved.*

I shook the squirrel who hung between my shaking hands. "You're lucky that you're in Mr Tailsy form right now. Even so, your fluffy behind deserves a spanking for that stunt. What if I hadn't caught you? What if..."

*Breathe...in and out...breathe...*

Robin transformed into human form on my lap with his legs straddling

me.

My familiars flew away to settle amongst the foxgloves.

*"He's dying for want of a fuck,"* Flair grumbled. *"Put both of yourselves out of your misery."*

*"He does appear painfully hard in those tight trousers."* Echo tilted his head.

"A thousand apologies." Robin hunched his shoulders. "You know what I'm like. I didn't think..."

When his lips quirked, I tickled his neck where he'd always been weakest to the attack in retaliation, and he chuckled. "What?"

"When I'm in Mr Tailsy form, I'm rather...impulsive. All I could think about was returning to you." He flushed.

I ached to trace the blush down his cheeks, neck, and then open his shirt and see how far down it went but I didn't know if he returned my love. Not with the hunger, desire, need...and *craving* the same as any ghost.

Robin edged back, lifting the book off my lap. When he traced its spine, I was envious, imagining that his finger was touching *me* with such reverence. "I meant to steal a dance with you at the Enchanted Ball, even if I was beaten for it after. I had this whole scene worked out in my head. It would've been grand and romantic and..." He sighed. "As is tradition, I had a gift for you as well. I have no money. I wish that I could buy you the world but...I made this: It's a Your Heart's Desire Book."

Then he ducked his head.

*Your Heart's Desire...?*

I stared down at the book that he was holding. I could tell that it'd been created out of sheets, which had been ripped out of other books (possibly his ones for classes).

*What kind of risks had he taken to make it?*

Orphan whipping boys had no possessions. Is that why he'd hidden it in Hecate's Tree, so that the Princes wouldn't find it?

My pulse sped up, and I swallowed with difficulty. Gifts at the ball were traditionally given to those who you intended to court...or marry. Is that what Robin meant?

Had he decided to ask me to...*what?*

I gently took the book from him. "Thank you. I could never wish for anything better."

I studied the red feathers that decorated the front of the book. They were beautiful. Then I blanched.

*Hold on a witching minute, Robin had plucked his own feathers to be able to make me this gift...?*

Would it be a terrible breach of manners if I vomited?

“How could you...?” I whispered.

Robin grasped my fingers between his. “They’ll grow back. Now whenever we’re parted, you’ll have me with you still. When you’re alone, open the book and you’ll understand as well.”

All right, that sounded obsessive enough that he *did* feel the same as me...*maybe?*

When he stroked my fingers between his over the feathers, his bittersweet robin’s song magically sang out. I laughed. Sometimes, I forgot how powerful a mage Robin was.

“I’ve been bought the finest gifts since I was a baby,” I murmured, “but this is the best one that I’ve ever received. I shall treasure it.”

Robin’s eyes crinkled, as he smiled. I lived for those smiles: the times that he lost himself in me, forgetting the dangers of the academy.

*Like now.*

Then the moment passed, and he frowned. “Don’t lie to me.”

I crossed my arms. “Don’t be a mage’s prick.”

Robin raised his eyebrow. “That’s difficult since I have one.”

Now it was my turn to flush.

*Why couldn’t I have him? Why did I have to deny us both?*

There was only one certain way to check that he returned my love. The secret code of *glove flirtation* that mother had taught me for when I was finally taken into balls and witch society.

Robin’s face scrunched in confusion, as I drew off both my elbow length gloves, before pressing their tips to my lips with deliberate tenderness, never dropping my gaze from his.

**Code:** *I love you.*

I didn’t expect Robin’s bark of laughter.

Instantly, my eyes burned with tears, and I tried to roll away from underneath him but he was too strong. He held me down, and even though I called for my magic, it only fell in caressing strokes around Robin’s shoulders.

“Get off me,” I hissed.

Robin clutched my hands, holding me still. “Hush,” he murmured, “silly, sweetheart.”

I stopped struggling, almost stopped breathing at the *sweetheart*.

“But you don’t—”

“I love you.” Robin gentled his hold on my hands. His crotch rocked against mine, and I moaned. “For so many years now, I’ve loved you. But you’re my best friend, and even that closeness is more than a mage deserves.” When I tried to speak and tell me him that he was *wrong* — the other witches thought that he was the enemy, but he must realize that I alone didn’t — he licked across the seam of my lips, and I was stunned to silence. “You’re to

marry another. Yes, I'm aware. And still I crave only you because I'm wicked. I know that it's a crime to want you as I do, and yet I can't stop."

"If you're wicked, then so am I," I insisted. His fingers ghosted against the pulse points on my wrists, and I was desperate to feel them across my aching nubs. "I didn't choose to marry a stranger, and you didn't choose to be born a mage. Why should we sacrifice our love?"

"May I kiss you?" His voice was low and desperate. "If I can't marry you, then let me love you. I wish to hold you forever, but if they steal that from us, then let me at least have one moment to remember."

I shuddered, rubbing my nose against Robin's in a way that was familiar but now so changed, just like everything. "I'm not bound to my husband yet. Even Titus can't hex me for a kiss before we've even been introduced, surely...?"

Robin stiffened. "Fae are insufferably possessive snobs, and I shall hate him on principle. But he'll love *you*, I promise."

I could see how hard it was for Robin to say those words, but it deepened my respect for him that he'd forced himself to reassure me. Even now, he was trying to protect me.

My lips fizzed with magenta magic. I gasped, as it jumped across to Robin's mouth, pulling him into a kiss that was intoxicating in its desperation and savagery.

My first kiss was everything that I'd dreamed, and yet *witching heavens*, so many times better.

I sucked on Robin's lower lip, and he nibbled on mine in retaliation. Then his tongue twined with mine, and I was lost in the sensation of my first kiss, which tasted sweetly of berries and bubbling magic. I arched, as my eyes widened, and all of a sudden, my magic reached out, until I could sense *everything*: the roots of the trees, the birds in the sky, and the pink trails of every student within the academy like their magical signature written behind them.

*I'd been awakened.*

"Oh, what a delightful discovery." Unexpectedly, mother's voice rang through the glade, and I jolted in shock. Robin didn't pull away from the kiss, however, instead he held onto me more tightly. "I apologize, am I interrupting? I mean, my daughter is only marrying a prince tonight, but if a worthless mage believes that he may touch her, then who am I to tell him that a wretched creature like him has no such right?"

A single tear slipped down my cheek.

*Worthless...wretched?*

I knew that Robin had been called such words as soon as his magic had come in and his witch family had realized that their son was magical, but after

the beauty of what Robin and I had shared, I *hated* that mother would use such words like blades.

My mother, Henrietta, was a dark shadow at the corner of the glade like Hecate (or my magic) refused to welcome her in. Flair and Echo *cawed* raucously, flapping their wings.

At last, Robin pulled back but continued to peck feather-light kisses onto my lips between each word. “I shall always love you. Please don’t forget me.”

“Forget you?” *Hocus Pocus*, *how could I ever forget him?* “Why would I...?”

“Ah, I know who I am to say that the vile mage has no such right: I’m the principal of Rebel Academy, Head of the House of Crows and *your bloody mother*,” Henrietta snarled. “The mage shall pay for this crime, and Magenta, you’ll learn what happens when you choose the path of the wicked over the blessed.”

My breathing became ragged, and I clutched Robin. “You’re wrong. I’m only choosing the man who I love over a prince who’s a stranger.”

Then I screamed, as crows’ feathers, which flamed like I was trapped inside a blazing black bonfire, veiled the glade in Henrietta’s magic, transporting all of us back to the confines of the Rebel Academy and judgment.

[DISCOVER WHAT HAPPENS NEXT TO ROBIN AND MAGENTA HERE...](#)