

Ecokinesis

**Penchant for Trouble
Book Two**

**by
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INDIES UNITED PUBLISHING HOUSE, LLC

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Published by Indies United Publishing House, LLC

Printed in the United States of America

First Printing, February 2020

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ISBN: 978-1-64456-099-0

Library of Congress Control Number: 2020930530



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QUINCY, IL 62305-3071

www.indiesunited.net

Chapter One



I trudged across the cafeteria toward my normal table. This was so not fair. After everything Dan and Nina had found out about me in the last months, I couldn't believe they were still making me go to school.

Sure, Dan hadn't seen any proof since I couldn't leave Sanctuary without getting grabbed by the fae, but still. My invisible sword sheath should have won me some points. He totally believed Nina of course, but believing and seeing? A little different. And there was a whole lot to believe.

Lucy was already sitting at our table, reading a book. Somehow we always sat together, even though we didn't like each other and didn't talk. There really wasn't much to say. Since I'd almost turned her brother over to the fae to save myself, I felt guilty around anyone from the Martan family. She just had a problem with everybody. I sat down across from her and started in on my lunch. Sad that here in Sanctuary I couldn't eat nearly as much.

Suddenly Lucy looked up, then straight back down. I checked over my shoulder to see what she was looking at. Cray, headed our way, super late. Yep, that

was the real reason she always sat with me. As much as she pretended to hate fae, she sure didn't mind being around my kind of, sort of, brother.

"Hi, Trisha." Cray was always so polite. Sometimes it got on my nerves. He nodded toward Lucy. "Hello." He was adjusting better than I would have thought possible. He was like a shy human kid now, not a shy fae kid. Normal clothes and the fact that he'd learned some slang seriously helped. Dan had worked his government magic to get him into school. I wasn't in on the details and I wasn't sure I wanted to be.

"Hey, Cray." I loved saying that. I think it annoyed him, but again, the whole polite thing. He'd never said a word.

Lucy mumbled something but hardly looked up. Real smooth. Ah, just another day at Anthony High. After battling trolls, hyran and fellow fae, it was beginning to feel really dull around here. I wasn't sure yet if that was good or bad.

Even the self-defense classes Nina had put me in weren't that great anymore. It was a lot of work. It had been fun when Nina and I were going together, but they'd moved me up two levels beyond her and now we were in different classes. It made me really glad she was taking them, but I also really hoped she'd never need to use what she'd learned. My foster mom wasn't really the fighting type.

The bell rang. Kids slowly collected their trash. Cray's eyebrows shot up and I laughed, pushing myself to my feet to go dump my tray. "Better chow down on something fast," I said, moving past him toward the trash can.

He groaned and stuffed some noodles in his mouth while following me toward the door.

"Where were you anyway?" I asked.

"Trying to find my way here," he said, his cheeks flushing. Even after a month of school he still couldn't figure out how to get anywhere without help. And I'd thought I was bad.

"I can help you get to your next class, Cray," Lucy

offered. “You know, if you want help.” Her voice trailed off and her face went beet red.

“Okay then.” I drew out the words and twitched up an eyebrow. “See you, guys.” I took off, really not wanting to see them. It was just weird. Mostly because Cray was pretty much my brother now, after all we’d been through together, and I still didn’t like Lucy. Cray had chosen to do the right thing and help me over being able to stay with his own kind. I was pretty protective of him.

The rest of the school day zipped by pretty quickly. Which was great, because I had self-defense class all night, and I was pretty excited about going and getting knocked around.

I’d also joined basketball, but practice wasn’t until tomorrow. Oh the possibilities, now that I could bruise and bleed without insta-healing, or more specifically, not worrying about people seeing me do it. Did I sometimes miss the ultra quick recovery time? Oh yeah, especially waking up after a particularly harsh night at the dojo. But it was so worth it to be able to actually be in group sports now. Sanctuary with its no abilities thing had changed my life.

The whole zits thing wasn’t cool though. At all.

But I’d always wanted to be normal, and here it was. Just as amazing as I’d thought it would be.

After my last class, I mashed the books I wouldn’t need tonight into my locker and charged toward the exit, waving at a few teammates on the way. So weird to have people wave back. But this was life now. And it was shaping up great.

I always walked home after school. Sure, it was cold, so Nina didn’t like it much. But sometimes I did miss being more independent, and somehow she seemed to sense that, so she let me.

I threw my backpack over my shoulder and waved to Lucy, just to make her mad. Rebecca always made her ride the bus, even though she could have walked with me. I didn’t mind, it meant I didn’t have to spend

time with her. And her mom did have reason to be paranoid, after the whole Jaime snatch thing. Having your daughter taken by superpowered creatures from another realm tended to do that to a person. But at least I'd been able to get her back. And get to the point where I could live with myself for getting her into the situation in the first place. Most of the time.

Cray rode the bus too. He said it was because he didn't like walking, but I got the feeling it was more about Lucy than exercise.

I didn't tell anyone that the real reason I walked was a dog that always followed me.

The mangy mutt always showed up as soon as I was out of sight of the school. At first I hadn't liked it. Growing up on the run and then in home after home, I'd never really gotten attached to pets. But this ugly thing grew on me. I'd even started hiding leftovers from lunch in my backpack to feed him once we reached a point no one from the school would see us.

Sure enough, there he was, waiting for me. He really was an ugly dog. Long matted hair covered his body, the color indiscernible because of the dirt and whatever other gross stuff he'd gotten into caked all the way down to his skin. His ribs still stuck out, though that was getting better because of the food I was bringing him.

I felt bad on the weekends, and I didn't know what he did for meals then, but our apartment didn't allow dogs. Nina would probably freak out if I tried to bring him home. Dan would be in my corner on this one though, he loved dogs. Maybe once we got moved somehow Storm would just show up one day, and it would be a complete surprise to everyone, including me.

Yeah, I'd given him a name. Not a great name, but hey, I hadn't really done this before.

Stormy saw me and dashed my direction, tail going a million miles an hour. He jumped up and nearly knocked me over. I shoved him down.

"Hey now, Nina will know something's up if you

ruin my school clothes.”

He just sat and grinned at me, tongue lolling out like usual.

“What? You think I have something for you?” He cocked his head and went still. I pulled a small piece of hamburger out of my pocket and threw it to him. He snatched it out of the air and it was instantly gone.

“That’s all you get until we reach the alley. You know that.”

He whined a little, but fell right into step with me when I started forward.

A couple of blocks from the school there was an old alley between two factories. I stopped halfway down it and dropped my backpack. “You ready for this?”

Stormy dropped into a sit instantly, staring me down.

“I’ll take that as a yes.” I unzipped my bag and grabbed a baggie of food. It was amazing what teenagers threw away. So far no one had seen me rooting around in the trash can. Hopefully it stayed that way.

I tossed Storm the first chunk of burger with no ceremony. No reason to make the poor guy wait.

It was gone just as quickly as the small piece I’d given him earlier. “Hungry today, huh?” I took pity on him and grabbed the rest of the food out of my bag and dumped it on the ground in front of him.

He gulped it down fast enough I worried he’d choke himself.

“Easy there boy. It isn’t going anywhere.”

I waited until he was done and looking for more before reaching out to scratch his grimy head. I didn’t know much about animals, but getting between them and their food when they were super hungry didn’t seem like a good idea. At least it wasn’t a good idea for other people to get between me and my food when I was starving.

Suddenly Storm’s stare jerked from his attention being on me, to him locking onto something behind

me. I looked over my shoulder to see what he found so interesting.

A guy. A tall guy, at that. In a big coat, with a hat, and a scarf covering most of his face. It was cold yeah, so it made sense, but it still gave me the willies. In all of our times using this alley, Storm and I had never run into anyone. Ever.

The guy stepped forward, raising a hand.

Storm moved between me and whoever it was. I'd never seen him even grumpy. Surprising with how hungry he'd been when I'd first started feeding him, but he was sure unhappy now. He raised his hackles and a low growl rumbled out of his throat.

Okay, that was a little scary.

"What do you want?" I asked, slowly reaching back to make sure I still had my sword. Check. Even though we were supposed to be safe here, I was paranoid and didn't trust a single fae other than Cray and Jaden, so I still carried it. Yeah, sometimes it got in the way, but better safe than sorry. At least with the invisible sheath Wade had made for me, no one saw it and thought I was a serial killer or anything.

"Trish."

Oh great. I knew that voice. Speak of the devil.

"Sic him, Storm."

Storm didn't even deign to give me a look. He just kept growling without moving. It didn't matter. I didn't actually want him to sic. The idiot standing in front of me might hurt him.

"What do you want?"

Wade pulled the scarf down. "Can we talk?"

Okay, was I curious what he was doing here? Absolutely. Did I really want to talk? Absolutely not. Seeing him made all kinds of bad memories try to push through the barrier I'd built. I knew what it was like to be in a family now, I wasn't the same person I had been, but thinking about the things I'd done before... Nope, better not to think about them at all.

"Nope. We were finished talking when you tried to kill me."

He gave me a weak smile. “And look how that turned out.”

I raised a hand in a full on stop signal. “You didn’t let me finish. I thought we were done then, but I was starting to feel a little differently after we were forced to work together for awhile.”

“I sense a but-”

“But,” I interrupted him, “I didn’t realize how low you could actually go. Kidnapping a seven-year-old. I can’t believe you. Go back to Faerie where I don’t have to see you again.”

Wade’s weak smile had totally disappeared. He looked beaten down, far more exhausted than I’d ever seen him. It did make my heart twinge, but I wasn’t falling for it again. I turned to back out of the alley the way I’d came. I could find another way home.

“I’m not here to get you back or anything like that, Trish,” he called after me. “I need your help. Bad.”

A groan slipped out and I ground to a stop. What could he possibly need from me that he couldn’t get from someone more qualified, Starren for example?

“It’s Starren. She’s in trouble.”

I whirled around so my glare could melt his face off. It didn’t work, but it was a good effort. “If there is anyone in the world I’d be less likely to help than you- which is shocking, I do admit- it would be Starren. I can’t believe you’d even ask me that after what happened. It’s only been like two months!”

I was starting to shout. That needed to stop before someone looked down this alley to see what was going on.

“I know. Trust me, you don’t understand how badly neither of us wanted to do that. But what we both have at stake... Please, Trish, just hear me out.”

Since the glare wasn’t working, I crossed my arms in front of my chest and glanced away, like he wasn’t even worth looking at. My head was spinning so hard from seeing him that I could hardly process. Bile worked its way up my throat, and I swallowed it down along with the terrible memories seeing him had

brought up.

Storm seemed to know how I was feeling. He'd stopped growling and followed me when I'd moved back up the alley, but he shoved himself against my leg now, bumping my hip with his head until I dropped my hand and gave his dirty head a little scratch.

All of the good feelings from the last month of spending time at the gym and hanging out with real friends, then going home to Dan and Nina happy to see me, were gone. I was back in the woods, lying on the ground, terrified, wondering what had happened. This jerk had done that to me, good reason or not.

"This is really serious. Really serious. She might die."

Okay, so did I dislike Starren more than I'd even thought possible? Yeah, when she'd taken Jaime and turned on me I had. It had faded a little since then, because I did know how the Council worked, and she had probably been forced to do stuff she didn't like, just like I had been with Jaden. But did that mean I wanted her to die? No way.

"She stuck up for you, Trish. She saved your life when you were helping that family escape, when Vilan tried to stop you all leaving Chicago."

"Fine," I pulled my hand away from Storm and crossed my arms in front of me again, knowing it was defensive posture but feeling better anyway. "Talk."

"The Council is acting like she let you all go on purpose. They won't ask her for the truth, even knowing she can't lie. She's locked up now, and they scheduled her execution for next week. I don't have anyone to turn to. Please..."

Well this wasn't great. Could I really just stand by and let Starren be killed? We'd been on opposite sides of an issue at the end, but she'd treated me pretty well when I'd been on her team.

Leave Dan and Nina again? Risk dying? Go to Faerie, after I'd just compromised everything a good person should believe in to stay away from that place?

Starren was amazing. Surely if there was any way for her to escape, she'd have done it by now. And what help could I really be? I had no practical knowledge of Faerie, just what my mom had taught me.

"I can't, Wade. I'm sorry."

"So you'll just leave her to die, then." He sounded disappointed, almost disgusted. "You're the best person I know, the only one I thought would be willing to go against the Council. You've done it before."

That made me snort. "I'm the best person you know? I think you need new friends."

"Starren is my only friend." It came out in almost a broken whisper, and my heart wrenched in my chest. But there really wasn't anything I could do.

"At least help me get back into Faerie," Wade said when I turned to walk away again. "They're watching all the known tunnels, and I can't get back without them tracking me."

"How am I going to help you do that? I don't know anything about Faerie tunnels."

"You don't. But someone that listens to you does. He got here somehow, didn't he?"

Jaden. Wade didn't want to say his name, but he was talking about Jaden. Somehow he'd escaped Faerie and come to Earth to care for his family. He obviously knew of a tunnel somewhere, but we hadn't talked about it.

My shoulders slumped. I really didn't want to talk to Jaden, but it seemed kind of extreme to let Starren die because I felt too guilty to talk to a guy. "Fine. I'll find out where it is, but then you're on your own."

Wade smiled. It was nowhere near the old smile, but the closest thing I'd seen since we'd 'bumped' into each other.

"Meet me here tomorrow morning. I'll see what I can find out."

"I have to wait that long? Time is important right now."

"Trust me, you don't want Dan finding out you're

in the city. He'd probably kill you. Just wait until tomorrow morning."

Wade nodded and pulled his scarf back up, then watched me leave. I wasn't hanging around to talk. I could still hardly look at the guy without a pang of betrayal twinging in my gut.

Storm stuck close as we left the alley, watching Wade over his shoulder. I wound my fingers through the long hair on his back. I loved that he hated Wade.

Now for the interesting part. How did I always get myself into these situations? I'd done so well ignoring Jaden since we'd moved here. We had a good thing going. He'd know the second I asked to talk to him that something was up.

I trudged around an extra block to avoid the alley with Wade in it. Thankfully the city blocks were laid out well enough I didn't have to worry about getting lost. Storm slowly relaxed beside me.

"Jaden, I know we haven't really been talking..." Nah, why bring up the fact that I'd been ignoring him? "Jaden, I have a favor to ask..." Nope, that was wrong too. "Jaden, you know how you said if I ever needed anything just ask, since I helped you with your family and everything?" Better, but maybe leave the whole 'I saved your family' thing off the end.

I shifted my backpack. Storm looked up at me. "I know, it's not great, but it's all I've got. You got any better ideas?"

No answer.

"That's what I thought. This should be wonderful."