

Tendrils of Blue Electricity

Adelaide Storm bolted down the narrow street, the police right on her trail, her fiery, red hair flying like fire. Her breaths came out in ragged puffs and pants and her legs ached, but that didn't matter now. All that mattered was getting away from this city, where people could get hurt. Or before the lightning consumed her.

“Stop!” shouted one of the six police officers tailing her. Six. That’s how many it took to catch a fourteen-year-old girl with the ability to summon lightning. Adelaide would not—could not—stop, though fear crept across her skin, threatening to release blue tendrils of electricity. She had to control her power and, most importantly, her fear.

A groan escaped Adelaide’s lips as she slammed into a rough brick wall. She exasperatedly blew a lock of hair out of her face. Lost in her thoughts, she ran into an alley with only one exit currently guarded by her pursuers.

“Get—get away from me!” Adelaide pleaded, her confident voice finally cracking.

“We’re not going to hurt you. Just come with us so we can return you to your family. They’re worried sick about you,” another officer said. Lies, all of it. They’d seen her use her powers, and they’d seen her murder her entire family with them. After that incident, Adelaide knew no one was safe around her. The cursed lightning inside her, no matter how bright and glorious, only brought death and destruction. Her eyes darted around, scanning her surroundings, every nook and cranny, and plotting an escape. Her lightning danced between her fingertips. She clenched them, repressing the growing tendrils of blue electricity.

“That’s where you’re wrong,” she quietly muttered, then lunged for the wall of the brick building she slammed into earlier and pulled herself up, her hands and feet working together. The rough brick cut into Adelaide’s fingers, but she continued to climb. After scaling half the building the sequence of hand-and-foot coordination became like clockwork. *Right hand, left foot, left hand, right foot*, she repeated in her head over and over again as clamors sounded beneath her. She looked down to see a mob of spectators clustered at the base, taking pictures and videos on cell phones. Concealing her face as best as she could, she continued to scale the building.

Minutes later, Adelaide glimpsed the top of the building. So close, yet so far away. She began to hasten, but one of the bricks cracked when she grabbed onto it and she lost her footing. Adelaide choked down a yelp, catching herself before she could tumble to her death, or into the mess of people down below. Her lightning crackled again in the cup of her palm, but she gritted her teeth and pushed the sensation down. It would not unleash itself on herself or this city. She

would find someone, and she would convince them—use force, if necessary—to remove her powers. No longer would they inflict pain and misery on her or the people she loved.

Her lightning crackled stronger and brighter. A shrill screech that started out as a light ping grew to a deafening level. She groaned, her muscles sore, but kept climbing. *Just a little further*, she told herself. *Just a little further*.

The words were of little use, however. The crackling, blue energy slowly wound up her arm like vines. Adelaide scaled the building faster, the top drawing closer and closer. She climbed, persevering until she grasped the ledge and hauled herself up. By then, lightning crackled along her entire body. She got to her feet and tore across the rooftop, but stopped before another ledge. Her plan had been to leap to the next rooftop, but the gap was too far.

Her body glowed bright blue as she sank to her knees. All of a sudden, breathing tired her. This was it, the dreaded moment had arrived at long last; when the power consumed her once and for all.

Adelaide tilted her head back and let loose a guttural cry as the lightning, in all its power and glory, engulfed her in its burning light.

There was no going back.