



The First Meeting

<https://www.deviantart.com/bunnylove2>

Copyright © 2020 MNT

All rights reserved.

Chapter One: The Move In

I shivered, leaning back into the cushioned seats of my mother's SUV and stared as the world outside flew by--thick patches of pines and oak trees interrupted the rolling hills of wild grasses and farmland. Despite the new and unexplored territory outside, within the car a deadly silence suffocated us. My family tried their best to keep a smile planted on their face, of course, but I understood the disappointment they all bore. The move from Tagaida that should've taken a year at the most transformed into a seven year journey because of me. Every town, every city we stopped in offered her a victim and us a reason to pick up and move again. After experiencing the same loss again and again, I shut myself out from everyone else. So as I sat there, struggling to drown out her ragged voice with my own thoughts, I decided my fate. Although I didn't doubt Darkstar eagerly awaited claiming another victim in the town we headed towards, I realized that if I lost another friend because of her then she'd accomplish her goal. *Even if it means being miserable, I can't allow her to overwhelm me for good.* I sighed quietly, pulling my knees in tightly and resting my head on my arms. A pang of guilt and homesickness struck me as I recalled the past years of my life. Despite how often my family tried to reassure me, I never could shake off the weight of what happened. *How could I? He meant everything to me, to my people, and I...* A chill crawled down my spine, and I squeezed my eyes shut as the vivid memory played through my mind. I swallowed dryly and struggled to calm the contents of my stomach. Yet the grotesque scene lingered in my mind, forcing me to realize how much I ruined not only my family's lives, but my people's as well. *I wish I could just...*

get rid of her and go home. When I opened my eyes again, though, the dreamlike hopes I offered myself shattered. As the new town peeked over the horizon, her hoarse voice echoed loudly in my mind.

I will never go away.

X X X

Alensville, a small town in the Midwest of Anasteria, provided my parents with another perfect place to settle down. No one knew who we were, where we hailed from, or about the trail of blood left behind in Darkstar's wake. The people cluelessly walked along the sidewalk as we drove past, unaware of the hidden power within me and even more so of the gods and goddesses who silently guarded humanity. I sighed, redirecting my attention to my father as he spoke up.

He jabbed his finger towards an expansive building surrounded by parking. "That's the school the man told us about," he glanced back towards me, "I'm sure you'll fit in fine there."

I shrugged, to which he frowned slightly before sighing. I quietly forced out a better response for his sake, "yeah... although isn't this town small enough that everyone knows each other?" I hesitated, tacking on a bit more to my question, "I wonder if they'll warm up to me quickly or not..."

Dad nodded and broke his gaze momentarily, thinking. "Well, if the students are anything like the adults, then I'm sure you'll be fine."

I slowly nodded, returning my stare to the world outside. When my parents met up with some of the people from the town, to finish up paperwork for our move, they mentioned I needed to be enrolled in their public school since I

never attended one over the past years. All of the towns we stayed at before understood my parents' requests to let me be home-schooled, but Alensville insisted I attended school in a conventional method. My features fell into a frown as I watched the school vanish on the horizon. I hated the idea of surrounding myself with people, especially with Darkstar around. Yet I couldn't refuse them, otherwise I'd cause trouble before our family even settled in. I shook my head and brushed off my thoughts as we drove down Orana Drive, the street my parents mentioned as we entered the town.

Mom swung into the driveway of our new home, a large modern-colonial house that loomed over the smaller homes in the neighborhood. She placed her hands on her hips, smiling confidently as she announced to us, "alright kids, time to unpack and settle in!"

We all grumbled our agreement and tugged our things out of the car. Glancing around I noted our different neighbors, if any were outside. Most of them spoke kindly and were elderly men and women, but when I stole a glance across the street, my gaze landed on a younger girl. With her long blue hair trailing her, she skipped along gleefully, free of worries. I elbowed Hitachi, hoping to at least help him out in the friend department. When he directed his attention to me, I pointed towards the girl, "looks like someone your age lives nearby and not just a bunch of old people."

He squinted, nodding indecisively before speaking up, "now we just hafta find someone yer age." He grinned at my frown, teasing me silently.

If my hands weren't full right now... I huffed, storming inside as I further entrenched my plan into my mind. No matter what, I can't talk to anyone in school. No friends, no problems with Darkstar. My brother and sister already claimed their rooms, so I cautiously peeked into the room next to my

brother's. The room waited silently for me to enter, the colors splashed on its walls and carpet warm and inviting to me. I gently closed the door behind me, leaning against the wood as I studied the cozy, yet empty room. In the corner, a baby blue canopy bed rested, enticing me to lie down for a bit after the long drive. I trudged over and dropped my bag of clothes on the floor, flopping down on the soft sheets afterwards. I closed my eyes, my mother's sweet voice leaking into my room when she called for my father's help with something. As my body sunk into the cool mattress, I realized how much the day drained me of energy. I sighed, my stomach twisting with dread when I thought about the coming months. I doubted Darkstar would wait long if any opportunity presented itself. I needed to isolate myself so at least if she killed someone from school the weight on my conscience wouldn't be overbearing. *As horrible as it is to think of it that way...*

Mom poked her head into my room, "Star?" She chuckled at my groaning, "your things are still in the car, come and get them before dinnertime okay?"

I sat upright, nodding as I yawned. "Yeah, yeah. I'll get them in a sec." After she closed the door behind her, I continued my exploration of the room. A medium-sized dresser sat against one wall, and in the adjacent corner from the bed another wooden door sat inlaid into the wall. I opened the door, sticking my head through the opening to inspect what I thought was a closet. I wandered into the bathroom, chuckling to myself as I recalled my parents' confusion earlier over where the supposed third bathroom was located. *Sweet, my own bathroom.* All of the other Anasterian homes we lived in before only contained two bathrooms at the most, which ended up in a lot of impatient waiting and bickering between us siblings. A tinge of hope piqued in my mind, and for a moment I allowed myself the happiness over the

comfort I found in my new room. After all, since I'll be alone from now on, I'll need all the happiness I can get from the simplest things.

X X X

I leaned against my bed, mindlessly clicking my controller as I sighed. The first day of school laid in wait on the horizon, and I wasn't looking forward to it at all. Not only was public school something I didn't care about in the slightest, but I also feared for the students' safety. Throughout the drive to Alensville, her sickening voice echoed her plans within my mind. Darkstar was set on killing the first person who offered themselves up quietly to her. I knew the moment I found myself isolated with someone, Alensville would witness the first horrific murder by her hands. I sunk down further, frowning as I studied the character select screen in Mega Bash Pros. A knock on my door broke my thoughts, and when I gazed over Mom poked her head in.

She offered up a smile, "Hey Star." She wandered in, sitting down on my bed, and cleared her throat. "Your first day of school starts next week. Are you nervous?"

I shrugged as I set down my controller, but I understood where her interest really laid. "Maybe a little..."

She sighed, stroking my hair, and silence bubbled into the room momentarily. "Sweetheart, you can be honest with me." She scooted down onto the floor next to me, wrapping her arms around me. "I know you're worried about Darkstar."

I nodded, leaning into her hug, and rested my head against her shoulder. "I wish I could just stay home."

"I'm sorry, we tried our best to persuade them, but they were insistent." She huffed, shaking her head, "some of these Anasterians certainly have a knack for imposing their beliefs." She glanced down at me, studying my eyes intently for a moment before brushing my bangs out of my face. She offered a small smile, "although Star, I don't think you have any other reason to want to stay home." Her smile faded, a hint of disappointment flickering in her eyes. "You've always been an outgoing girl... don't let anything change who you are."

I frowned, shrugging again, and with some grit in my voice I responded to her, "I'm not changing who I am." I pouted when she raised a brow at me and whined. "I'm not!"

She chuckled, accepting my words, and kissed my forehead. After releasing me from her grip, she stood up and brushed off her knee-length skirt. "Then don't isolate yourself, Star."

I crossed my arms, huffing as I mumbled a simple response. After she closed the door behind her, I snatched up my controller and returned my attention to the video game flickering on my TV screen. I sighed, sinking down again against my bed as I started the match. Some irritation flitted around in my mind, but I recognized where Mom's concerns originated. I recalled easily my life before Darkstar showed up--free of paranoia and guilt. I loved spending every moment exploring the woods around my hometown with my friends, all of us giggling and wholly enjoying ourselves. A pang of nostalgia and sorrow twisted into my heart, and my mind focused more on the faces of my friends than the image of my character soaring into the air and off the map. Droplets of liquid regret stung my eyes, ripping

themselves loose and down my cheeks. Mom stood with a light desperately praying my personality would rush home back to me, but as far as I was concerned I scared it away with my doubts. *It's not like I don't want to be myself... I just can't afford to let my guard down.* I sighed, a sound escaping my lips somewhere between a growl and a cry. *The first day isn't even here yet, and I'm already frustrated and exhausted...*

Chapter Two: Shy Guy

I skulked down the hallway and stared at the ground, only glancing up to check the door numbers. *Just two classes left. Then I can go home.* The next class was art, a subject that I loved since I was a kid and one of the things keeping me grounded. I peeked my head around the open door, glancing around the room quickly. *Looks like the right spot.* I strided in, stretching my long legs as I searched for an open seat. I pulled out an open chair, seating myself and laying my backpack down. I studied the room closer; rambunctious teens sat atop desks, rambling loudly to each other and laughing, and the teacher, Mr. Kreskivich, stood at the board writing in plain cursive. I rolled my eyes, sighing. I met only a few students who were well-mannered--most though acted like rabid squirrels.

Once the bell rang, Mr. Kreskivich clapped his hands together, rubbing them together eagerly. "Alright, settle down everyone." He paused while the talking died down, waiting patiently. He tapped his finger on the board, reading over what he'd written, "Good to meet you all, I'm Mr. Kreskivich. This class will be an introduction to 2-D art. I don't expect you to be experienced, but I do expect some effort." He cleared his throat, walking over to his desk and

picking up a stack of papers. He hefted them up, returning his attention to the students, "since it's only the first day, I'm going to have you all do a little get-to-know each other."

The students in the class groaned, and one waved their hand in the air and complained, "but we already know each other!"

He shook his head, chuckling, "well then consider this free time to talk with friends." He visited each desk, gently laying down a paper for each student. After he completed his rounds, he returned to his desk and set down the excess papers before turning back to us, "well, get a partner now. Go over the paper together and answer the questions. Have fun with it."

The students immediately broke into partners, and suddenly everyone else had a partner but me. I surveyed the room, correcting my initial thought, *well, almost everyone*. I ignored the other student though, hoping that maybe if Mr. Kreskivich didn't notice or didn't care, I could skip the assignment and enforce my no-talking policy. Yet, when I strided up to him, he refused me. "But-"

He shook his head, "Ms," he tapped his chin, recalling my name from his memory, "Tutalachi, you should get to know your peers." He hesitated, his eyes darting around the room, "after all, you're new here... everyone in this town knows pretty much everything about anyone--it's tightly-knit." He offered a small smile, "I understand it may be a bit overwhelming at first, but I think talking to people your age will help ease you in."

I nodded, swallowing dryly. I couldn't refuse his request since I didn't want to dig up issues before Darkstar revealed herself. I bit my lip, raising the

question floating around in my mind, "but everyone has a partner already. What am I supposed to do?"

He raised a brow, glancing over my shoulder. A tinge of sorrow colored his eyes, and when I followed his gaze, my eyes landed on the other student I noticed earlier. He sighed, lowering his voice for me alone, "perhaps you should partner with him. I'm sure he could benefit from meeting you."

I glanced at the kid, nodding slowly to Mr. Kreskivich's words before sighing. "I guess."

He smiled at me, the sorrow in his eyes replaced with hope. He folded his hands together, nodding and offering me gratitude. "Thank you, Ms. Tatalachi. Now, go ahead before you get too behind the rest of the class."

I wandered away from him, slow with my pace so I could study the boy more.

He stared down at his desk, shoulders slumped and he didn't even react when I walked closer and sat next to him.

I frowned, tapping him on the shoulder to which he flinched upon contact. Yet he still didn't look up at me so I cleared my throat, "excuse me."

Finally, albeit slowly, he turned his gaze to me. For a second, the look in his eyes was like an unlit candle. The stare quickly transformed into confusion.

I crossed my arms, rolling my eyes. I waved around the paper like a flag, "you want to partner for this?" I mumbled under my breath, "not like we have any other options."

His stare of confusion melted gradually into bewilderment, remaining silent as he studied my face.

I huffed at him, raising a brow and my voice a little at him. "Excuse me, we both need to work on this." After more silence, I snapped my gaze towards Mr. Kreskivich, but he worked quietly at his desk with something else and didn't see me. I groaned, turning my glare towards the boy, my impatience rising. "What, are you mute or something?"

He flinched at my demanding tone, shaking his head to calm me down, but answering shortly afterwards. "U-uh, n-no, s-sorry," he stuttered, and his face reddened when I rolled my eyes at him and sighed.

"Okay, well let's work on this then." After he nodded in agreement, I stared at the paper, tapping my pencil on the desk. *Hmm... just basic stuff I guess.* I sighed again, reading through the questions before turning back to him. "Alright, so... uh, what's your name? Mine's Lightningstar. Lightningstar Tatalachi."

He fiddled with his long sleeves, whispering out his answer, "Omaru," he flinched, stammering as he quickly added on his last name, "er, uh K-Kakiria." He brushed his long bangs out of his face, the strands of crimson red mixing with the black. He immediately fidgeted with his sleeves again after his hair, as if it wanted to rebel against his action, fell back over his left eye.

I tilted my head, raising a brow as I studied him. *What a weirdo. I guess that explains why, even though everyone in town supposedly knows each other, no one wanted to partner with him.* A small part of me pitied him-his shyness worked against him even in a place like this, but I ignored the feeling. I strictly determined I wouldn't involve myself with anyone with any emotions no matter

what. Everyone would just be a face, like a forest full of the same tree over and over again. I cleared my throat, nodding as I accepted his answer--not that I would remember his name anyways. "Okay. Um... let's see, uh..." I groaned, rolling my eyes. The questions bored me, but I pushed through them anyways. Eventually the questions turned to more interesting ones, although some I struggled to answer simply and avoid further discussion. "Have you ever moved? Hm... I've moved around a lot the past seven years, but I was born in Tagaida."

His eyes widened, surprise coloring his purple irises. "O-oh... uh... w-wow." He tilted his head, the intrigue clearly dragging him out of reality for a moment. He flinched when I tapped his shoulder with my pencil. He stared at me in confusion for a second before stammering a response, "I-I, uh... no." He shrugged, his lips tightening into a thin line as he struggled to brush off the awkwardness.

I shook my head at him, my mind swirling with questions. *How does anyone get so socially inept?* "...okay. Well, moving on then." I wrote down the answer, flipping over the paper, and when I glanced back to him, I jumped slightly.

He stared at me intensely with a puzzled look, studying me like a botanist examining a rose.

I frowned at him, snapping at him a little bit, "what are you staring at?" *I don't want anything to do with anyone. Doesn't matter who, the answer is no.*

My response, of course, caught him off-guard, and he shook his head. He stammered out an apology, his face flushing from embarrassment.

I rolled my eyes, sighing as I returned my attention to the paper. I ran through the rest of the questions and, finally, reached the last question. "Do

you have any siblings?" I tapped my finger on my cheek, humming as I put my thoughts in order. "I have an older sister and a younger brother. Linu and Hitachi." For a moment, I let my defenses down, accidentally slipping out excess information, "Hitachi is sooo annoying sometimes. So is Linu, just not in the same way." I jolted, my eyes snapping open as soon as I processed my words. *Ugh, I'm already failing at being distant!*

He raised a brow at my silent reaction, but didn't question it. He hesitantly glanced around the room, eyeing me out of the corner of his vision. "I uh... I-I have a-a younger sister... er, uh Lily," his features twisted with uncertainty as he over-explained himself, "m-my sister's n-name, I mean, t-that's uh... her name." He held his breath, struggling to overcome his failure to act normal. He glanced at me again, still not exhaling, but curiosity tinted his eyes.

I raised my brows, forcing him to release the question I knew he pent up inside. "What is it? If you want to know something, just ask." My pestering ripped another flinch out of him and more stammering. I rolled my eyes at him for the thirtieth time and repeated my statement with a more demanding tone, "well, what?"

He shrugged, fiddling with his pencil. He attempted to ask whatever he wanted to know, but ended up messing up and retrying over and over again. Finally, he shook his head as if he thought his action would restart his mind. "Y-you, uh... so you..." He sighed, closing his eyes for a moment as he organized himself, "y-you just, uh, m-moved... recently?" He said the word 'recently' slowly like he struggled to pronounce the syllables.

I nodded, my head tilted as I reasoned out his curiosity. "Yeah..." I paused, questioning my thought process, but decided to roll with it, "my family just moved into Orana Drive half-way through last week."

He accepted my words, the sentence rolling around in his mind as he worked it over. Then quietly he mumbled under his breath, "I live over there too." The embarrassment stretched over him immediately, and he shyly added on to his sentence, over-explaining himself again, "I-I mean, uh... I j-just, er... m-my sister n-noticed that, uh... t-the house across the s-street, i-it wasn't v-vacant anymore..."

I squinted at him, realizing I possibly knew who his sister might be. I nodded, shrugging at his words. "Probably was us. I mean," I glanced around the room, noting Mr. Kreskivich stood patiently, watching us, "everyone knows everyone here right?" I raised a brow at him, "so you should know if you've seen me before?"

He shrugged, agreeing quietly, "I guess so..."

Mr. Kreskivich clapped his hands together, struggling to grab the class's attention. "Alright everyone, only ten more minutes until the bell rings. Staple your paper to your partners and turn it in at the front." He offered a smile, certainly earning the class's favor with his words, "after that you're free to pack your things up and relax for a bit."

I scooted back in my chair, about to pick up the papers, but the boy jumped up and snatched my paper in his other hand. I tossed him a confused look--I definitely wasn't expecting the sudden enthusiastic attitude from the kid who sat as lifeless as a statue earlier. I stared at him, "um... you don't have to--"

"It's fine, I uh... I can do this, a-at least." His face twisted with embarrassment and uncertainty. "I insist," he whispered before stepping carefully over to Mr. Kreskivich's desk, whose face lit up when he realized whatever-his-face-is handed the papers to him. When he sat back down next to me, he met my stare before snapping his attention elsewhere, his dark tanned skin tingeing red with embarrassment.

I sighed, redirecting my gaze towards my desk, and leaned back. *I really hope he isn't getting attached.* I doodled on my notebook paper while I waited for the bell to ring. Out of curiosity, I stole a glance at him; his gaze fixed on the desk, but instead of blankly staring like earlier in class, some determination flickered in his irises; Like I re-lit the flame of a worn candle. I furrowed my brows, the caring nature of my mind sneaking out when it should've hid. The bell blared, effectively scaring him a little bit judging by how he flinched immediately, and I stood up and snatched my stuff up.

He jumped out of his seat, nearly tripping over the chair. He scrambled to pick up his stuff and shyly stopped me in my tracks, "uh, h-hey..." He reached his hand out to tap my shoulder, but hesitated. When I swirled around and glared at him, he flinched, probably the jumpiest person in the world, and stammered. "S-Sorry, I j-just wanted to... uh..." His face twisted as he ransacked his brain for the words, "uh s-say uh, er," he stared past me, face blank as he forced out the most awkward goodbye, "...uh, see you... around."

I huffed, rolling my eyes at his pathetic attempt. I broke my rule momentarily, purely out of pity for him. "Bye." *Not that I'm going to make it friendly of course.*

His eyes widened in surprise as I shoved past him, confusion from my forced demeanor clear in his irises. He followed me out of the class, but didn't continue to walk behind me. He lingered in a doorway to study me from the corner of his eye, but slipped into the room quickly afterwards.

I accidentally bumped into someone, apologizing immediately as I hurried past. *Dumb!* I sighed, shaking my head. *Only day one and I'm already struggling to hold back myself.* I rubbed my temples, grumbling to myself as I reinforced my plan to myself.