

Chapter 1 – There Isn't Much Time

‘Get a doctor!’ The shout rang out amid the hustle and bustle of the morning crowd at the city docks. ‘He’s going to blow!’

An alarm shrieked its ear-splitting warning, shattering normality. People scattered, elbowing and jostling each other in their rush to escape the waterfront. At the rapidly emptying epicentre of the panic, a man howled in pain. His skin was flushed bright red, sweat dripping freely. He sank to his knees, face upturned to the sky. He paid no heed to his surroundings, every fibre of his being seeming to strain for an end to the searing heat burning inside of him.

His companion paced nearby, eyes flicking between his friend on the ground and the Skyway overhead. ‘Aled, hold on. The doctor’ll be here soon.’

Malc wasn’t sure if he’d said that more for his own benefit, seeing as Aled probably couldn’t hear anything over the sound of his own yelling. Maybe he should run. Aled’s shouts were approaching scream level, and everyone knew that was the second-last stage before, well, *boom*. Lords, where was that doctor?

Pushing against a tide of people, in the customary mid-length grey coat and bulky leather satchel, hurried a doctor. ‘Out of my way,’ he hollered. ‘Out of my way, damn it!’

Taking the stairs to the Skyway two at a time, Turner once again found himself thankful for the structure, particularly at times such as this. Only emergency personnel were allowed up here, and it made crossing the city a much faster process. Ever since the Skyway was installed, the number of corporeal fulminations – the final grisly stage of magic poisoning – had gone down drastically.

It hadn't stopped them, though.

After what seemed like an age, willing the carriage to rattle faster along the track, the