

"Explosion"

The Iron Trial AU by Arayah Remillard and Sara Ketchale

Blair Hunt had so much she wanted to say. And Callum Hunt had so much he wanted to do. But they couldn't, no matter how hard they tried.

Because Blair was mute, with so much she wanted to be expressed, but the one way she had believed to be the best was not an option she had. Communication with someone other than her beloved twin was something she desired, and felt like she deserved, but in the end, knew she'd never have it. While Callum had a permanent limp, that couldn't be fixed, no matter how many surgeries he had, or physical therapies he went to. He truly believed that he was his perpetual limp. That everything he will do or wants to do is going to be changed in order to keep him as far away from the deadly sting that his injury gave him.

Blair and Callum did everything together, experienced everything together, from the day they were born to the days they share now. They were so close, nothing anyone could do or say could break the bond the siblings had. Their bond was something special, something treasured by them and known completely by the people around them. Callum was well known throughout the town, he was known for his snippy comebacks and useless leg. "He's annoying, a wisp in the wind, nothing to be worried about," as his fellow peers and elders would say. But Blair, she was bizarre, strange, someone to be aware of; rumors flying around her small community. Rumors she became immune to. But, the words they said in their rumors were words she'd love to speak. That point is made clearly, but no one besides herself understood her agony other than her brother, Callum. Just another little thing they shared together, just another little thing without an explanation other than what their father believed was correct.

Telepathy. That is what their father called it, at least. But that's beyond anything they could to ask for, clarification wise. They believed anything and everything their father had to say. Including that magic was evil, disastrous, something that was absolutely mortifying. Above everything else, despised by their father. He would always say how magic is what killed their mother, his wife, when they were just babies, too young to remember.

He also always told them how, whatever they did, they needed to avoid getting into the Magisterium. So that's what they did. That's what Callum did, at least. He decided that if his father hated it than so should he, but Blair knew how to keep to herself. Knew how to hide what she wanted to... And she wanted to learn about magic and the Magisterium. So late at night, when her father and Callum both fell into a deep sleep, she would research, trying to learn more about magic, mages, and the Magisterium. She went against everything she trusted those nights, just because it fascinated her beyond her control.

And she hated it so dearly.

Blair and Callum knew that they would get picked up from school early that day, just like other kids attending this Trial, but the others were lied to. Lies such as dance practice or soccer games, in return gave Blair and Call a laugh due to their knowledge and the other children's lack of it. They would be driven to a location that their dad hadn't disclosed with them, and they would need to take a test. Neither knew what was on the test. All they knew is what their father had told them: that whatever they do, they cannot be accepted into the Magisterium.

"Blair and Callum Hunt, would you please report to the office. You are being dismissed," said the intercom overhead.

Every last person in the twins' class stared at them. Blair would always imagine that she was being pointed and laughed at, the main topic of conversation with all of her peers. Nevertheless, she stood up and walked out the door with her twin brother.

Their dad was waiting for them inside the office. When he saw them, he smiled, but it didn't reach his eyes. "Let's go," he said plainly, then led them out the door.

They had been driving for about ten minutes when their father turned around to look at them. "Listen. I know you may be curious about what the Magisterium has to offer, or what your ability as a mage could become, but you cannot make it in. Understood?"

"Understood," Call said, for himself as well as his sister.

What if we make it in? Blair thought desperately.

"Blair wants to know what happens if we make it in," Call asked for his sister.

Their father swerved to the side of the road so quick, so unexpectedly, that Blair almost hit her head on the window, while Call did just that.

"Did you hear me, Blair? *You cannot make it in, no matter what!* It's not an option to even think about, because if you listen to me, then you will not be able to make it in.

"First, pick all of the answers that seem to be wrong. Next, make things explode. Maybe throw in a blatant disregard for rules and directions once or twice, and you should do fine." Their father smiled at them, a real, true smile, and Blair's heart broke. Oh, how she wanted to go to the Magisterium, but she knew that it would break her father's trust, put him through so much fear for her.

They pulled up to a parking space 10 minutes late. "The later, the better," their father had said, "We want to make the worst impression possible."

Call got out of the car and started hobbling away without his crutches, but their father ran up to him and handed them to him. "We want to make you look weak, unfit for any type of magic school," their father said hurriedly.

Blair ran up to Call. *What's his problem?* she thought to Call.

Call looked at her shrugged. "I don't know. I get him wanting us to fail, but wanting me to look disabled...?"

Do you want to make it in?

Call looked at her look she was crazy. "Of course not! Why, do you?"

Maybe a little, Blair thought to herself. But this is what she thought to Callum: *No, not at all. I trust Dad.*

And that was that.

Inside the building, there were many kids, most with obviously proud parents. There was a lot of commotion, parents giving kids a pep-talk, kids making new friends, and parents and teachers mingling. This was until a middle aged woman with a loud voice shouted, "Children! Follow me!" All of the parents wished their kids good luck, or bid them farewell until they meet again, or that they'd do great, all except Blair's and Call's dad, who merely nodded in their direction. And with that, the twins followed the huge group of kids down a hallway. Fearing their goal in failure.

The corridor gave Call chills as he stood side by side with his sister, both trembling with the fear of failing, failing their dad. Kids of their age piled into another room as the twins tagged along behind, Blair pulled a piece of stray hair away from her face and shuffled behind her limping brother. *I'm scared.* Blair's thoughts interrupted Call's thoughts of pure panic. All the brother did was nod, not finding a way to console his sister. Without a second longer to wait, the woman who brought us here stowed into the room and stood up tall, acted confident. Then spoke.

"First of all, I would like to welcome you to the Iron Trial. Now that we're away from your guardians, we can explain in more detail what is going to happen today. Some of you have received invitations to apply for a music school, or a school that concentrates on astronomy or advanced mathematics or horseback riding. But as you may have supposed by now, you are actually here to be evaluated for acceptance into the Magisterium."

Exasperated gasp and whispers of shock seemed to erupt from the group of twelve year olds, as the twins stayed in silence, along with another boy, Aaron, who had nothing but a happy grin on his face during all the chaos. In which bestowed Blair, who had been paying the closets of attention to each individual student, and he talked to everyone. Everyone talked to him. Even the snotty Jasper kid that Blair already seemed to despise. The frost-like temperature seemed to disappear as the obviously inexperienced women tried to calm the frustrated children. "Take your seats!" The woman finally shouted out in distress. Everyone seemed to quiet down and one by one found their assigned seats on the frigid, wooden desk and chairs provided.

"I am Master Milagros and I will be going you your test for today." She spoke with a withdrawn tone and quietly walked the room handing each person their own paper. A pen appeared on each table and a short gasp was shared throughout the room, even by Call and Blair. Master Milagros then stood by the door, as if wait for us to be done. Waiting for us to automatically know how to use the magical pens provided. But one by one the student worked their pens, then starting to write at a fast pace in their books. *How..? What th-*, Blair looked at

her brother with a face that displayed amazement and confusion. The same face seemed to be plastered on Call's own, but his seemingly much more amused do to the smirk from her twin.

Just fail. All we need to do is fail. No stress or worries. Just failure, in their terms. Blair sent her thoughts to Call, as if she was trying to make sure Call was okay with failing. In which he was determined to do. Sooner rather than later Blair seemed to figure out the pen, to an extent. It bled through each paper and was very blotchy. There were many questions, such as, "A dragon and a wyvern set out at 2 p.m. from the same cavern, headed in the same direction. The average speed of the dragon is 30 mph slower than twice the speed of the wyvern. Find the flight speed of the dragon, factoring in that the wyvern is bent on revenge," which were very easy to get wrong, because it was very unlikely that they would put down a random, silly answer and get it correct. That's how it worked for most of the questions. *So far, so good,* Blair thought to Call. Call looked at her and grinned his special, goofy grin. Then his pen gave out, shaking it and shaking, and it didn't seem to work. He stopped and before he had any sort of say in what he was to do next, the pen splattered. Sending splotches of ink on himself, his paper, and the items of his sisters. *Call...* Blair said in a warningly scared sort of way. "Uh! Um, go wash up, the two of you! Wait for the class to be finished testing in this part of the Trial, I will dispose of your testing materials.." Master Milagros spoke, disgusted. The class went from quiet to a deadly silence as the twins exited the room. But the sense of relief and achievement seemed to overpower the awkwardness and tension in the room. *One section failed, two to go.*

Once everyone finished the written test, many people looking optimistic but some people double and triple checking their work, Master Milagros collected all of their tests and led them into a huge room, presumably a gymnasium. There was a black foam ball hanging from a rope on the ceiling, and a long, wooden rope ladder. The Master told them they had to retrieve the ball any way they could. She first called out deWinter, then Stewart, name after name being called, no one being able to climb the ladder to retrieve it. It was very strange to Call, but Blair got it right away. *Magic, Call. We have to use magic.*

"Hunt," called Master Milagros, obviously forgetting that there were two Hunts' in the group. Blair and Callum both started towards the unstable rope ladder that seemed to stump all who face it. *What the heck Call, he obviously meant me!*

With that little phrase, Blair shoved her brother back, but softly, the twin only stumbled back. Blair mentally screamed when an unknown force pushed Blair backwards, using much more force and strength than her towards Call. Not moment after the force sent Blair backwards, the ball atop the ladder burst aflame. After her abrupt landing on the hard ground, Call looked at her with worry in his eyes, *I'm okay* Blair confirmed. Everyone's mouths agape, Master Milagros seemed to be the only one with the capability to construct words at the moment ordered at the twins. "See Master Rufus. This instant."

They were surely going to fail now. They had to.