# Chapter 14: How to Accidentally Amplify Magic

This day had been a marathon for Angel -- first the breakthrough with their training, then Emerys’ idea about using love to amplify their power, then Acri showing up and revealing all that information. She looked at Evariste and saw her exhaustion mirrored on his face. *Won’t we ever get a rest?* Emerys was right about the tight timeline though -- they needed to figure this out ASAP.

As they walked through the palace halls on their way to the training room, she instinctively reached for Evariste’s hand, her tension easing as she felt his hand grasp hers. *Just having him here, being with him, makes this all so much more bearable.* She sensed the gentle pulse of magic between them and the weight on her shoulders lessened.

*Had this connection formed with anyone other than him…* She stopped the unsettling thought in its tracks. It *had* formed with him, and because of that, she *wanted* this bond.

She laughed, marveling at her openness to the desire -- a stark contrast to the fears and insecurities that, mere months ago, would have drowned it out.

“What’s so funny?”

She swung their joined hands. “It’s just…I never would have thought I could even *handle* having such a deep magical connection with anyone. But with *you*…it’s not just something I can live with, but something I’m starting to cherish.”

He smiled softly, his eyes brightening. “Truly? Even though it was thrust upon us so unexpectedly?” His voice was full of wonder.

“Yeah. I never would have expected to want something like this, but I do. With anyone else, it’d be such an invasion of all my boundaries. But with *you*…well, in that first training session, I *chose* to let down my walls and let the magic flow between us, to *trust* you and myself. It really scared me at first, but it was worth it, because it’s *you*.”

His smile widened, eyes dancing. “I can only imagine how hard that had to be for you, to let go like that. To know that you trust me enough to have made that choice, and that you *want* this bond between us…I can’t even describe the joy that gives me.”

She smiled back at him and her heart swelled. “I spent so many years building walls around myself, holding so tightly to my magic, living in fear. You were the one who first saw through all that and set me down the path to find myself again. So…” She hesitated, her voice lowering and her cheeks slightly red. “There’s no reason to hide myself from you. I trust you Evariste, more than I trust anyone else.”

As they reached the training room, they paused and he squeezed her hand, his gaze intense as he turned to face her. “And I trust you, Angel. With my life, with my magic, with my heart.”

At this declaration, their magic suddenly flared up all around them, but this time it felt different, *stronger*. It was as if it was pleased by their declarations of trust and had somehow strengthened itself in response. Angel had the distinct impression that it could have cut straight through the mirror.

She thought she really ought to be freaking out -- it made *no sense* for magic to behave like this. But her heartbeat was steady, her breathing even. Peace and strength radiated from the magic surrounding and flowing between them.

She could feel the connection to Evariste more strongly than ever, and memories flooded her mind -- holding his hand, joking with him, late nights discussing magical theory, her begrudging amusement at his insistence Stil was their child, even his stubborn insistence that her core magic wasn’t evil…so many moments of joy, caring, and connection, all the reasons she’d fallen in love with him.

Evariste’s face was alight with wonder. “Do you feel that? The strength of the bond?”

“Yeah...it’s stronger than I ever would have thought possible. If love and trust can really amplify magic to such an extent…” She grinned. “Well I might *almost* owe Emerys an apology. Almost.”

He chuckled. “‘Almost’ being the key word?”

She smirked. “He’ll be smug enough just knowing he was right. I don’t need to give him an even bigger head.”

Returning her focus to the magic swirling around them, she sobered. “But this,” she gestured to the magic swirling around them, “the sheer *strength* of this bond, is truly astounding.”

Determination filled her and she gazed into Evariste’s eyes, a silent understanding passing between them. “That mirror has *no idea* what we’re going to hit it with.”

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Acri walked down the halls, flanked by the same two guards as before. His mind was swirling with all that had happened that day. He had no idea what the future held for him.

Unbidden, his mind flashed back to the memory of Sarah’s earnestness when she’d shown him empathy…the feeling that she saw straight through his defenses, that she saw *him* as something *more* than just a tool.

And then there was the way the enchanters and the elf king interacted with each other -- there was no hostility between them, no power plays, no negotiations or careful exchanges of information, no *fear.* He figured he should simply classify it as weakness and move on. And yet…wasn’t it the same way Sarah had talked to him when she’d made him feel *seen* for perhaps the first time? And even the guards who flanked him hadn’t tried to intimidate him -- though he had no doubt they’d act immediately if he tried to escape their watch. It was as if he’d entered a new world with a different set of rules from the ones he knew, and that reality was equal parts exhilarating and terrifying.

As they rounded a corner, he was startled out of his musings by a sudden ripple of intense magical energy. Looking around, he saw his guards had frozen in place, slack-jawed. Just up ahead, at a hallway intersection, stood Enchanter Evariste and Enchantress Angelique, surrounded by a cloud of swirling magic. Acri’s own jaw dropped as he starred. It almost looked like…two separate magics had swirled together somehow, strands of blue and silver intertwined. But that was impossible -- magic simply didn’t behave like that.

“That mirror has *no idea* what we’re going to hit it with.”

The enchantress’ words pulled him from his shock. They were really going to destroy the mirror? With this…what even *was* this?

His jaw dropped even further and his mind raced when the elf king, previously out of sight in the adjoining hallway, came into view as he reached the corner, approaching the enchanters.

“I knew it! All your talk about it being ridiculous, but here it is, the power of love at its finest!”

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Angel nearly jumped at the exclamation, dropping Evariste’s hand and whirling to face Emerys. “What are you doing here?!”

He smirked. “You two are the ones who put on yet *another* dramatic display *in the hallway.* But I guess you were too impatient to use ‘the power of love’ to wait until reaching the training room.”

She flushed. “You’re being ridiculous!”

“Ridiculous? The evidence is right here!” He gestured to their swirling magic, which was radiating intense power.

She clenched her teeth in irritation. “Yes, we amplified our power. But it *wasn’t* because of some silly ‘power of love’ thing.”

Emerys raised his eyebrows, smirk widening. “Oh? Then what *was* it?”

Angel narrowed her eyes. “That’s none of your business.”

His smirk widened even further. “Yeah, that just means I’mright.”

She let out a huff. *Why does he have to be such a pain about this? He’ll never let me hear the end of it if I let him have the last word about it now. He’ll be bringing up “the power of love” every chance he gets. To think I was* almost *going to apologize to him!*

“It was about trust, OK!? Are you happy now?! Our magic amplified when we deepened our trust. We weren’t even trying to amplify it yet. *That’s* why we’re still in the hallway!”

“Huh. Your magic really does like flaring up in my hallways.”

Evariste chuckled, then took Angel’s hand again, twining their fingers together. “What’s important is that now we should be strong enough to destroy that accursed mirror.”

Emerys visibly sobered and Angel’s irritation eased as she squeezed Evariste’s hand. *How is it that just his touch is always enough to make me relax?*

Another voice spoke, stammering. “W…what is going on? How is…how can any of this be possible?”

They all turned to see Acri and the two guards currently assigned to him, standing at the adjoining hallway, all three gaping at them.

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Emerys cursed internally. What were they doing here?

One of the guards had apparently gotten over his shock enough to speak. “Y…You’re majesty. I apologize. We didn’t realize this hallway would be…uh…occupied.”

Emerys groaned. *Of course they didn’t.* How could they have when he hadn’t told them to avoid it or given them any reason to think they should? It wouldn’t have mattered if Angel and Evariste hadn’t *accidentally* flared their magic *in the hallway* for the second time, but what was done was done.

“I suppose that’s my fault. I should’ve told you to avoid this route today. Continue on to his quarters as discussed, and mention this to no one until I say otherwise.”

Both guards assented and bowed before leading away a wide-eyed Acri.