She stared at her hand, marveling at the glow that surrounded it, the gentle wavering of the light in her palm. The fire was blue and white, casting strange shadows on the walls of the alley around her. To her right, the girl struggled to her feet, unsteady from shock and trying to stand up on the rough alley floor in heels. From the light of the fire in her palm, Amy could see her face was bruised, her lip split and bloody.

The fire grew larger and hotter as Amy turned to her left. The man was still rolling around on the floor, trying to put out the fire that had nearly consumed his jacket. The smell of burning plastic made Amy wrinkle up her nose in disgust. The girl finally made it to her feet, bracing her back against the wall of the building to keep her upright.

“What are you?” She whispered, staring at the fire resting comfortably in Amy’s palm.

“I-I don’t know.” Amy admitted. “This has never happened before.” The man, still smoking and smoldering, roared to his feet. Amy panicked and threw the ball of fire from her hand again, this time impacting directly on his chest. Amy and the girl didn’t stick around to see what happened, running down the street as the man’s screams echoed behind them.

Without thinking, Amy led the girl home, up the three flights of stairs and behind the heavy, dead bolted door of her apartment. The girl was still shaking badly as she sank down onto Amy’s couch.

“Here.” Amy draped the old afghan around her shoulders. “What’s your name?”

The girl sniffled. “Lucy.”

“I’m Amy.” The fire in her hand had gone out, but Lucy still shrank away from her as Amy reached for her face. “Hey, it’s okay. I promise I’m not going to hurt you. I just want to see how badly you’re hurt.”

This time Lucy let her look at her face, hissing through her teeth in pain when Amy pressed too hard on a sore spot. “Who are you?”

“I’m just a nurse.” The words seemed almost hollow now. *Just* a nurse. Nurses didn’t typically throw fireballs from their hand at random muggers on the street. “I’m gonna grab my first aid kit. Sit tight.” She did wonder, as she dug around under her sink for the box, if Lucy was going to make a run for it now that she had left the room. Poor girl seemed absolutely terrified, of what had happened to her and of what she had seen.

But she was still there, shivering under her blanket, when Amy came out with the first aid kit. “This is going to sting a little.” Amy murmured, gently swabbing at Lucy’s face with the alcohol wipe. It did hurt, but as Amy carefully cleaned the cuts and scrapes on Lucy’s face and arms, she seemed to grow calmer.

“Thank you. For everything.” Amy had a feeling Lucy didn’t just mean the first aid, or the bandage over her eyebrow.

“I would say it’s no problem, but honestly, I don’t know how I did that or why.” Amy sat back on the coffee table, staring at her palms. They seemed like they always did, the same familiar lines and calluses and the freckle at the base of her thumb. No sense of where the fire could have come from or where it had been.

“It’s really never happened to you before?”

“No, I’ve never thrown fire from my hands.”

“Maybe you’re, like, *Ghost Rider* or something.” Lucy sighed when Amy looked confused. “Come on. The comics? Even the crap Nicholas Cage movie?”

“I’m not familiar.”

“Okay, I doubt you made a deal with the Devil that gave you these powers, but whenever he’s around evil doers, he turns into this skeleton made of fire and uses his powers to take down the bad guys.” Lucy shrugged, pulling the blanket tighter around her shoulders. “Maybe it was coming up to that alley and seeing that guy whacking me around that did it.”

“I see that kind of thing every day. I work in the ER. So many people come in battered and bloodied. Why didn’t I do it then?”

“Maybe because they were already hurt? You were saving me from going to the ER.”

“Maybe.” Amy sighed, the weight of the evening finally settling on her shoulders. “You can sleep on the couch if you want. I need to go to bed.”

“Thanks. I think I will.” Lucy tossed some of the pillows off to the armchair and settled in. Amy turned off the lights and retreated to her own bedroom, closing the door behind her and leaning on it.

She held up her hand before her, and watched as the flame bloomed in her palm, the blue and white light almost comforting. Almost natural.

So not *Ghost Rider*. Then what was she? Was she supposed to become a superhero now? Or just live with the knowledge that at any time, her hands could burst into flame and she would have no explanation.

She let her head fall back against the door with a thunk. God help her if she flamed up during her shift at the ER. The smell alone of the plastic gloves would give her away, if not the *fireball* in her hand. She was so screwed.