

The book cover features a vibrant, stylized illustration. In the upper left, a young man with wavy brown hair and blue eyes is shown from the chest up, wearing a light blue t-shirt. He is looking back over his shoulder with a serious expression. In the lower right, another young man with dark, wavy hair and blue eyes is shown from the waist up, wearing a brown suit jacket over a light blue shirt. He is looking directly at the viewer with a slight smile. The background is a mix of bold, geometric shapes in shades of orange, red, and teal. The title text is prominently displayed in the center, with 'RAINBOW ROWELL' in white and 'ANY WAY THE WIND BLOWS' in yellow, both in a bold, sans-serif font with a slight shadow effect.

**RAINBOW
ROWELL**
**ANY WAY
THE WIND
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*This book is for you. Never let them tell you you're not
magic.*



LADY RUTH

There's a candle in my window. Sputtering. Sizzling. Threatening to go out.

It won't. It hasn't. Not for twenty years.

I set a second candle beside it and point my wand at the wick—then hold my breath, hoping for fire.

The flame leaps up, warm under my palm. My tears finally come.

He lives, then. Jamie lives. Yes. Good. All right.

The flame is long and steady.

My son lives.

I reach for the decanter of Madeira by my bed. Cut glass. An antique. Andrew, my husband, wouldn't approve of this. Spirits so readily at hand. But Andrew had *me* close at hand. Until the day of his death. Someone to share the burden of his sorrows. I never expected to walk this path so long by myself.

I am not a melancholy woman.

I'm not spiteful, I don't hold grudges. There's no time for it—a grudge will eat up your whole life and leave you on your deathbed, realizing you never lifted your head to the sun or had a second piece of cake.

I let in the light. I eat the cake.

I was born on the Sabbath, you see. Blithe and bonny, good and gay. Oh, I was a golden girl, full of life—full of *magic*. I came into this world to find happiness. And I found it! In my husband and my own children. In Lucy, especially.

My Lucy, my daughter ...

Everyone said she was the spitting image of me—but she was better, I think. With her father’s sense of decency and my vigour. She was strong and stout and absolutely *pink* with life.

Until she met him.

The day the Mage died—has it been a year already? nearly two?—I took down a bottle of the *good* Madeira. I raised my glass. “*This one’s for you, Davy. I drink to your death, you merciless bastard.*”

That man twisted the life right out of my Lucy. Turned the girl’s head till she could only parrot his paranoia and prophecy.

I told myself it was a mercy when she ran away, a blessing that she disappeared without a trace. Davy was the most powerful man in the World of Mages. How far did Lucy have to run to escape his long reach?

I imagine her in California, under the sun. Or in Siberia, warm by a fire. I imagine her walking down a dirt road and leaving no tracks.

I imagine the child.

I believe there was a child. I *hope* ...

Well, I hoped that Lucy would reach out to me someday. A letter. A sign. (I’ve watched the skies for crows. I’ve checked the bottom of every teacup.)

But when would it have been safe? Davy was watching for her, too, I’m sure of it—his magic fiercer than mine and far more ruthless. Even the power of a mother’s love couldn’t match that man’s capacity for violence and vengeance.

The thought of him finding her ...

The thought of him finding *them* ...

So many nights, I’ve stood at this window and cast spells into the sky.

“Hey, you’ve got to hide your love away!”

“Keep it secret, keep it safe!”

“Mum’s the word, mum’s the word!”

I imagined my words finding them, my daughter and her child, and acting as another blanket of protection pulled tight over their shoulders.

But now ...

Now Davy is gone. The Mage is dead.

You can come home now, Lucy.

I stand over two candles, the old one flickering, the new one burning strong. I pour a glass of wine.

Come home, child, I need your help.

Come home to me.

Help me find your brother.

2

SIMON

“But ... that can’t be right. I *killed* the Mage.”

I’m sitting in Dr. Wellbelove’s study. When Agatha told her parents she was coming home, they insisted that I come, too, for dinner—and it’s been proper awkward so far.

She and I sat in our old places—next to each other, on the same side of the table—and her mum kept looking at us like she couldn’t decide whether to be disappointed or relieved that we aren’t together anymore.

Agatha and I were supposed to be a sure thing. I think her mum had already planned our wedding.

But we were a sure thing back when *I* was a sure thing, back when I still had magic—when I still had *all* the magic—and a calling.

And before I got stuck with giant fucking dragon wings.

Mrs. Wellbelove was appalled when she asked for my jacket and saw what was lurking underneath. At least she didn’t have to see the tail, too—I’d taken the time to wrap that down the leg of my jeans. (So uncomfortable. My leg gets chafed, and my tail goes numb, and I have to wear baggy jeans that make me look like someone’s dad.)

Dinner was *endless*. Agatha refused to make small talk, and her parents didn't know where to start. Everything about me is something no one wants to talk about. Hard to ignore the elephant in the room when you're making chat *with* the elephant.

I finished my dessert, Eton mess, in three bites, then Dr. Wellbelove invited me into his study. That's where he likes to have serious talks. The Wellbeloves have been something like a surrogate family for me (something a little more distant than that—like a surrogate surrogate family) ever since I joined the World of Mages. They used to invite me here for school breaks and holidays, even before Agatha and I started dating. And Dr. Wellbelove has always tried to talk to me about father-son things. He sat me down in this very study when I was 12 to tell me about the birds and the bees. (Though I feel now that he left out some pretty crucial information.)

Tonight, he took the seat behind his big glass-topped desk and got a stack of papers out of a drawer. "Simon, I've been waiting to talk to you until all the legalities of the Mage's estate were sorted..."

Legalities. "Sir—am I being arrested?"

Dr. Wellbelove looked up from the papers. "Arrested?"

"For the Mage's death."

He took off his reading glasses. "Simon, no. No one is getting arrested. The Mage's death was an accident."

"Sort of..." I said.

"It was certainly self-defence."

I nodded, miserably.

Dr. Wellbelove put his glasses back on and looked down at the papers. "The Mage—Davy—*David*—"

"David?"

"His estate has been settled now."

I shook my head. "The Mage was called David?"

Dr. Wellbelove looked up at me. He cleared his throat. "David Cadwallader."

"Oh."

“There are relatives, of course. But the terms of his will are clear: The bulk of the estate is set aside for you.”

“*Me?*”

Dr. Wellbelove cleared his throat again. “Yes.”

“But ... that can’t be right,” I said. “I *killed* the Mage.”

“Well,” Dr. Wellbelove said, straightening the papers, “that may be true. But, legally, it’s irrelevant. You’re still the Mage’s heir.”



The Mage’s estate ...

What does a man like the Mage leave behind? He already gave me a sword, but I’m not magickal enough to call it. He gave me his father’s wand, and I left it at Watford. I think.

The Mage made me his heir to get me into Watford—only magicians could go to school there, and I wasn’t one. I was a fluke. Killing the Mage was my last work of magic.

If Penny were here, she’d say that I *had* to kill the Mage, that *we* had to kill him. That it was the only way to stop him from killing me and who knows who else. It was already too late to stop him from killing Ebb.

If Penny were here, she’d say it wasn’t my *fault*.

But they *were* my *words*.

I killed him.

I killed my ... mentor, I’d guess you’d call him. My guardian. He never talked to me about father-son things, but I was in his charge. I was his blade, his not-so-secret weapon. I had a place at his right hand.

I never even knew he had a name ...

“There are some personal effects,” Dr. Wellbelove says, “furnishings. His wand and sword, a collection of daggers—”

“I don’t want them.”

“They’re very rare.”

“His family can have them. You said he had a family?”

“Cousins,” Dr. Wellbelove says, “in Gwynedd.”

“They can have it all.”

“There are other assets,” Dr. Wellbelove says. “His savings.”

“The Mage had money?”

“He had his stipend as headmaster and very few expenses.”

“His cousins can have all that, too.”

“No,” Dr. Wellbelove says firmly. “They can’t. Son—” Dr. Wellbelove calls me “son” sometimes, but he doesn’t mean it like a father would. (Well, maybe he means it like *a* father, but not like he’s mine.) “Listen to me. I know how unorthodox this is—”

“It’s not unorthodox, it’s demented! I can’t take money for killing him!”

“You’ll take the money because it’s yours, Simon. Legally. And—” Dr. Wellbelove’s face is getting red. “*Justly*. The man misused you. We all know that now.”

“He never *misused* me, sir—are people saying that?”

“No, I mean—Well, what I mean to say, Simon, is that we still don’t understand the scope of the Mage’s corruption, but we do know he was trying to steal your power. Possibly he *did* steal it.”

“He didn’t, I gave it away!”

“The bottom line is, he *owes* you, Simon. He owes you more than *this*. There’s no way that he—that anyone—can make up for the way he manipulated you, the years you spent furthering his interests.”

“He didn’t have to manipulate me. I wanted to help.”

“You were a child—”

“No, I was the Chosen One!”

Dr. Wellbelove looks down. And I look away. Both of us, embarrassed and ashamed. I was never the Chosen One. That was just another of the Mage’s lies. And Dr. Wellbelove and I were both fools to go along with it.

“It’s been decided by the Coven,” Dr. Wellbelove says. “The estate is yours, Simon.”

I lift up my chin. “I’m not the Coven’s concern anymore. I’m not a magician.”

Dr. Wellbelove sighs forcefully. “For Merlin’s sake, lad, just take the money.”

3

SHEPARD

I have known Penelope Bunce about a week.

In that week, I've tangled with a were-skunk, incited a vampire gang war, and been spelled stupid at least twice.

I'm having the time of my life.

We're in London now. She insisted on bringing me home with her, with all of them, as soon as she realized I was cursed.

What kind of girl brings you home *because* you're cursed? I mean, that's something *I* would do, but I'm pretty foolish about these things—which is how I got cursed in the first place.

She faked my passport. She faked my plane tickets. She and Baz will both cast spells in front of me now like it's nothing. I never thought I'd be this *in* with a group of magicians. Nobody gets in with magicians!

I mean, I think my heart will burst if I betray them ... Literally. There was a magical handshake, and I crossed my heart and hoped to die. But I was glad to do it. I'm seeing things no Talker ever gets to see—no “Normal,” that's what the magicians call us here. That's what Penelope calls me half the time. “The Normal.” Like she's only ever met one.

“Well,” she says now, letting me into her apartment. “Here we are.”

It's just the two of us. We all got out of San Diego in a hurry. I guess Baz's aunt has been arrested or something? Something about their old school. He took off as soon as we landed at Heathrow. And Simon and Agatha went straight to Agatha's house; she was pretty shook up.

We're all pretty shook up. I get the feeling that last week was intense, even by magician and vampire and dragon-boy standards. "I could sleep for a month," I say, sitting on Penelope's couch.

"You can sleep tomorrow," she says. "We're going to see my parents as soon as I've had a shower."

"Is something wrong?"

"Yes. Shepard. You've lost your soul to a demon."

I shrug. "Right. But that's not ... *urgent*."

"How is your spending eternity in demonic service not urgent?"

"It's eternity," I say. "Not tomorrow."

"Unless you get hit by a bus tomorrow."

"Are you going to throw me in front of a bus?"

"No, but on that note: Remember to look *right* when you cross the street. Americans are always walking into traffic..."

"Penelope. I've already been living like this for two years."

"Which is why we're going directly to my parents' house. Then you'll have your soul back, and you can die whenever you want."

"Your parents are going to unbind me from a demon over dinner?"

"Well"—she's looking through a stack of mail, twirling the end of her long, brown ponytail in her fingers—"there probably won't be dinner unless we bring it. No one in my house likes to cook. But otherwise, yes. My mother is the smartest and possibly the most powerful mage in all the World of Mages."

"Is she some sort of queen?"

"What? No." Penelope looks up at me, disgusted. "Mages don't have queens."

"Oh, right, pardon me for making that assumption in a country that actually has a monarchy."

“My mother is a magickal historian, and a headmistress, and an elected official.”

“And she’s really the most powerful magician in the world?”

“In the World of Mages.”

“Which is ... the world?”

“Which is the United Kingdom. And Ireland. And various islands.” She drops the mail back on the table. I kind of hoped Penelope and Simon’s apartment would be full of magical devices and artifacts. Like crystal balls and mystery boxes. But so far it looks like any other college student’s apartment. They’ve got the same Ikea couch my sister has.

“Let me call and make sure Mum’s home...” Penelope kicks off her chunky black Mary Janes. Doc Martens. I like them. She’s wearing argyle knee socks. I like those, too. I like her whole *Velma from Scooby Doo, but make it lazy* look. Her plaid skirt and baggy purple T-shirt. The tortoiseshell eyeglasses.

“Are you sure your mom will want to help me?” I ask.

“Of course she’ll want to help you.”

“In my experience, Speakers don’t go around helping Talkers out of traps...”

Penelope folds her arms and frowns at me. “Your experience with magicians is extremely limited and doesn’t include my mother. It just *barely* includes me.”

I return her frown with my warmest smile. (Which is *very* warm.) “Let’s do it,” I say. “I’m up for anything.”

She frowns more deeply at me. “That is the problem, you know.”

“I do know that. Yes. Indeed.”

4

BAZ

“You here to bust me out, Basil?”

My aunt is sitting on a velvet-upholstered chair in the corner of a stone cell. The Coven summoned a tower to lock her up. The guard outside had to wait till dusk before he could cast the spell to open the door.

“I’m here to bail you out,” I say. “For snake’s sake, Fiona, what were you thinking?”

“Bail? Pitches don’t pay bail. Or ransom.”

“Well, that’s fine,” I say. “My father paid it, and he’s a Grimm.”

She leans back and rests her boots on a writing table. “Come back when you’re ready to break me out properly.”

“This isn’t a joke. They’re only letting you out because Dr. Wellbelove and Headmistress Bunce vouched for you.” I only found out Fiona had been arrested because Penelope decided to call her mother before we left San Diego. When Penny came running down the beach yesterday afternoon, I thought someone had died.

“Wellbelove?” Fiona sneers. “And *Bunce*? Why on earth or below would they vouch for me?”

“They’re vouching for *me*. I promised that you wouldn’t do a runner.”

She huffs. “That was foolish of you.”

“Fiona. Can we *please* go?”

She sighs and takes her time standing up, then kicks over the chair.
“Fine.”



Fiona’s wand and car were impounded. I had to sign for those, too. If she fucks up before her trial, they’ll put me in a tower with her. I hold out her wand and keys.

“Back seat,” she says, taking them.

“I’m not sitting in the back seat.”

She opens her door. “I think you are. Because the front seat is for people who haven’t been kidnapped by—”

“Ha ha,” I say.

“Ha ha,” she says, tossing her handbag onto the passenger seat.

I climb into the practically nonexistent back seat of her MG (1967, Grampian Grey—classic), which Fiona treats as carelessly as everything else in her life. (You should see our flat; there are mice living in the sofa, it’s *shambolic*.) I have to sit sideways to fit. I wrench my knees past the seat in front of me. “Are you going to tell me what you were doing at Watford?”

Fiona starts the car. “I needed to pick something up.”

“In Headmistress Bunce’s rooms?”

She glares at me in the rearview mirror. “Those are your mother’s rooms, Basil.”

“No. Not anymore.”

“Always.”

“*Fiona*. The Mage is dead. The war is over.”

“That’s what they’d have you think.”

“That’s what I *do* think.”

“The war isn’t over until we get back what’s ours!”

“*What’s* ours, Fiona?”

“Our power, Baz! Watford! The Coven!”

“The Coven has already rolled back most of the Mage’s reforms. What more do you want?”

“They were never reforms!” She points at me in the mirror. “They were a campaign against the Old Families!”

“Well, they’re mostly gone now, is my point.”

“It’s too little, too late.”

“Fine then,” I say, “maybe you should run for the Coven and change things.” (This is a terrible idea, I’d never vote for Fiona. And I *can* vote now—the injunction against my family was dropped. All the Mage’s laws targeting specific families were overturned. We’ve got Bunce’s mother to thank for that.)

“In the old days,” Fiona pouts, “Pitches didn’t *have* to run. We were guaranteed three spots on the Coven.”

How am I supposed to reply to that? The woman is ridiculous. I roll my eyes and try to change the subject. “What were you trying to find at Watford?” I ask again, more gently this time.

She shakes her head. “Something of your mother’s.”

“Headmistress Bunce said there’s nothing of my mother’s left at Watford. She already gave me all of her books.”

“Then why are they still on the shelves in Bunce’s office?”

“That was my decision. I thought Mum would want them to stay at Watford.”

“How do you know what she’d want?” Fiona scoffs. “You never even knew her.”

I sit back. Away from my aunt.

Her eyes jump up to the mirror. “Fuck. Basil. I’m sorry. I didn’t mean that. I’m just—I haven’t had a cigarette in three days.”

And she isn’t having one now. Fiona isn’t allowed to smoke in the car with me; I don’t trust her with fire in close quarters. I look out the window, ignoring her.

“Basil. Don’t pout.”