

SUPREME MAGUS

Chapter 2 Prologue 2

The bullying ended, but his social life never stopped being miserable. How could he possibly make any friend with such a shameful private life?

He had to constantly hide the bruises with long sleeves and had run out of plausible excuses for his streak of black eyes months before. His classmates and professors simply pretended to not know and he just pretended to believe being that good of a liar.

It was painful, but manageable. He still had his little brother to share that pain with. Carl was all he had, his family, friend and confidant. He was Derek's whole world.

But when that age came, he started having crushes toward girls in his school, and those feelings weren't as easily suppressed. Once again, he felt utterly helpless.

He could not tell anyone about his problems, could not allow people to get close to him, otherwise he would have to think of an explanation for not being allowed to bring any friend home. Let alone a girl he liked.

Derek was tormented by cruel thoughts, often demanding the heavens why what others took for granted was but an impossible dream for him.

Fueled by the hormonal storms Derek's rage started growing relentlessly. He started having troubles sleeping at night, thinking about all those lovey-dovey couples out there.

Derek knew he was different from them. His crippling flaw wasn't being shy or having a bad case of acne. His problem couldn't be cured by any doctor, because it had a name and surname. Ezio Esposito, his trash bag of a father.

Derek started conceiving plan after plan to get rid of him, even if that meant killing him. At night he would devise elaborate and meticulous plans that often involved prolonged torture, making Ezio suffer like Derek did for all those years.

But when morning came, he would always realize it was a dumb plan. More wishful thinking than anything else.

Derek lacked the means and the ruthlessness necessary for getting rid of Ezio. No matter how much he hated him, Ezio was still his father and he was just an angry teenager.

Kill Ezio? Sure. And what about then? Live a whole life ridden with guilt? Running away from home to avoid being the arrested? And with what money?

Killing Ezio would have meant abandoning Carl forever, and destroying any possible chance of being happy in the future.

So, every morning Derek would swallow his plan along with the porridge and move on. His only real prospect was to cram as a madman, get a scholarship and get out of that hell as fast as possible.

Time flew, and in the blink of an eye it was the last summer before Derek's first year of high school. Despite the hot climate, his heart was cold as ice.

Derek had already hit his grow spurt. That combined with his martial arts and muscle training had given him a mean look.

Ezio was aware of that, and being a coward had started to avoid beating Derek as much as possible making Carl the new favourite target.

Derek had already tried standing up for his brother, but the only result had been Ezio buying a nightstick from the local Army Surplus and getting beaten with it instead that with Ezio's bare hands.

He saved Carl from that by begging and crying, and only because the ruckus had alarmed their neighbours.

So, whenever Ezio threw one of his tantrums, Derek could only watch his brother getting beaten, again and again.

Then, one morning Ezio received his first big commission in years. So, he wore his best suit despite the heat and had Derek preparing him the briefcase and the laptop.

Ezio was in a real hurry, he could not afford his competitors to snatch this whale. It could have been his career making commission!

Derek rushed to the door, where Ezio was already waiting, and helped him adjust the laptop's satchel.

Ezio ran to the elevator, pushing the button like a madman but the light remained red.

Cursing his damn condo, the building manager and his rotten luck Ezio made a rush to the stairs.

And that's when Derek noticed it. Turning his head to follow his father, Derek noticed that the light made odd reflections on the hallway's floor.

Ezio had just passed in front of him when he realized that the janitor had just washed the stairs but forgot to put the wet floor sign.

It happened all in an instant. Ezio made a long heavy stride, all his weight down and forward and then his foot slipped.

Derek could have warned him, could have even extended an arm and prevented the fall. But instead he chose to remain still.

Ezio tumbled down the stairs, bounced on the next alley and tumbled again crashing downstairs. His body was a broken mess, all his limbs bent in unnatural angles.

As any teenager, Derek had his smartphone at hand, so he started to make several photos to prove that the floor was wet and there was no warning sign.

His mind was already planning on hiring the best shark lawyer he could and sue the building managing firm responsible for his condo.

Only then he carefully walked down the stairs to confirm Ezio's death. He was there, incapable of making a moan or asking for help, but his eyes were fixated on Derek, begging for help.

Derek grinned to him and said: "Do you really think I am so stupid to never learn anything from you? As you more than once taught me, never delegate. If you want something done right, do it yourself. Your smartphone is in your pocket, take it out and call 911. I'm just a failure of a son, I do not want to mess this up for you, daddy."

Ezio's eyes were full of shock and hate, but that lasted only a moment. His head went limp, his gaze blank.

A laughter fought to come out, but Derek suppressed it. Instead he started shouting for help putting on his best terrorized son impression.

As always, Derek's mother was too obsessed with her problems, her grief, her feelings to bother looking for the lawyer, leaving everything in Derek's hand, since Ezio was no more.

Three birds with one stone. After a careful research he contacted and hired the best shark lawyer they could afford, so that Derek would be his client instead of his mother.

He told him everything about his father's incident, the abuse, and the need to make so that the money would be split between the three of them, mother and sons.

Both Derek and Carl were very firm on that point, they wanted the lawyer to start the process to get emancipation. With the money from the compensation and the inheritance, they had enough to be self sufficient until Derek could provide for them both.

What followed was the happiest period in their life. First, they obtained the inheritance, and shortly after they got emancipated and moved away from their mother's place.

Not even a month later, they received a very generous settling offer from the building manager. They used it to settle up and make proper plans for the future.

During the following years, bullies were not a problem. Derek and Carl were now both martial artists and had each other's back. Finally they could experience having friends and girlfriends, their domestic nightmare finally over.

They suffered many disappointments though, since too many of those so-called friends turned out to be people that wanted to use their parent-free house as a party house.

Also they had an hard time figuring what being a normal teen was supposed to be. While their peers seemed only interested in having fun and skipping classes, they were focused on studying and saving as much as possible.

Derek and Carl would spend holidays and vacations doing part time jobs to slow down the thinning of their bank account. They were not poor, but not rich either.

They knew they had to save as much as possible, in case rainy days would once more fall upon them. But all in all they had a good life.

Derek got a scholarship and obtained a bachelor degree in chemistry, soon followed by a master in biochemistry. Carl was doing well too, already got his engineering degree, ready to study for his master and already had a fiancé.

Despite being really happy for his little brother, that was really a painful thorn in Derek's side. He had always been the more socially inept between the two, and never managed to get into a stable relationship, not even in college.

Derek had no problem talking to girls, the problem always lied in him being picky and ended in his inability to trust. He had had many crushes, but never fell in love.

At the beginning he put the blame on his bad luck, always finding shallow or idiotic girls. After finding more than one good girl, he put the blame on his dark past.

But when confronted with Carl's happy relationship he could only blame himself. While Carl had suffered almost the same things, he got out much stronger and pure than Derek.

Derek was just too scared of being hurt again to let any relationship grow above a certain level, and that was an enemy that he could not just beat up.

Derek accepted the first decent paid job he got, working in the night shift of a big chemical company in the Q&A department.

Carl had shared with him, as a graduation present, that he was willing to propose to his fiancé as soon as he got his master. Hence Derek needed money because he had only two years to save enough to give his little brother a decent wedding.

Derek did not like his current job, but it was a way to start his working career and filling his curriculum. Also it was well paid, and he resolved to use the company insurance to seek for psychological counseling.

He knew he had problems and wanted to work them out. Derek consulted several doctors before finding someone he was able to work with, and after several months he felt he was finally starting to make some progress.

But alas, such happiness was not bound to last.