Chapter 125 Rincewind’s Past

Lucy and her friends went home, and I returned to Rincewind’s library alone.  I had lost nearly ten hours of study time.  The dark elf was not around the house, so I went down to the library by myself. Entering the room, I found Rincewind and the dark elf speaking. Rincewind was in his true form, at least from what my abyssal sight could determine. He looked to be in his mid-thirties with just a touch of gray in his beard. “Caleb! We were just discussing you.”

I felt that Rincewind being here was very fortunate. “I have so many questions for you,” I moved into the library to join them.

“Well, if one of them concerns the well-being of your friend Carrie, know that she arrived safely into the care of an excellent mentor,”  he smiled brightly.  “If it is where Achellion and Lezerath are, then I expect them back any day with our fifth team member. The sixth member, one of my past apprentices, will return to Earth shortly. They will be traveling to Boston and awaiting us there.”  He motioned for me to sit, “Now that we have a moment and some private time.  What other questions can I answer for you?”  Maivas nodded to Rincewind, walked past me, and went up the stairs.

I formulated my thoughts. “The transit threads that connect the planets through the layers,” I started with my most recent question. “You studied how portal locations on the planets to the transits move over time.” I walked to the shelves where the series of books were, “I read your research on their movement and their penchant to snap when they move too fast.”

“Eh, all that old research.  It didn’t turn up much.  When a portal thread snaps, it is like a spider’s thread.  It resettles and sticks elsewhere.  I was just trying to predict when it would snap and where it would reappear,”  he mused.  “I observed hundreds and never found a pattern on where it would reattach, but I could determine when it might ‘relocate’.” He produced a flask and drank a little before putting it away.

“Do you know what is happening on Mercanious?”  I asked directly.

“No.  Just rumors.  The angelics control the transit and the planets with an iron fist.  I have put inquiries out for Iris’ parents in that region, but I have not heard back,” Rincewind spoke calmly and sat across from me.

I began to think this conversation was not going to be as productive as I had hoped, “We have a theory,”  I started.  “We think Iris’ parents were not kidnapped to stop Mercanious from being cut off from the source but were brought there to speed up the process.”  Rincewind looked dubious.  I continued, “We also think the faux orc invasion from Mercanius that happens two or three times a year is a cover to bring over materials to do the same to Earth next.  We think that is why they are hiding magic from people to force the technology on the planet forward to prepare for life after Earth is cut off.”

Rincewind laughed harshly, “Boy, do you know what happens when a planet is cut off from the Source?  Babies are born dead.  Trees no longer grow.   Sapient creatures lose motivation to do the necessities of life!”  He calmed from his short, emphatic outburst.

“What if they stored enough aether to continue life?”  I offered another aspect of our theory.

“You do not know what you are talking about, young man.  I have been on a planet cut off from the Source. I watched it die around me.  You can not store enough aether to keep a planet viable for continuing life once the thread is severed,” he said, trying to reason with me.

Rincewind looked pained, but this could be extremely valuable information, “What happened?  How did you leave if you were on a planet without aether and no access to a transit thread?”

Rincewind reclined and sighed.  “A story too long to tell in one sitting.  The short of it?  My birth planet was cut off from the Source.  We didn’t understand what was happening at first. We were unaware of the transits, and aetheric magic was rare among us. We did have enough technology to get into space.  We traveled to a moon orbiting an iron core planet. It was the only planet in the entire star system that had some life.  That moon was still connected to the Source.  Even with that connection, my people did not thrive on that moon.”  He paused with sadness, and I thought he might not continue. “I was the only one left after millennia.”

He stood and walked. “It took me another millennium to learn magic and open my first portal into a transit.  My people were long-lived, but if we could connect to the Source we can greatly extend our lifespans. I traveled up the transits and then found my way to Earth... after a time,” he smiled to himself, recalling memories.

I asked, “How old are you?  You told me you were human, and I do not think I believe you anymore.”

He started laughing, “Trust me, I am human.  I am the human, or one of them.  The **perfect** human I am called out in the cosmos.  Or perhaps eternal, timelord, endless, ancient, infinite, or any number of other terms to describe the founding race of humanity. But I am not the only one.”

He looked thoughtful for a moment, “But maybe the only one in a few thousand light year’s distance on this layer.” He focused on me, “But we are not going to talk about that now.  Your leaps of logic lack facts.  After we deal with the aboleth, I will take time to explain.  Do you have other pressing questions for me?”

I didn’t want to drop the discussion because my instinct told me our guesses had merit to them.  But I moved on to my next question anyway: “I am struggling with aetheric magic.  I can not learn spells, and I think it is because my aether flows out of my too fast to control.”

Rincewind wore a big smile. “That is a brilliant observation, my young demon friend.  You are, in fact, correct. You are trying to paint a canvas with a six-foot brush.  All you do is smash the easel and make a mess.  I believe the correct analogy is that you are a bull in a china shop regarding aetheric control.”

“So I can never leave aetheric magic then?” I asked, disappointed and slightly angry for having spent too much time adding basic magic texts to my mind space.

“It is about fine control, my young demon. We could contain and restrain the majority of you aether.  If your aether pool was one hundredth its current size, or even one thousandth its current size, you would have a much easier time understanding and controlling it.  A simple alteration to an aether containment collar should do the trick.” He went into deep thought, “Yes, I can alter one for you, but you should not practice with it now. The fight with the aboleth is too close,”  he finished. He started to leave, thinking we were done.

“One more question.  Where are all the angelics?  They control Earth, but I have not seen one.  Why are they not dealing with the aboleth themselves?”  I asked somewhat heatedly.  If the angelics won Earth in the demon-angel war, why were they not here to defend it?

He nodded sagely, “Of those that conquered Earth thousands of years ago, some have been killed, some moved to higher layers.  A few of their descendants still roam the planet but are just a shadow of past power.”  I waited for him to ask the next question himself, and eventually, he added, “And you think this supports your theory?  Interesting.”  He thought for a moment, “The angelics did not respond to my request for aid to slay the aboleth.”

Rincewind paced for a moment before speaking, “Ok, Caleb.  Score a point for you.”  Rincewind walked to a shelf, taking a book thoughtfully. I did not catch the title.  “We can talk again tomorrow evening over a meal.”

“One more quick question.  What is your real name?   The first name you went by?”  I asked the man, who was much, much older than I had imagined.

He put on a far-off look, “A name I have not used in millennia.  A name that is best forgotten.  Arjun. Arjun was the name my mother gave me.  It’s best to forget the past demon-born.  Least we dwell too long on it and do not look to the future. In time, you will no longer consider yourself Caleb Silversmith. I change my name every hundred years or so, it helps keep me thinking I am young and keeps others from becoming suspicious.”

He walked out of the library and up the stairs.  I watched him go, trying to guess what motivated him to remain on Earth and help the humans here. He was definitely not an evil person. My best guess was he fell in love with someone in the past and maybe he had descendents on the planet.

After a time of mulling Rincewind’s true motivations, I returned to my studies.  I dropped my efforts for adding books on aetheric magic.  I searched for bestiaries next and sociology texts for Nashima.  I was starting to figure out the library’s organizational system. It made a weird kind of sense but didn’t help me at all find anything.  It was all chronological from the perspective of the librarian.  Sequences of books were stored together.  But the books appeared to be in the order of their original publication date otherwise.  Which meant I had to search each title one at a time.

How Maivas knew where each book was and what relevant information was in each book was beyond me.  Maybe he read every book in the library.  That was the only way someone could be effective as a librarian—if they read every book. I added piles of books to my mind space before everyone returned in the morning.

When Maivas came down the stairs, he handed me a collar made of silver with a simple clasp. “Mage Rincewind asked me to hand this to you. The clasp is simple, and it is easily removed. When you put it on, it will tighten around your aether core and limit your access to it.” He handed me the collar. “Be aware it will also prevent you from entering your mind space. He spent all night working on it. It is an exceptional gift, and I suggest you find a suitable way to thank him.”

“Thank you.” I took it, and everyone watched as I put on the collar. All my senses were instantly muted. It felt like I was in water when I moved. I felt helpless, and my control over my body gave way, and I transformed into my incubus body in seconds. The collar blocked all my powers. It also just revealed something I had avoided thinking. I was not a human with an incubus form. I was an incubus in a human form.

That shock hit me hard as mentally, and I knew I had been avoiding thinking about it. I looked inward. I focused and could see my aether core. A tiny speck in my inner focus. Another tiny speck was next to it, and I realized it was the gift from Andromeda. The core that filtered my essence to be able to purify death essence.

“Caleb, are you ok?” A worried Bedelia rushed to me, followed by the others. I shook my head and removed the collar, and everything rushed back to me, and I dry heaved onto the floor at the suddenness of it. The return of my abyssal senses had been too fast. My companions looked ready to attack Maivas.

“Wait! I am fine. I am just not used to it. It was just my first time using the collar,” I rasped as I regained my composure.

Maivas had not moved or reacted. He said, “It is attuned to your core strength. You should have just enough access to it to play with a trickle of aether. If you do it in public, I suggest you obtain an illusion device so you are not discovered in this form,” he indicated my incubus body.

“Thank you. Is Rincewind coming down soon?” I asked.

“Unfortunately, the mage had something come up. He will meet you in Boston on the 14th. He also wanted me to give you this,” he handed me a letter before going to the tables to start putting books back on the shelves.

**Friend Apollyon,**

**I finished the collar, and it will guide you in the path you seek to control your aether. It will take time, but remember, your new lifespan is immeasurable. Do not get frustrated. I have an issue that has arisen that needs my immediate attention. I will meet you in Boston. The contact information below is for Lezerath.**

**Also, there has been a development concerning you. The young woman from the Inquisition is traveling to your house in Virginia. She is seeking you out, but I do not believe it is for nefarious action. I have sent someone to delay her until Sunday evening so you can finish in the library.**

**Best Wishes, Your Friend**

Aurora was coming to see me in Virginia? Was she acclimated to life in the world and freed of her mind control then? That was going to be a very interesting interaction. I was not sure I would have time to meet her, but everyone else could handle her until I returned from Boston.

The next few days in the library ran by too fast. There was just too much knowledge that I wanted. My pressure headaches limited me from adding too much too fast, so I needed to slow down every once in a while. I did not even realize it was Saturday until Iris broke my focus, “Caleb! It is time to go to the party. Lucy and her teammates should be at the rental house in a few hours.”

I had completely forgotten about Lucy. I looked at the books longingly. “Just one more,” I stated as I went to grab one of the stacks.

“No!” Iris demanded, “You need a break, and you look a mess. You are going to take a shower and relax. Maybe that slut Lucy will throw herself at you. Well, maybe is too loose a word. She definitely will. We are going, NOW!” I smiled at Iris, maybe we would leave after I added just one more book.