Chapter 2 The World We Don’t Know (Part 2 of 2)

I had two weeks to come up with a great costume.  I needed something that could hide my age and hopefully give me the opportunity to pick up a sorority girl at the party.  I know it was a long shot but it was fun fantasizing about the possibilities while watching porn.

Rob and I kicked around ideas.  He thought dressing as Harry Potter was a great idea.  That way I could ask the college girls if they wanted to play with my wand.  I was leaning toward going either as a cultist so I could wear a mask or deep hood or both. In the end, Rob’s mother, Sofia, made me a black cloak with deep purple silk trim and a few ‘arcane’ symbols on the back. Rob’s mother, younger sister, and Rob lived on the Monroe estate down the road. They lived in a small outbuilding that used to house slaves back in the 1800s and was converted to quarters for the estate maid. Sofia was an illegal immigrant and worked for the old Monroe couple. She was only 32, having gotten pregnant with Rob when she was 15. When she got pregnant with Rob’s sister, Camilia, she fled to the United States. Sofia was a tiny woman who still had some youthful look to her. She worked hard for the Monroe’s and they paid her decently. She was determined that she would save enough money for both of her children to go to college. She was a good woman.

Finally, the day came. I wrapped the cloak and a Zoro mask in my backpack. My mother saw me off and told me to be careful and not drink too much at the party. Yes, she knew I was going to a college party. I texted my sister on the bus ride and she picked me up at the bus station in her jeep. I had hoped Hailey would be with my sister since she had sort of invited me to the party.

“Caleb don’t look so down. It is going to be a great party. If you were hoping to hook up with Hailey I am sorry but that ship has sailed.” Damn, she could read my mind. “Hailey is fucking an offensive lineman from the football team.”

“Way to burst your brother’s fantasy bubble Paige,” I said morosely.

“Don’t worry you might have a shot with one of the pledges. They with be dressed in high-cut nurses' uniforms and serving drinks. If they think you play for one of the varsity teams you might get lucky. Just wear protection,” Paige said. I was close with my sister and she knew I was a virgin. I was sure if I asked her she would find some college woman to set me up with but that just felt unmanly. For my first, I wanted to earn it.

Although my parents thought Paige was an angel, she was not. She had a half dozen boyfriends in high school and had sex with at least three of them to my knowledge. Sometimes she liked to vent to me about her boyfriends so I knew a lot about her dating life in high school. After her freshman year in college, we talked a little over the summer and she said she hadn’t dated anyone. She was too focused on rowing.

We stopped at her off-campus apartment and had to wait for four hours before the party started. Paige did homework and I played on my phone. Ashley showed up dressed as Catwoman, black latex suit and all. Michelle Pfieffer move over! Paige’s costume was Harley Quinn and she was getting dressed and putting on makeup in the bathroom now. Hailey was going as Poison Ivy and before I could talk with Ashley she showed up. They started talking and I was left out of the conversation so I just took out my cloak and mask and dressed. They both said they loved my cloak and that I should have dressed up like a wizard from Harry Potter instead of a cultist. I would never ever tell Rob they said that though.

I learned the house where the party was being hosted belonged to alumni and they were renting it out to the sorority. It was huge. The dining room had been set up as a summoning room for demons. The living room had a Tarot card reader. The pool deck would have music, alcohol, and dancing. The second floor was set up as a haunted house with the male pledges from a frat operating it during the night. There were going to be prizes for various games throughout the night as well as the best costume prize of $500 to a local restaurant.

Paige returned and she looked incredible. I didn’t recognize her as my sister. Hailey said to her, “Are you making a move on Paul tonight?” I looked up and Paige seemed to think.

“Maybe. If he is alone maybe.” She looked at me and explained. “Paul is a tight end on the football team. We went on a date earlier this year but with him being in the season haven’t had time to go out again.” I was going to say that maybe he found someone else but kept my mouth shut and nodded. I was too busy checking out all three woman’s outfits.

We drove to the party and the outside was decorated as well. Cars were parked neatly and a burly man at the door was taking everyone’s car keys. At least they were being safe. We entered the house and my eyes nearly popped at all the scantly clad college girls in costumes. My sister tapped me on the shoulder and whispered that I should try not to stare. She told me to keep my phone on me and call her if I needed her. If she didn’t answer then try one of the numbers I gave her next.

They left me gawking as I made my way through the house looking for a good target. A drink was put in my hand and I drank it in one go. The alcohol hit my system making me loosen up. I took a second and then a third trying to find confidence in the beverage to approach an isolated woman. I finally found a young woman to talk to me dressed as a Starbucks barista. She was also drunk and we drank a few more together as we talked. She was a freshman at the school’s rival to the south, A Tar Heel. Her sister was a senior at Duke and in the sorority hosting the party so that is why she was here tonight.

We were both extremely intoxicated and she invited me down into the basement as no one should be down there. I followed her eagerly and we started kissing sloppily on the couch down there. I had slipped my hand under her shirt and was clumsily fondling her left breast. She broke away from me as I was moving to give the other breast some attention. “I have to pee. I will be back soon…” She got up and with some effort went up the stairs.

I waited for her to return. I hadn’t even gotten her name… I tried to stand myself but it was too difficult with my level of intoxication. The room had even spun a little. I was now sitting down in the basement trying not to throw up. Maybe I should call Paige? No, I didn’t want to spoil her night. Just sit here and force my way to sobriety. Yeah, that wasn’t going to work. When was the barista going to return?

*Directly above my head, a group was being led by a hired actor going through a mock demon summoning he had pulled from the web. I wasn’t aware this was happening or that the ritual the man pulled was actually from a tomb over 700 years old.*

My senses were duller than I realized as I couldn’t focus and the room seemed tilted and blurry. Then the room came into focus instantly.  I was in a large white stone circular chamber with various banners on the wall.  A raised throne sat on the far side. A woman with shimmering red hair and…horns?  I must have passed out and was dreaming.  Her ample chest drew my attention.  If this was a dream maybe I could manipulate it.  I walked up to the woman and as I got closer she was sexy, cute, and hot all rolled into one.  My eyes gorged on her form so I tried to burn her image in my mind for use in future fantasies.

I was about to touch her when she spoke, “Are you done?” Her mouth smiled and a vivacious grin formed.  “Interesting, your mind is overflowing with impure actions for my person.  If I was physically in your realm I would take you up on them.” Her smile disappeared.  “So mortal I have taken a second of my time to answer your call out of curiosity.  Ask what you wish so I can deny it and we can extinguish this mental link and take a portion of your life essence for disturbing me.” She seemed to be losing patience but then smiled, almost cruelly.  “Oh, you don’t know what is going on here? A half-hearted summons and a clueless human in the circle.”  She stood and walked around me.  Her body moved like a runway model and she had a tail and black leathery wings pressed to her back!  I don’t know why but I found the tail extremely erotic as it flowed behind her.

“The little summons circle your friends made to summon a being from the 13th realm was like fishing for sharks with a fishing line of sewing thread.  If I hadn’t been paying attention I would have never noticed. And I can snap it at any time,” She smiled a smirk at me.

“What is your name?” She asked as she circled me.  She smelled divine but I couldn’t place the scent.

”Caleb.” I squeaked out under her lusty gaze.

“Caleb today is your lucky day. I haven’t had an agent in your realm in ages.  I am willing to anchor a sliver of my power to you. In exchange, you will gather life force for me from your realm.  If you do well I will empower you further.  Maybe even one day I will raise you to join me here on the 13th level.  You can join my hordes and help me move to the 12th and secure power there.” She finished and yeah, I was completely lost but the slit in her dress revealed a lot of her leg when she walked.  She snapped her fingers and my mind cleared instantly. “Better.  I turned off my sexual appeal.  So Caleb do you agree to be my agent in your realm?”

Did I want to make a pact with a demon? In the stories, this never went well. There was always some negative drawback like death or having your soul consumed or ending up burning in hell for eternity.

”There are no drawbacks and it looks like you need more of an explanation.” The demoness transformed into a tall human woman in a sleek black silky dress.  Her horns melted into her head and the wings folded behind her back completely disappeared. “If you have noticed I canceled all my persuasive abilities on you, not that they worked to their full effect in this mindscape.  That is where we are, a mental projection of myself through the layers of the realms into your mind.  I will not force you to become an agent…even though I could so easily.”

”There are 23 layers of reality.  Essentially they are mirror universes stacked upon one another.” An illusion of discs stacking one right after another appeared between us. “You, my young human being, are in the lowest level, the 23rd level,” she pointed to the bottom disc.  The higher realms,” she indicated the upper layers, “are closer to the source. The source generates all aether and it trickles down to the layers like gravity.  There are hundreds of stories in your realm of these other layers.  The 22nd layer for instance is called the Fey realm.  The Earth in that layer has elves and fantastical creatures from your myth and legend.  If you become my agent you will learn more about the other realms and have the ability to physically travel between them.”

“The thing is you can only travel up from the realm you were born on. So being born on the 23rd layer you can essentially travel to any realm.  But if your body doesn’t have enough power within it you would be crushed by the aether on higher layers.  As you are now you could survive on the 22nd layer for a period of time, maybe even the 21st for a short time.  If I gave you some of my life force you could reach as high as the 20th layer and still live there comfortably.” She paused waiting for a question. I was still trying to decide if this was real.

”Now I know you are asking yourself what do I gain from this contract? The first and most simple thing is immortality and power.  As long as you sustain yourself on life force you will be immortal.  Life force is what little aether trickles down to your realm that coalesces in a person.” She was going to continue but I had heard enough.  I didn’t want to kill people.  Her eyebrow rose as it was obvious from our interactions she could read my mind.

”Well there are other options my young man.  You have heard of a succubus from your legends?  I could turn you into an incubus. Succubus and incubus don’t need to siphon away a person’s entire life force.  Instead, they use people to create a mini vortex to suck in the aether from the surrounding environment through their aether core.  Usually, the ritual even helps the person increase their own aether core while the incubus siphons off the aether drawn through the aether core and converted into life essence.  This vortex is created through the act of arousal and sex.  The higher the arousal the stronger the vortex and the more aether you can draw to the person you are manipulating.”

“I see I have your interest now,” she purred. “You will need control of your faculties during the passion though.  If you lose yourself you can still kill your partner by accidentally sucking in all the aether life force from their core instead of the ambient aether being drawn through their core by the vortex.  Just a warning,” she smiled devilishly. I think her black dress had gotten smaller. “And if you collapse their aether core they will die in a few days, their soul starving to death.” The beautiful woman was convincing me.  She didn’t seem to be hiding anything from me.  She smiled a big white smile at me.  Well, maybe she was hiding some things.

“I would answer all your questions but keeping this connection open is a draw on my own aether. What I can tell you is as you become more powerful the aether in the 23rd layer will eventually not be enough to help you grow more powerful.  You will want to move to a higher layer to gain a purer aether. It may be a century before you feel the need to move to the 22nd layer but eventually, you will. But as I mentioned since you were born on the 23rd layer you can always travel back once you mastered the magic to do so.” She smiled at me again and I felt at ease by her benevolence.

”The 17th layer and 29,800 years…or close enough.  That is the answer to your next two questions.  What layer was I born on and how old am I.” I had been thinking about that exactly. “So more questions? Or your answer?”

I thought long and hard before asking, “How much of my aether life force that I harvest will go to you?”

She smirked at me before replying, “90%”  So basically I was slave labor.  Her expression frowned. “At 90% it would take you a decade of solid effort to return my investment in you.  And that is if you didn’t get yourself killed.  Even if you won’t age you can still be killed and I haven’t had much luck with men on your layer in the past.  They always end up doing something stupid.”

”50%” I wasn’t sure if I should be bargaining or not but the smile on her face said it was ok.

”80%” she responded and circled me like a shark.  I had just committed to the contract in her mind and now we were working out the details.

”75% and you give me more than a sliver of the power you mentioned.” She finished her circle and stood in front of me.  Her eyes turned to a purple glow and I felt her look into my soul.

”Done!  Well bargained.  I will imprint the knowledge of your new powers on your mind.  Those powers can be grown by expanding your aether core and spending your life essence stores. When you are strong enough you can contact me again through our link to bargain for more powers. Although you will only need aether to live this transformation needs fuel beyond the aether I am supplying you.  So when you awake I highly suggest you eat a lot.” I had thought we were going to talk and maybe I would get a lesson or two.  Some type of tutorial.

I woke in the basement and immediately my body wracked in pain.  My bones ached, my head ached, my genitalia burned and my muscles were like needles.  I didn’t know what time it was but the basement was empty.  The party was still in full force as the music was still echoing down to me.  I pulled out my phone and only a few minutes had passed.  She said I needed to eat.

 It was difficult to move but I made it to the stairs. I went to the kitchen and started eating everything in sight. The pledges in nurse uniforms watched In morbid fascination as I ate tray after tray of finger food.  I just couldn’t feel full. I went to the fridge and ate 12 sticks of butter. No still not enough. One of the girls was calling 911. She thought I was on drugs and thought I might kill myself by overeating. I needed calories and it didn’t matter what kind. I grabbed two-gallon tins of olive oil in the pantry and left to go out the front door. My mask was still on and the guy taking the keys didn’t stop me as I left. My sister’s jeep was parked down the street. The street was dark and the doors unlocked. I got in the back and lay down. It didn’t take me long to drink the two gallons of olive oil.

My body was burning up and I think I had made a terrible mistake. Then it started to fade. I was exhausted and sweaty. Maybe it was a hallucination from something they put in the drinks? It didn’t matter…my stomach lurched. I got the door opened and vomited up a massive pile of black sludge from my stomach into the bushes.

Paige found me next to the Jeep shortly after, “Caleb are you ok! What the fuck happened! One of the pledges said you had gone insane and were eating everything in sight. We are going to the hospital.” I held up my hand and pucked again. Thankfully it was dark here and she couldn’t see the black sludge that was coming out.

“I’m good now. I had been challenged by a girl. She promised…to show me her tits if I pulled that stunt.” That was the best I could come up with on the spot.

“Are you sure you are ok? I couldn’t get my keys back as I failed the breathalyzer. There is water in the back of the Jeep. I will wait until you are sure you are ok. Then we can call an Uber.” She said was concern in her voice.

“I am fine. I will call an Uber myself. You can go back to the party. I will be fine, I promise.” I said with conviction. She gave me her spare apartment key.

Paige waited for 30 minutes before heading back to the party and I had gotten into the Uber. I went to her off-campus apartment stripped and went into the shower. I turned on and fell asleep under the cold water.