Chapter 100 The Inquisition

My decision to meet Aurora was to satisfy my curiosity. I had no intention of signing on to the Inquisition. I was also aware I might have to charm her to hide the fact that I was a demon. It kind of felt like I was playing a game but held all the cards.

We got to the Panara and ordered our food.  The woman was very awkward, taking a long time to study the menu and asking the clerk many questions.  After ordering, I did not think she understood that we could wait at the table.  She waited until the food was ready and then sat at the table.  She eyed her food like it was the most precious thing in the world.

“How did you get involved in the Inquisition?” I asked the woman as she greedily into her turkey avocado sandwich.

With a full mouth, she started to speak, “This is really good.”  I waited for her to swallow.  “I was born in Ukraine.  The church found me in an orphanage when I was six and took me to Italy, giving me a new name and life’s purpose.  I have been learning to control aether and identify and fight non-humans ever since.”  She ate for a bit, then asked, “Can I order another?”  She got up and ordered another one.

She smiled and chugged her lemonade when she sat back at the table.  I asked, “Don’t they feed you?  And why did they send you to recruit me?”

“We eat well.  The variety is somewhat lacking, though.”  She munched on her crisps for a bit before continuing, “I don’t know why they sent me to recruit you.  I was getting ready to do a round of exorcisms in Canada with others when they sent me here from Los Angelos.” She clapped her hands softly, “Ok, here is my pitch,” she put her hands on the table and looked me in the eyes.  I was expecting some type of magic to seduce me.  She did have beautiful light blue-gray eyes.  “Caleb, angels are real.  If you come to work for the church, you will meet one and know the truth of it.  Evil is real too.  And you need to decide what side you want to be on when the real fighting comes.”

“Ok, Miss Constantine.  Hold up.  Do you fight evil in the transits as well?  Because there is a lot of evil in there.”  Her face scrunched in confusion.

“Transits?  Like subways?”  She asked, confused.

“No, I am referring to the threads called transits of dungeons that connect the 23 realities,”  I stated, but her confused face didn’t change. Did the Inquisition not know about the transits?  No, they must, but maybe Aurora was just a soldier and hadn’t been told everything.

With a blank face, Aurora said, “If you just realized your magic, then how do you know about the higher planes?  There are 23 planes of existence, I know that.  But something connecting them?”

My eyebrows arched, “The Magus Arcanum does not hide the fact they exist.”

She slapped the table, drawing attention to us.  “Those bastards already got to you?  Damn it. They said you were a newly realized mage.”  She had an epiphany, “That was why they sent me!  They knew it was a waste of time.”  She slouched in her chair.  “They didn’t want me to go hunting the black imps in Vancouver and assist with the exorcism with them and sent me here to make contact with you.”

“So I take it they don’t take you out much,”  I said jokingly.  The food and ditching her.

She slowly reached for her lemonade, “Yeah, I just joined Grand Interrogator  Delgado’s team a few months ago.  My first mission with them was in Germany, trying to confirm a quasit was harassing livestock.  Quasit are small annoying little demons,” she explained.

“We captured it, and I accidentally set it free, complete mishap!  Our second mission was in the Isle of Crete.  Supposedly a mermaid had surfaced, and the Inquisition alchemist wanted some scales.  Once I found the mermaid, I couldn’t kill her and told her to flee.  Delgado wasn’t happy.”  Damn, this woman liked to talk.  “We were just in Los Angelos delivering holy water.  I dropped one of the jugs.”  She didn’t just like to talk; she was also a  menace.  I could see why they had ditched her.

Before she could go on, I asked, “So, what type of magic do you have?  Do you have any magic artifacts on you?”  This conversation was quickly pittering out.  Her Panara light buzzed, letting her know her sandwich was ready.  She got up and started eating when she returned.  Her beauty actually didn’t diminish as she stuffed her face.

“I am a containment specialist,” she said with some mayo on her mouth.  My heart did freeze a bit, remembering when Iris had tricked me into a containment circle. “I can cast aetheric chains.  I know the script for the basic containment circles.  I have studied the weaknesses of devils, demons, and supernatural creatures.”  She returned to eating her second sandwich.

“Should you be telling me all this?”  I said, taking the first bite of my roast beef sandwich.

Aurora paused her sandwich to her mouth, “Probably not.  Forget I said that.”  Wow!  My impression of this woman was that she was a bit of an airhead.  She went introspective and just held the sandwich there as she thought.  I could see the gears in her head. I could see the gears in her head.  She finally came back to herself.  “Sorry bout that.  Sometimes I drift off.  I can not tell you about my items.”

I decided to tease her, “I could have sworn that was a Gunslinger aether pistol on your hip, though.”

Her eyes went wide, “No, it is a Taurus Public Defender with aether-infused slugs.”  She really was an airhead, or maybe she just had terrible short-term memory.

“Are those illusion earrings?”  I asked her next.  I wasn’t using any powers on her; she was just voluntarily giving me answers.

“What?  No.  This one detects demonic magics, and this one gives my thermal vision when I channel aether to it,” she said proudly.

“Demonic magics?  How does that work?”  She may be a bit simple, but she was still a danger to revealing my nature. I would try not to be careless.

She smiled at me, thinking she was going to educate me.  “When mages use aether, it sort of flavors the aether with the magic; one of the four elements, demonic, angelic, draconic, primordial, and planar, are the major ones.  This earring tingles when demonic-flavored aether is used nearby.”  I really wanted to test the veracity of her claim but did not.

“What is your relation with Magus Arcanum, the Inquisition specifically,” I asked, trying to get as many answers as possible from our meeting.

“Well, I guess we are kind of like the detectives.  We respond to requests to deal with tier 1 creatures and investigate higher-tier creatures.  If we can not handle it, we turn the discoveries over to our Primus, and then he decides if the Angelic Paladins or Magus Arcanum need to handle it,” she said seriously.

I tried to make a joke, “So you are like the minor leagues?  The developmental league.”

“Is that a soccer analogy?” She asked, perplexed.  “They do watch a lot of soccer at the monastery.  I guess that is accurate.  We discovered a chain demon operating in Nepal when I was still training.  It killed six of our Inquisitors before they called in angelic paladins to handle it.”

One more question before I left, “Monastery?  Where is that?”

“It is in the mountains and secret, so I guess I shouldn’t tell you,” she said plainly.  I knew if I pressed her, she would reveal the location.  It was easy to see why her companions did not like working with her.  I bet the imp that escaped had probably asked her to open the cage so it could go pee, and she let it.

She had finished eating, and Aurora said, “I guess I failed to recruit you.  Maybe I can catch up with Grand Inquisitor Delgado,”  She mulled,  “He did book my hotel for three nights. So maybe a short vacation is in order.”

I left the woman working on her phone.  I learned enough not to be afraid of the Inquisition.  She was as dumb as a bag of rocks.  Maybe they did something to her to make her that way in order to control her.  I wouldn’t be surprised.  I was sitting in my car in the parking lot, checking messages on my phone, when she exited the restaurant.  She got in her rental and drove away.  Should I follow her?  Maybe this was all a farce, and they were going to abduct me.  I followed her to the Marriot but didn’t pull into the parking lot and kept driving.

I think it was too hard to believe that someone was that dense.  She had magic and acted like she was five years old with her reasoning skill and focus.  I wanted to spy on her, but Jade called me.  “Hey, Caleb.  Monsoon is meeting Traci in an hour.  Just wanted to let you know.  She thinks he is a practitioner of ancient Chinese medicine.”

“Traci went for that?”  I asked skeptically.

“We told her you set it up.  We told her it was just to alleviate her pain.  She doesn’t know Monsoon is going to heal the damage.”

Maybe I did not need to be there then.  I considered for a moment and decided to erase her memory anyway.  Better safe than sorry.  The Mandy failure was already coming back to haunt me.  It was going to happen at the ranch. Before I left, I looked up at the Marriott.  Aurora opened the curtains on the sixth floor and stepped out on her balcony.  Ok, I knew what room she was in.  I drove to meet Traci and Monsoon at the ranch.

Frost smiled from the porch as I parked.  “Who are you?  And what have you done with Frost?” I accused.

Realizing she was smiling at me, Frost steeled her visage.  “Caleb, they are in the parlor.  Monsoon should be done soon.”  As I walked past her, she whispered, “Thank you.  It worked.”  I smirked as I went to the parlor. Frost would be asking for the core enhancement soon.

Traci was sitting in a chair with her mother standing behind her while Monsoon worked on the knee.  Traci waved excitedly at me, “Mother, this is Caleb,” she looked back at her mother, who was studying me.  Her mother was in her early forties and hadn’t yet lost her looks. She did have a wedding band and engagement ring, and I didn’t plan to be a home wrecker.

Her mother started casually grilling me while Monsoon worked.  She flew out from Kentucky for the weekend to see her daughter and didn’t want her to go to a strange house for holistic medicine alone.   When Monsoon stood, I activated my voice and charming eyes, enthralling both Traci and her mother.  I told them they came out here and got some acupuncture from a skilled healer.  I had changed their memory to think I only suggested the appointment and was not the one who had set it up.  They had only met Frost and Jade, so they left thinking that was it.

As they drove away, Anya came into the room, “Caleb!  I admit I was angry at you for the longest time.  Now I am glad I met you.  Jade acts all authoritative in public but is a nice person in private.” Anya was the catkin figure skater who I took on a date, and then she used me to relieve her sexual heat. She had then tried to make me forget about the encounter.

“Where is Jade?”  I asked the smiling Anya.

“Mandy and Jade went to see Agatha in the city,” Anya said helpfully.  I checked my phone, and Jade hadn’t texted anything about meeting her mother.  Whatever it was about could not be good if Agatha was back in the States.

Anya bit her lower lip hard enough to make it visibly bleed, “Caleb, do you want to go and see the stables?  I have been helping with the renovations and researching studs and mares for Jade to purchase and breed.” Her tone made it clear what Anya had in mind.  Anya was a bit of a masochist, and I did not want to have this type of interaction with Frost around.  If Frost saw Anya and me having somewhat violent sex, then Frost would probably get scared off.

“Sorry, Anya.  Rain check.  I have plans for the evening,” I said while trying to sound disappointed.  I did need more life essence, and Anya had a lower tier 2 core. In my abyssal sight, it looked slightly fragile, so it was still healing. Andromeda was right. My enhanced sight made everything easier. I was like putting on glasses; everything just looked crisper and easier to interpret.

The truth was I had no plans for the evening.  I was curious about Aurora, though.  Maybe I would spy on her.  I drove home, considering how to spend what remained of my Wednesday night. It was almost 10 PM, so I talked to my parents before going to my room.  It was cloudy outside, so it was extremely dark.  I showered and stepped out to the fire escape, and transformed.  I took to the air and headed to the hotel.

I landed softly on the balcony and listened.  The room lights were off, and I reached for the sliding door.  She had left it unlocked.  This was also a surprise as I thought she would have been trained to secure her place of sleep due to the nature of her job.

I paused, was I crossing a line?  That mysterious self-imposed ethical line in the sand.  I told myself I was doing this to protect myself. I slowly opened the door, moved the curtain aside, and looked into the room.  I had my abyssal sight active.  No containment circles, and all the aether-infused items I had noticed on her when we met were scattered across the room.

The bed was empty and still made.  I entered the room and looked around.  Two duffel bags were open on the chairs.  Discarded clothes littered the floor—it was the outfit she had worn today.  I walked silently to the bathroom.  The bathroom door was open, and it was empty.  She wasn’t here.

I searched through her things.  Clothes, a case of aether bullets, her earrings, and a small revolver were on the table.   If she was in the hotel, she must have gone swimming or to the fitness center.  I paged through some leather books in the duffle bags.  Two were on supernatural creatures, and the third was a journal.  I looked, and she did have very nice penmanship.  I paged through the book to add it to my mind space. I then read the entries.  She was documenting her days in the journal.  I paged to today.

Met the target, Caleb Silversmith.  He played a good game of ice hockey but was not as impressive as the videos on the web.  He bought me dinner at a local shop.  The turkey avocado sandwich was amazing.  I would describe Caleb as highly intelligent.  He has already been in contact with the Magus Arcanum, so I doubt he will be interested in working for us. I was unable to get him to come with me to the hotel room to read his aether core.  I was advised to wait until Grand Inquisitor Delgado called for me.

I stood and started searching the room for the aether reading device.  I found it in the bathroom in a small toiletry bag.  It was a bulky blood analyzer.  I had seen them at the Bazaar but did not see a need to purchase one.  It read a core and if they had any genetic markers for the demi races.   So their plan must have been to get me to the room and read my aether core.  Aurora was a terrible seductress then. She had the looks but not the moves.  I heard footsteps in the hallway, made my way to the balcony, and closed the sliding door.

I was in my Caleb body when she came in and turned the lights on.  I peeked through the cracks in the curtain…bathrobe, and bathing suit.  She had gone swimming.  She started to hum to herself as she stripped.  Ok, peeping Tom was not on my list, but for some reason, it excited me.  She had very feminine hips, a narrow waist, and a modest chest.  She had light tan lines telling me she liked to sunbathe.

She slipped into the bathroom, and I heard the shower running. I waited, and she came out drying off and going through her duffel bags for clothes. Granny panties, loose shorts and tee shirt. She then spent time setting up the room. She put her gun under one pillow to start. Then she put both stud earrings back on. She rolled up the belt and placed it on the nightstand. I never asked what that magical device did.

She paused and looked at the balcony for a minute. I was ready to jump and transform. Instead, she took one of the leather-bound books to the bed. It was the journal. She started to write in it. I thought about going to the lobby and coming up to her room. Instead, I just jumped off the balcony and transformed. I felt that Aurora did not demonstrate to be a threat.

I flew home and slept a little uneasily. I had dreams of being pursued by sexy nuns with Wonder Women’s lasso of truth. It was not an unpleasant dream other than the fact I was being pursued.

Thursday and Friday went by quickly. On both days, Bedelia and Artica drove up to Baltimore and came back really late. They were going through the containers, and everything was being delivered over the weekend, including the Bentleys.

The team was technically in first place now in our league since we had made up one of the forfeited games. Rob was having his lunch in the open study room and completely avoided me. I tried to approach his sister, Sofia, but she was also keeping her distance from me.

Traci approached me on Friday, saying her knee felt phenomenal, but her coach thought it was not healed as the specialist said the ligaments were severely strained. So she was still not allowed to compete.

The only life essence I harvested was from a session with Kiri on Thursday and Abigail on Friday at Iris’ house in the afternoon. Just 35 life essence, giving me 51. I was definitely getting some diminishing returns as their aether cores gained some resistance to the vortex. I flew every night to check on Aurora. I hoped she would have left by now, but she was there, usually lying in bed reading one of the tombs or writing in her journal.

On Friday night, I caught her talking on the phone. From what I could make out, the two other members of her team were coming here from Vancouver. This made me slightly concerned as I thought Aurora would fly to meet them, not the other way around. Saturday was an away game, and I would be gone almost the entire day.