Chapter 58

I moved my age back to my high school self while I walked. The streets were well-lit, and I paged through my messages and texted as I walked. Rob had covered for me with the parents as planned. Molly and Mary were excited for the weekend dances….I really should get some dance practice in. Maya sent me a nice note that Paige had told her I would be in Amsterdam for New Year’s. She wanted to visit me. Hell yes! I found the hotel information in an email and sent it to her.

Someone bumped into me while I was focused on my screen, sorting through Paige’s messages from the last two days. It was a hard shove, and I think he meant to knock me down, but I just stumbled. I looked up, and the guy looked a little surprised. He was about 6’2” and easily over 250 lbs. He collected himself, “Give me the backpack!” He stated while looking up and down the sidewalk. There was no one in sight at 2:00 am.

“No,” I said and kept walking. I heard a click and turned. He now had a knife—stupid idiots. I activated my abyssal eyes, and he was just a human. I activated my charm and voice together, “Ok, this is how this is going to work, friend. You are going to go to the nearest police station and confess all your crimes and answer any questions they might have of you in regard to those crimes. Do you understand?”

The mugger nodded and turned to leave. Should I say anything else… “Also, you never saw me tonight. This encounter never took place!”

I kept walking unperturbed. The Wal Greens was pretty dirty as Pharmacies go. It took ten minutes to get the one guy working at this hour who knew how to do the FedEx shipping. It cost $172 to get the package there before 8:00 pm tonight at Iris’ house. I set it up for no signature and just a drop-off. I stuffed the $20,000 into the box.

I opened the UBER app and got a ride to the airport, figuring my exploration of the seedier side of the rich and famous was over. When my driver arrived 15 minutes later, I was a little shocked it was a demi with a strong aether core. As I got into the back, I used my bracer to access him. 1.12. He wasn’t shielded from my sight. He had deep green skin and ears that reminded me of fins on a fish. “Airport?” he asked.

“Yeah, please. My flight leaves in two hours,” I replied, studying him in his rearview mirror.

“Should be 15 minutes to get there at this time of day,” he said, doing an illegal U-turn.

I couldn’t hold my curiosity in and could see the airport in the distance, “So I don’t recognize your species….” He focused sharply on me in the rearview mirror.

He finally answered, “Genasi. A lesser genie with an affinity for water. Human mage?” he asked. I nodded.

“I am not familiar with genies. Can you tell me more about your culture?” I asked but remained on guard.

“Not much to say. Genasi have an elemental affinity, mine is water. We are fairly rare on Earth. I have only encountered seven others in the last forty years. We are mostly nomadic. Just trying to make a living. Are you with the Magus Arcanium then?” He asked.

“No, no!” I paused and noticed relief on his face. “So, do you travel in the transits?”

“No! Perfectly happy being safe and sound on a planet! Earth isn’t the best as planets go, but not the worst by far,” he said, chuckling.

“How many planets have you been to?” I asked, leaning forward, not wanting to miss anything.

“Earth is my third. Definitely the most polluted of the bunch. And definitely, the most divided of all. I can’t believe how you humans let so many demis into politics!” My mind flashed back to the senator at the party. “It is almost like the Magus Arcanium is orchestrating it all and looking the other way on purpose.” We pulled into the airport drop-off. But I really wanted to talk more with this interesting character.

I passed him a $100 bill after paying on my phone for a tip, “How do you travel between planets? I just started developing my magic, and I am still learning,” I smiled as he took the bill.

He put the car in park and turned in his seat, “For Genasi, we contact our elders, the true genie. They open a portal between the worlds.” It looked like my $100 bought me more questions as he was waiting patiently.

I tried to phrase my question carefully, “Why do you not hear more about genies? I know there are legends but my…education…hasn’t touched on them.”

“The djinn, dao, efreeti and marid are more elemental flavored aether than substance. They rarely meddle in the corporeal being affairs. When they do, they create genasi,” He held out his hand, indicating himself. “We have just a thread of the power of our lineage. We also age, unlike our sire. I might live three of four lifetimes of a human, but I will eventually die.” He turned around and put his hands on the steering wheel, indicating my time was up.

“Thank you. That was super informative. Can I have your name? And perhaps your number in case I ever need a…question answered again?” I asked knowing I was reaching.

He studied me and reached out his hand to shake, and I did, “Shimiheesh. But Shim is fine. If you need a ride…” he smiled. “Then you can call, and we can negotiate. My number is 786-434-9933.” I quickly put his number into my phone. I traced the conversation in my head, and it was obvious that the ride I was referring to was a trip to another planet, not an UBER. That was fine. I was still finding my way in my new world. I gave him another $100 and went into the airport.

It didn’t take long to check-in, and I was waiting in the terminal. I put Shim’s number into both of my phones. When I looked at my Apollyon Silverhorn phone, I had three missed calls and a text. I looked at the text message.

***This is the Magus Arcanium Mundus. We would like to discuss your recent harvest of an alpha winter wolf. Please call us at any time. Dexter Briar***

My first guess was they were looking for the tier 2 aether crystal. Or maybe they just wanted to let me know where I could pick things up. I moved to a private location and called.

“This is Apollyon Silverhorn returning a call for Dexter Briar,” I said to a woman who picked up.

“One moment, please. He is expecting your call,” she said very professionally.

It was just 30 seconds when a man came on the phone. “Thank you for returning my call, Mr. Silverhorn. We have completed the harvest of your alpha white wolf, and we have interested parties. I am sending you a document now to review the harvest. I opened the document.

**Item Fair Market Value Request to Purchase**

Aether Ice Gland, Alpha $25,000 $40,000

Alpha White Wolf Pelt $12,000

Alpha White Wolf Meat $2,500 $5,000

Alpha White Wolf Skeleton $2,500 $10,000

Alpha White Wolf Heart $500 $500

Alpha White Wolf Liver $500 $500

Alpha White Wolf Genetalia $500 $500

As I was looking it over the man talked, “The method of killing left the wolf in excellent condition. With these parts our fee is $8,700, which we have taken from your bounty of $10,000. $1,300 is now being deposited into your account.” My phone chimed with the deposit. “The meat, heart, liver and testicles have been requested for purchase by another organization. Most likely as cooking ingredients. Can I release them?”

It was more of a statement than a question. I said, “Yes, that is fine.” My phone chimed, and another $6,500 was deposited.

“Now, the skeleton should also be a simple matter Mr. Silverhorn. I am assuming you have no use for it. We have an academy that would like to display it, and they have offered a more than fair price. Can I proceed with this transaction?” He said conversationally like it was already a fact.

“Yes,” I said.

“Very good,” he sounded happy. It was about ten seconds, and $10,000 hit my account. Now no one has had inquiries about the pelt of your trophy. If you give us a week, I am sure we can find a buyer or if you want it made into a cloak or rug, we can do that at no charge to you as a thank you for being so accommodating.” His words were practiced, and I knew the next was going to be an ask for the gland.

“That is fine,” but I preempted his next question. “Why is the gland so valuable?”

He was quiet on the other end for a minute before speaking, “The rarity for one. A lower-tier 2 aetheric ice gland is not common on the local markets.” He paused again. “The viability is about three months. If you wish, we can open bidding on the gland, or you can sell it to the interested party. He is an alchemist of some renown with the Magus Arcanium. As an aetheric ingredient, it would normally be taxed at 20%. But the buyer has the authority to wave the tax if you wish to sell to him,” he said with underlying meaning.

He was telling me the guy who wanted the gland was powerful, and I would be doing him a favor. I was a small fish swimming in a big pond right now. I made my decision, “That is fine. He can have it. Please make the pelt into a rug. Where and when can I collect it?”

“Excellent Mr. Silverhorn! The funds will be released to you once our interested party has the gland in hand. Your new rug will be a top priority for us, and I expect to have it ready in four days and we can deliver it or you can pick it up at any Bazaar.”

“The Bazaar in DC is fine. Let me know when with a text.”

“Very good. Have a wonderful day Mr. Silverhorn.” He hung up.

I could see how financially lucrative this was. Well, if I had to split it with a group of six, maybe not as much. And all this didn’t even include the aether crystal that was in my car.

I was about to delete the three messages when I noticed one was from Amelia. I played it.

*“Mr. Silverhorn, I have talked with the sellers, and they have agreed to sell for $720,000 cash. I have started the paperwork and just need your approval to proceed and utilize the funds you deposited. Once the sale is complete I will have contractors out at your house in a few days for the highspeed data lines and repair of the septic. I did learn the septic needs to be removed and a new septic needs to be installed away from the stream. The cost for the new tank is around $40,000 and the removal will be about $12,000. I am still getting information on the data lines.”*

I texted Amelia to proceed with the sale and send me the documents to sign digitally.

My plane was called to board, and I got in line.  It appeared my flight was only going to be about half full. I sat in my seat and closed my eyes.  I slipped into my mind space to see how well I did with life essence.  Not great, but good enough, 102/140.

I didn’t hesitate for too long before increasing my Abyssal Speed up to Lower Tier 2. My life essence now read 2/150. It was a never-ending push to accumulate life essence and level. I actually thought I had been doing fairly well. Just five weeks as an incubus, and I had a stable of willing women.

I exited my mind space, and my body was cold, almost freezing. I guessed this was from the upgrade, but I hoped it would pass. Soon heat returned but elevated to an uncomfortable level and then abruptly ended. I now felt tingly…different. I could sense I could move faster and wanted to try it out, but that would not happen on a plane. The flight attendant asked me to buckle up, and I complied.

I went to my mind space to see if I could experiment there. The first thing I did was add a lie detector. An ability appeared.

Discern Truth Tier 0 100 life essence Read a person’s thoughts to ascertain if they speak truth

The good news is the ability was cheap to learn. Unfortunately, it didn’t detect lies, just the truth. I also guessed that if the subject believed something was true, it would read as the truth. I still thought it useful and planned to invest in the ability when the time was right.

I moved to my dojo. Could I see how much my enhanced speed improved in my mind space? I started going through some punches and kicks and….hell yes! The air almost snapped with my strikes. I was going to dominate Kiri in our next match. I spent a few hours with my clubs, getting used to the new speed. Once I was confident, I went to my bed and slept in my mind space for eight hours.

On waking, I practiced some dancing. Not easy by myself and just with some books for reference. Maybe I could try and make myself a partner, a construct in my mind space. I had wanted to start with birds but I had a more urgent need now. Hopefully, if I failed, I could dismiss the construct. The female body I was most familiar with was Chloe. I had just spent three hours staring at her in a well-lit room.

I started imagining all the details of her body, her hair, her eyes, her musculature, the smell of her hair, the taste of her lips, the feeling of her body as we touched, her smile, how her intimate parts looked and responded to our coupling.

Chloe was standing before me naked. It had worked. She was still and looked exactly like her! I examined her, and I would call this a success. But she didn’t move. I tried giving commands, and nothing. A flesh statue is what I had created. I didn’t understand what I did wrong. Maybe I should have been thinking about her personality and how she moved as well.

I touched her lips and tried to pull a prince charming and kissed her. Not that I expected that to work, but the feel of her lips was perfect, just like the real world. I massaged her breasts, and her nipples didn’t respond and get hard like Chloe. I stepped back and sighed…she had no life to her. Life? Was that the answer? Did she need an investment of life essence? I put my hand over her heart and willed some life essence into the construct. I felt my life essence tick down a point, and Chloe’s head turned and looked at me and smiled.

I stumbled back as the smile seemed more mechanical than natural. “Hello?” I asked a few paces away.

“Caleb, you were wishing to dance?” Chloe said.

“Um, yeah. But what are…what did I do?” I asked, uncertain if I should try and erase the construct or not.

She cocked her head like a dog, “I am a fragment of life force you molded into this image. I draw from your thoughts and subconscious. What you know, I know.”

“So, can I absorb you back into my life essence pool then?” I asked, somewhat excited. If this construct did, in fact, have access to my subconscious thoughts, then maybe it had answers I knew but couldn’t access. Information that Andromeda gave me but didn’t reveal.

“No. But you can dissipate me. You will not regain the life essence you vested into my creation.” She said without any hesitation or fear of being destroyed.

“If I had vested more than one life essence, would you be any different?” I asked when I noticed my banner read 1/150.

“You are not powerful enough to manifest an independent construct in your mind space. If you tried to add more life essence, it would be like trying to fill a cup with a pitcher of water. The excess just spilling over.” She said while rolling her neck and testing the movement of her limbs.

“How did you know that? Did I know that and I am tellng myself?” I asked getting confused.

“Yes, you just learned this when you created me. Your control of your life essence and neophyte understanding of creation in your mind space puzzled it out, but you had not voiced your conclusion yet.” She said. She started rubbing her hands along her body, exploring.

My mind reeled and sought clarity, “Could my conclusion be wrong?”

Chloe stopped and looked at me. Her eyes were a lively brown like a remembered, and after a pause, she said, “Yes. You could be wrong in your assumptions. I suggest you don’t believe everything I say. I am essentially your subconscious mind.”

Damn it. I was basically talking to myself in my head. Is this how people end up in psych wards? “We can still work together in here,” Chloe said, interrupting my thoughts. “You created me to learn to dance. What you learn in here,” she waved her hands in my central chamber, “Will be transferred to the real world. Knowledge and muscle memory are convergent. So shall we dance? And can I have some clothes?”

A few thoughts later and Chloe had a nice red dress on. The weird thing as we started practicing some simple ballroom dances was that Chloe didn’t need to reference the books I brought into my mind space. She acted more as an instructor guiding me through the process of learning the steps. It was just a few hours when I felt comfortable with the waltz, tango, and slow foxtrot.

Before I left, I said, “I can’t call you Chloe. That is too weird. What name do you want?”

The woman smiled and said, “Pandora.” I nodded, thinking it was an easy name to remember. After all, I had actually been the one to think of it, albeit subconsciously.

I returned to the plane and found we were in the air. I decided to take a nap in the real world and closed my eyes.