Chapter 48 The Orc Tamer

After parking in Iris’ driveway, I texted my parents to let them know where I was.  I got out and entered the house.  I expected something somewhat disastrous inside...maybe Vida tied up in a chair and holes in the wall.  Instead, I found Vida and Abigail in the living room watching Netflix on the TV in the living room.  Iris didn’t have cable, so Abigail’s pink iPad was plugged into the TV.

Both young women were in boxers and tank tops, sleeping attire.  “What are we watching,” I asked as I moved to the couch to sit next to Abigail.  Vida had a blank face and was absorbed in the screen.

Abigail answered, “*Emily in Paris*.  We are still on season one if you want to join us.  Vida got her translating ring, but she doesn’t talk much.  But she likes the TV.  We were watching on the iPad to start but moved down here to the TV.”

“Where are Kiri and Iris?” I asked, not seeing them.

“Iris is studying upstairs, and Kiri left after we got back from school,” Abigail answered and turned off the screen.  Vida looked up, confused at the blank screen.  “Iris said you need to be here for Vida to answer questions.  She just nods yes and no to our questions now that she understands us.  But we know she can understand us and speak.”

“Good.  Did Vida eat?” I asked, and Abigail pointed to an empty pizza box with a sour face.  Abigail liked to eat healthily.

“Ok, Vida.  Please come with me. I have questions.”  I sat at the kitchen table.  Using my soothing voice and eye contact, I renewed my charm effect on the orc girl.

I started my questioning, “Please answer my questions as completely as possible.  Do you understand?”

“Yes, I understand Caleb,” Vida responded with a nod.

Well, she knew my name.  I asked my first question, “Was the planet you came from overpopulated?  What can you tell me about the planet?”

Vida answered, “The planet is called Mercanious.  It has twin moons and a yellow-red sun.  The planet is not overpopulated, but it is very cold.  The white skins control much of the planet.  My clan, the Nightshades, are from the forest moon.  The white skins used their magic to invade and conquer us.”

I wondered if this was enough information for the Magus Arcanium to locate the planet.  I still was wondering why they didn’t take the small-scale invasion seriously, “Vida, why were you sent here? How were you selected to come here?”

“I was part of the cast-offs. When we reach our first blood, the woman are pitted against each other. If you lose three times, you are deemed too weak to give birth to the next generation. We are given the choice of exile to the transit or a chance to gain a warrior’s crest. With the male cast-offs, we are divided into teams and sent to other planets,” she finished answering my questions.

It sounded like a brutal culture.  The expense of sending essentially child orcs light year’s away didn’t make sense to me.  “What were you supposed to do once you got here?  Were you making the planet colder?”

For the first time, Vida didn’t answer immediately.  “I don’t know.  The shaman I was with noticed I had a spark and pulled me out of the warrior ranks.  She selected an all-female team to support her from all the cast-offs.  I think....” she paused, “I think the shamans sent through the portal failed a loyalty test to the white skins.  She liked to yell at us and talk to herself.  She thought we were sent here to map the planet, not build ritual cold sinks.”

“Are the white skins going to invade?” I followed up quickly.

“No, they are still conquering the moons.  And this was just one of many planets that cast-offs are sent to,” she answered immediately.

“How many cast offs were sent to this planet in this recent purge?”  I asked after a few minutes of processing.

“Five hundred and eighteen, three hundred six males and two hundred and twelve females.  Only forty-two white skins among us,” she added with the first note of anger at how few white skins were exiled.  She couldn’t hide her hate of the ice orcs.

“That is a very specific count.  Does it have meaning?  How often do they send cast-offs here?”  I saw Abigail in the doorway listening, and she had a sad face.

“I counted everyone myself.  I don’t think the number has any meaning.  Every city sends cast-offs away every solar cycle,” Vida finished.

So every one of their years, they culled the undesirables from their cities.  In order to make use of the effort, they were mapping other planets for the future, but if they weren’t doing all this population control, then why did the Magus Arcanum think they were trying to prep the planet by making it cold?

“You can count Vida.  Are young orcs educated?  And why did you choose to come here instead of the transit?” I inquired.

“We are educated for five solar cycles.  Numbers, letters, reading, basics of combat, and loyalty to white skins,” she said the last with obvious hatred in her voice.  “The rumor was the transits had their own orc clans, but they just captured cast-offs and used them as fodder in their wars and for breeding stock.  I didn’t want to be forcibly taken over and over again and give birth to children destined to die fighting pointless battles.”

“She is done,” Abigail came into the kitchen from her doorway.  “You can ask your questions another time Caleb.”  Abigail was crying.  I felt like I was just starting to get a clearer picture but backed off.

I renewed my charm on Vida and said, “You will listen to Abs here and answer her questions to the best of your ability.”  Abigail had said she hadn’t been very talkative, so maybe that command would help.  They left to go upstairs, and I was left alone in the kitchen.

I pondered what I had learned. After becoming an incubus, I thought clearer and had better problem-solving skills. Or at least I thought so. The Magus Arcanium knew about the orcs and their invasion and knew when and where all the incursion events were. They had their own response teams that focused on the more populous incursions. Maybe they were working with the orcs. It was a leap in logic, but it checked my boxes.

Defending from the ‘invading orcs’ gave the Magus Arcanium some power. They knew the locations and could get support from the mage and demi community to deal with it. The incursions were always dealt with effectively since the incoming orcs were so ill-prepared. That would raise the political influence of the organization. It would also make sense that they didn’t ask for prisoners. Since they only asked for the heads to retrieve the bounties.

It all made too much sense, and I hoped I was wrong. Next time I talked to Vida, I would do so without the charm spell. I wanted to see how she actually behaved. I got up and drove home. It was really late, and my parents were asleep. I showered and lay in my bed in boxers. I didn’t look at my phone tonight.

I fell into a hazy dream. Human mages in robes were directing an army of demis to fight a horde of naked orcs. The humans were safely behind the wall of demi flesh and safe. I didn’t realize it, but I was in the middle of the field and being rushed from both sides. The two armies collided, and I was attacked mercilessly by both armies. I woke in a sweat.

I went out on my fire escape in the cold night air in my boxers. The fresh air cleared my sweat and excited my lungs. It was only 2:33 AM. Clouds made the night extremely dark, and I felt the pull to go flying. It should be safe. I transformed into my incubus body and flapped my wings, propelling me into the night. I followed familiar roads and estimated my top speed to be around 45 mph by the few cars below me. It took some effort to maintain this speed, but it was not exhausting.

I circled about a quarter mile in the air and watched the handful of people in town. Flying west, I noticed a robbery taking place on the seedier side of a neighboring town. My abyssal eyes could see into the gas station window at the angle. A man was waving a gun. I was just in my dark blue boxers. Was playing hero worth it? I decided to follow the getaway car instead.

They drove north for twenty minutes and then pulled into a crappy trailer park. I hadn’t even been aware such a place existed so close to my house.

I landed nearby as a woman and man exited the beat-up truck with their spoils. They raced inside, and I moved close enough to hear. “…how much, Martin?” the woman asked impatiently.

“Give me a sec! I just started counting—at least four hundred. Maybe five,” the male voice slurred, obviously intoxicated.

“We should split it,” the female voice said and I heard a loud slap.

“I did all the hard work bitch. You will take what I give you and be happy!” It was quiet for a while then he spoke again, “I am sorry baby. You know how I get when I drink. I will make it up to you. Here. Take fifty and go get gas and some dinner for us.” The door opened and the truck sped away. I heard the guy mutter, “Stupid bitch.” And he called someone on the phone and started talking to what I guessed was his other girlfriend.

What a scumbag. But why had I followed him here? Was I going to do anything? The trailer homes were far enough apart that I guessed some violence wouldn’t be too noticed. Should I just beat the guy up and use his phone to call the police? It sounded like a plan.

I boldly went to his front door and bashed in the door to find the man laying down a coke line on his table and was in complete shock at my entrance. His face read horror at my appearance. He reached for a gun on the table and I rushed him. Two shots were fired before my fist connected with his face. Two more punches, and his face was a bloody mess, and he was unconscious. I checked myself and found a bullet wound on my chest. It was oozing blood, and I realized I was an idiot for rushing in.

I felt the wound and felt the bullet. It had barely penetrated my skin. Huh. Two fingers squeezed it, and the bullet popped out like squeezing a zit. It rolled under the stained sofa, and I got down and retrieved it. The money on the table didn’t interest me, but I could tell it was over six hundred by the number of twenties in the pile.

I decided crime fighting was definitely not my forte. I checked and made sure the man was still alive. I found a phone, dialed 911, and said, “come quick, the guy who robbed the gas station is in my trailer home!” I tried to sound like a squeaky-voiced boy, but it came out as if I had a scratchy and parched throat.

I left the trailer and took to the skies. I think someone in the park had come to investigate the gunshots as flashlights were moving to the trailer. I circled overhead, and ten minutes later, the flashing lights of two police cars entered the trailer park. Yes, I was definitely not the Batman. I flew, ignoring the beings below me and just enjoyed flight. I landed on my fire escape and went into my room feeling much better.

I had 40 minutes before practice, so I grabbed my phone. I sent quick replies as I went down my messages. I looked for anything alarming or interesting. Maya had texted me. It just said, ‘thinking about you.’ I just texted back a blushing emoji. At the bottom of the list was a text from Mandy.

***Caleb do you have time to meet? Jade left something for you that I am supposed to give you in private. Maybe we can meet Friday night at the old church?***

The old church was just outside of town. It was still maintained because it had the cemetery behind it, but a newer and more elaborate church had been built about fifty years ago. It was a secluded place. I had strong doubts. I think it was Mandy trying to find out what I did to Jade. I was sure Agatha had tasked Mandy with finding out as much as she could. I could always just fuck Mandy and not use my vortex on her. Still, I didn’t want to capitulate to anything Mandy asked of me. I texted her back, ‘Too busy. You can give it to me at school.’

I was sure she would press, and she texted back a few minutes later, ‘let me know when we can meet privately away from school.’ I laughed aloud. Yeah, not going to happen.

I went to hockey practice after doing some research online. If I was going to help Mary and Rose train for rowing I should put some effort into it. I found an online book by a coach named Erick. He had a series of warmup stretches that started with a dynamic sequence and moved into yoga poses. He really focused on a range of motion and mobility for injury reduction and preparation for strength training. The stretches would take an hour for an inexperienced person and thirty minutes for an experienced athlete to move through.

The second half of his training was weights. He had an intro, intermediate and advanced sessions. Most of the intro weights were focused on the torso and posterior chain; the hamstrings, glutes, and lower back. Intermediate weights focused on shoulders, upper back, quads, and hip flexors. The advanced strength workouts used compound lifts like cleans, high pulls, pullups, and deep squats. It was a very easy program to follow, and I managed to pull it into a book in my mind space to reference.

Hockey practice went a little better than yesterday. Jamie worked with the defensive men at one end, and the forwards worked with Sam at the other. I used my voice to help, and we worked much better together. Sam even ended the practice early. James asked if I wanted to hang out at his house after the game on Saturday. I declined because I assumed it was a farse to get me with Mandy.

I showered at home and drove Rob and Sophia to school. We stopped by Dunkin, and I got them breakfast. Their mother wasn’t feeling well, so they didn’t get breakfast. School flew by, and I noticed Molly was doing much better in classes. In English, she didn’t need my help, and she told me with a smile that she had gotten 100% on her last two math quizzes. It made me think my charm ability was much more powerful than I thought. Had I somehow rewired Molly and made her smarter? She was definitely more focused even after I broke the charm.

The ability said *seduce and charm* your target with your eyes. It was an extremely powerful ability. It was too useful. I sighed internally. I was just 14 life essence from getting another upgrade. I had planned on a flight upgrade, but it was obvious this ability was more beneficial.

I figured tonight I would review all my abilities and do some searching for new ones. During the study period, I left school and went to Iris’ house to check on Kiri and Vida. Vida was watching TV. I think the same program she was watching yesterday. Kiri was on another iPad, I think shopping on Amazon from my view of the screen.

“Vida, you need to watch only three episodes a day from now on. Kiri, I wanted to try lifting my charm on Vida for a while,” I said and Kiri looked up in alarm.

“Caleb, I don’t think that is the best idea,” she said seriously. “Right now, she is fairly tame and well behaved…and clean. It took Abigail an hour in the shower to get her smelling like green apples.”

“It will be fine. I will reactivate it after I see her reactions,” I stated calmly and sat next to Vida. She did smell like green apple shampoo. I found the charm thread and cut it, and waited.

Vida’s eyes cleared, and she looked around. Some slight fear crept into them, but she didn’t take any action. “Vida,” I got her attention on me. “How are you doing? Is everyone treating you ok?”

She looked at Kiri and then at me, “Yes. Everyone has treated me kindly.”

“Good. Is there anything you need, or is there anything you want to do?” I asked the young orc. Her eyes were clear, and considering my question.

“Just more pizza,” she said and Kiri smirked.

“She has eaten five pizzas in the last two days. I don’t know where it all goes!” Kiri said and she looked to be relaxing as well as Vida didn’t appear to be a threat.

“Do you want to return to your planet?” I asked next. Vida looked down and shook her head no. “Do you want to remain here and learn magic with Abigail?” Her eyes brightened. I guessed it was genuine.

“Yes. Will you teach me magic? I was told I was too stupid to learn true magic,” she said soundly like a little girl about to get ice cream for behaving well. I looked at Kiri, who was studying the girl, and she gave me a nod.

“Ok, Vida. I have to go, but I am going to put you back under my spell. As you have seen we do not plan to harm you. Just continue being good and we will teach you magic,” I said. I focused on her eyes and charmed her again. She seemed to submit easily to the ability, like she wanted it around her like a blanket.

Kiri followed me to the door. “She isn’t as bad as I thought she would be. Abigail has been talking to her non-stop since last night and she has been through a lot. I am glad I wasn’t born an orc. I guess I want to say…you were right not to kill her.” She looked at me. “I can teach her to fight if you think that is a good idea. I mean, I am bored watching her all day, and she needs exercise. She is going to get fat just eating pizza and watching TV.” Did I detect a sense of concern from Kiri over Vida?

“Maybe next week after we retrieve your sister. My charm spell may be part of the reason she is placated. The longer she is under my spell, I think it will engrain my desired demeanor upon her. It is not something I want to do, but if she can act like a normal human girl then she can go to high school and carve out a life for herself.” Kiri’s elven brows moved to her forehead.

“Really? The orc rehabilitator. The great mage Caleb!” she pronounced softly. “I still need to train you how to fight, and you need to try and tame me as well,” she grinned and surprised me with a kiss. It lasted over a minute, and we exchanged some saliva. Kiri was not a woman who liked public displays of affection and had pretty much ignored me in front of the other woman. But it was clear she wanted to continue our wrestling match.

When the kiss broke, I said, “I look forward to it when I have time.” I backed out the door as I had just gotten a text that Mary and Rose were on their way to my house. I just needed 16 life essence for an upgrade. Maybe I could get it in my basement this afternoon.