Chapter 102

My dreams were not pleasant. I imagined dozens of children being abducted and brainwashed into an Order to fight demons—specifically me. I watched from a third-person view as each was educated, detailing why an incubus was evil and needed to be eliminated. It detailed all my failings to date. Charming people for personal gain, almost killing women in my pursuit of life essence, and lying to people. I

I woke with my sweat soaking my sheets. As an incubus, it took a lot to get me to perspire—maybe it was tied to my human past. I needed more clarity and went into my mind space. I still needed to have a talk with Pandora.

I found the two of them in the library. Pandora was sitting in Lilith’s lap, and both were reading a book. Pandora smiled, and Lilith looked put out. “She is taking liberties,” Lilith said. Pandora squirmed her butt a little before standing up. Lilith stood as well. Lilith had been reading Aurora’s diary. Pandora had been reading the Karma Sutra.

I asked Pandora, “Haven’t you already read that?”

“It is my fifth time. I just use it for the pictures now. You need to add more videos of your interactions with your harem,” Pandora said while getting wrinkles out of the black cocktail dress she was wearing.

Lilith held up the journal, “Interesting one here. She may be worth saving.”

“I am not actually here for her,” I said, focusing on Lilith. “Well, maybe I am. I do not know. I have questions.” I looked at Pandora, “Is there anything Andromeda told you or taught you that could help me deal with—morality or maybe humanity, I don’t know?”

Lilith put down her book., “Are you sure you want her help on this?” indicating Pandora.

I nodded, “She was in the mind space of Andromeda. Am I doing the right thing by helping her,” I pointed to Aurora’s journal. “Is it my human nature? Incubus nature? Even pseudo-parental nature to protect her? Am I just so super horny I have to try and save every attractive woman I see?”

Pandora tapped her chin in thought, but it looked more mocking, knowing her personality. “Your incubus nature makes you want to stick your dick in everything, and your human nature makes you want to save everyone who can not save themselves.”

Lilith’s eyes went wide in shock, “A surprising insight from our resident strumpet. I think,” she paused for dramatic effect, “you have read too many comic books. Good and evil are not black and white. There is a lot of gray out there. But I am going to give you the best advice—follow your gut.”

I turned to Pandora, “What were the constructs like in Adromeda’s mind space?”

Pandora lost her constant seductive smile, getting serious, “For one thing, most of her constructs in her mind space matched her appearance, and they frequently left to talk with her other agents.”

I stopped her talking with a question, “How many agents does Andromeda have besides me?”

Pandora shrugged, “I don’t know.  Dozens...hundreds?  Not something they volunteered.  Her mind space was also much bigger than yours, much bigger,” she spread her hand wide to indicate how small my space was compared to Andromeda’s.  “Also, it was a single plane bisecting a sphere.  She had a small town on one side and an expansive forest on the other.”

“How did the transition work between sides?” an interested Lilith asked.

Pandora smiled, “Pools.  You stepped into the water and appeared on the other side.  Well, the town had various buildings where the constructs worked.  The skies were a swirling dance of soft pinks and cerulean blues,” Pandora said with admiration.  Her fond remembrance ended, and she continued, “I was not allowed inside any of the buildings, though.  My training was mostly how to recognize and counter an intrusion.  Andromeda also personally taught me my strict place in the mind space,” she winced at those memories.

I interrupted again, “Were there any other constructs visiting from her other agents?”

Lilith moved next to Pandora and put her arm around her waist, “You are going to reach me, right?  How to protect this place?  After all, we are practically sisters.”

“Oh, now you want to get all cozy now that you want something from me?”  Pandora teased,  “I am sure we can work out a barter system if it is ok with him.”  She held Lilith’s hand around her waist, not letting her disengage from the hug.  “And no,” she addressed me, “no other constructs from other agents.  I was the first one in maybe two hundred years.  I guess you are something special.”

Pandora was using Lilith’s hand to caress her belly through the fabric of her dress, and Lilith did not resist.  I was getting turned on by it, which was her intention.  I focused, ignoring the display, and asked, “How am I special?”

Pandora positioned Lilith behind her and got Lilith’s other hand to fondle her breasts.  “It is your potential maximum rating or coefficient—I did not really understand it. Basically, it has to do with your soul when you were born and how big it can grow over time.  Your maximum aether core size is six something based on your core.”  Lilith pinched Pandora’s nipples at the vague response.  It just gave way to Pandora having a lecherous look and happy face, “Six point six, six.”  Lilith squeezed harder, and Pandora yelped this time, “Fine!  It was six point seven seven.  How did you know I was lying?”  She tried to turn, but Lilith locked her arms around her preventing it, and Pandora didn’t struggle.

Lilith whispered loudly enough for me to hear, “It is your tone.  I can tell when you are lying by your tone of voice.  It has a teasing quality like you can’t wait to tell the truth a breath later.”

Pandora’s eyes went wide.  After collecting herself, she continued with what she learned, “Most humans can only reach around two before their cores can no longer grow as their souls are at capacity, I guess, and that is after centuries.   Your special core. That is why your core was so frigging big on the lowest layer when she made you into a demon.  Andromeda was surprised as well but hasn’t told you because she is afraid you will get a big head.”

So I had potential.  Lots of it.  “My core is growing fast.  Maybe I can get there in a century or two.”

Pandora shook her head no, “Your core growth will plateau.  As you get closer to tier five—at least that is what one of the constructs told me.  Then it will be millennia, and very slow progress to reach tier 6.”

“How strong is Andromeda?” Lilith asked.

Pandora pretended to think, “She doesn’t display her abilities and power in the open like your banners, Caleb.  But I think she is closing in on upper tier 6.  So a wild guess, 6.4. You won’t catch her in a hundred thousand years.”

Lilith asked another question, “How high can a core reach?”

Pandora answered, “I don’t know, but it goes past tier seven.  But you need to ascend before that.  I don’t know what that refers to, just heard it in passing from a conversation.”

I was confused why Lilith and Pandora didn’t share knowledge, “Don’t you two talk when I am not here?”  I asked, confused.  “Why doesn’t Lilith already know all this from you?”

Lilith answered, releasing Pandora, “When you created us with a spark of life essence, we became individual aspects.  But you still control our access to knowledge.  I asked Pandora to train me, and she said yes, and you didn’t object.  So now she can.”

My head started hurting.  “So if I said you could share any information freely?”

“No!” Pandora said loudly.  “You need to compartmentalize your constructs.  All of Andromeda’s had specific tasks they were assigned to.  You may be the king of the sea on the 23rd layer, Caleb, but powerful beings in higher layers can tare your mind space apart.   Differentiation is the key to a strong defense.  Oh, eight constructs are how many you should have defending your mind space based on the strength of your core.  They told me that much.”

“I have to make more of you?   I can not handle the two of you!”  I laughed too loud.

“Well, your constructs don’t all need to be women.  You can make some studs.  Or beasts if that is what you are into,” Pandora advised.

Lilith chimed in, “A big fluffy dog.  Something that will make a good pillow when I am reading in the park.”

Pandora added, “If you are taking requests.  I want a male centaur.  A big male centaur.”  The fact she didn’t seem to be kidding made me question my subconscious. “What?  Andromeda had one.”

“How about I recreate that alpha winter wolf in here to start?  Once I get acclimated to it, we can add another.”  I asked the two of them.

“Oh, get something from the real world of the beast if you can and bring it to your mind space.  It makes the construct much stronger but do not use their aether crystal.  That will give them their own independence, and they will not be loyal to you.”  Pandora advised. I was glad she actually learned something in her time away from me.

“So you did learn some things on your vacation?  How much of a sample?  I have an entire pelt but planned to use it for something special,”  I referred to the alpha winter wolf pelts in front of the cabin fireplace.

“Any sample is good.  A tuft of fur,  claw, anything with a genetic marker.  More doesn’t make it better,” Pandora said.  “It is a cheap way to clone the monster here.  It works for sapient beings too, but you shouldn’t do that unless they are dead.  Because it gives them a link to your mind space and a foothold here.”

“Ok, I am going to go get the fur then,”  I said and left my mind space.

Twenty minutes later, I arrived at the cabin, and no one was here.  It was seven in the morning, and I was about to call Artica, but she called me first.  She was not omniscient.  She had just installed the new security system and promised to link my phones when she got back.  They were all currently at Iris’ house.  They had moved some furniture there this morning to make room.  They were meeting the six moving trucks at ten.  The party Iris was organizing was unloading all my loot from Amsterdam.  Apparently, Bedelia and Artica had this huge orchestrated plan for unpacking everything.

With the tuft of silky fur from the rug pelt in my hand, I collapsed on the soft leather sofa.  The new leather smell still was prominent as my body sunk in.  I assimilated the fur into my mind space and then went there myself.  I picked the fur up off the floor in the pedestal room and focused on it, remembering the alpha winter wolf in all its glory.  Lilith came rushing in, “No!” but it was already done.  A car-sized winter wolf stood before me.

“What?  Is something wrong?”  I asked, concerned.

Pandora came behind her dressed in a yellow sun dress.  They had been in the park.  Lilith looked deflated, “I wanted a puppy, or at least something easier to cuddle with.  Once you imbue it with essence, you can not change its appearance in here.”

Pandora groused, “Am I not good enough for you to cuddle with?”

Lilith ignored her and moved to pet the white wolf, “It is soft.  Very soft.  Ok, this will do.”

I stood before the wolf, and its head was as big as my body.  It was intimidating with his icy blue eyes.  I asked, “When I give it life essence do I assign it an aspect of my subconscious as I did for you two?”

Pandora answered, “You can if you want, or you can let it keep its natural disposition. It will be completely loyal and should also be a much better defender. I don’t understand why. That is just what I was told.”

I let the alpha wolf maintain its identity and fed it a single life essence to wake it up.  It immediately jumped on me, pinned me to the ground, and started liking my face.  The massive tail was wagging vigorously as well.  I had a two thousand-pound puppy.  Pandora quipped, “Well, I guess it needs some training.”

“Ya think!” I freed myself and stood.  “Ok, this one ton of fluff needs a name.”

Pandora offered two choices, Lupo or Blitz.  Lilith’s suggestions were Casper or Skye for the blue eyes.  I decided on Casper and told the two to start training him.  I left them to their devices.

Back in the cabin, I reviewed my phone messages while waiting for everyone to arrive. Traci had sent me condolences for the loss in the hockey game and asked if there was anything she could do to cheer me up. I said I was ok and would try to make it to one of their competitions.

Paige sent me excited texts about how well the season was going and asked again for the same enhancement I gave Maya. Maya had pulled a 6:45.2 on her last 2k. The coach had her drug tested, and she passed as well. Knowing that my enhancements optimized a person’s physiology and were not drugs was good. I didn’t know what to tell Paige, and I was still upset Maya had not contacted me. I eventually texted Paige that we could talk about it when she came home again. Just another moral dilemma to solve.

Jade arrived with Frost, Monsoon, Anya, and her new bodyguard. He was a dark-skinned teen male who was a pantherkin in my aether sight. “This is Amari. He is my new bodyguard.”

I shook his hand, but he still seemed slightly starstruck being pulled at such a young age. I showed them all inside and called Artica, “Jade is here to help. Why did you invite them over? The cabin is supposed to be my sanctuary.”

“We needed the hands. There are a lot of things coming, and you would have eventually told them anyway. Mandy shouldn’t be there, right?” Artica said softly, realizing she had made an error by not asking me. I mean, after everyone at Iris’ house knew, it was kind of all over anyway. Maybe I would have to get myself another place—and keep this one to myself.

“Mandy is not here. It is fine. When will you be here?” I asked.

“Two hours,” she said and hung up.

I gave a tour to my guests and Monsoon and Frost made a bunch of security suggestions. I took notes as it would be good to humble Artica when she got here. Jade suggested adding a secret bunker. She suggested a prefab bunker. The one she was ordering for her ranch was a prefab and would go in first, and then her new house would be built on top.

I listened but did not think such extreme measures were necessary. Jade was preparing for the apocalypse. I told her if something happened, I would join her in hers. When the first truck finally arrived, followed by two cars, the work began. Even with the movers it was a lot of work. One crew worked on moving the liquor collection to the racks while another assembled the shelving for the library/study.

Bedelia was directing all this, and she told me she had selected the best collection of tomes. Many of them were arcane in nature. It was an impressive collection, and only about a quarter were going to fit. Ok, maybe I did need a bigger house.

Artica was working on unloading the Bentleys into the garage. She had the plates from Bedelia and was screwing them on when I came in. “Iris is supervising the bottles of alcohol and Bedelia has the books. What is next?”

Artica looked around, and pointed at a truck, “That one has all the gold and jewelry in crates. They need to be brought into the utility room in the basement.”

So I ended up carrying millions of dollars of gold into the basement. Bedelia was a bit of a pain in the ass as she directed Mary, Anya, and Carrie on where each crate of books should go. I was not going to get involved with the. Vida and Eilina were helping Iris put away the bottles. Abigail was in the kitchen preparing food for everyone.

Monsoon and Frost had started moving the furniture, and Jade was on my hip, hinting that if three was anything I did not want, she would be more than happy to take it off my hands. Kiri—was sitting on the porch admiring the view. I went to sit with Kiri, and Jade followed.

As I sat, I asked Jade, “How did the meeting with your mother go?”

“Agatha was—Agatha.” She growled softly. “It is fine. Mandy has been a pain, and I know she is reporting back to Agatha, but I am managing.” She sipped on water, “Bedelia offered to train Anya and Amari. Did she tell you? She wants to host a magical class after school.”

“As long as it is at Iris’ and not here,” I said flatly. I needed to start setting some ground rules for Castle Caleb. With Bedelia and Artica already living here, setting up the fences was getting harder and harder.

Jade nodded as my mother used to when she was humoring me. Jade changed the subject, “Are you ready for Eilina tonight?”

“Ready for what?” I asked.

Kiri, to my right, spoke, “She decided tonight was her night. After Vida’s party, we are all leaving you two here.” I just nodded. I knew it was coming, but just a few hours notice was a little rude. Artica yelled up to us to do some work, and I waved at her. Kiri stood and went to help. Jade did so a moment later.

They did have a great plan. Unload one truck at a time and send it away so the next truck can back up. I gave each pair of movers in the vehicles a $100 as they left. I don’t think they noticed with all the teenage girls in shorts and sweaty tees moving about. Everything got inside but not quite unpacked by five pm. Abigail called for dinner, and we all sat tightly around the newly imported table.

Vida was beaming as we celebrated her birthday, and Abigail had asked everyone for their own mini-individual pizza. Mine was cauliflower crust with BBQ chicken and caramelized onion. It was good. Then came the gift-giving, which I did not know was happening. Someone remembered for me, as there was a $1,000 gift card for clothes at American Eagle. We had a lot after, playing pool and air hockey. I was the air hockey champion until Amari beat me. I was fine with relinquishing my title.

Artica did show off the new cars in the garage. And everyone choked when Artica went over the specs and the price for each of them. Of course, Jade asked to borrow one for when she needed to impress someone. I did not commit.

Eventually, everyone started leaving, and before I knew it, I was left in the house with a shy Eilina. Eilina sat on the leather couch in the living room and looked at me expectantly. Ok, I needed to make the first move. I sat next to her and leaned in for a kiss while my hand caressed her thigh.

I was about to add some saliva to work Eilina into an elven arousal when my phone rang. Both my phones were silent, but a few people had ringtones that overrode silent mode on my Apollyon phone. This ringtone was thunder and heavy rain. That was for Rincewind. Not a call I could ignore. I peeled away and answered in a deep voice of Apollyon, “Yes?”

“Mr. Silverhorn! I wanted to let you know that your teacher has arrived. The Githzerai woman I told you about. She will be in the States tomorrow night. Can you pick her up at the DC airport tomorrow night?” Rincewind said conversationally. At least it was not time to confront the aboleth.

“Yes. Text me the flight information when you have it,” My heart was speeding up. I was going to host a demi I did not know. One who had strong psychic power and was going to train me, Artica and Jade on how to build our mental defenses. I had put down the phone in a contemplative haze.

Eilina asked, “Is tonight, not a good night?” She looked so innocent. A forty-year-old elf woman who looked closer to a seventeen-year-old human.

I smiled, “Hell yeah. We will start slow, and you tell me what you like.” I moved back into her on the couch.