Chapter 59

The flight attendant woke me and told me we were landing in 20 minutes.  I was off the plane and headed to my car, looking at my phone.  I was going to be late for school.  Nothing I could do about it.

I arrived halfway through the first period and charmed the vice principal, Mr. Callahan, into letting me go to class without a note.  As the day progressed, I started to feel more and more normal, like last night was just some weird dream.  At lunch, my table consisted of Iris, Abigail, and Bedelia. Rob and Yuki got a private booth.

Bedelia spoke, irritated, “These high school boys are persistently annoying. How many do I have to turn down before they get a clue.”

Abigail added, “You should just go to the dance with someone.  It will be fun.” Her words fell on deaf ears as Bedelia rolled her eyes.

Bedelia made eye contact, “I bet Caleb isn’t going to the dance this weekend.”

I dug into the salad Abigail brought for me, “Yeah, I have a date for the Friday sophomore dance and the Saturday junior dance.” Bedelia was left speechless.

As lunch finished, Bedelia asked me, “So Caleb, when are we going back into the transit? Who are you taking to the dances? Iris said she wasn’t going.”

Bedelia started walking with me, interested in my answers. I told her, “After the white wolf incident, I think we need to get more prepared. I am taking Molly and Mary to the dances.”

It didn’t take long to ask, “Who are Mary and Molly?” Was that jealousy in her voice?

“Friends. I have a lot of friends,” I responded.

After a long pause, and as I was turning down a corridor to my class, Bedelia asked, “Am I one of them?”

I stopped walking and looked at Bedelia, “Yes, I count you a friend.” I was glad she didn’t have a detect lie ability. The truth was I still wasn’t sure about her. She was useful but cocky. She was much more entwined with the Magus Arcanium than Iris, and she was a fount of knowledge. I would keep her close for now. She left with a half grin.

After school, I drove Rob and Sophia home. Mary and Rose showed up, and they helped me bring the rowing machines to the basement. Rose was not happy, “Caleb, I would rather lift weights than row on the ergs.”

I had a devious grin, “Don’t worry, Rose; we will not use them until next week. I just plan to have you two do a 2000m test on them.”

Mary asked incredulously, “You spent $2,000 just to have us do one 2000m test, Caleb? We could have just used the machines at the boathouse! You know I have the code.” I stopped assembling the machines. I suddenly felt stupid. I had no response.

“I can assemble these later. Your right, Mary. I was just thinking all three of us doing a test at the same time would be fun.” Rose rasped something about 2ks not being fun. “At least they can be stood up and not take up too much space once they are assembled,” I mumbled. I couldn’t tell Mary that money was coming in much faster than I could spend it.

We started on the stretching. We were still working on basic moments with the weights. I was surprised when Rose asked me to help her with the pigeon pose. I leaned my hips into her hips from behind, pressing her body into the floor. She groaned in a painful stretch. I moderated my weight, but I was essentially pressing my groin into her ass. After we did the other leg, Mary called for the same assistance.

As we finished stretching and moved into weights, Rose kept asking for help that required me to put my hands on her body. I looked at Mary, and she was just smirking. Rose asked, “Are we working out tomorrow? We know you are taking Molly to the junior dance.”

I paused in getting the dumbbells ready, “Yeah, it shouldn’t be an issue. I think the dance starts at seven and I will pick Molly up at five. So we can start together after school, and you can finish while I change.” Mary slapped Rose’s ass to move over so she could get her set in. Rose was clearly thinking about something.

“For our Junior dance on Saturday, Caleb, are you coming to the after-party?” Rose asked. Mary suddenly looked up. I had to think and recall the hundreds of texts from Mary. I was picking her up at 6 pm at her house, and her parents were taking pictures. Then we were getting there early to get our ‘official pictures’ in front of the photographer’s arc. The dance was from seven to ten. After the dance, Mary said we were going to hang out at Justine’s house.

“Is that the party at Justine’s house?” I asked recalling the text.

Mary answered quickly, “Yes. It is just Justine, Rose, Kelsey, Riley, Denise, and me with our dates. It is a really small gathering Caleb.” I think those were all her teammates who were juniors.

Rose added, “Justine’s parents are in California. So we have the house to ourselves.”

“Yeah, sure,” I said, and Mary visibly relaxed. She probably didn’t want to be the only one there without her date.

Rose smiled at her friend and said, “Told you that all you had to do was ask him.” I realized my mistake. I had taken to not responding to all of Mary’s texts. There were usually more than ten every day. So I would read them all and make one response. I must not have confirmed the after-party. If I had to guess, it was just a chance for the pairs to have sex. Mary didn’t want to have intercourse…so maybe when I didn’t say I was going, she probably thought I was ditching her after the dance.

Rose said as we got closer to finishing the weights, “Caleb make sure you don’t wear yourself out tomorrow with Molly. Mary has something special planned.”

Mary jumped and put her hand over her friend’s mouth, and raspy whispers were exchanged. Mary was unhappy with her friend, but Rose grinned ear to ear.

As the weights finished up, my dad got home early and came downstairs to check on us. He probably thought he was a good father by showing interest in his son’s friends, but when we finished, Mary went to shower first, and he stayed talking with us. He tried to talk up the sauna getting finished next week and about how well I was doing on the hockey team. Mary came out, and Rose went to shower.

After Rose showered, they left, and Dad said we were going out to dinner at Pacciano’s, a fancy Italian restaurant a good thirty-minute car ride away. We were celebrating mom’s annual bonus, which I guessed was substantial. All it took was a depressed country warring with itself to help the drug market boom, I guess.

I compromised by taking my car so I could visit Iris’ house after the meal. I had a feeling this was more than just a celebration dinner as well. My dad had that look like I was about to get lectured.

I showered and dressed and met my parents at the restaurant at 8 pm. After ordering, my mother started on the inevitable conversation, “Caleb, we are becoming concerned by your habits.” Her lips were pursed, and she nudged my father.

“Caleb, what your mother is trying to say is you have been spending a lot of nights over at Iris’ house,” he said, and my mother nodded at him. “You are also…involved with many other young women at your school.”

I calmly sipped my water. I knew this conversation was going to happen eventually. I was not going to use my abilities on my parents. I put down my water, “My grades are the best they have ever been. I am playing hockey and have a few scholarship offers already for hockey.” Mother’s eyes went wide. “I am also scheduled to graduate on time, making up the year I was held back due to my dyslexia after I finish the last two online courses I am taking.” I held up my hand and sipped my water again.

I wasn’t sure how to proceed from here. Maybe mostly truth. “I am sexually active but have been practicing safe sex.” That was true because my seed was sterile. “When I am out late, it is usually because I am helping friends.” True, but sometimes I was helping myself. “I am getting plenty of rest and feel better than I have ever felt.” I could rest as much as I wanted in my mind space, so that was true. I finished, waiting expectantly on their reactions.

My parents were silent before my mother spoke, “Caleb, we just don’t want you to become someone who you will hate in the future.” She inhaled. “We want to set a curfew,” the dime dropped. I was reconsidering the pledge not to use my powers on my parents. She expanded before I became too upset, “We are thinking 11 pm on school nights and midnight on weekends,” she supplied.

I considered, “What about the nights I stay at Iris’ house?”

Mother sighed deeply and looked at dad, “We are divided on this, but once a week is fine as long as her parents allow it.” My parents were being reasonable. More reasonable than any almost 17-year-old could expect.

My thoughts drifted to Andromeda, telling me that demons don’t compromise. I thought as the entrées were brought out. Eventually, I would out-age my parents. But for now, I still felt my human need to be nurtured. I talked while I ate, “How about on school nights, I will observe the curfew, and on the weekends, I will stay with Iris?”

I ate while my parents talked back and forth and considered the compromise. Mom finally said, “Ok, as long as your grades don’t slip.” It was a small victory for them, and in the end, I knew I was going to do whatever I needed to.

After the meal, I left and went to Iris’ house to check on everyone. My package had arrived, and I gave the $20,000 to Iris as petty cash. Since I had transferred her $100,000 so she didn’t need the money, but cash was always good. She said she would set up some ‘go bags’ in case they needed to get Vida or the elves out.

The house was cleaner than it had ever been. Apparently, Abigail was teaching Eilina and Vida how to keep a neat and tidy home. Belelia wasn’t here, which was a surprise. I was talking with Kiri about doing some training in the basement when my phone buzzed. It was my Silverhorn phone. I looked at it, and it was an incoming call request from Dexter. I answered, “Mr. Silverhorn, thank you for taking my call. I just wanted to inform you that the $40,000 has been transferred to your accounts. I have another…request you may be able to help with.”

I waited, and finally, I prompted him, “Go ahead and ask.”

“Very good,” his practiced voice answered. “We have an artificer looking for a lesser tier 2 aether crystal. We would greatly appreciate it if you have the one from the alpha wolf and are willing to part with it. We can see that you sold one recently, but it was before your team bested the wolf, so I am assuming you have another. Once again, I am in a position to waive the Magus Arcanium tax. We will pay 2.1 million for the crystal as our time is short.”

I hadn’t planned on selling it. Just hold on to it for a rainy day. “Fine. I will send one of my team members to DC to drop it off at the Bazaar there.”

“Excellent! When can we expect it?” Dexter asked smoothly.

“Probably tomorrow,” I said, thinking that Bedelia could drive it to the city. Or I Suppose Iris could do it after school. He thanked me and hung up. It certainly seemed like Dexter was some type of acquisition specialist. Maybe I could use his skills to acquire items I needed.

Iris volunteered to bring the crystal in, and I retrieved it from the car for her. It was weird something so small was worth two million dollars. I headed down to the basement to practice with Kiri, but Eilina and Vida decided to come and watch. It was true that Vida and Eilina were getting along extremely well, almost like long-lost sisters. They sat hip to hip and whispered to each other.

I started testing out my new speed enhancement. It took about twenty minutes to get accustomed to it, and then I was all over Kiri. I was very handsy with her, even with Eilina and Vida watching. I cupped her breast frequently, regularly locked my hands around her waist to throw her to the mat from behind, and kept my hips on hers when we were down on the mat. I could smell the arousal of Vida as we fought with our bodies in front of her.

Kiri gave up, and we switched from hand-to-hand to weapon combat. Once again, my enhanced speed gave me a monumental advantage. When Kiri sat to rest, Vida jumped up and said, “Me next! I want to wrestle Caleb!”

I considered and said, “When you can beat Kiri, I will take you on Vida.” Vida’s gave fell on Kiri in a predatory gaze. It was 10:30 pm and I left Eilina watching Vida and Kiri work through some martial arts. I was irritated as I was not getting any life essence tonight.

As I was leaving, Abigail stopped me and asked me to talk with Vida about not wandering off to look for pizza. We all went downstairs to see Kiri throw Vida ten feet and land hard on the mat. She got up with a happy grin and was about the reenter the bout when we called her over. The conversation took twenty minutes, but I didn’t use the charm’s effect to leverage her cooperation. I got home after 11 pm, but I had texted my parents when I left. So score one for me for almost making the curfew.

I showered and confirmed my two exams at the community college for December 14th. The college closed on December 17th, so if I didn’t do the exams on the 14th, I was going to have to wait till January. I had an extremely busy weekend.

The morning practice went well, and we were all confident about the Saturday game. The team was coming down from Philadelphia. Our first overnight game would be against them in Philadelphia on January 9th. They were good, so it should be a challenge.

I showered at home, and Rob and Sophia were quiet on the drive to school. It took a little prying, but I learned their mother, Camilia, might be in trouble as an illegal alien. Their entire family didn’t have any documentation. The lingering policies of the past president had them worried. I told them I would take care of it. I told them Iris and my new friend Bedelia knew a guy.

I called Bedelia and told her the problem; she just needed some digital photos. Rob sent her some pictures from his phone. They were skeptical, but I knew this was legitimate. At lunch, Molly sat at my table with Iris, Bedelia, and Abigail. The normally shy redhead was so excited she couldn’t stop bouncing. She confirmed the time I would pick her up three times at lunch. Iris thought it was funny, and Bedelia gave me a look that questioned my taste in women.

During the last period, I went home early and told Rob no ride today. I had to get ready for my first dance.