**Chapter 18 Arturo / Callem**

**Arturo**

Arturo studied the scene. He was looking for a vial from a potion. He noted nothing in the mess of the alleyway. Then this boy probably had a healing ability then. Or maybe he had already imprinted the mend flesh spell? No that was unlikely as that would have taken months for someone so young. He had common clothes on and no house signet ring on his hand so he had no mage tutor. It was probably a healing ability as regeneration would not have saved him.

The boy had numerous facial lacerations and fractures and his hands and forearms had bone sticking up at angles under the flesh. His dagger sheath was empty and his backpack was gone. There was one large tome in a puddle of blood. He picked it up and read the title, The Complexities of Aether Creationism, A Qualitative Comparison of Dungeon and Mortal Spellcraft. Interesting reading for someone so young. Maybe he was an apprentice to some obscure mage out here in the lower cities?

Arturo leaned against the wall deciding on a course of action. He had two subordinates who could take over and bring the boy to a healer. The carnival workers were much more interesting after all. His office had confirmed three spies from the Sadians within their number. On top of that there were four others that were divined as having malicious intent. Not a large number when you consider their massive airship had just over 600 people on arrival. He selected the communication stone in his vest for his agent, Jurmaer.

After some thought he activated the stone and waited for the return activation signal then spoke, “A boy in the city has been accosted.” Before he could continue Jurmaer spoke.

“Someone from the troupes?” Jurmaer asked.

“No just a city kid but he may have a high tier healing ability,” Arturo responded calmly. “I plan to bring him to the medical clinic in the city. You will need to change positions to watch my street as well.” He heard Jurmaer frustrated sigh on the other end before acknowledging in the affirmative.

Arturo put the book on the boys chest before lifting the boy. Ugh, he would have to pay for magical cleaning to get the blood out. He wished he had his anti gravity medallion with him but he only wore it when he was serving aboard a skyship. The aether crystal cost to power it was just too high. Oh well, he walked the four blocks to the healer’s clinic and brought the boy in and let them do their work as he faded into the background and when he wasn’t observed activated his chameleon ring again.

**Callem**

Callem was working on another prize for Wynna, to the distressed dismay of the carnie behind the counter. He noticed Gareth and Freya were running toward the city between the tents in the distance. He could see panic on their faces even from this distance with his enhanced sight. It had been a wonderful day so far. Ennet had let Wynna spend time alone with him and there was definitely something there. Something that hadn’t stirred within him for years was coming to the fore. She was a remarkable woman. Well read, kind, funny, and attractive for her age. He could help her with her fitness since it was lagging but he figured to let the relationship progress before pressing that. Right now his concern was on Gareth. Where was Storme? He excused himself from Wynna’s company saying his students appeared to be in trouble. He followed Gareth and Freya from a modest distance in case this was nothing.

Callem was able to follow at a brisk jog, his movement didn’t portray that he was following the kids though. He just seemed in a rush to get somewhere. The couple picked up their running speed when they could, Gareth didn’t let Freya fall too far behind, keeping an eye on her as he ran. The girl was giving it her all and there was an obvious emergency. When they entered the merchants ward of the city they started frantically searching the buildings until they found the healer’s clinic and went inside. Callem guessed Storme was inside and walked through the door shortly after them.

He found Freya crying over her unconscious brother in a room in the back. Gareth had anger and worry on his face as the healer was talking to him. Relief flooded Gareth’s face as he noticed Callem in the doorway. The healer paused looking at the impressive new arrival filling the doorway then continued as Callem nodded to him. “…as I was saying. He has multiple facial fractures, hand and arm fractures, two broken ribs and a shattered knee cap. We repaired the two skull fractures as they were pressuring his brain. Surprisingly he had no internal organ damage beyond a lung laceration that probably occurred in transport here from one of the broken ribs. He should pull through but the cost of additional healing…” The man trailed off.

“I will pay the cost,” Callem filled in for the healer.

The middle aged healer looked relieved. He seemed indecisive on whether to ask for payment first. Callem passed him a large gold coin to which his eyes widened, “Yes this should cover most of the costs if not all. I will need to complete the bone repair over two days unless you want to purchase an aether restorative potion for me…?” He left the question hanging. Callem gave the greedy healer a hard look that got the man to start casting his spells.

Callem then turned and looked at the far corner of the room and spoke in ironclad words, “I hope for your sake inquisitor this was not of your doing or scheming.”

**Arturo**

Arturo had watched as the boy, Gareth, had arrived with the boy's sister. Someone must in the city recognized the boy as he carried him and let his friend know. It was all a very touching reunion but not very interesting. Then a large square man entered the doorway and Arturo suddenly felt constipated with worry.

He knew this man but hadn’t he been exiled off to retirement and he should have died already, right? The man, Callem, had been the arms instructor at the academy when he attended many years ago. The man was a focused teacher and to his knowledge was neutral in almost all politics. Arturo had chosen the far corner of the room that had no windows and one door. He was lamenting his choices when Callem turned to him and spoke in the coldest tone he had ever heard, “I hope for your sake inquisitor this was not of your doing or scheming.”

Arturo knew that Callem’s eyes could see through most minor illusions but had hoped to remain unnoticed. There was no point now so he dropped his chameleon ring effect and startled the healer, boy and girl. They all seemed on the defensive. “No Commander. I found the boy in an alley and brought him here.” He addressed Callem with the highest title he had had in the navy in a show of respect.

His thoughts were also reordering. So Callem. Was Callem related to this boy somehow? It would make complete sense. Maybe Callem had remarried and had children in his time away from the capital.

Callem’s voice was still hard as he retorted, “And I assume the attackers were left to go free? Inquisitor’s don’t take action, they just report what they see.” Arturo fumed internally but calmed before his anger showed. His job was information gathering and interrogation. Anything beyond that without approval from the chain of command…

“I did not catch the culprits in the act.” Arturo responded evenly. Well that was the truth. He knew what was happening in the alley but he didn’t actually see it. He needed to watch his words because he knew Callem had a sort of truth sense about him. During his time at the academy nothing got past the man. He decided to reach for information, “Are you this boy’s benefactor?” Well that was obvious as he had just paid for the healing but perhaps he would volunteer more.

Callem responded with some moderation in his tone now, coming down from his initial anger. “These two boys,” he smoothly gestured to Gareth and Storme, “are my students and farm hands. They are under my protection and employment.” The words had some bite.

Arturo leaned against the wall comfortably for the first time in this encounter. Well at least he had something to report today, the great Commander Callem had taken on students. A number of people in the city would be interested to hear this news.

Maybe he could gain some goodwill from Callem and play both sides? He was probably one of the most powerful fighters on the islands even with his advanced age. “I am glad I was able to get him to a healer for you then. I will look into the assault and see if I can bring them to some justice.”

He pushed himself off the wall and walked calmly past Callem and was planning to exit the room.

**Callem**

Callem was fuming on the inside. Inquisitors were the spies of the Skyholme elite and cared nothing for the common folk. It was obvious from his words he could have prevented the assault. He had just used the plural, ‘them’, to describe the attackers. Inquisitors never lifted a finger unless it was beneficial for them or their masters.

His shock at seeing Callem had indicated he didn’t know the boy was attached to him initially. He decided his best course was to get the inquisitor as far from the boy’s as possible and warn this one off. So before he left the room Callem said, “No. I think it best if the boy takes care of his own problems. That way in the future he will not start things he can not finish. I wish for you take yourself from this room as well and I hope to not find you or any of your associates near me or mine in the future. I gave my oath to never take sides and in return I was promised to be left to my own devices. You will honor that.” The last sentence was in his even toned command voice.

Arturo responded after having a slight look of disappointment on his face, “As you wish Master Callem.” He took measured steps to the doorway and Callem allowed him to leave. “If you need anything from us in the future…”

“I will not Arturo.” Callem said in a voice going hard. He had finally remembered the man. He had taught him as a boy at the academy. His face had changed quite a lot but the familiarity was there. He recalled that Arturo was a ladder climber. A boot licking kid who did whatever the most powerful person in the room wanted. He had modest skill with the blade if he remembered correctly. Gareth would easily outstrip his bladework within the year.

“As you will.” Arturo said slightly surprised Callem remembered him. He made his exit and left the building.

Callem returned his attention to the healer’s progress. Storme was gaunt already from the healing. Low tier healing spells used the bodies energy to heal and a lot of healing had been done. “How comes it healer?” He asked softly now that the encounter with Arturo was over. Gareth looked worried from the encounter but Freya was focused on Storme.

“I have just finished with the facial bones and his hands. There was a lot of work there. He still has the knee cap, ribs and one forearm bone. There is still a large amount of swelling as well. I am pretty spent as is the boy.” The healer did look tired.

“Good enough, Gareth get a cart and horse to bring us back to Hen’s Hollow. There is a bone healer there that can finish the work there. Then we will be headed to my farm for the boy to recover. Freya will accompany us till Hen’s Hollow and I will talk with Storme's parents there.” Callem just stated the plan and it went into motion.

Two hours later Storme was being serviced by the bone shaper in town, Aantal, fixing his remaining bone injuries. Bone shaping didn't require the bodies stores to work so the unconscious Storme wasn't being drained by the healing.

Callem had a conversation with Alurha and Caleb about the attack. They both acquiesced to Callem’s plan to keep Storme at his farm till he entered academy at 14. Callem wasn’t sure why he felt the need to protect and train Storme. He was going to be unique talent in Skyholme. A powerful mage and competent warrior. Maybe he just wanted to keep him out of the grasp of the noble families in the capital. Whatever his ulterior motive it was obvious that Storme couldn’t protect himself. First, the giant eagle and now the ruffians in the city tried to kill him.

Freya was upset at this plan as she wouldn’t see her brother anymore. Callem said she could come out for 6th and 7th day once a month and stay overnight. It would be good for Storme as well. Gareth would escort her for the round trip.

Callem wasn’t sure why the inquisitor had helped Storme but whatever it was it couldn’t be good. It was best to keep the boys out of sight and mind from that group for now as well. He was also going to have to do a better job preparing them for the harsh challenge of the elite academies. He was reworking his training plans for the boys in his head…