Chapter

I wanted to fall asleep, but the smell of burnt aboleth was really repulsive.  I opened my eyes and sat up.  I was shocked to find Rincewind already standing...he had been lying next to me seconds ago, and I didn’t hear him move.  Tamaris approached, “Artemis left. I am leaving and will start Archellion on his trip home to save you the trouble.”

He approached me and shook my hand, “It was a pleasure to fight with you demon.  If you are ever in my neighborhood drop in.”

Tamaris and Achellion started around the water to head up the passage on the other side. That was the only exit and from where we had descended.  I did not think the smoke would have cleared yet from the fire in the otyugh lair.  Rincewind had a far-off look, and I asked, “Is everything okay?”

He seemed to take a minute, “Yes.  During the assault, they contained seventy-eight of the aboleth’s minions.  Seven did not survive its death, and two are mad, their minds broken.”  He sighed heavily, “It is better than I feared.  Usually, more than half perish.  I think that was your doing.  You were battling it in your mind space and in Achellion’s mind space.  You distracted it enough it was not able to lash out at the minds it had enthralled upon its death.”

“I am glad I could contribute to the win.  Should we check on Lezerath and the people we freed?”  I asked while checking the skin around my injury.  The wound had closed and was pinkish but quickly tanning.  In another hour, all evidence would be gone.  The missing rib was growing back as well.  In a few hours, it would be replaced.  I transformed into my human body and went to retrieve my shirt and combat jacket.

“No need.  The Magus Arcanum is handling it.  You can head home.”  Rincewind started walking beside me.  “If you are conceredn about Lillian Holland, I believe she survived.”

I let out a heavy breath. Lillian was how I found out there was an aboleth in Boston as my charm would not work on her. She was a high school friend of my sister. “That is good,” I said tiredly.

“I am going to be gone for a few weeks,” Rincewind informed me as we walked. “If you want access to the library in Paris, just let Maivis know, and he will set it up.”

“Where are you going?”  I asked, a slight concern because he sounded serious.

“I am going to visit some trusted angelics a few thousand light years away on the twenty-first layer,” he stated.

He spoke about how traveling that distance seemed like an afternoon drive.  We had reached the otyugh layer, and Rincewind nodded, “Artemis put a temporary barrier of the entry.  It is keeping the smoke out of the passage.”  We walked a little further, and Rincewind added, “But the foul smell still lingers.”  He coughed as we walked.  The smell also offended me but did not stifle my breathing as Rincewind cast a bubble around his head so he wouldn’t have to breathe the air.

Rincewind paused at the orog bodies, “I think only two escaped into the city.” He knelt at the Chef Boyardee cans. “Huh, not my choice for a last meal.” He spent some time searching the bodies.

I asked, “What are you looking for?”

“Markings. Some orog tribes tattoo themselves when they come of age. Some do piercings. Others do body mutilations. They have none of these, which means they are not from a tribe. I think my assumption was incorrect. I thought orog helped bring the aboleth to Earth.” He considered and then added, “I think they were sent here after he arrived to help the creature. They built this access to its lair.”

Rincewind started walking again, “The fact that all this was happening without my alarms going off is concerning. I think your theory about disguised things arriving on Earth when the Mercurian Orcs send their young is correct, Caleb. That is the only way so many arrivals could have gone unnoticed by my network.”

“And if the angelics control Mercanious and the aboleth arrived in conjunction with arrivals from their…” I left my thoughts unfinished for Rincewind.

“I will talk to angelics that will tell me the truth. For now, you can live your life knowing the planet is safe from this threat,” we reached the wine cellar in the house. I was surprised it was almost dark outside.

While I was taking a shower and changing into normal clothes, Rincewind left. I called for an Uber to the airport and purchased an expensive first-class ticket to DC. I called Artica to have her pick me up, “Caleb, are you okay! Jade said it was handled but didn’t know where you were.”

“The creature is dead. Sorry, but my phone was stored in my mind space and I just retrieved it. I am going to need a pickup at the airport in DC in six hours. How are things in Virgina?” I respnded.

“Everyone is worried so they will relax after I tell them you are coming back,” Artica paused to talk to Abigail. “Aurora is over at Iris’ house. She insists on meeting you and has been a handful. Kiri thinks someone is following Eilina, but Bedelia thinks she is jumping at the shadows. Oh, and we covered for you at school on Monday, but your mother has been trying to find you for the last day.”

“So just a typical day. Well, come and pick me up. I am going to my mother now,” I hung up and called home.

A worried Madeline Silversmith picked up, “Caleb, where have you been?”

“I am sorry. I should have let you know. On the return flight, I ended up in Boston by mistake. I had some issues, but I finally got a flight to DC. I will be home soon,” I tried to keep to broad facts.

“Boston? Is Iris alright?” my mother said concerned. “Does this have anything to do with that terrorist plot the FBI just foiled in Boston?”

I had not watched the news but assumed that was how the Magus Arcanum explained the city’s activity. I replied, “Sort of. It was why I could not get a flight out right away. Iris is already back in Virginia.”

I promised her I would go straight home when I got back. My ride picked me up, allowing me to see all the messages I had. It had only been two days, yet I had dozens. My close circle knew where I was, but Chloe, the masseuse, and escort, was asking about the Caps game this Saturday. She had invited me to the pre-game skate as she worked with a number of the players in her capacity as a masseuse.

I had kept Chloe on the hook because a single’s cruise was coming up over the summer. That sounded like an amazing way to quickly get a lot of life essence. Fresh partners always yielded more for me. I did not have any plans on Friday, and a pre-game skate sounded amazing as I had been a Capitals fan for a long time. I replied that I would be in town and looked forward to it. Chloe only knew me in my adult body as Apollyon Silverhorn—so that is who I would go as.

The next messages were a little trickier. Ashley had talked to her sister Lucy in Australia. From the tone of emails, it sounded like Lucy had spilled everything. Ashley was jealous of her younger sister and wanted me to come down and visit her. I was not ready for that because I planned to find a way to raise my sister’s aether core without having sex with her. I couldn’t confront her until I had a solid plan. I decided to call Paige as she had not texted me once in the last week.

It rang four times before she answered, “Bro. How are you? How was your vacation? I bet Iris is walking funny after the week. Did anyone else go with you?”

“Everything turned out good. Paige, I wanted to check in about the promise that I made you,” I said a little solemnly.

“Yeah, I have been thinking about it a lot. I am ready to do whatever it entails. I think I am almost mentally ready. It still feels wrong to me. I want it, though,” her tone was not enthusiastic.

“There may be a way to accomplish it without us… You only need to be in the heat of passion and achieving release while I am close. Do you think you have a partner that would be willing to…while I was close, Paige?” I laid out the alternative for raising her core without crossing our brother/sister line.

Paige was silent for a long time. She finally asked, “Could it just be toys? Could you just watch me while I serviced myself?”

I thought about it and knew it would only work if we did a slow-core raise like I was doing with Bedelia. I did not want to have dozens of sexual encounters with my sister, “No. You only have one chance at it, and it has to be a pretty intense sexual encounter for the best results.”

“I don’t think I know any guys who are going to let my brother watch while they fuck me, Caleb,” she said testily. Then she asked, “Does it have to be a guy? Maya would probably do it? She can wear a strap-on or something.”

The thought of that got me thinking it could work. I would just need to keep supplying saliva to Paige while they worked against each other. I could keep Maya at her height as well. “I think that could work. When do you want to do this?”

Paige seemed to think for a long time. “You could come down this Saturday?”

“No, I can’t. I am going to the Caps game. What about the following weekend?”

“We have a race in Tennessee. What about during the week? I know it is a long drive, but maybe you could rent a helicopter or something,” she started, sounding eager.

“Tennesse? I can meet you in Tennessee. Send me your hotel info, and I will get a room in the same hotel.” I was really going to do this. I was committing to it. Paige at least sounded much happier knowing that was didn’t need to have sex. My phone showed a text with an attachment. “I got it, Paige. You two get whatever you need to make it work. I will be there on Friday night.”

“Thank you, Caleb. You will not regret this. Love you, bro,” she hung up.

Wow, I was doing this. I kind of already regretted it. I texted Ashley that I was coming to her race. After watching Maya and Paige together, I was sure I would need some release myself after.

The flight to DC was quick from Boston. When my plane landed, I went straight to the parking lot. Artica had a big sign in front of the new Cadillac. It read World Savior on it. It was sort of funny.

I sat in the front as Artica drove me back. I sent Artica the information to get me a hotel room in Tennessee and told her about my plans to see the Caps game this weekend. I wanted to get things back to normalcy. I also had to retell the whole battle with the aboleth. Artica asked a lot of questions, and it made the nearly four-hour drive go by fast.

She dropped me off at my house, and my parents were awake at eleven. My concerned parents talked with me about the trip and the side trip to Boston. I managed to glance over the facts and they finally let me go to bed. I did not need to sleep in my mind space tonight I was beyond exhausted.

So, the day after saving the world, I had to go back to high school. Ms. Henderson had my texts for my Friday exam ready for me. It was biology this week. Hazel’s tutoring was put on hold for Tuesday to give me a chance to catch up on studying since I missed Monday. It only took me fifteen minutes to scan the seven-hundred-page biology book into my mind space. But I did have a lingering headache from the effort. I needed to take some time off from adding books.

At lunch, I told everyone they were going to have to wait till after school to hear the blow-by-blow accounts. At our table, Jade had a much-reduced role in the conflict. She had fought a lot of singular battles with men under the aboleth’s influence. She was part of Selina’s team, and they attacked the false aboleth lair and all their opponents with humans and weak demis.

The plan was to all meet at the cabin and tell everyone the tale. Iris said Aurora would be there as well, and I would finally be able to see why she had sought me out. Vida did ask when she was getting her sensory enhancement. I had promised her, and I would deliver—eventually.

The cabin was packed; Abigail, Mary, Eilina, Kiri, Bedelia, Artica, Vida, Aurora, Iris, Anya, and myself. Aurora seemed slightly out of place and more of an observer. I realized I did not have a single man in my group. Mary had been able to come due to rowing practice being canceled today. Her parents were still adamant about not wanting to let her hang around me. Anya was flying to Canada tonight for her pre-production meetings for the teen drama she was going to be part of. She landed one of the main roles, an antagonist to the drama’s protagonist.

We ordered food, and as we ate, Jade and myself told our tales. I tried to downplay it as much as possible. Mary was mostly completely in the dark about the magnitude of what we did in Boston. When we finished the retelling, it was time to deal with the patient Aurora.

“Aurora, so why did you need to see me? You are free from the Inquisition’s influence. I do not expect any favors in return,” My question had everyone focus on her. She did not shy from the question.

“I am just trying to figure out how much of my life was a lie. I have realized you are a demon, something I was trained to hunt, and yet you saved me from the mental prison.” Aurora made a weird face as she looked around the room. “I think I might have made an error in coming here, though. I would have preferred to talk privately.”

“No. You can say whatever you want in front of everyone here,” I said as reassuringly as possible. “I trust everyone in this room.”

It took her time to gather herself, “I wanted to thank you and maybe see if my skill set could be of use to you for actual good. I am still wrestling with the idea that a demon could be good, but Rincewind convinced me you have good intentions. But the road to evil can be paved with good intentions.”

Abigail angrily said, “Caleb does not use people!” Her defense of me was misplaced because that was all I did on the surface—use people. I tried to pay them back with enhancements. But I did use people.

Bedelia defended me as well, not as loudly as Abigial, “Caleb has powers that could bind all of us to his will, but he has not done so. We are all here by choice.”

Kiri, who had watched Auruoa for the last two days, “I told you our relationship with Caleb is more symbiotic. He makes us stronger, and we make him stronger. There is no downside for either party.”

Aurora shook her head, “I did not come here to join another cult.” She stood and made her way to the door. “Caleb, I thank you for rescuing me. I think I was expecting something different.”

“Aurora, it was good to meet you without a clouded mind. Maybe you should return to Rincewind’s academy and learn to delve into the transits? You have talent and strength. There is evil out there to fight,” I encouraged her. “You heard our tale tonight of the abomination in Boston.” Maybe I should not have downplayed my role in the victory in the retelling tonight. Not that I wanted Aurora to join us.

“It was a fantastical tale. I have learned to be skeptical in the things I hear now.” She approached me and we shook hands. “Caleb, maybe we will meet again.”

After she left, Kiri started laughing, “She will be back, Caleb. The entire time I watched her, she asked me a thousand questions about you. I guess she will hide nearby and spy on you until she can decide if you are good or evil.”

“Definitely evil,” Bedelia joked.

“So evil, you are not getting a core enhancement session tonight,” I scolded her with my best evil grin.

She looked shocked and uttered mockingly, “I apologize, my demon lord. What can I do to make up for the slight against your good name?”

I stood and threw Bedelia over my shoulder. She struggled for the show, and I carried her upstairs to the master bedroom, “Oh, I am sure we can think of something.”