

The Ruler's Companion

Novus Peregrine

Ethan breathed out a sigh of relief as he finally got far enough from the main trails of the national park for the sounds of the city to completely fade away. He'd taken increasingly more obscure side-trails, some poorly maintained, just to achieve that minor feat. Frankly, given that he wasn't exactly a woodsman, he was grateful he hadn't needed to leave the trails entirely. He would have if he'd needed to. Woodsman he might not be, but an experienced hiker he was. He'd carefully marked his route so far and could easily have continued to do so well enough to not fear getting lost. Thankfully, it hadn't proven necessary, and he found a nearby rock outcropping to sit down on and bask in the quiet.

He was, despite what others might think if he'd tried to explain his need to get away, a city kid at heart. He'd been born near a large Arcology, and moved into it when he was still just a child, his parents had transitioned from maintaining farm equipment to engineering positions at progressively better corporations. It was a normal childhood. Even with Earth having rebounded a great deal from the climate crisis of the early 2000s, part of the solution to that crisis had ultimately been found in condensing human presence into massive self-contained Archologies. Even the smallest Archologies supported millions of inhabitants, and did it in ways that drastically reduced the environmental impacts that so many people left. Not everyone lived in them, not by a long shot, but perhaps 60% of humanity did so. Combined with dozens of other measures, it had worked to slowly, painfully slowly, roll back much of the damage that had been done by humanity to their own world.

Ethan, as a result, was hardly one to be overwhelmed by city life. His parents, however, had been big on making sure that their children had gotten proper exposure to nature, and Ethan had found it relaxing in ways he couldn't possibly describe in any of the half dozen languages he knew. Nature, to him, was a place to come to for a *recharge*. He wasn't sure why it was that way, but something about it just felt *right* in a way that the cities and Archologies didn't. He liked his conveniences and wouldn't leave them for nature, even if he could. But, occasionally, he needed to get out and soak in the world away from the rest of humanity.

Today had been a day like that. He'd moved to a new Arcology nearly six months ago now, escaping some not-so-great memories of a lost family and a bad breakup. He hadn't been in a bad place, exactly, so much as not in a good one either. The change of scenery had, thankfully, done him a great deal of good. As had throwing himself into his work as a writer and artist, channeling his emotions somewhere positive. He was doing reasonably well for himself, at this point, even if he was becoming a bit lonely as the natural result of too much self-imposed isolation while repairing his mental health. That feeling of negative isolation, combined with the crunch of his latest deadline, had weighed down heavily on him for the last few weeks. But, that too, was why he was out here today. His newest work was already off to publication and he always took a few weeks off after a crunch like that, if he could.

So, on his third day of recovery, after spending the first two mostly *sleeping*, he'd hopped a shuttle to the hiking trails of a nearby national park. One he'd as yet not had a chance to explore. Now. Well, now he could soak up a bit of peace, before going back to the Archology and maybe trying to making a start on getting to know some new people. However that was actually supposed to work. He

wasn't exactly an extrovert, so he usually just stumbled his way into new friend groups. For now, he'd just sit here and...blink in surprise?

Wait. No. That hadn't been the plan. But it was certainly what he was doing as his wandering eyes caught the glint of something in the hollow of a tree. Feeling curiously compelled to find out what it was, he pushed up off the rock and carefully approached the hollow, being extra careful to make sure he wasn't disturbing something's nest. The closer he got, the more obvious it was that he wasn't doing anything of the sort. By the time he'd gotten close enough to see inside the hollow, he could tell it was *weirdly* clean, actually. And the thick leather-bound notebook inside, one of extremely good quality, was certainly not what he'd expected to find way out here. Particularly given it was in pristine condition. Ethan frowned and looked up and down the trail he'd stepped off of. No sign at all that anyone had been here recently. How very odd. Leaning in, he was able to read an embossed title on the notebook face.

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Overcome by curiosity, he reached into the hollow and pulled the notebook out, staring at in additional surprise as his fingers identified something he hadn't felt in...a decade or so? It was the feel of the paper. The *handmade* paper of extremely good quality. He'd run across some of it, years ago, at a Renaissance Festival. He'd loved the stuff, bought and filled a journal full of it...but it was far too expensive for casual use. What the heck was a leather-bound journal full of it doing out *here*? Puzzled beyond words, he opened to the first page, hoping for an explanation. He certainly got one, but not one that could possibly have expected...

To Whomever Finds this Notebook,

As I write this, intending to hide my notebook away, I am an old man. A happy, content old man who has lived an incredible life. But an old man, nevertheless. It is for that reason that I have decided to place this notebook somewhere that another may someday discover it. In my youth, it was my greatest magical achievement. Now, well, I've long since figured out how to do similar things without it as a crutch. And I am quite content with my wonderful wives and mistresses anyway. Playing with the abilities of The Ruler's Companion is a young man's game.

You, of course, are said young man. You couldn't have found the notebook if you weren't. Nor could you have found it if you were a malevolent soul that would use it to cause serious harm, instead of merely having fun. Even had such a person somehow broken through the protections where I placed it, or if those protections had faded with time, the notebook would destroy itself the moment such a person tried to pick it up. And you, then, would not be reading this note.

So, congratulations. You passed that particular test. Now, to explain what this notebook does...and prove to you that it's real, if you don't believe in magic. On that score, let's knock that one

out right quickly, shall we? Close this book, open it again, and check the inside of the front cover. Go ahead. I'm just a note. I'll wait.

...

...

...

Ethan stared at where the note just seemed to end. Shrugging and deciding to play along, he closed the notebook, waited a few seconds, and opened it to the front cover. The moment he did, he froze at what he saw there. It was his name. His full name, including the middle one that he was so embarrassed by that he never told anyone. More than that, his name was only the start. His height, weight, blood type, and dozens of other intimate details were listed out in an excruciatingly extensive profile. Suddenly *much* more concerned about just what he'd stumbled onto here, he gulped and opened back up to the first page with the note. The note which had now *changed*.

Hello Ethan!

No. The notebook isn't intelligent, nor am I alive. Probably not even my real self, if it's been more than a few years since I left this behind. Consider what just happened to be a sort of...magical programming language, I suppose. The notebook scanned you, found out all about you, and entered your name and magical signature as the new Ruler of the notebook. As of the moment you read the first note and closed it, no one but you will be able to use it as anything but a regular notebook. Not until you willfully and intentionally discard it, after erasing your own name from the cover. Oh! Its also got some basic protections against being destroyed or stolen, but it's best not to really test those, given how old they are at this point. I don't recall ever actually *needing* them, so I'm not sure how well they worked.

Anyway! With that bit of proof given, let me describe to you what this notebook does. I titled it as I did because this notebook emits a field of magic all around it. Even for the weakest, most mundane person, that field will be a few hundred meters. For someone with even average magical potential? More like half a kilometer, unless specifically restricted. This field is called The Ruler's Domain...and it's now your key to a great deal of fun!

So, what does the Ruler's Domain do? Simply put, it enforces the Rules you right within the notebook on the people within its range! Now, I don't mean it lets you, say, turn someone into a duck. That would take far too much power to be held in a notebook, no matter how fine the quality. It would burst into flames if it tried something like that! No, these are mental changes only. If, for example, you write within the book that it's a *Rule* that everyone within the field of effect must hate the idea of pineapple being put on pizza? Then everyone within the field will feel that it's *only natural* to hate pineapple being put on pizza (as they should anyway, really. Seriously, that's just *unnatural*). They won't think it's weird at all. Not even once they leave the field again. They might once again believe pineapple could be fine on pizza once they leave, but they won't be at all disturbed or worried by what happened. The *Rules* seem natural to someone, period.

Starting to get ideas? Oh, I bet you are. I was a young man when I made this, and I assure you I used it for all sorts of things a horny young man would naturally think of. It was, I have to admit, I significant chunk of why I put so much effort into making it. I was a pervert as a teenager, so sue me. Most teenagers are, regardless of gender.

That said. There are some limitations you should know about. A few were things I put in as safeguards against even myself abusing the notebook. The rest are more about power. The notebook draws power from both the environment and from its current holder, you see. (You'll find yourself needing quite a bit more food than usual while you adapt to that, just as a sidenote to be aware of.) Thus, what it can achieve is very dependent on how strong your own magical potential is, and how much ambient magic is in the area. I chose a relatively normal sort of place to leave this, with fairly average amounts of ambient magic. How much strength you have...well, I have no way of knowing that. Nor does it really matter.

What *does* matter is that it effects what sort of *Rules* you can create. Don't worry, the notebook will simply erase a rule if you don't have the power for it. And you'll grow naturally stronger over time, simply by using it. The two key points you need to know are these:

- 1) The safeguards won't let you *harm* anyone with the *Rules*. Not intentionally, at least. This is not a tool of crime or war.
- 2) The amount of power needed for a *Rule* to take effect is proportional to the unnaturalness of the *Rule*. Turning a regular beach into a topless beach? That requires only a minimal amount of power. It's a relatively natural jump, you see? Requiring everyone on the beach to pretend the sand is snow? More power. It doesn't match the environment. Might be possible, but only if you yourself are fairly strong and the beach has a decent amount of ambient magic to work with. Making the same people believe that it's completely natural to put on a parka at the beach, and then run up and down it in the heat? Even if the safeguards didn't stop you, since that could kill someone, it wouldn't work. It's too *unnatural* for both the mindset and location of the people there.

And that is just about it. Oh, I could tell you a lot more about how the notebook works and suggest things to do with it. But what would be the fun in that? I left this behind so that some young man could have an adventure. Hopefully a lifetime worth of it! Mine certainly has been, and why should I be the only one? So, figure it out for yourself! Just one last piece of advice? It always turns out better if the people you're having fun with have fun themselves. Adventures are better with companions, after all, rather than going it forever alone.

-Mysterious Old Man

P.S. Ha! I always wanted to sign something that way. Maybe I should have just said, 'It's dangerous to go alone, take this?'

Ethan's lips curled into a faint grin at the last line, even as his mind struggled to process just what he held in his hands. The changing note and the details inside the cover said this was real...or else among the most elaborate pranks ever created. He sat back down on the rock nearby, staring at the Ruler's Companion, mind whirling with possibilities and considering how best to test it.

Ethan had waited patiently for his chance. He'd been sitting in the small coffee shop, a relative hole-in-the-wall on the 43rd floor of the Arcology's 32nd sector, for nearly an hour. He had, of course, ordered a coffee. He'd even gone back for a pastry after the first 45 minutes, not wanting to be a leech on a perfectly nice business. Sure, the place was hardly full at this time of day and none of the workers seemed to care, but it was still the principle of the thing. He was going to make absolutely sure that he didn't cause any *harm* with his testing. Which, of course, is why he'd waited until a full-on slump. This little spot was well enough liked by the locals to stay in business, but it did so more by making coffee *deliveries* at certain times of day to the surrounding businesses than by direct sales. Which meant that, at 2:00 in the afternoon it hadn't been busy. Even so, he'd waited until, just after 3:00, there was no one but him and two baristas in the shop.

The fact that both of them were fairly young a cute wasn't lost on him. The younger was, he thought, right around nineteen and clearly a bottle blonde rather than naturally that color. Upbeat and full of smiles, she was an obvious favorite of everyone he'd seen interact with her. The elder was somewhere in her early twenties, maybe a year or two older than Ethan himself, and was a rather amusing personality contrast to her coworker. She was darkly tanned and raven haired...and had a biting, sarcastic wit that had frequently had Ethan trying not to fall out of his seat laughing as he listened in to her barbed comments. Somehow, the two opposites seemed to actually get along, and even if his experiment went nowhere, he was content to have at least gotten a floor show out of watching the duo.

Now, as no one at all was in the shop, it was time for that experiment though. Switching from the sketchpad he'd been idly drawing new ideas on, he cracked open *The Ruler's Companion* and wrote his very first test 'Rule.' Since this was *just* a test, he went with something fairly tame.

Rule 1: To encourage better tips, male customers at Rutian's Coffee are referred to as 'Master.'

There was a faint pulse of light that ran along the words the instant he finished the sentence. A moment later, he *felt* more than saw, as that light spread out over the coffee shop. Blinking and honestly rather convinced by the lightshow that it had probably worked, Ethan casually stood and approached the counter. The blonde perked up, giving him a smile as he approached.

"Can a get a new latte, please? Hazlenut instead of vanilla, this time."

"Of course, Master! One Hazelenut coffee, coming right up!"

Despite having been convinced just a moment ago, the blonde actually following through on the Rule she couldn't have known about sent a spike of adrenaline racing through Ethan's blood. He watched her make the latte in a half-daze, paid for it...and left double the tip he'd left the previous time. He didn't know if actually following his 'half' of the Rule's logic would make it stronger. But it wouldn't hurt anything, and was a possible apology for what he was about to do. He wasn't about to stop his experiments, after all.

Returning to his seat, he took several sips of his new drink, staring almost unseeing at The Ruler's Companion as he mulled over what to do next. Finally, he settled on several Rules he could try in sequence, attempting to sort out the limits. He wrote the second Rule with a slightly less steady hand than the first.

Rule 2: If someone at Rutain's Coffee who has left a good tip asks you to remove your bra, you must comply. They deserve a nicer view in return for their own generosity.

The lightshow and feel of the Rule spreading outward was the same. Glancing around to make sure no one else had entered while he was distracted, Ethan raised his voice to the two women who were chatting. Trying to make his voice come out confident despite his fear this would be too far, he asked the question.

"Ladies? Could you please remove your bras?"

They both blinked and looked at him. The blonde blushed, but barely hesitated, reaching behind her back, under her shirt, and quickly started unhooking her bra. Ethan was so distracted by her wiggling that he almost missed the older worker asking her companion if he'd given a good tip. He *didn't* miss when the older and significantly bustier woman got a response and repeated the motions of her companion. She was far smoother about it and didn't blush in the slightest...even as Ethan's eyes boggled at her boobs dropping into place. She must be at least an F-cup! And she wasn't even sagging all that much! A gene-splice, maybe?

Both women seemed confused for a moment once their bras were in their hands, making him nervous...only for it to quickly become obvious they simply weren't certain what to do with them. After a quick, whispered conversation, both of them stuck their bras under the counter in the same spot. They smiled at him, the older of the two actually sending a wink his way, then...went right back to their previous conversation.

So...that had worked. Just how far could he actually take this? Deciding to skip ahead, he tried writing another Rule. One much more jarring.

Rule 3: The Dress Code at Rutain's Coffee has recently changed. Between 3:00 and 4:00 pm, all employees must be nude.

The moment he wrote it, he instinctively knew it wasn't going to work. Sure enough, when it lit up this time, it burned away without leaving a mark on the page. Okay. Good to know that it wasn't painful or anything for a Rule to fail. And that the note had been telling the truth about the limits, as far as he could tell so far. They had to *fit* the environment somehow. Or perhaps the people and their expectations? Considering, he tried again. Something subtler but more *active* in a way.

Rule 3: If an employee at Rutain's Coffee finds a customer attractive, they must approach him or her and offer a free coffee. If he or she accepts, the employee will become aroused to the point of mild distraction.

Ethan might not be a super-model. But he was fit and good-looking enough that he'd never had trouble finding a girlfriend. Well, not when he could get over his own introverted nature to actually ask a girl or two out, anyway. He also didn't want to continue this if neither of them was going to enjoy it. So, best to find out...assuming it worked. To his surprise, the moment he finished the sentence, it flashed brighter than ever and sunk into the page. The Rule *had* taken.

He looked up to take in what the two workers were doing and was gratified to note that the younger of the two was staring at him fixatedly. The older wasn't, which was a bit disappointing, but he'd take what he could get. Particularly given that the raven haired twenty something was *clearly* amused by her companion's reaction. She leaned in to whisper something in the younger woman's ear. Whatever it was made the blonde blush...but she also started making another cup of coffee. Looking down at his barely touched latte, he realized he hadn't really thought that through. Oh well. That wasn't really the point.

A few minutes later, he was accepting a new drink from the cute bottle blonde, appreciating the way she called him 'Master' and deliberately made her braless breasts jiggle and sway a bit for him. She swayed away after his thank you, and Ethan hadn't missed the fact her nipples had turned hard as diamonds while she talked to him. Even as she slid back behind the counter, she was biting her lip and fidgeting, much to the older woman's amusement. Ethan grinned...and decided it was high time he see if he could target a *person* instead of a place. Now that he knew she was at least a little into him, he didn't hesitate to jot down two new Rules, one using the name he'd carefully noted from her employee tag.

Rule 4: Employees of Rutain's Coffee are allowed to take customers into the back.

That one took instantly. But when he tried another...

Rule 5: If Alicia of Rutain's Coffee finds herself aroused by a customer, she will invite them into the back for a blowjob.

...Something odd happened. The entire list flared, instead of just the new Rule, and then the Rule flamed out. Frowning, Ethan puzzled over it from a moment...then nodded as a thought occurred to him. Maybe it worked that way? After a moment to consider, he reluctantly crossed out Rule 1 and Rule 2. He was a little worried about the second one, but when they faded from the page a moment later, neither of the girls seemed any the wiser. He watched them for a couple of minutes, then nodded. The original note had mentioned that someone wouldn't think it was weird even once they left the influence of a Rule. Since the Rule was so recent, it would likely take some time for them to consider replacing

their bras. Good. With those Rules having faded away when he crossed them out, Etan made a new attempt at the previous Rule.

Rule 5: If Alicia of Rutain's Coffee finds herself aroused by a customer, she will invite them into the back for a blowjob.

This time, the Rule hesitated only a second before imprinting, and Ethan grinned hugely at two separate victories. Three really. He now knew he could affect specific *people*, he knew that there was a *total* cap on the amount of power he could use for all combined rules. And, most importantly, from the way the two women were furiously whispering, he was about to experience something nice. Very nice. The older woman looked surprised, likely since she hadn't been included in the Rule. But after a few moments of arguing, she grinned and shooed the blonde back towards his table. Carefully securing The Ruler's Companion, he looked up at the blushing blonde with his best smile.

"Yes?"

"Ah...sir? Can you follow me into the back, please? You've tipped me so well today that I feel like you should get a *special* thank you."

Trying hard not to show his excitement...or trip over the half-erection he was already sporting, Ethan followed the blonde into the back, choosing to ignore the teasing comment the older worker threw at them as the door shut. The 'back' was, it had to be said, mostly storage and rather cramped. But that didn't deter Alicia as she backed him into a nearby shelf and went up on her tip-toes. The kiss surprised him, given that it wasn't part of his 'Rule,' but he went with it. He could think on what it meant that there was wiggle room in the 'Rules' later. Right now, he was thoroughly committed to having fun...and pressing his luck just a little. That luck-pressing took the form of reaching up to grab her breasts, zeroing in on her rock-hard nipples and firmly circling them with his thumbs. Given how she moaned into the kiss, deepening it a second later, he figured she wasn't in the mood to protest.

Even so, the Rule clearly had its influence, as Alicia began to kiss her way down his jawline and throat, even as her hands found his belt and deftly unfastened it. He grinned as the motions, done without looking, showed off a considerable degree of experience, despite her being a few years younger than he was. A few moments later, as his pants started to sag, Alicia abandoned her kissing completely, falling to her knees. The fact that she smoothly used the motion to pull his pants and boxers down, causing his throbbing cock to nearly smack her in the nose, only reinforced his previous thought.

One of her hands came up, grabbing his shaft, even as her other went down...into the waistband of her pants. Huh. Definitely some improvisation. But he wasn't complaining! Particularly as she seemed to be quite appreciative of his size. He might not be a porn star, but he was well aware he was considerably above average, and as Alicia began to stroke his cock teasingly, she commented on just that.

"Oh my. I wasn't expecting quite this nice of a cock! Pity all we have time for is a blowjob!"

Okay. That comment absolutely wasn't something she was being forced into and he was absolutely going to be doing something about that. But later. For now, he was busy gasping as she leaned forward and sealed her lips around his tip, flicking her tongue across it a moment later. *Definitely* has some previous experience! She spent a few seconds longer on just his glans, swirling her tongue around his cockhead, before beginning to bob her head. Her first bob didn't take her far, but she didn't stop either, with each successive bob going a little deeper. He could tell when she hit her gag reflex, but the part of his mind that could still think was impressed that it barely slowed her down. Two extra bobs and she worked her way past it, the tiny choking noise she made only making the experience hotter for him.

Ethan had only rarely had girlfriends capable of deepthroating him and he hadn't been expecting it here. He was quickly proven to have underestimated this particular barista as, with an expression of determination he caught only glimpses of due to the angle, she steadily swallowed more and more of him. Finally, perhaps five minutes into one of the best blowjobs of his life, Alicia's nose made contact with his groin, his entire shaft down her throat. She angled herself to look up at him, somehow seeming to *grin* around his cock as she made eye contact...and then began to hum a nameless tune. Ethan immediately groaned, quickly realizing he wasn't going to last long against that assault. Something only reinforced when she doubled down by starting to bob again, all while keeping up the humming as best she could. Wanting the pleasure to last as long as possible, he held on to his fraying control for another minute, two, three...and then he snapped.

Unable to warn her with more than a grunt, she somehow seemed to know he was about to cum anyway...but didn't back off at all. Instead, she slammed herself down on him fully and swallowed rhythmically, still humming as she did. He cried out again as the overstimulation extended his climax, five hot spurts of cum firing down her throat. She pulled back a few moments later, opened her mouth to show there wasn't a single drop that had been 'wasted,' then winked up at him.

Holy shit.

Ethan barely remembered the next few minutes, though he did remember Alicia seeming smugly pleased at his dazed expression as she helped him dress...and he *certainly* remembered the soaked g-string she'd slipped into his pocket. That particular bit penetrated the haze quite clearly as they made their way back out front. After all, that *absolutely* hadn't been part of the Rule he'd made. Alicia had done it all on her own...

Finding himself back with his coffees and doing his best to ignore the knowing smirk of the older worker, he shook himself back into focus. Okay. That had been...*more* in ways he hadn't expected. Ones he fully intended to explore farther. Quickly opening the Ruler's Companion back up, Ethan thought for a moment, then nodded and made a few changes to the Rules. He struck through Rule 5 and replaced it with two less intense ones.

Rule 6: Alicia of Rutain's Coffee can't help but think about the most recent blowjob she gave. It was the hottest experience of her life and she fantasizes about doing more with the same customer.

Rule 7: Alicia of Rutain's Coffee, for reasons she doesn't understand, imagines herself calling the customer she gave her most recent blowjob to 'master.' She becomes slightly more aroused every time she considers it.

The new Rules easily took effect, even combined apparently being less power-intensive than the previous Rule. He wasn't at all sure just how much good it would do, but he was going to spend enough time here to finish at least one of these coffees and get another pastry. He'd just have to see later, after the Rules had been replaced, if her spending an hour or two fantasizing had any sort of long-term effect on how she thought of him.

For now, he was done experimenting. At lease at the coffee shop. He could imagine several more interesting places where he might achieve greater results...

<<End of Part 1>>