I had a long sensual kiss with Maya before I left.  She was just your everyday homesick water fairy.  I drove to practice feeling pretty good about myself. I had made Maya happy and got a fair amount of life essence.  I definitely needed to upgrade my abyssal sight though. I think I misplaced my vortex over her aether core.  I had guessed it would be in the same spot as a human, close to the center of the brain but when she lifted her disguise it was at her brain stem.

As I was dressing in the locker room James approached and begged me to come over Sunday night to meet Jade’s mother.  I told him I had plans I couldn’t change.  He mumbled that he was going to get in trouble for not coming through.   I almost said I would do a Sunday lunch but then remembered Andromeda.  I shouldn’t bow to my lessors, demons were superior.

Coach Sam was not at practice.  She had divorce proceedings come up last minute.  Jamie ran the practice and was particularly hard on me.  Constantly yelling at my mistakes even though they were small.  She obviously had an issue with me.  I did my best to take the verbal abuse coming from her and the repeated pleas from James at practice to change my mind.  My teammates began to get frustrated with Jamie for the obvious abuse but I calmed them with my voice.  Sam would be back tomorrow for the game tomorrow.

After practice, I showered at the rink as I planned to visit Iris and Abigail to see how they were doing.  In the shower, James approached me again.  His eyes just flicked once below my waist before he asked, “Come on Caleb.  My parents and my aunt are going to murder me for not getting you to the house Sunday.  My aunt is traveling a long way and hates to be kept waiting.”

“Sorry, James I have to meet someone in DC for dinner.  I am leaving around noon,” I told him while finishing my body wash luffa.

 “She is flying into DC,  you can meet her there…maybe…” he sounded uncertain.

“No.  Monday after school James.  She probably needs a cat nap after the long flight anyway,” I replied.

“Fine!  But don’t try your funny quips with her.  She is a bit… serious,” James finally gave up.

I drove to Iris’ house and found Abigail cooking inside.  She was actually baking.  Cookies and muffins for a fundraiser for cheerleading. They were raising money to buy presents for underprivileged children. I talked with Abigail for a while and we made a date for Wednesday to go running.  Abigail’s mother was going to stay with her parents till New Year’s.  So Abigail was going to stay with Iris.  I didn’t understand until Iris walked into the kitchen obviously having been listening in, “Her mom thinks my parents are here.  She  doesn’t know they are not.”  Both girls put on a cheeky smiles.  I just shook my head.

“So you two are BFFs now?”  I asked sampling a chocolate chip cookie.

Abigail replied, “Yeah, when can I see you in your incubus form?”  The cookie stopped on the way to my mouth.  Iris facepalmed.  “Oh, Iris you trusted me enough to show me magic and to tell me about your problems.  I know you said Caleb’s true identity was a secret but we are all friends here.”

Abigail was one of that simple but genuine young women.  Still, Iris had breached my trust. She looked at me exasperated, “You are the one who dropped Abigail on my doorstep and I told her my secrets too!”  Her explanation helped a little as I had pushed these two together and it seemed both needed each other’s support.

Seeing my irritation Abigail offered. “I won’t reveal your secret Caleb. You used your powers to get rid of my stepfather?”

I felt a little cornered but answered honestly, “Yes I questioned him and made him tell me the truth.”

Then she asked a question that threw me off, “And did you use your powers to seduce me?”

I stammered, “No, I wouldn’t…I did use it to heighten gratification from us having sex.”

Abidgail nodded, “That is what Iris said.  You confirming it makes me believe you.  So when do I get magic from letting you have sex with me?”  Iris facepalmed again.  Abigail looked surprised and said, “What?  You said he had a magic ability to enlarge my magic potential.”

Standing behind Abigail, Iris mouthed the word, ‘sorry’.  I decided to give Abigail an explanation, “Yes my ability does give my partner a chance to enlarge their aether core.  But it is like inflating a fragile balloon.  Too fast it might burst.  I was going slow with you to see if your aether core expanded further beyond expectations.”

Abigail nodded, “So do I need to sign some type of blood contract or something?  Do I need to serve you for my entire life?” She sounded completely serious and I was briefly at a loss for words.

Iris face palmed for the third time.  I didn’t know what to say, “No I don’t bind a woman to my service or anything.  I just…I just do my incubus thing.”  I mumbled.

Abigail looked deflated, “I know I am not the smartest but I work hard.  My prospects for college are not that great.  I am a good cook though.  Can I be your personal demon chef?”

I couldn’t help but quip, “Oh, do you have the cookbook *How to Serve Humans*?”  Referencing a twilight zone episode.

Iris face palmed again, this time at me.  Abigail didn’t catch the joke, “No, but I am sure I can find it on Amazon.”

I just smiled as I explained the joke and Abigail said it was not funny.  Abigail needed a lot of self-validation from an outside party.  I could probably give it to her but was binding someone to me wise?  Would I be starting a cult?  Abigail wore a semi-smile as I mulled things over.  She definitely was pretty when she smiled…when she was happy.  “Fine! You can be my personal chef Abs.”  Her face blossomed into a brilliant smile and she jumped into me, wrapping her legs around my waist and arms around my neck and giving me a long kiss.

Iris didn’t facepalm this time but instead looked jealous. We spent the afternoon packing the baked goods for the sale tomorrow. Abigail smiled the entire time. She had a glow about her. Iris started to talk about the intricacies of magic. The first step was locating your aether core and then learning how to manipulate it.

We even tested Abigail’s core to get a base reading on her. She was 0.201 with the device. A solid low-tier hedge mage number Iris said. She had the capacity to learn simple spells. She seemed so excited but then asked if she would get to go to Hogwarts now. Which got another facepalm from Iris and a look to me saying, ‘help me out here a little.’ Abigail followed that she was joking but when I mentioned Lydia and her being taken by the Magus Arcanum I opened a new can of worms.

The questions started coming fast and furious from her and I made my escape. I had my whole evening free and to myself. I could do a few things. I could go home and wash my sheets…nope I could just change them and wash the dirty sheets tonight. I could go for a run…without the promised prize of life essence I didn’t feel like it. I could work on my online courses…no I was in the habit of doing that late at night into dawn. I could go shopping as it was Black Friday…but did I really want to fight the crowds…nope.

I pulled into the Monroe’s driveway. I hadn’t hung out with Rob for a while and I texted him. I had forgotten he was shopping with Yuki today and his return text informed me what store they were at and if I wanted to join them I could. Nope.

I could head home and maybe sneak to my room with Maya. I texted Paige asking what her and her friends were up to. They were just leaving Vincent’s and going to continue their shopping.

Crap. I drove to the state forest and decided to go for a walk, not a run just a walk. I passed a few other hikers and took a rarely used trail to a rocky gorge. I had never been here before but it seemed extremely remote, 3 miles from my parked car. With the chilly weather and difficult terrain, I guessed no one would be around.

I stripped naked and transformed into my incubus form. It felt liberating and I stretched. Ok I climbed the wall to a ledge about 20 feet up. It took some focus to get my wings to spread behind me. I had wings so that meant I could fly right? I practiced flapping them, each wing extended about five feet from me, giving me about a 12 foot wing span when you added in my torso.

I leaped off the ledge planning to glide gracefully down but my right wing snagged a shrub and I spiraled into the wall and crashed in a tumble of wings to the ground hard. Ok, that was not fun. Let's try lifting off. I stood in the center of the gorge and flapped my wings increasing the tempo but nothing happened rather than stirring up dust and debris. What was I doing wrong?

I sat in my demon form naked in the gorge and went to my mind space to review my incubus handbook.

*An incubus’ wings are an extension of a demon's will. By channeling your will into them you will have the freedom of flight.*

Yep, that was it. Two sentences to teach a newborn incubus to fly. Well maybe ‘channeling your will’ meant something. I returned to my body and willed wings to make me fly…and I felt something similar to when I created the saliva. A slight drain on my aether core. I needed to use aether to fly. I didn’t even need to flap the wings as I was already lifting off the ground.

I willed myself forward and nothing. What? I don’t understand. I flapped the wings and moved up and sideways as it was uneven. I drifted to a stop. I started to think. So I needed the wings to move but the aether expenditure somehow overcame gravity. I spent the next three hours of remaining light getting used to maneuvering in the air with the wings. I remained in the gorge even though I desperately wanted to test the skies.

Flying was just way too much fun. It barely took any aether, maybe 4 aether per hour to fly by my estimates. In the transit, I could fly forever as my regen was faster than the expenditure.

I transformed back into my human form. I had just found my second favorite thing to do after harvesting life essence. I dressed and headed back to my car. I didn’t see or hear anyone while I was practicing and it was now fairly dark out. I drove home thinking things were going great for me.

The house was empty when I got back and checking my messages I missed texts saying everyone was going out to eat and to meet them there. The message was an hour old so I missed dinner. I texted the family back with a group text saying I just got home and didn’t need dinner. I went upstairs and started cleaning. I was in a great mood as I washed the sheets and put clean sheets onto my bed. I was anxious to top off my life essence tonight and upgrade my ability. I was starting to convince myself that maybe I should upgrade my incubus wings instead of abyssal sight. In my mind space, I looked at my banner detaining my powers.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ability** | **Level** | **Cost to Increase** | **Effect Summary** |
| Abyssal Eyes | Upper | Tier 1 | 100 life essence | see in low light and see a sapient’s core |
| Abyssal Strength | Upper | Tier 1 | 100 life essence | improved muscluar stregnth |
| Abyssal Speed | Upper | Tier 1 | 100 life essence | improved reactions and quickness |
| Abyssal Endurance | Upper | Tier 1 | 100 life essence | improved fitness |
| Abyssal Smell | Upper | Tier 1 | 100 life essence | pick out and identify faint smells |
| Abyssal Taste | Upper | Tier 1 | 100 life essence | identify poisons |
| Chronomancy | Upper | Tier 1 | 100 life essence | alter your apparent age |
| Incubus Form | Upper | Tier 1 | 1,000 life essence | transform into your male demon form |
| Incubus Tail | Upper | Tier 1 | 100 life essence | control your tail and it’s form while in incubus form |
| Incubus Wings | Upper | Tier 1 | 100 life essence | improve the strength and appearance of your wings |
| Succubus Form | Upper | Tier 1 | 1,000 life essence | transform to your female demon form |
| Melodic Voice | Upper | Tier 1 | 100 life essence | soothe and calm your target |
| Aphrodisiac Salivary Glands | Lower | Tier 2 | 200 life essence | your saliva is an aphrodisiac |
| Seductive Gaze | Upper | Tier 1 | 100 life essence | seduce and charm your target with your eyes |
| Mask Aether Core | Lower | Tier 2 | 200 life essence | hide your true nature |
| Contact Queen Andromeda  | Upper | Tier 1 | 100 life essence | Contact Queen Andromeda |
| Infuse Life Essence |   | Tier 0 | 1000 life essence | instill your life essence into an organic form |
| Healing |   | Tier 0 | 500 life essence | restore flesh at the cost of aether |
| Binding Contract |   | Tier 0 | 500 life essence | bind a servant to your cause increasing their power |

I missed the last line and had to read it twice more. I had definitely thought about contracts when Abigail had said she was willing to form one with me. Had I unconsciously brought this ability into being? It was still 500 life essence to unlock so I was a long way away from being able to get it. I just wish my incubus handbook had better descriptions and was updated as needed. It was frustrating to not have someone to talk to about this.

I did steel myself though. Abyssal eyes was going to be the next upgrade no matter what. Being able to see threats was more important than my freedom of flight.

I was sitting at my computer when I felt the house shift slightly. The frint door had opened so they had returned from dinner. It was 11:12pm. I guessed they were all drunk too. Now all I had to do was wait for Maya to sneak up to my room tonight.