

I remember the tales of old, sung to me in flights of fantasy: of a world of heroes, an era of adventure. A time when anything was possible.

I remember the legends of these heroes, of those who slew great demons, of many who convened with the gods, and many more who spoke to the inhabitants of higher planes.

This epoch of heroism was a time where the mortal and higher plains coexisted, a time where both interacted freely and without boundaries, without order, and without any of the ties that bind.

Such things have been cast into the light of mysticism in the contemporary era. Seen by many as a period of poorly recorded history born out of imaginative fixation, rather than a documentation of truth.

To many, this era of fantasy was accurate to its namesake... a mere fantasy, and nothing more.

This was what I was led to believe.

This was what I truly believed.

And yet here I was, witnessing the manifestation that all but defied those beliefs.

A physical embodiment of those fantasies.

A faceless knight clad in blue, heraldry proudly drawn, speaking freely to those of higher planes without prompting, without deference, without decorum... without being beholden to the ties that bind.

Moreover, she spoke in a manner only portrayed in songs of legend, as equals in peerage, and contemporaries in dignity.

This was, as Nurse Pelka would say, *the stuff of legends*.

And I was acting not as a mere witness to the birth of this legend, but as a participant in the drafting of its course.

But as with all legends, this was not without its challenges. As point after point that was raised began chipping away at the reality that I thought I understood, a worldview I thought was absolute; prompted first by the library's self-admitted limitations, and its desire to overcome those limitations for the sake of transaction.

It was actively redrafting its eons-old rules, in adaptation and in service purely for Emma's unique needs.

It was a personalized direction that betrayed the library's vested interests in this new realm.

A not-so-subtle hint at its assessment of Emma, and by extension, Earthrealm's potential.

This would later be all but confirmed by the librarian himself, at the behest of Emma's incessant ramblings.

Ramblings that would traditionally be seen as novice in typical discourse, but that was clearly more in line with the library's straightforwardness, and very much in line with its preference in conducting trade.

I watched on, trying my best to ignore and block out the sudden surge in activity within the foreign ebb and flow of the library's manastreams. It was a silent and unseen fight that eventually ended in the library's victory, but only momentarily, as it overcame my learned decorum prompting my feathers to flare out in a natural response.

I continued bearing witness to Emma's back and forths with Buddy and eventually the Owl, as the library morphed, contorted, and changed all to illustrate its points to Emma. I noted at the corner of my eye, an entire *section* dedicated to the Earthrealm. I listened, as Emma continued her points of clarification, demonstrating Earthrealm's particular acumen for trade assessment.

I hinged on every word of every sentence, as the realization quickly came that what was rapidly developing wasn't merely a typical exchange of information. It was a trade of immense significance, one that should have only been possible by the Nexus owing to its seemingly endless stores of clandestine information.

My whole body stood still, as Emma preempted her trade of this *Radio*, with a speech befitting of an Elven Nexian diplomat in its delivery and content; as well as its flair and bluster. I dissected each concept, as Emma described a tale that reflected the tale of many a realm, until finally, it reached a point that no realm could match. None, except the Nexus itself. I listened closely as she described the functional limitations of a civilization never before seen, never before heard of, never before imagined save for the Nexus itself, and a few outliers such as Aetheron prior to the reformations.

A civilization so large, so expansive, so driven in its course and its direction for more, that it required nothing short of miracles to maintain its ferocious hunger.

Miracles that came in the form not of a mana-driven derivative of Tethers, Puddlejumping, or Flares, and not even brute-forced into existence by the gift of flight, speed, or water-sprinting, but by a wholly foreign concept that had only been revealed to me a few days prior.

A concept that up to this point had been nameless, vague, and formless.

A concept, no, a system... known as science.

And its derivative, *technology*.

A method and system of civilizational advancement that had only magic and mana as its contemporaries.

On a scale so vast that only the greatest of adjacent realms with the most advanced of magics could hope to match.

That was my assertion, at least, until I heard a collection of words that simply did not fit into the narrative of Earthrealm.

*"Our destiny was always to cross the distance of oceans. Regardless of if they were oceans of water or **oceans of stars**."*

A collection of words that I'd at first dismissed as mere window dressing for the sake of a trade.

However, I should've known better than that.

The Earthrealmer wasn't the type to mince words.

Moreover, she was the type to say *exactly* what she meant, in as little words as possible.

So as her speech went on, and more was revealed, a revelation dawned on me that I remained actively opposed to for the sake of my own sanity.

A revelation so far reaching, so extensive, that it would lead to nothing but a redefinition of the worldview I held.

I held onto that root of doubt, that network of skepticism, for as long as I could.

Until finally, I could not.

As the library itself would act as the third party assessor which would uproot any of these doubts, in a fashion so simple, that it left me speechless and listless.

"Earthrealm... and your kind, are utterly fascinating Cadet Emma Booker."

The librarian himself spoke, not once doubting, not once refuting, not once denying any of the Earthrealmer's claims.

“Even after all that has transpired, and the trauma that has been incurred upon it, the library wishes to express nothing but adamant appreciation and wishes to reciprocate fairly and accordingly.”

In fact, it was nothing short of *grateful* for this revelation.

Meaning that its veracity was undeniable.

Emma’s realm, her world, her *minor-realms* of starless skies, was *real*.

Which meant that there was no adjacent realm that could parallel her own.

Except for the Nexus itself.