Chapter 145

I woke with a naked Artica draped over me in her natural catkin body.  I petted her soft fur until she started to go into a low, grumbling purr.  I had compartmentalized what I had done last night with my sister and Maya.  I was glad Maya had been there, or I might have given in, gone further, and done something I regretted.

Artica stirred, and her hand slid down to my groin.  I had been a little rough with her last night as I had needed to release in my male body.  Her slightly increased strength was apparent as she had managed to control a few positions.  “We need to shower,” I said to the little nympho.

In response, she just grasped the flaccid penis and attempted to bring it to life.  “I want to see my sister’s race.  If you want, we can go again in the shower.”  Artica lept off the bed and raced into the shower.  Her feet had tangled in the sheets, but she did a graceful roll to get into the bathroom, her tail swishing in anticipation.  I followed her.

We were dressed and getting ready an hour later when a knock came at the door.  I checked, and it was Ashley.  I opened it immediately to an anxious Ashley, “Ashley, what’s up?”

“Do you know where Paige and Maya are?  The bus is waiting for them to leave for the race.  The coach took our phones last night so we could focus,” she said, a little panicky.  “Paige said you were coming, and I got your room from the concierge.”

I went next door and locked loudly.  Eventually, a blurry-eyed Paige opened the door wrapped in a sheet.  The smell of last night’s activities hit my senses.  Seeing Ashley, her eyes went wide, “Shit!  Maya!  Fuck we are late for the bus!”  She rushed back into the room, and the shower was running in seconds.

Ashley was relieved she had found the two as they both rushed to shower together in the bathroom.  Ashley sent a text on her phone to the coach.  “At least she will never take our phones again after this,” Ashley mumbled.  She then focused on me, “Hi Caleb, thanks for taking care of my sister.  I appreciate it.” The beautiful blonde bit her lip, “I was hoping you could come down and visit us at the college.”

“Visit you?  I would love to.  But I am actually going on a trip soon and not sure when I am coming back,”  I said as Artica left the room to stand behind me.  Ashley looked a little jealous of her as it was clear we had stayed in the same room, and both had wet hair.

“Really?  Where are you going?” She said, putting on a brilliant smile and ignoring Artica.

Ashley was not aware of the supernatural world, so I could not reveal my trip to Mercanious.  “It is for a summer job.  I am going to tell Paige after the race, and she can tell you about it.”  I heard them swearing and stumbling around the bathroom dressing.

I walked past Ashley and could feel her eyes on my back as Artica, and I made our way to the truck.  “She has it bad for you,” Artica said slyly.

“Yeah, I just wished you looked at me that way,” I joked as we stepped into the elevator.

“When I was on my hands and knees in the shower ten minutes ago and looking up at you, my eyes did not look that way?” Artica said, ignoring the company in the elevator.  An old couple seemed incredulous at Artica’s bravado, but the older gentlemen gave her body a once-over.

I looked at my bodyguard sternly, and she realized her attempt to embarrass me was not well received.  I leaned in and whispered, “No more showers with me.”  I might not be able to follow through on my threat, but it had her recoil from me and accept the admonishment.

We left the hotel’s parking lot with Paige’s team still waiting for her and went to the race course.  Rowing is a very boring sport to watch.  You can only see about a quarter of the two-thousand-meter race. And the time between races is about fifteen minutes. I sat on a bench with Artica as race after race passed.  Paige was in the last morning race, still two hours away.  Artica was on the lookout for trouble as I worked on my phone.

I had a few text messages from the fire genasi, Vanhi.  She was more than happy to help facilitate the trip, which made me think she was going to get something out of this.  As for reaching the top of Devil’s Tower, she had secured a helicopter ride.  I actually just planned to fly everyone up one at a time in the cover of darkness.  I told her I would meet her there with my companions.  We sat on a park bench and waited.

Paige’s race finally came down the course.  We stood and went to the water’s edge to yell as they came.  They were winning by open water and looked strong as they passed the finish line.  Artica said, “That was an impressive win, there are some top teams here. Paige’s team was ranked 11th in the country, and they just beat the 3rd and 6th ranked teams by maybe seven seconds.”

I looked at Artica with my eyebrows arched. She shrugged, “While you were…raising her core, I did a lot of research online.” I nodded, slightly surprised Artica had taken an interest in the rowing.

We went to talk with Paige after she got off the water.  It was weird walking around the park with the rowing shell trailers.  Before I became an incubus, I would stare at all the women in spandex suits…now, I was not as interested.  Paige’s crew had massive smiles as they put the boat on the trailer.  Paige waved, but her coach needed to talk with them before she could talk with me.  Once that was over, she raced to me and hugged me.  I returned it and saw a lot of Paige’s boat mates walking toward us.

“Did you see how dominant we were!” Her blue eyes were electric with excitement.

“Yeah, you are going to move into the top three in the country after the win.” I pulled Paige away from her approaching team, and we went for a walk, “Paige, I need to tell you some things.”  My tone was serious.

“It didn’t work?”  she asked worriedly, thinking the core enhancement failed.

“No, your core is 0.95.  You will be able to use the invisibility cloak and learn magic,”  I said. She stopped walking, and Artica sidestepped her as she had been trailing us and keeping an eye out.

“It worked?  Then why are you so serious?  Can I select another enhancement?  I have been thinking about this for a while,” she said excitedly.

I held her shoulders, “Paige, I am leaving Earth and do not know when I am coming back,” I broke the news.

Paige didn’t seem to understand, “You are going into the transit?  Are you going to the elven city of Kealon?”

The elven city of Kealon was where our trail was taking us to find Iris’ parents, but I never got there.  It did not surprise me that Paige had remembered the details, “No, I am going to another planet.  The planet where Vida is from.”

“Mercanious?  What?  Why?  Does mom and dad know?”  She panicked a little, realizing how far that actually was.

“No, I need you to cover for me.  It may be days or years.  I have to go; someone important is in trouble.”  I tried to soften the blow a little, “What enhancement did you want?  I can also improve your memory enhancement as well when we get back to the hotel.”

Paige was still in a daze at my news, “What the fuck, Caleb!  You are possibly leaving and never coming back, and that is all you can say?”

“I am coming back, Paige.  I just do not know when,” I said defensively.  I wish Carrie had given me a little more information about this rescue Andromeda mission.

“I will go with you then,” Paige said.  “Someone needs to keep you out of trouble.”

Artica quipped, “If she is going, then I am going too.”

“No!” I said angrily and let my demonic anger burn in my words.  “I am just here to let you know.”  Paige and Artica stepped away from me.  I felt I needed to show my anger in this.  “I will be in the hotel room.  Come to my room when you get to the hotel, and I will give you the elixirs.  What do you want?”

Paige’s face had numerous emotions on it, but I think she realized I was the one who made the final decisions.  She finally said, “Constitution.  I think constitution will help me age slower from the readings I did in Iris’ library.”

I nodded and left Paige and dodged her teammates.  She had been so excited after the race I hated to burst her bubble.  We got five milkshakes on the way back to the hotel.  Artica packed our things, including the symbian, in the truck while I waited for Paige.  I went into my mind space and added the constitution enhancement elixir to my banner.  I had 207 life essence so I increased it to upper tier 1. It read that it improved the health and recovery speed of the recipient.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Elixer of Constitution | Lower | Tier 1 | 100 life essence | improves the health and recovery of the individual |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Elixer of Constitution | Upper | Tier 1 | 200 life essence | improves the health and recovery of the individual |

If this gave my sister a longer life, then the 200 life essence investment was well worth it.  I waited for Paige and had Artica wait in the car.  I had five milkshakes for a reason.  Two were for Paige, two for Maya, and one for Ashley.  When Paige knocked, I let her in.  She had already had a quick shower, “I am still angry with you, Caleb.  If you do not come back, I am going to hunt you down and break you.  Besides, you promised me you would come to Hawaii with me this summer.” She ended with a week smile.

I hugged my sister, and she had tears streaming down her face.  “Do not worry, I will be back.  Now I can make the…milkshakes for you.  While you are drinking them, I will make two for Maya and one for Ashley.  They only have about fifteen minutes before they lose potency.”

Paige smirked, drying her tears, “Ashley? Do you have a crush? Why is she getting an enhancement?”

I thought about it before answering honestly, “Yes. I do like her. I think…” I paused for a moment, “I want to help her, and I did not have the opportunity when we had sex.”

Paige nodded in understanding, “This still seems weird, sister.”  She called me sister in reference to my succubus form.  The tension cracked, she let a smile escape, “I always wanted a sister.” She got serious when I looked impatient. She relented from teasing me, seeing I was not in touch with my feminine side, “The bus leaves soon, so get to your thing…”

I handed her one milkshake at a time, and she drank both of hers to start.  I then made the remaining three.  Maya got the improved strength enhancement and quickness.  Maya chose that when I gave her the options in a text message.  Ashley got the constitution enhancement.  I had planned to give her the recall, but the idea of living longer and being healthy made more sense.  Even though it sounded a little gross, I planned to get this elixir to my parents somehow.  Maybe I would add the ability to make it as succubus milk?  That would be a waste of 200 life essence but less cringeworthy.

I handed her the three additional milkshakes, “Paige, can I enhance Ashley’s core sometime?  I mean, I don’t know why I am asking you.  Maybe…I guess I want you to talk to her about the supernatural world.  See if she wants it,” I admitted.

“Don’t you have enough girls in your parade, bro?” she teased, having dropped her anger or at least buried it for now.

“I just like Ashley.  This,” I tapped her milkshake, “is the constitution enhancement.”

Paige sighed, “I really hate giving this to her without telling her what it is.  But I will talk to Maya, and we can approach Ashley together to explain things.”  We had one more quick hug before Paige left.

I went down to the truck, and Artica was waiting for me.  It was a four-hour drive home, and we got on the road.  Right after we passed over the Appalachian mountains, I got a call from Mary.  “Rose just called me, Caleb.  She wants to meet at Rooster Rock in the state forest.  What do you want me to do?”  Mary sounded anxious as Rose had been her best friend.

I thought for a moment, “Have Bedelia scout from a few miles away and call me back.  We are still about two hours from getting back from Tennessee.”

Bedelia called and said she was meeting Mary.  Aurora was going with her.  I thought this was a mistake, especially since the Archbishop said he was after her.  But Aurora was her own person, and would make her own decisions. Bedelia thought she actually wanted to confront the man who had enslaved her.

Bedelia finally called when we were just thirty minutes away from them. She was on speakers in the truck, “It is them, Caleb.  The angelic is with them, and he knew I was scouting.  He was not able to trace my location, and we are safe.”  I sensed some anxiety in her voice.  “He is powerful, Caleb.”

Artica said while driving, cracking her knuckles by tightly gripping the wheel, “We should call in Kiri and Jade. This could get messy.”

Bedelia answered, “They are already on their way. Vida, Eilina, Iris, and Abigail as well.”

I got concerned, “No, they are unnecessary, and this is too dangerous. I do not want them to come.”

Bedelia said, “They are coming in case you need them. They will be safe. We should talk about training them in the future.”

I did not like putting everyone in harm’s way, but everyone was stubborn and did not want to listen. I thought for a moment that if I had bound these women to me with a contract, then they would not be able to disobey an order. Bedelia hung up and said she was calling Jade.

I needed to roll with this for now and keep everyone safe. That meant confronting the Archbishop and his angelic. We parked at the mountain’s base on the park’s far side. Rooster Rock was a nickname the locals gave a rock formation. It was not because it looked like a rooster, but back in the seventies, it was rumored guys would bring their girlfriends here for sex—and then crow about it.

Aurora and Bedelia got out of the Pathfinder, followed shortly after by Mary. “Everyone is on their way, Caleb. I noticed fifteen people and one of them was Rose. I think they planned to capture Mary and use her to draw you in.”

“Where are their cars?” I asked, trying to get an idea of the terrain.

“About a half mile down the walking path. They parked off of the old fire tower road. Three SUVs and one van. Only one of their guys is watching the vehicles,” Bedelia informed me.

“Mary, how was Rose when you talked to her?” I turned to the blonde, who looked almost sick at everything that was going on. She did not need to be here.

Mary focused slowly, “She was…she was flat. Unemotional when she called me.”

Aurora narrowed her eyes, “She is probably under the influence of Grand Inquisitor Arturio Delgado.” A vein popped in Aurora’s neck as she clenched her teeth.

Mary asked, “Are we going to free her?”

“I do not know,” I replied, thinking of a plan as Kiri arrived with the others. Jade arrived with her two bodyguards, Monsoon and Amari. We definitely had the numbers, but very few of us had the training in the actual type of fighting that was going to happen. We may need to kill. Kiri was checking her aether rifle as I slipped into my mind space.

I summoned all my constructs to the library. Before committing to any attack, I needed to find out what kind of threat the angelic was. Hopefully, the group had some useful knowledge from all the books from Rincewind’s library.

They all knew what was happening in the real world, and Pandora was surprisingly the first one to speak, “We know who the angelic is.”