

Chapter 1

Saving Susan

When: Just after leaving the last world

Where: Standing before Inari's house

Lysanias walked over and knocked on the door, figuring it was the polite thing to do despite Inari no doubt knowing he was there.

"Up here!" a voice called, and he looked to the roof. She was standing up there and looking up at something intently, but he just saw the sky. She shook her head and crouched, then jumped into the air in a high arc. She flipped over, and lightly touched down on one foot. "Hi!"

"Hello. Nice to see you again."

"It is, isn't it?" She laughed, not being serious. "Come on inside. You hungry?"

"I could have a little something, if it's not too much trouble."

"Course it's not. I'll make you a little snack and tell you where I'm sending you next."

"Fine." He looked around, eyes narrowing. "Where's Jenny? I should have been right behind her."

"I just sent her directly to her friend, there was no need for her to come here. They have their own mission to rescue Susan's father, so at the moment they're all busy with that. You'll see her again, I'm sending you to where she went after this."

"Ah! Just didn't want to lose her. She seemed quite excited to finally be on her way to see her friend."

The two sat down with tea and some small cakes, and Inari gobbled one down with excitement. "Yummy! Now," she said, licking her fingers. "I'm sending you to the 'shop' of one of our wanderers, named Susan. She has a friend named Luna who learned a technique when the two were accidentally separated while wandering. She can help you unlock the power of that sword."

"What exactly *is* the power of this sword?" he asked, taking a cake himself while stroking the outside of the sheath with his other hand. "The shadow avatar offered to trade me the blade for that entire reality."

"That's just it, I'm not sure, so naturally it wouldn't be either. It'll depend on a few things."

"Such as?"

"How much work you put into it, to start. If what I think can happen actually does. If it retains some part of the power it would have had if you had chosen to reform the broken magicite. How its power interacts with your own. How friendly you become with it."

"Friendly?"

"Of course! It is alive, you know. Still not quite awake yet, but that's what Luna can help you with."

"I see. But it'll be worth it, right?"

"What? A few months of practice? Of course! You're pretty smart, Lysanias, you should pick things up on your own fairly easily. And neither you nor the realities I'd like you to save are going anywhere, so why not take some time?"

"Fair enough. But what I mean is, if I put a lot of effort into waking it up, how do I know it'll be powerful enough to have bothered with? What if just training my other skills in that time would have been more worth it?"

She shook her head. "If things pan out as I expect, it'll be worth it, don't worry. I'm sorry I can't be more specific right now, I want you to go there with no expectations."

"I'll take your word for it. How close will I be to Susan? Will I need to ask around?"

"I've gotten you close to the action the other times, haven't I?"

"True, you have, I just thought I would ask."

“Don’t worry so much, everything will be fine!”
Great, why am I more worried now than I was?

After telling Inari a little about his adventures so far and showing her some of the things he had collected she said it was time to get going.

“Unless there’s something else you need from me?”

He thought a moment, but figured she really couldn’t offer forgiveness for all those planets he had gotten destroyed. *Like Jenny said, they still exist, right? Somewhere.* “I don’t think so. There’s no shadow avatar where I’m going, right? That reality was already taken care of?”

“That’s right. It’s just a training mission you’re on currently.”

“Then I guess I’m ready.”

“Super. Now let’s see, what time do you need to arrive?” she muttered. “I think about then? Or no, maybe that’s better? Or then? Over there? Ah, it’ll work itself out. See you!” She shoved him backwards, and he suddenly found himself face to face with a screaming group of kids. They were in a library, and scrambling back away from something. There was a young obviously terrified girl at the front of the group, holding out a stick and gaping at him. *I didn’t think my arrival was that scary.*

“Er, Susan?” he asked.

“Yes, but watch out!” she yelled, pointing behind him. He whirled, and a shadowy claw was streaking towards him. With no time to draw his blade he simply caught it in his right hand and struck out with his left, punching the arm in hopes of shattering it. He could feel the terror of the kids behind him, and the raw hunger from the creature before him, so this wasn’t anything he need to hold back on.

And why am I being thrown into a combat one second after I arrive? I thought you said this place was safe?

The figure ignored the blow totally and his fist simply bounced back.

Okay, that’s different.

The shape, hard to see as the light here wasn’t that great at the moment, seemed to look him over. It shimmered and become the helmeted form of Leah, light sabers once again spinning in the air around her.

“No!” he cried, releasing her arm. “You’re dead! This world should be free of you!”

“It’s not real,” Susan called to him. “It’s just an illusion, it’s what this creature does. But you can’t hurt it normally, you have to use magic and I don’t know any directly damaging magic spells!”

Huh? I thought she was a wanderer? How can she not have any attack magic? But he put this question aside, drawing his weapon. *Good thing I have a sword that will kill just about anything.* “You better be right about that.”

“I am!”

The figure darted forward, but Lysanias held his ground. He knew his sword couldn’t miss, so he swung at “Leah” not bothering to try and parry her strike. *I’m putting a lot of trust in you, Susan, if that light saber is real I could be dead in a second.*

But it wasn’t, familiar arcs of energy appeared as the sword was swung, lighting the area while the blade was in motion. The sword easily slashed the creature in two, causing it to burn away. The kids behind Susan seemed to relax, but were still looking around fearfully, sticks out.

“That. Was. Amazing!” Susan told him, eyes wide. “How did you- oh. Hello? It’s just the day for things popping out of the air, isn’t it?”

“Humm?” Lysanias turned and Inari was there, looking white as a sheet.

“Lysanias!” she called. “Oh, there you are. I sent you too far back! This is years before you’re supposed to be here. Don’t touch anything until I can reorient and send you to the proper... Why do you have your sword out?”

“This place is under attack or something,” he told her. *How can you not know that?* “Some shadow creature just attacked me.”

“Oh great, it would be *that* day you got sent to. Hold on.”

“What’s going on?” Susan asked, coming up behind him.

“Don’t talk to the locals,” cautioned Inari. “You’ve done enough temporal damage. Don’t step on any butterflies either.”

“Me? You’re the one that sent me here.”

“Are you leaving? We need your help,” Susan pleaded, grabbing his shoulder with her free hand. “The castle is under attack, we could use you.”

“I just go where I’m sent, I’m sorry.” *Maybe she hasn’t become a wanderer yet?*

“But you can’t just-”

“Got it!”

Suddenly, Lysanias was standing someplace else.

“-leave without helping,” Susan finished.

“Not to worry,” another voice said behind them, and they whirled. “You’re in the right place if you need help. That’s what we do here, at... Susan?”

Behind a counter was a red haired girl that Lysanias noted had completely black eyes. She was wearing a robe and a tall black hat, and he felt both power and magic radiating off her like he had never felt before. Her energy dwarfed his, that much was clear, and she had at least several magical items on her person or was powerfully magic herself.

“Susan?” asked Susan. “You look older, and I didn’t think you liked wearing our sorts of clothes. What’s going on, what happened to the castle? Where am I?”

“Susan?” the other (apparently) Susan repeated, dropping the small sack she had been holding. Coins tumbled to the ground, but she didn’t seem to care. She took a hesitant step towards Susan, her eyes starting to fill with tears. “Susan! You’re alive!” she finally cried, and wrapped Susan up in a hug. Susan’s eyes flicked over to Lysanias, who just shrugged. He put his sword back, figuring he didn’t need it at the moment, and waited for Susan to compose herself. After a moment she did, and held Susan at arm’s length.

“It is you, isn’t it?” she asked.

“Yeah, what’s going on? You act like I’m dead or something.”

“You were, you totally were!” she insisted. “Did you save her, somehow?”

Lysanias, distracted by the shelves full of stuff in this shop, realized she was talking to him. “Oh, uh, I guess? I mean it was sort of an accident but... Susan?”

She nodded, unable to talk because of the emotions Lysanias felt rolling off her. He suddenly found himself being hugged, and far stronger than her small frame would have allowed. *Good thing I’m reinforced I guess.* Once again she stepped back.

“I don’t know who you are, or how you managed this, but you have my thanks. Anything I can do for you, name it. No price is too high, and my resources are considerable. They are yours if you want them. You want this shop? It’s yours, for saving her life.”

“Oh, I’m sure that’s not necessary,” he said, coloring. “Actually I’m just here to find a person named Luna. I’m told you know her? I need to learn something from her, something about waking up my sword.”

She did a double take, looking up at his eyes. “Wait a second.” She stepped back and looked him over. “Armor. Sword. Low energy, but your equipment is supernatural in origin. You’re a wanderer!” she crowed, breaking into a wide grin. But then it fell again. “Wait, is this some other version of Susan? Are you both wanderers from a nearby reality?”

“No. Look, maybe we should let the person who was the cause of all this explain?” *Yeah, she’s a wanderer all right, if she can tell all that about me just with a look. She must be like me, able to learn a variety of skills?* He got out the white marble from the pouch, and Susan glared at it. “Don’t tell me.”

“Oh, you know her?”

“Yes. Go ahead, make the call.”

He put energy into the sphere and Inari's worried face appeared before them. "Did you make it okay?" she asked. "Any problems- oh."

"Yes, oh. Susan here came with me!"

"Ah."

"Inari, what did you do?" demanded Susan. She looked cross, and had her hands on her hips.

Wait, is she staring down a near god? Who is this girl?

Her demeanor changed, suddenly smirking instead of looking worried. "Saw a chance to save the life of someone you knew, so I took it. Oh, don't look so sour, Susan. It worked out, didn't it?"

"Er, am I dead?" Susan asked.

"Nope!" Inari assured her. "Just a little late. And I don't mean *that* way so just put that thought out of your mind."

"What?"

"We all thought you died in the attack," Susan explained. "The kids that were there said you had done 'something' that killed the Bogey, but that you had vanished. We thought taking it out had cost you your life, but I guess not. I take it that was a little cover up by you?"

"I had to, they couldn't know the truth," Inari insisted. "I had to fog their senses a little bit, they were fine afterwards right?"

"I suppose. Oh my gosh, I have to tell your parents, they'll want to see you right away!" She dashed behind the counter and started typing away, then waited impatiently as a printer spat out a sheet of paper. She rolled it up and gave it to an owl, which she tossed out the door into the afternoon sunshine. "Right, where were we? So what really happened?"

"I screwed up and sent Lysanias here a little too far back," Inari explained. "He killed the creature, then dragged Susan here with him. Had I not done that, she and those other kids would have died."

"You could have told me!" Susan insisted. "I believed for years she was dead!"

"It hadn't happened for you, yet. Heck, it hadn't happened for *me* yet! I couldn't know Lysanias would do all the things he did and make it there."

"But she was gone, how could you... Time travel. Never mind."

"Exactly. Even I don't mess with time easily, Susan. And Susan, I apologize. But being here is better than being dead, no? A few years have passed, and you'll be a celebrity for a few months. The girl that came back from the dead. And you can just say it was Susan, and everyone will just nod their heads and say 'oh, well of course it was. Why wouldn't it be?' and everything will be fine."

"Thanks?"

"Not a problem. Anyway, come on back when you're done here, I'd like to see what you come up with for that blade, Lysanias. And I found another place I want to send you that you don't have a marble for. A world with a very useful tool I think you'll get a kick out of. Susan, come visit sometime. Just because you've thrown in with Silverstreak doesn't mean I won't welcome you here. We're all on the same side, and I like talking to people."

"Sure, you're right. It's just so busy most of the time, but I'll put you in the calendar for sure."

"I'll see you later then." She vanished.

"So, can someone tell me what's going on?" Susan asked, looking around. "Do you have a shop now? Just how long has it been?"

Susan laughed. "I sure do. I run it with Luna. The S & L Everything Store. Combination detective agency, treasure hunting guild, fabrication emporium, crime fighting unit, magical solutions of all kinds. We do it all here."

"Wow!"

"That's one word for it. And it's been a couple of years. Your friends have all

graduated, I'm afraid. But hey, being the first non-dead ghost should make up for it, right?"

"Years? So I was just transported through time?"

"That's about the size of it. We'll have to get you caught up. The attack happened, a lot of people died actually," she looked sad as she said that, "but we did finally manage to kill Voldemort, so you don't have to worry about him anymore. I had adventures, but I'm on break and opened this store to help people around here instead. It's been fun."

"That's a-"

The door suddenly flew open and two people dashed into the place. They set eyes on Susan and broke down, flying to her side and scooping her up in a hug.

"Ah, her parents have arrived!" Susan said lightly. "Another case solved!"

"You didn't do anything," Lysanias protested.

"Shhhh."

"I see how it is."

"She won't really take the credit, don't worry," a new voice in the shop said. "She hardly takes the money she's actually earned doing actual jobs for people." Lysanias looked around. "No, down here."

He looked, and there was a black cat looking up at him. "Hello?"

"Hello there. I'm Sparkle, nice to meet you."

What the heck? That cat has more energy than me. In fact I think they have more energy than Susan there. How is that possible? It's nuts! "Nice to meet you. This is a pretty interesting place, isn't it?"

"Oh, you never know what will come through those doors," the cat agreed. "Why not give them a moment and I'll explain things when they're ready? There would just be a lot of weeping and promises of repayment if you stayed, and I know you hate that sort of thing. You can head to the back, I'll cat the counter."

Do the what now? Oh, right, he or she can't exactly 'man' the counter, now can they?

"Thanks, Sparkle. Come on, not many wanderers come to me, so it must be pretty important." She led him into the back, past a bunch of in-progress works in the lab area, and they sat down at a small table.

"I did mean what I said earlier though, if you need a favor I'm at your disposal."

"Thanks. Think I'm set for the moment but I'll keep it in mind. Like I said, I'm actually here for Luna."

"So you said. Can you start from the beginning?"

"Sure. It started when the god of my world decided to wipe us all out..."

"So then I got this sword," he went on, having told the story up to that point.

"Can I see it?"

"Sure." He slid it out and handed it over. She looked it over critically, easily hefting it like it was nothing.

"This is one tricked out blade," she admitted. "I'm feeling all sorts of magic and spiritual energy all through it. And you say this part used to be a crystal?" She tapped the runes at the base of the blade.

"That's right."

She shook her head and handed it back. "Amazing. It's one of a kind, that much is clear. And you say it's alive? It does almost feel that way. Wow."

"And the shadow avatar is clearly afraid of it, so I need to figure out why."

"I agree." She chuckled. "Shadow avatar. Good name. I call him the darkness, my father called him world eater. Most official name I've heard is Darkvoid, from Silverstreak himself. But I don't know if even that is the name it calls itself. It won't tell me, so we just call it whatever we like. I wonder if that annoys or flatters the old sod." Her eyes, despite being all black, seemed to unfocus a second. "Yeah, well same to

you, big guy!" *Er, who is she talking to?* "There's only one problem, Luna isn't here."

"Really? Inari sent me someplace the person I'm supposed to look for isn't?"

She laughed. "Not to worry, I can send you along. She's up at the school, the one you briefly saw when rescuing Susan, there. She's going to be teaching a class in wand release, so I guess you can do something similar with the sword? Release its power that way? Humm, it's possible." She looked into the distance, thoughtful.

"Wand release?"

"Hm? Oh, yeah. People on this world need a focus to do magic, a wand. 'The wand chooses the wizard.' But no one ever knew why until Luna met a bunch of death gods and they figured out her wand was like their swords, and had a life of its own. She came back here with me and showed the headmaster of the school. He agreed to let her teach a class, both to kids and adults in a sort of after school program. It wasn't exactly what she wanted to do after she graduated, but hopefully she'll only have to do it a few years. Then one of her students can take over teaching the class and she can get back to studying magical creatures."

Death 'gods?' These people get around! "I see. Wait, aren't you from this world? You said 'on this world' so..."

"Sort of, my father came from elsewhere, he's a wanderer too. I do magic the sane way. Watch." She held up a hand and the familiar circles appeared above it, coalescing into a ball of light.

"That's funny, I do magic the same way," he admitted. "Same circles and everything."

"Get out of here!"

Lysanias was somewhat shocked. He thought they were getting on well. *What did I say?* "Oh, I mean, if you want. I didn't mean to offend you. I'm sorry. I don't want to cause you any trouble, I'll just go."

She looked confused. "What? No, I mean, are you being serious about that?"

"Very serious. I'll show you." He cast the exact same light spell, and her eyes got wide.

"You do! You cast magic the same way-" Her chair tumbled backwards as she sprang up. "Tell me you have a character sheet!"

"A what?"

"Oh, come on! You're not a *paragon*?"

"Er, not that I know of. I'm a progenitor, does that mean anything to you?"

"What? No. That's odd. I've never met anyone that did magic even remotely like me. Except my father, of course. But now here you are."

"Maybe our worlds are close by? Your father's and mine, I mean?"

"Maybe. Well, that's not here or there. We were talking about wands. If you can learn any skill, you might want to see if you can use a wand too. That magic of yours takes energy, right?"

"One type does, that I learned from a skyebourne. The other type that I learned from Don doesn't. I don't use skyebourne magic that often because I don't want a ton of spells bouncing around my head for all eternity."

"You can do two types of magic?" She seemed flabbergasted. "From the same world? Wild. Why *not* three then?"

"I don't think there's any reason I couldn't."

"And I thought I was powerful. Have to let you look my book over, see if you can learn spells from it. That would be wild, nobody else around here can. Still, I'm sure I could take you."

"Take me where? The castle? We're leaving right now?"

"I mean in combat! You always take things so literally?"

"Oh. You probably could, you've got a lot more experience than me as a wanderer."

"I guess. Anyway, wand type doesn't use energy that I can tell, Luna can stand

there and cast the same magic over and over again. It could be useful if there's something easy it can do that you can't already. I mean it wouldn't hurt to pick up a wand, right? Just in case?"

"I've got all sorts of things already kicking around my sub-space pocket, a wand will fit."

"It's settled then. I'll bring you to see Luna, you two can get acquainted, and we'll go wand shopping."

"Not without me," said a voice at the door. "Unless *someone* is too good to say hello to their old pal."

Lysanias looked over, and there stood Jenny.

Chapter 2

House of the Rising Sun

When: Just after being hugged by Jenny

Where: Susan's shop

"It's about time you caught up to me, stranger!" Jenny said to him, hugging him.

"Heh, sorry about that. I came right after you but Inari said she sent you along to where you needed to be."

"Yup, right to Silverstreak. Met some neat people, and then there was Susan, about to rescue her father. That was a trip, we could have used you!"

"Sorry, it was out of my control."

"I know. Still, it ended okay. So it's been a couple of *minutes* for you?"

"That's right."

"Wild, it's been like a year for me. Who was that out there with the crying parents?"

"A person Lysanias here rescued. Susan Bones, we all thought she had died in the attack on the school a couple of years ago."

"Wow, Lysanias, only been here five minutes and already you're rescuing *the ladies*."

"It wasn't like that, it was an accident, set up by Inari."

"Huh, another person that doesn't like taking credit for things. Weird. Anyway, here to see Luna, huh? Gonna wake up your sword?"

"That's the plan."

"Don't mind if I tag along, do you?"

"I don't mind," Susan told them. "The teleportal will carry one or a million."

"A *millllllllon!*" both cackled at the same time, rubbing their hands together.

No, these people aren't good friends at all. What makes you think that?

"Just let me pop it open and we'll be set." She cast, and a hole opened in the air.

Lysanias could see how that could be useful, and opened up his book as the others went though. Hastily scribbling a reminder he snapped it shut and stepped through himself. He found himself in a closet, Susan's designated teleport point inside Hogwarts castle. (Not that he knew that.)

"What's that?" she asked. "You have a book of your own?" She was holding a large leather bound book, with strange crystals on the front of it. "This is my book of magic, is that similar?"

"This is the reference book I keep," he explained, flipping through it to show her. "I can learn so many things, I don't want to forget anything. So I make notes in here when I see something interesting or see a new skill. I hope one day to take it back to my world, and see if anyone there can learn anything from it." *Like the progenitors that are left.*

"That is so neat!" she exclaimed. "And if it could be duplicated I bet other wanderers would find it useful too. If they ran into some creature or tactic used by the darkness they could look it up. Or if someone wanted to try something or needed to know if something was possible..." She trailed off, staring into space.

"I suppose a copy could be made," he offered. "But I've only been to three worlds, it's not very complete yet."

"Oh, I'm thinking so much bigger," she told him. "Jenny, can you go find Luna, I have to take care of this!"

"Go on, get it out of your system," Jenny told her, rolling her eyes.

"Thanks! See you in a bit." She tapped a strange device strapped to her wrist and said "Requesting hub transport door."

"User verified," it chirped. "Hub access granted." A doorway of light opened

behind Susan and she stepped backwards through it.

"See you soon!" she called, and the door closed.

"That was abrupt," Lysanias remarked.

"The thing you have to understand about her, and this is key, she has poor impulse control. She gets an idea and she's there, let's get it done and move on to the next thing. Not a procrastinator, is our Susan."

"I should say not, given she was supposed to be introducing me to Luna and she's just ran off. I mean, really!"

"She doesn't do it to be rude. She just has so many ideas and plans bouncing around her head for stuff, they crowd her out a little. I hope you're not offended."

"No, it's fine. It's Luna I'm here to see anyway."

"Then let's be on our way." She cracked the door open and peeked out, seeing the hall was clear. "We'll have to ask a painting, I'm not that familiar with this place. I've only been here a few times."

"Whatever you say."

They moved through the castle halls, Lysanias and Jenny towering over most because this was a school, after all. But they made their way to Luna's classroom, finding her decorating it with flowers and such with her magic. He, of course, hung back behind Jenny a little.

"Still shy, huh?"

"No!"

She tried to step to the side and he stepped with her. "No?"

"Just introduce us!"

She laughed. "Hey Luna!"

"Hi Jenny. Wow, I've never seen such a beard on a fifteen year old before! Did you start growing it a hundred years ago?"

"How did you know?" he blurted. *Not that it matters, but I really do have to figure out a way to tell when I get older. Or do I?*

"Wait, really?"

"Luna, is this Lysanias. Lysanias, this is Luna. Sorry Susan couldn't be here, she got an idea and ran off back to the hub."

"That's my girlfriend! Nice to meet you." She came over, putting her wand away, and stuck out her hand to shake. He took it, and she looked him over.

"Nice eyes. Do you actually have multiple pupils?" She leaned close, looking at him.

"Er... They're from another world," he explained. "Inari gave them to me."

"Oh, you're a wanderer? I kinda figured, that armor gives it away."

"I really should take that off, but it's been one thing after another since I got here."

"It's okay, wear what you want, when you want. So what can I do for you?"

"I'm actually here to learn from you, if that's okay."

"Really? What can you learn from me that you can't learn from Susan?"

"Your wand release, I guess. I'm not exactly clear on what that means, but apparently I can do something similar with my sword."

"I wouldn't doubt it. I learned the technique from people who released their swords. Can I see it?"

"Sure." He handed it over, and she took it gingerly, obviously expecting it to be heavier. "Oh, it's light!" She bounced it up and down in the air.

"No, you're twice as strong as you were before."

"Really?" She looked it over, then got her wand out again. "*Seek for the truth, Belahime!*" she called, and in a flash of light her wand became a magnifying glass. She peered at the sword through it, growing more excited as she moved from tip to end.

"This sword has no weaknesses," she exclaimed. "None at all. I've never seen an object that had no weakness."

"I put supernatural power into it to make it basically unbreakable," he told her. "Is

that what you're seeing?"

"Must be. It's magical, I can tell that much too. What an amazing thing. You might just be able to release more power from it, like I can with my wand."

"Is that what you did? I just thought it might be a spell."

"Hm? Oh, you really don't know, do you? Let's take this outside and I'll show you what you're getting into. She won't really fit in here."

"She?"

She grinned. "You'll see. Come along."

They walked out of the castle and down to the lake, where Luna had him take the blade out again. She held her wand up. "*Let all that can be known reveal itself to me! Awaken, Belahime! Release!*"

There was a burst of air, and standing behind Luna was a strange and huge winged creature. The body of the creature was slender, but it towered over Luna. The feathers it had shimmered with all colors of the rainbow, and it seemed to have a dog like head and lion like claws. It looked down at them, and Lysanias took a step back. It radiated spiritual energy, not anywhere near the spirit of Alderaan, but still a lot more than he had. "Everyone, meet Belahime."

"Charmed, I'm sure," she said. "No need to be afraid, I won't hurt you."

"I'm not!" he mostly lied.

She laughed. "Is that so? Well, then put that tiny stick away and we can talk."

"Actually, the sword is why I called you out."

"So this is the true form of your wand?" Jenny asked. "I've never seen it. How about that?"

"Yes, you may gaze at my majesty and heap complements upon me without end," Belahime told them, turning and twisting to show her feathers. "But why do I need a sword?"

"You don't need one, silly. I want you to take a look at it, to see if Lysanias can wake it up like I did with you."

"You mean after years and years of ignoring my voice? Possibly."

"I mean- you know what I mean."

"I suppose. Hand it over, let's take a look."

Lysanias stepped up and presented it, the blade being grasped in a paw rather clumsily. "Very interesting, how this sword came to be," she said, looking it over.

"You can tell the past of an object? I can do that!"

"Indeed? What about seeing the future?"

"Glimpses."

"Getting an answer from all of existence?"

"Sure. I'm not great at it, but I don't know exactly how to practice it."

"Sounds like you're a seer."

"You know what a seer is? But no, though I was trained by one. A water spirit named Amy back on my home world."

"I see. You aren't as worthless as I imagined then."

"Be nice!" Luna told her.

"I can only be truthful," she replied, turning her attention back to the sword. "I do think something similar can be done. Yes, there is a presence still in this sword that could be awoken. I see great success and change surrounding this blade, it has a long and worthwhile future."

"That's wonderful. Thank you!"

"Yes, thank you," Lysanias told them, taking the blade back. "If I may ask, would you mind if she called you out again?"

"Whatever for?"

"I can absorb the skill someone has at something with my eyes. That should save us time, if I can just watch you do it."

"Humm, would that really work?" Luna asked. "My skill is calling out the spirit of a

wand. You're not trying to do that. You're trying to awaken your sword, and then do something similar, but not exactly the same, as I do. I think if you wanted to call out Belahime, you could watch me and be fine. But calling out your own power, I think you'll have to do that the hard way. Figure it out and practice."

"Ah. Inari implied the same, but I thought I would ask."

"No question should be unasked," Belahime told him. "Just be sure you want the answer when you do. If there's nothing else?"

"Not for the moment. But I'll be calling you out to demonstrate the technique for my classes, so don't get snippy."

"Snippy indeed," she sniffed, and suddenly Luna was holding her wand again.

"How does that even work?" Lysanias asked.

"You mean a tiny stick of wood turning into her? Heck if I know. So, do you want to sit in on the adult class? Or the kid's class, or both?"

"Both, it's what I'm here for."

"You'll have to go see the headmaster, then. My night class is being held in the village, anyone can come to that. But if you're going to be wandering the halls, he'll have to know about it."

"I don't know about wandering, but okay, whatever the procedure is around here."

"Come on then."

Luna led them to the headmaster's office, and he greeted a fellow beard bro warmly. He also introduced his phoenix, who Lysanias greeted.

And then Fawkes fell off his perch.

"Sorry, sorry, I just said hello!" Lysanias protested as he tried to get the phoenix upright again.

"I know that," said Fawkes, scrambling back to his feet, "I was just really surprised, that's all. I never expected to hear Enochian again."

"Oh my gosh, a talking bird!" said Lysanias.

"Wait a second," Albus told him, taking him. "You mean all this time we've known each other and *now* you decide to let on you can talk?"

"Oh, er, cheep? Squack?"

"Do you take me for a fool, bird?"

He sighed. "Now look what you made me do."

"Me?"

"Yes, I can talk. I am from Heaven, after all. I can do magic, too, might as well just put everything out there. That's how we teleport, by the way, magic. Holy magic."

"You really have been holding out on me! You're honestly from Heaven?"

"Where did you think? I'm a herald of the sun, it's my job. A few of us came here to Earth and stayed, but we're fairly common back home. But how do *you* speak my language, anyway?" One eye was staring at Lysanias.

"That's a long story. Basically we progenitors was created right after the angels were, before there was language. At least on my world, so I speak and read all of them."

"Enochian was meant as a universal tongue," Fawkes admitted. "I'm speaking it now, but they can understand me just fine. You're not going to drop this, are you?" Everyone looked over at Albus, who looked about ten years younger.

"Nope!"

"That's why I never spoke in the first place. You tell anyone, and Heaven might get peeved, so what I tell you stays between us."

He nodded frantically.

"Fine, but take care of this guy first. A person that speaks angel must be fairly important."

"Oh, I'm not all that important," Lysanias told them. "I just want permission to come to classes here."

"Come to class? You?" Albus looked him over. "What can we possibly teach

you?"

"Everything you can. About your magic, and releasing my blade in Luna's class."

"How about potions?" Luna asked. "That might be fun for you."

"I know alchemy, but I wouldn't mind the practice. If it's at all similar maybe I can give you guys some formulas from my world."

"Alchemy? Can you make gold?" Albus asked.

"Sure." He looked around and picked up a paperweight from the headmaster's desk. It appeared to be simply glass, something he knew how to work with. Closing his hand around it he concentrated, and when he opened it again it was pure gold.

"I actually meant with alchemy, but that works," Albus admitted, taking it and hefting it. "It's smaller."

"Gold is heavier than glass."

"Ah, so it wasn't magic you did, like transfiguration, you just turned the glass into gold."

He nodded.

"Extraordinary. Not even Susan could do that! Well, well. As long as you don't make trouble in my school, you're welcome to come and learn." He hefted the paperweight. "Your first month's tuition is paid, anyway."

"Oh, I can get more," he assured the man.

Albus laughed. "I bet you could. Don't worry about it. But I would like to hear your story sometime, and get regular reports on your progress."

"Of course!"

"And do try not to do too much of," he shook the gold. "Come in as a first year student, we can say you accidentally drank some aging potion or something. I don't need another Susan running around, doing impossible things every other day. If you can stick to our magic while you're here, that would be ideal."

"I could come looking younger, if that would help," he offered. "I can reshape myself just as easily as that." He pointed to the gold. "More easily, I've practiced that more."

"I wonder... Well, whatever you want! Classes start tomorrow and you missed the sorting. Still, hey, you awake?"

"I don't really sleep, you know," said the hat that was on the shelf nearby.

"Oh my gosh, a talking hat!" Lysanias exclaimed. "Talking paintings, talking hats, what doesn't talk around here?"

"I don't talk," the desk didn't say, because it couldn't talk.

"Anyway, put it on!"

Lysanias took it down and put it over his head. "Oh, no, another one," it lamented.

"Another one what?" he asked.

"You know. All of it? Fine, you know what? Let's give the old man a heart attack, he's been around long enough. Slytherin!"

"**Whaaaaaaaaaaat** does that even mean?" Lysanias asked, as everyone there gaped at him.

"Are you sure?" Albus asked, having dropped the heavy gold nugget on his foot without noticing.

"Course I'm sure. You've never questioned me before. You know how ambitious this guy is? His totem spirit is mountain, representing the pinnacle of achievement. He recently bragged to the shadow avatar he didn't need her pity energy, he was going to be super powerful through his own efforts. His identity gift is speed, realized when he accepted his destiny of traveling through all kinds of realities to save them. He works hard, and while it's for the love of his friends, and to one day protect them as they protected him, it's still ambition. So yes, Slytherin, Slytherin, Slytherin! So there!"

"Then Slytherin it is," he accepted, taking the hat off and putting it back. "Did not expect that."

"Is that bad?" he asked. *And that's some hat, to have figured all that out in that short a time. Magic around here certainly is powerful.*

"No, just surprising, is all. You will join the Slytherin students at mealtimes, and earn points for that house. Lose some too, perhaps? Luna can give you all the details. Now, I have a bird to roast."

"I'm immune to fire," Fawkes reminded him.

"Not this fire!" he promised with a smile. "Also, why does my foot hurt?"

"Come on, let's leave those two," Luna told them. She took them back down the staircase, and they walked back to her classroom. He got a crash course on the four houses on the way, and what each exemplified.

"I suppose by that definition I am Slytherin," he admitted. "I do want to learn all things, like a Ravenclaw, and I'm brave, like a Gryffindor. But to be a shield for the innocent against the shadow avatar, that is my real purpose. That is my overriding concern."

Now back in the classroom, Luna sat on the corner of her desk and looked him over. "Even if a wand works for you, it's the sword you want to release. That's going to be a problem."

"Can't turn the sword into a wand either," he told her. "Nothing can change it after what I did to it."

"I suppose they won't be getting it very soon," she mused. "We have some time to think of something."

Suddenly a light appeared behind the group, and Susan, carrying an armload of metal, rectangular slabs, stepped out. "Hey everyone, you're all here. Great, I've got a present for all of you! Did something happen?" She put the stack on the desk and looked around. "You seem a little down, did he not allow you to come?"

"He got sorted into Slytherin," Jenny told her with a snort.

"What?" She was clearly shocked, but he didn't expect her to close her fist and have a light saber like blade shoot out of it. "Traitor!"

Chapter 3

Choosing the Wizard

When: About a week later*

Where: Mars base Epsilon 4**

After Susan declared Lysanias a traitor she brought the blade high, leaping for him. He had only a split second to react, so he pulled his shield from sub-space and brought it into position to block the blow.

That blow never came.

“Nice reflexes,” Susan praised, opening her hand and letting the blade vanish. “You can come out now.”

“What was that all about?” he demanded, putting the shield down.

“Hey, Inari isn’t the only one that likes a good prank. You should have seen your face!”

“That wasn’t nice,” Luna scolded. “He could have hurt you!”

“Nah, look, he went for the *shield* first. He could have pulled the blade, it was right there. No, he’s got good instincts, I like him. And so does Silverstreak, who actually requested I do that in the first place. So there.”

“People keep saying that name, who is this Silverstreak?”

“Another being like Inari, just more interested in technology and the power of friendship instead of living in a cabin alone in a woods someplace. He helped put these together. Well, his crack team of experts did, but he provided the material.” She tapped the stack of slabs.

“Okay.”

“He thinks you’re doing okay for yourself, and yes, he’s been watching. Nothing moves through the multiverse without him knowing. At least, so he says. Anyway, if you’re interested he’s got a few jobs lined up. Check with Inari when you see her. If you do them well he’ll give you access to the Hub, like I’ve got. And to answer your next question, the Hub is the meeting place for us wanderers. We can come together and share ideas, technology, magic that we’ve found. I’ll show you the armor and wings I got from there later. It’s like a builder’s paradise, a little slice of heaven.”

“I’ve seen heaven, at least through a portal when they were still open. So I’d be interested to see how it stacks up.”

“I stand by my claim. Now, my gifts!” She turned and handed each of them an... well, let’s call it what it is, an iPad Pro. “It’s practically indestructible, so don’t worry about that. Turn it on here,” she indicated the button, “and I’ll show you what it can do.”

Everyone did, and the screen lit up with icons.

“What is all this?” Lysanias asked, eyes darting about the screen. “Camera? I know what that is! You can take pictures with this?”

“I’m more interested in what music is on this thing,” Jenny told them, tapping on music. “What? Nothing? You got my hopes up and then dashed them quite expertly my friend.”

“It doesn’t have any *yet* because they’re factory fresh!” Susan told her. She ran her nose along hers and breathed in deep. “Smell the industrial chemicals, breathe it in.”

“Ew, no.”

“What am I looking at here?” Luna asked, clearly as unfamiliar with the technology as Lysanias was.

“Okay. Everything is clearly labeled, just touch an icon to open it. There are more, you can swipe on the screen to bring them into view.” She demonstrated.

“Sailor Moon drops? That name sounds familiar,” Jenny said, swiping across.

“Oh yeah, it’s a match 3 game, featuring the sailor scouts. Isn’t that wild? I met them in person,” she told Lysanias. “But enough messing around. The main reason I wanted these guys was this!” She pointed to the upper most left icon on the home screen titled “Hub.” “Touch it! Touch it. Touch. It. Touchit. Toouch... it. Do it!” Everyone touched it, and a blank screen came up.

“It’s a blank screen,” Jenny told them.

“I know! Isn’t it amazing!?”

The three traded a look, wondering if this girl had gone crazy. (again)

“I see you have no idea, yes, of course I can explain it I don’t need your input thank you very much. Sorry about that, what I’ve just handed you is a *distributed, hub connected, instant updates, limitless power* version of your book, Lysanias. You put something down in here, and instantly *every person* that has one of these, across all realities, suddenly knows what you wrote.”

“Which is just us?” Luna asked, indicating those in the room with one finger.

“Well, yes, obviously for now, if you want to be completely and one hundred percent technical about it, is just us. But don’t you see? A new rocking tune goes viral and some guy twenty realities over puts it in here, Jenny can suddenly listen to it. Someone takes the cutest cat photo *of all time* and we can all gush over it. A new spell, news of the darkness, it can all be sorted, cataloged, captured, searched, or dismissed. Right here!” He held the padform up and shook it at them. “Don’t you see what that means?”

“Oh.” Lysanias did. He understood this was a nearly magical level of technology, and she had just *handed it to him*. “It could change our lives.”

“It could change our lives! This guy gets it. This guy right here. He gets it.

Lysanias, you are a man of rare and refined tastes. If I didn’t already have so many best friends in the world you would be my new best friend.”

“All right, cut it out,” Luna finally managed. “It’s a big deal, we get it.”

Lysanias sighed. “I just have to copy all my notes into it somehow. How do I do that? Do I use a pen on this thing?”

“Actually, you can just take pictures, I’ll show you later. There is a special pencil you can use if you don’t know how to type.” She pulled a small box out of her robe pocket and handed them out. “Right now though, I want to see if a wand will accept you. Shall we?”

“I suppose so.” Lysanias pushed the button again and the screen went dark, so he nodded and put the padform plus pencil away. “But I was accepted here as a student. What do I need to know about that?”

“That’s right, you said something about your house. You want to learn about wanded magic? I suppose with no XP to worry about you might as well,” she muttered to herself.

“I thought it might be fun, I can’t just focus on one thing.”

“I’m the same way!”

“No you’re not,” Luna protested. “You just cheat with your magic and get stuff done really fast. So then you have to start something else.”

“Ah, it’s the same thing.”

“Whatever. Go with her, Lysanias. I’ll talk to the headmaster about what classes you might want to take. Obviously you don’t care about astronomy or transfiguration. Your schedule will be a little weird, and people will probably notice eventually, but we’ll come up with some story. But if you can’t find a wand then it’s a little pointless anyway.”

"That's true. Shall I come back here, or can you go to the shop? Or no, you must have a house someplace..."

"We actually live above the shop," Susan explained. "She can get back there."

"I can get back there."

"I'll see you later then. It was nice meeting you."

"Same here. See you."

Luna and Susan shared a quick kiss, and she opened a teleportal down to the village, which was fairly quiet now that school had begun.

"Wand maker is over there," Susan directed. "Let's a go!"

The bell near the door jingled as they entered, and the wand maker Garrick Ollivander slid his ladder over and poked his head out to see who had come in so late. Lysanias looked around, and the wand shop hadn't changed much (in hundreds of years) so there were still stacked up boxes everywhere.

"Welcome," he said. Then he really looked at the dark eyed woman that had come into his shop, and carefully, so as to not fall and break his neck, come down off the ladder. "How strange," he remarked. "I've heard tell that the great Susan Felton was making wands herself now. The so called "magical focus" that indeed can be any shape, such as a ring or a necklace."

"That's true, I've been experimenting with ways to use my ability with fabrication to make quote wands for people. It's had a small measure of success."

"Then why, might I ask, are you *here*?"

"My friend here would like to see if a wand will accept him."

"I see. And you cannot provide something suitable?"

"No, I can't. He can already do my type of magic, so that focus would gravitate towards that, which he doesn't need because he doesn't have that weakness. No, I want a real wand for him. Unlike me, he should be able to use it just fine."

"Then I shall do my best to accommodate him," Garrick told them. "Your name, please?"

"Lysanias."

"That's it?"

"That's it."

"Interesting. Your eyes... just like Susan here I see. Your eyes have seen things. There is a fire there, no doubt about it. Perhaps something in blackthorn, or pine? We will see, yes, we will soon see." He shuffled off, returning with a wand which he pressed into Lysanias' hand.

Lysanias, for his part, looked into the future of that wand figuring this would be the perfect time to get some practice in with that skill. He handed it back. "Not the one."

"Very well, you would know. Let's try this one."

"This one will be chosen by a girl," he announced, handing it back.

"Really? How extraordinary. What about this one?"

"Wait a moment. Is this really the process? Just try every wand in the place? If there isn't one here for me it'll take forever and we'll have nothing to show for it. I mean you know where I come from, really how would there be one here for me?"

"It's more a question of finding one compatible with you," Susan told him. "It's not one per person, forever. It's hard to explain. Luna's told me about it, as she's a wand user and has begun studying wand lore through history, but it wasn't really something I needed to know, so..."

"I see. Let me see if there isn't a better way."

"Most irregular!" said the man, but lowered the wand. "But I suppose given who you came in with..."

She has quite the reputation around here, huh? Lysanias closed his eyes and basically reached out with the force. He wanted to know if any wand here pulled at him, or called to him, or seemed to come into his hand. He let the dusty smell of the shop wash over him, and let the noise in the street fade from his attention. He felt something, and slowly opened his eyes, taking in the energy of the area but not looking for ley lines. He doubted there would be many here anyway, but something did catch his attention. There, at the bottom of a stack was a wand box with a faint shimmer, an energy that seemed to call to him. *But am I seeing it or feeling it? Or both?* Walking slowly forward he kept his eyes on the box that pulled to him. "This one," he said, pointing. He didn't want to risk knocking the stack over, which is smart because he totally would have, and the man grumbled but dug it out.

"Ah, are you sure?" he asked, opening it up. "This one's pretty old, actually. Not that it's a bad thing, of course. Ah yes, I recall this one now. It was a little experiment I did, which I thought was a failure until now. Interesting. This one, for sure?"

"I'm fairly sure, but nothing is certain."

"Very well." He plucked it from the box and handed it over, and again Lysanias looked in to the future of the wand. *I'm leaving with this wand.* But of course that was obvious, as the wand reacted, lighting up in his hand and then quieting again.

"I retract my complaints, maybe you do know what you're doing, Susan. That was the most astonishing thing I've ever seen." He spun the box, looking at the label on the end. "Hornbeam. Well, well, well. Do you know, my own wand is made of that particular wood?"

"Really?!"

"Indeed."

"What's the core?" asked Susan, who knew that much about wands after all this time.

"Solid silver, actually. I melted some Occamy eggshell down and poured it in there. An experiment, like I said. It is certainly the most rigid wand I have ever made because of that. I thought maybe I had made it too rigid, but at last it finds an owner."

Core?

"So he picked a really expensive one, is what you're saying?"

"The wand chooses the wizard, not me."

"So you say, so you say. How much?"

"Let me bring it to the counter and wrap it up at least." He took the wand back and placed it gently in the box, putting the cover on and heading to the front of the store. He punched up 12 galleons on the register.

"I can cover that," Susan told them, pulling out a sack. She started counting out golden coins.

"You use gold coins?" Lysanias asked. "I have some from home, I could pay for it myself." He got out his own pouch and started sifting through it. "Don't have much gold though, it's really valuable there."

"May I see those?" Garrick asked.

"Sure." Lysanias handed over a set of three, the ember, the moon, and the sun, and he looked them over, naming them as he did.

"Thinner and smaller than ours," he remarked. "Interesting designs though." He held it to the light, squinting at it.

"Metal is becoming scarce there."

"Is it? Humm, coins from another world. No one else would have anything like this, would they?"

"I would doubt it, unless Susan is handing stuff like that out."

"I'm not," she assured them.

“Just a moment.” He went and got out a parchment, then wrote a bit on it and slid it over the counter. Lysanias read

I _____ do hereby certify that these coins, the brass ember, the silver moon, and the gold sun, come from another reality. They were acquired on _____ in exchange for a Hornbeam wand with a silver core, thirteen and a quarter inches in length.

“Sign at the bottom, and you too, Susan. That should be enough legitimacy for anyone that asks. We’ll call it even.”

“Up to you,” Susan told him. “I’m happy to pay for your wand if you don’t want to spend your own gold. I’ve got plenty.”

“He’s not getting some kind of power over me by my signing my name, is he?”

“What, no? Of course not!”

“It doesn’t hurt to check, I don’t know how magic works here, or what it can do.”

“True, being cautious isn’t a bad thing. But no, it’s safe.”

“Very well.” He printed his name, dated it, signed as did Susan, and was handed the box.

“Pleasure doing business with you.”

They walked back to her shop, Susan telling him what to expect up at the school, and generally pointing things out around town.

“Outside of this place is more technological,” Jenny explained. “Not to the level where we were, with Death Stars and such, but it might get there some day.”

“I see. Magic and technology are kept separate, then?”

“The magic users just don’t see the point. That’s changing a little because of me, I’ve donated some TVs and video game systems to the school. Along with some solar panels to run them, so they get a taste of what they’re missing. That reminds me, you’ll be asked about quiddich. Just tell whoever asks you tend to root for whoever’s in the lead and leave it at that. Stupid game, honestly, but people still enjoy it.”

“Okay.”

“Oh, think you could fly on a broom?”

“If I need to fly I can grow wings and use air bending. What do brooms have to do with it?”

She pointed, and Lysanias looked overhead as several people passed on broomsticks.

“Odd way of doings things.”

“Believe me, you’re going to be saying that a lot in the coming months. Get used to it.”

“There’s a lot to remember!”

“True, you won’t have the background knowledge most kids- wait, I’ve got it. You can be Hermione!”

“I could change into a female form for the duration, I suppose.”

She laughed. “No, no, I mean a friend of mine, Hermione, she was born to parents who were not magic users. It happens. Just say you weren’t raised in the magical world, it’s fine. Any oddities you display will be explained by that. Ugh, we’ll have to get you some robes, too. Cauldron for potion making, standard spell books grade 1, shoot what am I forgetting? It was years ago I first went to school.”

“This seems an awful lot of trouble. I hate to be a bother, couldn’t I just go as myself? Wouldn’t that be easier?” *Though books I wouldn’t mind getting, I didn’t find any in the last world and I promised myself I would bring Everest back as many as I could.*

“Nonsense! It’s no trouble. Let’s head over that way. It shouldn’t take long, the shops will be empty at this point because the rush has passed.”

So Lysanias changed himself into at least an approximation of what he wanted to be at the school so he could be fitted for robes, and then was loaded down with books and supplies for classes. He now had to get used to being small again, or at least smaller than he had been, so was now going through what he had gone through after being rescued, in reverse. He thought he should have a longer stride, and his grip was all messed up because of shorter fingers. Still, Susan seemed to have plenty of money and had no problem spending it on him.

“You’re getting a little taste of what being a parent would be like,” Jenny told her.

“Very little,” she agreed. “Still, it could happen.”

“Er, isn’t Luna your girlfriend?” Lysanias asked. “Can two women have a baby on this reality?”

“Shape-shift magic. Think about it,” she replied with a wink.

It was getting somewhat late by then, and Susan got a message from Sparkle that she had a client, so they headed back to the shop. He and Jenny went out to eat, though while walking back he was wondering where he would spend the night.

“Do you want to stay at the castle? Classes start tomorrow anyway, it’ll save you some time in the morning.”

“I suppose I need to go back there anyway, see what Luna came up for my schedule. I’d like to walk around and try to find everything too.”

“You can always just ask the paintings. It shouldn’t be a problem.”

“Then I guess I might as well get to know my fellow Slytherins. I wouldn’t want Susan to have to pay for a room for me on top of everything she’s done.”

“She wouldn’t mind.”

“That’s not the point though.”

“I hear you. Can you get there yourself?”

“Which way is the castle from here?”

Jenny pointed. “That way, I think.”

“Fine. Tell Susan thanks, and maybe tomorrow afternoon I can come back here and get a lesson on using that thing she gave me. Oh, and tell her to think of any skills you think she knows that I don’t. I’ll want at least a primer on them.”

She laughed. “Sure. You two are a lot alike, you know that?”

“We’re both wanderers, I’m sure there’s a certain type of person that’s chosen for that.”

“I guess. I’ll see you later then.”

“See you. Thanks for today, glad to know you made it all right.”

He vanished.

*Just kidding

**I totally had you going there though, didn’t I? Because you never know, it could happen, right?

Chapter 4

Complications

When: The next morning

Where: Slytherin dorm

In the dream, Lysanias was surrounded by a sickly green light. Above him, the moon went dark, and kids were running and screaming as men from the shadows pulled strings to make a child dance for them.

Lysanias woke up.

Oh sure, Inari. Training only. Sure, that's right. So why did I just have a dream like that?

He had no idea when classes started but he saw others still sleeping so figured it wasn't quite yet. The sun was starting to come up though, so he decided he would get ready, *I'm not falling asleep after a dream like that. I can still hear someone screaming.* Refreshing his transformation he knew he had exactly 9 hours before he changed back, and figured that would get him through the day quite nicely. He pulled his robes on, tying the power sash around himself like a belt, and reaching for his bracelet. His hand stopped as he touched it, and he looked at his arm.

No one else is going to wear anything like this, or the circlet. I could put this on under the robe, but if someone saw it they would want to know what it was. I don't think it's prohibited, but let's consider where I am. I can go without them, right? I won't be as strong or fast, but I'm supposed to be a little kid. No one would expect me to be. He put the bracelet away and got out the hairpin and the wall ring. With one in each hand he weighed them against each other. *Again, when will I need the chance to go first in combat? I'll just wear the ring, there's magic here so if someone decides to cast a spell on me, they'll be in for a bit of a shock.*

He was somewhat surprised to see it fit him perfectly, despite having smaller fingers now, and decided they didn't sell various sizes back on the world with Terra. They must just somehow fit, because that's what rings did. That done he went down to eat, getting some odd looks on the way there because no one knew who he was. Or had ever seen him before. Or had seen eyes like his. The night before he had appeared in Luna's classroom, then went to find her. Asking paintings along the way he tracked her down and got his schedule, which still left most of the day empty.

"We put you in all the magical classes, basically the opposite of what Susan took here," she told him. "You don't need any practice reading ancient runes, for example, you can read all languages, right?"

"That's right."

"Care of magical creatures, also pointless, a lot of these creatures only exist here. And on, and on. I have no idea what you'll tell anyone that notices you're free most of the day. You can go to the library and practice, or out in the courtyard. Stay away from the forest though, a kid your age wouldn't go near it."

"Right."

"Otherwise, I'll see you in class!"

He wandered into the library after he ate, which was open early for older students who needed to get assignments done, and took a look at the sorts of books they had here. Finally it was time to head to the dungeon for his first class, potion making. He found some stairs and headed down, then somewhat retraced his steps as the classroom wasn't that far from the dorm entrance. Kids of all ages streamed passed

him, and didn't pay him any attention as they had their own problems to worry about. That was fine with him, it meant he was blending in okay and wasn't deserving a second look. He sat down at an empty table and waited while the other kids filtered in.

"Who are you?" asked Severus, coming into the room and looking the class over.

"Lysanias, sir," he said, figuring that was probably the right term.

"I didn't see you at the sorting, that I recall."

Right, the other teachers probably haven't been told yet. I did come just yesterday, so this was a last minute addition. "I was sorted later, having arrived late. I'm in Slytherin."

"Are you indeed? Well, do not expect me to be lenient just because you are in my house. Now, everyone here? Very well, wands away." He launched into the standard speech and told them to open to the start of their book and get started brewing the potion therein. That done he lost interest in the class, sitting at his desk doing something.

The kids all gave a collective shrug, cracking their books open.

"Hello, I'm Jake," said the boy sitting next to him. He had dark brown hair a slightly too large nose, but otherwise was fairly undistinguished.

"Lysanias, nice to meet you." He stuck out his hand.

"Really?" Jake took it and shook it.

"Sure, why wouldn't it be?" *Do they not use that sort of greeting here?*

"Gee, no reason, it's just you're in Slytherin, right?"

"What's that got to do with it?"

"Nothing, I guess. I'm in Hufflepuff, in case it does."

"I don't care what house you're in."

"Oh. If you say so. Anyway, guess we're partners for today."

"Seems that way." *Are we supposed to work together? I guess I'll follow his lead on that one.*

"Ever brew a potion before?"

I did some alchemy back home, does that count? "Nope." *I just hope it works for me, given he didn't really explain anything.*

"Me either. Well, better get started."

"Right."

Both opened their books and Jake got to work, but Lysanias stared at the directions. He flipped pages to the start of the book. He looked at the back of the book. He paged through the book. He looked up at the board, which was empty. He glanced around, and people were starting to chop and boil ingredients. He looked back at his book. He looked up again to see Severus staring at him.

"Were the directions too complex for you?" he asked dryly, making the class laugh.

"Not exactly, sir. I was just looking for the rest of them. Is there another book I should have, or a pamphlet or something?" *Jake here says he's never brewed a potion, so this is a beginner's class. I'm not in the wrong class, he seems about my 'age.'* *What does he know that I don't?*

"Rest of them?" He swung himself up and grabbed the book out of Lysanias' hands after gliding over there. "They seem complete to me."

"They can't be!" he protested. "I mean, look here. You add this and this, then stir, correct?"

"That is what it says, yes. Your mastery of *reading* is at least average."

The class laughed again, but he ignored it.

"But it doesn't say how long to stir for! It says three times one way, once the other. Okay, fine, but is each one the same speed? How big a circle do I make in the cauldron? Do I touch the sides of the cauldron or try to avoid it? I don't have any way to

measure the temperature of the liquid, does it not matter? How does the magic know the spoon isn't an ingredient? I'm putting it into the mixture just the same as all the others. If I lose my grip on it will it be gone? How do I clean the spoon afterwards? I must assume that having any trace of an old potion on the spoon will seriously impact the next potion I try to create with that spoon. Should I have purified it beforehand, in case there was some contaminant on it right now? Is water adequate? Is there a special kind of soap I should use? Is there magical soap? It says one cup of the leaves, chopped. Is that finely or coarsely chopped? It would make a huge difference because of the volume, wouldn't a weight of them be a better measurement? What about the snake fangs, why is crushing them needed when they're just going to be absorbed into the potion anyway? Does the length of porcupine quill-

"You'll just go on all day, won't you?" he sneered. "One point from Ravenclaw... Wait no, you said you were Slytherin, didn't you?" He looked like he was fighting with himself internally. "Very well, one point from Slytherin then, for thinking you were in Ravenclaw. Please try to remember you are in Slytherin house, in future. Now get to work." He turned and went back to his desk.

Lysanias was left gaping at his back, wondering if he should say "but that didn't answer any of my questions!" He looked to Jake, who was at a similar loss but now looked more thoughtful. He turned back to his book and read it, nodding. Others around the room were snickering, while some, probably his 'fellow' Slytherins, were looking angry, probably because he lost them a house point so early in the year. *But everything is made up and the points don't matter!* "It doesn't make a lot of sense, does it?" he finally decided.

"No, it doesn't." *The directions or the teacher. Who is this guy?*

Lysanias then had a bright idea. He looked over his shoulder to where the door was, and estimated the distance. *Mountain spirit, think you can head to the library for me? Just don't get caught, these people are magical and can probably see you.*

Tricky. Nevertheless I shall attempt it.

It appeared out in the hall, and then *it* got a bright idea. It put a hand out and *twisted* in a certain way, and felt a ward come into its hand. *We are, after all, the same 'person,'* it thought to itself. He pulled, and there it was, an 'ignore me' ward. It shrugged and slapped it on, then moved off towards where it remembered Lysanias remembering the library was. It stopped when it saw someone in the hall, but they looked right past it, making it chuckle a little. With that accomplished it simply went to the library as quickly as it could, then started taking down books on potion making. Skimming through the early parts of various beginners books the spirit found the answers to most of the questions Lysanias has asked, and as he could see through the spirit's eyes he could read the books while still sitting in class. Satisfied now he had a better grasp on the process he started chopping up leaves as his spirit put the books away. The spirit held on, despite Lysanias wanting to let it go, which made him look in that direction in surprise. The spirit headed back, opening the door and slipping into the classroom.

What is it?

The spirit pointed to the ward.

That's amazing, you got a ward out of my... er... our sub-space pocket! How did you know you could- you can't answer that question! I'll have to meditate and ask you later.

The spirit shook its head, mimed drawing a sword, and then slapping a ward onto it.

Lysanias resisted the urge to facepalm. *Of course, stick one on the sword and I can have it in Luna's class without anyone knowing. Spirit, you're the best, I'm glad I came with you!*

“What are you looking it?” Severus asked him, looking at where he was looking.

“Oh, uh...”

“Concentrate on your work.”

“Yes sir.” *Moron.* The spirit vanished.

So Lysanias worked on his potion. As it was, to him, a rather simplified alchemy that he already had experience with, it didn't give him too much trouble. The only real difference was that he didn't have to apply supernatural energy at the end, instead applying magic throughout the entire process. To that end, the books he had looked at said the most properly potent potions procured potential through the breath. You stirred in time with your breathing, exhaling once per stir, while willing magic from yourself into the mixture through the spoon. So that's what he did. He closed his eyes, took a deep breath, and slowly exhaled while stirring. Once. Twice. Three times. Then once back. He gently pulled the spoon up, and peered over the lip of his cauldron. *Well, the color's right anyway. Now what?*

“It seems your potion has earned you back the point you lost earlier,” Severus said dryly. “Well done.”

Jake gave him a nod of the head as a measure of respect, which he returned and looked up at his professor.

“Thank you, professor.”

“You, carry on,” he told Jake, who was looking at his potion in distress.

Lysanias went to the library to look up books on charms and read his own grade 1 spellbook *before* going to his next class, to avoid any needless running around by his spirit. He figured he had a good grasp of the fundamentals, that being a wand motion and a word of power. *Just like my physical movements for some planets of magic, or dumping energy into my will for skyebourne magic. And apparently you can cast without the words, but that's pretty advanced. I should be set for charms class. Oh, maybe I should actually get my wand out of the box!*

Making sure no one was watching he pulled the wand box out of sub-space and opened it up. Taking the wand in hand again he held it up, wondering if it would glow again. But it didn't, apparently that was just the initial “bonding” process. He looked it over, even giving it a slight flex and yes, it felt like there was something hard in the middle. The handle was quite long but rather plain, so after a moment's consideration he concentrated on it and sank the wood in a little, making a mountain design to match that on his shield. He also added angelic runes, or “writing” he would call it, spelling out his name. To anyone but an angel it would just be an odd design, but he would know. Having personalized it he checked himself over for a place to put it.

Sticking it in a pocket just doesn't seem right. What do other people do, I wonder? I should be seen with it, pulling it out of sub-space might be a little bit suspicious.

In the end he dug out the metal bracer he had made to hold his sword and shield when they were in contain wards and simply reshaped it to hold the wand now. He slipped it onto his sword scabbard, given the length was too great even if he was in “adult” mode to wear on his arm, and slid the wand into the holder. *That should do for now. The ‘ignore me’ ward should keep anyone seeing where I pull it from and make the appearance of it uninteresting enough to wonder about. I'll have to see where others keep theirs, it seems like something a person would always want to have on hand, but is bulky enough to be difficult to handle. For now let's keep studying this type of magic, it seems so different from what I know now I'm eager to get started!*

He needn't have bothered.

He was now trying to stay awake as Professor Flitwick demonstrated the forty five individual wand movements that “when strung together, will produce magic.”

Finally about twenty in he could take no more, and raised his hand.

“Now next is the double diamond- Yes?” asked Filius.

“Have mercy, professor,” he pleaded. “Not a person in this room is going to remember even a fraction of those wand movements in their first day. Couldn’t we just start off with maybe five and practice those?”

“Oh, no, that wouldn’t do at all,” he said with a chuckle. “I know it’s tough, but there aren’t many more to go.” *There’s still more than half!* “Just pay careful attention, and before class is out we’ll all practice the ‘swish’ and ‘flick’ so that you may try your first spell. Now, the double diamond.”

I’m being punished, aren’t I?

Finally the lecture was over, and Filius allowed them to take their wands out. Most pulled them out of pockets, which Lysanias thought was a bit crude, given the importance of the item (and cost) to everyone in this room. The girls took them out of purses or bags, which was at least a little better. He demonstrated the wand motion and had them try it, cautioning all the while that it might take a few classes to get the hang of it. “I have had first year classes do it though!” he said excitedly, like he was looking forward to seeing if anyone would do it today. “The incantation is Winged Levitation. Now you say it.”

“Winged Levitation.”

“Again.”

“Winged Levitation.” *What is he doing? Why is he making us say these words like we were just learning how to talk?*

“Humm... No, some of you still don’t have it. The pronunciation is very particular in magic. Er, until it isn’t when you can cast non-verbally that is. Why don’t you try it yourself?” He pointed to a student.

“Winged Levitation.”

“No, close, but it’s Winged Levitation.”

“Oh, I see! Winged.”

“No, but better. Winged.”

“Winged.”

“That’s it!”

He moved to the next student, who carefully parroted the words back one at a time.

Punished. I’m being punished.

With the pieces put together Lysanias looked at his feather. “Winged Levitation,” he said, swishing and flicking as he had seen the professor do. *Though I would have preferred to use my eyes and just absorb his skill. That wouldn’t mean I knew his spells though. For now best to learn them the long way.*

The feather stayed where it was.

What did I do wrong? “Professor,” he asked, raising his hand.

“Yes?”

“You didn’t really demonstrate the spell for us. Just the words and the motion. Could you, perhaps, put them together and show us how it’s done?”

“Didn’t I? What a silly mistake. Of course, quiet everyone, quiet. Let me demonstrate the spell.”

Lysanias opened up his senses, trying to catch what Filius did as he cast the spell. Susan would have advised against this, given what she went through, but in this case it worked out. He wasn’t as good as she had been in the skill, and he was rusty at

it besides not having done it for so long. So his range was limited, meaning he didn't get a migraine from all the magic around here. But he clearly felt power travel from the professor, out through the wand, and into the feather as he swished and flicked.

"There you are, you see?" he asked. "Notice the bobbing motion, as though an invisible pair of wings were attached to the feather. That's why the spell is called Winged Levitation. The thing you are levitating bobs as if on wings."

There were nods of agreement, clearly this made sense, and he lowered it again. "Back to it, then."

At least it should be easy to remember. Lysanias took another look at his feather. He could feel magic, it was all around them, it was how he did Sun and the one Neptune spell he knew. *Gather that magic inside yourself, direct it out the wand, and command the feather to move.*

"Winged Levitation."

His feather bobbed into the air.

"On the second try, no less!" Filius exclaimed, watching it float. "One point for Raven- no, wait. I don't think I know what house you're in! So sorry, I must be slipping in my old age."

"It's fine, professor, I got in late so I was sorted privately. I'm in Slytherin."

"Are you? Well, take a point for Slytherin house then!"

Most in the class looked glum.

So a net gain of one? I suppose that's not a bad showing the day, right? At least I made up for my earlier loss.

Bringing the feather down Lysanias found he could levitate it about half the time, on average. Maybe a little less, by the numbers he certainly wasn't connected to by the character sheet he didn't have. But he left the classroom feeling pretty good, he had proven he could make potions and do wand magic. The day was going fairly well, and why shouldn't it?

He grabbed a bite to eat in the great hall, sitting by himself. He noted that some sat alone, some sat reading books, some sat in groups and were animatedly discussing whatever it was witches and wizards talked out. *Probably other witches and wizards, and their doings and goings on?* Those that passed and started to sit down caught sight of his eyes, and suddenly remembered they had to be elsewhere. The first time it happened he brushed it off, but the second and third time he started to feel a little lonely, then a little annoyed. *If only I could reshape my eyes too, but it seems they're stuck like this.*

But finally it was time to begin what he had actually come to this world for, and went to Luna's first class. As people filed in he could tell she was fairly nervous about it, but excited at the same time. As the seats filled she took a count and decided everyone was there. Lysanias had his sword at his side, concealed with a ward so no one looked twice at it.

"Welcome!" she said happily. "This is a wonderful turn out, and hopefully everyone here understands *why* there are here. This is the first time this class has even been taught, so we'll be learning how best to go about it together. I hope I can count on your help with that." Turning, she went to the board and started writing. "The wand chooses the wizard," she said, stepping away from those words. "We always knew that, but we never knew why. Now we do. This is my wand." She held up her wand. "Her name is Belahime. She is in a certain sense 'alive,' just like your wands. They have a name, and a personality all their own. In this class, we are going to focus on the techniques to wake your wand up and if you keep at it, fully release its power. Now, what do I mean by that? If you would like to come with me, a chamber has been prepared just down the hall so I can demonstrate. My wand's release is fairly large." The

class left and went down the hall, entering a large room with a domed ceiling. “Everyone still here? Very good. I am going to wake up Belahime, who will appear behind me, so don’t be startled. She can tell you a little about herself, and you can ask any questions you might have. The main point I want you to understand is this; releasing a wand’s power will take dedication. You must come to learn your wand’s name and get to know them as you would a friend. It’s not like casting a spell, which is directed outward. You must direct your attention inward, and discover what I call your soulscape. But enough theory, that can come later. You want to know if this class will be worth your time, and that’s what I’m about to show you. Everyone ready? Then let us begin. *Let all that can be known reveal itself to me! Awaken, Belahime! Release!*”

The class, apart from Lysanias who had seen it all before, stumbled back. The released form of the wand seemed pleased to be given such awe and looked down on the assembled students.

“You didn’t shrink back,” she said.

Lysanias thought that was an odd thing to say, but then realized she was looking at someone else. He moved forward, looking at the boy’s face. It was a younger boy, probably a first year, with slick hair and what looked like a scar on his cheek. He didn’t look awed or frightened, in fact he looked angry.

“You actually did it,” he said coldly, ignoring Belahime.

“Er, what?” Luna asked, confused.

“The sons of fey send their regards,” said the boy, and raised his wand. Lysanias’ thoughts raced ahead. *There’s only one reason to point a wand at someone. You mean them harm!*

“Avada-“

Without thinking he spirit stepped in front of Luna, who was inhaling to gasp, eyes wide.

“Kedarva!” he finished. The spell, a green bolt of energy launched out of the wand and streaked towards Lysanias. His wall ring glittered, and the energy impacted his magical barrier, bouncing back at the surprised boy.

Who flew backwards, dead.

Chapter 5

What Susan Does Best

When: A moment of silence later

Where: Hogwarts classroom

Everybody started screaming at once. Though they didn't know it, all the kids in the room could now see thestrals, which was a nice perk, right? Okay, one of their classmates was lying there dead but did any of them really like that kid anyway?

"Quiet, quiet!" Luna was trying to calm everyone down but doing a terrible job.

Suddenly, in a burst of flame Albus was there, wand out and taking in the room at a glance.

"What's happened?" he demanded, and all the kids crowded around him and started talking at once. Of course, none of them actually *knew* what had happened all they knew is that poor Garrett was dead, seemingly of a killing curse. A killing curse he himself had cast trying to kill Luna.

"Return to your classroom," he ordered. "I will sort this out. Professor Lovegood, please escort your class back to your classroom. Lysanias, you will remain here to tell me what happened. You may stay also, Belahime."

At least pretend to pick me out randomly. It would have been, what, an extra two seconds to look around the room and "choose" me out. I mean come on.

"I go with my master, *human*," Belahime told him. "But out of respect for this tragedy and to lend my aid I will stay."

The class has herded by Luna, who turned to the headmaster.

"I'll clear my classroom out right away," she told him, feeling sick to Lysanias' senses.

"Whatever for?" he asked.

"It's my first day on the job, I haven't had my class for ten minutes, and already a student is dead!"

"Yes, well, that's no excuse to run away," he said a bit stuffily. "We'll get to the bottom of this and let you know."

"Yes, headmaster." She numbly turned and took her class back with her.

Let her know? Does this sort of thing happen often?

"Go and get Susan," he told Fawkes. "If anyone can help this boy it's her."

"Very well," he said, vanishing off his shoulder.

"Now, Lysanias, what happened?" He knelt by the body and started playing his wand over the boy. "Curious," he muttered to himself.

"I'm not exactly sure myself," he answered honestly. "Luna showed us her wand's released form," he indicated Belahime, "and suddenly this guy was attacking her. I didn't expect some kind of instant death spell, which is apparently what he used."

"No, to think a student would know such a spell... and he cast it on *himself*? After, what, you negated his original spell somehow? He didn't want to be taken alive?"

He shook his head. "My wall ring reflects all magic back on the caster," he explained, holding it up. "I stepped in front of Luna to protect her, but like I said I didn't expect that level of magic. The death spell he cast bounced back and hit him."

"You threw yourself in front of someone to save their lives? How are you not in Gryffindor?"

"Because it wasn't an act of bravery, it was a tactically sound decision. I knew it would bounce off, there was no actual risk to me."

"I suppose."

Suddenly there was another flash, and Susan was standing there, carrying Sparkle in her arms. She jumped down, looking the kid over.

“What happened?”

“A rebounded death curse, cast at Miss Lovegood. Lysanias here reflected it, saving her life, but the caster as you can see died instead.”

She took a moment to parse that sentence. “You saved Luna’s life?”

“So it seems.”

“On your first day here in the school?”

“It is the first day, yes.”

“How are you not a paragon? That’s amazing, even to me!”

People keep asking me why I’m not things I’m not. I am who I am, can’t you just accept it? “You are all taking this rather well,” he grumped. “Do you see this sort of thing often?”

“I’m just confident in Susan’s ability to help,” Albus told him. “Going back in time or somehow saving this boy’s life.”

“Tricky,” she admitted. “You’ve checked the body?”

“It’s real, not a fake. But something is strange about it.”

“I see.”

As Susan looked him over, Lysanias felt something strange but couldn’t immediately pinpoint it. Then he realized, it was coming from Sparkle. Like she was conflicted about something, staring intently at this boy.

You can help him? he sent into her brain, startling her. Her eyes darted to him and she gave the barest nod of her head. *But it’s complicated?* Again the nod.

“Let me try a soul technique,” she decided. “It hasn’t been long, right?”

Albus shook his head. “I came as soon as the wards were triggered, and Fawkes went to you directly.”

“Then we’ll see. Stand back. *Light of the Multiverse, Make Up!*”

After a swirl of power cleared, standing in Susan’s place was Susan, but hardly human looking anymore. She was now black and white, literally, seemingly swirled together in strange patterns. She was smooth and nearly featureless despite still being feminine in shape, but didn’t stop to look at herself like this was strange in any way. She had no clothes or any equipment on, but as Lysanias looked she did have one feature. Set on her chest was a colorful orb, the only thing colorful about her now.

What in the world did she just do?

Susan closed her eyes, concentrating on the boy. “*Soul Recovery. Soul Binding.*” she intoned, remaining motionless for several moments. “*Healing Infinitude. Soul Recovery. Permanent Binding,*” she repeated. “I think it’s working.” As he watched the boy gave a jerk and started breathing again, his eyes flying open. They stared up at nothing, but he blinked a few times and *simply wasn’t dead anymore.*

She just brought that dead kid back to life! What is she, some kind- wait, didn’t Luna say she met Death Gods? Could this be a technique from them? She was still concentrating on him, so Lysanias took the liberty of grabbing up his wand with the force and storing it away. *No sense letting him near that until we know what’s going on.*

“What’s going on?” he asked.

“Oh dear,” said Fawkes. “That’s going to be a problem. I didn’t think she could actually do it.”

“Neither did I,” she admitted. “But the theory was sound. Hey you, here’s a question for you. Before I kill you again, why did you try to murder my girlfriend?”

“What? Why would I do that?”

“No, try again,” she said sweetly, grabbing him by the throat and hauling him into the air. “Why. Did you try. To kill. My girlfriend.”

“Susan, control yourself!” Albus demanded.

"Oh, like that's ever worked," Sparkle muttered.

"One can always hope."

"I didn't!" the boy claimed again. "I swear!"

"He's telling the truth," Belahime told them. "I can tell that."

"Susan, put him down!" Albus now seemed more serious. "We will get to the bottom of this, I promise. But killing him a second time won't accomplish anything."

"Fine." She released him, and he tumbled to the floor.

"What's happening?" he asked, obviously distressed. "What is that thing?"

"It's just me, Susan."

"You're Susan? You don't even look human!"

"Huh? Oh, this?" She indicated her body. "Yeah, it's based on what powers I take and- why am I explaining this to you? Why did you try to kill Luna!"

"I'm telling you I didn't!"

"Liar!"

"Peace!" called Albus, stepping between them. "Garrett, isn't it? What's the last thing you remember before seeing Susan here?"

"That thing," he replied, pointing at Belahime. "Luna made it come out, and then I was on the floor."

"What happened after the wand was released?" Albus asked Lysanias.

"He said something about the sons of fey sending their regards and pointed his wand at Luna. Figuring that couldn't be good, and warned by a dream about the moon dying last night, I stepped in front of it. Then he bounced his spell off me and died."

"I killed myself? I was dead?" Garrett asked, white faced.

"You were dead!" Susan chirped. "I brought you back. A thank you wouldn't go amiss."

"..."

"Well, suit yourself."

"And you have no idea why you would do that, or who the sons of fey are?" Belahime asked, looking down at him.

"No, I don't!"

"He doesn't," she agreed. "He is not trying to deceive us."

"Sons of fey?" Susan asked her.

"I must reluctantly admit my ignorance," she told them, sounding like she would rather eat garbage than admit this. "But I'll be looking into the matter as I am able."

"As will I," Albus told them.

"So what's going to happen to me?" Garrett asked.

"I'm afraid I cannot allow you your wand until this matter is settled."

"My wand?" he looked around for it.

"It's safe, I saw Lysanias pick it up. Normally casting a killing curse would mean execution by dementor, but curiously there aren't many of them left anymore. Also, you've already died once for the crime so can we really kill you for it *again*? Plus Belahime says you're being truthful so something strange is going on here. For now I want you to go to the infirmary and get checked out. You were dead at least three minutes by my estimation, who knows what *that's* done to you. Fawkes, we can spare you, perhaps you could accompany him, make sure he doesn't get into trouble on the way?"

"Actually, you're going to want me around," he said, nervously glancing around the room. "Any minute now."

"Really?"

"Really."

"I see. Rather cryptic, but fine. Perhaps Lysanias then?"

"I'll send my spirit, I would like to stay here, make sure the class is all right."

If you wouldn't mind, spirit?

Of course. I do like being out and about.

The spirit appeared, and Garrett jumped away from it. "Now what is that? And where did it come from? Am I going crazy?"

"Hopefully not, I see it as well," Albus told him. "It's just a day for surprises, isn't it? Lysanias here is the third person, I believe, to have the killing curse cast at them, and survive. You are thus the fourth. And the school year is just beginning. Off you go then."

"Right." Dazed, he made his way out the door, flanked by the spirit.

"Now then, what can you tell me—" Albus started to say, but Fawkes gave a squawk as a ring of fire appeared in the room with them.

"Oh, I knew it. They were just waiting for him to leave. Here they come, it's bad, it's really bad!" he said in a rush.

"That's a heaven portal!" Lysanias gasped, looking through it.

"It's an Ophan," he clarified.

"I don't care what you call it, that's Heaven beyond there!"

From this portal stepped a somewhat androgynous figure wearing a gauzy white robe you could see right through. The figure wasn't male or female in the human sense, but an angel, as feathery white wings followed them through the portal. It was hard to tell from the glare of Heaven behind them, but they also shone with a heavenly light themselves. They looked around.

"Susan?" they asked, voice light and pleasant.

"That's me," she answered, eyes narrowed. "What are you?"

"Your friend can explain, I'm sure," they answered. "I'm simply here to deliver this to you." They handed over an envelope, which Susan snatched out of their hand.

"What is this?"

"Consider yourself served. Good day."

"Served?" The outrage on her face was plain, but the angel hadn't stuck around. It simply turned, nodded to Fawkes, and headed back through the portal of fire, which closed again.

"Uh, Fawkes?" Albus asked. "Have I just lost what little control I had of this school?"

"Afraid so."

"And that was Heaven?"

"Yup!"

"And that was a real, live, honest to goodness angel?"

"A very weak angel, hardly deserving of the term, but yes. That was a malakhim, the lowest rank of angel that exists."

"Haaaaa?"

"I'm being put on trial!" Susan angrily announced, having torn the envelope apart. "It's tomorrow!"

"Trial?" Albus asked.

"For, get this, breaking the natural law of the universe!"

"Well, you did," Fawkes put in. "To be totally fair."

"But I do that all the time! I do it six ways from Sunday. I do thee impossible things before breakfast!"

"And that's fine. But this, apparently, they believed was a road too far."

"If they think they can just waltz down here and—"

"If I may interrupt, they're Heaven. That's exactly what they think. Look Susan," she looked at her out of the side of her face, which was dead on for a bird. "You can't fight Heaven. If you do, this castle, the surrounding countryside, maybe the entire country will become a smoking crater. I've heard tales of what you've done, I know how

powerful you can be. Heck, there's rumors you could destroy this entire planet by yourself!"

What?

Susan didn't dispute that, simply asking "Where did you hear that from?"

"Never mind that. The point is, if you're on trial, then go on trial. See what they have to say, and maybe we can get you off. I mean how are they going to punish you, anyway?"

"Good point. They didn't even arrest me!"

"They know it's pointless. Both because there's nowhere on Earth they can't find you, and that you could just slip into another reality in which case you'll basically be exiling yourself. They know you won't."

"What do you think?" she asked Lysanias.

"I only know about angels back home, and even then I didn't study them or anything. But I know they're fairly stuck up. I mean even I believe, in my heart of hearts, that I'm better than the people back home because I was created in a more 'pure' state. It was Allfather, angels, us. Well, somehow the lizard people were in there someplace but never mind that. I wouldn't go around rubbing it in people's faces, but angels have no problem reminding people that they are the ones running around Heaven, and we're not. Also I think some may have resented the Allfather making them bow to humanity, given all our flaws. They would come after you, and keep coming, if they thought you were in the wrong."

"I see. Here." She handed it to Albus. "There's some requirements for a courtroom, you can take care of that. I have to see how my girlfriend is doing, I've made her wait long enough. Do you need Belahime?"

Albus shook his head and Susan held her hand out. "Come on then, I'll take you back. Wouldn't do to have you roaming the halls."

"Very well." The creature shimmered and Susan was holding a wand.

Albus silently took the papers and watched Susan walk out.

"My spirit saw that kid to the infirmary apparently," Lysanias announced. "Do you want it to wait there?"

"No, no, it's fine, I'm sure he wouldn't cause trouble there. Humm, according to this you're being called as a witness. As is Garrett. And council must be assigned Susan, I wonder who we can get on such short notice."

Suddenly there was a bang and a tiny creature with leathery wings was hanging in the air next to the group. It was holding an envelope as big as it was, and looked around. "Hi!" it said excitedly. "I made it!"

"Demon!" Fawkes snarled, recognizing the thing as an imp. And indeed it had tiny horns, leathery red skin, and a tail.

"Hey, I didn't ask to be a demon!" it protested.

"But you must have been wicked in life, to be so changed."

"Yeah, whatever. Can someone take this? It's really heavy!" Indeed the little wings on the back of the creature were flapping furiously as they tried to remain in the air.

"I will take it," Albus told them.

"Great! Here you go!"

"It's not addressed to anyone-" But the moment the paper was out of his hand the imp vanished.

"Imps can teleport, by the way," Fawkes told them.

Albus looked and felt as if he didn't know whether to burst into tears or song. "Beings from other worlds, demons and angels running around the halls of the school. Reflected death spells, people *back* from the dead. I'm retiring next year, I mean it!"

"No you don't," Fawkes told him. "You're loving all this."

“Ha!”

“What’s it say?” Lysanias asked.

“Hm? Oh, the note, right! Let me see.” He scanned it. “Apparently someone has offered to represent Susan in the case. Pro bono, even. It’s just signed “L” though, I wonder who could have known about it and gotten this together in that short a time?”

“I shudder to think,” Fawkes told them. “Especially given a demon delivered it. A minor demon, but still.”

“Well, I must put together a courtroom that meets these requirements. If I am going to host angels in this castle we’ll have to be prepared. I’d prefer the ministry courtrooms, honestly, but this says that’s too exposed. I can keep people away from the room here. Fawkes, I’m counting on you to warn me if I’m about to breach some Heavenly protocol.”

“Of course.”

“What about me?” Lysanias asked.

“Oh, go back to class, I suppose. I’ve only slightly blown your cover at this point. Please don’t take all this to be typical, it isn’t, I assure you.”

“I believe you. I think I’m being punished for something, truthfully.”

“You?” he snorted. “Are you sure you don’t mean me? Anyway, no one actually died so I hope your first day has at least been somewhat positive. I’ll see you tomorrow, the trial starts at 9:00. I’ll let you know where when I find a room big enough.”

“All right.”

The two went their separate ways, and Lysanias walked back to the classroom. Susan’s eyes lit up as he approached, and he found himself being hugged again.

“I didn’t get to thank you before,” she said. “So thank you. As if that could convey my gratitude to you for what you’ve done. My shop isn’t enough. You want super powers? I’ll give you my orb if that’s what you want. I’ll have Silverstreak find you a reality to rule over. Whatever you want because *my Luna is safe.*”

“It’s no big deal. The dream I had warned me, that’s why I put this on.” He showed her the ring.

“Ah, a ring that reflects magic back? I have a similar spell, but I wasn’t sure of the casting check I would have to beat. I know now they’re similar to what I would have, or at least my magic considers things to be. I might just make one of my own for Luna. But I’m serious, think of something, okay? Luna means the world to me.”

“I can see that.” *And feel it. I wonder if I’ll ever find that sort of love. Somehow I doubt it.*

“So is he still okay?” Luna asked.

“He’s still fine, he made it to the infirmary anyway. I still have his wand, I forgot about it, but you can go see him later I guess.”

“Tell them,” she indicated the door. “They don’t believe me, because they saw the green light and he fell over, dead. Maybe they’ll believe you. I’ll be in in a minute.”

“Oh, uh...” He found himself being shoved into the classroom, where many pairs of eyes, hungry for the knowledge only he could provide, stared into his.

I’m being punished, it’s the only explanation, he thought to himself as he tried to figure out how to begin.

Then everyone started talking at once.

Chapter 6
Finishing up the First Day
When: A moment later
Where: Classroom

Lysanias was not good at dealing with crowds. He didn't even like talking to people he didn't know. In short, he was fairly shy, though he didn't do much fluttering, if you get my drift. So he sort of stood there frozen as everyone demanded to know what was going on.

"Let him breathe!" one girl finally said, standing up at her desk. "Quiet, everyone, let him talk!"

The class reluctantly quieted down and she turned to him. "Can you tell us what's happening?"

He looked her over and she had dark skin and eyes, and her long hair was pulled back, held in a ponytail and was over one shoulder. She was looking at him expectantly, and he wondered how much to tell them. *At least telling them what they will find out for themselves is fine.* "Garrett is actually fine, he doesn't know why he attacked Luna like he did. Her wand construct," *or whatever they're called. Do they have an official name?* "said he wasn't lying about it. Apparently it can tell truth from lies? I don't know, it seemed to imply that it could. He's resting in the infirmary right now."

"That's impossible," said a boy near the far right side of the class. "We all saw the green light. We all heard what he said."

"Don't be stupid," said a girl near him. "How could he know *that* spell?"

"He didn't," Lysanias assured them, but then wondered how to follow it up. *Wait a second, I think I do have something. It'll be a bit of a lie, heck it'll be a flat out lie who am I kidding, but it just might work.* "But he thought he did. He pronounced it wrong, and maybe got the wand motion wrong too. It backfired on him, but like I said he's still alive."

"There, you see?" asked the girl who had stood up. "You play around with unforgivable curses, and you get what you deserve. But he didn't know why he said that?"

"What, about the sons? No, said he's never heard of it."

There was some muttering but it *felt* like the real explanation, and Lysanias was secretly rather pleased with himself for coming up with it. *It does it all. I don't have to explain about my ring, he doesn't have to come back from the dead, they get a lesson in not messing around with magic that can just outright kill somebody. I'm not even sure I would want to learn a spell like that, even in my line of work.*

"So are we still having class or not?" asked another kid.

"Yes, Professor... er, professor..." *What did she say her last name was?*

"Professor Lovegood," prompted the girl.

"Yes, she's right outside, saying goodbye to Susan. She'll be back in a minute."

With that done he went to seat and the dark skinned girl sat down too.

Whew, thank goodness that's over.

A few moments later Luna returned and they had an uneventful first class. She explained about the steps they would be taking to awaken their wands, first learning to meditate by focusing on certain things. After that how to enter their soulscape, then find and befriend the spirit of their wand. Once they did that they would be told the wand's name, and then be able to start trying to call it out. To that end their next session would do away with the desks for mats, cushions, or squishy chairs as each student preferred, and their homework was to read a short essay Luna handed out about mediation and to find a crystal, rock, or other focus they would use to help in their relaxation efforts.

Luckily, I know about meditation already from calling out my animal spirit. I just have to redirect it to the sword. But I have a wand now too, could I find out its name and call out any power it has, as well? Probably best to stick to one thing at a time, it was the sword the shadow avatar was worried about.

As class let out the dark skinned girl stepped up to Lysanias and walked out with him. "I'm Rose," she said, introducing herself.

"Lysanias," he replied. "Nice to meet you."

"You too. Don't think I forgot what you did, jumping in front of Miss Lovegood like that. Gryffindor, right?"

"Slytherin." He took a few more steps and had to stop and look behind him. She was causing a backup as people tried to get around her, and one taller boy was scowling as she had just stopped dead in the middle of the hall.

"You can't be," she finally managed, hastily stepping up to him again.

"Why not?"

"Jumping in front of someone just isn't a Slytherin thing to do. Or are you hoping to get a good grade out of the class without doing the work or something?"

"No, this class is very important to me. I'll work as hard as everyone to call out the spirit of my sw- wand."

"No kidding?" She looked at him out of the corners of her eyes.

"No kidding."

"Huh." They walked side by side for a few steps. "Where are you headed?"

"Oh, thought I would go check on Garrett, actually. We never really met, but he could be a victim in all this. The headmaster thought so, anyway. I thought I would go down, show there was no hard feelings or whatever. I mean if it was me, I'd be feeling pretty messed up right about now. Attacking someone? A teacher no less? Then not able to remember why?"

"I'll... come with you!"

"Sure, that's fine."

"And you're not just putting me on about your house?"

"Why would I lie about it?"

"I don't know, but you're not like any Slytherin I imagined."

"Then perhaps it's time to revisit your preconceptions." There was a pause.

"Sorry, sorry, that came out all wrong! I'm so stupid!"

"You don't talk like you're stupid. You talk like someone in Ravenclaw. This way to the infirmary."

"Ah, right, I was going to ask a painting before we got too far."

"Good idea. And no big deal, I know what you meant. Maybe I have been a little unfair to Slytherins without cause. I'll keep it in mind."

"Okay."

So they visited with Garrett, who seemed rather surprised about two classmates coming to see him. Madam Pomfrey assured them he was all right, and Lysanias handed over the pamphlet relating to meditation and told him about the homework. As he did he looked the boy over, who seemed to be about his apparent age. He had a strong chin and nose, and one of his teeth was a little crooked. But he seemed nice enough, feeling a bit surprised Lysanias made the effort.

"Find a rock?" he asked.

"A focus, something to occupy your attention while you achieve the desired state of mind," Lysanias explained. "If your mind wanders, which it tends to do for most people, you'll worry more about something happening a week from now instead of focusing on the moment you're supposed to be in."

"You seem to know a lot about it," Rose told him.

"Oh, yes, well, I learned meditation a long time ago. Then I was introduced to some elven techniques..." *Crap, do they have elves here? Should not have said that.*

"House elves?" Garrett questioned.

"Nothing odd about that, is there?" He breathed a sigh of relief they didn't think we was nuts crazy for believing *elves* existed, just a little bit odd for associating with what seemed to be a certain kind of elf.

"It's a little odd," Rose told him.

"Do they know a lot about meditation?" Garrett asked. "I know they have their own powers that aren't like our magic..."

"The one I learned from seemed to." *Note to self, find house elf and see if they can teach me anything new.*

"That makes sense," Rose told them. "I suppose not every goblin knows about banking for example. They would have different interests and such."

"Well, of course," Garrett agreed. "I mean obviously, I knew that." The three laughed.

"We shouldn't be too late for our next class," Rose told them, rising. "Garrett, nice to meet you. Lysanias, it was nice talking to you." There was a slight hesitation. "Let's do it again some time?"

"Sure, I'd like that."

"Great. See you!" She bounced off with a bit of a grin.

"I'd better go too." *Not that I have any other classes today.* "Hope you get to the bottom of this whole sons of fey thing."

"You and me both. Apparently I'm going to some trial tomorrow."

"Shoot, I forgot about that! Yeah, I'm going too, as a witness to the events that happened. Oh, look, I told everyone you had just backfired your spell because you didn't actually know how to cast it properly. They think you didn't die. Let's try to keep it that way, all right? You go around telling people you *died* and came back to life they'll either lock you up or never take anything you say seriously ever again."

"Don't worry, I'm not stupid."

"Just letting you know."

"Thanks. That was quick thinking on your part."

"It just came to me. I guess I'll see you tomorrow morning."

"Yeah. See you."

As he walked away a thought struck him. *Neither one commented on my eyes. They just accepted me. How about that?*

At dinner that evening Rose and Garrett both found him at the table he was sitting at, and sat with him with a smile. They talked about their day, Lysanias telling about his encounter in potions class and how boring Charms was, which you think would be the best class because you were doing actual magic, right?

"I think history of magic was probably more boring than that," Rose told him. "Though I don't recall seeing you there. You are first year, right?"

"Yeah."

"I must have just missed you."

"Must be." *How much do I actually tell these people?*

He didn't have to answer because Susan came into the great hall, flanked as always by Sparkle, looking around for them. Lysanias waved to her, and she started over.

"Wait, red hair, black cat. Is that *Susan*?" Rose asked. "Did you just wave her over? Do you *know* her?"

"Uh, a little?"

"Hey everyone!" she greeted. "Garrett, need to talk to you. Madam Pomfrey said she released you but I was still a tiny bit worried. Tell me, have you done any magic since you, uh, came back?" Susan said this last part softly.

"No wand."

"You've still got the man's wand?" she asked.

"No one said to return it."

"Hmm, well, give it back now because I need to try something."

"Okay." He reached under the table to hide where he was pulling it from, and got it out. He handed it over.

"What am I supposed to do with it?"

"Magic, obviously," she said, as though that was obvious.

"Bit of a problem there," he told her. "I can't. Lysanias here got the spell on his first try, but I couldn't get it."

"Oh, you did, did you? You Hermione you!"

"Second try, *second*."

"First, second, whatever."

"Yeah, he actually asked the professor for a demonstration after he tried it and failed the first time. I remember now. Professor Flitwick demonstrated, and he nodded like that was all he needed to know, and then he did it. Weirdest thing I ever saw."

"What, asking for help?" Rose asked.

"No, he just looked at the feather, decided 'yup, I'm going to lift you with magic now' and then did it. I mean, how do you do that?"

"Oh, uh, I don't know."

"Well, that is a problem," Susan admitted. "And one my magic can't help with, loath as I am to admit that. Maybe Lysanias can provide some tips and get you going? I need to know, it's fairly important."

"I'll try, you don't think my magic was damaged or anything, do you?"

"I'd rather not say. Lysanias?"

"One second, there may be something I can do." *Two things. But explaining how I want to call the spirit of the dragonfly might be a bit of a stretch. But the other?* He got up and hauled her a little ways away, pulling out his circlet when he was sure no one was looking. "I think this will help him cast magic easier. It provides a bonus to magic, and honestly while wearing it spells for me come a little easier. If you tell him you made it..."

"Let me see that." She took it and popped it on her head, then somehow was holding a sheet of paper which she turned over. She glared at it as if not believing her eyes. "Er, if I offered you a mountain of gold, would that be enough?"

"What, to buy it from me? No!"

"Figures. Hey Sparkle, take a look." She shifted the page over and Sparkle nodded. "Plus fours, and in all planet skills. Not bad, not bad at all."

"Is that good, then?"

"Good? Let's just say my reality considers a "5" to be an average ability to do something. A "10" is the human limit of doing something. If a master magic user put this on they would be about one and a half times better than the next best magic user, who is supposedly the best magic user on the planet! With talent and aptitude you could be a '20' rating with this pretty easily. Why aren't you wearing it?"

"Honestly, I thought it looked a little out of place. But I could attach an 'ignore me' ward like I'm doing with the sword if I had to. But I figured I didn't need it at the moment."

"What sword?"

"The sword you can't see, because it has an 'ignore me' ward plastered on it."

She chuckled. "I'm not sure what I was expecting. Okay, we'll try it. It should make him average at magic if you can get him a '1' rating in the skill for now. Just tell him what you did."

"I'll try."

So they went back and he put the circlet on, then Lysanias explained about envisioning a pool of magic inside yourself and letting it out our arm, then down into the wand. "And don't forget the incantation, Winged Levitation. Not Winged Levitation."

"Okay, stop a second. What are you people saying?" Lysanias demanded. "Why do you keep going on about pronouncing very simple words?"

"You hear the words like I do," Susan guessed. "Not the pseudo Latin they have to memorize, but what the words mean. Am I right?"

"Wait, they're casting spells in a language they don't know how to speak?"

"You hear the meaning? What's she talking about?" Rose asked.

"He has the gift of tongues," Susan told them. "He can understand any language."

"Is that why he sounds funny? I wondered, but I can understand him perfectly so I didn't want you to think I was crazy."

"Yeah, same goes for me," Garrett told them. "So you just pronounce them as though it was your native language?"

"Yeah. That makes so much sense now, I should have thought of it. You guys going over it and over it in class. I was going bonkers!"

"No wonder you said it was boring, I can imagine why," Rose commiserated. "You're just full of surprises, huh?"

"I guess." *You have no idea.*

"Anyway, shall we try it?" Susan asked.

"A pool of magic. Sure, why not? Just swishing and flicking didn't get me anywhere." He concentrated on the napkin in front of him. "Winged Levitation."

It started bobbing in the air.

"Oh, thank goodness," Susan breathed. "That's a huge weight off my shoulders."

"I did it," Garrett told them, grinning. "I did my first spell. Thank you, everyone."

"What was that about a pool?" Rose asked, her own wand now out.

"I'll leave you to it," Susan told them, taking the circlet back. "See you all later."

I want that back later, he pushed into her brain.

She looked at him quizzically, then looked at the food still on the table. "You know, house elves prepare all this food. If you ask a painting I bet they'll tell you how to get into the kitchens. You might want to thank them for their hard work. They won't accept thanks, of course, but it's the easiest way to meet them, should you want to do that."

I get it. I'll go at some point before I leave here. Thanks.

"Wait, what was that really about?" Garrett asked her.

"Just making sure I got all of you when I brought you back. I wanted to see if you still had the *spark of magic*, but you do, so no worries. Practice hard, there's no reason you can't be a great wizard."

"Was there some danger of that?"

"Sure. Never done that before, didn't know if it would work. But it did, so no worries!" She walked off.

"My turn," Rose told them.

Dinner eaten, and both could now somewhat reliably cast the levitation spell, Lysanias went looking for Luna, but was approached by a shining hare jumping through the air as though air stepping. *Need to practice that skill more. What is that thing anyway?* “Follow me if you’re ready to talk to the headmaster,” the hare said in Luna’s voice. It then started slowly bouncing away from him. He followed it, so it bounced a little further, and soon he was standing in a courtroom.

“I should have known,” said Severus as he came in. Susan, Luna, Albus, and several other teachers were there. They all looked over at him, and Susan smiled and waved. He waved back. “You’re with *her*.”

“Known by the way I completed your in class assignment by actually figuring out how to brew a potion with no instruction whatsoever? I must assume you delight in watching little kids fail given your seeming lack of concern for actually teaching your class. I would never have known about the breath thing otherwise, you thought we would just stumble into it? Your teaching methods leave a lot to be desired.”

“Well said!” Susan told him. “I knew there was a reason I liked you. Why do you still work here?” she asked Severus. “And you’re teaching potions again? Who’s teaching defense?”

“Quirrell, actually,” Albus told them.

“Get out of town! Really?” Susan’s face lit up.

“Really. He came back, refreshed after his time traveling and said he wanted to take up the mantle again. Given his unique circumstances and personal story of how his quest for power went so wrong I thought him an excellent choice for the position.”

“He actually *time traveled*? Don’t you know how dangerous that is!? How far back did he go?”

“Er, that’s not what I meant. I meant he spent time... traveling. Not that he actually did time travel. In any case we can only go back six hours, remember?”

“OH! Well, it doesn’t hurt to to ask for clarification, does it?”

“No, it doesn’t.”

“I’ll have to say hello, catch up with him. Anyway, here’s where we’ll be tomorrow. I still have no idea who is representing me.”

“What is my role in all this?” Lysanias asked.

“They just want your statement,” Albus told him. “According to this, you may be asked certain questions. Just answer truthfully and it should be fine.”

“Very well.”

“I happened to hear you visited poor Mr. Tanpoline after class. That was very nice of you.”

“Who? Oh, Garrett!”

“Exactly. And it seems Rose has taken a shine to you, as well.”

“What, do you have spy cameras everywhere or something?” he demanded.

“He’s never told me how he does it either,” Susan told him. “Good luck.”

“If we’re done here?” Severus asked impatiently. “The room is secure, no student will have any inclination to come down this corridor until we lift the enchantments.”

“Yes, you may go, Severus. Thank you, everyone.”

“And there’s really going to be angels running around in here?” the witch Lysanias didn’t know was named Minerva asked.

“Apparently.”

“I’m calling in sick tomorrow.”

“When did you take up divination?”

“Albus, it’s Susan and the forces of Heaven. I don’t even know *what* that means for the school. Don’t take this lightly, I beg you!”

“I won’t be, Minerva. I’ll be putting further protections in place myself. And I’m *certain* that Susan will be on her best behavior.”

"I'm not a child, Headmaster," Susan told him. "I've walked worlds, seen and done things you wouldn't believe. Heck, I've *destroyed* worlds. I could destroy this one in less than a minute. I'm not the same person I was when I attended classes here."

"You really must write a book about your adventures."

"Susan's Chronicles? Maybe, someday. For now I owe Lysanias here a lesson in *computer use*."

"I will see you all tomorrow then." Albus left with a nod of his head and Susan got out her padform so they could go over it.

"How was the first day?" she asked, turning hers on.

"You know, it wasn't actually too bad." *I actually think I made some friends, and I'm getting a chance to be a 'kid' again since I sort of got robbed of my first go around. We'll get through this trial, maybe Susan can take over why some random kid tried to kill Luna, and I can just focus on my studies.*

But of course the universe had other plans.

Chapter 7
Trial: Part 1
When: The next day
Where: Courtroom

About 8:30 that morning Lysanias made his way to the courtroom. The school was going on as normal, and the professors for Lysanias' classes that day had been told not to expect him. He had been told some wards had been put up around the hallway leading to the improvised courtroom so no one unconnected to the trial got a glimpse of an angel, but he didn't see anything. There was magic in the hallway, but then there was magic everywhere in the castle and he didn't want to stand there studying it, so he moved on. The door opened smoothly at his touch and he went inside, making sure no one further down the hall was looking at him. Some people were already there, including Luna and the headmaster. Fawkes was on the headmaster's shoulder, and turned his head at Lysanias' approach. The courtroom was pretty much a courtroom, with some seating for people near the back and a judge's bench and connected area at the front.

"Good morning. Did you sleep okay?" Luna asked him as he approached.

"Sure, I slept fine," he told her. "I'm not the one on trial this time."

"That's true."

"Have you been on trial before?" Albus asked.

"Actually, yes. On both sides. I was in a trial about a wizard overcharging his customers, which I had hoped would be about enslaving the water spirit Amy. He got away, but then later realized what the trial had really been about so that was fine. Then I was put on trial for murdering a shopkeeper in town. That was a bad couple of days, believe me."

"You murdered someone?" both asked, faces a mirror of shock.

"It was an agent of the shadow avatar, we didn't yet realize what we were up against. The man attacked me and I managed a good blow against him, which killed him. Sadly it killed the shopkeeper more than hurt the shadow avatar, but like I said we didn't even know there was a shadow avatar at the time. It had maybe hundreds of the things in the world, they were basically disposable as far as it was concerned."

"What happened?" Albus asked. "Obviously you escaped a prison sentence or execution yourself."

"Oh, it turned out the judge in the case was taken over by a shadow too, and totally ran the trial into the ground trying to just get me executed. Someone who knew what was going on came by and rescued me."

"I see. So the case was never really resolved?"

"The judge recovered, it turned out the possession could be reversed and he told the local lord to deal with me. They tasked me with betraying the being that saved me by cutting off the portal between our two worlds so shadows stopped coming through it. We did it, but that just led to more problems as he and his kind then turned against us."

"Sounds like an exciting story."

"Not when you were in the middle of it."

"I can understand that."

"Oh hey, here comes Susan," Luna told them, turning towards the doors. They waited a few seconds and then opened, making Lysanias wonderer how she knew. "She didn't," Luna pleaded to the universe as she walked through them. "No, of course she did."

Lysanias saw what she meant, Susan was wearing a strange kind of armor that was pure white, and had a pair of wings folded behind her. This left her arms bare and on one arm was a bracelet with several colored balls. More were shoved into the bottom

of the armor, and he could clearly see others seemingly pressed into her skin at the wrists. The armor had been created in such a way to show the orb on her chest, and her hair was a fresh shade of dark red. On her head was a circlet with a wing motif, and a white skirt hung down halfway to her boots. On a belt was a dagger she would have to draw with her right hand (remember she's left handed) and a sword hung at her right. Her legs were covered with white, thigh high armored boots engraved with various patterns. Onto the side of one she carried a pistol, while another dagger was shoved into a slot on the other. Flanking her were two robotic dogs, looking the place over, and Sparkle, looking resigned.

"Really?" was all Albus said.

"They're going to be reminded of just who they're dealing with here," Susan told him. "Where is everyone? I thought this place would be filling up, I wanted to make a grand entrance. I guess I'll have to go out and come back in again."

"I would really prefer to keep my castle in one piece."

"Then you shouldn't have allowed one of *your* students to almost murder Luna while inside *your* castle. Lysanias." She nodded to him.

"Susan."

"You geared up? Looking a little young there."

Judge me by my size, do you? "I have armor wards on under my shirt, and I'm wearing my sword at my side and the circlet even if you can't see them. I can have my shield out in an instant, and my spirit so if they try anything, I'll be ready."

"Now look here-" Albus started to say, but was cut off as another portal of fire opened near the front of the courtroom. Several beings stepped or floated through it, the first being a long, serpentine creature with a face like a mask. Then floated two spheres of pure light, followed by several quite animalistic beings that were somewhat like lions with ram's heads. The spheres went over to the jury box, while the lion looking creatures, which still stood on two legs, went to the corners of the room. Next was a more traditional looking angel with pure white wings, holding what appeared to be a strange scepter in one hand. They took a position at the corner of the room and got out a notebook, setting the scepter down on the floor beside them and writing stuff down as they looked around. Next out of the portal was another, larger angel of the same type, somewhat human looking, though this one was wearing a business suit of all things and had a sword at his hip and a briefcase in one hand. They also had four wings, instead of two, folded neatly at their back. While the others totally ignored the humans (and cat) this one came over to them as the portal changed into a very strange looked wheel of fire with wings and eyes.

"Ah, Susan I take it?" he asked, looking down at her. "I'm Zadkiel, patron of justice. I'll be representing Heaven in this case. Is your lawyer here yet? We should speak."

"Not yet."

"I see. Well, not really my problem, I suppose." They went over to their desk and started pulling papers out of the briefcase.

"What happens if your lawyer doesn't show up?" Lysanias asked.

"I have no idea," Susan answered. "Who are all these people, using the word people loosely?"

"Obviously the throne is acting as a judge," Fawkes told them. "The dominion over there is probably the court stenographer. Those spheres of light are called virtues, I have no idea what they're doing here. They're celestial repositories of magic, so maybe to shut you down?"

"Ha!"

"Then we have the sphinx, I suppose they're acting as guards. The Ophan is of course making the portal so the rest can get here, and stayed probably to take them back."

"Quite an assortment," Luna observed.

And quite a bit of power. Most of these beings are off the charts, energy wise. What exactly are their abilities? With the energy I'm feeling from them, even trying to fight them one on one would be almost impossible. Unless they have no powers, which I doubt, and would just attack with their various weapons.

"Every sort of heavenly being has a task, angels aren't typically 'general purpose' like humans are."

"And this trial will be fair?" Albus asked. The angels' heads all snapped over to look at him. "I guess that was a stupid question. What I mean is, will it be recognizable to us on Earth as a trial?"

"We have modeled this after your own justice system," the throne said down to him.

"Wait, the magical one where they don't gather evidence and just lock people up, or the non-magical one where they have to prove people are guilty?" Susan asked.

"Whichever one will bring the greater justice."

Er, is that an answer?

A few moments later the throne looked over to the spheres of light. "The jury will have to be briefed, please bring them here."

"Of course," the two virtues answered, and magic started building up around them. There was a flash, and suddenly twelve people were sitting there. Naturally this freaked them out more than a little. Some were obviously in the middle of something, as they had their hands up and were doing something as they now sat there.

"Quiet!" the throne roared. Everyone looked up at it, as it had stood up slightly and it was really, really long. So at its full height it would be eight meters tall. "You have all been brought here to serve as jury in a very special trial. You will be returned to the time and place you were taken from, unharmed. The trial will begin shortly, stay quiet until then."

Susan looked the terrified people over, and they were from what she could see, a standard jury. If a jury could be selected from anywhere on the planet at once. A mix of clothing, skin types, and ages were represented, and they all started babbling at one another. Naturally, they couldn't understand each other, a fact that wasn't lost on Susan.

"How are they going to deliberate if they don't speak the same language?" she asked.

"That will be compensated for, when the time comes. For now they don't need to talk to each other."

"Fine, but there's something else. I thought I was supposed to get a jury of my *peers*. My peers are other wanderers, not these regular people. They have no idea what goes on in the magical world, much less my own personal version of reality."

"That too will be compensated for, so don't push it. This is the best we can do."

"So you admit your best isn't good enough? Interesting."

The angel stared at her, but with that masklike face it was impossible to tell what they were thinking. Lysanias felt they were annoyed though.

"Perhaps not antagonizing the judge would be best?" Albus suggested.

"If this trial really is fair it wouldn't matter," she replied matter of factly. "It's the jury that's going to determine my innocence anyway."

"Or guilt," the throne reminded her.

"But probably innocence."

She turned away.

Laying it on a bit thick, aren't we?

Another spell was cast and everyone calmed down suddenly, the two spheres of light hovering nearby. The jury sat there, apparently now satisfied they were where they were supposed to be.

Or magically drugged. I couldn't exactly tell what sort of spell they used. But I still feel a new magic in the area, so they must be maintaining something. But it seemed to deal more with knowledge than emotion. Strange. But then, I'm not very good at sensing out magic, I've not had that much occasion to practice it.

Several other people trickled in, Garrett, for one. Rose also came in, apparently to show her support to Lysanias, who she waved to when she sat down. He waved back.

Finally it was 9:00 and one of the sphinx called "All rise!"

But wait, what about Susan's lawyer? But he felt something coming towards the courtroom, having presumably teleported into the hall. Someone very powerful, if the energy he was feeling was any indication.

"The honorable judge Shoftiel presiding. The matter is Susan vs. the Heavens. Representing Heaven, Zadkiel, patron of justice. Council for the defense?" He looked over to Susan.

"Uh..."

"Lord of the morning," shouted a voice at the back of the courtroom while the doors burst open. "The Morning Star, Right Hand of God, the Flame of Heaven, the Light Bringer, Lucifer." In strode a man in a dark business suit, red tie, and also holding a case. His black hair was slicked back, and he was of indeterminate age. However, his form was perfection itself, and even Lysanias wondered what that no doubt magnificent body might look like under that suit.

"You!" spat the throne. "I should have known."

Lysanias looked to the jury, who was still just sitting there as though Lucifer himself hadn't just come into the room. *Drugged?*

"Me," Lucifer agreed. "Do you not believe I'm qualified to act as a lawyer?"

"That is not the point!"

"Then I don't see the problem."

"You're 'L'?" Susan asked.

"Indeed. Were you expecting someone else? I think this could be quite fun, don't you?"

"I get Lucifer as my lawyer?"

"You're right to be awed, of course. Say, nice eyes." He looked over at Lysanias, who noticed his eyes were red too. "Can we get on with this? I don't want to keep my client waiting."

"Are you okay with this?" the throne asked Susan.

"What happens if I say no?"

"You would have to find another lawyer, or represent yourself."

"Then I'm fine with it."

"Splendid!" Lucifer told her. "I believe you're up, Zadkiel."

"Don't you say my name, traitor!"

He set his case down and opened it. "So I have your permission to call you Buttface?"

"No you do... Wait, what did you call me?"

"Can we get started here?" the throne asked, sinking down again.

"Of, of course." Zadkiel took a moment to compose himself. "Members of the jury, this case has been called to prove, beyond doubt, that Susan Felton, the girl over there

pretending to be an angel, has broken the natural law of the universe. That of restoring the dead to life. This event occurred yesterday, in the classroom of one Luna Lovegood, who you see seated right there. I will be calling upon several witnesses to provide evidence.” He sat down.

The judge nodded to Lucifer.

“Hi everyone, glad to see you all here. Sorry to call you away from your lives, but you know how it goes. How’s your wife doing, she okay?” he asked one man.

“Uh, she’s fine?” he answered.

“Super, super. Didn’t have anything to do with her recovery. Or did I? Who knows!? Now, for my part I’m going to be showing that Susan here is not only innocent, she’s double innocent. Is that a thing? It is now, I made it up. I get to do that, you know? I’ll be totally knocking down all the witnesses he calls, and providing my own. St. Peter will be one of them, just FYI. Hopefully he can take a break for a few minutes later. Do your stuff, Buttface!” He sat down, and Susan sat next to him.

“My name-” the angel started to say, but then realized he himself had told Lucifer not to call him it. “I will call Lysanias to the stand. Please step into the box.”

Lysanias took a deep breath and walked forward into the witness box, here he sat down.

“Before we begin, do I need to fetch a bible?” Zadkiel asked.

“We could get you a picture book one, that has pages you can color yourself!” Lucifer shouted over to him. The jury chuckled.

“It wouldn’t really mean anything either way,” Lysanias told him.

“No, I don’t suppose it would,” Zadkiel agreed. “You lost your faith some time ago, didn’t you?”

When the Allfather tried to kill all of us? Did kill most of us, and left me and the rest of my people scattered? Uh, yeah, plus I’ve met beings “above” them one of which I’ve sworn to kick off as many realities as possible. But no, go on about how great and trustworthy your version of the Allfather is. Wisely, he said none of this. He wasn’t Susan, after all.

“But no matter. Know that you are in the presence of various types of angels, which all have methods of determining if you are being truthful.”

“I figured that.”

“Very well. Now, in your own words, can you describe what happened?”

“Sure. Professor Lovegood explained what the class was going to cover for the year, and we moved to another room which had space to call out her wand’s power. It takes the form of a huge bird with the head of a dog, so we couldn’t call it out in the classroom the ceiling was too low.”

“That isn’t relevant to the case, but go on.”

“Once there she did call it out, and it appeared. Naturally everyone was shocked at the sudden appearance of this large creature, except for one boy.”

“Can you point that person out? Are they in this courtroom?”

“It’s Garrett, he’s sitting right over there.”

“Please show for the record that Lysanias pointed to Garrett Tanpoline. Go on.”

“He seemed almost angry, not surprised like the others. He raised his wand and said something odd, ‘the sons of fey send their regards.’ At that point he cast a death spell of some kind...” He glanced over to the jury. “Er, these are non-magical people, aren’t they?” *The way they’re dressed seems to indicate that.*

“Please confine your remarks to the questions you have been asked,” the judge told him.

“Actually, that’s a good point,” Lucifer remarked. “They’re not going to know a lot of the context for this stuff. Or did you do *that*?”

"They have been told what they need to know. Please continue with the explanation."

When?

He looked over and Lucifer made a spinning motion with one hand. "They must have, it's fine," he said.

I guess that means go ahead.

"Er..."

"A death spell of some kind," said the angel taking notes.

"Ah yes, thank you. A death spell of some kind. Having moved into position between Professor Lovegood and Garrett before he could speak the complete spell it bounced off my wall ring and stuck him instead."

"And the effect of the spell doesn't change?"

"The spell effect is the same before and after being reflected, yes."

"And so the boy died?"

"Objection, that's leading the witness!" Lucifer called.

"Sustained. You don't have to answer that."

"What did you observe after that?"

"He fell over. Professor Lovegood believed he was dead, and the headmaster for the school arrived. Susan was contacted, and she appeared a moment later. She then did something and he was fine."

"You are able to feel life energy, are you not?"

"Objection! Please be more specific in your questioning," Lucifer called.

"I don't understand, what's the problem?" the judge asked.

"Your honor, I will be making a distinction between life energy and *spiritual* energy as part of my case. I want the jury to realize the difference."

"Sustained, the question pertains to spiritual energy only, in that case."

"Very well, I didn't know there was a difference," the angel admitted. "Please answer."

"I can feel the presence of spiritual energy, yes."

I didn't know there was a difference either, so don't feel too bad. How did Lucifer?

"And did you?"

"It was fading, yes."

"And what does that indicate?"

"That he was dead, or dying."

"And now he isn't?"

"As far as I know, he is not an undead creature."

"How would you tell?"

"Uh, I could put a healing ward on him? If it works the same way I've heard about back home from my friends, that should damage instead of heal."

"Can you do so now?"

"If the court requires it." He looked up at the judge.

"Please do so. Garrett, please approach the bench."

Garrett got up and so did Lysanias. "Can I borrow one of your daggers?" he asked Susan. "I don't think my sword is really appropriate for just scratching him."

"You have to cut me?" Garrett asked.

"If the ward doesn't have anything to heal, it won't activate," he explained.

"Fine."

He walked over to Susan, who pulled her knife out. There was a collective gasp by the angels.

"That's an angel slaying knife!" the angel recording notes gasped.

Chapter 8
Trial: Part 2
When: A moment later
Where: Courtroom

“This old thing?” Susan asked sweetly, holding it up so that every eye in the place was on it. “Why, I had plum forgotten that property of this knife.”

“What? What is it?” Lysanias asked, looking the blade over after glancing at the angels. The level of fear in the room had increased significantly since it had come out, so they knew something about it he didn’t. It was all one piece, solid metal, and rather a dull looking metal at that. He wasn’t sure if he felt anything from it, given the magic and spiritual energy in the room. In fact, he was fairly close to Lucifer who wasn’t bothering to rein in his power, so trying to sense anything was like trying to stare at the sun. It wasn’t going to work.

“I got this knife in another reality,” she explained. “It’s basically lethal to any angel I stick with it.”

“Or demon!” Lucifer called. “I want that recorded, that either is susceptible. It isn’t just an angel slaying knife. Get back here and do your job,” he commanded to the angel taking notes. They had scrambled as far away as they could get, into the corner of the room. Reluctantly the angel sat back down and took up their pen again. Lysanias walked over.

“It won’t kill him, will it?”

“Not if he isn’t an angel or demon.”

“I don’t think I am,” Garrett told them, leaning away from it a little.

“I’ll just cut his hand, that should be safe enough, right?”

“Sure,” Susan agreed, handing it over. *No time now, but I should ask to see this again. I’d like to analyze this, see if I can replicate it.*

He went over to Garrett who reluctantly held a hand out, which he grabbed and slashed with the blade. Then he got out a healing ward and stuck it on, making the wound vanish again. The ward burned up when it was done, and his hand was fine.

“He would have been badly burned by that, if he was undead,” Lysanias admitted. “I don’t think there’s any way she could have faked that. Undead is undead, even here.”

“Indeed. You may return to the box. And put that knife away!”

“Of course,” Susan answered sweetly, smiling. “Don’t want to make you nervous.” She accepted the blade and slid it back.

“So Garrett’s energy was fading,” the lawyer asked as he returned to the stand and sat down.

“That’s correct.”

“I would like to submit exhibit A, a copy from the Heavenly Ledger, that records the times that souls enter Heaven. Can you take a look?” He walked over to his briefcase, pulled out a luminous page, and handed it over to Lysanias.

“I do see Garrett’s name on this list,” he admitted. *Odd though, the writing for his name seems fainter than the others. Does that mean anything?*

“And the time is correct?”

“It does show a time several minutes after Professor Lovegood’s class started.”

“Thank you.” Taking it back he passed it around the jury box, and they looked it over.

“So the boy was dead. Now he is not. I believe the conclusion is clear. Your witness.”

"Thank you, Buttface. Now, Lysanias, at the time of the occurrence there were several people in the room. Yourself, Susan, Albus Dumbledore, the other students. Luna herself. Do you know if any of them have a medical background?"

"I don't know that."

"Do you?"

"I do not."

"Then no one checked for a pulse, or began recovery efforts such as chest compression?"

Chest what? "No."

"I see. So while he may have looked dead, he could have just been sleeping."

"I suppose the two states would look similar."

"So you have no evidence Garrett was actually dead?"

"Apart from the ledger page, no. At the time we really had no evidence apart from him falling over."

"We'll get to the ledger page. I'd like to talk about that ring of yours. You left off a detail earlier I want clarified."

"I did?"

"You did. What specifically happens to protect you from magic?"

"The spell is reflected back at the caster."

"At full strength?"

"Oh, I see what you mean. No, only at half strength."

Wait, how does he know about that?

"I see. So if I cast a fireball spell and it was going to do, say, thirty damage to you, it would do fifteen damage to me, instead."

"That's right."

"So what about in the case of a 'death' spell as you put it? What happens then, in other words what is half a death curse?"

"I have no idea. I've not really tested it against all types of spells."

"Fair enough. But isn't it logical that it would work similarly? That the spell would only be half as effective?"

Isn't this leading the witness? But the other angel is keeping quiet. What gives?

"That does follow, yes."

"I submit that only half the soul of Garrett was forced out of his body by the spell, and that the shock of this rendered him unconscious. No one in the room thought to check for signs of life, they all just assumed he was dead and left it at that. Susan's technique pulled the part of his soul that left back from Heaven, yes, but who can say if Garrett had been taken to a healer he wouldn't have recovered fully? Let's return to the ledger page, shall we?" He collected it from the other lawyer. "Notice anything strange about this page?" he asked, handing it back.

"Yes, the writing is fainter for Garrett's name."

"Now what could that mean, I wonder?"

"I could only speculate."

"I submit that his soul wasn't yet completely in Heaven. To that end I would like to call an expert witness to the stand, Albus Dumbledore. Lysanias, well done, you may step down."

"Thank you."

Albus took the stand, and again was reminded he was in a heavenly court. Lucifer stepped up. "I would like to ask you about a boy you knew named Tom Riddle."

"I am familiar with the name."

"Is it true that the man Tom Riddle, in an attempt to become immortal, split his soul into several pieces and secreted them in various objects? Objects that were later destroyed by Susan and her friends?"

"That's correct."

"So the body can live on with only a partial soul?"

"That is correct."

"You are also familiar with the spell that was cast? The Avada spell?"

"I am."

"Does it function as I've described, simply tearing the soul from the body?"

"The only time the spell has ever left a mark on a person was Harry Potter's scar. Otherwise it always kills instantly and cleanly."

"And while Tom Riddle was making these soul containers, did any angel descend and smite *him* for breaking natural law? Put *him* on trial?"

"Not that I knew of. Susan had to destroy him, no angels or demons were involved."

But I have to wonder where that magic came from originally. Demons, perhaps?

"I submit that is because the Heavens simply have it out for Susan, who often times runs around as she is now, dressed in white and 'pretending' to be an angel. To say nothing of that knife that makes them very nervous, as you saw. This latest act simply being an excuse to put her on trial and punish her for something far less evil than has gone on in this world before! They don't like the fact she can actually help people, making them look bad for sitting around Heaven doing *nothing*."

"Objection, that's not a question."

"You're right, of course. But this is; the process of splitting the soul, why doesn't everybody do it? I mean, do it once and live forever, right?"

"It's considered the darkest art possible as it requires the death of another. If I could magically wipe every reference to it from every book on Earth in an instant I would do it. And I believe the loss of knowledge to be the greatest tragedy there is. But in this case it would be justified."

"Ah, I see. So not only did Tom seek to become immortal, breaking Father's laws, he murdered again and again to do it."

"Yes."

"No further questions."

The other lawyer stepped up. "Now Lucy says Tom was trying to make himself immortal, correct?"

"I think he means me," Lucifer whispered to Susan. "But I'm not a girl. Well, I could be if I wanted to be." He winked.

Is he coming on to her?

"That would be the only goal I can think of, for causing Tom to do what he did."

"But it didn't work, did it? In the end, all his soul shards were freed and moved on. For all his preparations, the man is dead."

"The container were destroyed, I have no knowledge of what happened to the soul contained within."

"Fair enough. The point is he did not succeed. As far as murdering those people, that happens all the time, doesn't it?"

"It does."

"And no angel descends to punish those that do so, correct?"

"Correct, as far as I know."

"Can you say why that is?"

"I suppose because we were given free will, and the opportunity to atone for our mistakes. We're not judged until the very end."

"I see. But you agree that death should be absolute. If we had people dying and coming back to life all the time there would be chaos!"

"I admit there could be some challenges in that case. I haven't really thought about the implications of such things. I'm not a philosopher, I just run a school."

"I take that into consideration. But yes or no, bringing the dead back to life is probably a bad idea on the whole."

"Yes, it's probably a bad idea."

"Thank you, you may step down." He did, returning to the spectator area.

"I now call to the stand the psychopomp Meltarth. Meltarth, are you here?"

An angel suddenly appeared in the box without a sound. Lysanias looked the creature over. It was death, basically, dressed in white but looking like a human skeleton and carrying a scythe. But it did have wings, and silently looked the proceedings over.

"Oh no!" Lucifer groaned.

"What? Is this bad for us?" Susan asked.

"Bad? No, but trying to get answers out of one of those guys is like trying to get a tooth out of a jellyfish. We'll be here all week!"

"Now, Meltarth, can you describe what happened on the day in question?"

The figure pulled out a book and pointed to it.

"Ah, I will interpret."

"Objection!" called Lucifer. "We all know you can talk, psychopomp. Loosen up those jaws and get 'em wagging. Either that or get out of the stand."

The angel passively glared at Lucifer.

"Oh, you want to go? You want to find out how Lucifer can make your every day a new and frustrating experience? Or do you think you can take me?"

"I will speak," said the creature softly.

"So get on with it!"

"Within my book are the dates and names of all those I will collect each day. Two days ago the boy's name was not in the book. Yesterday it was. I rushed to the scene, it was as that man described it." He pointed a bony finger at Lysanias. "I saw the boy Garrett die, and collected his soul as is my duty. I took it to Heaven, where I left it."

"And here he is alive again. Is that right?"

"It is right the boy lives. It is not right that the boy lives."

"Objection, we don't want riddles, little death, we want straight answers."

"Sustained. Please rephrase the question."

"Is it correct that the boy is alive and in this courtroom?"

"Yes."

"And that isn't right?"

"Yes."

"Thank you."

"Can you describe the soul that you collected?"

"It was as all souls."

"Did it feel lighter than it should have? Less bright, perhaps?"

"I suppose it was. I didn't think anything of it, something may have happened to it in the past to diminish it. Perhaps a deal with a demon."

"And what about now? Is it the full weight and brightness?"

"I would have to remove it to answer that question."

"With your permission, Garrett, please do so. Don't worry, he'll put it back."

"Uh... Okay?"

Man, cutting him, now pulling out his soul. Garrett is having a tough day. All for being brought back to life after doing something he doesn't remember even doing!

The figure went over and touched him, extracting a swirling energy from Garrett's body, which looked down upon his very soul. "It is whole."

Crap, really should have paid more attention to that. But I don't want to be blind for the rest of this trial, right?

"Thank you."

The angel released the soul, which was sucked back into his body.

"No further questions."

It vanished.

"Are you okay?" Lysanias asked him.

"I think so. That was my soul?"

"Apparently." And apparently they can be safely removed from the body. Wonder if I could find someone else to show me that little trick?

"I will now call Saint Peter to the stand. Please get him here."

The ophan started spinning faster, and moved to the ground where it became a portal that Heaven shined out of again.

"Ah, you're ready for me?" asked a man in a white robe, sticking his head through.

"We are, please take the stand," said the judge.

"Very well." He stepped through and looked around. "Wow, haven't been away from my duties in forever. Where do you want me?"

"Right here." The portal vanished and the angel returned, floating back up to be out of the way.

"Fine." He went over. "What can I do for you?"

"You recognize this boy?" Lucifer pointed to Garrett.

"Nope."

"You've never seen his soul?"

"Don't think so."

"I see. Tell me, what's the current backlog of souls?"

"Coming into Heaven? I would say five days, all told."

"Nearly a week, you need to get some help there, Peter."

"I've kept asking for some but I never get any."

"Well, with how you must have annoyed Father it's no wonder."

"Annoyed? How?"

"I don't know. But anyone that is tasked with standing outside heaven for all eternity, never able to enter, must have done something, right?"

"Er..."

"Objection, this line of questioning has nothing to do with the case!"

"Sustained."

"Apologies, your honor, I was just curious. You were saying five days."

"That's right."

"So in the five minutes or so after the partial soul was delivered there was no way for Garrett to have entered heaven?"

"In five minutes? No chance."

"And if a person is not in heaven, can they really be considered dead? As precedent I call your attention to exhibit B, an article about a boy who was underwater for over forty minutes." He pulled a newspaper article out of his case and passed it to the jury. He also passed one to Lysanias and the others.

Apparently a boy named Michael in Italy spent forty two minutes underwater before being rescued. He was hooked up to several machines for a month and woke up

suddenly. He was able to speak and recognized his parents. Extraordinary. This doesn't say how he was another month later though...

"Where is his trial for the doctors that allowed him to cheat death? Was this boy pulled out of Heaven or did he never make it? Do you know?"

"Without a last name and more explicit time of death- oh, of the event, I can't be sure," Saint Peter told them.

"But this is the first trial you've heard of dealing with the subject."

"Yes."

"And as the gatekeeper of Heaven, you probably would have?"

"I should hope so."

"No further questions."

"I don't have any for him," said the other lawyer.

"You may return to your duties, gatekeeper," said the judge. The portal of fire once again opened, and he was gone.

"I may have more witnesses to call," said Zadkiel. "One moment your honor." He went over to Garrett. "Garrett, do you remember being in Heaven at all?"

"No. Just seeing the thing Professor Lovegood did with her wand, and then I was on the floor with Susan looking down at me."

"Very well, thank you." He turned back to the judge. "I have no more witnesses to call."

Ah, his not remembering doesn't strengthen his case, so obviously he doesn't want the jury to hear that.

"Very well. Lucifer?"

"I have one more. I will seek to show that there is actually precedent for people returning to life, and that there is another person, in this very courtroom, which could have performed the deed. Sparkle Felton, please step forward."

"Huh?" Susan looked down at her cat, who had her eyes closed.

"Really?" she asked.

"You have been called."

She sighed. "Fine. Let's get this over with." She padded up to the witness area and jumped up to the ledge. "What do you want to know?"

"First of all, you can sense life energy as well as spiritual energy, can you not?"

"I can."

"So they are different?"

"Very different. A rock has neither. A person can have life energy but be exhausted, so they don't have spiritual energy. An undead creature can have spiritual energy but no life energy."

"And did the boy, at the time of his apparent death, have life energy?"

"Yes."

"Enough that you could have reconnected his soul and revived him, without having to resort to super power techniques like Susan must?"

"Yes."

"What?" Susan cried. "I didn't know you could do that!"

"Quiet!" the judge told her.

"No, no, let her speak," Lucifer allowed. "It is, after all, a rather shocking revelation. And it will save me some questions if she does it. I'm sure she'll ask the some ones I would."

"Irregular, but as long as you don't say anything..."

"When did you know?" she asked.

"Back when Harper and I were experimenting with what he could do. During the station evacuation on that planet the meteor hit we came across a dead man in a

hospital room. He insisted we try bringing him back to life. I'm sorry to say we succeeded."

Sorry? To have brought a man back to life?

She snapped her fingers. "I saw that guy! He was running around naked and screaming he had come back... to... life. Huh. And you never told me, why?"

"That I had the power of life and death? Susan, you know who you are. You're reckless, even at the best of times. If you thought I could just bring people back how would you be?"

"I like to think I've gotten better over the years."

"Yes, and you have. But then it was awkward, how do you even bring that up? Besides, it worked there but I had no idea if it would work elsewhere. And I wasn't going to round up dead bodies to try and experiment on them. So it just didn't matter if I could do it or not, I didn't have any opportunity to."

"That was probably wise."

"So yes, lifestreaming can bring back the dead. I've done it before. Once before, with another lifestreamer there to help me."

"And you were not put on trial in that realty for doing so?"

"I was not. Perhaps they knew I was leaving soon anyway?"

"Oh no, I don't think any angel would think like that. Breaking the law must be punished."

"You would know better than me."

"Indeed I would," he replied sourly. "No more questions."

"This lifestreaming as you call it," asked Zadkiel, "what is it, exactly?"

"The manipulation of life energy to do various things. I can create barriers, energy blasts, manipulate my own physiology. I'm not even sure I know the full scope, I've not really had a teacher for it."

Here, kitty kitty kitty!

"Can you demonstrate?"

Humm... be blind for an hour or not? Would she teach me otherwise if I asked? I already missed my opportunity to figure out to pull the soul out of someone. Ah well.

"I don't see why not." Sparkle concentrated and a small green barrier appeared around her.

"The color..."

"Yes, the irony is not lost on me, the color of this life energy and the color of the death curse. Total coincidence, I assure you." It winked out.

"And you sacrifice your very life to do that? Why bother?"

"Not exactly. I suppose if I was drained of energy I could still manage techniques by burning my life away. But normally my body converts spiritual energy into life energy and I project that. It's not as bad as it sounds."

"Are you going somewhere with this?" the judge asked.

"I'm trying to see if there are any relevant questions I can ask, your honor. I wasn't expecting a cat to be called to the stand, much less one that could bring the dead back. I need a moment."

"Very well."

The lawyer paced a bit. "Did the reality you used this technique in have angels?"

"Ah. Well, as far as we could tell the angels were the bad guys?"

"What? Preposterous!"

"But true. They wanted everything to crunch down to the way it was before the big bang so everything could be together again. Lucifers, or the avatars of stars, their version of demons, wanted to keep the universe expanding because it was more fun to have planets and people and trees, and things to do."

Zadkiel looked to Lucifer.

"No relation."

"I have no further questions."

"Very well. Closing statements?"

Lucifer got up. "Members of the jury, allow me to summarize what you've heard here. A boy may or may not have died, no one in the room could tell. He was hit by half a death curse, something that has never happened in history before. A faded signature on a document and an angel of death point to *part* of a soul being delivered to Heaven's "waiting area," but not Heaven itself. Was the boy dead? Could a modern doctor have brought him back? Could Sparkle? Probably, but we'll never know. Susan rushed into things, as she does, and snapped her fingers to solve the problem. Might he have recovered on his own and just had half a soul? Possible. Susan tends to confound the best of us, as I'm sure Albus could attest to. And this time there was more other-worldly interference in the form of the wall ring. It's not something that's going to happen every day, and Susan acted with the best of intentions. She's not raising undead armies, though she could, she wanted to save the life of one young boy. I leave you with this thought- if our Father, the creator of this universe (so he says but now I'm starting to have my doubts) really wanted death to be a one way street, would there be anything Susan, no matter how powerful she currently is, could do about it? I don't think so."

Now Zadkiel got up again. "I believe the evidence is clear. The angel of death delivered a soul to heaven. That delivery was documented, and then the soul was pulled back because of what Susan did. His spiritual energy was fading. He was dead. Motive doesn't matter here. The law of the universe says death is absolute. We can't just have people crossing back and forth, otherwise we would open portals to Heaven ourselves and just let souls and mortal beings mingle as they please. It's a one way street, and I thank you for helping keep it that way."

Er, isn't that the wrong approach? If I was on that jury I would be thinking of my own mortality, and maybe the rules needing to be bent for me at some time in the future. I say she's guilty now and that closes it off for me, too.

"The jury will now deliberate," the judge announced, and the two spheres of light went into action. One swung above the jury and the other went in front of them. More magic was done, and a wall sprang up between them and the others.

"Now we wait," said Lucifer.

"Hey, how did those people not freak out about magic and powers and lifestreaming and everything?" Susan asked.

"Magic," he answered. "There was a sort of low level telepathic field in the courtroom. Anything they didn't know was filled in from the background knowledge you all possessed. The one in the box will be maintaining a spell to let them talk to each other. Quite handy, really."

"I guess so. I'll have to research something like that."

The barrier wasn't up long, and the judge against turned to the jury. "You've reached a verdict?"

"We have. We find Susan Felton..."

Chapter 9
Suspicion of a Friend
When: A few moments later
Where: Courtroom

“Of course, it didn’t matter what the jury decided,” Lucifer told them as the angels filed out. “They had no way to punish you over this.”

“Angelic law is clear,” agreed Fawkes. “A person can only be judged at the end of their days.”

“Then why go through all the trouble?” Susan asked. “What was the point?”

“It’s basically an ‘error’ so to speak in their programming,” Lucifer explained. “A person from outside the reality wasn’t foreseen by our Father. Natural law should be complete and isolated. Death is a one way street, or only circumvented through the most dark of magics, staining your soul anyway. Indications are *you’ll* never die, and thus never be judged. Or at least, not around here. You might die on one of your little excursions to others realities.”

“I suppose.”

“With that they got stuck in a loop. They couldn’t judge you now, but you seemed to break a law that couldn’t be broken. If they judged you they couldn’t punish you, Hell is the punishment and it’s for souls, not alive people. And they couldn’t kill you because Father commanded an angel never kill a human.”

“I could have escaped from there easily anyway.”

“Exactly. So this was more about sending a message. That they’re watching you, and they will act if you push them too far. Reminding you there are greater powers in the world than you.”

“Like yourself?”

“Aw, senpai noticed me?” He put both hands to his face and cutely looked away.

“Hard to notice anything else. Don’t they teach you to rein in your spiritual power up in Heaven?”

“What do you mean? I am reining it in.” He said this with complete seriousness, looking quite puzzled that they would even question it. Susan and Lysanias’ blood chilled at that thought. “Anyway, must dash. I’ll let you know if I ever need a favor from you.”

“What could I possibly offer you?”

“Oh, you never know, I like to have a variety of people owe me little favors. Just in case. You might be called upon to help a follower of mine, or simply serve my interests here on Earth where I’m not allowed to. I am still an angel, you know, so even I have limits on what I can do to people.”

So what he’s saying is, he might want her to kill somebody for him.

“I suppose I do owe you.”

“Don’t suppose I could get that in writing?” He gestured and an inkwell, paper, and quill appeared out of thin air.

Susan shook her head. “No chance.”

“Very well. I know you have a strong sense of honor, so it’s fine.” It vanished again. “Keep shaking things up, Susan. Bye.” And he was gone.

The jury and the angels, having been whisked away or traveling back through the portal of fire, left the courtroom empty apart from the few that had been there at the start. They now had to clean the place up again.

“So that happened,” Garrett stated matter of factly. “Angels are real. Who knew!”

“Best to keep that to ourselves though,” Albus cautioned.

"Been having to keep a lot of things to myself," he muttered. "And it's only the second day of school."

You don't know the half of it.

"I must prepare for today's class," Luna told them. "I'll see you there, Lysanias. Garrett?"

"Oh! Are you sure?"

"What do you mean?"

"I didn't think you would want me back. I mean what if I go berserk again?"

"That's a good point," Susan agreed. "I'm not sure I'm comfortable having the two of you together."

"Nonsense. He only reacted when I showed Belahime's true form. I'll just *not do that*. Problem solved. At least until we know what set him off in the first place."

"I will be very cross if you get yourself hurt or killed you know. And the angels will be much more cross after I bring you back."

"I'm sure it will be fine. I've had enough students drop the class, I don't want to lose Garrett too if he's still willing to learn."

"I'm staying in the class!" Rose told them, hand in the air. "Count me in!" She looked proudly at Lysanias as she said this.

"Well said," Albus beamed at her.

"Thank you, headmaster."

"Thank you," Luna said genuinely. "After what happened, I'm lucky to have a job at all."

"At least it wasn't giant spiders this time, or that stupid snake that killed poor Myrtle. I didn't have to expel anyone, and in the end no one died. Come, back to class now!"

"I should go see Myrtle, see how she's doing. Another thing to put on the calendar, visit my ghost friend regularly. She can't exactly come see me. Anyway, come by tonight and I'll show you how to get your book into the padform."

"Right," Lysanias told her, finding himself dragged to the side.

"Keep on eye on them both," she cautioned. "I still owe you big time for saving her life. Saving it twice? This world is not enough." She looked to the side. "Yes, I know it's Bond, James Bond, and don't say... you said it. I hate you."

"Er..."

"Oh, sorry, never mind." She turned her attention back to Lysanias. "Just watch them, okay?"

"I will."

"Thanks. I know you well. See you later."

Having missed most of potion class he considered, then went down there anyway, figuring he could take a spot at the back and get it done during the next period. He didn't have class until later, and he hated to just sit around.

Though researching the sons of fey wouldn't hurt, if there was anything to find.

Still, he didn't want to be seen as falling behind, even with his slight edge having done similar things with alchemy before. Coming into class everyone turned briefly to see him enter, and Jake gave a wave and shot him a confused look. Severus glided over to him.

"How went the trial?" he asked.

"As no one could prove Garrett completely died, being hit with only half a death curse, the jury sided with Lucifer in believing Susan innocent."

"Unbelievable," he intoned, looking up at the ceiling like "oh really?" "She slithers away again. You would do well to stay away from that girl now that your part in her

shenanigans is over. Class is almost over, you will not complete the potion but you will not be marked off for it. The headmaster has made this clear.”

“Oh, I’ll stay through the next period if you can find me a quiet spot,” he insisted. “I wouldn’t want to fall behind.”

“What about your next class?”

“My next class is charms, I should have time.”

“Is it? How strange. Very well, you may have the table in the back, I will bring you the ingredients.”

“Thank you, sir.”

He didn’t reply so Lysanias put himself in the back and opened his book, looking over what they were preparing. Everyone had gone back to work by this point so he gave a small grin, snapped his fingers to start the burner going, and set the cauldron down on the fire after filling it up from the sink to his right. *Yes, going to be just fine from here. Susan will find out why someone tried to kill her girlfriend and I can focus on training. Not my job or responsibility.*

He botched his potion nearly at once, as if the universe was punishing him for such bold thoughts, but was able to recover nicely before the next period was over with the rest of the ingredients.

My completely random nature strikes again. At least he left me with whatever was left over, so I can try this again. It’s just following directions, it’s not that hard!

Severus seemed as pleased as it was capable for him to be, and he went to charms class to practice his “swish and flick” with everyone else.

He was now sitting in Luna’s class beside Garrett and Rose, apart from everyone else in the class. They were on soft mats, and the light was dim, but Luna could be clearly seen at the front.

“Now then, everyone get out your wands and your focus, and we’ll begin our first meditation exercise. Hold the focus and your wand comfortably in both hands. What I first want you to do is breathe nice and slow, focusing your thoughts on the wand before you. The wand wants you to know its name. It wants to get to know you. If your thoughts wander, simply return them to the focus and breathe slowly. Now I don’t expect anyone to achieve this today, but if you find yourself in a sort of dream, don’t try to wake up. This is expected. Your wand is reaching a hand out to you, so look around for it. It could take any form, but it should be something that would define you, so it won’t be hard to spot. Hear what your wand has to say. Is everyone ready? Then let’s begin.” She set soft music playing through the classroom and Lysanias put his hand on his sword, still hidden behind an ‘ignore me’ ward.

The trouble is going to be talking to the sword and not going into my soulscape where I can talk to the mountain spirit. Separating them, perhaps. I suppose once I wake it up I’ll be able to just go into my soulscape and talk to either, but for now, I have to direct my mental energies towards the sword or-

“Let anything that can be measured be measured! Awaken, Tomario.”

Lysanias, and the rest of the class, were knocked out of their nascent meditation by Garrett, standing with his focus forgotten by his side. His wand was up, pointed towards the sky and in a burst of magic it transformed in his hand to be what can only be described as a wooden yardstick. He lowered it in shock, looking around the room. “Er, like that, professor?” he asked nervously.

“Ten points to Gryffindor,” Luna managed. “Perhaps you would like to share with the class how you managed to do that so quickly?”

Yes, I have no idea if Luna is a good teacher or not, but that seems rather quick for someone who just started out. Or is calling out a wand spirit easier than an animal spirit?

"I'm not sure professor," he told her, looking the yardstick in his hand over. "The name and the words just sort of came to me." It was a mostly unadorned, thin strip of wood, but Lysanias could see it had numbers and lines on it, like every other yardstick in existence.

"Came to you? You didn't have to go on a quest inside your own soul to give the spirit the energy it needed to manifest itself?"

"Do what now?"

"I see. Well, I guess you're just a natural talent." She got her wand out and brought the lights in the class back up, making everyone wince until they adjusted. "Let's have a look!"

He held it up, and Luna looked it over. "The shape and the words seem to suggest the special ability it will grant you. Why not try measuring something?"

"Wait, what? You get that huge bird dog creature thing and I get a ruler? That doesn't seem fair."

"Oh, goodness me, this is only the first stage of your wand's release. The first stage of mine looks like a magnifying glass. Through it I can tell the truth of something, such as any weaknesses in the construction. Your ultimate release will come later."

Several of the boys in the class snickered.

"Yes, yes, ha ha, very amusing," Luna told them. "That's what she said, and all that. I was going to explain all of this once I felt the class was a little more advanced. You didn't need to know it yet, and could focus on just learning the name of your wand. But you managed it anyway, so well done. Now, go ahead, measure something."

"I still say this is pretty lame," Garrett grumbled, looking around the room. As the desks had been removed he went over to the chalkboard and slapped the thin edge of the yardstick onto it. "Okay the chalkboard is one hundred twenty inches in length and forty eight inches high. In metric that would be 3.048 meters long and 1.2191 meters high. One hundred seventy pounds, or 77.1107029 kilograms. It has been written on six thousand, four hundred and seventeen times. It's hung here for the last two weeks, having been in storage for forty six years prior to that one thousand thirty two feet or 314.5536 meters away from this spot. The RGB value of the main surface is—"

"Okay!" she pulled the ruler off the board and sort of "woke up" Garrett with a start. "That's about all we needed to know about chalkboards, aren't we glad we asked, class?"

Silence was her only answer.

"Did I just instantly measure everything there was to know about this chalkboard?"

"So it seems. Are you all right?"

"The knowledge just sort of rushed into me. I'm fine." He rotated the yardstick and put it on the floor. "Strange, I suddenly know how high the ceiling is. I know how many square feet the floor is, because my wand is touching it. In fact, now that I think about it you touched this didn't you, professor? I know all your measurements now as well. From how long your hair is to how large your—"

"I certainly don't put any stock in such things," she hastened to assure them. "Every person is just perfect the way they are."

"I was going to say heart is, but okay, strange where your mind went professor."

The class tittered like a bunch of eleven year olds.

"Humm, yes, I believe you. *Well.*" She seemed a bit out of sorts. "I suppose for our superstar here you should try releasing this form and going back to your normal wand. Then see if this was just a fluke or if you can do it again. The rest of you," she got

her wand out and dimmed the lights again, “back to work. You saw it easy it was for Garrett here, I expect all of you to have the names of your wands by the end of class at least!”

Yeah, sure. But this Garrett does need watching, that’s for sure. Nobody but me learns that fast, and only because of my eyes. Right?

Garrett proved he could call out the power of his wand with some regularity, while none of the other people in the class had managed so much as a syllable of their wand’s name. Even Lysanias, who basically knew what he was doing, hadn’t managed to go into the sword’s version of his soulscape. Luna again told them that was perfectly normal, making Lysanias scowl because really, she only had herself and now Garrett to compare to. That really wasn’t a big enough sample size, now was it?

“Well done,” Rose praised him as class let out.

“Yeah, nice job,” Lysanias added, a large enough man (in a child’s body) (who was really still only about 15 in “lived” years) (who had aged thousands of years asleep) to admit when someone did something incredible right next to him.

“Thanks. It was so easy, it was amazing. I can’t believe you two didn’t figure it out.”

Rose sniffed. “I guess this just means you’ll be rubbish at everything else. It stands to reason a person only has one talent, isn’t that right Lysanias?”

“I suppose so. Still, it’s only our second day, I wouldn’t be too hard on yourself.”

“Oh I’m not. Now, what are you two doing after dinner?”

“Homework?” Lysanias offered, having heard that term before. He wasn’t going to turn in hand written essays for example he was here to learn practical magic. So he couldn’t make potions for homework and he had already proven he could cast the one wand spell he knew better than anyone in class so he didn’t have to practice that. His sword he could try talking to before bed. *After all, I know the name of it, the sword smith told me. I doubt it would have a different name than that. But I do have to see Susan and corner that kitty so I can get a lesson in lifestreaming.*

“Yeah, second day of school and we have homework,” Garrett agreed.

“Forget that! How about solving the mystery of Garrett’s attack on professor Luna?”

“What? How are we going to go about doing that?”

“I’m not sure, but I’ve loved mystery stories all my life. Now I get to actually participate in one? Don’t you think that’s exciting?”

Garrett and Lysanias shared a look, neither really feeling it.

“I guess?” Garrett ventured, not wanting to spoil her mood.

“Then it’s settled. We’ll eat and head up to the room it happened in, see if there are any clues or anything.”

“I guess if you want,” Lysanias told her.

“Great, see you in bit!” She turned down another corridor to head to her next class.

“Are we really going to go back there?” Garrett asked him. “I’d rather not relive the experience, not that I can remember doing what you all said I did anyway.”

“Might as well humor her. We all saw what happened, and the room is empty. We’ll poke around a few minutes, she’ll get bored, and that will be that. I’m sure the headmaster or someone went over the room for clues. I mean you did try to kill somebody, they would want to know how. It must be under investigation by real professionals, right?”

“You’re right. Why make her mad at us? I’ll see you later, okay?”

“Right.”

So that night the three went back up to the large classroom and stood looking around.

“Okay, miss detective, what’s next?” Garrett asked her.

“Um, let’s recreate the scene,” she suggested. “I’ll be Luna, you can be yourself, and Lysanias can be himself.”

Hey, I could be him and he could be me, literally. But best if you don’t know that.

“Fine. I was standing here.”

“And I was here.”

“And that means Luna, meaning me, was right here. She was holding her wand like this, and then it vanished when she called out her... Hey, you couldn’t have been that far apart.”

“What?”

“You’re standing too far apart. You blocked the beam with your body and that ring of yours reflected the spell, right?”

“Where did you get that ring, anyway? I’ve never heard of anything that can do that.”

“Susan must have made it,” Rose told him. “Duh, that’s how he knew her. Your parents had it made for you, right? Smart of them, bouncing magic back is almost a super power around here.”

Making a lot of assumptions right now. Thanks for that, didn’t really want to explain, and I’m not going to correct you.

“That’s not the point, he had it then, he has it now. Get closer together, he raised his wand and you were right there between Luna and him.”

Yeah, but I’m a lot faster than I look.

But he did it, and she nodded. “Yes, that’s probably closer. Now, where was I? Right, the dog thing is behind me, and Garrett raised his wand and said...”

“...”

“Said...”

“Oh! Something like, oh you really did it, the sons of fey send their regards. I don’t remember, remember? I just heard about it.”

“Then you, Lysanias got between them, go ahead.”

He did.

“Then you cast the death curse, and it bounced off. Let’s see now.” She looked around the room, squinting into the distance.

“What are you doing?”

“Looking if there was a place someone could have cursed you, of course. Controlled your actions and made you do it.”

“Why me?”

“I don’t know. You think you were cursed beforehand?”

He shook his head. “It was in our letters this year, remember? The doors have a dead magic area created by Susan in front of them. Anyone passing through the doors has any enchantments knocked off them. They can’t be shape shifted or cursed by the time they’ve entered the castle. If I was it would have been after I got in.”

“A teacher, maybe?”

“Why though? I mean everyone knows professor Snape would like to be back teaching defense against the dark arts, but even he’s not making students poison professor Quirrell. Nobody wants Luna’s job, nobody else can do it yet!”

“I suppose you’re right.”

“Now, you said two things. The first, you really did it. What does that mean? Like someone was surprised to see professor Lovegood call out her wand like that. They didn’t believe it, it was a shock. Why else would you say something like that?”

The boys shrugged.

“Then the second part. The sons of fey. What does that even mean? What’s fey?”

“Something about fairies?” Garrett offered.

“You two are obviously useless. Come on, let’s head to the library and look up what fey actually means. That could be the key to this whole thing.”

The two boys trailed after her, hanging back a bit.

“Is she getting bored yet?” Garrett asked.

“Not yet, I think,” he answered. “It hasn’t even been a half hour, let her play detective if she wants.”

“Yeah I guess. Who knows, she may even stumble into something.”

“Wouldn’t that be a hoot!”

“Owl humor? Really? I guess I’ll put up with it, given you stuck by me. I don’t know anyone else whoooo would have done so.”

The two boys laughed, but Lysanias was more interested in why Garrett seemed so eager to have her ‘off the case’ as it were.

Your reactions are going to tell us if we’re getting close to something. I’m really glad Rose is taking the lead on this, she really must love mystery stories. It lets me hang back but still be nearby if you actually find something. Wonder if she’s in Ravenclaw? I’m watching you Garrett, I’m watching you.

Chapter 10
A Matter of Friendship
When: Moments later
Where: Library

“There’s a problem,” Rose announced, standing at the large dictionary on a stand that the library displayed.

“Don’t they define the word?” Garrett asked.

“Just the opposite. This word has been around for some time, so it has lots of spellings and meanings.”

“That figures.”

“Let me grab a pen, so glad wizard shops sell these now.” Rose rummaged in her bag and came up with a pen and some paper. “First we have f-e-y, which can mean fated to die.”

“The sons who are fated to die? That sounds ominous,” Lysanias remarked.

“It gets worse. ‘Appearing to be under a spell, or marked by evil.’”

“Great, you were right!”

“Supernatural, or relating to the world of fairies.”

Is there supernatural power, like me, in this world? Have to ask Susan.

“Being in unnaturally high spirits...”

“I don’t think it’s that one,” Garrett told her.

“Probably not. Or this one, whimsical, strange, or otherworldly.”

So wait, am I fey by that definition?

“Then we have f-a-y, again relating to to fairies, but also meaning pretentious or precious. Could also mean fitted tightly-”

“The sons who are fitted tightly? Uh...”

“Hey, I’m just telling you what this says. It’s also a first name for girls that’s fallen out of favor. Sometimes spelled Faye. So there you have it.” She dramatically closed the book, then reopened it because it looked better sitting on the pedestal that way.

“So what have we learned? Nothing,” Garrett told them. “I hate to say this, but can we do homework now?”

“Mysteries take time to solve, Garrett. If the answer just fell on us it wouldn’t be a mystery. We have to look into things, make deductions, wear a silly hat, smoke a pipe.”

“Smoke a pipe?”

And don’t most of you wear silly hats anyway?

“Okay, maybe not that last one, but you get the idea. Go do homework if you want, I’m going to think about what these names might mean. It’s all we have to go on, and I would think you would want to know why you did what you did!”

“Look, someone or something powerful and stealthy enough made me cast a death curse on someone, nearly got me killed, and then made me forget doing it. You don’t poke a sleeping bear, Rose.”

“You do if it’s on your terms. You have traps and nets and magic ready to catch the bear when it wakes up. Rather than just letting it wake up when you’re not ready. Besides, we have to find the bear to poke it. Right now we can’t even see the path.”

“Exactly, we could be stumbling along and fall in a hole.”

“So we’ll fly out of it, we’re learning how to fly on brooms, aren’t we?”

“I didn’t mean literally!”

Wait, so the stuff about the bear and the path was to be taken literally? “I don’t think this is really getting us anywhere,” Lysanias said to them.

“You stay out of it,” Rose told him. Then she looked over at him. “Say, I didn’t see you at broomstick class today. What gives?”

“Er... I’d rather not talk about it.” *Though in reality if I can learn any skill, and this is a skill, wouldn’t I be able to learn it?*

“What, do you already know how to fly? Did your parents *illegally* get you a broom early? Who are your parents anyway, they must be loaded to have gotten you a Susan artifact.”

“My parents are dead,” he told her honestly.

“Oh my gosh!” Her hands flew over her mouth. “I’m so, so sorry. I didn’t even *consider* that might be the case. You must think I’m so stupid. I... I...” She looked around as if seeking an escape. “I’m sorry.” She ran off, clutching her bag and the notes she had made.

“That was abrupt,” Garrett told him. “Sorry about your parents, were you really young?”

“When I was... born? Yes, I was about nine months old when I was born.”

“What? No, when they, you know...”

“Oh, no, it happened-” *when I was about fifteen, but I’m playing the part of an eleven year old now.* “Not too long ago.”

“Wow. That sucks. Wait, they weren’t killed by dark wizards who then failed to kill you and may one day return to take revenge, right? Leaving you a scar as your only memory of the event?”

“That sounds familiar...”

“It’s what happened to Harry Potter.”

He threw up his hands. “Well, how many times is that going to happen? Seriously!”

He laughed. “Just checking. You never know, history could repeat itself. Who are you staying with? Other relatives I guess?”

“Susan, actually.”

“What, seriously? How did you manage that?”

“I’d rather not talk about it.”

“That’s fine. I probably wouldn’t want to either. That’s how you got the ring, huh? *Do you have enemies that might try to kill you, that’s why you don’t go riding outside on broom-* Right, don’t want to talk about. Well, look, I guess I’ll see you around, okay?”

“Yeah.”

He walked off.

So is that it? Was that how strong our bonds were? Have I not really made friends here? And honestly I shouldn’t. I’ll be moving on when my lessons are done, better we just go our separate ways now than have to explain things later, right? Still, you’re not in the clear yet, Garrett. I’ll keep an eye on you as I’m sure Susan will want to know if you do anything else to threaten Luna.

But he still felt really down as he went to find a quiet spot to teleport from back to Susan’s shop.

Once there Susan showed him how to activate the camera system built into the “HubBook” which could easily place his current notes into the system. As he opened it up he saw the program had changed a little, now showing “tabs” across the top he could touch. One was “wand magic” another “paragon magic,” “monsters,” “The Darkness,” and a few others. He touched one and the white part filled in, showing the explanation for wand magic and listing the known wand motions and an index for spells. He could swipe from the left or right to show more “pages” of the book, or search for specific things which would take him to the right page immediately.

“I’ve starting filling a few things in,” she told him. “Oh, and if you look at your music section Jenny’s been transferring her collection into the system. She said she

found you a song like she did me? You can star if it you want, so it doesn't get lost in the shuffle and you can listen to it easily."

I can do what?

"I took some cute cat pictures of Sparkle too, just to get the ball rolling."

"Under protest," Sparkle told her, hand at her ear where she had been washing. "And I insisted on no captions."

"I'm sure that was reasonable," Lysanias told her, still not having the faintest idea what she was talking about.

"Now, for your stuff. Let's put some of your book in and see what we get!" They went to a "new page" section and he snapped some pictures of the wards he had drawn in there. A new tab appeared at the top, labeled "wards" and he was impressed to find clear drawings, and the notes he had made about each one had been turned from hand written markings to clear computer text.

"Great, that worked," she bubbled. "Another thing I should mention, this area here" she switched tabs, "is your private area, any notes you make here don't get pushed to the system. So if you wanted to keep a journal of just notes for your own use you can."

"I think I know where my private area is, thank you very much."

"You know, just because you still look like you're eleven you don't have to act like you are."

Are kids even a few years older any better? "Sorry, I guess the other kids are rubbing off on me."

"Sure, we'll say that's the reason. So, put your junk in, poke around, let me know if you have any questions!"

Wait, didn't I hear someone refer to... never mind. "Right, will do."

"I'm in back working on stuff for clients, so just give a yell."

"Thanks. Wait!"

"Yes?"

"That knife of yours, might I hold it a moment?"

"The angel slaying one? Sure, I guess." She got it out and handed it over. He looked it over, feeling it out as he did. "This is supernaturally active."

"Yeah. I could replicate it with some kind of death spell, but then whoever I stabbed with it would get a resistance check. This just seems to kill angels or demons that get stabbed. Not that I've done that around here, mind you. But they were afraid of it, so there must be a reason. You think you could duplicate it?"

"Let's see." He spent his minute feeling it out, and he felt he had a handle on the metal, at least. "It is a special metal, very similar to my shield material, actually. I could easily make a knife in this shape, and out of the same stuff. But it wouldn't instantly kill anything, not without whatever supernatural power is also bound up in it. They probably used a process similar to my own artificing, which if I had it to study I could maybe duplicate. It would take time though."

"Interesting. Well, let me know if you ever need to kill a demon or angel, I'll loan it to you."

"Thanks. I think my sword would probably do the job fairly well, but I'll keep it in mind." He handed it back, carefully. *Because now that I think about it, am I close enough to an angel it might just kill me in one shot? Better to not chance it, I think.*

She left the room and Lysanias now redirected his gaze to Sparkle, who had finished washing her face. "Now then," he began, rubbing his hands together.

"You want to know about livestreaming, don't you?" she asked.

"How did you guess?"

"That look of anticipation on your face. I'll show you, but there's a few conditions."

“Such as?”

“I’m not teaching you how to bring back the dead.”

“Given the trouble Susan’s way of doing things has caused, that’s probably for the best. Will that greatly impact what I can do with the technique otherwise though?”

“Let’s take a look.” She put a paw out and a piece of paper appeared under her. “I seem to have six skills. A barrier, you saw that earlier. A bolt, that’s just a beam of destructive energy HDL damage energy spent.”

“I have no idea what that means, but I have fire bending or air bending to cause damage at range. I probably wouldn’t need it. The barrier might be nice though, if I didn’t have time to slap wards on or had a bunch of people to protect from say a falling rock or something.” *Well, maybe that’s a bad example because I could earth bend rocks, but the principal is the same. Falling something I don’t want squishing me or those near me.*

“Fair enough. Manipulation, that can boost stats, or make you harder to damage.”

“That would be nice.”

“Retaining, that’s how I was able to bring that guy back. It can keep someone from aging, keep someone about to die from dying, or bring them back. Oh, it can also heal disease I guess.”

“I could use potions for that, or magic I suppose?” *And I’m already immortal in that sense, so I don’t need it for that. Hard to argue for it if she really don’t want to have that knowledge out there.*

“Probably easier. Then there’s sense, allowing you to tell if something is alive or not. Plants, people, etc. And then transfer. That transfers life energy from one person to another, though it’s usually manifested as spiritual energy, I’ve never tried to kill someone by draining their life energy away.”

“I can already do that. Healing or draining, alchemy or spirit bending.”

“So then you just want barrier, manipulation, and sense, is that right?”

“That sounds about right.”

“Two of the three are physical, I could show you and you could ‘record’ them with your eyes, right? Sense I would have to work with you on.”

“Would you mind terribly teaching me all three the long way? I have the time, I’m stuck here learning how to wake up my sword in any case. I’d rather store up more potential for future worlds.”

“Potential? Sounds like XP.”

“I just know that Inari said I had a certain potential, having not used it all as a kid before I got sealed up. She said it was finite, but would replenish itself as I wandered. And I used the potential in my ‘cheating’ with the eyes. I do it too much and I won’t get any more benefit from it until some time passes. I used it a *lot* to get bending and my martial arts skills where they are. At least, I think, because I took a lot of skills from that world. So I’m trying to recover a bit, if that makes sense.”

“Yeah, XP. You have some kind of hidden XP you don’t know about. And you really don’t have a character sheet, like this, huh? Well, I guess there would be those in between the type of people here and the people like Susan and me.”

“I’ll take your word for it.”

The character sheet vanished, and Sparkle pulled Susan’s padform from their shared sub-space pocket. “Tell you what. I’ll dictate some notes on the skills, you can read them over. All of them but retaining, I may as well get them all in at once. You can just read the entries on what you want to learn. You’ll want to get your own notes into the system tonight, right? So you wouldn’t have time to start livestreaming today anyway. Read the notes over and I’ll act as a teacher for you while you’re here. Hopefully you have a high REASON and can learn quickly.”

“Can you tell?”

“Susan could use chaos magic and get your stats. Don’t ask her to, it’s not worth it.”

“Okay?” *Wait, chaos magic as in chaos moon? Nah, can’t be.*

“I’ll be in the next room, you don’t need me yammering on while you’re trying to work. Store is still open, just give a shout if someone comes in.”

“Right.”

“Wait. Now that I think about it, she has a spell to steal the stats of someone temporarily and give them to someone else. She could just steal all of yours, give them to herself, check her own character sheet for the increase, and then give them back. That would tell us.”

“I suppose it would.”

She put the padform away, then jumped from the counter and padded into the back. Lysanias took the stool at the desk, wondering what it might be like to have his own shop like this, back home. He could easily solve a variety of problems, just like Susan could. And he had friends with varied skills, just like she did. *Yeah, it could work.*

The next day Lysanias got through potion making just fine, producing a potion of near maximum quality for an NPC, meaning far and away the best in the class, earning him another point for Slytherin. He gave Jake some pointers, mostly about breathing and letting the magic from within flow through the spoon and into the mixture. He looked skeptical, but it did seem to help making Lysanias wonder why professor Snape never mentioned it in class.

Charms class was fine, with Garrett sitting next to him probably more out of familiarity than anything else. They practiced winging the feather around which at least a few people could do by now. Professor Flitwick had those that could work with those that couldn’t, because he knew the best way to learn something was to teach it, so he got Garrett’s feather to move as well.

At lunch, a voice next to him softly said “is it okay if I sat down?” and looking over, Rose was standing there. She looked and felt apprehensive, like she expected him to snap at her and tell her no. So he did the opposite. He smiled and said “Sure. How are you?”

“I’m fine. You mean it?”

“Why would I say it if I didn’t mean it?”

“Oh. Okay thanks. How are you?”

“I’m okay. Classes going okay today?”

“Yeah, I guess. Will Garrett be joining us?”

“Probably. We worked together in charms class, so he should be along.”

“Then I guess I just come out and say this.” Lysanias noticed her nervousness was increasing, and wondered what was up. “Why don’t you tell me who you really are?”

“What?”

“Look, I’ve been asking around. No one has seen you in any class but potions, charms, and wand release. You go to the library otherwise, or wander around and people lose track of you. You’re not a squib, Garrett was saying how you were the first in class to lift the feather. You have a wand. Though I have no idea where you keep it. You know Susan, you saved professor Lovegood and the more I thought about it, the more I kept coming back to you being much further from her than I made you be last night. But you still managed to save her. You apparently don’t have a last name, at least no one has ever heard anyone call you it. You’re a mystery, Lysanias whatever you are, and now I want to know just what you think you’re playing at!”

"I'm not playing at anything," he insisted. "I'm here to learn, just like you. It's just there are some things I need to learn, and some things I do not. That's all."

"That's not an answer. I will go to the headmaster if I have to!"

"He knows about me, it's fine."

"So you're not going to tell me, then?"

"Is it really that important?"

"Yes, it is. I'd like to be friends, but I can't do that if I think you're hiding stuff from me. Like, big stuff. Like are you an angel? Come down to spy on Susan? But then why go to school as a kid? You can't learn anything about her here. You did magic faster than anyone but Garrett released his wand the very first try so who knows what that means? Am I just stupid? Are you two laughing at me behind my back for some reason?"

"What? No!" he insisted. "What would give you that idea?"

"Does Garrett know?" she asked suddenly. "About you, I mean."

"No, and I'm not telling him. There's something going on with him, but I'm not sure what. I met both of you at the same time, when I started classes here."

"So you're here to watch him? Are you an auror, just changed with polyjuice? But I don't see you drink anything..."

"I'm just here to learn, like I said! I never wanted to get involved with Susan stuff, I just wanted to learn about releasing my sword. Wand. My wand."

"Sword? That's an odd slip. And if you are undercover, you're terrible at it," she went on, mostly to herself. "You wouldn't have shown off in class by lifting the feather so easily."

"I'm not... er, undercover."

"Oh, your hesitation tells me otherwise. Come on, spill it!"

"You really do hate a mystery, don't you?"

"I like solving them, if that's what you mean."

He stared at her, and felt her anticipation grow. *Is there really that much harm in telling her? She knows Susan exists, and roughly what she is. The concept isn't foreign to her. I may have to do things only I can do, it would save bad feelings later. I can hear her now, 'didn't you trust me enough to tell me?' That would really ruin our friendship, if we even stayed friends if I didn't tell her now. But is being her friend the thing I want to do knowing I have to leave this place? It's not my home, my friends are waiting for me back home. This padform thing may have lots of knowledge about skills but nothing about actually being a wanderer. How best to go about it. Should you make friends, who should you tell? I suppose it's a case by case basis anyway. Maybe I could start taking some notes along those lines, to help people even newer at this than me.*

"Take a picture, it'll last longer," Rose finally said teasingly.

"What? Oh, sorry, I was just thinking. Fine, I'll trust you, but you can't tell anyone. Especially Garrett."

"Got it!" She crossed her heart.

"Fine." He grabbed a plate of food, then another for Rose. Making both vanish he got up and offered his hand.

"Where did those plates go?"

"I'm not telling you here, and it might take a while so I'm bringing them with me. You coming or not?"

"Fine." She took his hand to help her get around the bench and then followed him through the corridors to an empty room. He slapped some 'ignore me' wards around the doorframe so no one would try to get in, and pulled two chairs from desks, indicating she should sit. He took the chair across from her.

"Now, you want to know who I am? The truth is..."

Chapter 11
Run, Lysanias, Run
When: Three days later
Where: Luna's classroom

So Lysanias had told Rose who he really was, and what he was really doing there. He showed her the sword, a few bending maneuvers, and lifted her with the force. She seemed and felt terribly excited to know the truth, and nearly missed her next class asking him questions. She especially wanted to know how she could become a wanderer when she was older, but he wasn't exactly sure.

"I was sort of drafted into it by Inari," he told her. "Because I didn't fit in my world anymore. Not as I was, anyway." *Now I could probably open my own school, or guild relating to problem solving for people or making items or something. Or be a bounty hunter, or a dragon slayer, or any number of things.* "Susan of course went after her father. But there must be some kind of trial you can go through, this Silverstreak fellow seems to have some things lined up to see if I 'have the stuff' to get access to the Hub. Apparently it's some kind of retreat for wanderers they can visit between realities to recharge, make stuff, and get advice. It's a gym, posh hotel, and infinite workshop all rolled into one, staffed by wanderers or other agents of good from across various realities."

"That all sounds amazing!"

"The way Susan talks, it is. She's met some really nice people there, and gotten help making thing there too. The armor she was wearing and the wings came from there apparently. The wings were already made, the armor was custom fitted for her alone. Apparently they have machines there to crank out any sort of design for weapon, armor, or gadget you could think of. It's a builder's paradise at least."

"Do you think I'd make a good agent?"

"I have no idea. It'll depend on how good you get at magic, and I guess combat training. You have a leg up, you could talk to Susan about your suitability in a few years, after you graduate. She might test you or whatever, or at least take you to see Silverstreak so he could see how you would do. From what I understand most wanderers work in groups of three to four, to cover their weaknesses. Susan had Sparkle and Jenny for a bit, she was so powerful magically she didn't need anyone else. Same with me, I can do so many things I'm basically a group on my own. But you would probably be assigned other people to travel with, at least at first until you proved yourself. Probably a group without a spellcaster, maybe? Depends on the type of magic you might specialize in too, I guess. Support or direct combat."

"There's magical combat classes you can take after you take Arithmancy," she recalled. Apparently one of Harry Potter's friends developed some kind of magical martial arts? I'm taking those classes for sure!"

"I would recommend it. Now that I think about it I should scan that anatomical chart I got back with Korra, and make some notes about chi-blocking in the HubBook. It's not supernatural in the least, so anybody could learn it. If they give martial arts lessons here I should tell the instructor about it."

"I think Susan's mom teaches that here, actually."

"Really? She never mentioned that! I'll have to go meet her. Wait, marital arts or chi-blocking?"

"I've never heard of chi-blocking, but I guess there's some kind of unarmed combat style she teaches. You have to have completed Arithmancy and that to take the advanced combat training class."

"Have to talk to her for sure."

"I have so many other questions!"

“Don’t you have class now?”

“Oh my gosh, you’re right! We’ll talk later okay? Garrett probably wonders if we’re avoiding him. Shoot, and I can’t even talk about this when he’s around. I’ll see you in Professor Lovegood’s class!” She ran off.

Don’t forget your bag, he sent into her brain. She skidded to a halt, ran back, yelled “That is so cool thanks” as she grabbed it, and sped off again.

He shook his head.

Now in class Lysanias was standing at the base of the mountain again, for what felt like the fiftieth time. He looked up, the sword was just barely visible at the top, spinning away like it didn’t have a care. “Why do I always come back here!?” he roared in frustration.

Because you only have one soul.

“Geya!” He jumped, and spun, raising his hands into a defensive stance. “Oh, it’s just you, mountain spirit. Don’t scare me like that.” He put his hands down.

Apologies. I thought you were speaking to me.

“May as well, I’m not getting anywhere. What did you say?”

I said you only have one soul. So naturally you would come here every time.

“So then how do I wake up the sword? Nothing happened when you lifted me up there the last time. I need to do the same thing I did with you, at least according to Luna. Some kind of spiritual quest to find out how to call upon its power.”

What prevents you from doing so?

“I’ve no idea. Otherwise I would have done it. I always wind up at the base of the mountain.”

So you must climb the mountain and grasp the sword with your own hands.

“Climb the-” He broke off, staring up at it. “I don’t know the first thing about climbing mountains. Would I even have the strength? There’s no path, it’s a sheer cliff face.”

You are still thinking too literally. You have already said what is needed. This is no physical journey you must undertake, but a spiritual awakening that shows the spirit of the blade your dedication.

“It looks pretty physical to me.” He touched the stone that made up the base of the mountain.

You must look past that. Simply decide, in your mind, that you will claim the blade, and take a step. See what becomes of it.

“Okay. I might as well try it, everything I’ve done so far has resulted in total failure. Stand back.” He took a few steps back and focused his gaze on the sword, high above. *I will awaken the blade Ragnarok and claim it as my own.* He took a step towards it.

And found himself somewhere quite different. He was standing on a small platform with a checkerboard pattern on it, apparently supported by nothing. Stars shone all around, and as he leaned over he saw the same was true below him as well. Nothingness and stars. Before him was a strange set of platforms, leading off into the distance. He saw ramps, spikes sticking out of places, *are those weird looking creatures standing there,* and as he watched the platform nearest him changed, the blocks making it up flipping over. Seconds later they were back to the way they had been, and seemed to repeat this pattern of flipping at regular intervals. Strange music was playing, sounding rather upbeat, but he couldn’t tell where from.

“Er, what?” he said no one in particular. “Ragnarok? Are you here?”

But there was no answer.

“Mountain spirit?”

Nothing.

“Ohkay. So I have to make it through this weird obstacle course for some reason? And not fall to my death? Easy enough, I’ll just grow some wings and fly to the end.” He turned, taking his shirt off and envisioning wings from his back as he had done in the past.

Nothing happened.

“Strange, I’m pretty good at this sort of thing.” He tried again. And again. And again.

I’m stuck doing this the hard way, aren’t I? That figures. He put his shirt back on and looked the course over. So I’ve got to cross the blocks before they turn. In fact I see a lot of these weird things spinning around, I’ve got to get past it while I can still walk on it, while over there... what are those things? There’s another one way over there, why is it just walking back and forth like that? What does that achieve? Everything here is in motion, changing before my eyes. Looks like safe spots there, there, and there. I guess reach the first one and catch your breath, then plot a course to the next one? Seems about all I can do at this point.

He went over to the first set of flipping blocks, which he estimated were about 3 meters square. There were three of them, and they flipped in unison. He touched it as it went by, making sure it was at least real. He heard a strange noise and the blue freaky looking thing in front of him spat what looked like a cannonball out. It moved so slowly he had plenty of time to get out of the way, and watched as it sailed past him into the void.

Er, okay. But can it do that again?

He stuck his hand over the platform and yes, it shot another iron ball at him.

“Why are you doing that?” he called to the thing. It didn’t answer, so he looked it over. It was mostly purple with big yellow eyes, and seemed to be giving off light. Vaguely mushroom shaped with a circular opening at the front where the balls came out, and it maybe had cat ears?

Freaky.

He backed up, and tested his speed on the platform. As his identity gift was speed it was a part of his soul, and so it seemed to work here. He didn’t have the shoes or increased strength his other equipment would provide, but it looked like he didn’t need it. Watching the platform it seemed he had three seconds to get across, and it took three seconds to spin around.

This platform is longer than the flipping blocks, so if I can make it across here before they flip, I should be fine.

He easily managed it, and watched it flipping for a moment.

Well, standing here isn’t getting me anywhere. I guess we’ll try it. What happens if I fall though? I mean this is a part of my soul, I can’t actually die. Right? Right?

He shot across the three squares near the edge, so the cannon firing mushroom or whatever it was couldn’t hit him, and easily made it to the platform it was sitting on. It spun to face him again.

This thing has feet? What the heck is this thing? Yipes!

He dodged another metal ball, apparently this thing really wanted to knock him off of here. He had figured this would be the case and hurried to the platform which was red. This was an L shape where the two blocks that made up the bottom of the L moved one way while the top part of the L moved the other. They had just finished flipping so he had 3 seconds to cross them. He barely managed it, setting foot on the next steady platform just as they started to turn.

That was close. I thought I was fast, but I might have to put some effort in if there's more than four of those in a row. Luckily they seem to flip in a fairly regular pattern that's always three seconds. What have we here?

Floating in midair were some strange blocks. Two were made of bricks while the center one seemed to be metal and had a funny shape on it.

What in the world does that symbol mean? I can't read it, it's not a word. And what the heck keeps them up there? He passed a hand under them, then hesitantly put his head under there so he could look up at the bottom. Reaching up he felt they were just ordinary bricks, while the "gold" box was just that. Metal. Cold, shiny, unyielding.

Very strange. Well, let's see what's next in this place.

Next up was *Yikes!* Lysanias had to dodge again as another of those funny mushroom creatures, stuck to the underside of the next set of moving blocks, appeared and fired at him.

"Enough with the cannonballs already!" he called to it. But three seconds later the block it was on turned and it could no longer be seen.

I get a three second reprieve, how generous. Great, there's two blue, then a left turn and one blue, two reds, two blues, then a red, then three reds until then next safe area. Wait, now what?

He climbed up on the floating blocks, which thankfully held his weight, and looked off a little ways into the distance. On a floating blue platform way over there were what looked like giant golden coins.

Estimating the size of these platform sections at 3 meters across, and given the fact there's three rows of three, are those coins half a meter across? And they're floating too, or at least not falling off when the platform spins around. Would I stick to these platforms? Do I want to take that chance? Oh great, there's another one of those weird cannonball mushrooms on the red blocks right before the next safe area. Do I need one of those coins later? How would I carry it? If I need one why are there nine of them?

He watched the mushroom thing appear and vanish again.

I can't just stand here. It's going to be tricky, but I have to move just as the mushroom thing goes out of sight. Then somehow jump on each set of platforms as they lock into position.

"Lysanias?"

What was that? He looked around. "Hello?"

"Lysanias, class is over, you have to come out of it."

"Wha?"

Lysanias opened his eyes, and Luna was bent over, looking at him. "What happened?" she asked.

"I think I did it. I was running this weird obstacle course I've never seen before, so if that wasn't getting closer to the spirit of my, uh, wand, then I don't know what is."

"Very good!" she praised. "If you're moving towards it a few more classes should have you there."

"Wait, the whole class time just passed?"

"That's right."

"But-" *The platforms didn't flip over that many times, and I timed them, three seconds each. How long am I going to have to be in there for if I only got that far in an hour? Though I suppose, to be fair, I was in that cave for quite some time looking for the mountain spirit.*

To save time he went down to the dorm right after he ate and sank back into his meditative state. To his relief the 'quest' picked up right where he had left off, so he found himself standing on the blocks and looking out at the next part of the course.

Wait, so does this mean my mountain spirit is unavailable to me, because I'm in the middle of this? Well, as it took me an hour to reach the first safe zone I'll try to reach the next three tonight, that should be three hours, right? This isn't exactly sleeping, even though I'm not moving and am effectively dreaming.

He hopped off the blocks as the one with the mushroom cannon sank out of sight and stepped onto the blue platform. He made the turn and the red platform smoothly clicked into place before him, so he dashed across it to be in position when the next blue platform came around. Out of the corner of his eye he saw the coin platform spinning, and resisted the urge to jump over there.

For one, it's in my soul so it's not like I could take anything out of here. Second, it's probably some kind of trap for the greedy, how do I know it's not some kind of illusion that wouldn't hold my weight even if I went over there? No, best to stay right here and not chance it.

The blue was now in position but something was nagging him. *Aren't I forgetting something?* He heard a *pop* sound behind him and he dodged to the side, avoiding another cannonball. *Oh right, that was it. Good thing they make that noise, to warn me.* He stepped across to the blue platform, again dodging around a slow moving cannon ball now from the front, as another mushroom creature started turning out of sight. *Meaning I'll have to get past it when it comes up again. Great.* He waited at the edge of the blue, then made the L shape cutting between the empty void and the mushroom creature which thankfully seemed rooted in place. *If those things actually chased me, I would really be in trouble. I doubt I could chi-block something like that, even if I did know where to strike. They look pretty solid.*

Now on the next safe area he stood far enough away the one behind didn't shoot at him, but that just meant the three ahead could. *Oh great, this platform is seven blocks long, that's about twenty one meters. It'll be one second into flipping over by the time I reached the end. I see what I have to do though, jump to that blue platform, let it flip, then jump back to it. Easy, right? Two mushrooms on one side, one on the other. Great. Let's go over it where there's only one and try to pass him on the right side. I'll make for the right blue platform, then jump back and have more than enough time to get to the safe area. Right, here goes.*

He ran straight for the mushroom shooter, along the edge of the platform. It fired three times but straight ahead, meaning the cannon balls just missed him. *Maybe it's more about showing courage than my ability to dodge? Things are set up here to look like a problem, but I can actually squeak by them without actually getting hit. The main concern I have is falling.* He jumped over to the blue platform, watching the red now start to flip. Something caught his eye above and he risked a glance in case it was some kind of trap. Above him was another of those strange floating bricks, and above that, an even more strange looking, stylized, five pointed, sickly green star spun. *Er, what? It's not really lighting the place up, what is it doing there? So weird.*

The red had now flipped again so he had to move or be dumped off, so he wasted no more time thinking about the star but moved ahead. He was now on the next safe area, and he couldn't help but wonder if two hours had really passed in the outside world. This area was longer than the others and curved, so he looked ahead. Something was rushing towards him. *Right, what was I just thinking about if those things could move?*

"Hello," he said to it, looking down. It was a squat, brown creature with huge eyes, and it was changing right for him. "Er..." It wasn't slowing down. "Are you friendly?" He sidestepped at the last second, causing the creature to run past him and

tumble off the edge of the platform. "Why did you do that?" he shouted to it as it fell into infinity. It did not answer.

Crazy! Now what's this? He walked over to a shining little creature floating there, seeming to dance in the air. It sort of looked like the star from before, just squishier and more like an animal. "Are you going to attack me?" he asked.

It said nothing.

"Hello? Can you hear me?"

"..."

"Great, I'm talking to myself." Just in case he waved a hand in front of it. No reaction. "Okay then, well, you have fun or whatever." It did look like it was having fun. It was smiling, anyway. He moved on. There was another group of three blocks which he once again ignored, and a long platform spinning away like the others. It seemed to be 13 blocks long, meaning he would never make it before it tipped him off. He looked right and left, but this time, no side platforms to jump on. *So now what?* The platform turned again and he was left with a new puzzle. The section before him was lit up with an odd pattern, as was the one six spaces away. On the blocks that didn't have this pattern were more of those giant coins, and Lysanias stroked his beard and nodded. *They're some kind of obstacle. I see, if I had jumped to that other platform I would have run smack into them and been bounced off. I'm on to you, coins! But that still doesn't show how I'm supposed to get across this thing.*

He watched it for a moment, then took off his shirt again, flinging it out onto the platform that had the pattern. It didn't burst into flames or anything. *So I can probably stand on it safely, it's not a trap I have to jump over. But how am I going to reach the other side? Can I spirit step inside my spirit?* He tried, but couldn't. *Figured that was the case. Come on, it can't be impossible!*

"Hey, do you have any idea how to get across this?" he shouted to the star like creature he saw about half way down. It continued to float, dance, and totally ignore him. "Thanks!" *Stupid things. This platform though, maybe it's just like the cannon mushrooms. Looks dangerous, but gives enough wiggle room to actually not be. I'll just have to try sprinting across as quickly as I can, there's nothing else for it. Maybe those oddly colored blocks stop the timer for a moment? We'll see. There's nothing on the other side, it must be a trap, those blocks must do something why else would they be there? The coins are just to force you near the edge, so you feel more exposed because you can't run across the middle. But I should be fine, I can run in a straight line, right?* He backed up as much as he could and waited. The blocks spun around to show the "coin" side and just as they locked into place he was across the first block. He didn't know what Kermit flailing was, but he experienced it as he was suddenly accelerated, arms flapping. He passed the next block, accelerating again, and easily made it to the safe area before the platform rotated.

Into an ambush by two of the mobile mushroom creatures.

Chapter 12
Splitting the Difference
When: The next day
Where: Luna's classroom

Lysanias was not looking forward to going back into his soulscape as he had left as soon as the two mushroom looking things spotted him and started forward. As he had anticipated three hours had passed, and he had gone to bed. He knew in class he had time to defeat the two and get to the next safe area, or at least he hoped that was the case. He had been thinking about how to handle the two.

I have to lure them to the edge and try to make them fall, like that first one. Dodging around two of them is going to be tricky though. I just hope what I've been practicing works. Lysanias had gone outside during his free periods and practiced leaping over something, in this case two rocks he felt were about the same size. He planned to jump over these two headfirst, tuck into a roll, and come back to his feet in case they stopped quickly enough. *But if I'm right near the edge they should just tumble off. I hate to do it, but they didn't seem like they wanted to talk. Besides, they aren't real, right?*

He took a deep breath and entered his soulscape, making the two pick up from where they had left off too. He ran to the edge and prepared himself. When the two were almost upon him he jumped, rolling to his feet as he had practiced. Spinning he saw the platform behind him was empty.

Another challenge overcome. I think I preferred being lost in the cave. Let's see what's ahead.

Ahead was a series of blue platforms each one square wide, separated by a meter or so. As all blue platforms moved at once, this was a problem. There were three of them, then a forth that was two squares long, and then *absolutely nothing*. The next area was hundreds of meters away that way. The only other feature here was another odd floating box at the end of the forth platform. It didn't look like either the brick ones, or the metal one with the weird symbol on it. He looked left and right, there was no other way to go. To make matters worse, more of those strange, enormous coins seemed to block the way in a sort of stair step arrangement, right where he would have to jump.

Okay, what? Am I going to have to jump on the coins, grab the nearest one, then climb over them while the platforms move? That could work, if whatever holds them up like that can hold my weight. But the bricks did, right? Maybe there's something in the box that will let me move to the next area? If not I can just hang out on the coins and see what my options are. He stood and pondered a moment, seeking some other solution, but nothing came to him. Resolved, he waited for the platform to stop rotating, and ran forward to jump onto the next one. He stretched his hand out, intending to grab the coin but rather than doing the sensible thing like stay there and let him, it vanished as he touched it. *Oh crap oh crap oh crap!* he thought to himself as he plowed through the coins and landed on the next platform. *Go back, go back, go back!* He jumped back and dashed back to the safe area before he got dumped off. He bent over, gripping his knees, not sure if he should be laughing or cursing.

"Illusion coins, of course. Why not?" he remarked to no one in particular. "I just have to cross all those platforms, open the box, and figure out how to use whatever is in there before I get dumped off. Three seconds. Sure, can do!"

Who am I kidding, I can't do that!

He had an idea and went back to one of the blocks. Reaching up he tried prying it away from the others, hoping that it was somewhat mobile and he could simply keep it in the air and hang onto it while the platform turned. It didn't move. He tried cutting it apart with alchemy, but as with spirit step it didn't work at all.

Okay, plan C I guess. I just have to think of it.

“You really can’t offer me any tips?” he asked the dancing star person.

It kept obviously dancing, almost seeming to look away in embarrassment at having been asked.

“Thanks, big help.” He grabbed it, hoping maybe it could be moved, but no, not so much. In fact it seemed somewhat relieved when he walked off again. *Great. What else do I have to help me around here?* He looked, and his eye fell upon the somewhat ineffective rail at one edge of the platform. *Why is there a railing only on one edge of this platform? It’s useless. It’s also far too short, it wouldn’t stop anything tumbling over and in fact might just make it more likely. Unless it’s part of the solution.* He went over and to his surprise, it wasn’t actually anchored down to the platform at all. He could simply tip it over, which he did. Looking to the end he smiled, and as the blue platform turned he gave it a mighty shove, jamming it in the way of the turn. He jumped on it, keeping it down and keeping the turn from completing. There was a grinding noise and the thing struggled to finish the turn, bending the metal but not breaking it off. He gently let it go, ready to spring back if it started to rise again. But it stayed there, so now instead of four turning blocks he now had several tilting blocks. *But not tilted enough it should be a problem.*

He managed to get over to the box, which he touched. There was a flash, and suddenly he was over at the other area, swiftly looking left and right to make sure this was still a safe area. *Why not have this area connect to the other? Why build this weird box teleport system?* He was at the moment not harassed by anything so he had a chance to look the next challenge over. The platform he was on was larger than the one he had started on, and had railings on three sides. A strange, squat looking flagpole was before him, and then a set of blue platforms that went up the side of a strange looking scaffolding. These it seemed were independent of the others, as they still turned. Naturally, everything floated without support in the starry expanse, of which he had more than a fleeting glimpse. He tried to speculate, if he fell off, where he might have landed, but such conjecture was futile.

Great, I have to climb the steps and make it to that area there, where something is no doubt waiting.

Opening his eyes he saw the clock indicating it was almost time for class to end, and Luna was shaking a few people out of their meditations.

That evening he went back in again, resolving to get three more safe areas ahead if he could. He looked around the area, finding the railings again not secured, nor was the flagpole. It had a fairly heavy base though, so it would be somewhat unwieldy to try and carry as he was. There wasn’t really a place he could stick it to stop the rotation anyway, and he sensed the star creatures watching him were somewhat puzzled at his behavior. They seemed to be watching him, their dancing a bit slowed down.

“Any time you would like to offer a hint, I’m listening!” he called to them. They looked away and sped up their dancing again. “Don’t think I didn’t notice you ignoring me.”

He looked up at the blue platforms, waiting for the spinning to stop. *At least they spin towards me, not away. I can always scramble up one, grab the top edge, hang on, and climb over it to the other side if the start to move while I’m on them.* He hopped up the three and gave another hop to a safe platform, set below the next one. He peeked over and saw another of those blue mushroom shooters right ahead. Two higher platforms beckoned from the left, as well as another arrow sign showing he needed to go higher.

I guess I am climbing the mountain.

The current blue mushroom shooter in front of him seemed quite attentive, ready to shoot him the second he popped his head up. He could see two more where he was standing, one on each level of the upcoming platforms. *I don't want all three of these things shooting me at once. I wonder...* He hopped down the blue platforms again and took a look at the arrow sign that was sitting there. It was as big as he was, looking like a blue bordered sign mostly painted yellow with a red arrow on it. As if it wasn't obvious which way he had to go.

Those cannonball things they spit move pretty slowly. Everything around here is not what it appears, given this is all happening inside my soul. This seemingly wooden sign is not wood at all, it's... dream... wood. Leaving that topic behind he yanked the thing and it came up easily. The sign was set on a yellow post, and it didn't really weigh anything because again, it didn't really exist. The star creature to his left had given up all pretense of dancing and was just staring at him like it didn't know what to make of this behavior.

"Anything to say?" he asked it.

It went back to halfheartedly dancing.

"I didn't think so."

Lysanias hefted the sign and hopped up the blue platforms again, then jumped up on the platform containing the first mushroom shooter. It gleefully spat cannonballs at him, three in a row, so he widened his stance and thought like a bolder. The balls smashed apart one by one on the sign he was now holding up in front of him, pushing him back only slightly.

I thought so. They're not moving at a great enough speed to really hurt me, but that explosion they do when they hit something certainly might. Glad this place provided me a "shield." But now before it can fire again- He shot forward, gripping the post with both hands and delivering a mighty (or as mighty as he could make it) swing. The creature wasn't that far from the edge so it only took a few tries to drive it back and send it sailing over. *Good thing they don't just, you know, move back into position when I hit them. They seem rooted to whatever spot they're seen on, even if they can physically jump around to shoot.*

He repeated this for the second and third ones, again letting them shoot three times, go to recover, and then whacking them with the sign. There were star creatures here too, and while they didn't have mouths he was sure they would be open while watching this brutal display of savage murder on his part.

"This is partly your fault," he told the one closest to him. "You choose not to speak, I solve these puzzles in my own way."

Looking ahead now he saw another sign (*Humm, I could dual wield these things?*) pointing upward to a red and blue ramp, each three platforms tall. The blue was to the left of the red, meaning he would have to make a sideways jump to make it. Both were pretty steep, but not so steep he thought he would have trouble getting up them. *Not much of a running start for this though. I guess I'll just have to chance it. When the red locks down sprint up it, the blue should lock down for just long enough to jump to it.*

He managed this easily enough, then came to another safe platform at a left turn, which he stood and stared at. Before him was a grid, alternating blue and red, five by five. More "illusionary" coins were on the center red ones, and there was another green star at the far left.

This actually looks more impressive than it is. I can basically just walk across, if I'm quick enough. The blocks fit together perfectly, there's no space between them. And there's a split second where they're all still. I just walk straight ahead, ignore the coins I can just pass though, and I'll be on the other side in no time.

So he did.

There was another mushroom shooter but he just used the sign again, smacking it off the platform.

Proceeding forward he came to a two level area, again with more red and blue platforms flipping over. In the distance hovered what could only be a space station, and he wondered how his subconscious (or whatever) had come up with all this. The lower path led to a green star, so the upper path was the one for him. This could be attained by standing on the blue platform before him, jumping to the red platform, then jumping to another blue platform. While not a platformer himself he managed this after reluctantly dumping the sign, coming to another red platform, one by four. On the forth was another mushroom shooter and behind that was another of those strange boxes. He let the red lock into place and sprinted across, again the cannonballs missing him by inches. He touched the box and the familiar flash seared his vision.

When he blinked his eyes clear he was standing on a large platform and there was a woman there looking at him expectantly. Looking her over he saw she had a silver crown on her head set with several large jewels, and was wearing a long, flowing, turquoise dress that covered every part of her but her hands. Her eyes were also a brilliant turquoise, and her hair was long both in front and behind her, covering one half of her face completely. *I wonder if she's missing an eye or something?*

She had a wand in her left hand, which was tipped by a star, and several of the star beings were around her.

"Greetings," she said, inclining her head. "That was a most, uh, impressive display."

"Thank you, majesty," he told her, trying a bow.

She giggled, one hand covering her mouth. "Never mind that, Lysanias. Come, you have a choice to make."

"Choice?"

She led him to the right, and there floating point down on a pedestal was Ragnarok.

"Indeed. I am Rosalina, the spirit of your wand." She held her own wand up. "Ragnarok you know." She indicated the sword.

"I'd like to. The shadow avatar seemed very concerned about- wait, who are you again?"

"The spirit of your wand. Did you think because you came from outside I wouldn't make myself known to you? The wand is right above the sword, isn't it?"

"I suppose. I thought I might try and see about reaching you after I had a handle on the sword, it was what I came here to learn. I didn't expect to learn that this world had magic users that could use wands, and that the wands were actually alive."

"But find us, you did." She shook her head. "And that's the problem."

"Problem?"

"You can only choose one of us. Even your soul can handle only so much, Lysanias. The mountain spirit takes some portion of your power, either the sword or myself will take another."

"Wait, what happens to the one I don't pick? I don't want you to die, I've only just met you!"

"You're sweet, but I'll be fine. Let me explain. The sword is on the verge of waking up, and choosing to take it in hand will wake it up the rest of the way. You will then be able to call upon its power, the power of change. I have been awakened, and can offer advice or conversation if you wish it, but my power will be denied you. I will still work to cast spells with, and you may come see me in your soulscape if you wish, just like your mountain spirit. If you do not chose the sword, instead choosing me, it will simply sleep forever, or until another desires to awaken its power and has the skills to

do so. It too will not 'perish' not being 'alive' in the sense that you are. So you need not fear."

"All right, I have a better idea now, thank you. If it isn't rude, I'd like to know what I'm giving up. You say the sword is the power of change, what is your power?"

"You are wise to ask, it isn't rude. My primary power would be that of *protection*. In my shikai, or initial release form your wand would look like mine now, and be able to create protective bubbles that cannot be broken. In my final release, or bankai form, I would look much as I do now. I would be independent, such as with Belahime, and I'm an accomplished spellcaster in my own right. Also any spell you learn you could teach me, so my abilities would only grow."

"So I could have both you and my mountain spirit out at the same time? It could be bending and you could provide magical support?"

"That's correct."

"Wow. What's this about 'bankai' though, I've never heard that."

"But you have. Your ability with languages translates it for you, just as with spell incantations. Luna said it, you just heard the word 'release.' I'm able to say it so you can hear it without being translated because I'm a part of you now."

"I see. Bankai. Interesting. Can you be more specific about Ragnarok?"

She shook her head. "I'm sorry, no. My magics have only told me it represents change. What it will look like in the various released forms is not known to me."

"Great, that's not very helpful." He shook his head. "That's not your fault though, I didn't want to you think I was blaming you, or anything. It makes sense, if a perverted amount."

"I'm not sure I follow."

"No? We have a sword and we have a shield." He indicated each as he said it. "Attack and protection. I really am a shield, aren't I? No wonder we were drawn together."

"Indeed, we're a good match. But don't think choosing the sword will turn me against you, or anything." She came over and took his hand in hers. "I'll still help you as I can, you don't need to worry I will abandon you. I'll just be stuck inside you all of the time instead of just most of the time."

"You seem really nice, I'd like to get to know you better. But I came for the sword! Aarg, this is tough."

"I know. In a sense this will determine your fate going forward. Do you value protection or change more?"

"I don't know!"

"Nevertheless, you must decide. I will leave you to your thoughts." She dropped his hand and walked back over the star creatures, who lit up at her approach.

Do I though? Do I?

"You say there are two release forms, right? The more 'advanced' wand that can create unbreakable bubbles, and getting you in person."

"Correct," she said over her shoulder.

"While the sword is an unknown, but relates to change. Why can't we split the difference?"

"I don't understand."

"What if I choose the sword's initial release, but you as my final release? I can't get the protection ability of the wand, okay, fine. That's similar enough to my lifestreaming barrier anyway, as long as I'm near someone. And it can be pretty big, according to Sparkle, and I'm fast enough to put it anyplace. Seems attacks can leave it as well, so that's a benefit over the bubble. I get the first release of the sword, but the final release of the wand. I don't know what 'bankai' I lose for the sword, but I *gain* a

magic user in combat. With my mountain spirit out I really could be a whole party myself. Think about it!”

She did look thoughtful, turning back to face him. “But how would it be accomplished? You must take either the wand or the sword in hand, choosing one or the other. To choose both would destroy you.”

“But what if *you* chose the sword, and *I* chose you?” He was grinning like a maniac.

“Set down my wand? Pick up the sword, and then have you pick up the wand? That’s crazy!”

“So crazy it just might work?”

“I have no idea!” She started pacing the area, looking at her wand and then over at the sword. “I suppose the intent matters, wanting to claim the power. But if you voluntarily give up some aspect of us...” She went over to her attendants, looking up at them. “What do you think?” While he didn’t hear anything, she seemed to, and nodded her head. She turned back to him. “It’s a risk.”

“I realize that. Chase two rabbits and you’ll catch neither. Maybe I’ll lose access to you both. Maybe I’ll lose all my powers, or worse, simply explode myself. But I won’t turn you aside, Rosalina. You didn’t get asked to come on this journey with me, but now you’re stuck with me. I didn’t know you existed, but now I know you’re a person, just like me. I have to do the right thing. It’s only right you get the chance to defend yourself wherever we go next. If you’re willing to risk it, you can be my ‘bankai.’”

She broke out into a huge grin, and ran to him, throwing her arms around him. “Thank you,” she said after a moment, stepping back. She still had her hands on his arms and looked into his eyes with hers. “We’re going to make a *fantastic* team!”

“You know it! Let’s do this!”

“Right.” She put the wand down near the sword and took a deep breath. “I claim the power of the sword’s shikai for my own! Awaken, Ragnarok, let all who feel your bite know change!” She nodded to Lysanias, who picked up the wand.

We didn’t really discuss any words to say. I guess I’ll just say something similar.

“I pick up Rosalina in friendship and respect, let her bankai become my shield. Rosalina, let’s protect the world from devastation!”

“It is done!”

Lysanias opened his eyes, the deep darkness of midnight meeting them, and he had two phrases echoing through his mind, which he knew would activate, once he was practiced enough, his sword ‘shikai’ and wand ‘bankai.’

Awaken, Ragnarok, let all who feel your bite know change!

Rosalina, let’s protect the world from devastation! Bankai!

Chapter 13

Making Memories

When: The next day (Saturday)

Where: Mrs. McGonagall's office

"Good morning, children," Minerva said to the three as they entered her office.

"What can I do for you?"

"Good morning, professor," Rose told her cheerfully. "We have a question to ask you."

"About transfiguration I hope?"

"Not really."

"I was afraid of that." Her eyes flicked to Lysanias, who smiled innocently. "Don't keep me in suspense."

"We would like to leave the school and go see Susan this morning, if that's permitted."

"Oh, is that all? Humm, for what reason?"

"I've heard all about Susan's magic and what she can do. I want to take Garrett there and see if she can get his memory back regarding his attack on professor Lovegood."

"The headmaster hasn't requested this? Or perhaps an auror?"

"No mam, I thought of it myself. Lysanias knows Susan personally, and has been telling me about her."

Stuff I've learned from the padform and HubBook, she's been making notes of her adventures in there and how she handled them. The stuff she's gotten into...

"Does he now? I can't say I'm surprised you haven't been contacted yet, Garrett. The headmaster has been known to simply allow events to take their course, rather than being more what I call 'active' about things. It's possible this is another one of those times. Especially if Susan is involved in some way. Still, three eleven year olds wandering around the village?"

"That's hardly dangerous, is it?" Garrett asked politely.

"Heavens, you would be surprised. Although saying 'heavens' probably carries more weight now that we know, er, what we know about that. Anyway, given it's... the three of you, it should be fine. I'll write you up a pass good for today. But I want you to report back to me before lunch that you've made it back. Susan can send one of her famous holes in the air if she has to keep you longer than that."

"Thank you, professor! We will, I promise."

She wrote the pass and they scurried off, out through the castle and towards the village. Not without a "thanks for asking, by the way. Susan would have just left," on the way out. "Your actually coming to me shows a rare foresight. You all get a house point."

"That was easier than I expected," Garrett announced.

"We have honest faces," Rose explained, lying through her teeth. Both she and Lysanias know it was Lysanias himself as the "adult" of the group that allowed them to get away with this. He would defend them with his life, not that it would really be needed in the village.

"I guess. So, Lysanias, what were you so excited about at breakfast, anyway?"

"Ah, I can tell you now! I spoke to my wand last night and learned her name!"

"Her name?" Rose asked, a little surprised.

"I think you'll like it. It's Rosalina."

"No way!"

"Yeah, I know. But that's the truth. She looks like an elegant princess."

"Wait, back up, your spirit is female?"

"What's wrong with that?" Rose asked a bit stuffily.

"Nothing, I guess. It's just weird. Do you know how to call her out?"

"I sure do. It's 'Rosalina, let's protect the world from devastation!'"

"Oh, I guess that's cool. Have you called her out yet?"

"No, I went to sleep, it was almost midnight when I came out of it. You're the only one that's called out your wand's power," he reminded his friend. "I'll need plenty of practice and getting to know her before I'll be able to see her outside my soulscape." *Especialy because she's my ultimate form, so I need to master calling the sword's power out first. And if my mountain spirit is any indication, unless I put in a ton of effort I'll only get it one out of every five or six tries at the start. That was not fun.*

"Still wonder how you did that," Rose told him.

"Don't look at me. Maybe Susan can figure something out? How much is this going to cost me, by the way?"

"Susan's pretty reasonable, I think. She doesn't seem the type who is in it for the money."

"I heard she cured a bunch of werewolves years ago, and they still all haven't paid her back," Rose told them. "She's not waving her sword around demanding their money, now is she?"

"I have no idea."

Now at the shop Susan came out to greet them. *I've told Rose who I am, but not Garrett,* he sent into her brain. She gave the barest of nods.

"Hey you guys, what are you all doing out of school?" She put on a mock angry expression and stood with her hands on her hips.

"Hello Miss Felton," Rose said formally. "We have a pass, if you'd like to see it."

She laughed. "That's not necessary. I don't care one way or the other. If you're in trouble now you'll be in trouble ten minutes from now too, so you might as well tell me why you're here."

"I'd like you take a look at my friend Garrett here."

"Why, is he sick?"

"We were hoping you could help him remember why he attacked professor Lovegood."

"Not a Lion King fan huh? That was the perfect set up, and nothing. Kids today, I tell you. Never mind, probably before your time anyway. I think it was before my time too, come to think of it."

"I don't understand."

"Yes, yes, you told me they wouldn't get it, congratulations."

"Uh..." She looked around to see who she was talking to.

"Susan does that, just ignore it. She's not crazy," said Sparkle, sitting over on the counter. "Not yet, anyway."

"Oh."

"Right, sorry! Garrett, right. Naturally I've been looking into it myself, using time area and such, didn't want to involve you if I didn't have to. Haven't found much, honestly." She looked and felt very annoyed as she said this.

"Neither have we. We looked up the meaning of fey, and looked for hidden places in the classroom someone could have magically controlled him. Neither was much help."

"Hey, that's not bad," Susan admitted. "I didn't think of actually defining the word, that could have been a real clue. Coming to me was a good next step."

"Rose is a real detective story buff," Garrett said, a little bit of pride creeping through in his voice, like it was him that was the detective.

"You are, huh? Well, let's see if this little mystery can be solved." She concentrated, tracing a hand through the air and magical circles spun about her. "And

now for this.” She pulled her padform out of nowhere and turned it on. She did a quick search, nodding to herself. “I love this thing, glad someone suggested it.”

“Wait, do that thing again,” Lysanias requested.

“What thing? Praising a certain someone on the sly? He’s got a beard that would make Santa jealous. And I should know, I’ve met the guy!”

“You met *Santa*?” Rose asked.

“Is it really that farfetched?” Susan looked totally serious.

“I don’t even know!”

“What I meant was that thing you did to the padform! You just went tappity tap and the spell came up.”

“That’s just the search.”

“I know about the search, how did you enter the letters? You didn’t write them in.”

“It’s these keys here, see?” She tilted the screen so he could see. “I just put them in. Watch.”

“One second.” He sent power into his eyes, and nodded. She typed a bit, and he closed them again.

“Did you just steal my rating in *typing*?” she asked, sounding dismayed.

“Just enough to get started. Is that what that’s called? Typing? Neat.”

“What just happened?” Garrett asked. “Why do you have your eyes closed?”

“No harm in telling you. These red eyes of mine can capture someone using a physical skill and let me reproduce their movements. It lets me learn some things really fast.”

“But why typing? Do you have one of those?”

“Er...”

“Anyone can buy one,” Susan came to his rescue. “It’s just technology. Remind me to show you later.”

I guess they are disguised as something that actually exists here. Ours are just a little more advanced than the local version.

“Oh, okay. I wondered about the eyes, the magical world is so *weird*! So what’s that?” He pointed to the padform.

“The formula for the spell I’m about to cast. It’s the spell of *remember*, Saturn, grade 4, and it should help you remember the incident with Luna.”

“Great!”

“Just let me read it over a moment here...” She looked the formula over, while the others made small talk with Sparkle. (It’s small because she’s a cat. Get it?) “Right, Garret, hand please.” She took his hand and magical energy swirled around both of them. “*The attack on Luna. You will Remember,*” she cast, and there was a flash and the energy was gone.

“So, do you remember?” Rose asked him.

“Er, no, strangely enough.”

“That’s odd,” remarked Susan. “The spell went off, I didn’t fail it. You really don’t remember?”

“No. I remember what people *told* me what happened, but still nothing after seeing professor Lovegood’s wand release until I woke up on the floor.”

“Curious. You don’t know why you attacked Luna? Or how you cast the death curse?”

“No idea! I’m terrified something like that is going to happen again, that I’ll just get up one night, and start killing everyone! I’ve contemplated asking someone to tie me to my bed, but figured they would think I was nuts!”

“I could actually do something about that,” she told him. “Watch this!” She pulled a sword about as big as the one Lysanias used out of sub-space and swung it at him. He screamed and threw up his arms, then cracked an eye open to see the blade some

inches from his skin. "See? I physically can't harm a living thing until Sparkle tells me its okay."

"Are you under a curse? Did someone do this to you?"

She shook her head and put the sword back. "I did it to myself. Just in case I went nuts, I wouldn't turn my powers to harming people. We could do the same thing for you."

"You're that powerful?" Rose asked her.

"That powerful and that dangerous. You think these black eyes of mine are just for show?"

"I just thought it was because your dad wasn't from around here."

"No, they came later. It's actually a mark of- that's not important. What is important is getting your friend squared away. If you're that worried about hurting someone, I can cast a *geas* spell on you. Your situation is a little bit different, maybe something like "you cannot hurt a living thing unless it's trying to hurt you first." That sort of thing. I wouldn't want you getting beat up at school because you couldn't raise your wand to fight back."

"Or practice hexes in Defense Against the Dark Arts class," Rose added.

"Exactly. What do you say?"

"It would really take a load off my mind."

"Done! Just let me take a look here..."

So Susan put a *geas* spell on him until the mystery of the attack on Luna had been solved, that he could cast no permanently harmful magic on any living thing. That way he could still wound, disable, knockout, or hex, but not outright kill. She paged through her book of magic looking for something else that might help, but if he didn't remember after the *remember* spell he wasn't going to. She did try a few other things, such as *Reveal Condition* and *Suppress Curse* but neither seemed to help.

"I'm stumped," she finally admitted. "My question magic should have solved this already, quite honestly, and I thank you for the opportunity to see you directly. But whatever this is, it's warded against even me."

"I think that terrifies me," Garrett admitted, after seeing the power she threw around. Of course he had seen magic all his life, but Susan's magic was *there* in a way warded magic wasn't. You could see it, in the circles it produced in the air. To a person who was getting used to holding a wand, watching someone stand there and produce magic like that without one was pretty awe inspiring.

"Me too, a little. More for Luna than myself, but my own item of *Magic Reflection* I made for her should ward off any more death spells. But I'll keep plugging away at it, believe me. Anything you find out, please let me know."

"We will!" Rose promised. "Thanks for everything."

"Of course! See you all later!" The group turned, but Susan caught Lysanias' eye and tapped the padform. "message" she mouthed, and he nodded. *She must want to send me a message, I think I remember how that works.*

"So now what?" Garrett asked, shoulders slumped and looking back the way they came, up to the castle.

"Now I'll treat you to an ice cream and we can head back to the castle before noon."

"You don't have to do that!"

"After disappointing news like that? Sure I do. I'm not buying yours though," she told Lysanias. "We're still friends and everything, it's just... you know."

"That's fair." *I'm wealthier than you anyway. I gave Susan a ton of the angelic metal I made my shield out of, and she paid me handsomely for it. I would have just*

made myself some coins, but she said that's probably a bad idea because they do have a spell on them that merchants do check for on occasion. Don't want to land myself in jail. Again. It was nice of her to think of it though, I should have been the one to suggest it given I am wealthier. Rose is a really nice person after all, isn't she? Have to make a note of that in the HubBook in case she does get a chance to become a wanderer.

With ice cream bought and eaten, the group went back to the castle to get their homework done, as they wanted Sunday free. Lysanias excused himself after lunch and said he would meet them in the library later. From there he went into a bathroom stall, pulling out his padform. There was a tiny "1" next to the "messages" app, so he touched it.

I had a truth telling spell going, that's the first spell I cast, Susan had written. He's telling the truth as far as my magic knows. He really has no idea what happened. Coupled with his ability to call out his wand's first form on the second day of class and my inability to get any answers with magic about this whole thing make me very wary of him. Has he done anything out of the ordinary since then?

He touched the box to enter a reply and was pleased to discover he could interpret the characters before him. Typing in the sounds of the words generated the angelic script he was used to, much like a Chinese or Japanese system would. He wasn't very fast at it, but he wasn't trying to write them in with the pencil either.

Not a thing. Sorry. His ability to cast death spells at his level should worry you more.

You're probably right. Sorry to involve you in something like this, you just wanted a training montage and got stuck in a mystery involving my girlfriend.

Not a problem. Gives me something to do, and I think I enjoy helping people as much as you do.

That's the spirit. Rose seems nice, she's the one that wants to be a wanderer?

Yes.

And she doesn't show any sign of weirdness?

No, she seems pretty average at everything. I mean we've only been in school a week, it's hard to tell.

That's what I'm afraid of, it's only the first week! Look at all that happened. Well, keep your eyes open. When you're not stealing playing the piano or whatever next.

Typing, I tell ya! ;-)

You're just jealous.

Maybe. Bet you a bag of gold I could develop a spell to add someone's skill to my own.

So the group sat and did homework, at least the other two did. With only a third of the classes, and those being more practical than anything else, he just practiced wand movements in a mirror.

"Aren't you going to do the essays?" Garrett asked finally. "We have so many essays!"

"I fail to see how writing *about* a potion, for example, is going to make me a better potion maker. To get better at doing something you have to do that something, not just write about doing that something. Unless you're trying to get better at writing, then writing is probably the thing to do. Or reading other people's writing. But you get the idea."

"So you're just not going to do the homework?"

"That's about the size of it."

"You're crazy! I wish you luck!"

"You could at least help us do ours," Rose complained. "I mean it's the first week of classes and we have all this work to do!"

"You've got a lot to learn," Lysanias told her. "Who is the one who wants to be the next Susan?"

"Me," she admitted softly.

"You think she didn't work hard?"

"Stories vary. She got attacked a lot, that's something everyone says about her."

"I guess that's one way to do it."

"Yeah, dueling! You've got a book of magic there, what easy spell can we throw at each other?"

"How is that writing your herbology essay?" Garrett asked her.

"I mean for after. Something fun! I'm not writing essays all night! I want to move a little bit, actually use the magic I've been born with. It's why we're here, right?"

"Oh. I suppose learning magic could be "fun." Get some extra points in defense class, maybe?"

But he did help, after finding one of the easier spells he thought might be useful for them. Though he was shaking his head inside at how any of this *writing* instead of *doing* helped anybody.

"Here's the spell I found," he announced when the books were put away. "It's a disarming charm, apparently it can make someone release something, like say *a wand*? Given wizards are fairly helpless without them, I'd say it's a decent one to learn. Plus it's fairly easy, the wand motion is a half crescent going right to left, then a quick jab. Not much more complicated than the swish and flick."

"Expel your anus? That sounds like a personal problem," Garrett said with a snicker.

"It's armus, not anus, you dunce!" she corrected, smacking him.

"Ow, what was that for?"

"Like you don't know. Expelliarmus, huh? Grade four, think we can handle it?"

Or "*Drive Out A Weapon*" if you're me. "Won't know until we try."

"Should we ask someone about the correct pronunciation?" Garrett asked, mouthing the word. "I'd like to see the wand motion before I try it, too."

"What's this?" Rose seemed to be shocked. "An actual good idea for once? Not bad, Garrett, not bad. Let's go find someone to ask."

So they did, and took careful note on a sheet of paper how it sounded phonetically, looked visually, and then went to go practice it. They went out to the courtyard a ways from anyone, and figured they had an hour or so at least before the sun went down. On average, they could get it every one out of nine times, of course that was with them just standing there. Actually aiming the spell was a different problem, as they discovered. They went back inside as it was getting dark and Rose told them "We need to work on our aim, first. Let's see if we can find a spell that like causes a dot to appear where we point our wands. Something like that. Then we can aim better, then we can learn spells that depend on aim."

"Sounds reasonable," Lysanias agreed.

"When are we going to have time for that?" Garrett complained. "We've got all that homework to do!"

The two stared at him like he was growing a third eyeball.

"Garrett, we did our homework," Rose insisted. "Well, some of us unrebelling people did." She glanced at Lysanias. "It's done, over. We've got tomorrow free, go us!"

"No we didn't!"

"Yes we did! What do you think we did all afternoon?"

"We, uh... no, we must have... uh... stop trying to trick me! I thought you were my friends!"

The other two shared a concerned look. "Garrett, she's not," Lysanias said calmly. "You did your homework. Check your bag if you don't believe us. It's there."

"I will!" They went to his dorm room and he pulled his bag out, sorting through his books and parchments. "Wait, what's this?" He held up an essay he had written.

"It's your homework. Look, it's in your handwriting!" Rose pointed at it.

"It is in my handwriting," he agreed. "I sat and did this?"

"I think you better go see Madam Pomfrey again," Rose suggested. "Like, right now."

"Yeah, maybe that's for the best." He stuffed his books and papers back and the three went up to the infirmary, Garrett looking haunted. The two explained what had happened, and she said she would check him over.

"It could be something wrong with his brain," she told them. "A boy named Neville had a problem like that, so I've been reading up on brain ailments the last few years. Has he slurred words or been dizzy? Hit his head, or had any spells cast on him?"

"He was with us all day, apart from, you know, bathroom breaks," Rose told her. "Nothing like that. Nothing! The only thing he ate that wasn't prepared in the castle was an ice cream, we all had some."

Lysanias nodded. "The only spell he got hit with was a disarming charm, and not even that often, we're all terrible at it."

"What about the Susan magic?" Rose reminded him.

"Oh yeah, there was a bunch of that, but all exploratory in nature. She was trying to get his memory from before back, not make him lose today!"

"I'll want a full report, what exactly you all ate, if someone gave him something to drink, the works. What you remember about the day versus what your friends remember, I'll get a parchment and be right back."

Wow, they're really taking this seriously. And if he starts forgetting more and more, there's good reason to. Garrett looked and felt really scared, so Lysanias had no problem taking his hand. "We'll get to the bottom of this. Honest. We're here for you."

"Yeah," Rose said, taking the other. "No matter what, you're not alone."

"Thanks," he muttered, feeling ashamed now that he was on the verge of tears. But he also felt something else. Gratitude towards them.

Maybe I'm watching the victim of something, and not the instigator. He can't fake what he's feeling, not unless he's the most accomplished actor of all time. I'm going to have to be more careful from now on. I may have let you down, Garrett, and for that, I'm sorry. Some shield I am. Wait, the village was that way... Susan, if you can hear me, Garrett just lost some of his memory from today. He's really scared and we are too, can you come to the school infirmary right-

A hole opened in the infirmary and both Susan and Sparkle jumped out.

"I came as fast as I could," she announced.

Chapter 14

Working out your Frustrations

When: Just after Susan showed up

Where: Infirmary

Garrett and Madam Pomfrey weren't exactly sure how Susan had gotten word she was needed, but she waved away their startled cries. "I know everything, of course," was her only answer. "Now what's going on?"

She checked him over, again trying *remember* and *question* while Poppy got their statement about what he had done, eaten, or more importantly *not done* that day that he did usually. Both turned up nothing, so Poppy suggested he stay there overnight for observation. She said his parents would be notified, just in case they knew about some condition they hadn't disclosed to the school, even by accident.

"Something that may have happened years ago, cleared up, and now is coming back," she suggested. "They might not have even thought it was important to mention anymore. We have to explore every possibility."

With nothing more the others could do, they were shooed out of the room and back to their own beds.

"We'll come get you in the morning," Rose told him.

"Thanks."

"Have a good night, Garret," Lysanias told him.

"What is happening to him?" Rose asked Lysanias on the way out of the infirmary area.

"I don't know, I wish I did."

"Can't your powers tell you something? It's a little silly to keep him in the dark now, isn't it? Having a memory loss event while *doing homework* can't be enemy action!"

"I agree. I can look into his past, but he was with us the whole day. I don't think I'll get anything more from that than Susan did just asking *question* magic. But there is one thing I can do."

"Oh?"

"I'll try and have a dream about him tonight."

"How is that going to help?"

"It will relate to the situation. It'll be dream imagery, so maybe not terribly clear, but right now I'd take 'incredibly murky' to 'groping around blind.' Plus while he's asleep I can go back there and see what I can tell from touching him."

"Okay. I just feel so helpless."

I know, I can feel that coming from you. "I'm sure Susan does too, and it's not a feeling she's used to. We'll get to the bottom of this, Rose."

"We better. Good night."

"Night."

To pass the time while Garrett got to sleep Lysanias decided to stop in and talk to his new spirits, see how they were doing inside his soulscape. He sat on his bed, sword and wand across his legs, and began the familiar meditation to bring him there. When he opened his 'inner eyes' he was as usual standing by the base of the mountain, but there were a few new features there to look at. Ragnarok had a fancy pedestal it was laying on, while a cute little cottage, complete with fence, flowers, and from what he could tell a garden in back was nestled nearby. "How about that?" Not seeing Rosalina he walked over to the sword, which lifted off the pedestal and hovered, point down, seeming to look at him.

"Ragnarok, nice to see you up and about at last," he hailed.

Greetings, Lysanias. Rosalina and your mountain spirit have filled me in about what happened since I was forged.

"I hope you're not too disappointed in waking up to find yourself a sword."

Not at all! I seem to be the finest sword in all existence, is that not right?

"I made you as sharp as a sword can possibly be. When swung you actually *cut the air* so if there's a better sword out there than you, I can't see how."

Then it is well. Better that I am able to aid you then sit on a dusty shelf until I crumble to nothing. And I hear you aided my brethren, both Esper and Magicite, making the world I used to inhabit flourish with magic again?

"True. It will take some time, but I think all people there will be able to use magic one day."

I approve. Have you come to know me better, that my power may be called upon?

"Yes, you and Rosalina. Shall we talk?"

It seemed to laugh. *For us, there is no need. Simply use me in combat as you have. Change people's destiny. Change their minds. Change who they are. That is at the heart of me, and how you will come to know my power. Even as Magicite, and an Esper before that, I was a spirit of change. The others always thought I was a bit simple, but that works in your favor now. I will come when I hear your voice. Together we will show our enemies the power of change!*

"That we will. Thank you." *Changing them from being alive people to being dead people? I wonder what it means? Still, I'll find out soon enough. I'm stuck with my choice so it's not like knowing will help me at this point.*

Now your feminine wand spirit, that's a different thing all together. The sword turned a bit, towards the cottage, then back. You wish her ultimate release as your own, meaning you wish more of her power to manifest in the real world. So, you must come to know her far better than you do me. Thus she will require... More.

"More?"

Yes. More talking, more understanding. Getting to know her. Liking her, and having her like you. I suggest you start with complementing her garden, she's been working hard on it, and I think she takes a lot of pride in it.

"I will. Thank you."

Good luck. And with your friend as well. We all feel as you do, helpless, and want you to know if there is a way we can help, don't hesitate to ask. Our power is, as yet, limited, but we will do what we can.

"I will. See you later."

The blade went back to laying down upon the pedestal, and Lysanias opened the gate and went up the stone path to the house, where he knocked.

"Coming!" came a voice inside. She threw the door open, smiling to see him. "Lysanias, you came! How are you?" She wasn't wearing her fancy dress, but more practical work clothes. She had lost her crown and wand, but her hair still covered the one side of her face. She was still beautiful.

"Fine, but frustrated about Garrett."

"I know. Do you like what I've done around here?"

"I do. How did you do all this? Magic?"

"It's your soul, but we're a part of it now, you know. I didn't want to just stand around like the mountain spirit, so this manifested itself. You might say it's as much a part of me as I am of you."

"Ah. Interesting."

"Come in, let me show you around!"

Rosalina, part of the house or not, was obviously proud of her little cottage, and happily showed him around the place. In the living room was what Lysanias first believed to be a painting, but as he got closer saw it was the real thing.

"The only coin currently in my collection," she said wistfully. "I'm looking forward to seeing others from other worlds. Then I can add them here, on display."

"You collect coins?"

"Is that strange? I like them. They show what a country considers important, studying them can even show the history of a place as they change over time."

"Strange? I don't know. I just didn't figure you for a coin collector, I guess."

She laughed. "See, we're already learning about each other. I'm a huge coin collector. I've always felt that collecting enough coins could get me an extra life one day."

"Wait, huge as in you only collect large coins like this one, or that you want a huge collection one day?"

"Both!"

"Well, I've only seen coins this big in here, but..." He concentrated, wondering if he could bring the "spirit" of the coins he had seen in his travels. It worked, and the coins from this reality and the ember, moon, and sun coins from his home appeared on the table. "Ah, it worked."

"Oh, these are wonderful," she gushed, looking each one over carefully. "I love the... is this a dragon on this one?"

"Yes, dragons are a pretty big deal back home, I guess."

"They must be, to be put on a coin. Thank you so much, I'll put them in a display case right away. For now we'll have to continue the tour."

She showed off her garden, which of course he remembered to complement her on, and noticed several of the star like creatures floating around there. *I guess they're a part of her too? Or maybe she collects them as well? I'll have to ask their story sometime.*

"So you like gardening and coin collecting. And magic, I guess? What other sorts of things do you like to do?"

"I adore kart racing. I've got a track set up under the house, do you want to see it?"

"As I have no idea what that is, sure."

They went back into the house and she opened a door, leading them down a long flight of stairs. Stopping before a panel she did something to it, then another door slid open, which the pair walked through into a kart race track. Lysanias stood and stared, it was basically the open air here, and the track seemingly went for miles.

"What do you think?" she asked.

"Did you design all this?" he managed.

"I guess I must have, but I don't know how. There's all sort of tracks I can "load" into this area, with all sorts of themes. You want to give it a try?"

He turned to her, and her clothes were different again. She was wearing a teal and white jumpsuit that clung pretty tightly to her, and she was standing next to a squat vehicle with four giant tires.

"You mean you race around the track?" he asked. "On that?"

"Yeah, it's super fun. I mean it's not that much fun just racing yourself, so it would be nice to have someone to race *against*. Not sure if Ragnarok is really the right shape for this, though."

"I bet my mountain spirit could. If I could learn to do this, he would know it and be able to race you."

“That’s true. So, you want to try it?” She looked very excited, so he shrugged and said he would. “Great, hop on behind me!” She straddled the four wheeler and patted the seat behind her.

Is this the ‘getting to know you’ portion of the tour? He sat down, and she started the engine.

“Hang on!” she said.

“To what?”

She laughed. “Me, silly. Put your arms around me, it’s okay.” He did, and she sped to the starting line. There must have been some signal because she suddenly took off at top speed, and gave him a breakneck tour of the track. It had gravity defying jumps, loops, and even a section totally in the air which made the vehicle deploy a glider somehow, causing them to soar. “Waahoo!” she called, taking her hands off the handlebars. “Feel that wind!”

Sliding into the finish line Lysanias wondered if she had been showing off a little for him with some of the maneuvers she had pulled, and she spun to face him, face flushed with excitement.

“Well, what did you think?”

“I can see the appeal,” he told her honestly. “You obviously love this, and you’re really good at it from what I can tell. It was fun, thanks for introducing me to it. I will look into learning this myself, so we can all race.”

“Great! I can’t wait to take you on all the tracks. And I’ve got all sorts of different cars, even bikes, you’ll love that. Oh, how did I do?” She looked over and there was a giant board there, showing her time. “Eh, not the best but I wasn’t going for time, I was going for style. Still not bad though. Want to try another one, do you have time tonight?”

“Actually, I get the feeling someone wants to talk to me out there,” he told her, looking up. “Tomorrow?”

“It’s a date!”

“See you then.”

“See you!”

Lysanias opened his eyes and three older kids were standing there, staring at him.

“Can I help you?” he asked.

“What are you doing?” asked the one in front.

“Communing with my wand, why?”

“Doing what?”

“Talking to the spirit of my wand. You know, professor Lovegood’s class?”

“You were just sitting there.”

“Yeah, so?”

“It looks weird, you’re creeping me out. Stop it.”

Lysanias stared at the kid, like he was growing a goblin’s nose. “I’ll do what I like, thank you very much. Go away.”

“You want to start something?” He took a menacing step forward.

“He’s lying anyway, he doesn’t have his wand,” said the one on the right.

“Of course I do, it’s right here.” He pulled it out of the sword holster, making it visible now that it wasn’t “attached” to the “ignore me” ward.

“Oh, I guess you do,” he admitted. “It’s a dark wood, I must not have seen it in your hand.”

“That’s got to be it.”

“Are you ignoring me?” asked the one in the center.

“Aw, leave him,” said the one on the left. “Let him commune or whatever.”

“No, it’s stupid. He can’t just sit there!”

"I'm talking with my wand," Lysanias protested. "Not just sitting here."

"Wait, you're really taking a class taught by that weird Luna person?"

"Okay, first, yes, she's really nice I don't think I appreciate your calling her weird. And second, Hell yes, have you *seen* her wand release? It's a huge peacock looking bird with a dog's head that's *also a seer*. You think I don't want something like that?"

"Aw, what do you need something like that for?"

"Are you *serious*? Garrett called on his first level release and got a magical ruler that can provide measurements for anything it touches. Length, width, weight, even time. That's amazing. Are you saying you don't want to release you wand's potential?"

"Measure stuff? Who cares?"

"It's super useful. Heck, Luna touched it and he got all her measurements!"

The two behind him elbowed each other and nodded knowingly.

"It's still stupid."

"No, it's not. And anyway each person has something different. It's *power*, can't you see that? Isn't that what our house is all about?"

"So you think you're better than me because you're taking her class and can talk to your wand?"

At this point, Lysanias had basically had enough. He had been very patient with this moron, but he was tired, keyed up from the "ride" around the kart track, worried about his friend and how he could possibly help, and now there was this guy getting all up in his face. His expression hardened. "I am your superior in every way, and it isn't just because I'm taking her class, believe me."

"Ooooooo," said the two behind him.

"That's it, you're going down!" said the middle one, feeling enraged. Lysanias tensed but he stepped back.

Er, what? This is me going down? You stepping away from me?

"Come on, we can use the hallway."

"For what?"

"Our duel, of course. Bring your wand, you're gonna need it." He snickered, as did the other two.

"I don't need my wand to take care of you. But let me put my shoes on."

"Fine, don't want your little footsies to get- did you say you weren't going to use your wand?"

"That's right." *My one disarming spell only works one out of nine times anyway. If I can't take this guy with just martial arts, I may as well just give up now.* "Might as well make it as fair for you as possible." He dropped to the floor, putting his wand back and setting his sword aside. He was still wearing the sash and circlet, of course, and stuck his feet into the sprint shoes.

"Those are some ugly shoes," said the one on the right.

"Yeah, well, so is your face. At least I can change my shoes."

"He's got you there," said the one on the left. "You ugly, man. You need to be rich if you wanna get a girl."

"Hey, shut up!"

"Quiet, both of you. Come on, you ready or what?"

"Fine, let's do this." He slipped the wall ring into his pocket, *no sense getting accused of "cheating" later. I want to beat him fair and square. Amusing as it would be to see the look on his face when his spells bounce back at him.*

The two went out into the hall, checking there was no one around and as everyone in this house was good natured and obedient, it was clear. No one was out of bed past curfew, and certainly not paying any visits to girlfriends or boyfriends of other houses to later do walks "of shame" not that there was any shame it. No sir. They

walked a few meters forward and he said "That's far enough. I go three steps this way, you go three steps that way. Bruce here says 'turn' and we turn."

"Hey, you really don't have your wand," Bruce observed.

"This'll be a short duel, then," the guy remarked, snickering again.

Shorter than you think, moron. Wait, should I really be doing this? Eh, it's probably fine, I won't seriously hurt them. Just put them in their place.

He and his unnamed assailant took the three steps and Bruce yelled "Turn!"

Chapter 15

Searching for Meaning

When: After hearing "Turn"

Where: Hallway outside the Slytherin dorm portal

As Lysanias heard "turn" he spun and shot forward. The older boy was raising his wand but suddenly didn't have a target because it was *beside* him not *in front of* him. This was not "proper" dueling but Lysanias didn't know that. All he knew was getting a chance to work off his frustrations and teach someone a bit of a lesson. He struck, a quick three blows to the wand arm, connecting each time. The boy's arm went limp, the wand dropping out of his hand and clattering to the floor.

The boy grabbed for it with his left hand, managing it but so pathetically he would have to spend a second getting it into a position to do anything. If he could even cast left handed because all the motions would be their opposite way which would be quite unnatural for someone who hadn't practiced that. "Stun him!" he yelled at the other two. They were totally out of sorts, not expecting to be called in the first .6 seconds of this fight, and Lysanias felt he could safely ignore them for the moment. Seeing the kid pick up the wand overjoyed Lysanias, because it meant he could now hit this guy again. So he did, another three quick jabs to *this* arm.

The wand again clattered to the floor.

Unless you're thinking of holding it in your teeth, I can now ignore you. Your buddies however...

One unexplored benefit of having a speed in the range of 60kph meant Lysanias could jump seven and a half meters straight up. And according to (optional) rules he didn't know he operated under having a skill above a "ten" meant he could do somewhat "impossible" things with that skill. Having absorbed so much martial arts skill from the various masters on Korra's world he now jumped for the wall, bounced off it, flipped, and landed between the two surprised boys. And because he had only gone roughly a quarter of his speed he got to do this as a free action.

So he went for the wands. Snatching one and then the other out of the hands of the surprised boys, they found themselves at wandpoint.

"Now then," he said into the silence. "Given I've just disarmed all three of you in two seconds, you have two choices. Apologize, and never bother me again, or continue attacking me and we'll see how good I am with another person's wand." *Probably not very good. But I bet I could levitate you just fine with a bit of fake "magic" if I needed to.*

"What did you do to me?" demanded the ringleader.

"Don't worry, you'll recover. So, going to rush me? Or apologize? Tick Tock!"

"Sorry!" said the first.

"Sorry!" said the second.

"I can't move my arms, he did something to me and I can't move my arms!"

I suppose two out of three isn't bad. "At least some people have sense. Where's he going?" Turning, he saw the boy running out of sight. "Well, doesn't that beat all? I'll tell you fellows what I'm going to do." He took a step back and lowered the wands, putting both in his right hand. With this left hand free he picked up the third wand. "I'm just going to hold onto these for the moment to keep them nice and safe. You three can have them back when I've heard you've turned yourselves in and served your punishments. Fair?"

"No, give those back!" insisted the one on the right.

"Yeah, you can't just steal our wands!" agreed the one on the left.

Lysanias shook his head. "Fine." He dropped them into the pocket of his robe and shifted his stance. "Come and take them, then."

There was a long moment of silence as the two boys tried to goad the other into attacking, and finally the one on the left rushed him. He had his arms outstretched, probably trying to use his weight to force Lysanias to the ground. He wasn't impressed, simply dodging to the side in order to chi-block and not get pinned as the boy fell. Four quick blows later and the boy, now paralyzed but moving forward, smashed into the wall and fell to the ground. Lysanias pivoted to face the final boy. "Next?" he snarled.

"You killed him!"

"I didn't."

"You did. He's dead, just look at him."

"He's just paralyzed, he'll be fine in a few minutes along with your other buddy there."

"You just touched him and he's dead!"

"Would you stop *saying* that? Go check on him if you want, honestly."

The boy cautiously went over there, but of course had not been given even the most basic of first aid classes so he didn't know about pulse or anything. "He's dead!"

"Oh my goodness you're stupid! I'm going back to bed. Carry him to the infirmary if you think he's dying. And remember, you don't get your wands back until I've seen you carry out your punishment."

He went back to bed.

But he hadn't yet fallen asleep when he heard and felt someone approach. "If you say he's dead one more time..." he threatened.

"I don't say people are dead, I simply make them vanish off the face of the earth," a dry voice told him. "Get up and come with me."

He raised his head to see his head of house standing there, looking... like he normally did, actually. Like he had just eaten a lemon or something. Lysanias considered, for a brief instant, replying "why should I?" But he thought better of it and gave a resigned "fine." He got up, put on his bathrobe, tied it with his sash, picked up "nothing" as far as Severus was concerned and put it on his head, then picked up "nothing" again and belted his sword on.

"What are you doing? Some kind of pantomime? I am not amused."

"Neither am I," Lysanias told him. "But it's now you I'm waiting for, so lead the way."

"Why do you wear that ridiculous piece of cloth anyway? You're never without it."

In answer he grabbed the edge of his bed and lifted the thing as high in the air as it would go. "That's why."

"I see. Come along."

The third boy, who had come to point him out, just stared and considered how lucky he was to be alive.

They silently walked to the infirmary where the two were lying in bed, the third went over to stand by their beds.

"What did you do to them?" Poppy demanded.

"They'll be fine! Why doesn't anyone *listen* to me? Do I need the beard back? Does that make a difference?"

"You had a beard?" the one kid asked, surprised.

"They'll recover?" she asked.

"Fully. Give it ten minutes, that seems to be a theme with me. Honestly I got a few good hits in, I agree, but half an hour from now at most they'll both be just fine. It is a non-lethal take down style designed to temporarily disrupt energy flow in the body. They won't even have a bruise."

"That's a relief, I couldn't find anything wrong with either of them."

"And just what were you doing out of bed?" Severus demanded. Lysanias took a second to realize he was talking to him, not the other boy.

"What, me? Defending myself from these three, *obviously*. They ganged up on me, and found out the hard way that was a bad idea. End of story."

"I see. And why did you 'gang up' on this boy, as he put it?" he asked the other boy.

"Damion didn't like him just sitting there communing with his wand and went over to hassle him. He thought he was better than us, so he decided to teach the little punk a lesson." He seemed to realize what he was saying, staring at his paralyzed friend. "I guess he was right, he was better than us."

"Yeah, next time bring about twenty people if you want to have a chance." *Actually, maybe I shouldn't be giving them ideas?*

"Enough!" shouted Severus. "You will all be given detention for using magic in the halls. Come see me Monday morning and I'll assign it to you."

"Come on!" protested the boy, but Lysanias just folded his arms and stared at the potions teacher.

"You have a problem, boy?"

Does he go out of his way to be as unpleasant as possible? "If you're going to punish us, at least punish us for something we've *actually* done. Being out in the hall is the most you can *reasonably* say. No magic was used in our fight tonight."

"Impossible. You struck down two older boys and nearly made a third wet himself without magic?"

"Hey!"

"Ask them. I left my wand back in the room. It would have only hindered me at this point anyway."

"Hindered? Is this true?" he demanded of the other boy.

"Yes," he grudgingly admitted. "But to be fair, he took all our wands before we could do magic either. Still has them. As much as I hate to admit it, none of us used magic. We never even had a chance to."

"The three of you couldn't take one boy who has only been here a week? A boy who didn't even have his wand?"

"You do remember who I am, right?"

"What?" Severus actually looked at Lysanias, blinking in surprise.

"You didn't. You didn't even look at me properly. Even after I showed you what I could do, you didn't even see me. How did you become a teacher if you can't even *look* at someone?"

"You... you..."

"Me," he agreed. "I took it easy on them, but as head of your house you really need to sit down and have a talk with the students here about what being Slytherin means. It doesn't mean ganging up on younger kids because you don't like that they're just sitting somewhere and quietly meditating. Honestly, when I first got here people were shocked I was in Slytherin because of how nice, inquisitive, and brave I was. Just what are you doing that makes this house the home of losers like this?" He pointed to the three. "Whatever it is, it's working all too well. You might want to try a different strategy, though it's probably all too late to turn the house reputation around. Now I'm going back to bed. These two will be fine. When I've heard they've served their punishment, they can have their wands back. I will see you in potions class, *professor*." He turned and walked away, passing Garrett's bed. "Doing okay there, Garrett?"

"Who are you?" he asked.

Lysanias sighed. "I'll tell you in the morning, okay? I'm not in the mood right now."

"Sure, okay."

He went back to bed.

In the dream, Lysanias sat across from Garrett, both holding cards of some kind and playing some kind of game. Darkness was all around them, they were seated at a small wooden table. A long shadow from the single lightbulb that hung in the air above them stretched away from Garrett, but Lysanias didn't notice he had one. In front of each was a small pile of coins, though they seemed odd to him and he picked one up to look it over. It seemed to be half silver, half gold, just like the others. As he looked he saw that some coins seemed to be mixed with the face of one but the tail of the other. Some looked cut in half and stuck together, while others were swirled, creating a true mix.

"Is that your bet?" Garrett asked.

"Uh, yeah," he said, tossing the coin down.

"Bold. Very bold. But then you always were, weren't you? Or wait, that was someone else. Your skills have made you bold lately. They'll just get you in trouble, like tonight."

"I suppose. They aren't really meant for beating up kids, and I went as easy on them as I could. They didn't know any better, even if they were acting stupid."

"Do you have any threes?"

"Threes?"

"Threes." He pointed to the cards.

"Oh." He looked them over, it was a mishmash of cards. A card with a rearing unicorn on it (Americorn, "When this card enters your stable you may take a card at random from any player's hand"), a pokemon trading card game card (Mewtwo), a baseball card (Topps, 662, Rob Dibble, 1991), yoda's face was on one that looked about thirty years old (#29 "Do, or do not. There is no try"), one was a novelty one three times as big as the others and had a mostly naked lady on it. Why she was wearing a rubber mask of a wolf's head he couldn't fathom. It was the ace of spades. "No."

"Pity." He drew a card from the deck. "I'll see your bet and raise you a kumquat."

"A what?"

"A kumquat." Garrett brought one out and put it on the table. "What have you got against citrus fruit?"

"Nothing."

"Then the bet is valid. You know, we shouldn't be together."

"What? We're friends, aren't we? I mean we've only known each other a week but still."

"What's that got to do with anything? I'm talking about being together. It's your fault, you know."

"Mine? How is us being together my 'fault?'"

"Not *us* being together, stupid. I'm talking about us being together. And of course it is. If I had been able to kill Luna as I wanted, none of this would have happened."

"Susan would have snapped you in half. And you're not making sense."

"Maybe. But the fact remains, the reason we're together is because of you, and we shouldn't be. Your turn, put a card down."

"What game are we even playing?"

"Life. You don't get to know the rules, or the stakes, or even if all the people around you are playing for the reasons you are. Put down a card."

"Fine." He put down Yoda.

"HA! You just activated my trap card!" He turned over one that had been before him and looked it over. "Call of the haunted. I can summon a monster from my grave-

yard. You were the cause of so much death back with Yoda," he tapped the card, "I think that sort of makes you a monster, doesn't it? It would be delicious irony if I summoned you. Of course, you need to be in the graveyard first." He smiled and lifted a wand from his lap. "Avada-

Lysanias awoke with a start. *I take it back, I would prefer total ignorance, honest!*

Sliding out of bed he did his usual magic to clean up after getting his clothes on and went to see Garrett. He met Rose and the way and they made their way through the mostly empty halls towards the infirmary. Garrett was there, sitting up in bed and having something to eat. The other three that were there the night before were long gone.

"Good morning," he greeted them, setting his spoon down.

"How many fingers did I hold up before I left last night?" Rose demanded.

"You did what last night? I don't remember that at all!"

"I wouldn't worry too much, I only had the idea after I got back to my dorm."

"Not really fair to ask then, is it? I do still remember your promise to me, Lysanias."

"That figures, why would you forget that?"

"What promise? What happened after I left?" Rose demanded.

"Some older kids decided they didn't like me talking to my wand, who is pretty neat by the way, I have to tell you what we did last night. Anyway, they tried to 'duel' me and found out what a terrible idea that was. Severus came to get me and tried to give me detention. That didn't go so well for him, either."

"He was going to explain how all these miracles occurred," Garrett told her. "So get talking."

So he told the story again, Rose sitting nearby as Garrett's mind was blown. "You're like Susan, not really from around here," he said when the story was done.

"Wow. And you knew, Rose, didn't you? You must have, you're just sitting there."

"I knew," she replied softly.

"And why am I the last to know?"

"You have to understand, you tried to kill Luna," Lysanias answered honestly. "We couldn't be sure of you. Not really. I had to be careful about what I told you. But it seems you're a victim here so there's no point in hiding it anymore."

"I'm glad after all this you finally trust me," he told them sarcastically. He grimaced. "But I guess it was justified, I'm not even sure of myself anymore. At least I sleep better at night knowing I can't hurt anyone thanks to Susan. So your powers can't help either?"

"Actually, they have helped. Helped confuse me more. I did have a dream last night, listen to this..." He told the story about the weird card game, and the two looked at confused as he felt.

"He was right though, we shouldn't be together," Rose told them. "But if it's anyone's 'fault' it's Susan's."

"How do you figure that?" Garrett asked. "Lysanias blocked that death curse."

"But it begins years go. If Susan hadn't been alive she wouldn't have taken Luna with her on her trip to other worlds. So Luna wouldn't have been lost and then she wouldn't have come back with the technique to release wands."

"How do you know all this?"

"Uh, she's sort of my hero? I want to be a wanderer like her? It's actually part of the class notes if you had bothered to read them."

"Oh yeah, never got around to that."

"You signed up for a class without even reading the notes on what it was about?"

"It sounded easy, so I took it! Wand release, commune with your wand to learn its name and release its power. Commune means 'sit around' right?"

"That's not... anyway, with no Luna to teach that class you wouldn't have tried to kill her. We probably wouldn't have met, and there would be no reason for Lysanias to be here. Maybe he would have gone to the world Luna did to learn the technique himself, I don't know. But we wouldn't be here together. You would just be another boy I had some classes with."

"That makes sense."

"What bothers me is the dream Garrett wasn't. He wasn't talking about us being together, but he was talking about us being together? You're sure he said those exact words?"

"As far as I can remember, and it was such a weird thing to say it stuck with me. It's dream stuff, the entire Death Star turned into a ball on a playground in my last dream. It could destroy *planets*. We'll probably never figure out what the imagery means until it's too late," Lysanias told them.

"Not sure what the point is, then," Garrett remarked.

"The point is you- he- the dream- was trying to warn me. We just have to be smart enough to figure out what it meant."

"You two have fun with that. I'm going to concentrate on not forgetting anything else. Madam Pomfrey said I might want to keep a notebook, jot down things that happen. Then I can look back at night and see if I remember it all. It's like extra homework just for me! Hurray."

"Come on, don't be like that. It's just another mystery. That's a good idea though! Let's note down everything in the dream and see if it has some relevance." She went over and grabbed some paper off a shelf and a pen, then came back. "There was the light, the shadow, the table, the mismatched cards..."

The group talked about what the dream could mean and then headed to the library to see if there were any books on dream interpretation there.

"After all, the answers you get from the universe come from the world you're in, right?" Rose reasoned. "It stands to reason the dreams you have come from the same place. So looking up how others interpret dreams here isn't a waste because that same dream in another world may have looked totally different!"

They had no argument against that and poked around, but didn't find very much.

Finally after lunch Garrett was being no help at all and Rose slammed her book shut. "Come on then," she told the two. "Let's go outside or something. It's still fairly nice out, we can take a walk down by the lake. As Garrett doesn't feel solving the mystery of his vanishing memory is worth putting in a little effort."

"We've been at it half a day. We aren't finding anything. Lysanias even asked and didn't get an answer about what book we should look at."

"He's admitted he could have just had a string of bad luck. He's not gotten an answer right away before."

"But he said he always did in the end."

"So we'll try another library, or talk to the divination professor."

"I don't want to be told I'm going to die next week!"

"Just come on."

So the group walked around the castle grounds, then down to the lake where the boats were tied up. They looked out across the water. Lysanias hadn't done any water bending lately, so he sloshed it around just to keep his hand in it but not be too obvious about it. He was concentrating on that, trying to make an ice "net" just to see if he could, he wasn't paying attention to his other senses.

“You know, if you wanted to work off some energy, we could practice that disarming charm here on the dock,” Rose finally said. “It’s set up like a dueling area, nice and long. With everything that happened I forgot to look into a spell to practice our aim, but we can do that later. What do you say, Garrett? Think you can get me before I get... Garrett?” She looked beside her, then down into the water in confusion, then over at Lysanias who was now looking around as well. “Garrett?” she repeated. “What in the world?”

Garrett was gone.

Chapter 16
Vanishing People
When: Moments later
Where: Docks

Susan had provided a list of artifacts she had made for the school, so once they realized Garrett was gone Lysanias teleported into the headmaster's office to grab one of them. He had tried sensing energy, even sending his spirit into the water to look around, but his friend was nowhere to be seen. In his hands he now held a rather large picture frame, which he activated, telling them when he wanted to see. It was just a few minutes ago.

There were the three of them, walking down the dock.

There were the three of them, standing on the edge of the dock.

There was Lysanias, sloshing water back and forth.

There was Garrett, vanishing into thin air.

There were the two of them, being clueless.

And now they figured it out.

"He just vanished," Rose told the professors, watching for themselves. She had run to get someone who might be able to help, while he sat and asked the universe where Garrett currently was. Naturally he had augmented his skill with magic, and called upon the spirit of the dragonfly so he would have the best chance. Naturally he got nothing.

"Then there is not much we can do," Albus told them. "Not until Susan arrives, anyway."

"Sorry," Lysanias apologized. "I wish I knew how to cast Jupiter spells."

"You have other strengths," he consoled. "She'll be along shortly, she's just in the middle of something else right now."

"Strengths indeed," Severus said dryly. "Such as beating up kids in the halls. You're excellent at that."

"What's this?" Albus asked.

"They attacked me. I could have just let them bounce spells off me, would you have preferred that? Then they would have known something was up. The way I did it, at least they think I'm just really good at martial arts. It's something they might not remark upon further. I mean you have classes in it here at the school, Rose was telling me about them. It's something they're familiar with, not like bending or just using the force and throwing them around with my mind."

"In my time, people didn't rely on magical objects to fight their battles for them."

"You actually never got the better of your tormentors as I recall, Severus," Albus remarked thoughtfully. "Could there be some bitterness he was able to deal with his?"

"As we are simply waiting for Susan to swoop in and save the day, I see no reason to be here," he went on coldly. "Good day." He turned and left.

Actually, I could probably come up with something magical with Skyebourne magic. But then I'd have it bouncing around my head the rest of my life. I don't know if it's worth it when Susan can come cast the spell anyway. I wonder if I should have her teach me how to cast with energy the way she does it, just in case? I've got her complete book of magic on the padform, and she'd probably be willing. I'd have to get better at reading magical script though, it's not just like reading a sentence, I have to understand what the formula is trying to get the magic to do. Of course it's only casting spells that's restricted by my spell to augment my skill, I could cast it to read them easier.

But Susan did show up, Sparkle in tow, saying she had reviewed the spell and as it was only grade 5, she felt she could cast it quite easily.

“And what, exactly, is this spell going to do?” Albus had asked.

“You show me when he disappeared and the spell will convey an image of the location he went as if I was now looking at it. I’ll then be able to open my *teleportal* to it.”

“Then we should be ready for anything,” Lysanias mused, drawing his blade.

“Yup. Here goes.” Susan cast, Lysanias feeling her energy and the magic working to reveal the location. The lights and circled faded, and she stood there, looking a bit stumped.

“Did it not work?” Albus asked.

“Oh, I got the spell off,” she told him. “There’s a problem.”

“What’s that?”

“The place he teleported to must be somewhere dark. All I saw was a dark room, not enough detail to teleport to.”

“The spell really works that way? You do not get an awareness of the room but rather a literal vision of it?”

“It says right here, *‘Dimensional Tracer: etc. etc. spell then gives you enough information to travel to the intended destination as if you have just now seen it once.’* Right now wherever he teleported to is a completely dark room. He must have been moved. I’ll see what else I can come up with, but if Lysanias already asked, my *question* magic won’t do any better.”

“Then this situation is far worse than I believed. I will have to owl the ministry that one of my students has been spirited away from the castle through unknown means.”

“You sell your magic, and we know it can get through the Hogwarts wards,” Minerva remarked. “Could someone be using it against us now?”

Susan shook her head. “I don’t sell my teleport magic. Besides, I only know *teleportal* not *teleport* though I suppose this could have been *telesummon*. Which I wouldn’t sell either. No, I sell stuff like the truth candles, or healing magic for emergencies. Nothing like this.”

“That’s a relief.”

It was now three hours later, and they had tried various things to try and track down Garrett. Albus had sent his patronus to try and locate him, but it just hovered in air and then vanished. Susan tried various spells, and while Lysanias used the colored stones he had received from Amy to at least verify Garrett was alive, they couldn’t tell him where. He did, however, look into the future and see if he would be happy or sad relating to Garrett. *After all, if he’s never found I’ll be sad, but if he is I’ll be happy!*

He discovered he would be happy, after trying it only twice, which relieved everyone a little bit. Suddenly Albus perked up. “He’s back in the castle,” he announced.

“What?” everyone said.

“Come on, he’s back.” They rushed down to the hallway where Garrett, looking a little confused, was standing looking at a painting.

“Garrett, you’re okay!” Rose began, throwing her arms around him. “We were so worried!”

“What do you mean? Why wouldn’t I be?”

“You’ve been gone for hours! Don’t you remember?”

“Hours? We just came in from the docks and I was looking at this painting.”

“He was,” the painting agreed.

“You stay out of it!” Rose snapped.

“Well, I never!” The man in it stepped out of frame.

“Garrett, it’s been three hours,” Lysanias told him. “You vanished from the docks, we’ve been trying to locate you ever since.”

"Oh." He looked up, seeing Susan, Albus, an auror he didn't know, and professor McGonigal staring at him. "I guess as you're all here, you're not lying."

"We're not lying!" insisted Rose. "What happened?"

"I don't know."

"Maybe *remember* will work this time?" Susan mused, getting out her padform. "I guess I'll try it. Given this wasn't just an episode of him forgetting, he was actually taken from the castle. Unless he took himself from the castle? Anyway, one side Rose."

The spell cast, he suddenly looked horrified. "I was taken from the castle!" he agreed. "By some kind of short, weird looking creature with big eyes and ears. I caught a glimpse of it after we appeared but then it vanished again."

"A house elf?" Albus asked. "That would explain how they teleported you away. But why?"

"I'm still not sure," he admitted. "I remember a man screaming at me out of the darkness to give him his wand back. I don't have his wand!"

"Don't you?" Albus asked, his piercing eyes upon the young boy in front of him.

"No, how would I?"

"I don't know. Go on."

"That's pretty much it. He grabbed my wand, tried to do magic with it, and it seemed to reject him. In fact I think it actually burned him, the way he threw it back at me. There was another person there, they tried some magic on me but as I didn't have a wand to give him, they talked, the other guy put a memory charm on me, and I was back outside. I came in, stopped at this picture, and you guys walked up."

"You didn't see the faces of your attackers?" Susan asked.

He shook his head. "The place was dark. Like, really dark."

"I do sell *darksight* spell papers," Susan admitted. "They let you see in the dark."

"There is a potion that has a similar effect," Albus told them. "So it could just as easily be that."

"What am I going to do?" Garrett asked. "What if they grab me up again? They didn't torture me or anything, this time, but I could tell the guy didn't believe me. He just kept demanding his wand back. If they bring me there again and try to force me to give it to them, what's going to happen?"

"That's easy," Susan told him. "I'm going to put a spell on you. Jupiter. Grade 4. *Tracer*. Then anything I do will be able to succeed in finding you, no matter what wards they have you behind."

"Wait, is it physical?" Lysanias asked. "I should pick it up too. Then either of us could find him, in case one of us isn't around."

"It's not. It's RESolve based," she barked a laugh, "meaning holding that sword you'd be great at it. The problem is, the spell specifically says 'other spells' not 'any other means' so you would also have to learn *Descry Creature*. That's a way higher grade."

"Oh. Never mind."

"More distressing is that a house elf was able to teleport away with him," Albus mused. "How are we going to prevent that?"

"The elves can teleport in and out of the castle," Susan agreed. "Just like Lysanias here, who I'm pretty sure is doing the exact same thing. I could ward against it, like I put *dead magic* on the doorway area. But then I can't get here as quickly in an emergency."

"You've been hesitant to do so, for more reasons than that."

She nodded. "I remember Luna almost dying. This castle is supported in many ways by wanded magic. What would my spell of *fortification* do to it? I've never liked mixing magics."

"If only there was some kind of magical tether that could be affixed to him, snapping him back into place if someone tried to teleport him."

"That's an amazing idea. How would I even make such a thing?" She felt excited, looking off into the distance.

"I'll leave that to you. For now I'm glad to have you back safe and sound, Garrett. If you recall any more about your attackers, please let us know. For now I'll owl the ministry you've been found. Your parents will be quite relieved I'm sure."

"Sorry to have worried you."

"Nonsense! It's not your fault. This is just another piece of the puzzle, and one day we'll have enough pieces to put a stop to all this. I shall leave you to the care of your friends. Good day."

"What could he have meant, get his wand back?" Rose asked when they were alone again.

"I don't know. I've never picked up any strange wands and thought, 'I'll just keep this.' He seemed desperate though."

"It's all very peculiar," Lysanias mused. "Wands. You first go nuts, don't look at me like that, after Luna shows her wand release. Then you release yours *the very next day* beating everyone in the class. Even a week later no one has done it but you. Now you're abducted, someone screams at you about *their* wand, tries yours and can't use it, then returns you. They obviously didn't mean you harm, because they didn't harm you. But what was it really all about?"

"Speaking of that, why didn't you call out your wand?" Rose demanded. "If you had touched him with it you would have known everything about him, darkness or not. Or the room. How far away you were from the school, and what direction. Any number of helpful things!"

"Oh. I didn't even think of it."

"He didn't even think of it," she mocked. "Well next time, do so, okay? We were worried about you!"

"Sorry."

"I'm sorry too. I was concentrating on water bending, an invisible elf snuck up on us and grabbed you. I should have felt him coming."

"Or not," Rose told him. "They have all sorts of weird powers, maybe they can mask their presence too. You don't know."

"Maybe."

"So now what? Just go on with things?" Garrett asked.

"Not much we can do. Stay inside, it would be harder to grab you. I don't know. I've only been allowed to cast spells for a week, and I only know two. And both of them don't work very well most of the time."

"Then we'd better get practicing."

The second week of Lysanias posing as a student got off to a rocky start almost at once, as an owl swooped in at breakfast, dropping a letter into Luna's lap and winging away. She tore it open and gasped, then passed it down to Albus, who looked quite concerned as he read it over. Luna released her wand, speaking softly to it, but it shook its head. With a flick of his wand Albus sent the letter down to Lysanias, who was surprised to see a piece of paper hovering before him. He grabbed it.

Luna,

We have taken your father prisoner. To get him back we require any person you have begun to teach wand release to be memory charmed to forget anything about it,

submit to an unbreakable vow you will never teach another person, and then snap your own wand in half. An owl will arrive in one hour with the location to bring your students.

SOF

Just a second, I want to try something, he sent into Luna's head. She nodded, the message was received. He closed his eyes, concentrating on the paper. It had been written just a moment ago, so he could clearly see the room it had been written in. Oddly the person writing it was a blur, but he saw enough he was confident he could teleport there. "I'll be back," he told his friends. "Luna's father has been taken by the Sons of Fey and they're demanding all sorts of things to get him back. I have other plans."

"Be safe," Rose told him.

"Wait what?" Garrett asked.

"I'll tell you when I get back." Lysanias got up and headed to the back door, grabbing the rest of his breakfast as he went. *Meet me in your classroom, we'll go get him back,* he sent to Luna. She and Albus went out the other way.

Now in the classroom he explained what he had seen. "We can go right now," he told them. "He must be there, the letter was only written a few minutes ago. I teleport us inside, we get the drop on whoever is there, we get your father back."

"But how?" Albus asked.

"They slipped up. I can look into an object's past and see what happened to it. I saw the room it was written in."

"Then let's go!" Luna told them, wand in hand again.

"I suppose the three of us would be sufficient," Albus decided. "And time is of the essence. Let us go."

"Grab on." Lysanias drew his sword and got his shield out, wrapping the letter around the handle he grabbed on to the shield. Looking back into the past he saw the room again, and *shifted*.

The group found themselves in the room, a surprised person at the desk whirling around to see what the noise was. Lysanias dropped the note and grabbed the handle of his shield, bringing his sword up. He tried to get a good look at the man but again, he couldn't seem to manage it, he was fuzzy and blurry and impossible to look directly at.

"Oh crap!" the man said, and vanished.

"Aparated," Luna said. "We'll never catch him."

"Two more in the house, come on," Lysanias told them, pointing. Albus snatched the door open, while Luna jumped into the hall.

"It's clear. Come on." They made their way down the hallway and turned, there was a man trying to fumble some keys into a lock.

"Drop them!" Albus demanded.

"What, my pants?" asked the person. Again, Lysanias couldn't quite look at them. "But we just met."

"The keys- and they're gone. Alohamora!" The door clicked open, and again Luna took point, bursting through.

"Dad!" she cried, rushing to hug a man that he hoped was her father.

"Any others in the house?" Albus asked him.

He concentrated, turning on the spot. "I don't think so."

He lowered his wand. "Well, at least Mr. Lovegood is safe. Pity the two got away, but it's to be expected a surprised wizard will simply vanish. Still, perhaps the house will hold some clues."

Meanwhile Luna was asking if her father was all right, having woken him up from the stunning he had been through. He seemed to be, saying he had been out in the yard last he recalled. He didn't know how he had gotten there or what was going on. She told the story while Lysanias and Albus moved about the house. It was starkly furnished, the desk and chair the only furniture in the room they had arrived in, and Lysanias took the note up. It was about where Luna should go and how she should arrive, which is what he figured. The rest of the house was empty, though it did have a dark room in the basement Lysanias got the sense Garrett had been in.

"Find anything?" Albus asked him when they met back up.

"Nothing. Just the second note." He held it up.

"I have had no further luck. Could I ask you to go back and get the time frame? I would like to know if our mystery assailants can be seen better through it."

"You noticed that too? That you couldn't look right at them?"

"I did. Most peculiar."

"I noticed it when I looked into the past of the letter. But I'll go get it." He *shifted* back to the office, then back again. The pair walked the house, looking for any clues in the past, but again the people in the house were impossible to recognize.

"I believe they have charmed the cloaks they wear to somehow dazzle our eyes, making them impossible to make out," he decided. "You can see the cloak quite clearly from the back, after all."

"So despite being in the same room as two of these 'sons of fey' we're still no closer to figuring out who they are?"

"I'm afraid that is the case," he answered gravely. "Come, let us see to Luna and get back to the school. I will send an owl to the ministry to look into records for this house."

"Meanwhile, maybe her wand can see something about the house we can't."

"A good suggestion, before we leave we'll ask her."

But it couldn't, and both father and daughter returned to the school to plan their next move.

Chapter 17
Heart and Soul
When: That afternoon
Where: Library

Albus had news for Lysanias that afternoon, coming to find him in the corner of the library he was practicing wand movements. He had found a painting of a witch in there who could tell him how close he was coming to getting them right, so he sat and ran through the list again and again.

“Good afternoon, headmaster,” the painting said as Albus turned the corner.

“Ah, good afternoon. Lysanias, if you have a moment?”

“Of course. Was anything discovered?” He put the wand away.

“We’ve had a proper sweep of the house by several aurors, and we’ve discovered a few things. The house is very carefully warded against any sort of detection magic we could think of, probably why you couldn’t get any answers from the universe about this group. There are some spells on the walls even we aren’t familiar with, probably why both you and Susan were blocked. She was quite cross about that, as she still believes her magic superior to ours.”

“Is it?”

“Perhaps, perhaps. It is different in many ways.”

“And you said you aren’t familiar with these spells?”

“Alas, no. Just as with the spells that hide the identities of the people inside, they are unknown to me. Not that I know about every spell in existence, of course. Many spells are simply passed down through family lines and are not known to the general population. We are dealing with a powerful group here, so it’s no wonder they would take such strict precautions.”

“Some kind of secret society?”

“Yes, that’s our thought as well. The name Garrett shouted, having a house elf to order around, now this unknown magic? That seems to indicate more than just one person. Given their obsession with Luna and her teaching others to call out the power of their wands, it seems clear it has something to do with that.”

“You don’t think someone, years ago, figured it out and kept *that* to themselves, do you?”

“The possibility exists. For now, Luna’s other family has been warned, and two aurors are now assigned to watch Mr. Lovegood.”

He shook his head. “Controlling people, wiping their memory, using kids to cast killing spells, abductions, what is this group going to do next?”

“We can only hope they do not get too desperate. As time goes on, however, the chances another student learns to call out the power of their wand increases. They may become bolder if they feel threatened.”

He scowled.

“What are you thinking?”

“I’m thinking if someone in the class does manage to call out their wand, will they become a target? Would this group stoop so low as to break someone’s wand?”

“You’re right. The older students will have to be warned that’s a possibility. I fear they won’t be able to leave the castle and go to the village until this matter is cleared up.”

“Or... can they?”

“What did you have in mind?”

“If another student manages it and wants to leave, we can make it seem like they have. Get an auror here and I’ll make them look like the student. They get attacked and they’ll be more able to fight back.”

"A very good idea. I'll let you know, if it comes to that."

"And aurors themselves should be training to call out their wands."

"Oh, but they are. Luna has two after school classes. A general adult one I believe you've attended?"

"It's only once a week, I did go last week."

"And another for aurors, in secret, that meets more often. The entire organization is hard at work trying to master the technique."

"Excellent, that's good news. Actually, you may not want to keep that secret. Or at least let it 'leak' out a little."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean maybe if this group knows aurors are being trained too, it'll take attention away from the school. Sure, grab up a kid that can't fight back as well, but if aurors learn, the secret is out. They'll just have to deal. It won't be worth the attention of attacking school kids, and they wouldn't dare take on every ministry official."

"Garrett's parents were furious, and the ministry is taking it seriously even though he was returned. The word is getting out, if this is a secret society of some kind it isn't so secret anymore. All thanks to you and that ring of yours. Luna's death would have been tragic, and I don't know if Susan would have succeeded if the curse hadn't been at half strength. But that would have been that, Garrett would know nothing, and no one would be trained. They would have won in one stroke. Now they're nervous, and hopefully that will cause them to make mistakes. I'll talk it over with the ministry, letting the information out might be another avenue of attack. You do have good ideas, don't you?"

"It's been known to happen, from time to time."

"If you have any more, let me know. I'll let you get back to your practicing."

"I'll see you later."

That night, in the dream, Lysanias stood under a full moon and heard some loud crashing sounds in the distance. He was standing on a tall column of stone, and he looked around. There in the distance was a huge creature, smashing up everything around them. It was hairy, had teeth the size of his leg, and could pulverize the similar stone columns around him with just one blow.

Er, what the heck is this thing? It's taller than the pillar I'm standing on.

Looking around there was a man, a green man, hopping around the ground under the creature trying to stop his rampage. *Should I help somehow? But this seems a little beyond even me. Is this some sort of warning?*

Suddenly the man looked up and a beam of energy shot out from him, impacting the moon a few seconds later and blowing it to pieces.

Lysanias woke up.

Okay, note to self. If you see any huge monkey looking creatures or green guys that shoot energy beams out of their fingers, give them a wide berth. How fast was that attack to reach the moon so quickly to blow it up? Wait, how did we see it blown up so fast? I know what light speed is now, it must take some time for the light that hits the moon to reach the earth. Weird... Still, the message was clear, I think Luna's in danger. I'll have to tell her.

He did, and she promised to stay away from anyone that looked too lean, mean, or green.

A month went by.

There were no more attacks, no more abductions, it seemed that kidnapping Luna's father was the last thing these 'sons of fey' were going to try. In the meantime, Lysanias got pretty good at wand magic, learning several spells, and the lifestreaming stuff Sparkle was teaching him. He could make a decent barrier, sense life energy and distinguish it from spiritual, and manipulate his own to do various things. When not training he was visiting with Rosalina on average every other night. He went with her on bikes, four wheelers, and even some strange looking craft he had no name for across the various tracks she had access to, even trying a few on his own. He was still months away from calling her out, but had managed to call the sword's power out at least according to Luna. It was very underwhelming when he told her he was ready to try for real and they got together one evening.

He held the blade up and sent energy into it, calling out the phrase he felt would awaken it. "*Awaken, Ragnarok, let all who feel your bite know change!*"

There was a release of power so he felt he had managed it, as well as feeling that the sword in his hand was awake in a way it hadn't been before, but as he looked at it nothing seemed to have changed.

"Er, did it work?" he asked. "This is what happened before so I couldn't be sure."

"I felt something," Susan told him. "Spiritually, the blade changed."

"It didn't change *shape* though. Isn't that required?"

"They *typically* did," Luna cautioned. "But I don't see that they would absolutely *have* to."

"So now what? How do I know what the power of the blade is? Rosalina seemed to know what she could offer me, but Ragnarok is either not saying or doesn't know. Just that he represents change. That's why I expected him to change, maybe become a different weapon each time? Or change with every swing to keep someone off balance? This is just his usual shape."

"I just looked through my glass at something and knew," Luna told him. "Same with Garrett, apparently. The shape suggested what we should do with it, and when we did, we just knew."

"So I should cut something?"

"Your way of waking it up suggests that. 'All who feel your bite?' It seems pretty clear the ability it grants you will be activated by it hitting something."

"Let's head outside, I'll hit a tree stump I guess, that should be safe enough."

So they went out to Rubeus' hut and found a tree stump, which Lysanias whacked with the blade.

"Disappointing," he said when it didn't seem to do anything his normal blade would do. The blue electric arcs lit the blade up, and it sank deep into the wood, but after that nothing. Lysanias wrenched it out again. "Why was the shadow avatar so fearful of this?" He looked down at the sword. *Maybe they were just tricking me?* "If I hadn't actually talked to the spirit of the blade and Rosalina, and saw what your wand releases can do, I would have said this was all a waste of time. I mean Garrett and you both got something amazing, I expected something equally impressive." *I just hope it wasn't the final release of the sword I should have taken, and that's where the real power was. No offense Rosalina, I'm happy to have you too. But I'm going to be quite cross with myself if I choose poorly.*

"There must be a reason, Lady Inari sent you after it specifically, right?" Luna asked.

"She did. I guess I'll just have to keep using it and see what happens. I'll keep it at, maybe try catching a bug or something to feed to it. I mean 'feel your bite' also implies it'll eat things, right?"

"That would be weird, watching a sword eat somebody," Susan admitted.

“Yeah, let’s hope it’s not that. Eating someone and turning them into energy? That would be a change all right.”

“Good luck.”

But hitting a bug (a mosquito, not something pretty like a butterfly or useful like a spider) produced no result, and so Lysanias let the ‘change’ go and slid the blade back. *We felt something happen, but does that mean it actually worked? If it had changed shape it would be obvious. But as mine didn’t, and the blade didn’t seem to gain any new powers, I can’t prove it. I guess we’ll just keep trying and see what happens. I didn’t change any, neither did what I hit. What are we missing?*

But no power manifested, though Lysanias was sure he was calling it out correctly, and another two weeks passed. Several people had called out their wand’s first form, and no more had been heard from the sons of fey. Lysanias believed that might be the end of it, but we all know that’s not how this works.

“I’m concerned about Garrett,” Rose said, sitting down next to him for dinner that night.

“Another blackout?”

She nodded, starting to fill her plate from what was sitting nearby. “He was caught trying to get out of the castle, had his wand released too. Said he wanted to measure it from the outside, but then two minutes later in the headmaster’s office he claimed to not remember the last hour.”

“It’s getting more frequent. Susan swears it’s isn’t a disease, her knife would cure it. And she tried *suppress curse* but that didn’t help either. What’s left?”

“What if we’re thinking about this the wrong way?”

“How so?”

“Forget the fact he tried to kill professor Lovegood. Say that’s a separate thing, he was controlled somehow into doing that. What does that leave us with?”

“Him almost dying, having half his soul put back in his body, and then starting to act weird.”

“Now maybe it’s just a symptom of all that, I mean we have no one to compare him to because it’s never happened before. But what if it’s not?”

“You mean something happened to his soul? Splitting it and putting it back together hurt him in some way?”

“Is a broken vase, glued together, quite as strong as it had been? That’s the only weird thing that happened to him before all this started. What else could it be?”

“I’m not sure. You’re right about the vase, even with magic there might be cracks too small to see. Humm... There is a technique I can use to see the soul. I’m not very practiced at it though. Amy and I figured it out back home. I suppose as long as someone didn’t resist, it would work. Never really had cause to practice it.”

“If only we could remove it, like that angel of death did, we could see it clearly then.”

“Didn’t Susan say something about having hers removed by a ghost? But even if we saw ‘cracks’ in it, what would we do about it? We would have to remove it and somehow repair it. I suppose Susan stuck it together in the first place, she could maybe do something.”

“I don’t know if I’d want anyone messing around with my soul. But knowing, that could be valuable. You want to look at mine, make sure you remember how?”

“You wouldn’t mind?”

“Does it hurt?”

“Hurt? No, I just look into your eyes for a few seconds. It would tell me certain

things about you, like how strong it is, or if you're a demon in disguise."

"I'm not."

"So you say."

"Go ahead then!"

"In a minute, I'll want dragonfly's help for this. Be right back."

He slipped away from the table and found an empty room he could chant in, feeling the spirit settle upon him and then walking back. By that time Garrett was there, and the two greeted each other.

"What would you like to know?" he asked Rose. "I can probably only get one piece of information at a time. General condition, how tainted it is, if you're possessed by something or not or if your soul has a disease, if you tend more towards being a warrior or protector of people, or your spiritual nature."

"How about just general condition?"

"You got it. Face me and I'll see what I can do. Try not to resist, okay?"

"Okay." She turned in her seat to face him and raised his eyes to meet hers. A few seconds later he looked away.

"Your soul is fine!" he announced. "I saw it pretty clearly, it was quite sparkly."

"Sparkly?"

"You saw Garrett's, it had a glow to it."

"Oh, I thought maybe you meant I was a secret fairy princess or something. But if they all look like that..."

"They all look like that. I mean I've seen a grand total of two now, Amy's and yours. Garrett's, I suppose, though they could look different that way I'd have no idea. But Amy's was similar though of a different type, being a nature spirit. More like she was her soul... It's complicated, never mind."

"That's it?" Garrett asked. "You want to do that with me? Just look at me for a few seconds?"

"It's a quick check, we might as well."

"I guess it's fine." He got up and went to the other side of Lysanias, who decided what he would see and met Garrett's eyes.

"That's funny," he remarked when it was over.

"What is? What did you see?"

"Not sure how to tell you this. Your soul seems tainted with something."

"It's what?" they both gasped.

"Let me try again."

"Okay."

He concentrated again, and tried to see the swirling shape beyond his eyes more clearly.

"Yes, there's something attached to your soul," he decided. "Later I'll augment my skill with magic and take another look, see what I can find. But we may have a partial answer."

"Wait a second though, that angel looked at my soul, didn't he? He said it was fine!"

"Did he really?" Rose asked. "I mean he didn't seem to care all that much. And he was looking for something else, damage caused by Susan."

"What are we going to do? Is something taking me over? Is that why I keep wandering around and then forgetting about it? Is that what made me attack professor Lovegood?"

"I don't know what we're going to do, I don't know much about the soul," admitted Lysanias. "The important thing is not to panic. And I suppose it could have happened before all this began, rather than after you came back..." He looked into the distance thoughtfully.

"Who's panicked? I'm not panicking," Garrett assured them, clearly panicked.

Lysanias gripped the handle of his blade. "Calm down," he commanded, pushing the thought into Garrett's head. "Panic isn't going to help anybody."

He started breathing easier. "Right, right, no sense being all upset about it," he agreed, calming instantly. "I know Susan, I know you, one of you is bound to be able to do something about this."

"Exactly." He relaxed his grip. "I can even make a request through the padform, maybe some other wanderer has had experience with this sort of thing."

"What does it mean, though?" Rose asked. "How could this have happened?"

"He was partially in Heaven for a couple of minutes, maybe he was shaking hands with someone up there when Susan called him back down."

"You think I ripped someone's arm off by accident?" Garrett asked. "Brought it down with me, and now it's growing inside my own soul?"

"It isn't big enough to be a whole soul, at least I didn't get that sense of things. Maybe."

"What does that mean, though?" Rose repeated. "Is he going to be completely taken over?"

"Maybe if we don't do anything about it," admitted Lysanias. "But we know about it now, so we can. It's been a month, and yes Garrett is getting worse but not that quickly. We still have time to figure out what to do about it. He's not going to change into someone else overnight. We'll go talk to the headmaster tonight, we can head to Susan's over the weekend like we did before. Meanwhile I can send her a message about it, so she can get something ready." He pulled his padform out and messaged her, slapping an 'ignore me' ward on before bringing it out from under the table. "She says she'll look into it, but doesn't think she has anything immediately that can help."

"Great, I take back what I said about her helping."

"Apparently some time ago her book held the soul of her father," he continued reading, "and could create magic overnight for her. That's been 'fixed' so she would have to research any new magic not in the padform on her own. And nobody likes to mess with the soul, plus it's considered pretty dark magic, so she doesn't remember seeing anything like what we need to separate two souls."

"Figures I would get the thing nobody knows anything about."

"Of course, there are people around who might know plenty about the human soul," Rose told them, looking up.

"Who?" both asked.

She pointed. "The castle ghosts."

Chapter 18

Soul Train

When: A few moments later

Where: corner of the great hall

Having flagged a ghost down the group went over to an unoccupied corner of the room to talk to them. Rose tried to push Lysanias forward to talk, but as usual he didn't want to speak up so finally Garrett himself did.

"What can you tell me about my soul?" he demanded.

"Er, I'm not sure I understand the question," they replied. This ghost, like all the others in the castle, was dressed in the way they imagined, being taught by Mertyl years ago that a ghost was basically how they saw themselves. Currently "dressed" in a cloud of butterflies, they clumped and hovered in front and behind the ghost quite convincingly. "We can't talk about the afterlife, never having gone there ourselves."

He waved that off. "I've seen portals to Heaven, that's old news at this point. I'm talking about *my* soul in particular. I know something is wrong with it, my friend here can see it. But we don't know what to do about it."

The ghost, strangely enough, seemed to be rather uncomfortable with this line of questioning, looking around for a means of escape. "Why ask me? What am I going to do about it?"

"Being a soul yourself, we just wondered if you knew how to remove one and maybe repair it," Rose told him. "We think some other soul is bound up with his somehow."

"Remove it? That is strictly forbidden!" he snapped, then stopped. "Should not have said that. What I should have said was nothing."

"So not only angels can do it," Lysanias said, eyes lighting up. "Can you show me?"

"What did I just say? If people knew we could just go up to someone, tear their soul out, and destroy it, you think we would be floating around this place happily like this? They would have researched magic to destroy or contain us."

"Look, we can do it in secret," he pressed. "Or just explain how to do it without demonstrating. If you can teach me, I can learn it. I'm from another world, I know all sorts of skills people here don't have. I'll then do it, and ghosts will be in the clear."

"But you'll have learned it from us, and if it got back that we know, again, it's over for us. Humans don't like knowing we can touch their souls, believe me. There's a good reason for that prohibition."

Maybe they did at one time, and it went poorly for ghosts?

"Wow, we're just leaning all sort of things here at school, aren't we?" Rose asked. "Heaven is real, there are angels of death, ghosts can remove souls."

"Not all ghosts can, or even know about it," he clarified. "Like Mertyl didn't when Susan went to battle Tom. She used magic to remove her own soul and Mertyl carried it with her. We later told her about it, but it's still a forbidden technique. We have to practice it, and not many get the opportunity."

I hear that.

"This is an emergency, and a great way of practicing," Rose told him. "You can help my friend and yourself at the same time."

"Oh no, no way!" the ghost protested. "I'm not getting in trouble with the council over this. I'm sorry, but his soul stays where it is."

"There's a council of ghosts?" Garrett asked.

"Oh crap- I'm not talking to you anymore!" He floated up and was gone.

"That was both extremely informative, frustrating, and useless all at the same time," Rose complained. "Now what?"

"We find a ghost with looser morals?" Garrett suggested.

"That ghost flies around almost naked, he was wearing butterflies for Pete's sake! How can they be looser?"

"Was he? I didn't notice." He looked pointedly at her.

"Bet you would have had it been a girl ghost!"

"Bet you I wouldn't have!"

"Let's go find one then! I'm sure there's one in a bathing suit or something around here. If I see you ogle even a little..." She trailed off dangerously.

"Fine! I'll show you!"

They stomped off.

Yeah, I'm just going to see if Susan's around to chat with. He pulled his padform out and went to the message app.

Susan, you around?

I'm here, what's up?

Discovered there's something 'wound around' or 'polluting' Garrett's soul, we think that's why he's acting funny sometimes. Is there anything your magic can do about that?

We could go into his soulscape like when I fought Tom inside of Harry. But that was a different thing, Tom's soul had suppressed Harry and locked him up. Garrett's is presumably still there?

Yes, I just saw something else when I went to look at it.

Tricky. There's no spell of 'soul purification' of that's what you're asking. We went in there to destroy, not separate. I don't know if we even could. And we wouldn't want to destroy this other soul, it could be innocent in all this.

I agree.

I do recall meeting a ghost, fighting one actually, that could pull souls out of the body and weaponized them. I wonder if ghosts around there could do something similar.

Yes, we already asked. They can, but they refuse. At least the one we talked to did.

Bummer. We somehow need to get that death angel back, maybe it could help. But would it?

If we told it what you told me, maybe. It did give the all clear in a courtroom run by Heaven, it might want to not get in trouble by having missed something.

Can we do it?

There is a spell to bring a celestial being to you. Description says it really ticks them off though. My advice would be to put out a general request on the forum. There are more people with these now, you must have noticed the tabs filling in?

I did, but I've been concentrating on the sword for now, like I'm supposed to.

Anyway, search for 'soul' in the book or ask on the forum if anyone has run into something similar. Or knows a gentler way to get that angel back.

Good enough, thanks.

Let me know how it goes.

I will.

Night.

Night.

So Lysanias looked through the book, but didn't find much on the soul, and reluctantly went to the forums. He hadn't been paying attention to that part but it seemed there was a question and answer section where people could get help. He thought a moment and composed a request.

Hello everyone,

I'm dealing with a situation here involving a soul. A boy died from a reflected death curse, carrying half his soul away to the local afterlife. A technique was used to bring it back, making it whole again, but ever since then he's been acting a bit strange. I took a look at his soul and there's something attached to it, like maybe a piece of another soul came back with him? Local ghosts refuse to help, even though they probably could. Something about 'forbidden techniques' like I wasn't from another world and could just say I learned it someplace else. He seemed rather adamant about it. Any of the following solutions would be a big help:

- 1) Can someone provide instructions on how to remove the soul and purify it? And put it back, naturally. I can learn any skill, that's not the problem. I just need good directions on how to do it.
- 2) I watched a local angel of death pull it out once. If I could see them do it again I could capture the skill and do it myself. Problem: How do I get the angel here again? Magic is a possibility but rather forceful. Is there another way?
- 3) Is there magic to purify a soul? I want to gently force out this other bit, not destroy it though, in case it is another person and not just Heavenly stuff brought back by accident.

Thanks.

With that he finished his dinner and went to bed.

The next day he was pleased to have his question answered, and a link to new information in the HubBook app. He looked it over at breakfast, scowling.

Have to remember to keep an eye on the forums, answer a question that's been asked to "pay it forward."

"You got an answer but you don't look happy about it," Rose told him.

"Yeah, is the answer I'm stuck like this?" Garrett asked.

"Not exactly. There is a more 'gentle' way of getting that angel back here. Much like summoning spirits physically, you can petition angels and make them appear before you. Doesn't matter if they're on Earth already or still in Heaven, they can be forced here and asked to help. Messing around with Heavenly power wasn't on my 'to-do' list though. I mean I don't think there are progenitors here, so maybe there was never a flood like on my world? But if there are angels there must be some kind of Allfather, and I'd rather not attract His attention. There are some warnings too. Heaven can, if you abuse the ability to summon angels, come and take that ability away."

"But this is sort of an emergency," Rose told him. "You're not trying to get this angel here to kill somebody, you want to fix Garrett. One and done."

"And what if they decide fixing him means killing him? Like they take exception to him having two souls and he'll have to die to release the other one?"

"Then we politely say 'no thank you' and think of something else."

"My name wouldn't be in his book, right?" Garrett asked nervously. "He wouldn't just kill me without it being my time."

"You're willing to risk it?"

"Let me think about it."

"Fair enough. I'll thank them for the info and see if anything else comes in. Otherwise I'll study these instructions and the ritual for getting them here. We'll have to do it in or near the forest, I'll need a lot of ley lines for this, to support them like I do spirits. I

won't be good at it, so I'll have to cheat with magic, but how powerful a being you can support is also somehow tied to your skill at it. Ley lines can help there, so it should be possible."

"Are there other angels you can call?" Rose asked.

"There's a whole list. I don't know if all of them exist around here, though. I mean I recognize phoenixes, and those wheeled angels which are very tough to get. But some of these look pretty freaky. I'd show you, but this ward isn't keyed to you."

"That's fine."

That night at dinner nothing else had come in, so Garrett agreed to risk calling the angel. "But I'd like you to have the sword handy, and anything else you can throw at them, if they decide I'm better off dead."

"I'm not *attacking* an angel of death!" he insisted. "Are you crazy? It's bad enough me just getting them here."

"Figured you would say that."

"Give me a few days to make sure I can do it, we can try over the weekend. Maybe he'll be less inclined to kill you on Sunday, I don't know."

So Sunday rolled around and the three went out into the forbidden forest, with permission of course. They were accompanied by a giant of man named Rubius, who seemed rather jovial. He was accompanied by a small dragon, that Lysanias felt was a magical construct, and acted more like a big puppy than a fire breathing, sentient being like he would find in his own world. Lysanias kept an eye out for a good concentration of lines, and found one. Lighting a small fire he called on the spirit of the dragonfly, then using the lines increased his skill at petitioning. He was pretty sure he knew what he was doing, and Rose held the padform up that had the ritual written on it. This apparently had been taken from a world like his own, as it required ten minutes, so he sighed and got started. But not before calling out his mountain spirit, and a spirit of wind just in case.

Ten minutes later a very startled angel of death was before him. It looked exactly the same, but had a small book in one hand and was looking at a watch with the other.

"Sorry to get you here like this Meltarth-" he began, but the angel held up a hand. It put the book away, then seemed to concentrate on something. Suddenly all sounds stopped, and even the leaves in the trees went still. Lysanias felt around, somehow time had magically stopped for nearly everything in the area, including Rubius and the dragon. It nodded. "As I was saying, sorry to get you here like this, but there's a problem with Garrett's soul. You looked at it before, so I thought you might be able to look at it again? Maybe tell us what's wrong?"

It looked over at him, thoughtfully, then back at Lysanias. They crossed their arms.

"You're asking why you should?" Rose asked.

It nodded.

"This is partly your fault. You said his soul was fine at the trial! Well, you said it was whole. But it's not. Lysanias looked at it, something is in there with it. Maybe something you missed? I know it's probably something caused by him dying and coming back, but he's the victim here! He didn't ask for Susan to do what she did. Is it right to punish him for that? Or leave him like this the rest of his life? What if that thing in there keeps growing? Pushing his own soul out? Wouldn't it be your fault, if you can do something about it?"

It tapped a bony finger against its chin, then nodded.

"Thank you!"

They held the finger up and wiggled it. Turning to Lysanias, they indicated their eyes, then pointed. It reached for Garrett, mimed pulling something out, then showing it. Then putting it back, Lysanias again, reaching in, then pulling something apart.

"You're going to show me how to pull the soul out, but it'll be up to me to separate them, is that it?"

They nodded.

"Very well."

They reached for Garrett, and Lysanias activated his eyes. Pain flooded through him, but he gritted his teeth and carefully watched as the angel seemed to look Garrett over, as if looking for the best place to pull the soul from. He seemed to draw something out, and there was the shining soul of Garrett, swirling in his hand. Something a different color swirled along with it, and the angel held it out so he could clearly see it. He then sent power into it, and Garrett winced, the soul grew darker. Then brighter again. Then the angel seemed to grip the other color and slightly pull them apart. It opened its hand and the soul flew back into Garrett. Lysanias' eyes closed.

"Thank you," he said. "I think I've got it."

"Release me," said Meltarth.

"Of course." He stopped maintaining the connection and the presence of the angel left. Lysanias felt wind start up again, and Rubius started moving around. *Time is back, I guess.*

"Let's go," Rose said, taking his hand. "We got what we came for."

"Did ye?" Rubius asked. "I thought I saw something for just a second, but it's gone now. Come along then."

The next day, Lysanias understood what needed to be done.

"First I'll draw your soul out," he explained. "I didn't take the full skill the angel possessed, just hopefully enough to get the job done. So you'll probably pass out from the shock. It won't be as gentle as it was before."

"Great, and why didn't you?"

"Because I don't plan on doing this again? I can augment my skill with magic, but that doesn't mean my skill is better. I'm just warning you."

"Fine, then what?"

"The angel showed me how to damage and repair a soul. I can use the extraction skill again to pull whatever is attached to you off, then repair any damage that causes. Letting you go will then make the soul fly back into you, and you'll wake up. Releasing the other one will make it go where it belongs to."

"No more blackouts?"

"That's the plan."

"Then let's do it."

"We'll do it after dinner, up in the infirmary. Your parents might want to be there, not that it's going to go wrong," he hastened to add. "But just in case."

"I'll send them a letter."

That night Albus, Garrett's parents, Rose, Susan, Luna, Sparkle, Jenny, and of course Garrett gathered in the infirmary. Susan must have been in 'powers mode' because she was dressed oddly, probably with some sort of *soul* nature not that he knew anything about that. His parents wanted to know exactly what was going on and what was to be done, so he told them.

"You're taking our son's soul out of his body?" his father asked. "You can do that?"

"That, and more. You'll be able to see the corruption or whatever is attached to him when I do. I'll separate them, then put the soul back. It should be easy." *With the*

sword I doubt he can resist me, no matter what my skill is. It seems to be force of will that allows this to happen, so I'm in good shape.

"And you've done this before?"

"An angel of death taught me the skill."

"An angel-"

"I have full confidence in Lysanias," Albus told them. "Plus, Susan is here and she has already brought him back to life once. Half back to life, half." He gazed upwards. "I'm sure between the two of them, nothing will go wrong."

"And this is the only way?" his mother asked.

"I know of no magic to heal the soul," he assured her. "Only destroy it. Come, let us not keep Garrett waiting."

He lay down on the bed and Lysanias used magic to augment his skill. Garrett nodded, and he put a hand on his chest, seeking his soul. Feeling it, he gave a yank and the familiar swirling ball of energy came to his hand. Both parents gasped, and he could feel their fear. He wasted no time, taking his hand off the sword hilt and grabbing the other color as it moved into position. Pulling, he suddenly got an image of a man, his face clear, who seemed to be in agony. He yanked, and the two souls came apart. The vision of the man left him, and both souls pulsed weakly in his hands. He sent them energy, and they brightened again. With that he let both go, and one sped back into Garrett while the other zipped off into the distance.

Now what was that all about?

Garrett opened his eyes.

Chapter 19

Breaking the Case

When: The next day, mail time

Where: The great hall

Garrett recovered just fine, and his relieved parents thanked Lysanias for freeing their son from the whatever it was that had glommed onto his soul. He said it was fine, he was happy to help, and they went on their way. Lysanias checked him out, as did Poppy, making sure his soul was purely his own and there were no lingering effects. He also did a quick spell, so he could still do magic which made Lysanias breathe a sigh of relief. With that out of the way everyone went their separate ways and the evening passed without further incident.

Now the next day, the owls were swooping in to deliver the daily mail when Garrett found something dropping into his lap.

“Your parents?” Rose asked.

“No signature. Huh, that’s weird,” he told them, opening it up. “Listen to this. ‘I don’t know what you did, but thank you.’ It’s not signed. Yipes!” He hastily dropped the paper as it burst into flames.

“What was that all about?” Lysanias asked.

“Didn’t want anyone tracking it back?” Rose suggested.

“You think it was from that guy who abducted me?”

“Why else would you not sign it, *and* make it catch fire ten seconds after reading it.”

“But why thank me?”

“I did see a man’s face when I was yanking your soul away from whatever that was. Maybe he somehow knew a piece of his soul had returned? I don’t know.”

“Wait a second,” Rose told them. “Garrett, can you call out your wand’s power for me?”

“Right now?”

“Right now. This is important.”

“Fine.” He got his wand out and held it up. “Let anything that can be measured be measured! Awaken, Tomario.”

Nothing happened.

He tried again, and again, but nothing happened.

“I thought so.”

“That wasn’t the spirit of my wand, was it? Will I never be able to call it out again?”

“Not *your* wand, no.”

“Huh?”

“Look, this all revolves around wands, right? Calling out their name and their full power. We know they have souls, or an equivalent, it can take form with our help.”

“So?”

“So what if what made you try to kill Luna was a *wand*? Not a spell, and that’s why it didn’t get washed off when you went through the front doors.”

“You mean a wand release that can control people somehow?”

“Exactly. What if you got chosen at random, as a student of Miss Lovegood. They slip their wand release into you, then control you to try and kill her.”

“But that didn’t work. I got hit with the reflected death curse instead.”

“Exactly. But with a wand soul that belonged to someone else inside you. Who knows what that would have meant.”

“Susan brought me back, maybe trapping the wand soul inside me, which has now been released. It fits, that’s why the guy was shouting to give his wand back. I hadn’t stolen it, the soul of it just couldn’t leave my body and reform as a wand!”

“What do you think?” Rose asked Lysanias.

“I think he needs to do the meditation and see if Tomario still exists. Because you never did, right?”

“True. I just sort of knew how. If I was getting help from the other wand, it would make sense that now I need to learn how to do it on my own.”

If you still can.

“This all fits,” exclaimed Rose. “We might have solved the mystery!”

“We could never really know though,” Garrett protested. “But I admit it does fit the situation.”

Two days later Lysanias had the moon blowing up dream again, and immediately messaged Susan about it.

*I’ve never had the same dream twice, and it felt more urgent somehow.
Just a second.*

...

...

I just asked with question magic, ‘will Luna be blown up?’ I got a no answer. Still, better keep an eye on her. She can’t be both blown up and not blown up. And don’t worry, while I could blow up the moon I have no desire to. And Silverstreak wouldn’t send anyone here that would.

That thought hadn’t even occurred to me.

Then you’re not nearly paranoid enough. Your dreams wouldn’t have to be figurative, right? Keep it in mind. Thanks for the warning, appreciate it.

Lysanias, however, was more cautious, and decided to forgo talking to Rosalina in Luna’s next evening class. (He did briefly, just to tell her what was going on, and she understood, being all about protection herself) He instead sat there with an ‘ignore me’ ward on, straining to look into the future. It was a good thing he did, because he started to get that tingly feeling that something was going to happen. He ripped the ward off.

“Get out of here, now!” he shouted to everyone, causing Luna to jump in surprise. “We’re all in danger, get out!”

The class was advanced enough to come out of the meditation easily, but wasted time looking around at what was going on.

“Shield charms and get away from the building!” Luna told them. “He’s not fooling around. Come on, come on!” The two of them hustled everyone away from the place but the sense of danger built and built. Finally Lysanias spun and created the strongest barrier he could around everyone. Green energy enveloped them in a dome and Luna cried out “Become Hard!” pointing her wand at it. Others with wands out cried “Complete Protection!” and other shimmering energy fields sprang into existence. A second later the place went up like a bomb had just gone off.

Which for all intents it had.

Debris and fire rained against the various barriers everyone had created, but not with enough force to cause any of them to drop. Lysanias let his go as the area cleared,

Luna lowering her wand and looking around. As with the rest of them there was a fair bit of shock on faces, but no one seemed to be hurt.

"My bag was still in there!" one man complained.

"I think I dropped my cell phone," said another.

"What's a cell phone?" he was asked.

"Everyone all right?" Luna somewhat more importantly asked. No one said they had been injured, and the other shield charms were lowered. Smoke and noise now returned. "Class dismissed?"

"Until we can find another place to have it I guess," Lysanias agreed.

"Did that building just explode?" someone said. (They were a bit slow on the up-take.)

"How did that kid know about it? He warned us, how did he know?"

"Maybe he did it!"

Oh crap.

"Everyone, start putting out fires," Luna directed. "We can figure out what happened later. For now we need to keep the fire from spreading and make sure no one got caught in the blast. Lysanias here is not the cause. Don't just stand there, use water making charms!" She pointed to a nearby fire, and the students turned and started to put out fires. Luna turned to Lysanias and hugged him. "That's two I owe you," she said in his ear. "Family tradition is, someone saves your life three times, you have to marry them. If I didn't know better I'd say that's what you were going for."

"I wouldn't take you away from Susan!" he protested. "I didn't even know about it. You really have that tradition?"

She laughed, then it turned to sobbing. "What's going on? Why are people always trying to kill me all of a sudden?"

"I don't know. But it seems the Sons of Fey aren't quite done with us yet. It's okay, Luna, we'll get to the bottom of it." He held her tighter until she calmed down.

Not long after Susan arrived, grabbing Luna up in a hug and admonishing her "I can't leave you alone for even an hour?"

"Sorry."

"It's all right. That spider sense of yours comes in handy there, Lysanias. I should make an imbued object with a *danger sense* spell in it."

"Spider?"

"Never mind. Thanks for keeping Luna safe. Hey, I know something I can do for you. Leave me your wand over the weekend and I'll make it unbreakable for you. It's one of my most requested services, so it's no big deal."

"That would probably be best, given it's just wood. I'll take you up on that, thanks."

"Exactly. So, that explosion... It wasn't magical, was it?"

"I'm not great at feeling out magic, but I didn't sense any afterwards, no."

"I'm not feeling any now. A mundane explosive, powerful enough to take out a whole shop? Very strange."

"Something else is weird. Look at the shops just next to this one. They weren't touched. Now maybe they have anti-fire charms or something but they're not even scorched. And buildings here are fairly close together, you think an explosion like that would blow up the walls to either side at the very least."

"You're right. That is odd." The group looked over and several witches and wizards on booms were landing. They all wore auror uniforms, and started putting up a perimeter wall and questioning people. "I guess ministry agents are here to do their investigation. When they're done they'll probably put the building back up with magic. Then we can look around with *Time Area* and maybe see who planted the bomb."

“Was it a bomb? My dream showed a green guy blowing up the moon with an energy beam. He didn’t throw something at the moon, he did it himself. Does that mean anything?”

“You think someone did this? Like an elf causing it to blow apart? They can do that, but not on this scale. I don’t think.”

“I don’t know. We know at least one elf works for these people, there could be more. Several working together might be able to do it.”

“The power of friendship is strong, just ask the ponies,” she agreed.

“Ponies?”

“Never mind. Let’s let these people work, I’m taking Luna back home where it’s safe.”

“I just hope these other people are safe. If they were trying to kill everyone learning to call out wands and now it’s failed they might start going after them one at a time.”

“Maybe I should call classes off for now?” Luna suggested.

“No. We’re not backing down over some mysterious group trying to kill you. That’s what they want. With the ministry involved there’s certain to be a break in the case soon. They can’t have buildings blowing up all over, now can they? Next class isn’t for a week in any case, we’ll see what happens then.”

“You and your *overconfidence*.”

“It’s my best quality.”

“Uh huh.”

“In any case, I’ll ask if any of them are in danger. If they are we can deal with that later,” Lysanias offered. “I need the practice in that anyway.”

“Good thinking. You can get back on your own?”

“Yeah, no problem.”

“Thanks again,” both ladies told him, and then stepped through back to their place.

What really caused this, and how are we going to find who did it when we’ve been unable to thus far?

Later that night Lysanias got a “no” answer to “are Luna’s students in immediate danger from the sons of fey?” so that made him feel a little better. However he got a “yes” answer to “is Luna still in danger from the sons of fey?” which made him feel a little bit worse. He couldn’t get an answer to “how is Luna in danger from the sons of fey” so either their warding prevented that specific information or it was too complex to be answered. He went to bed feeling troubled and slightly guilty he couldn’t be more help. Instead of feeling proud he had saved a dozen people’s lives that night, because that was like an hour ago so what had he done *lately*?

The days passed and nothing was found in or around the house that could have been the explosive device that blew it up. They sifted through the rubble looking for metal fragments or wiring or anything that could have been used but just house bits were uncovered. Finally magic was used to rebuild the whole place and Susan went through, rewinding through time to see if anything had been planted there. Lysanias also did various tests, touching the walls and trying to see the past, and asking various questions of the universe. As far as he could determine, the house hadn’t even blown up because every question he asked about explosives or elves was met with a negative. He couldn’t explain it, but eventually had to accept it.

The next class was slightly smaller, but most came back. Susan was there outside the door guarding the place, while Lysanias had already asked if the students were in danger that evening. They were not, but he didn’t exactly relax his guard. They might not be in danger because Susan was there and might need help fighting something off.

That class and the next went just fine, but two weeks and a day after the attack something curious happened.

“Say that again,” Lysanias requested.

“I got a notice that the ministry considered the matter closed,” Luna repeated. The wanderers group was at Susan’s shop after dinner, so Susan, Jenny, Luna, and he were sitting at a table in front of the letter Luna had received.

“But they didn’t find anything. We didn’t find anything. Your training center blew up! They’re just going to drop it?”

“That’s what I said! But somehow the people in charge of the investigation don’t see it as important enough to continue their investigation.”

“You think they’re being controlled, like Garret was?”

“If they are, we’re in trouble because it doesn’t get knocked off them through my dead magic area. Or they’re coming in a different way. Or whoever is behind this is in the ministry now.”

“So what do we do?” asked Jenny. “Neither of you has gotten any clue about this sons of fey group.”

“I even tried absorbing energy from a few people,” Susan complained, “hoping it would help to get an answer if I had a really good rating for my check. Nope, doesn’t seem to matter what result I get, because I’m not trying to break past their wards directly. If I had gotten a good look at that guy back at the house I could use that technique and it wouldn’t matter what barrier he was behind. But as I didn’t...”

“Wait a second, maybe we do have something,” Lysanias told her. “It’s troublesome, but I’m pretty sure I got a flash of a man’s face and location when I was pulling the soul away from Garrett’s soul. If we could somehow get that image out of my head and put into yours, you could use it for the spell. It was too brief to study for a teleport, I need some way of viewing it again and stopping that moment so I can study the room I saw.”

“That’s true, something like that would be ideal. I don’t have a spell to pluck a picture out of your memory though.”

“Couldn’t an elf help?” Luna asked. “You’ve always said they had various abilities your magic couldn’t easily replicate. Like projecting their senses and other mental stuff only they can do.”

“You know something, they might. I’ll head to the school tomorrow and we can talk to the elves. You’re free after potions class until lunch, right?”

“Right.”

“Great, I’ll meet you then.”

“Will the ministry like you poking around though?” Jenny asked. “If they consider the matter closed, but you keep investigating won’t that be troublesome?”

“I’m just going to help Lysanias here, who is just beside himself with worry, make sure that poor man got his soul back or whatever. Look at how upset he is!”

“Am I?”

“You are.”

“Oh, right. Woe is me, to think of that poor man not having his whole soul. Oh me! Oh the pain! I can’t sleep, I can’t eat, whatever am I to do!”

“You see?”

The group shared a laugh.

“I suppose if he just ‘happens’ to be a part of this sons of fey group you can ask him a few questions?” Luna asked.

“That’s right. Like how he controlled Garrett and made him use the death curse. Besides, they know enough to stay out of my way.”

Susan was standing outside the potions classroom when it let out, and both she and Lysanias made their way to the kitchens where the elves were working. They were all over the place, but Susan seemed to know who she wanted to see and went over to one elf in particular.

"Lysanias, this is Winky," she introduced. "Winky, this is Lysanias, a friend of mine."

"Winky is glad to meet you," she said, looking Lysanias over. "Winky feels much power in you, sir. Power like Winky's, if you don't mind Winky saying so."

"Not at all. I'm just hoping you can do something I can't."

She looked over at Susan.

"We need you to go into his mind and pluck out an image he had of a man. Then give that image to me. Can you do that?"

She brightened. "Winky can do that, miss! It is a bit harder to go into two people at once, but Winky has been practicing very hard!"

"Good. Let us know when you might be able to do it."

"Winky can do it now, is very quick!" She led them off to the side and had each sit down and take her hand.

"What exactly are you going to do?" Lysanias asked.

"Winky will go into your mind," she explained. "Then into the mind of Susan. Then if you can think of the time you saw what you want her to see, she will see it!"

"That's amazing! Can you teach me how to do that? Or at least tell me about how you do it so I can make some notes?"

"If Susan says this is okay for Winky to do."

"It's fine, Winky. He's a wanderer like me so there's no harm in it."

"Yes miss. Now, please let Winky in and we will begin."

Lysanias cleared his mind and tried to allow Winky in. She tried, but bounced off like he was a brick wall.

"Sir's mind is very strong!" she told them. "Winky does not think this will work unless sir's mind can be weakened."

"I can't be that- the sword!" He dropped her hand and started unbuckling the sword. "Sorry about that, sorry, should have realized. The sword strengthens my will, of course you couldn't get through while I was holding it. I'll just set it aside and we can try again."

"I should have remembered," Susan admitted. "I've held that sword. That glorious, glorious sword that I want so very, very much."

"Mine!"

She laughed. "I know. Fight you for it."

"No!"

"Come on! Please!"

"No way. Not unless you can offer up something of equal worth should you lose." *After all, she primarily uses magic, right? And I have a wall ring. Could I really lose to her?*

"I'll see what I can find."

With the sword put away they tried again, and while she didn't just zip in, she did manage to slip into Lysanias' mind. Then she tried Susan, who as we all know has a RESolve that's basically unbeatable. She basically threw herself at Susan's mind but was unable to get in.

"Winky is thinking wandering has strengthened your minds quite a bit," she complained. "What are we to do? The two of you together may be impossible, but I do not want the memory to be changed by having to take it and then give it to miss later."

"Let's enhance you," Susan suggested. "With magic!"

“Exactly what I was going to suggest,” Lysanias agreed. “With spirits though.”

“Winky does not take strong drink anymore, sir,” she told them.

“Not that kind- I’ll just show you.”

There was a fire right there so Susan put magic on her while Lysanias chanted for the firefly spirit, and then they tried again. This time was far easier, and Lysanias imagined himself in a movie theater, which he had been in by this time. Upon the screen he projected the images he got while pulling the souls apart, and there, slowed down, was the man. He was doubled over in pain but his face could be clearly seen, as could the room he was in. More than enough information to teleport there, by either means.

“Gotcha!” Susan crowed, grinning. “Winky, you’re the best!”

Chapter 20
Crime and Punishment
When: That evening
Where: Susan's shop

The wanderers group gathered at Susan's that night after classes, intending to travel to the location seen in Lysanias' memory. Lysanias had watched the elf Winky meld with another elf, which was good enough for his eyes to pick up despite it being mostly mental. They had to physically touch so that was enough for him to know when the attempt began and absorb it. He found he could also read minds now, something the elves said they had to study before they could successfully meld. So he must have picked that up as part of the skill. They had cautioned him, however, that trying to read someone's mind would alert them something odd was happening. It wasn't just picking someone's thoughts out of the air, it was psychically drilling into their skull and yanking their thoughts out. Even the most unpsychic of people could feel it happening. He could however use it to feel the thoughts of an opponent in combat to get a sense of what they were going to do, but he felt the force was probably good enough in that area.

Susan now opened a portal in the air and jumped through, two guns in her hands at the ready. Sparkle was at her side. The rest followed, Lysanias of course had his spirit out, his sword active, and his shield raised. Luna had her wand out, and last in was Jenny holding a shotgun. The place was quiet, the room dark, and most everyone felt around to see if anyone was nearby.

"Seems deserted," Jenny spoke up, the first one to do so.

"I think you're right," Susan agreed. She holstered her guns. "Let's have a look around."

The house was indeed empty, and looking out the windows seemed in the middle of nowhere. It was dark, so it wasn't that far from where they had come from, and Susan cautioned everyone not to touch anything, including the floor if there was a rug they could instead step on.

"Anything could be a trap," she cautioned, remembering a certain failed raid she had participated in. "It could teleport us away to who knows where. Keep your magic senses out if you have them."

"Right," they all agreed.

They went through the house with the time frame, and it appeared this was some sort of meeting place. The most notable furniture there was a circular table that in the past several blurry figures once sat at. Again, it was impossible to distinguish them or see any details, even hearing what they were discussing seemed impossible. Otherwise the place was mostly unfurnished, but did have a holding area in the basement with a variety of chains, hooks, manacles, and the like. Susan looked into the past of this area as well, and a variety of people had been brought there and tortured. Again the ones not manacled were unseen and unheard, but the victims were not. So at least part of the conversation could be heard, which was a lot of refusing to answer questions and telling the tormentors to do various lewd acts upon themselves. It was enough to realize those brought here either owed the people in the cloaks money, or had done something to displease them.

"If they can get away with all this," Susan said when they had all seen enough, "they must be a pretty powerful organization."

"We're going to find them, and bring them to justice though, right?" Luna asked.

"Undoubtedly. The question in my mind is how."

"First things first, we have to catch them when they're actually here. These 'visits' seem awfully spaced apart," Sparkle noted.

"I can take care of that," Lysanias told them. "With these." He pulled out a few wards and waved them around.

"I don't recognize that one," Susan told him. "What's it do?"

"These are made in a pair. I'll stick one in this room and the meeting room, maybe under the table where it won't be seen. The others I'll activate and stick to my sword. When they talk, their voices will be transmitted through the ward so we'll know they're around. We can then surprise them."

"They'll still just teleport away," Jenny protested. "Like last time."

"That's my job then," Susan told them. "I'll head outside, get a view of the house from that perspective. When we know they're here I'll head to the outside and lock the place down with a spell. I'm sure I have one that will keep any form of teleportation from working in an area."

"We won't be able to teleport in," Luna figured.

"I can blow the door up with a grenade," Jenny offered. "That should panic them."

"I'll go in first, reflect any magic they cast on me back on them. Then we take them prisoner and see what this is all about."

"Wait a second," Jenny stopped them. "Do those wards work both ways? If you're sitting in class and they walk past the table are they going to hear the class going on? Might be a bit obvious."

"I can take care of that," Luna told them. "I'll cast a one way silence charm. It's used mostly with babies, so they can't hear if a party is going on or something but still be heard if they cry. I saw it in a book a while ago, but I think I remember it."

"We can easily test it," Lysanias told her.

"Get the ward placed and we'll see."

So the plan was put into action. Luna did a circle with her wand, defining the area of the spell around the ward that had been placed, a quick X, then a wavy line down and up. Lysanias went into another room, shouted into the ward, then Luna shouted into her end. The spell had worked, only one way could be heard so they put the other one down and repeated the procedure. Susan said she had a good enough look at the outside to teleport back there, and the group left to head back to the school.

It was day 73 in the Hogwarts reality. Voices come through the ward, garbled as always but one was clear. They are pleading to be let out, that they will get the money. This was somewhat embarrassing to Lysanias who was in the library at the time, and caused those nearest him to look over in puzzled confusion.

"Ah, nothing to worry about!" he told them, running out.

He got Luna and they teleported to Susan's shop, then teleported outside so Susan could cast "*Grounding*" on the place. "Come on," she told them, heading for the door. Luna was about to cast a silence charm on the door so Jenny could blow it up but Lysanias held up a hand. "Wait." He concentrated, feeling the situation out. "There's four people, all below ground. Let's just go in quietly and surprise them."

There were nods and Luna instead unlocked the door while Lysanias got his spirit out. They crept through the house, heading for the stairs. Lysanias was in the lead, in case they tried any spells, and they crept down the stairs.

"You hear something?" a voice asked.

"Go check it out," a voice answered.

Susan pushed past him and Lysanias felt energy building inside her. "*Hypnotic field!*" she cast, filling the entire basement. It went silent. "Oh, sorry, got you guys too. Here, I'll break you out of it, just don't open your eyes." She closed all their eyes, then told them what was going on.

"There's three men here in suits, a fourth in robes who is chained up. Three wands, thank you very much." She took them out of their hands. "Now, this guy in front of the guy that's in chains seems to be the leader, he's the one that's all blurry still. Lysanias, how is your meld practice going?"

"I can probably manage it," he admitted.

"Eh, you'll be fine, he can't make resistance checks at the moment. Get in there and see who he is."

"Okay."

She guided him to the man and he concentrated, going inside the man's head. It was as she said, he had basically free run of the place, and a moment later came out to tell the others what he had seen.

"Okay, so there are twelve of these guys, the 'Sons of Fay.' We had it wrong. It's F-A-Y not F-E-Y, in other words they are descendants of some woman named Morgan le Fay. Some big shot witch during the time of Merlin. She figured out the wands thing, and kept it hidden all these years."

"That little... witch," Luna almost nearly cursed.

"Indeed. They've been powerful ever since, though only a direct son can lead the group. The others are more spiritual 'sons' of Morgan in the sense they've learned to call their wands out. Basically they're a crime syndicate. This poor joker here is heavily in debt because of gambling. They do drug running, control sex workers though he used a very different term for it—"

"I can imagine," all the girls said.

"Ahem, yes. Kidnapping, blackmail, oh, and the reason the ministry backed off? Yeah, these guys told them to. So that mystery is solved as well."

"How many sons are there?" Jenny asked.

"Twelve, at present."

"Of course there is," Luna sighed. "I guess the table is explained."

"We have one shot at taking them out. There is a protocol for getting all twelve here in an emergency. If we did that we could end the threat against Luna today."

"Let's do that," Susan decided. "Let's end the threat against Luna today."

"Don't be hasty," Luna cautioned. "We have to do this right."

"Don't worry, I'll be good. Now then, I'm sure the ministry will be interested in what you two gentlemen have to say, let's get you in a cell to start." She cast *teleportal* again, shoving each one through and closing it. "And now for you, friend. I have your wand. You can't get away. There are five of us and one of you. I suggest you just sit quietly and let us do our thing." She dropped the *pattern* so everyone could see again, and he scrambled back against the wall.

"Get me out of here!" cried the man in the chains.

"One moment," Susan told him.

"You want me to end his blurring charm?" Luna asked, raising her wand and pointing it at the other man.

"No, in order to sell this we'll need it. He can hang onto it, for now."

"You're Susan, Susan Felton," the man gasped. "How did you find us? We put every precaution in place!"

"You threatened Luna here. That gave me a bit of incentive."

"I didn't," the man protested. "That must have been someone else. I don't know what you're talking about."

"Still, you're a son of Fay, don't try to tell me you're not."

"Yes, that kid went into my head and I couldn't stop him. How did he do that?"

"Could be useful in your line of work? Too bad," Lysanias told him. "You can't do it."

"How come you can?"

"Did you forget about the being quiet part?" Susan asked him. "Shut up."
He closed his mouth.

"What about me?" asked the other.

"I suppose you think you're the victim here?" she asked.

"I'm in chains, how can I not be the victim?"

"Because instead of getting help for your gambling addiction, you just borrowed money to feed it. Or is there some other reason he's after you for money?"

"No," he mumbled.

"I have very little sympathy. Anyway, we'll get you sorted out soon, just sit tight."

"I can't do much else at the moment."

"Exactly. Now, here is what we're going to do..."

An hour or so later the stage was set. Jenny, wearing an 'ignore me' ward was standing behind the man with a shotgun held to his head. She had demonstrated it, so he knew his head would be blasted off if he made any sudden moves. The man was at the table, already seated. Luna, Sparkle, Susan, and Lysanias, also warded, waited for everyone to arrive around the room. Susan had been thinking hard about a plan, which she didn't really share with anyone else, just saying she had it taken care of. As people started arriving they sat down, waiting for the others. Finally all twelve arrived.

"What's this all about?" demanded one. "What's the big idea, calling a meeting like this?"

"*Hypnotic field*," Susan again cast, making the gangsters freeze in place. "I love that spell." The others had spell papers of *magic immunity* going, so they could see, and moved to gather up all the wands. Meanwhile Susan put the tracer spell on each person while Luna canceled the spells on the cloaks with "end enchantment." (At least that's what Lysanias heard her saying.) Lysanias then got out his shield and passed them all through, then opened up his personal dimension and led them to where the cave exit was. The twelve were stumbling around, wondering where they were and what was going on.

"Gentleman!" Susan called to them. "Over here please, we're going to have a little talk about the future."

"Where have you taken us?" demanded one.

"Return our wands this instant!" another demanded.

"It's Susan," said the one they had met before. "You're lucky to be alive. Who pissed her off by going after her girlfriend?"

All of them looked at the others.

"Oh, bravo," Susan told them. "Very convincing. Don't worry, you'll all pay for it. Come, is there a table we can sit at around here?"

Lysanias led the sullen group a place they could sit down, and Susan got down to business.

"As I understand it you control a lot of the crime in both the magical and non-magical worlds, correct?"

They reluctantly agreed this was true.

"Great. You just got a new crime boss."

"Who?" they all asked.

"Me." She looked to the side. "I know you're proud of me, thanks."

Who is she always talking to?

They laughed and laughed and then as she stood there with her arms folded weren't laughing anymore.

"What are you doing?" Luna asked her.

"Ending crime as we know it. Trust me."

"Always," she said with a sigh.

“Good. Now, I’m going to write up a little bitty contract, and you’re going to sign it. Then you can have your wands back, and go back to your lives. But I’m going to run your organization. And we’re going to do it... my way.”

“What way is that?” asked one. “I thought you were all on the side of law and order and everything.”

“Yeah, what gives?” asked another.

“Basically, I don’t see crime going away any time soon. Agreed?”

They all nodded their heads in agreement.

“And what happens if I took you down, here and now? You.” She pointed.

“Uh, those below us would move up.”

“Exactly. This way you get to stay in power and everything, for the moment, remains as it is. But change is coming, and soon. I’m going to be going over everything your group does, and while some things are right out, some things can continue. In a modified fashion, perhaps, but continue.”

“I knew it!” one announced. “You really are one of us! All those stories were just a cover!”

She went over to him, nodding. Then grabbed his head and slammed it on the table. The others jumped.

“I am nothing like you,” she spat. “I said crime was ending, and I meant it. I just don’t see certain things as crimes.”

“Er, what?” one asked, timidly raising a hand.

“Let’s take sex workers,” she began, walking away from the man. He sat up again, rubbing his head. “The government refuses to keep those ‘in the trade’ so to speak safe. Instead they would rather lock them up, as well as those that would seek them out. That’s stupid. What two people do with each other-”

“Or three!” one piped out.

“Shut up,” said a couple of them guys.

“What?”

“Fine, or three, or more, if that suits you?”

“Oh yeah!”

We know what his specialty is, I guess?

She sighed. “Whatever. What they do is between them. If they do it safely, in a clean environment, of their own will. But now they’re forced to do it wherever, and be put in danger all the time, and sneak around. Well, the government isn’t going to regulate it? Fine. We’ll regulate ourselves. Weekly exams for the ladies, protection while they’re working, clean establishments, the works. Vetted clients, who they won’t have to fear.”

“But it’ll still be illegal,” protested one.

“Not if the actual activities don’t happen on Earth,” she said cryptically. “And certain drugs, in moderation, are probably fine. Production of ‘M’ is going to halt of course, as well as anything else too addictive or harmful. But certain things are probably fine. Gambling too, in moderation is fine. But those that do too much of either, we’re not sending in people to break legs or anything like that. We’re sending *social workers*. Getting these people actual help, not just pulling them in deeper or locking them up. That just means they can’t be productive members of society anymore, which helps nobody.”

“What are you trying to turn us into, a charity?” asked one. “Don’t hit me, don’t hit me, I’m just asking!”

“Charity? No. You’ll still make a living. But instead of driving people underground, forcing them to sneak around to get what they want, we’re going to *help them* get what they want. They want a pretty young girl for an hour? Fine, we can help, as long as they play by the rules. They want to get clean and put their life back together? We’re going to help them do that, too. They want to get out of debt, like this poor guy here?” She ges-

tured and Jenny brought the man who had been in chains into the room. "We'll help him too, not just chain him up. And in future we won't let it go that far, making sure they have a reasonable gambling budget they can afford. You want to gamble, fine. Bring in your tax paperwork so we see what you make in a year, and we'll set a limit for you."

"People won't go for that!"

"Then they won't gamble. Any that start doing it elsewhere will be tracked down, and those places closed. Soon, the underworld will know it's Susan running things, and that unlike the ministry, I can't be bribed, turned away, or hidden from."

Did she forget it was me that got her the info about these guys? It was just luck I managed to see that face when we separated the souls. Ah well, it's probably fine.

She went on. "Anyone that doesn't play ball loses their magic. No discussion. No torture. No jail time. They just quietly leave the magical world and can make their way in the non-magical one. I'll track down murderers and make them sign contracts they can hurt no living thing. Things like that."

"You really are taking them over?" Luna asked her.

"Yeah, I am. Look around, Luna. Crime has existed since one person had something another wanted. I can't change that. I can't change human nature. I kill these twelve, another twelve take their place. I lock them up, their lawyers get them out, or again others take their place. But if I can control crime from this side, steer people who need help to that help but keep people who just want to have some fun having fun, why not do it? Maybe once I can prove it can be done, the laws can be changed for some of this stuff and actually make it legal. People have tried to 'solve' crime forever. It didn't work. Let's try something else. If this plan of mine doesn't work, fine, then we try something else. I am immortal, after all. I have the time to try as many things as I want until something works. But to just keep locking people up, rather than actually helping them, isn't reducing crime. Is it?"

"No," she admitted. "Jails are more crowded than ever. Something has to be done."

"Exactly. So, what do you gentleman say? Shall we make a deal?"