Chapter 157 Gundella’s Play

While I slept, Aurora hugged me from behind, and I spooned Iris, who lay in front of me.  Bedelia stayed awake using some alertness pills to use her abilities to spy on the Whispering Rock Clan.  I retreated into my mind space to see if my constructs had learned anything from all the material I had given them from the library.

I first noticed that I had over three hundred life essences accumulated.  I enhanced my flame ball twice, increasing it from lower tier one to upper tier one and then to lower tier two.  “You can practice with that in your mind space,” Nashima said, walking into the central room.  “It will help you prepare and understand how much damage it could do in the real world.”

Lilith was behind her, and I jokingly grabbed Nashima to put between us.  Lilith’s plan did not include the flaming ball.  She voiced her anger, “Caleb, you were supposed to focus on defensive abilities and physical attributes until your life essence cap reached four hundred!  This mini fireball is useless as you can bring out your aether pistols from your mind space for ranged attacks!”

“Come on, it’s a fireball!” I summoned it to my hand, and its size had increased from a baseball to a basketball.  The heat elimination off of it had also increased.  I was able to compress it with a thought, and the fire went from yellow-orange to blue and reduced back to the size of a baseball.

“I admit that is cool—I mean hot,” Lilith conceded with a smirk.  “But we need to prepare to fight the angelics.  At least you added thirty more to the cap.”  She looked at the banner, and it had my life essence 9/360.  I just needed to invest 400 more life essence invested in abilities outside of elixir creation, and I could start moving abilities from lower tier two to upper tier two.  It would be a major jump in power and bring me closer to matching the archangel Kushiel.

We traveled to the lower layer of my mind space.  It was configured as a small town for weapons practice.  I changed the entire area to appear as a small western town, like the O.K. Corral shootout.  My mind space had been growing incrementally with every enhancement.  Now, it was over two hundred and fifty feet across.  I had four buildings on each side of the street.  I set the sun in the sky overhead for maximum brightness.

Lilith and Nashima were on either side of me.  “I like it,” Nashima said.

Nashima was eager to see the fireball, “Throw it already.  Let’s see what a lower-tier two flame ball can do.”

I summoned the sphere again, and it hovered over my hand.  I compressed the sphere to baseball size, and a blue orb of flickering flame hovered over my palm.   I made a pitching motion and flung it into the saloon.  The ball struck the window and exploded in a ten-foot sphere of fire, blasting debris away.  Items caught in the sphere of flame were gone.  We all gawked at the destruction.  Nashima noted, “I think it could definitely kill most tier one beings.  Even upper tier one.”

“Would it harm Kushiel?” I asked.

“It might slow him for a second, but I do not think it will hurt him much.  Tier three beings are on another plane of power,” Lilith noted.  She looked at me surprisingly and conceded, “It was not a waste of essence.  How much aether does it take to cast?”

We went to the banner, and I willed the information to appear.  The lower tier 1 flame ball used one aether.  The upper tier 1 used two aether, and the lower tier 2 used four aether.  I could cast the spell at any strength level.  I could definitely see why demons never learned lesser magic.  It was just too easy to manifest the magical ability for these spell effects. I still planned to work on the lesser magic and my fine aether control.

Lilth said studiously, “Demons have an affinity for fire magic, so it was not as costly in life essence as other spell-like abilities such as healing.  We should explore other fire-related magics.”

“I agree.  Do you library thing, and next time I have life essence to burn, we can talk about it.”  I left them and returned from my mind space to the bed.

Seeing me waking, Bedelia said, “I could not detect them spying on us.  They have been discussing how to keep you here.  Gundella is trying to hire elite warriors from the southern continent to serve in your retinue, and she is also trying to purchase weapons for an elite unit for you to command.” She smirked, “She is going to break her accounts to persuade you to stay.”

I shook my head, “We are going to leave as soon as we are in the pyramid,” I got out of bed and indicated she should rest.

“She is already planning to delay your tour of the pyramid.  Well, she was at odds with the Fiery Snow representative that was sent here last night.  They wanted to meet you, and she refused.  Makes it hard to get you a tour. They control the pyramid and have many shamans in their number,”  Bedelia explained.

“Get some rest, and we will deal with it tomorrow.”  I pressed her to sleep in the bed with Aurora and Iris.   Vida was sleeping awkwardly in a chair, still upset.

Somehow, I was starting to become the center of a storm of orc political intrigue.  It seemed like the angelics had abandoned the governance of the planet as they had done on Earth.  The orcs were fighting for advantage against each other in the clan structure.  I watched the door while the others slept.

The fat, gray orc came to get us and bring us all to breakfast in the morning.  Once again, there was a row of half-naked orc women.  All thirty-six were there as Tevega was now clothed and seated at the table with Gundella.  Her standing must have increased in Undella’s eyes. The spread was impressive, and Aurora did not wait and started eating immediately as the first dish was placed down. I was surprised my companions did not give the row of bare-chested orc women a second glance.

Vida and Tevega were having a staring contest, and neither was eating. I took some fried purple potato onto my plate and a small stack of thinly sliced meat.  It was an orc custom to always start each day with meat, usually from a defeated foe.  I asked Gundella, “When do we leave for the pyramid?”

“Mid-day.  You should have time to teach my daughter this morning.  Tevega is looking forward to it,” she said smoothly.  I knew it was a lie; Bedelia said we were not welcome at the pyramid.

“Fantastic!  Are any of these women trained in combat?” I indicated the row of half-naked orcs.

The old orc pointed, “Sharn and Glasha and both caravan guards for Whispering Rock.”  Two orcs in the row stepped forward. The first had icy pale eyes, and her body was stocky with muscle, and a fair amount of scars were evident. I guessed her age to be in her late thirties, but I had not seen many orc in my time. If I was correct, the other was young, the youngest in the line, and maybe younger than Vida.  “Glasha is Sharn’s daughter,” Gundella supplied after I studied the pair.  Sharn had a defiant look, while Glasha seemed a little afraid but shared her mother’s deep blue eyes.

“And they are of your Whispering Rock Clan?  They do not appear…willing.”  I said it as diplomatically as possible.

Gundella was not phased, “Their clan, Molten Fist, is subservient to the Whispering Rock.  Our bloodlines have mingled for generations.”

The veins standing out in Sharn’s neck told me it was not a willing subservience.  I quickly stepped into my mind space.  “Lilith, I was planning on fighting Tevega and these two warriors at the same time, but it looks like I need more information.  What is a subservient clan?”

Lilith pulled a book from Rincewind’s library.  Quickly opening to a page.  The action was unnecessary, but I humored her. “A subservient clan is a clan that owes a life debt to another.  Usually, they pay in terms of generations of service.  Something like my great-great-great-grandchildren will serve your house in whatever capacity required of them.”

“Interesting.  Is it always three generations of service, or does it vary?”  I asked.

Lilith finger to a page in the book, “It varies from two to ten generations based on the debt to be repaid.”  I nodded, thanked her, and returned.  My mind space was becoming my own personal wiki for the supernatural world. The more knowledge I added there, the better.

I addressed Sharn, “How many more generations of subservience does your clan owe the Whispering Rock?”

“Seven after my daughter,” she said steelly.  I had a dozen more questions about how this form of orc slavery worked, but this was not the time.  I proceeded with my plan.

“Tevega, we can continue our game from last night, but I need exercise and a challenge.  We will add these orc warriors to the mix,” I indicated to Sharn and Glasha.  “You only need to score a single strike to earn my seed.  These two will need to strike me three times to earn the honor.”  Glashsa looked to her mother with the same pale blue eyes for guidance.  I could tell neither of them were interested in being my partner.  I added, “If you do strike me three times and do not wish to enjoy my cock then I will not be offended.”  I figured that was enough to let one of them win and not have sex with anyone today.

Gundella stood slightly irritated, “I really hoped to see Tevega mature under your guidance, Champion Maestro.  How about we give her an hour to strike you before including the others?”

“No, I think I only wish to train for an hour in total this morning.  Three at once is my preference.”  I stood and walked to the orgy room, Vida walking smugly right behind me, followed by Aurora, Bedelia and Iris.  Tevega and Gundella were already consorting with the two orc guards.  They were probably planning to have them force me into Tevega so she could get her final strike.

The orgy room was as I remembered, but this time no one was behind the fake wall as everyone moved into the room to stand in front of it.  My three opponents were also dressed this time and not oiled and naked.  There was no ceremony, and servants brought drinks to the spectators.

I faced off against the three. The mother and daughter came at me together as a distraction.  I kicked the young Glasha into one of the walls and did a judo throw on Sharn, slamming her to the floor.  It happened so fast that Tevega was alone, and I grabbed her wrist, spun her to the ground, and pinned her as I had done dozens of times last night.  She activated her enhancements, but it was too late as she struggled beneath me.

“Not good enough,” I whispered in her ear.

Sharn, the scared warrior, recovered quickly and was already charging me.  The anger in her eyes at her daughter’s abuse and her own poor showing drove her.  I stood and kicked Tevega in the ass, sending her sprawling.  “Good, Sharn.  I was worried you had no fight.” I smiled as I imagined an orc would. I could see the approval in Vida’s eyes, and Aurora was amused. Bedelia was studying everyone’s reactions, and Iris looked worried for my safety.

“Champion or not, you will taste my fist today,” she snarled.  I thought it was cute how she was trying to be tough. She launched into an attack of basic martial arts, which I easily blocked.  Tevega recovered and sought to attack me from the side.  She had enhanced her speed, but I just grabbed Sharn and threw her at the Tevega, watching them crumble into a mess of limbs. Glasha did a leg sweep from behind me, only to have her foot stop dead on my leg. She winced in pain.

I turned slowly, “Good young one. That is one strike for you!”

I grabbed her ankle and flung her into the wall again. This was kind of fun. Tevega, with her enhancements, recovered first. Her rush was wild and undisciplined. I dropped and rolled, taking out her feet and sending her to the ground. This time she rolled, came up quickly and attacked me from behind while I had to deal with Sharn. The only true warrior I faced was cautious and trying to delay me so Tevega could get her strike.

I spun at the last moment and punched Tevega in the face, breaking her nose and sending her sprawling and dazed. Sharn punched me in the kidney before I rolled away, “Great strike for the warrior!” I sounded condescending, but Sharn did not rush in. Instead, she reformed with the others as they gathered themselves. Tevega’s nose was running blood, and Glasha was limping. Vida was smiling happily at the abuse I was handing out.

I was not worried about injuring them. They had shamans with healing. I threw them to the floor with judo throws, knocking the wind out of them. I stepped out before they could recover and reach me. I could tell Glasha was not into this fight and was only working at her mother’s encouragement. I just needed to make sure Tevega did not achieve a lucky hit. I gave up another strike to Glasha, she punched my shoulder from the side and limped away quickly—I think I damaged her back one of the times I threw her into the wall. I acknowledged the strike, “That is two for Glasha! Will the young one win the day?” I tormented the three.

I could see Gundella’s eyes going hard with anger. It was obvious that I could control everything that happened. I was playing a game here and could keep her daughter from the prize without much effort. I let Glasha get a strike on me next, a solid punch to my jaw. “Looks like the next one wins!” I goaded the three of them—all of them now at two strikes each.

Tevega came at me first, using every ounce of physical enhancements she had achieved. She was slowly increasing them with practice up to her new lower tier two core but was still in the upper tier one range. I got behind her, spun her to the ground, stepped on her back, I pulled on her long black ponytail hair, forcing her head up and immobilizing her.

I blocked Glasha’s kick, grabbing her ankle, and pushing her back while still holding Tevega’s hair. Sharn attempted to bowl into me, and I dodged, but she got a sneaky leg snap kick into my thigh. I could have blocked it if I let go of Teveg’s hair, but I didn’t. “Winner, winner, chicken dinner!”

I stepped off of Tevega and let the three sweaty women catch their breath. I think I came off as a pompous arsehole and a domineering warrior. Just what I wanted. I turned to Sharn, “Guard Sharn of the Molten Fist Clan. My cock is yours to do with as you please.”

 I tried to grin as I studied the sweating and exhausted woman. The tight shirt she had put on was torn and drenched. Her left eye was swollen shut, and purple bruises dotted her white skin. She caught her breath. “Champion Maestro, I wish to give my prize to my daughter. Teach her as you have taught Tevega.” Glasha looked shocked at her mother, and I was confused.

“I did not say you could pass the reward to another,” I voiced my disappointment.

Sharn immediately fell to one knee, “Please, Champion. Your training may one day save her life, and if she birthed a son with old blood like you, her place would be secure.”

I looked at the spectators. Gundella was furious, either for her daughter having failed or for Sharn not going to Tevega. Vida was just as angry as Glasha was her age or younger. Aurora was studying me, curious about what I would do. Iris and Bedelia had backed away from the group and were talking.

“I can appreciate your concern for your daughter’s well-being. I agree to your request. After we tour the pyramid I will make good on it.” I said, giving her a slight nod.

Gundella stepped forward, her unhappiness bleeding through, “Well, if we are to make it to the pyramid today, we should leave soon.” I cocked my head and nodded. Bedelia had a confused look as she was sure the matriarch had a verbal altercation with the Fiery Snow Clan, who controlled the pyramid.

The next hour was spent getting ready for a procession to the pyramid. Gundella got me an outfit in her clan colors, but it was more presentable than my transit clothing. We took the massive steam vehicle. Gundella was dressed in her house colors and looked smug, sitting next to me. Something was definitely up to something, and she had some type of plan. As long as we got close to the transit thread, I would open the portal and take my party through.

Iris, Vida, Bedelia, and Aurora were seated across from us in the cab as we took the tank-like vehicle through the city. Once again, she left the windows open so everyone could see I was in her vehicle.

When the vehicle stopped in front of the pyramid, the twelve guards of the Whispering Rock Clan formed on either side of the walkway. We stepped out and walked toward the pyramid. It was massive and, besides its glossy black exterior, reminded me of the pyramids in Egypt.

As we approached, the transit thread could be seen by me shooting into the sky from the very center of the pyramid. It had been built right on top of the access point. The guards did not follow us, and in the large archway entrance stood seven ice orcs in white robes and three large males in armor. One of the males was tall, almost as tall as me. He was of the old blood.

Gundella talked as we walked, “Seven shamans from the Fiery Snow Clan and three warriors from the Haunted Waters Clan. One of them is Vakgar, the strongest orc in the city.”

“Is this a friendly meet and greet?” I asked but already knew the answer. Gundella had worked this confrontation to increase her own standing in the city.

“They will challenge you in some manner. Having seen your prowess, I doubt you have anything to fear, even from Vakgar. He has seen many battles but long in the tooth,” Gundella said confidently. Maybe wearing her house colors had been a mistake.

We soon stood before them, and Gundella pronounced, “Champion Maestro has spent the night under my roof and taken my daughter’s gift. He is under Whispering Rock’s hospitality and can not be solicited by either Haunted Waters or Fiery Snow.”

I looked to Vida, who shrugged. She was not aware of the finer points of ice orc clan culture. I had walked into this with Gundella spinning me along.

The large orc of Haunted Waters, Vakgar, I presumed, stepped forward, “We challenge his right to breed as he has no beads to prove his worthiness.” Of course, there was going to be a fight. On the plus side, it looked like I was going to get a bead.