

Morgana's Gift – Part 10

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Interruption Three – Thunderstruck

“I thought I told you *not* to leave the house while I was gone,” Miriam said to him for what felt like the seventh or eighth time in the last ten minutes. “I was *very* clear on the matter.”

“And I told *you* that I felt almost compelled to go out, and that it was also this damn Midas Day thing that I was warned about,” Kevin said to her with a sigh. “But I can see you don't believe me, which is why you're going with me to talk to the wizard.”

“You keep saying that,” Miriam replied, “as if constantly saying the word 'wizard' over and over again is going to make it sound less insane.”

Kevin shrugged. “I don't know what else you want from me. I'm being as open and honest about all of this as I can be, so it's up to you what you do and don't want to believe.”

“Why are we walking there, anyway?”

“It's not that far, and I feel like for some strange reason the only way to approach the bar is on foot,” he shrugged. “You don't believe in magic anyway, so you can see all this for yourself.”

“If I see anything that freaks me out, I'm yanking you out of the bar and taking you home.”

“I think it's really *not* up to you, but I guess we'll see. That's the place up there,” he said, as Geoffrey's Gambit came into view. The Liquor Outlet next to it was in far better shape than he'd seen it a few weeks ago. The window that had been plastered over with cardboard had been fixed, and bars had been put over each window to give the building more of a fortress vibe. Even with all the imposing bars and grating, however, the store looked less hostile than it had before, as if an actual effort was being put into keeping the building in less dismal shape. It wasn't until his second glance that he noticed one of the windows on the Liquor Outlet was now a stained glass image similar to those on the shop next door, this one portraying a giant man cutting into his own arm, the blood dripping out on top of a keg, the bottom of which filled the mugs of dozens of tiny people.

Geoffrey's Gambit itself hadn't changed at all, and still looked like it didn't belong in a Los Angeles neighborhood, with its wooden front and almost frontier vibe. None of its windows had any bars over them, and the only sign of outward modernity was the neon OPEN sign illuminated in the main front window, the lone of the tavern's glass that wasn't stained glass.

“You're telling me that there's a wizard in yon olde timey pub-y?” Miriam said.

“You just keep making jokes and we'll see if he turns you into a frog or something.”

Kevin and Miriam entered the tavern, and he waved to the bartender. “Hey there, Seamus,” he said to the giant monster of a man. “How they hanging?”

“A bit sore an' a bit t' the left,” he responded, his voice still dripping with Irish brogue. “He's in his booth in th' back waitin' for ye.” He reached behind the bar and pulled out a tall wide brimmed glass, setting it atop the wooden bar. “Your usual, I reckon? An' fer the lady?”

“The lady will have a club soda,” Miriam said. “She's working.”

“OooooOOOoooo...” Seamus said with a laugh. “As m'lady wishes. I'll have'em back for you in two shakes, but best not to keep the old man waitin'.”

“I heard that, Seamus,” the voice of Merlin said from the back corner of the bar, as the bartender stuck his tongue out at him and tossed two fingers in the air in his direction.

The two of them walked deep into the bar, heading towards the booth in the far back corner. Merlin was nestled into it, his back to the door, and for half a second, Kevin wondered if that was bravado or just disregard on the mage's part.

Merlin looked much like he had last time Kevin had seen him. He still had fingers covered in rings, his hands covered with tattoos of all sorts of unusual symbols and drawings, all something Kevin suspected was part of the man's magical defenses. Instead of the pin stripe suit, however, now he was wearing a Panamanian hat and a Hawaiian shirt that hung incredibly loose over the man's wiry frame,

his exposed chest covered in a thick nest of black and gray hairs. He also had on large wooden circular glasses over his eyes, and he was writing or sketching in a moleskin notebook. Off to one side was the same copy of "Infinite Jest" he'd seen weeks ago, and he thought the bookmark looked as though it hadn't moved.

There was a woman seated across the table from him, somewhere in her early twenties, pretty enough, Kevin supposed, but it was Los Angeles, and nearly everyone was pretty enough. She was dressed quite provocatively, with an incredibly low cut top that seemed like her generous tits were threatening to spill forth at the slightest amount of encouragement. She had blonde wavy hair that hung down to her collarbone and a piercing set of light blue eyes that refused to look away from Merlin. In front of her was a rolled up scroll of parchment, and her hands were folded atop of it. Her lips were painted a bubblegum pink, and she was fidgeting impatiently.

"I signed your damn contract," she said to him. "So do I get it or what?"

He tapped his pen atop the page he'd been doodling on, as if he was considering it for a long moment before he set the pen down and moved to rip the single page out from his notebook, taking it in his slender hands, folding it in half before placing it down on the table, setting his palm atop of it.

"And you're quite certain you read that contract thoroughly before you signed it? You're willing to do all the things it asks of you without reservation? You have until you pick up the paper to change your mind," he said, sliding his palm and the paper across the tabletop from his half of the table to hers. "I wouldn't want to be accused of being unfair."

He lifted his hand up and she pushed the scroll across the table at him before grabbing the sheet of paper greedily, tucking it into her cleavage, as if pressed against her tits was the only place she felt like it would be safe. "Whatever it is you're going to ask me to do, it'll be worth it."

Merlin shrugged with that millenniums-old grin. "Then the only final piece of advice I have to you is to follow the instructions *precisely* in every way, shape and form. Practice the words out of context before you go through the ritual, because even the slightest mistake can have disastrous repercussions that would be no fault of mine."

"As long as you've got pronunciation guides on the paper, I'll get it just fine," she said with a viper's smile. "I'm quite exceptional with my tongue."

"I'm very certain that you are, my dear," Merlin replied, placing his hand over the scroll, taking it off the table, tucking it into a satchel that rested alongside him. "Go. Enjoy. I will see you soon enough to collect on my end of the deal."

"But the contract said—"

"I know exactly what the contract says, my dear, and I assure you that I will honor it to the letter."

The woman didn't seem to know how to respond to that, so she simply nodded and slipped out of the booth, sliding past Kevin and Miriam, keeping a comfortable enough distance that Miriam didn't seem to feel the need to put herself between them.

Kevin moved to slide into the booth and Miriam slid in next to him, positioning herself so she could keep one eye on both the door and the woman who'd just left, as if she expected her to return at any moment. "So you're a wizard, hm?" Miriam said to him. "You don't look like much."

"You also look too lovely to be a protectorate, daughter of Moses," Merlin said, amusement spread across his face, "but I won't prejudge if you won't. I imagine your beauty must be quite a detriment to your previous career choice. Your new role as the guardian of Morgana's savior won't have any such detriment. I suppose I do not have to guess as to the reason you've come by?"

"You told me to the day after what you called 'Midas Day,'" Kevin said to him. "What the fuck was that?"

"That, my dear boy, was you getting a little touch of chaos, something to liven up your life some, and the gift that Morgana has given you," the wizard said, reaching over to his cup of tea, picking it up to take a sip from it. "Did you enjoy it?"

"I think I'm lucky to have *survived* it," Kevin said, knowing the expression on his face was one of discomfort.

"Pish posh, bish bosh, boyo," Merlin replied. "You will always be as safe on Midas Day as you would any other, if not safer."

"Somehow my bodyguard mysteriously found herself busy on that day, and I can't say that makes me particularly safe."

"Yes, well, the first Midas Day has to establish some of the ground rules of the game, and I know your guardian is extremely capable, so I simply diverted her for the day, but she will be by your side for all the rest, if it makes you feel any better, however *her* safety is not as guaranteed as your own."

"So what the hell *is* Midas Day?"

"I thought it was rather obvious, but I suppose I can explain to you a few of the broadstrokes and you can simply discover the rest."

"Or you could tell me everything?"

"My boy, what would be the fun in that?" Merlin grinned, taking a sip from his tea. "Every Midas Day, you have a challenge before you, but I won't reveal what that challenge is. What I will say is that every hour that goes by where you haven't completed the challenge, your lure range expands, and I mean that by distance not desirability. You'll become ground zero of your own little beautiful apocalypse. You fail the day when you have a sexual release with a woman you've never had one with before. But be warned, the longer the day goes on without success or failure, the more intent the women will get. By sundown, they will show a sort of relentlessness you have yet to witness in your lifetime, the sort of thing that will both wind you up and chill you to the very bone. One at a time, several at a time, working in tandem, competing with one another... you will be swarmed with female flesh en masse until you cannot even trip without falling face first into some pussy."

"What a way to go, I guess," Miriam said with a laugh. "And you ensure his safety?"

"As much as anyone possibly can, my dear. None of the women will harm him, and no women who would bring sickness to him will look his direction. Also, none too young nor too old. I want him to enjoy the experience, even if it is lined with a bit of fear."

"More than a bit," Kevin replied. "Yesterday I was chased off a beach, run down the street, grabbed into a van, mauled by four women and then dumped on the side of the road without so much as my pants pulled up. That was awkward."

"But you *did* climax with them, didn't you?"

"Yes, but almost against my will."

Merlin rolled his eyes. "You can lie to yourself, Kevin, but lying to a mage is significantly more difficult. You will always *enjoy* Midas day, but it will come with moments of shock and fear, points where you feel like you are being overwhelmed."

"You're not going to tell me what the challenge is, though?"

"If I told you that, it would become too easy," the wizard laughed. "But I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give you a chance to win a single clue, something to start you down on the right path."

"What do I have to do?"

"Nothing," Merlin laughed. "Which is what the problem's going to be. Seamus, can you run next door and grab Victoria?"

The bartender nodded, then realized the wizard couldn't see him nod. "Aye, m'lord." He glared at Kevin for a second. "An' don' you be helping yourself to the bar while I'm gone."

"You certainly do like your games, don't you, Merlin?" Miriam said to him. "What if I were to tell you I didn't believe in magic?"

"I would ask what it would take for you to believe me?"

"Something completely impossible, something indisputable, something that there is no possible way it could be false or fabricated."

Merlin grinned, mischief glimmering in his eye. "I could provide such a thing, but as with all things, there is a price. I will set this price low, however, and all it would cost you is a secret. One singular secret."

"I'm full of secrets," Miriam said, her own eyes full of mirth. "I'm certain I could spare one."

"Ah, but you don't get to choose which one. I will extract one from you, one of real worth, one that you won't even know you'll be saying until the words have already left your lips. Is that a secret you're willing to surrender?"

"Only if what's given in return is of equal value. Not some quick thing, but something worth the price that's paid."

"Oh, I think that can be arranged," Merlin said, picking up his notebook, looking through the pages. "But for something like that, there will be one more stipulation with it."

"And what's that?" the Jewish girl next to him asked.

"You will have to care for what I am going to gift you, for the rest of your life," he told her. "This is no momentary flash in the pan. I am going to bond you to another living creature, give you a companion for your life. Are we agreed?"

"Since I don't believe in your magic anyway," Miriam said, "then I agree. The deal is struck."

Merlin chuckled, tapping a page on his book. "Then let us begin. The price and then the profit." He read a few lines from his book and then his fingertips crackled for a moment, a spark leaping between him and Miriam. "Alright, you may the price."

"I don't..." Miriam said, a confused look crossing her face before she turned to look at Kevin, surprise on her face as she found herself beginning to speak. "Kevin, I must confess to you that I have been listening to your album nonstop since my arrival, and while we've become good lovers, I want more than that. I have fantasized about bearing your child, about you shoving your cock inside of me and breeding me, not like a woman but like a bitch in heat, like a beast, to be pumped full of cum over and over again until I know for certain there's no way you couldn't have knocked me up. I do not want to be your wife. I do not want to be your number one. But I want to give you the greatest thing I am capable of. I want to give you a child, from my loins and yours. I want to be bred. I am so scared to admit this, but I want this more than anything I have ever wanted in my entire life." She looked at him, and slapped her hand over her mouth, her eyes starting to water up before she peeled her hand away, looking at Merlin. "You *bastard*," she hissed at Merlin, pointing a finger angrily at him. "If you do not live up to your end of this deal, I will end you."

The dark skinned mage waggled a finger back at her. "Of course I will live up to my end of the deal. Watch and learn what true magic looks like." He grabbed a pack of matches from next to his tea and opened the booklet, tearing a single one off before striking it, letting it spring to flame. Once a lit, he tossed it upwards into the air and the flame began to swirl and bend until a form began to solidify within it.

A few seconds later, a tiny little green dragon, no bigger than a few inches, landed atop of Miriam's fingertip, clinging to it with minuscule claws that sunk into her skin enough to him give purchase, but not so deep that they broke the skin.

"Miriam," Merlin said to her, "I give you Strazo. Say hello Strazo."

The dragon blew a tiny jet of fire into the air.

"What..." she said, looking at the dragon in shock and astonishment. "Is... is he real?"

"As real as you and I," Merlin told her, "but most people will look at him and think he's just a gecko or some other kind of lizard. He'll keep his wings concealed when anyone's around who shouldn't know about him, and he'll outlive you, so you needn't worry."

"He looks so tiny and delicate, though," Miriam said quietly, like fawning over a newborn puppy.

"He's not, though," the mage told her. "If you were to sit on him, for example, you're more likely to damage your own ass than you are to do a scrap of pain to him. You're quite the creature, aren't

you Strazo?"

The tiny dragon blew two tiny rings of smoke into the air and then shot a nearly invisible stream of fire through the center of them, almost seeming like he was laughing.

"Do you believe in magic now?" Merlin said as Strazo took flight once more, spiraling around the air a bit before landing on the edge of the bowl of pretzels, dipping his spiked tail into it to snag himself one, bringing it up so he could gnaw on it.

"I... I suppose I must," his bodyguard said. "What do I feed him?"

"He'll tend to his own needs but I have learned over the years that his particular strain of dragon loves salty things, so it wouldn't go amiss to leave out a bowl of pretzels."

The door to the bar opened again and Kevin leaned outward enough to see Seamus walking into the bar, followed by a blonde woman who looked like she was in her early twenties, wavy nearly platinum blonde hair hanging down past her shoulders with a single blue streak down the middle of it, dressed in a large Van Halen t-shirt and cutoff jean shorts, her eyes behind large black-framed glasses, which made her give off a little bit of a hipster vibe.

"Got Victoria," Seamus said, as he moved behind the bar, seeming to go back to work.

Victoria, on the other hand, shuffled quietly across the room, heading straight back to the booth. Her mouth opened and she said something to Merlin in a language he didn't immediately recognize. After a few seconds, he was fairly certain it was Czech, when Merlin was responding to her, his intonation changing, clearly speaking the language fluently. The woman looked at him and asked Merlin another question, to which he nodded and she shrugged.

Merlin tilted his head out to look over to the bartender once more. "Seamus, can you bring me the egg timer please?"

The bartender grumbled, but then grabbed an egg timer from behind the bar, carrying it over to the corner booth. "Y'know, y'could've just magicked the bugger over instead of making me lug it to you."

"I truly and well could've," Merlin admitted, "but where's the fun of that?" He picked up the egg timer, as Victoria got down on her hands and knees and crawled under the table. "So to win this, all you have to do... is nothing." He turned the egg timer to two minutes and let it start to tick, as Kevin felt Victoria's hands unbuttoning his pants.

"Now wait a minute..."

"It shouldn't be all that hard, if you'll forgive the pun," Merlin said. "If she can get you off before the egg timer goes off, you lose and she wins, and she'll get what she's playing for. If she doesn't, then you win, and I'll give you a clue."

Kevin was about to reach beneath the table, but felt his hands suddenly affixed to the table as Miriam leaned in to glance beneath the table, as Victoria fished his cock out and slowly wrapped her lips around the head of it.

"You can do this, Kev," Miriam said to him, placing one of her hands on top of his. "It's purely a matter of mind over matter."

Kevin inhaled a slow deep breath, but Victoria *was* an excellent cocksucker, and it was hard to think. He opened his eyes and focused carefully on Merlin. "Tell you what, Merlin. Double or nothing. If she wins, I'll tell you a secret of my own. But if she doesn't, not only do you give me my clue, you also give Victoria whatever she's playing for."

The blonde's mouth descended onto his cock, her tongue lashing along the underside of the head, her breath hot on his skin. Her fingertips were soft and kind, as they fondled his ballsack, and he was certain she must not have spoken any English, because she was working her lips up and down, caving her cheeks.

"You have a ridiculous level of confidence, Mister Bishop, but I have to admire that. You're just game for anything, and I find that refreshing after centuries of people being reticent to have a little fun when magic rolls into their lives," Merlin said, sparks rolling across the tops of his knuckles, moving

like a serpent of energy slithering over his skin. “But what sort of immortal trickster mage would I be to turn down a bit of sport? You're on.”

Kevin's nostrils flared, doing his best to remain in control of the moment, even while Victoria's lips worked of his dick with an accomplished skill that was taking every scrap of willpower he had. Despite the fact that he was now regularly sexually active, Victoria was going at him like her very life depended on it, raking her fingernails along the underside of his ballsack.

“Just breathe, Kev,” Miriam said to him. “In and out. Don't let this pissant magician control this moment. You have control, not always, not often, but for now, in this singular point in time, you are in control of everything. Do not surrender. Do not give in.”

Regardless of how much he was fighting, he suspected that he might lose, especially as Victoria started to bob her head up and down quickly, forcing the tip of his shaft into her throat, doing everything she could to possibly coax his release from him.

He closed his eyes, doing some of the breathwork that Natalie had been teaching him, also trying to tap into the meditation practices Elizabeth had been making him do three days a week. With Miriam's hand on top of his, he just needed to imagine Ashley teasing him to incorporate all the girls in his family into his resistance, and that made things much easier, because no man is an island, and he had a whole family standing behind him.

Once he pieced together how all the parts were making him stronger, he found the rest of the time just flashed by and the egg timer dinged before knew it.

As soon as it did, the mouth lifted off his cock, not even putting it away, moving to crawl out beneath the table, standing up, her head refusing to lift up, looking down at her folded together hands, tears starting to trickle down her cheeks until Merlin spoke again.

Kevin assumed Merlin was explaining to her that he'd bartered for her to also win, but for all he knew of Czech, he could've been reciting nursery rhymes to her. Still, after the mage finished speaking, she looked up at him, then over at Kevin, her lip quivering. She leaned across Miriam to wrap her arms around Kevin's neck, giving him a firm hug before pulling back, looking back down again.

She said one more thing to Merlin, and he replied as quickly, and then the girl made her way to the door and out of the bar.

“What was she playing for?” Kevin asked the mage.

“She wanted to be reunited with her sister, Ursula, who still lives behind the Iron Curtain, married to a rather wretched man. In sharing in your victory, I will have to go and remove Ursula from his presence and bring him here to the states,” Merlin said. “Why would you even do such a thing, to stake a woman you didn't even know to profit from your success?”

“A rising tide lifts all boats,” Kevin replied immediately.

“You know, of course, that's horseshit.”

“It's an ideal,” Kevin said with a grin. “And if I'm not trying to live up to it occasionally, what am I even doing with my life?”

“Well played indeed, sir. Then let me provide you with your clue. To escape the trap that is Midas Day, you must do something specific on that day, a thing you have never before done in your lifetime, something you would certainly remember were you to have done it.”

“That's a rather open-ended clue,” Miriam said.

“It's better than nothing, though, wouldn't you agree?”

“It's almost nothing,” Kevin sighed.

“Fine. Then I will add that it's in keeping with your other gifts from Morgana. And if a season's time you are no closer to an answer, then you can come and play again for another clue.”

“A season's time means three more Midas Days,” Kevin pointed out.

“Allow me to at least have *some* fun, Kevin,” the mage said. “Now I think I should take my leave of you, so perhaps you should finish what the other girl started, my dear.”

Miriam suddenly leaned forward and pushed her head down onto his cock, but as good as

Victoria had been, Miriam knew him intimately, and within moments, Kevin felt his own head leaning back as he began to cum into Miriam's mouth.

When she lifted her head up, and Kevin tilted his head back down, they both found that Merlin had disappeared into the wind.