

CHAPTER 51

TIME OUT FOR A MAGIC FEST

The trials and tribulations of the past few weeks vanish in an instant, only to be replaced by something far more interesting. And that just happens to be a self-directed course in the Yumi art of conjuring.

But success is not just a case of understanding the secret behind energy manipulation, it's an advantage if you have an ordered mind and a reasonable amount of self-control.

Reuben underwent a surgical procedure so that he could have access to the power of a Yumi Master, a delicate but painless adjustment to his energy field conducted by a team of highly skilled Yumi physicians.

This is a-once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to advance up the evolutionary ladder, and Reuben is happy to be joining the ranks of the exalted, but as Lezula points out there is one disadvantage.

‘You will only have access to these powers while you are in the Khavala.’

‘Well, maybe I’ll move here on a permanent basis,’ he says. ‘No doubt, I’ll find something to occupy my time.’

‘But your newfound powers will open up a world of endless possibilities, something you have always dreamt of.’

For Addric this really is a dream come true.

‘I have been looking forward to this day ever since I can remember. And I now have the power to tackle some of the trickier things in life.’

‘But don’t forget that conditions apply.’

‘I don’t remember you saying that Lezula.’

‘She did,’ Dheago says.

‘Allow me to remind you, Addric. Your intentions must be as pure as the heart that beats within, and your choices must be equally as clear.’

‘That should be relatively easy,’ he says.

‘Some things, as you will discover, will not work at all and others might even backfire.’

‘They will. Like what Lezula?’

This is information that any self-respecting manipulator should know about, but Lezula simply shakes her head.

‘You’ll find out for yourself, Addric.’

‘So, I really can get my heart’s desire?’ Reuben says.

‘The heart is the doorway to desire Reuben.’

‘Enjoy yourself, my friends. You deserve a treat or two.’

‘More than two, after what we have been through,’ Dheago sighs.

After many bleak and miserable years in the wilderness, the Goddess of Good Fortune has finally smiled on Dheago. He is now in a position to do whatever he wants but his ever-present pessimism is never far from the surface.

‘Plan ahead Dheago. Use that power to conjure up some of the things you will need for your upcoming journey,’

‘I don’t even want to think about that,’ he says.

The events of the last few weeks really have taken their toll, but Dheago’s dream is as remote as it has ever been.

‘I know that things have been a little difficult Dheago, but now you have the power to change your life, if you so desire.’

‘I promise that you will not leave here unprepared. And over the next few days, I will see that you have a clear understanding of what we have set in place.’

‘That is a promise, isn’t it?’

‘It is, believe me Dheago.’

‘In that case, I shall be back at eight. Enjoy your newfound powers, my friends.’

It has always been Addric’s dream to create something from nothing, and that day has finally arrived. This is the beginning of an on-going love affair, but he does have a few issues to iron out with the fine art of energy manipulation.

That has something to do with the fact that he hasn’t got his head around the concept of an ordered mind yet.

His first attempts at conjuring were a total shambles. His side of the room is a clutter of rubbish, while Dheago’s is ordered to the point of perfection. He places failed experiments to the left and any successes to the right.

In Addric’s domain, there is visible evidence that most of his experiments really have gone horribly wrong.

He has spent the afternoon trying to create anything at all, and his first real triumph is a fluffy toy cobbled together from six shades of synthetic fur.

His did his best to transform several meters of desecrated fabric into something recognisable, and after the tenth time, it worked.

A triumph of this nature calls for a celebration, so he spends the next hour lost inside a very large, garish green shirt, dancing around the room with a huge fluffy bear.

Dheago has conjured up knives, jackets, belts, and various forms of artillery, and he is currently working on a pair of black leather boots.

‘Addric,’ he says. ‘Come and look at these little beauties.’

‘Be there in a minute D.’

Addric throws the bear to the floor, trips over a pile of rubbish and accidentally squashes one of Dheago’s beautiful new shoes.

‘Addric, watch what you’re doing,’ he cries. ‘Now look what you’ve done.’

‘Oops, sorry Dheago, I didn’t mean that.’

He slithers out of the shirt and peruses Dheago’s craftsmanship with the eye of an accomplished expert.

‘For a formal occasion, perhaps.’

‘For tonight,’ Dheago says. ‘If I didn’t know better, Addric Sharano, I would say that you have been drinking.’

‘I tried that idea, but it wasn’t much of a success.’

‘Then, what have you been doing? You’ve been up to something as usual.’

‘I have been drinking tea, nothing but a yucky, bitter tasting tea.’

‘What sort of tea was it?’

‘Herbal, I think.’

Reuben appears at the doorway just in time to save Addric from another intensive grilling. And he is not only dressed to kill, he is the bearer of gifts as well.

‘What have you got there,’ Addric says.

‘A selection of aromatic treats, which, I would like to point out are a lot more appetising than herbal tea.’

‘Um, you’re right,’ Addric says as he pops one in his mouth.

‘I think I can taste a hint of alcohol as well.’

‘It’s artificial flavouring, Addric, not the real stuff, but you’d never know the difference.’

‘That’s a pretty slick-looking outfit you’re wearing Reuben. Design it yourself?’

‘Of course, Addric. I do have a broad range of skills, after all. It’s very smart, isn’t it,’ he says in a casual but not overly sophisticated way.

Reuben has obviously been a lot more productive than Addric. And he looks resplendent in a black suit embellished with a hint of golden thread.

‘An original design from the house of Ali Shah,’ Dheago says.

‘Absolutely and a mighty fine effort it is too, even if I do say so myself. One must look ones best for this evening. Mustn’t one?’

Reuben has short-cropped hair and a pale brown complexion and looks every bit the distinguished diplomat in his finest regalia.

He is dressed in a white silk shirt, a black jacket with matching trousers and a pair of knee-length boots. A woolen cloak is held fast by a golden clasp at his neck, and the finishing touch is a jeweled dagger that hangs at his side.

He just happens to notice a pair of interesting boots in Dheago’s reject box and decides to take a closer look.

‘Very nice indeed. I wouldn’t mind a pair of these,’ he says. ‘From The House of Sharano, I presume.’

‘No,’ Dheago says. ‘I made those.’

‘Very impressive. For tonight, I presume.’

‘Not those things, but these are.’

This is something of a surprise to Addric. Dheago has never shown signs of a hidden talent. In fact, he has never created anything at all, but he does have an ordered mind, and that is an essential requirement of energy manipulation.

‘And they are almost done,’ he says.

‘Very nice work, Dheago, but look at the mess in this room Addric Sharano. Have you got your act together yet? Are you ready for this evening?’

‘Sort of,’ he says sheepishly.

‘Well, make it snappy man. Lezula will be here at seven.’

‘Eight,’ Addric says.

‘Whatever, that gives us two hours, gentlemen, time enough for a magic fest.’

Lezula arrives at eight o’clock precisely and looks resplendent in a haze of light-infused fabric. She can hardly believe her eyes when Addric and Dheago make an entrance.

Through the miracle of an inspired make-over, they have been transformed into two striking young men, dressed in the style of the ancient Rishani Empire.

Addric, of course, insisted on doing his own hair.

‘Do I know these young men?’

‘They scrub up pretty well, don’t they?’ Reuben says.

‘They certainly do Reuben, but you all look so handsome.’

‘You wouldn’t believe what I had to go through to get them looking like this,’ Reuben says.

He is about to dive headfirst into a detailed post-mortem, but Addric cuts him off at the pass.

‘Okay Reuben, we get the picture. You don’t have to go into the gory details.’