

Not Anywhere

By
Ion Light



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Names and persons in this eBook are entirely fictional, and are, at minimum, the delusional happenstance of an author’s hallucinations, and therefore are exempt from persecution. Or is that prosecution? They bear no resemblance to anyone living or dead, including bears, unless they are untamed Furies. Except where that’s clearly not true, but hopefully, those folks have been referenced in such a way that it shows the love the author has for them in real life; every effort to be reasonably ambiguous as to allow for plausible deniability, or at minimum point to the alternative universe as the character source, while allowing for just enough hope that the readers are savvy enough to make silent distinctions and wink accordingly. But, still, should you be one of those folks without a sense of humor and easily annoyed, just put the eBook down and slowly step away, before the book eats your sense of peace and rains down miniature Ewoks with capes and pointy spears. Best disclaimer: never challenge worse. (Don’t make me mention prequels.)

Oh, do I have to say it: this is not a self-help book. You should absolutely never, ever, help yourself. That would just be wrong. I mean, think of all those poor Doctors, astrologers, and dieticians who would be unable to make a decent living if you started thinking for yourself. That said, if should you read between the lines and discover a pathway towards real magic, all I can say is, ‘don’t do it.’ Remember that thanksgiving when you helped yourself to a second plate? Yeah, kind of bloated and not pretty, and you spent the rest of the evening uncomfortable and lamenting, “Why didn’t I stop?!” Even after your mom and I both warned you not to, you still went and helped yourself. Just stop it, before someone gets hurt.

Also, please don’t consult me about magic, or esoteric matters. Yes, I am a counselor in real life. But magic and esoteric training isn’t counseling, and I can’t tell you what I really want to tell you, mostly because of the Prime Directive. That, and you can’t afford me. But even if you

could, you still can't. Just compartmentalize all of this as if it were fiction and you will live a much happier life if you just don't ask.

Oh, and all of you who want your very own tulpa; don't do it. This is not like going to the pet store and picking out a dog. It is absolutely nothing like reading an advertisement for 'sea monkeys' looking like little sea people, and you're hoping to get off watching live porn in your room, only to later discover, it's just brine shrimp and you can't get off to them, nor can you get rid of them, because, well, you spent time and money so you might as well keep them around, but also part of you is hoping that by not killing them they might mutate into what you were promised on the advertisement, and so you feel a sense of commitment, but I am telling you the Simpsons and South Park already did it. Besides, you can't show any of your friends you got 'sea monkeys' because you know damn well they're going to ask you, "You thought the little people were cute on the advert, didn't you?" And with all of that, if you persist that having a tulpa will improve your life, and it could, but it also take you to some dark places first, just ask Jung, well, if you want your own tulpa, do your own homework. Like asking 'google' is a hardship.

Oh, and if you're picking this up having not read "Not Here," followed by "Not There," I think you will be okay, but just know, you're diving into the deep end. There is going to be sex. And talking about sex. And though, you can see a James Bond film without having seen a previous James Bond film, and have some indication that a spy is likely to engage in frivolous sex to save the world, I am warning you now that James Bond has nothing on Jon Harister, so a little heads up, yeah, there will be something. They don't call this erotic esoterica for nothing.

Okay, I am trying to wrap this up. All rights reserved - but some wrongs are still available. Further, any disclaimer issued by me might be subject to change without notice. Clearly, any society that needs disclaimers has either too many idiots, lawyers, insurance adjusters, magicians, or all of the above. God save us all. No one else will.

This is a work in progress. Any corrections, or constructive criticism for the purpose of story refinement is welcomed. If you choose to contact the author, you may do so at: solarchariot@gmail.com. Please, put "not anywhere" in the subject line. This helps me find you amongst the clutter. (You visit one porn site, out of pure research for the book, and suddenly your inbox blows up... (that's the story, and I'm sticking to it.)) 214-907-4070 is my number. I

am not always available to take a call. I will, however, eventually, answer a text. If I don't respond in a day, email me.

Finally, and most importantly, this book is dedicated to those who have looked past the flaws of the grammar, and persisted because they found something meaningful in the story or the characters. I'm truly touched by those of you who have reached out. Even if you haven't reached out through correspondence, simply reading, whether you rated the book or not, is meaningful. In my own way, I have reached out and engaged the universe, and it has responded through you. We are not alone. Thank you for reminding me.

ENJOY!

Chapter 1

Do you remember that moment, as an adolescent, you have been found out. Yeah, no matter how hard you tried to hide it, through longer showers, umm, 'reading' in the middle of the day requiring three locks bolted on your bedroom door, waiting eagerly for the adults and siblings to leave the house and leave you alone, but suddenly they came back because of some stupid reason like, 'oh, I forgot my sun glasses,' and surprise, someone has caught you with your butt in the air humping the couch in the living room, because for whatever reason, the family couch was more erotic than your own bed.

Discovery of magic is a lot like that. We all do it. All the time, but we hide it because, well, quite frankly, we've become perversely attached to our war stories. War stories like: OMG, the foundation leak flooded the house, but the insurance had a secret clause that capped the foundation leak at 5k, simultaneously, the convertible cloth top is leaking, but only when it rains, the other car you loaned to a friend and they hydroplaned into a curve because they don't have enough experience to let off the gas and now the tires on the left side of the vehicle that hit the curve look like a time machine Delorean, only the truck still doesn't fly due to the lack of a flux capacitor, and since both axels are broke, the repairs will cost more than the blue book value and so it's almost better to buy a new vehicle, though it eats at you how a perfectly good truck, other than the broken wheels, is suddenly trash, and you heard through the grapevine your mother died, but you didn't hear it from family but through a friend of friend of the family, which just irritates you more about your family, you dropped your phone and it broke, the power supply on your computer went out, and work has fired you, but you needed a medical procedure which now won't happen in the absence of insurance, and you're trying to find a friend who is sympathetic, but they start competing with you, "Oh, you think you have it bad," and they give you their list of grievances, not so much to block you from soliciting their help, but because they genuinely don't have the ability to attend to anything but themselves but they start their list with how Starbucks got their coffee wrong, and you're like, what the fuck planet are you on?! That's where I was. Only, I had no list of grievances. I was in Safe Haven, enjoying a pleasant morning Joe surrounded by people I genuinely love, and touching a certain dread the same way your tongue might probe the space where a tooth use to be.

Huey, my friend, the power of perspective has nothing on love.

"Jon?" I tuned back into my reality.

Loxy smiled at me. If there is such a thing as a soul mate, which I don't believe in, Loxy Bliss would be the one. Still, I felt like a teenager who had used one too many socks to catch a load of sperm, and the 'mom' is wondering why I change socks so much and pushing for information, when she should have a fucking clue not to push, because she really doesn't want to have that conversation any more than you do. Well, not my mom, but 'mom son' discussions in general. My mom would be more likely to ask why I don't bring a girl home and then when I do, she'd be going off on me for bringing home some 'trailer trash' neighbor girl, embarrassing me and the girl, which would only inflame my libido but ensure I don't bring a girl home. The first time I had sex with a live girl was in a graveyard. It took some convincing to get her there, but once she discovered the joy of sex in a semi private public place, because who else goes to a graveyard after dark, I couldn't keep her away from the place. Yeah, she later on in life freaked out, started wearing goth clothes, sleeping in a coffin, and became a world renown medium, with her own TV show, but is that really on me?

"Um," Loxy mused. "Where'd you go?"

"Sorry," I said, watching Lester take his seat. Sabra pushed her hand towards him across the table, fingernails at saucer level, and when her hand arrived in front of Lester, a saucer and a cup of coffee had 'magically' appeared, being pushed by the back of her fingernails. Knowing magic exists and seeing it in action just never gets old. "I didn't sleep well last night."

"Speaking of that," Lester said, which was surprising only in that he rarely made more than grunting sounds before completing one coffee. "The next time you fuck Fersia all night, take her damn bell collar off. I swear, there wasn't a spot in the entire Hall that wasn't reverberating with that damn tinkle. I almost thought we had been overrun by pixies. You are smart enough to not summon and fuck with Pixies, right? Worse than squirrels in the attic."

I almost took a moment to consider Pixies and fucking with them, but got stuck on the accusation. "I didn't fuck Fersia last night. I wasn't even here last night."

"Oh, well, where were you Mr. Tom cat?" Fersia asked.

"With the twins," I said.

"So who was with..." Lester began.

"No, wait wait wait," Keera said eagerly. "The Collin twins?"

"Please," Lester said. "Like they would want to spend the night with a freshman. So, Fersia, if it wasn't Jon..."

“It was me,” Loxy said, trying to rush past this and back to me. “I’ll try to remember to muffle the bell next time. You were with the Collin twins again?”

“But I like it when you ring my bell,” Fersia said.

I wanted to say something about Lester’s dismissal with me and the twins but found myself absent of words. Loxy noticed.

“What’s wrong, Jon? Cat got your tongue?” Loxy asked.

“I,” began.

“Come home more often. You have an open invitation to play,” Loxy said.

“Speaking of play, who wants to try my new drink?” Sabra asked.

Loxy was the first to put her finger to her nose. It took me a moment to realize that I was the only one at the table not holding a finger to my nose. I frowned. “It’s a bit early to be drinking, isn’t it?” I asked. It was beautiful morning at Safe Haven, perched above the waters of Harister Hall.

“You lost, Sir,” Lester pointed out. “You’re too slow and your shirt’s on backwards.”

“How does a magician of your caliber get his shirt on backwards?” Esfir asked.

Embarrassed, I drew my arms in the shirt, reversed it, put my arms back through. Fersia laughed, making a comment about how I would be lost if Loxy didn’t dress me. I admit I have no fashion sense, but I can’t explain how I sometimes get my shirt on backwards. Sabra produced a glass and three, small bottle and as she poured the light blue liquid into the glass, the frosted symbol of our lightening patch fluoresced. The drink was layered, blue, indigo, then violet. The blue and the violet began to trade places.

“You’re not sampling your own magic, are you?” Alish asked, laughing at her own joke.

“Well, I have just the thing to draw you out of yourself,” Sabra said, pushing the new drink towards me. “It’s called the Freud Jung Bridge...”

“You mean the Rosenberg-Einstein Bridge?” I clarified.

“Uh? Oh, no, I don’t want to teleport you away,” Sabra said. “You’re already not fully here. That could be disastrous.”

“Just drink it,” Lester said. “You don’t need to understand everything.”

“What is your urgency in this?” I asked him, finally annoyed enough with his presence that I felt perturbed. It wasn’t like he had done anything specifically wrong towards me, but he now held my attention.

“I’m finally not the guinea pig is my urgency,” Lester said.

“Hold on,” Loxy said. “You created a drink that can access the unconscious, the seat of the libido?”

“I see nothing bad happening with that,” Keera said, clearly sarcastic.

“How do I consume it?” I asked, practically.

“Really?” Lester demanded.

“It’s a fair question,” Sabra said. “Drink it fast, then chase it with this strawberry soda.” She pushed a pinkish, bubbling drink at me that might have been Big Red substitute like Fanta. Not that I would protest Fanta. Have you ever seen the Fanta commercials? Tell me again sex doesn’t sell.

“I’m not a fan of strawberry soda,” I said. I would take the strawberry Fanta girl, though. Actually, I would take the Rainbow of Fanta girls, who I am kidding.

“You’re running out of excuses, now drink your damn drink,” Lester said.

“I’m seriously perturbed by your insistence,” I told him.

“Oh, just drink it,” everyone said, with varying degrees of amusement.

I drank the drink in one motion, put the glass down hard, paused as a grimace rolled across my face, only to discover I was an instant fan of strawberry soda. One glass wasn’t sufficient to get the taste of the poison out of my mouth.

“So, how was it?” Sabra asked.

“Not a fan,” I said, still sucking wind, trying to be kind. My voice sounded rock star breathless.

“It would help me if you were more precise. Describe the texture, the feel, and any latent effects,” Sabra directed.

I was trying not to think about it.

“Any inclinations towards your mother?” Loxy asked.

“Uh?” Then I thought Freud. “Oh! God, no. This drink better not open that fucking door.”

A fairly attractive female arrived at our table, professionally dressed in a suit, the skirt hitting her knees, simple pumps but matching the overall intended effect, and a guy’s jacket. It was so professional it could have been construed as a stripper delivery card, and I began to wonder are they trying to celebrate my birthday, but couldn’t even tell you when my birthday

was, because I had no clue about time, since I had pretty much given up all sense of space/time since entering the University. Her pumps were just high enough in the heel to accentuate her calves. My eyes stayed there.

“We’re not open till 11,” Sabra was saying.

“Look, I think it’s having an effect,” Fersia said.

“How can you tell,” Lester asked, looking at me. “That seems like his usual ogling mode?”

I wasn’t ogling! She was obstructing my vision, but I couldn’t seem to get the remark out.

“I’m looking for Jon Harister,” the woman said.

I managed to get my eyes up to her breast. You could tell there were breast there, but they were well concealed. Again, everyone put a finger to their nose, but me. The woman frowned. She addressed me silently, holding an envelope out for me to collect.

“I have something for you,” the woman said when I didn’t take it.

“A lap dance?” I asked.

Fersia covered her mouth.

“Excuse me?” the woman asked.

“No excuse necessary,” I said. “May I purchase a vial of your bathwater?”

“Are you drunk, Sir, or always this rude?” the woman asked.

“I’m Loxy,” Loxy took over. “Perhaps I can help?”

“I need to hand this to Jon Harister,” the woman said.

“A hand job, excellent idea,” I said.

“Are you Jon?!” she asked.

“Am I getting a hand job?” I asked.

“Maybe a bit high on the Freud,” Sabra said.

“You think?” Loxy asked.

“Are you Jon?” the woman asked me again.

“Depends on what you’re giving me? Herpes?” I asked.

“OMG,” she said.

“Oh, fuck it, doesn’t matter, just park your ass right here,” I offered.

“My name is Sam...” she began.

“Sam!” I sang. “I am Sam, Sam I am, I would, I could, here, there, anywhere, in a house, with a mouse...”

Fersia was laughing hysterically. I think everyone else was amused. Except the woman. She thrust the envelope at me again.

“Take it,” Sam said.

“I’m not accepting anything from you until I am satisfied,” I declared.

“I fucking hate sorcerers,” Sam mumbled, sitting on my lap. She began to grind, reluctantly, but with sufficient force that it suggested she knew how to work it and intended to accelerate the process in order to be done. There was no affection in it at all. “How’s that?”

“Don’t grind angry,” I said, paraphrasing Groundhog Day. I was dropping into a song: “But it’s the pelvic thrusts that really drive you insane...”

“I think he is about to do a spell,” Keera said.

Fersia eyes had closed, and she was gyrating her hips slowly in her chair, mouthing “Let’s do the time warp again...”

“Oh, that’s just the drink,” Sabra said.

“Maybe a bit high on the Jung,” Loxy said. “You’re going to need a third ingredient to mitigate the feud between Freud and Jung.”

“I didn’t think about that, but yeah,” Sabra said.

“Jung, collective unconscious,” Lester said. “Shit! Are you saying that drink could have an effect on anyone in proximity?”

“Well, yeah, that’s the whole point of the drink,” Sabra said. “Some people don’t like to drink, but they are curious about how it feels, hence the name ‘Freud-Jung Bridge.’ I thought you understood that,” Sabra said.

“Is that why I am thinking this is all pretty hot,” Esfir asked, unbuttoning the top of her blouse.

“You can be more aggressive now,” I told Sam. And that was not sarcasm. She reached under herself and unfastened my belt and pants, exposing the mini magician. In doing so, I saw her hose was held by garter belts.

“Fuck me,” Lester said, departing the table as if a nuclear bomb was about to be set off and there was only minutes left allowing him to get to minimum safe distance.

“You can’t out run this,” Loxy shouted after him.

“I am sure he has enough blocks he won’t be affected,” Keera said.

“OMG” Fersia said, coming to the edge of her seat.

Sabra looked up to the left, gripping the arms of her seat, closing her eyes. Esfir was melting into her seat, licking her lips. To keep from falling out of the seat, she braced her bare feet against the table stand, clearly visible through the clear table top, and almost all the way to crotch, but her hands went there. Samantha moaned, with sudden acceptance and enthusiasm. She reached under and peeled the underwear to the side and took me inside her. She lay her breast on the table, the left side of the face smashed into the glass, and with arms out-stretched, she gripped the table hard, pushing her pelvis into me with such force I feared my chair might topple if I didn’t lean into her.

“Are you all feeling this?” Keera asked.

“Oh, yeah,” Loxy said, her eyes locked on me.

They were all suddenly compelled to put their hands on the table, leaning forwards in their chairs. The table lifted as if we were summoning spirits in a séance, with Sam weighing the table down on her end. We all came at once, and as the affects settled, the table landed hard. Each item on the table landed out of sync with a clatter, but nothing was spilled. Everyone rested their heads on the table, exhausted, except me. I lay my head on the back of Sam’s neck, hugging her to me. She came off the table enough for me to have an idea of her breast, as her clothes were now disheveled even though I didn’t grope at all during, but was now getting a feel. She sighed, peeled my hands off her breast, and put them on the table. Loxy’s hand found mine, and she held it and squeezed, reassuringly.

“I think that drink was a success,” Sabra said.

“Oh, yeah,” they all agreed.

“Damn it!” Lester’s voice echoed in the distance, magically delivered due to his being enmeshed with the group.

Everyone at the table began to laugh uncontrollably. Even Sam couldn’t help but laugh, and it was a deep, genuine laugh that moved her belly and still being inside her I could feel it like a light.

I, as if waking from a dream, found myself with a stranger on my lap, and I inside her still. “What just happened?” I asked.

Samantha peeled her hands from the table, put the envelope in my hand, stood, adjusted her underwear, then her skirt, and shivered. “You’ve been served,” she said, and walked away.

“Who was that?” I asked.

“I don’t know,” Loxy said, her head still on the table, her eyes closed.

“I don’t care,” Keera said.

“Give him another drink,” Fersia said.

Chapter 2

The contents of the letter seemed to be a compulsory summons to meet with Morlon Fribourg. It was nonspecific in temporal locality, but the letter itself did seem to have an expiration date with which to respond, based on an hour clock that was counting down. There was an implied threat that not meeting would result in an act of malice.

“Is this binding?” I asked.

“You should probably talk to Doctor Handle,” Loxy said. She specializes in these sorts of things.

“It took some effort for Fribourg to get that served,” Alish noted. “That woman had no apparent magical abilities, so she’s not from around here.”

“She could be support staff, off campus?” Keera offered. “Or part of the colony?”

“She clearly has had enough experience with magician that she commented how much she hated it,” I commented.

“Maybe she’s a pet,” Fersia said, toying with the bell on her collar.

Keera scratched behind Fersia’s ear.

“Well, I guess I will go see Doctor Handle,” I said, standing up.

“Don’t be late to the pep rally,” Loxy said.

“Yeah, we’re all going to be wearing our lightening badges,” Fersia said.

“Lightening badges?” Alish and I both said.

“Our symbol, coat of arms thing,” Fersia said, pulling her jacket sleeve out from under her to reveal.

“Oh,” Alish said. “I thought those were tree roots.”

“Really?” Fersia said.

“They look like tree roots,” Alish assured her.

“This is made of light,” Fersia said.

“So are tree roots,” Alish assured her.

“Really?” Fersia said. Keera hugged her.

Loxy touched my jacket, drawing my attention to the badge. I hadn’t even noticed. My puzzled expression clearly gave me away.

“You okay?” Loxy asked.

“Yeah, why?”

“Shirt was on backwards, didn’t notice the addition of a lightening patch,” Keera said.

Nadine Collier, engineer, arrived at the table, pink hard hat and all.

“We’re not quite ready to open yet,” Sabra said.

“I’m here to inspect the additions,” Nadine said.

“Really?” we all said.

“That might explain why you’re not here,” Loxy mused.

“You haven’t seen them?” Nadine asked, pointing to the one closest to our table.

From our seating position, we could not see the enclosed rose at true north position of the Harister Hall. We could see some of Loxy’s enclosed pine tree, tree house-home between the 12 and 3 positions, and at the three o’clock position, something new: it appeared to be the top of a bubble. We all got up, walked down into the tunnel, out of the wall and around to discover what appeared to be a giant snow globe, minus the water, but snow falling inside the globe. There was a city in the distance, which might have been a mock up, miniature city, or it might have actually been a distant city, or a city that was affected by the refraction of light through the globe. The perspective was so ideal, it kept drawing our attention to it. No matter how you walked around it, the city stayed at the same distance. If there was a road going to the city, it could not be seen due to the fresh snow fall. There was a moon gate that led, presumably, into the globe and hopefully into the city, otherwise there would be a good walk through the snow. My brain was thinking, Emerald City, with the snow fall intended to counter the effect of poisoned poppies.

“Wow,” Fersia said for us all.

“You said additions?” I asked, as if staring into the globe wasn’t magical enough to be presently satiated.

“You really haven’t noticed?” Nadine asked.

We hadn’t. So, Nadine led us around to the nine o’clock position, where there was another ‘snow globe’ like structure, only this was full of water, with an underwater city in the distance. There was an air pocket at the top of the bubble. The floor of this snow globe was covered with white sand, a scattering of sea stars, some coral, fish, a treasure chest with a half emerged, sunken galleon, and, most prominently, and eye capturing, sea monkeys. And I am not talking about brine shrimp, but actual human sized ‘sea monkeys’ as illustrated by Joe Orlando in all the comic book ads of the 1970’s that made young men lust for having sea people of his very own. And a lot of disappointed kids who discovered the reality of advertising could be

extremely misleading. And it wasn't just kids, because even adults bought into it. For example, my older brother asked mom to buy them for him, and she refused, saying: "I don't want you looking at naked people." Which, kind of just makes you wonder, and increases the wanting to look at naked people, which was what we did as hunters and gathers for at least hundreds of thousands of years, and if you believe the hype that life in antiquity was better than the present, seeing naked people probably kept us well adjusted.

"You use to dream about being with sea monkeys, didn't you?" Loxy reminded me.

OMG, I sighed. I would have rather that had stayed secret, but was actually relieved that it could be said out loud without me feeling judged by my friends. "If I wake up to find myself fucking a brine shrimp, I am not going to be happy," I said.

"If you cum, I would say you were really happy," Keera said.

Fersia laughed.

One of the female sea monkeys approached and put her hand on the inside of the globe. Mesmerized, I approached and placed my hand over hers, on the outside of the glass. She mouthed the words 'hello,' but I had a bizarre fantasy flash through my head. She was saying "Spock, no!" And I was responding, "You have always been, and shall always be, my friend."

"Jon?" Loxy asked.

I was drawn out of the fantasy. The female sea monkey laughed and swam back to her group, and they all seemed to be chattering excitedly. I looked to Loxy.

"Did you say something?" I asked.

"Wow," Loxy said. "Where are you?"

"This is a normal effect of addendums," Nadine assured her.

"I'm losing my mind?" I asked.

"No, you're expanding it," Nadine assured me. "So, if you'll excuse me, I would like try and get my work accomplished before the pep rally. And as the patriarch of this Hall, you really need to attend this one, Jon."

"I wonder what's going to go in the other positions," Keera mused.

"Oh, that's right? Do we have a say? I would really like that tea shop where the patrons pet cats," Fersia said.

"With all the additions, and what may come, you might as well move in, Nadine," I said, jokingly.

“I accept,” Nadine said.

“Don’t we have to run it by a committee?” Esfir asked.

“I think he just bypassed the committee,” Loxy said, amused. “That was spirit, Jon. There is no accidental remarks.”

निर्मित

Doctor Colleen Handle was in her office when I arrived and a male secretary, looking fairly impish made me wait. The ‘imp’ was more human than true imp, but sometimes, if you looked at him through your periphery vision, there was this impression that he was a Gremlin that had eaten after midnight, with glowing red eyes, which instantly brought my eyes back to him. He sat at his desk, hands folded in his lap, and stared back. There was nothing on his desk suggesting he had things to do. He just sat there, looking at me. Stoically. I got the impression he could be in the Blue Brother’s car, flying through a mall, things breaking, people running, police car sirens roaring, and he would be just as calm and cool as Jake Elwood, just staring, maybe making an occasional comment: ‘you just ran over a baby. Cool.’

“Mr. Harister,” he said, jarring me back out of my fantasy. His sunken cheeks and thin lips were spooky. His tuft of hair fell went up and spilled over like a waterfall. In truth, he was a Muppet that went very wrong. “She will see you now.”

A door to the right of the Imp’s desk slid open. It was hard to see in, as the light inside the room seemed to pool in the door frame. I got up, walked over, and pushed through thin sheet of light that conformed to my body like pushing into a balloon. I broke into Colleen’s presence with a ‘pop.’ She sat in an egg chair, a hovering egg chair, in an alcove which was all windows, like a bubble blister on a ship. No, better, it was the Emperor’s window on the second Death Star, only instead of space and stars and a battle, it was blue skies and clouds. I was curious enough to want to get a closer look out the window, but I had to do my ‘compulsory’ ogling of Doctor Handle. The rest of the office was empty. No books. No artifacts. No possessions, or nick-knacks, not even a layer of dust, as if this was a clean room, but not like a clean room Dexter might want to make clean up easier.

Doctor handle was a thirty something professional, lawyer type. She was not big breasted, and an outline of a bra was discernable under her white blouse. Her tan skirt hit mid ankle, but was up a little due to her sitting legs crossed in her chair. Her legs and feet were bare.

Her hair was down, and pooled over her left shoulder. Over all, she had the look of someone who runs on a daily basis, perhaps even competes in marathons.

“You may come have a closer look, if you like,” Colleen said.

“What?” I asked.

“Come closer to me,” Colleen said more than asked.

“Oh,” I said, and approached the alcove where her egg chair hovered. Now that I was closer, I had to look out the window.

Colleen’s chair turned with me as I stepped up and approached the window. The window over looked the campus. The whole of the campus was visible, like looking at an elaborate gaming map with toy artifacts, or like from a helicopter looking down, as opposed to being in the top of the building looking down. I had a moment of vertigo and touched her chair to steady myself. The chair started to drift away increasing my unsteadiness but then pushed back to hold its position.

“Yes, that is Safe Haven,” Colleen said. “Technically, the whole planet is Safe Haven, but below is the main campus. You can see Harister Hall’s tower over there. It’s actually kind of nice, like a monument, but I would have preferred it next to the shore, and would have made your tower a lighthouse, but then again, given how much your place is changing, and how quickly, it’s probably good you set up next to the Penetrable Forest. But you didn’t come to discuss landscapes and architecture or property rights, did you?”

I brought up my summons. “I got this,” I began.

She held up a hand, blocking.

“You have not paid me for the last representation,” Colleen said.

I blinked, lowered my arm. “That wasn’t like complimentary University service?”

“Oh, you’re such a freshman,” Colleen said. “Haven’t you learn there is always an exchange rate when it comes to magic? I defended you, I get paid. That’s how it works.”

“I ended up being pushed into an early internship and punished for something I didn’t really feel like I should have even been called out on,” I pointed out.

“Oh, we’ve already gone over all that, and had I not been there, your outcomes might have been more severe, so, suck it up, let’s move on, but you still have to compensate me for my time,” Colleen said.

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