

Chapter 16: Sanctum - The Palace of Silence

As they fell through the vortex, Will could feel a familiar presence. It was the same one that had visited him before those nights. Julia had never felt this before, and so the final seconds of consciousness before crossing the vortex were ones of absolute terror.

A flicker of light later and the sea was gone. The boat was gone. The light was mostly gone. Only a strange dim glowing was visible now. It was very dark, but soon their eyes adjusted. They were both lying on a smooth stone floor. Almost inhumanly pristine, as if no one had set foot there before.

An alien feeling. The surroundings were all flat, as if the entire space had been cut out of rock of such precise degrees. The rock was a polished black or blue, thus the light felt absorbed by the surroundings.

Julia was the first to stand up. She could see Will was a bit tired. He had just managed to get them through the defenses of a force or thing that clearly did not want visitors. His eyes were closed, but he was still breathing. She tried to ask how he was, but she couldn't speak. Some force of this place did not want speech.

Julia roused Will. He got up but also found that the place they now were would not allow speech. As if the place had some power to prevent them from physically creating a vocal sound. Very strong magic. Will thought, *What is this place?*

Julia thought the same. It was strange, yet not as strange as when she heard Will's voice in her mind. Very strong magic.

Both looked at the other and it became very clear. There was no speech because there was no need for it. Thought alone was needed.

Julia offered Will her hand and both stood together hand-in-hand. Looking about the place, only one direction went forward. So they walked carefully down the dimly lit halls of the palace of silence to the other end.

Both of their minds spoke to one another.

Do you know this place? Julia thought.

No, but I know its feel. It's him, the one who visited me.

The Monster?

This is his aura. No mistake.

The long empty hall continued for some ways before it became light. The light that did make it was being re-aligned this way and that by the mysterious qualities of the rock. Tiny beams of light made their way to Will and Julia, but even those were faint and felt cold.

What is this place? Julia thought. Will didn't really have any answer, only that it felt darkly familiar.

Some of us cannot change who we are, I am afraid. A voice said—or thought.

Because it was a thought, there was no directionality, but it could really only come from one direction.

Do not be afraid, child. I have allowed you here because you seek answers. Its feel was icy, alien, almost omniscient in a sense. As if it knew them personally but did not wish to pry too much.

Take a breath. Hold it... Now release.

The voice let them relax as they approached more closely to the exit or entrance.

The ante-chamber or grand-room was shaped as a perfect sphere. No flaws, no obstructions, a smooth and round spherical interior. The only thing preventing Will and Julia from sliding to its bottom was the causeway that criss-crossed the center of the room.

At the sphere's exact center was a throne. It looked very old, very worn from simply the passage of time itself.

And in it sat the most disturbing thing either of them had ever seen.

It was a creature that seemed a cross between all of the things of a person's worst fears. An insectile creature of long, thin, folded arms and thin membranous wings, sharp features at every angle, as if this thing had been created to incur an alien sense of unease. Too angular and sharp to be possible.

It blinked its large bulbous eyes with strange translucent eyelids like a reptile. Where there should have been a mouth was many straight, needle-sharp teeth pointed horizontally.

There were no clothes to cover its body. The gleaming exoskeletal shape of its body implied it did not need such.

The two simply stared for several moments at their ghastly host. The aura of fear it created was almost noxious in a way. Such was the power of the Monster King.

Breath, the voice said again. The creature upon the throne made no movements, only its breath. *Close your eyes.* As they did this the aura of fear weakened and they could think clearly again.

It is the Nightmare's glamour. All living things are affected by it upon sight of one. It is why no one can ever see the same form. The glamour creates an illusion of what a person fears most.

"So you are a Nightmare?" Will finally had the courage to say.

Indeed. Yet, here, I am as I am.

"What... who are you?" Julia didn't quite believe everything yet.

I am the first. First human born upon Geb all those eons ago. First to die and be reborn. And as such I am the first 'monster'. Their lord.

The Monster King? Will thought. The reality hitting him. He opened his eyes, but the creature before him continued to sit barely moving.

Why? Why did you appear before me? Why did you tell me to go to Ath? What do I need to know? Will had so many questions about the whole journey he was on. *Where did it all end? Why did he have such a strong connection with Julia?* Certain things had become clearer, yet others were not clear enough.

Julia heard all of this for the first time, but it too had bothered her for a while now. This 'journey'. It was in a lot of ways too far-fetched. Was it magic? Was it science? Why was Earth so unlike these other worlds?

"I am sorry, Julia. Will," the Monster King said. "But you had to learn these things on your own to understand."

"Understand what?!"

"Your 'own' place." The thought silenced all of their thoughts as their minds wanted to continue running through the various issues and questions.

"Own place?" both thought in tandem.

"You are yourselves, yet another. Two fibres of the same cord. Two yet one. A single soul-line that connects the two of you. It is why you are connected now."

"And your biggest question, 'Why?' Because you both wish to create change in your worlds. It is your natures to create change. And these places you have now seen have shown you that you can create that change, be it big or small. Change is change."

The Monster King stirred in his throne.

"I wished to help you learn that you can create change. It is a hard lesson, but you both grew, as I knew you would."

Both opened their eyes now. They could see the creature before them changing slowly into an aged man. Tired, weary as he sat. The hair that had been brown turned grey and white at its sides. His skin shriveled bit by bit as he moved slowly, gracefully out of his throne. An old King, tired from all the time of all the ages past.

"I envy both of you. You can create change, yet I cannot. I was not destined for change. I was destined for balance, to keep the balance of Geb for all ages until it too is sucked into the vortex of Chaos. It is a sad fate, to be so powerful, but be unable to change the world around you. A sadness too deep to put into words."

"Can Myrah be changed?" Will thought.

"Yes," the Monster King replied. He had a very poor look upon his now old kingly face. "Could I shed a tear I would, but alas. I cannot. For such a change on Myrah will require a great price."

"Oh..."

"The greatest price you can pay, Will. If you wish to change Myrah, you must be willing to put every remaining year of your life to it, or it will not change as you have seen it must."

The reality had long shown around him: the injustices of the caste system had been born into. The

stagnation of an entire world's economy and creativity. The horribly unfair system that benefited a shrinking elite and stunted all innovation.

But to fight that system—practically hundreds of thousands who would defend such a system to the death—it seemed a futile existence.

Yet, to stand even the ages of time unbowed by all the weight of a world could be done.

At the same time, Julia contemplated her own great choice. The change she wished to make in her world. It wasn't perfect, but it wasn't a terrible one either.

People of Earth, though divided, were not an enslaved people. They were free to move, unlike Alth, divided by its great walls. Or Geb, a world of wild forces that were hard to understand at times. Earth, as Julia could see it, was its own thing. Just as unique and different from any of the other worlds she'd seen.

"What about the stone?" Will asked in his mind. Ever since finding it on that day long ago. It was what had allowed him to do what no other ever had, in science or magic: to travel worlds at a thought.

"Ah. The stone." The Monster King sighed out. "Such a tragic thing it is for magic to die completely. But it does, like all life have its ending."

At that he swept his arm in a wide arc and the spherical chamber became completely dark. Slowly the walls lit up, tiny specks and spots across the curved stone, like the night sky on a very clear night, but without a moon to crowd the picture.

"This great universe is vast, no question about it," he began. "There are more worlds than I care to count. A few are so gifted with life, and even then, few still with complex life. Yet, even after so long I find a peace about it, that life will always continue one way or another."

"That stone is a remnant of a world long gone. It too was one of magic, yet that world shattered; the remains cast about space for countless years."

"This rock is what is left of a magic world, like my own?" Will thought. The king simply nodded. The lights grew again and the chamber became visible once more.

"A choice is before both of you. What will you do?" It said softly.

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Author's Notes:

To keep the chapter functioning as a clear Jungian integration scene—where Will and Julia represent the unconscious masculine (Animus) and feminine (Anima) aspects of one underlying psyche/soul that are finally meeting and beginning to unify—the following elements are non-negotiable. They form the symbolic spine of the chapter:

1. The explicit "two yet one" revelation The Monster King's lines: *"You are yourselves, yet another. Two fibres of the same cord. Two yet one. A single soul-line that connects the two of you. It is why you*

are connected now." This is the clearest, most direct statement of the theme. It must remain (or stay extremely close to this wording). It tells the reader, without ambiguity, that Will and Julia are not separate characters but complementary halves of one deeper Self.

2. The Palace of Silence and forced telepathic communication The total suppression of spoken language and the effortless mind-to-mind dialogue is the perfect concrete symbol for Anima/Animus integration: the ego (speech) is silenced so the unconscious aspects can speak directly to each other. Their synchronized, overlapping thoughts ("Own place?" both thought in tandem) reinforce that they are operating as one psyche.

3. The shared encounter with the Monster King (archetypal meeting) The King functions as a Wise Old Man / Self archetype who brings the Anima and Animus together for the first time. Their joint confrontation with him, the glamour of fear, and the subsequent revelation only make sense if they are experiencing it as two halves of the same soul. Removing or softening this scene would break the integration moment.

4. The theme of change as a joint destiny The King's insistence that **both** of them are here to learn they can (and must) create change in their worlds ties directly to individuation: once Anima and Animus recognize their unity, the whole psyche gains the power to transform reality rather than remain divided or stuck in balance.

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